

When Do Votes Count?

Regime Type, Electoral Conduct, and Political Competition in Africa

Harris Mylonas

Nasos Roussias

Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut

The effects of electoral systems have been tested recently in Africa, raising several questions: Are the systematic effects of electoral rules the same across regime types? Does the conduct of elections affect the process of strategic coordination between voters and parties? The literature to date has not considered these issues and also analyzes elections in settings where a crucial set of its assumptions are clearly violated. The authors argue that the mechanism of strategic coordination only operates in democracies that hold free and fair elections, and they exhibit the ways it is violated outside of this domain. They compile a new data set on sub-Saharan African elections and show that the interaction of electoral rules and ethnopolitical cleavages predicts the number of parties only in democratic settings, failing to produce substantive effects in nondemocratic ones.

Keywords: *party systems; elections; ethnic heterogeneity; regime type; electoral conduct; Africa*

A well-documented finding in political science is that electoral institutions and social cleavages interact to determine the number of parties (Cox, 1997; Neto & Cox, 1997; Ordeshook & Shvetsova, 1994). We refer to this as the “Duverger model” throughout the article.¹ Recent literature has tested this theory in the African context (Mozaffar, Scarritt, & Galaich, 2003). However, tests are conducted using inappropriate samples, which combine democratic and nondemocratic elections and ignore issues of electoral conduct, such as ballot stuffing and vote rigging. Implicitly, these tests assume that elections operate similarly regardless of regime type.²

Authors' Note: We thank Jose Cheibub, Keith Darden, Bill Foltz, Marios Panayides, Ken Scheve, Jim Vreeland, Daniela Donno, Philipp Rehm, and Jonah Schulhofer-Wohl for their helpful comments. We are also grateful to Staffan Lindberg both for his comments and for sharing his data. Both authors have contributed equally to this article. Dataset available at www.harris-mylonas.gr

We argue that one should test the Duverger model on “free and fair” (F&F) elections³ that take place in democracies.⁴ A crucial set of preconditions must hold in order for electoral rules and sociological variables to shape the electoral competition of a country. Strategic coordination is the main causal mechanism that links these variables with the number of parties; it involves the coordination of competitors over entry and citizens over votes (Cox, 1999). In the presence of electoral fraud, intimidation, and political violence, however, we have no prior examples of whether—or how—strategic coordination works. We posit that elections should operate in different ways conditional on the regime type of a country and the fairness of the electoral contest, and hypothesize causal mechanisms regarding the functioning of elections in nondemocratic settings.

To test these arguments, we compiled a new data set on sub-Saharan African elections, improving on existing ones and increasing the number of observations. We separate the analysis based on both regime type and fairness of elections, which enables us to illustrate the different ways elections function in democratic and nondemocratic settings. Our empirical analysis demonstrates that the logic of strategic coordination predicts the number of parties only in F&F elections that take place in democracies. District magnitude, where ethnopolitical fragmentation is moderate to high and ethnic groups are geographically concentrated, *increases* the number of parties. At odds with previous results, where ethnopolitical fragmentation is low and ethnic groups are dispersed geographically, district magnitude *reduces* the number of parties. In nondemocratic settings—where, among other things, entry is restricted, violence and intimidation against voters and parties occurs, and dissemination of information is controlled—the model is not applicable. Another finding is that irrespective of regime type or electoral conduct, the effective number of presidential candidates predicts the number of parties.

We organize the article as follows. We first discuss the main findings in the literature and explain the motivation for this article. We then present our argument by defining the proper domain of the analysis of elections and discussing the ways in which different combinations of regime-type settings and electoral conduct affect the functioning of party systems. The operationalization of our main variables and the presentation of the specification used follows. We close with a discussion of our results, conclusions, and policy implications.

The Motivation

A vast literature accounts for the structure of party systems. The most established finding in the field is that electoral institutions and social structure interact to shape the party system in a country (Cox, 1997; Neto & Cox, 1997; Ordeshook & Shvetsova, 1994). Recent applications of Duverger's model have tested its validity outside of established democracies. In sub-Saharan Africa, Mozaffar et al. (2003) examined the effects of institutional and sociological variables on the number of parties. The novelty of their approach rests both on the application of this theory in the African context and on their new measure capturing cleavage structures. Mozaffar et al. create an improved measure that analytically distinguishes between concentration and fragmentation.

Using their new ethnopolitical cleavages measures in the Duverger model, Mozaffar et al. (2003) find that fragmentation independently reduces the number of parties but, when interacted with group concentration, increases it. They also provide support for the importance of cleavages in mediating the effects of electoral institutions on the number of parties (p. 379). The overall implications of their study suggest the importance of accounting for the spatial distribution of ethnic groups when explaining variation in the number of parties.

Their analysis suffers from some problems that have already been identified in the literature (Brambor, Clark, & Golder, 2006a). However, we believe that the most important problem with their analysis is pooling elections regardless of electoral conduct and the regime type in which they took place. Thus, they implicitly assume that elections have the same effects regardless of context. We argue that the systematic effects of elections vary based on regime type and electoral conduct.

Some descriptive statistics from our data set highlight these concerns. There are important differences in party-system variables once we account for regime type and conduct of elections. For example, winning parties in democracies garner fewer votes and seats than those in nondemocracies. Moreover, this difference becomes starker when controlling for the quality of elections. Significantly fewer parties run in not-F&F elections, whereas the effective number of both electoral and legislative parties is much higher in democracies than in nondemocracies. The patterns that emerge from Table 1 can be explained once we properly determine the domain of the analysis. The following two sections explain our argument.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics

	Conduct of Elections			
	Regime Type	Free and Fair	Not Free and Fair	Difference
Mean % of votes of the winning party	Democratic	53.8	46.9	6.9
	Nondemocratic	57.1	63.3	-6.2
Mean % of seats of winning parties	Democratic	60.7	56.3	4.4
	Nondemocratic	68.7	77.4	-8.7
Absolute number of parties running	Democratic	10.3	12.9	-2.6
	Nondemocratic	10.7	6.7	4
Effective number of electoral parties	Democratic	3.3	4.4	-1.1
	Nondemocratic	2.6	2.2	0.4
Effective number of legislative parties	Democratic	2.7	2.8	-0.1
	Nondemocratic	2	1.6	0.4

Note: Boldface entries highlight differences across relevant categories of cases.

The Proper Domain of the Analysis

We argue that the mechanism of strategic coordination should only operate in democratic settings. The mechanisms by which elections structure party systems most likely differ based on regime type and the fairness of elections. A direct implication is that one cannot lump together and analyze elections that lie outside of this domain with ones inside it. To define this domain, we introduce the measures we use to capture regime type and conduct of elections.

Our measure of regime type is based on a minimalist definition of democracy that focuses on ex ante uncertainty, ex post irreversibility, and repeatability of elections (Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub, & Limongi, 2000, p. 16). The variable is dichotomous and takes the value 0 for democracies and 1 for nondemocracies.⁵ Given this conceptualization, dictatorships are a residual category.⁶ Despite the obvious shortcomings of a dichotomous measure, we use it because it captures significant differences between regimes.⁷ However, many scholars have criticized Przeworski et al.'s coding of Botswana as a dictatorship because of the absence of alternation in power, despite the fact that most area specialists consider it a democratic state. We address this concern by using a corrected regime-type variable where Botswana is coded as a democratic state.⁸

A continuous measure of regime type would have been preferable, if an unproblematic one existed. Unfortunately, the two most commonly used

measures, the Freedom House (2004) index and the Polity score (Marshall, Gurr, Davenport, & Jaggers, 2002), suffer from serious problems. The Freedom House index is subjective in nature, without a clear coding scheme for classifying regimes (Munck & Verkuilen, 2002; Vreeland, 2003). With regard to the Polity score, Vreeland (2003) as well as Gleditsch and Ward (1997) point out that it is not really a continuous but a categorical measure. More important, it conflates different dimensions of regime-type attributes, which makes it impossible to interpret the meaning of different values of the variable.⁹

Scholars of elections in Africa have suggested that analyses should also focus on the conduct of the electoral process rather than just on regime type (Bratton, 1998; Lindberg, 2004, 2006). Elklit and Svensson (1997) echo this concern and provide a definition of F&F elections. A free election is one in which voters openly express their preferences and parties run unobstructed, whereas a fair one refers to the impartiality of the rules and the environment in which elections are held. In parallel, observers from various organizations (United Nations, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, EU, African Union) have recently intensified their efforts to evaluate the quality of elections across emerging democracies.

Lindberg (2004, 2006) constructs a measure that captures the quality of elections in Africa, based on judgments by international and domestic election observers. He suggests a 4-point ordinal measure in which values 1 and 2 signify not-F&F elections and 3 and 4 F&F. Lindberg demonstrates that the quality of elections has important implications for a variety of relevant outcomes. He finds that turnover of power, acceptance of electoral defeat, and opposition boycotts are causally linked with electoral conduct.

One could argue that the occurrence of not-F&F elections signifies that a country is not a democracy and that F&F elections only take place in democracies. However, the concepts are analytically distinct. On one hand, Geddes (2006) suggests that authoritarian rulers might hold F&F elections in order to signal their strength to the opposition, whereas a fraudulent election might not signal strength but rather demonstrate weaknesses of the ruling regime. On the other hand, Simpson (2005) argues that forward-looking incumbents rig elections to undermine the future success of the opposition, irrespective of regime type. In sum, free and fair elections do occur in non-democracies, and democracies do hold rigged elections (Donno, 2007).

Given that regime type and electoral conduct are analytically distinct, and our argument that Duverger's model should only work in democratic settings, applying the model outside of the proper domain is problematic. In what follows, we summarize the necessary conditions for strategic

coordination to take place and identify the various ways these can be violated. We present examples from our sample to support our intuitions and present causal mechanisms.

The Duverger Model and Violations of its Assumptions

Strategic coordination is the mechanism by which parties and voters make decisions in elections that structure a country's party system. Two distinct processes take place. Before the elections, potential candidates and parties decide whether to compete (Cox, 1997). Entry decisions factor in the potential opposition, available polling data, chances for success, costs of running, and potential funding. At the same time, voters assess available information about the electoral competition and decide whom to vote for (Downs, 1957). This decision also takes into consideration the probability of success of each party: Voters do not wish to cast a "wasted vote" for a party that has no chance of winning (Cox, 1997; Duverger, 1954).

For strategic coordination to work, a specific set of conditions must be satisfied (Cox, 1997). Voters and parties must be short-term rational and have full information about the chances of success and the positions of each party.¹⁰ However, the theory also rests on an implicit set of assumptions regarding electoral conduct. Voters are free to express their opinion; parties enjoy unrestricted entry and are independent actors rather than satellites. Such requirements echo Dahl's (1971) conceptualization of democracy in which voters formulate preferences freely, signal them, and their votes weigh equally in the election. Crucially, it is also assumed that electoral laws operate properly and election outcomes are respected. The above assumptions are often violated. We argue that when violations occur, strategic coordination does not have its expected effects.

To illustrate the above empirically, we cross-tabulate regime type with violent incidents during the electoral process (Lindberg, 2004; see Table 2). We observe that peaceful elections are more likely to occur in democracies. Moreover, the opposition rarely boycotts elections in democracies, and when it does so, some opposition parties still decide to run. Furthermore, in nondemocracies the opposition is more likely to boycott elections. However, scattered violent incidents are more or less equally likely to occur in all regime types, which is puzzling. This puzzle washes away once we look at F&F elections in democracies.

In what follows, we explore which assumptions are violated under different combinations of regime type and conduct of elections. The most

Table 2
Elections, Violent Incidents, and Opposition Participation

Regime type and violent incidents			
Regime Type	Violent Incidents		
	1 = Peaceful Elections	2 = Isolated Incidents	3 = Not Peaceful
Democratic	21	30	9
Nondemocratic	8	40	7
Total	29	70	16

Regime type and opposition participation			
Regime Type	Opposition Participation		
	0 = Total Boycott	1 = Partial	2 = No Boycott
Democratic	0	6	47
Nondemocratic	4	12	34
Total	4	18	81

Free and fair (F&F) elections and violent incidents			
F&F Elections	Violent Incidents		
	1 = Peaceful Elections	2 = Isolated Incidents	3 = Not Peaceful
F&F	25	43	2
Not F&F	4	27	14
Total	29	70	16

F&F elections and opposition participation			
F&F Elections	Opposition Participation		
	0 = Total Boycott	1 = Partial	2 = No Boycott
F&F	1	3	58
Not F&F	3	15	23
Total	4	18	81

F&F elections in democracies and violent incidents			
F&F in Democracies	Violent Incidents		
	1 = Peaceful Elections	2 = Isolated Incidents	3 = Not Peaceful
Yes	20	26	2
No	9	44	14
Total	29	70	16

F&F elections in democracies and opposition participation			
F&F in Democracies	Opposition Participation		
	0 = Total Boycott	1 = Partial	2 = No Boycott
Yes	0	0	42
No	4	18	39
Total	4	18	81

Note: Boldface entries highlight differences across relevant categories of cases.

common violations involve restrictions to entry in political competition and intimidation tactics. In particular, we focus on three different subsets of elections: (a) those that take place in nondemocracies but were F&F; (b) elections that are not-F&F but take place in democracies; and (c) those that are not-F&F and occur in nondemocracies.

(a) Parties and voters participating in F&F elections in nondemocracies make decisions in an environment that undermines strategic coordination in various ways. Party formation is not free, as not all political forces have equal opportunities of running.¹¹ Potential and existing opposition candidates, as well as voters, are likely to be targets of intimidation and coercion.¹² Dissemination of information in nondemocracies is problematic because media tend to be controlled by the government. Moreover, according to expert accounts on Africa, rulers sometimes allow F&F elections up to the point that their authority is not threatened (May & Massey, 2001; Santiso & Loada, 2003). Control of the judiciary can ensure that in case an unexpected result occurs, courts may intervene and protect the government.¹³ Przeworski and Gandhi (2001) make a similar point: "Legislatures and parties are used by dictators to co-opt the potential opposition and to mobilize support for the dictatorship. . . . [E]lections are . . . an instrument for intimidating the society" (p. 2). Lindberg (2004) also shows that coding an election as F&F does not preclude attempts by the government to manipulate the results.

Typical cases illustrating the above processes include elections in Ethiopia (1995), Chad (1997), and Burkina Faso (2002), which are among the 22 F&F elections in nondemocracies in our sample. Although most international observers deemed these elections F&F, the regime's tolerance for opposition was quite limited.¹⁴ For example, the judiciary in Chad rearranged seat allocations in favor of the incumbent when the opposition did better than expected in the polls. May and Massey (2001) conclude that in the 1997 elections, "*the judiciary has been coerced and intimidated by the political authorities. Press freedom persists, but the law is used to ensure a degree of self-censorship*" (p. 134, italics added). Strategic coordination in such settings is improbable, because voters who have experienced such incidents are likely to be cynical about elections and anticipate similar behavior by incumbents in the future.

(b) Violations of the necessary conditions for strategic coordination are easier to notice in democracies with not-F&F elections. Opposition parties are not always allowed to run, because the government typically uses legal justifications to restrict entry, such as constitutional rules and entry requirements, or persecutes and imprisons leaders.¹⁵ Access to media may be

restricted, thus giving an advantage to governmental candidates. Violence may be used to sway voters' preferences and ballot rigging or irregularities in counting may be used.

Numerous examples of such practices exist. Elections in Comoros (1992) took place after a period of postponements, attempted military coups, and intimidation of the opposition, as well as violent incidents and widespread electoral fraud (U.S. Library of Congress, 2006). Comoros is not an outlier in this subset of cases—Kenya under Moi (Orvis, 2001) and Zambia under Chiluba (van Donge, 1998) are other examples among the 13 not-F&F elections in democracies. Glancing at Table 2, one notices that the measure of F&F elections captures some of these important dynamics. Violent incidents are rare when the conduct of elections is F&F, and the opposition usually participates. However, when elections are not-F&F, violent incidents are widespread and the opposition chooses to partially or fully boycott them in almost half of the cases.

(c) Finally, not-F&F elections in nondemocracies suffer from all of the above practices. Thus, we do not expect strategic coordination to be relevant under such conditions. Voters are unlikely to engage in strategic voting, or even turn out to vote, when they expect elections not to matter. Lindberg (2004) puts it well: "*Voters in Africa seem to know a fake election when it is coming*" (p. 74, italics added). As we see in Table 2, both violent incidents and boycotts by the opposition are overrepresented in not-F&F elections taking place in nondemocracies.

Fraudulent elections are not always the case. Clean elections occur quite frequently, despite some irregularities.¹⁶ Elections where votes count and strategic coordination operates are not absent in sub-Saharan Africa but are restricted to democracies that hold F&F elections. Typical examples of such elections are clustered in the 1990s and can be found in countries like Benin, Botswana, Ghana (Bratton, 1998; Nugent, 2001), Madagascar, Mauritius, Sao Tome, South Africa (Ferree, 2002), and Zambia (Posner, 2005).

Data, Operationalization, and Model Specification

We have compiled a data set of parliamentary elections in sub-Saharan Africa between 1979 and 2004, based on availability of data (Mozaffar et al., 2003; Nohlen, Krennerich, & Thibaut, 1999; various official Internet sources). Our data set consists of 116 elections, 61 of which took place in democracies and 55 in nondemocracies. This represents a significant increase compared to the existing data sets on elections in Africa (Mozaffar et al., 2003),

as it nearly doubles the number of observations. As mentioned above, we code regime type based on a minimalist definition of democracy (Przeworski et al., 2000) and conduct of elections based on Lindberg's (2004) operationalization. From Lindberg's data, we created a dummy variable where 1 stands for not-F&F (values 1 and 2) and 0 for F&F (values 3 and 4). The distribution of Lindberg's variable for the elections in our sample is bimodal, thus supporting our decision to dichotomize it.

To capture the notion that the logic of strategic coordination should function only in F&F elections taking place in democracies, we interact F&F elections with regime type, which separates our data set into four subsets:¹⁷ 49 F&F elections in democracies, 22 F&F elections in nondemocracies, 12 not-F&F elections in democracies, and 33 not-F&F in nondemocracies. In our analysis, countries that are coded as democracies and have F&F elections are referred to as democratic settings (49), whereas the other three subsets are referred to as nondemocratic settings (67). Given the violation of assumptions in the latter, we analyze elections in the two settings separately.

Our dependent variables are two standard indices that capture the nature of the party system: the effective number of electoral and legislative parties (ENEP and ENLP, respectively). They measure the level of fragmentation in the party system—the former accounts for all parties that receive votes in an election, whereas the latter measures all parties that obtain seats in the legislature. The formula used to calculate the two variables is $N = 1/\sum s_i^2$, where s_i is the vote or seat share of the i th party (Laakso & Taagepera, 1979).

Although the use of these indicators is widespread, several criticisms relevant to the African politics context have been raised. An often cited objection refers to the mapping of multiple party systems on a single "effective number." Bogaards (2004) emphasizes this problem with respect to African elections, which often involve dominant parties, and favors Sartori's (1976) classification of party systems based on the number of relevant parties. However, this point is not applicable to our article because we do not engage in classifying party systems.

The specification we use is a modified version of the standard one used in the literature (Mozaffar et al., 2003; Neto & Cox, 1997; Ordeshook & Shvetsova, 1994). In our specification, we suggest the substitution of proximity with the effective number of presidential candidates; as suggested by Brambor, Clark, and Golder (2006b), we include constitutive variables of the interactive terms in our model; we also account for spatial correlation in elections held in the same country. In what follows, we discuss these modifications and introduce our independent variables, except for district magnitude (natural log), which is unambiguous.

Fragmentation and Concentration

We use Mozaffar and Scarritt's (2002) measures in order to capture ethnopolitical cleavages. Recent work has shown that common proxies for cleavages suffer from serious problems (Posner, 2004). Unlike these indices, their measures capture both geographic concentration and fragmentation of ethnopolitical groups within a country. The index of fragmentation weighs all politically relevant groups by their size at three levels of aggregation, whereas concentration refers to the geographic dispersion of groups. This measure captures an important element of Duverger's model, namely, that strategic coordination operates at the district level.

Proximity and Effective Number of Presidential Candidates

Existing data sets code the effective number of presidential candidates (ENPRES) using the presidential election that is temporally closer to each legislative election, regardless of whether the presidential election followed the legislative election.¹⁸ Such an approach implies that scholars predict the number of parties at time t , using an event that occurs at $t + 1$. However, in emerging democracies the highly volatile pool of candidates makes strategic calculations about future outcomes highly unlikely. Unless an upcoming presidential election is very proximate to a legislative one, the coattails of the presidential elections will have an indeterminate effect.

To account for this, we code ENPRES from presidential elections that are temporally prior to each legislative election. As a consequence, we construct our own measure of proximity that is directly comparable to Cox's measure.¹⁹ The most distant presidential elections are the ones that took place at the earliest point in the legislative term. Our operationalization results in different values for 60 instances of the proximity variable, with a mean difference of 0.058.²⁰ With respect to ENPRES, we obtain 20 different values, with a mean difference of 0.8 effective candidates.

Finally, proximity per se should have an effect on the number of legislative parties only through its interaction with ENPRES, although the latter directly affects the legislative competition. Proximity should matter only as a variable conditioning the effects of ENPRES; coefficient b_8 in the model below should be 0. The most important determinant of legislative elections is the number of candidates in presidential ones and not the closeness of the two per se. Thus, contrary to standard practices (Brambor et al., 2006a; Cox, 1997), we exclude it from the analysis.²¹

Below we present the fully specified regression model:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Effective Number of Parties} = & b_0 + b_1\text{Fragmentation} + b_2\text{Concentration} + \\ & b_3\ln(\text{District Magnitude}) + b_4\text{Fragmentation} \times \text{Concentration} + b_5\text{Fragmentation} \\ & \times \ln(\text{District Magnitude}) + b_6\text{Concentration} \times \ln(\text{District Magnitude}) + \\ & b_7\text{Fragmentation} \times \text{Concentration} \times \ln(\text{District Magnitude}) + b_8\text{Proximity} + \\ & b_9\text{Effective Number of Presidential Candidates} + b_{10}\text{Proximity} \times \text{Effective} \\ & \text{Number of Presidential Candidates} + \epsilon. \end{aligned}$$

In all regressions, we report standard errors clustered by country to account for spatial correlation, correcting for potential dependence among elections within a country. Ideally, we would use fixed effects as the remedy for spatial correlation and endogeneity, but doing so is not possible due to the time-invariant independent variables (fragmentation and concentration) that would have to be excluded.

Results

The empirical analysis supports our theoretical expectations.²² The Duverger model works as expected in democratic settings and fails to produce substantive effects in nondemocratic ones in all specifications.²³ The empirical analysis demonstrates that the logic of strategic coordination predicts the number of parties only in democratic settings (see Table 3). In these settings, district magnitude *increases* the number of parties when many ethnopolitical groups exist and are geographically concentrated, a finding consistent with the party-systems literature (Cox, 1997; Neto & Cox, 1997; Ordeshook & Shvetsova, 1994). In contrast, strategic coordination does not account for the number of parties in nondemocratic settings.

Juxtaposing our results with those by Mozaffar et al. (2003) and Brambor et al. (2006a) shows that pooling elections across different settings leads to different results.²⁴ Mozaffar et al. get substantially different results from the ones we get by correctly specifying the domain of analysis. Brambor et al., although improving on the methodological front, do not capture the negative effect of district magnitude on the number of legislative parties.²⁵ More important, both analyses are unable to capture the dynamics of electoral politics in nondemocratic settings. Table 3 demonstrates that the Duverger model is either inapplicable or functions differently in those settings. Thus, previous findings misrepresent the effects of electoral institutions and cleavages for half of their sample.

Table 3
Summary of Our Results and Comparison With Results From
Previous Analyses

	Our Results				Mozaffar et al.		Brambor et al. ^a	
	Democratic Settings		Non-Democratic Settings		Pooled Sample		Pooled Sample	
Fragmentation ^b	Concentration ^c							
	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
The effect of District Magnitude on the Effective Number of Electoral Parties								
Low	–							
Medium			+					+
High		+	+		–	+		+
The effect of District Magnitude on the Effective Number of Electoral Parties								
Low	–							
Medium	–	+						
High					–	+		

Note: Signs indicate the direction of the causal effect and are statistically significant at 95%. Empty cells indicate nonstatistically significant effects.

a. Brambor et al. do not run their analysis on the effective number of electoral parties.

b. Fragmentation labels: Low (1-3.9), medium (4-6.9), high (7-10).

c. Concentration labels: Low (0-1), high (2-3).

Following the suggestion of a reviewer, we reran our analysis on a pooled data set including a dummy for democratic settings while interacting it with all our independent variables. This way, we allowed the coefficients to vary across the two settings. We used *Clarify* (Tomz, Wittenberg, & King, 2003) to test whether the marginal effects of relevant variables are significantly different between the two subsamples. For all variables, the differences between the two settings are significant, consistent with our separate analysis. For brevity, we do not report these results.

A more detailed analysis of the effects of the variables follows. The discussion relies on graphs because we cannot interpret effects of interacted variables simply by looking at significance levels and their coefficients from the regression table (Brambor et al., 2006b; Kam & Franzese, 2007).²⁶

Variable Effects

District magnitude. In democratic settings, district magnitude increases the number of both electoral and legislative parties when many relatively concentrated ethnopolitical groups exist. In countries with concentrated ethnopolitical groups and moderate levels of fragmentation, the marginal effect of district magnitude on the effective number of electoral parties is positive (see Figure 1).²⁷ In elections where fragmentation is not extreme and groups are dispersed geographically, district magnitude *reduces* the number of parties. This counterintuitive result appears in recent analyses and has not been interpreted properly (Mozaffar et al., 2003). This negative effect could be attributed to coalition dynamics. For example, given a plurality system and a fairly dominant group, smaller groups stand no chance of winning seats (because they are dispersed). If the electoral system becomes more permissive, parties representing small groups face incentives to form coalitions in order to win seats. Thus, an increase in district magnitude shrinks the number of parties.

Looking at the marginal effect of district magnitude on the number of legislative parties, one realizes that this coalitional dynamic does not get translated into seats. Relatively dispersed groups appear to lose seats in the parliament when district magnitude increases, given a low level of fragmentation (see Figure 2). As expected, legislative parties increase with district magnitude in countries where many geographically concentrated groups exist.

The above results stand in stark contrast to the ones in nondemocratic settings. Supporting our argument, district magnitude has no effect on the number of electoral parties regardless of ethnopolitical fragmentation and concentration (see Figure 3). Turning to the legislative parties, district magnitude increases their number given many dispersed groups (see Figure 4). This effect is opposite from the one we observe in democratic settings, indicating that elections function in fundamentally different ways in the two settings (see Table 3). This result, however, is driven by only two elections: Mali, 1997, and Namibia, 1989. The former was an election that was initially annulled and marred by heavy violence and the boycott of the main opposition parties (Election Watch, 1997); the latter was a constitutional election.

Effective number of presidential candidates. For all values of proximity, the number of presidential candidates increases the number of electoral

Figure 1
Marginal Effect of District Magnitude as Fragmentation and Concentration Vary
Dependent Variable: ENEP in Democratic Settings

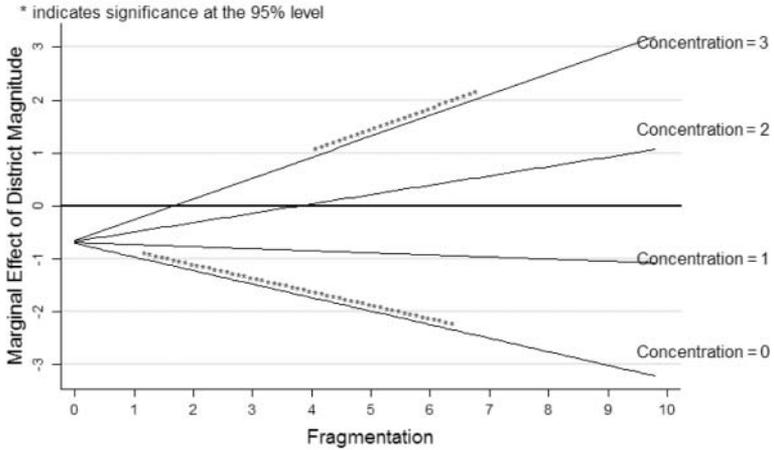


Figure 2
Marginal Effect of District Magnitude as Fragmentation and Concentration Vary
Dependent Variable: ENLP in Democratic Settings

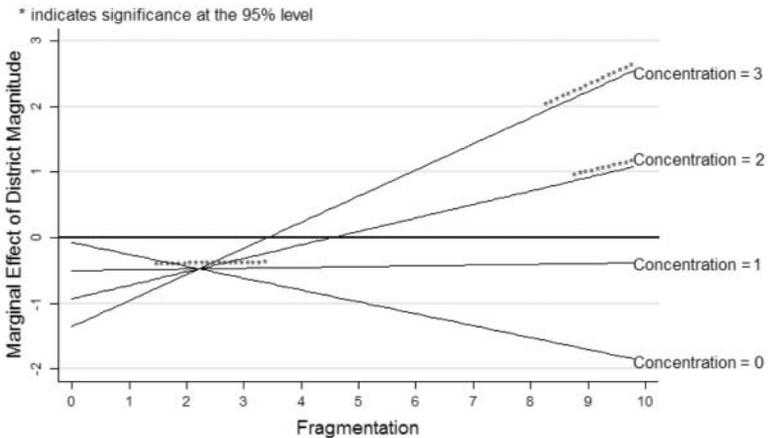
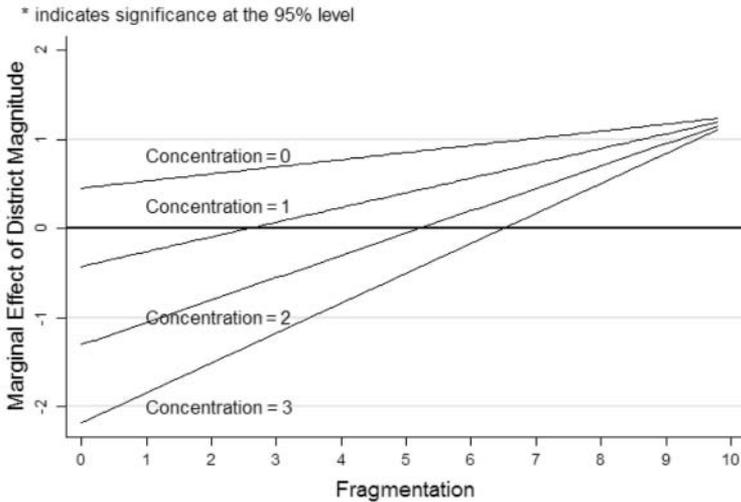


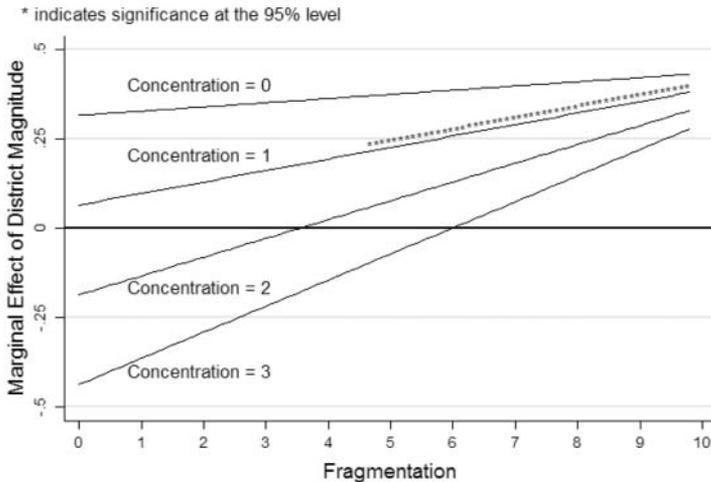
Figure 3
Marginal Effect of District Magnitude as Fragmentation
and Concentration Vary
Dependent Variable: ENEP in Nondemocratic Settings



parties (see Figure 5).²⁸ However, when legislative and presidential elections are closer in time, the effect decreases. The more distant presidential elections are, the more parties run in the following legislative elections. This result goes against the conventional wisdom that the closer the two elections are, the higher the effects of presidential competition on the legislative one. Our findings are consistent with the following interpretation: Concurrent elections lead to the creation of almost as many electoral parties as presidential candidates, whereas presidential elections preceding legislative ones generate multiple parties. This interpretation is plausible given that one should not expect concurrent elections to spawn more parties in the legislative competition given time constraints. The same relationship exists for the number of legislative parties (see Figure 6).

In nondemocratic settings the marginal effect of the number of presidential candidates is robust. There exists a positive relationship between the number of presidential candidates and parties running only when the two elections are temporally close (see Figure 7). This effect persists with

Figure 4
Marginal Effect of District Magnitude as Fragmentation
and Concentration Vary
Dependent Variable: ENLP in Nondemocratic Settings



respect to legislative parties but is significantly reduced (see Figure 8). This is not surprising, given the importance of presidential elections in the African continent (van de Walle, 2003).

Fragmentation. In democratic settings, fragmentation has a positive marginal effect on the number of electoral parties when relatively permissive electoral rules coincide with geographically concentrated groups.²⁹ However, turning to legislative parties, fragmentation has a positive marginal effect only when the electoral system is very permissive (see Figure 9). Although more ethnic groups lead to more parties, these parties enter parliament only where the electoral system is permissive. In nondemocratic settings, fragmentation has no effect on ENEP. It appears to have a positive significant effect on ENLP, but this effect is substantively very small.

Concentration. Consistent with the patterns above, concentration has a positive marginal effect on both legislative and electoral parties when the electoral rules are more permissive and many ethnopolitical groups exist

Figure 5
Marginal Effect of ENPRES2 Without Proximity
Dependent Variable: ENEP in Democratic Settings

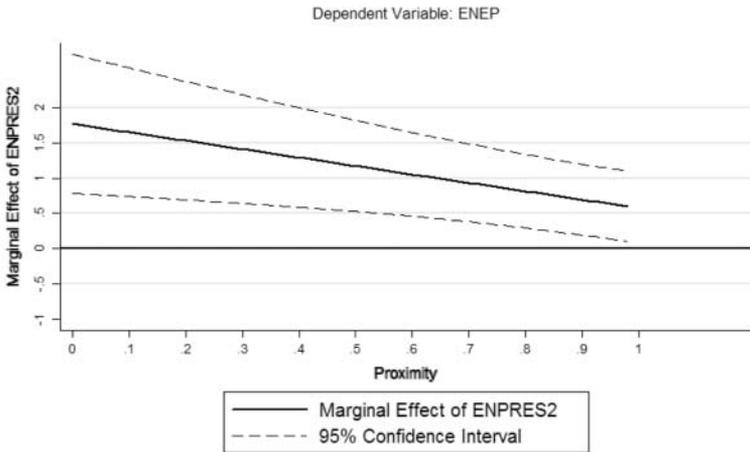


Figure 6
Marginal Effect of ENPRES2 Without Proximity
Dependent Variable: ENLP in Democratic Settings

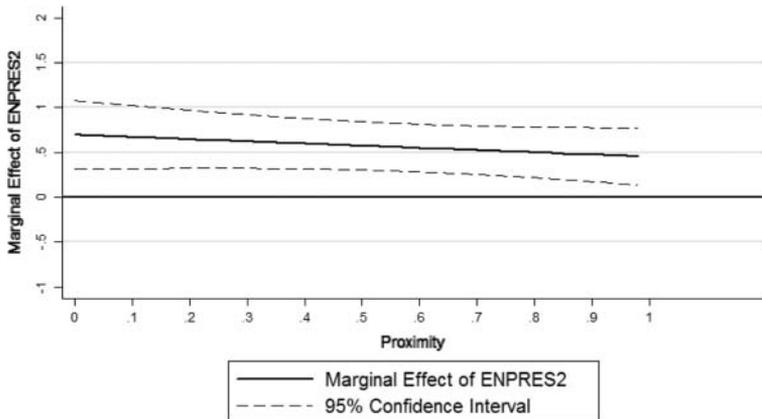


Figure 7
Marginal Effect of ENPRES2 Without Proximity
Dependent Variable: ENEP in Nondemocratic Settings

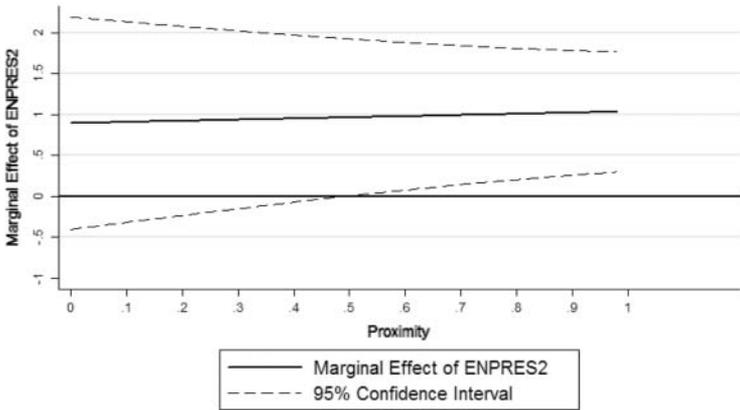


Figure 8
Marginal Effect of ENPRES2 Without Proximity
Dependent Variable: ENLP in Nondemocratic Settings

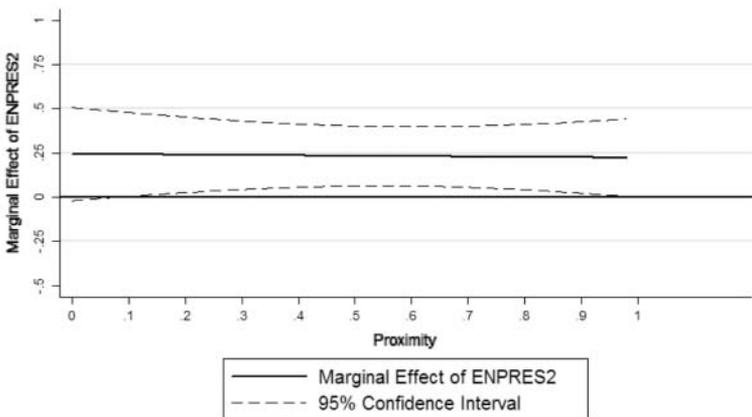


Figure 9
Marginal Effect of Fragmentation as District Magnitude and Concentration Vary
Dependent Variable: ENLP in Democratic Settings

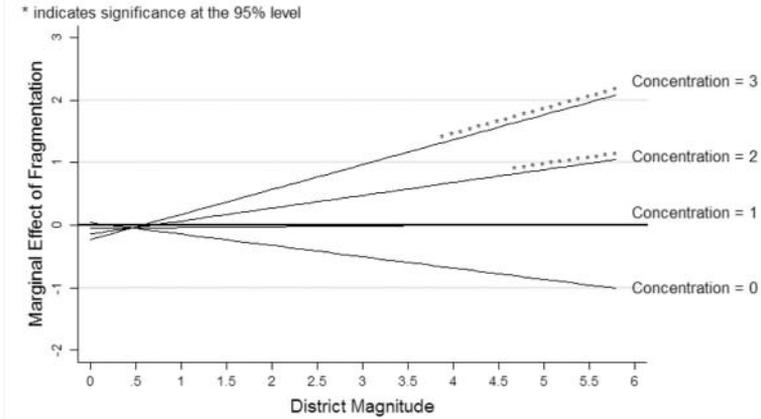
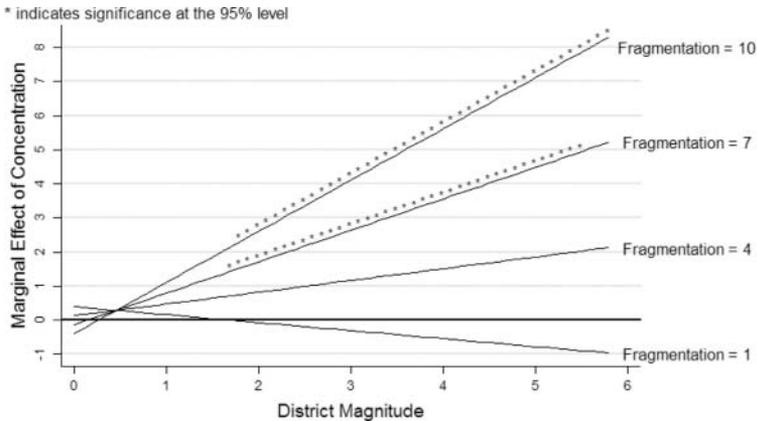


Figure 10
Marginal Effect of Concentration as District Magnitude and Fragmentation Vary
Dependent Variable: ENLP in Democratic Settings



(see Figure 10). This holds only for democratic settings, because in nondemocratic settings we find no effect on the number of electoral parties. There appears to be, however, a small positive marginal effect of concentration on the number of legislative parties, at least for high values of fragmentation.

Conclusions

In this article, we argued that electoral rules interacted with ethnopolitical cleavages can shape party systems through unhindered strategic coordination only in democracies that hold free and fair elections. Elections in nondemocratic settings violate the assumptions under which electoral rules account for party-system structure. Although elections structure party systems irrespective of regime type, strategic coordination is not the only mechanism at work in nondemocratic settings. This is not to claim that coordination does not take place at all, or that elections in such settings are meaningless. However, the series of violations of the relevant assumptions we observe in nondemocratic settings renders coordination a secondary process.

Such reasoning might appear straightforward but it has not been identified in recent work on African party systems. Mozaffar et al. (2003) argued that African systems are not quite the same as the ones in established democracies. Brambor et al. (2006a) questioned African exceptionalism and empirically demonstrated that they are not different. However, these analyses are inattentive to the impact of regime type and electoral conduct on strategic coordination.

Our analysis shows that in the presence of many concentrated ethnopolitical groups, district magnitude increases the number of parties in democratic settings. Nonetheless, when groups are dispersed and fragmentation is not extreme, district magnitude *reduces* the number of parties, a result that can be attributed to coalition dynamics. The effective number of presidential candidates increases both electoral and legislative parties irrespective of the timing of presidential elections. Moreover, this last effect is also present in nondemocratic settings, pointing to the importance of presidentialism in Africa (van de Walle, 2003).

Overall, the analysis indicates that political competition in Africa is not different from that in other regions of the world. This is a finding that is echoed in the results of many African scholars; Lindberg (2005) concludes that electoral institutions in Africa have similar effects to established democracies. A way forward is the combination of district-level data and in-depth knowledge of cases (Levitsky & Way, 2006; Lust-Okar, 2006)

rather than through cross-national analyses. Our argument should be tested in other regions of the world. The comparative enterprise of collecting data on the conduct of elections, ethnopolitical group concentration, electoral institutions, and electoral results in emerging democracies will broaden and deepen our understanding of how strategic coordination works in various electoral settings.

To conclude, for elections to really matter they have to be accompanied by guarantees of unrestricted entry, rule of law, and an independent judiciary. A *sine qua non* condition is that voters' preferences are reflected in the results of elections. Despite its value, the recent intensified efforts of electoral monitoring cannot counterbalance the effects of savvy authoritarian rulers. To be sure, elections do matter even when flawed, as the electoral history of Western Europe and the United States has illustrated. Elections taking place repeatedly over time can lead to a successful transition to democracy; however, this might not be as replicable as many policy makers believe. To take root, democracy must be planted firmly.

Notes

1. Even though Duverger never tested empirically the effect of cleavages and electoral institutions on the number of parties, he was the first to theorize about it (Clark & Golder, 2006).

2. Mozaffar, Scarritt, and Galaich (2003) omit several cases that underwent democratic transitions in the context of the third wave of democratization, which forms their case selection criterion, without justification. A breakdown of their cases shows that out of their original 62 elections, only 32 were democratic (Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub, & Limongi, 2000). Despite this variation in regime type, they lump these elections together under the category of "emerging democracies."

3. Throughout the text, we refer to free and fair elections as F&F and not free and fair ones as not-F&F, based on Lindberg (2004).

4. We refer to countries that are coded as democracies (Przeworski et al., 2000) and have F&F elections (Lindberg, 2004) as democratic settings. All other cases are referred to as non-democratic settings.

5. For a detailed list of the criteria, see Przeworski et al. (2000, pp. 18-29).

6. There is significant variation within this residual category that deserves future research (Gandhi, 2004; Geddes, 2003, 2006).

7. Munck & Verkuilen (2002), after a thorough comparison, side with Przeworski et al.'s (2000) operationalization over the Polity score and the Freedom House index.

8. Coding Botswana as a dictatorship does not change the results of the analysis.

9. Zinn (2004) demonstrates that "anocracies" (countries with Polity scores between -5 and 5) are widely different among them, even when they have the same Polity score.

10. Cox's (1997) theory depends on several other assumptions; see chapter 4 of his book.

11. Ethiopia in 1995 is such a case. Lyons (1996) states, "It is inherently difficult to assess elections in which the major opposition parties do not participate" (p. 138).

12. "Opposition leaders are regularly arrested and embarrassing witnesses often conveniently disappear or mysteriously die in police custody" (Santiso & Loada, 2003, p. 400).

13. Santiso and Loada (2003) write about Burkina Faso, "Impunity and the weakness of the rule of law have been constant features in the last decade of formally democratic rule" (pp. 399-400).

14. "Deby . . . allowed free and fair elections up to the point when he looked like losing control of parliament. He did not seek a landslide victory, but defeat was not an option" (May & Massey, 2001, p. 134).

15. A blunt example is the behavior of President Djohar before the 1992 Comoros elections, when he threatened his main opponents that they might not be around for the upcoming elections (U.S. Library of Congress, 2006).

16. More than half of the elections in our data set were F&F according to Lindberg, but only 10% of them were unambiguously F&F.

17. For a list of the cases in each subset, see appendix online at www.harris-mylonas.gr

18. Cox's operationalization of proximity is: $2 \times I$ (Legislative elections_t - Presidential elections_{t-1}) / $(P_{t+1} - P_{t-1}) - 1/2$. The most distant elections are those that took place in the midterm of the legislative cycle (Cox, 1997, p. 210).

19. Our operationalization of proximity is $1 - [(Legislative\ elections_t - Presidential\ elections_{t-1}) / (P_{t+1} - P_{t-1})]$. Zero stands for the most distant elections and 1 for concurrent ones.

20. For robustness, we also run all analysis using Cox's measure of proximity and effective number of presidential candidates (ENPRES), and all results remain substantively the same.

21. To test whether the effect of proximity is indistinguishable from 0, we ran a set of regressions with proximity. The coefficients for proximity are indistinguishable from 0 for all models except for effective number of electoral parties (ENEP) in nondemocratic settings. We thank a reviewer for this suggestion.

22. We also run all models including a transitional election dummy; results remain the same.

23. We have tried several operationalizations of the concept of democratic settings: F&F elections (Lindberg, 2005) and two regime type measures (Freedom House, 2004; Przeworski et al., 2000) for robustness. The results remain the same regardless.

24. The difference in the findings is not due to increasing the sample size of the Mozaffar et al. (2003) data set. In a companion paper, we have found similar substantive results using their original data set.

25. Brambor, Clark, and Golder (2006a, p. 321) find a negative effect that they attribute to coding problems, which they "correct"; once they do that, the effect vanishes.

26. For the regression results, see table online at www.harris-mylonas.gr

27. To interpret the marginal effect of district magnitude, one cannot simply look at the coefficients of the regression tables. The effect of X in a model of the form $Y = a + bX + cZ + dW + eXZ + fXW + gZW + hXZW + \epsilon$ is the derivative of Y in respect to X; thus, the correct effect of X on Y is equal to $b + eZ + fW + hZW$. We graphically present these interaction effects. We indicate significance at the 95% level with asterisks (Brambor et al., 2006a).

28. The marginal effect of ENPRES comes from the model: $Y = a + bX + cZ + d(X \times Z) + \epsilon$. The effect of X on Y is equal to $b + dZ$. Effects are shown in graphs: upper and lower dotted lines depict the boundaries indicating the 95% intervals, whereas the middle line represents the predicted effect of a one-unit change of X on Y, given the specific value of Z. When both upper and lower bounds are above (or below) 0, the effect is statistically significant and positive (or negative).

29. Graphs for the effects of fragmentation and concentration on ENEP are available online at www.harris-mylonas.gr

References

- Bogaards, M. (2004). Counting parties and identifying dominant party systems in Africa. *European Journal of Political Research, 43*, 173-197.
- Brambor, T., Clark, W. R., & Golder, M. (2006a). Are African party systems different? *Electoral Studies, 26*, 315-323.
- Brambor, T., Clark, W. R., & Golder, M. (2006b). Understanding interaction models: Improving empirical analyses. *Political Analysis, 14*(1), 63-82.
- Bratton, M. (1998). Second elections in Africa. *Journal of Democracy, 9*(3), 51-66.
- Clark, W. R., & Golder, M. (2006). Rehabilitating Duverger's theory: Testing the mechanical and strategic modifying effects of electoral laws. *Comparative Political Studies, 39*(6), 679-708.
- Cox, G. W. (1997). *Making votes count: Strategic coordination in the world's electoral systems*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Cox, G. W. (1999). Electoral rules and electoral coordination. *Annual Review of Political Science, 2*, 145-161.
- Dahl, R. A. (1971). *Polyarchy: Participation and opposition*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Donno, D. (2007). *Defending democratic norms: Regional intergovernmental organizations, domestic opposition and the consolidation of democracy*. Unpublished manuscript, Yale University, New Haven, CT.
- Downs, A. (1957). *An economic theory of democracy*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Duverger, M. (1954). *Political parties: Their organization and activity in the modern state* (B. North & R. North, Trans.). London: Methuen.
- Election Watch. (1997, January). *Journal of Democracy, 8*(1).
- Elklit, J., & Svensson, P. (1997). What makes elections free and fair? *Journal of Democracy, 8*(3), 32-46.
- Ferree, K. (2002). *Voters and parties in the rainbow nation: Race and elections in the new South Africa*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
- Freedom House. (2004). *Freedom in the world*. Available from www.freedomhouse.org
- Gandhi, J. (2004). *Political institutions under dictatorship*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, New York University, New York.
- Geddes, B. (2003). *Paradigms and sand castles: Theory building and research design in comparative politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Geddes, B. (2006). *Why parties and elections in authoritarian regimes?* Unpublished manuscript.
- Gleditsch, K., & Ward, M. (1997). Double take: A reexamination of democracy and autocracy in modern polities. *Journal of Conflict Resolution, 41*, 361-383.
- Kam, C. D., & Franzese, R. (2007). *Modeling and interpreting interactive hypotheses in regression analysis*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Laakso, M., & Taagepera, R. (1979). Effective number of parties: A measure with application to West Europe. *Comparative Political Studies, 12*(1), 3-27.
- Levitsky, S., & Way, L. (2006). *Competitive authoritarianism: The origins and evolution of hybrid regimes in the post-cold war era*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Lindberg, S. (2004). The democratic qualities of competitive elections: Participation, competition and legitimacy in Africa. *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics, 42*(1), 61-105.
- Lindberg, S. (2005). Consequences of electoral systems in Africa: A preliminary inquiry. *Electoral Studies, 24*, 41-64.

- Lindberg, S. (2006). *Democracy and elections in Africa*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Lust-Okar, E. (2006). *Elections under authoritarianism: Preliminary lessons from Jordan*. Unpublished manuscript, Yale University, New Haven, CT.
- Lyons, T. (1996). Closing the transition: The May 1995 election in Ethiopia. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 34(1), 121-142.
- Marshall, M. G., Gurr, T. R., Davenport, C., & Jaggers, K. (2002). Polity IV: 1800-1999: Comments on Munck and Verkuilen. *Comparative Political Studies*, 35, 40-45.
- May, R., & Massey, S. (2001). The 1996 and 1997 elections in Chad. *Electoral Studies*, 20, 127-135.
- Mozaffar, S., & Scarritt, J. (2002, August). *Constructivism and the construction of a dataset on ethnopolitical groups and cleavage patterns in Africa*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston.
- Mozaffar, S., Scarritt, J., & Galaich, G. (2003). Electoral institutions, ethnopolitical cleavages, and party systems in Africa's emerging democracies. *American Political Science Review*, 97(3), 379-390.
- Munck, G. L., & Verkuilen, J. (2002). Conceptualizing and measuring democracy: Evaluating alternative indices. *Comparative Political Studies*, 35, 5-34.
- Neto, A., & Cox, G. (1997). Electoral institutions, cleavage structures, and the number of parties. *American Journal of Political Science*, 41, 149-174.
- Nohlen, D., Krennerich, M., & Thibaut, T. (Eds.). (1999). *Elections in Africa: A data handbook*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Nugent, P. (2001). Ethnicity as an explanatory factor in the Ghana 2000 elections. *African Issues*, 29(1/2), 2-7.
- Ordeshook, P., & Shvetsova, O. (1994). Ethnic heterogeneity, district magnitude, and the effective number of parties. *American Journal of Political Science*, 38(1), 100-123.
- Orvis, S. (2001). Moral ethnicity and political tribalism in Kenya's "virtual democracy." *African Issues*, 29(1/2), 8-13.
- Posner, D. N. (2004). Measuring ethnic fractionalization in Africa. *American Journal of Political Science*, 48(4), 849-863.
- Posner, D. N. (2005). *Institutions and ethnic politics in Africa*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Przeworski, A., Alvarez, M., Cheibub, J. A., & Limongi, F. (2000). *Democracy and development: Political institutions and well-being in the world, 1950-1990*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Przeworski, A., & Gandhi, J. (2001, August-September). *Dictatorial institutions and the survival of dictators*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco.
- Santiso, C., & Loada, A. (2003). Explaining the unexpected: Electoral reform and democratic governance in Burkina Faso. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 41(3), 395-419.
- Sartori, G. (1976). *Parties and party systems*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Schumpeter, J. (1942). *Capitalism, socialism, and democracy*. New York: Harper & Brothers.
- Simpser, A. (2005). *Strategic incentives for electoral corruption*. Unpublished manuscript, University of Chicago.
- Tomz, M., Wittenberg, J., & King, G. (2003). *CLARIFY: Software for interpreting and presenting statistical results*. Version 2.1. Stanford University, University of Wisconsin, and Harvard University. Available from <http://gking.harvard.edu/>
- U.S. Library of Congress. (2006). Country studies. Available from <http://countrystudies.us>

- van de Walle, N. (2003). Presidentialism and clientelism in Africa's emerging party systems. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 41(2), 297-321.
- van Donge, J. K. (1998). Reflections on donors, opposition and popular will in the 1996 Zambian general elections. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 36(1), 71-99.
- Vreeland, J. (2003). *A Continuous Schumpeterian conception of democracy*. Unpublished manuscript, Yale University, New Haven, CT.
- Zinn, A. (2004). *Anocracy and the onset of civil war: A reconsideration*. Unpublished manuscript, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

Harris Mylonas is a PhD candidate at Yale University. His research interests involve state and nation building, identity formation, and political development. His dissertation, *Assimilation and Its Alternatives: A Theory of Nation Building*, identifies the conditions in which ruling political elites target members of ethnic minority groups with assimilationist policies instead of granting them minority rights or excluding them from the state.

Nasos Roussias is a PhD candidate at Yale University. His research interests involve voting behavior, electoral systems, political institutions, and voter learning. His dissertation, *Party System Evolution in Transitional Democracies: How Do Parties and Voters Learn to Make Their Votes Count?*, explains variation in the rate of party system consolidation in new democracies.