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*Coursework*

**“**Democracy and dominant party regimes in Africa: a comparative analysis**”**

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# Introduction

Since the start of the third wave of democratization Sub-Saharan Africa has become a goldmine for democratization and modernization research due to a vast variety of regimes and conditions surrounding them. However, much of this diversity has not yet been explained from the perspective of party systems and elections. Understanding patterns and mechanisms of the select few democracies in the region can prove crucial in expanding on democratic achievements throughout the continent of Africa and beyond.

Competitive elections are at the core of the democratization process. From premodern times, they were thought of as protection against tyranny and misgovernance, and ultimately, as means to the effective and legitimate government, accountable to its citizens (Bovens et al. 2014; Eulau, Webb, and Gibbins 2020; Przeworski 2018). Political parties, on the other hand, are commonly used as the simplest measurement of a country’s regime, as it ultimately brings a political system to an equilibrium (Aldrich and Griffin 2010). We must also acknowledge that competitiveness in party systems[[1]](#footnote-1) is closely linked to electoral competitiveness as they both appeal to voters and their ideological and policy preferences (Klüver and Spoon 2016; Przeworski 2018). This points to the interconnection between electoral and parliamentary politics and establishes a relationship to regime outcomes. It is especially important to understand why some countries managed to become modern-world democracies, while some descended into autocracies from the perspective of party politics, as this approach connects voters with institutions (parties themselves, voting rules, etc), and with specific contexts within a political system, like ethnic fragmentation, colonial past and other features.

The dream of “democratization by elections”, which was largely popular at the beginning of Huntington’s third way of democratization, haven’t paid off due not only to the initial rise of competitive authoritarianism and hybrid regimes (Diamond 2002; Levitsky and Way 2002) but because of the lack of substantive progress and overall continuity tendencies in autocracies as well as democracies (Bleck and van de Walle 2018; Bogaards 2013; Rakner and van der Walle 2009). African context is unique from a theoretical standpoint because over the years multiple researchers found a strong positive association between introduced competitive elections and democratization, from the classic work of Staffan Lindberg to the recent Edgell et all empirical tests (Edgell et al. 2018; Ham and Lindberg 2019; Howard and Roessler 2006; Lindberg 2006). But as the overall quality of elections and stabilization of regimes[[2]](#footnote-3) has been increasing since the end of the Cold War and is still increasing in Africa (Ham and Lindberg 2019), democratization is rarely the result of these processes. It is a puzzle in a sense that not much has changed since the late 1990s, due to presidentialism and what Van der Walle and Bleck call ‘liability of newness’*.* These, in turn, correspond with the rise of dominant-party and single-party regimes (Bleck and van de Walle 2018). Prominent works also point to the much-needed differentiation between dominant, single-party, and multiparty systems in researching the effects of elections on democratization (Bogaards 2013). But as far as these distinctions go, the line between democratic and autocratic countries blur.

With most of the Sub-Saharan African countries hosting regular elections, dominant party regimes are as potent as ever, with approximately half of the region’s countries being dominant-party regimes (LeBas 2019). Party dominance can exist in both autocratic and democratic regime settings, differing in the openness of contestation and methods deployed to maintain electoral dominance (du Toit and de Jagger 2012). For countries with dominant party democratic regimes, or leaning towards liberal democracies, these instruments lie within the reach of the law, and electoral success is achieved through popular support and strong organizational structures. On the other side of the spectrum, coercion, electoral fraud, and barriers to competitors are tools for dominant party authoritarian regimes, or illiberal ones (Boone and Wahman 2015; Green 2012; Schedler 2002; du Toit and de Jagger 2012). We argue that democratic dominant party regimes present a serious challenge to our understanding of the relationship between regimes and party systems, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, as they combine qualities of autocracies, mainly, aspects of neopatrimonialism and control over elections, with democratic ones, such as freedom of speech, government accountability, and others.

Furthermore, a cluster of three countries stands out: Botswana, South Africa and Namibia (LeBas 2019). Although they have historical, institutional and political differences, these countries all have something in common: despite satisfying all other criteria for being democratic, they are yet to pass Huntington’s two-turnover test or have any turnovers for that matter (Huntington 1993; Mukhara 2004). This is *problematic* because as this position has been described as a sort of in-between democracy and authoritarianism, it is not clear what factors may affect either these regimes descending into authoritarianism (like Zimbabwe) or becoming full democracies (du Toit and de Jagger 2012). *The research question* we are going to answer therefore is “What are some of the factors that allow a regime to stay democratic, yet dominated by a single political party?”. Our *goal* is to identify the relationship between political regimes and single-party dominance in sub-Saharan Africa.

*The subject of research* is party dominance in Sub-Saharan Africa. We will perform these *tasks* to answer the research question:

* Delimit factors, influencing single-party dominance;
* Determine, which of these factors matter for party dominance in democratic and autocratic regimes;
* Determine the influence of country-specific factors for party dominance in Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa.

We choose to define party dominance **analytically**, as it allows for comprehensive statistical large-N analysis, but we also believe that not every important characteristic for this work can be measured in the same fashion across the whole sub-Saharan region, largely due to institutional heterogeneity and informal practices on the spectrum of electoral and party democracy. We, therefore, adopt an analytical approach that centers on the inherent importance of area case studies in comparative politics research and is deploying mixed methods to supplement them. This leads to the incorporation of three case studies on countries that are most different from the rest of Africa (democratic, long-standing dominant-party regimes with free elections) while being most similar amongst themselves (shared history, similar regimes, and institutions, relative economic success). If some of the factors described later will play a role in party dominance there (i.e. ethnic fragmentation or resource curse), then we can reasonably expect them to be relevant in less democratic countries in the region. We cannot place this approach under the neo-positivist paradigm, as we are not adhering to the notion of ‘dropping proper names for relevant variables’ approach to research, and support an extended description of context matters as described by Franzese: multicausality, context-conditionality, and endogeneity all matter to us, and shall be accounted for in this paper (Franzese 2009; Przeworski and Teune 1970; Woods 2016). We, therefore, adopt an analytical context-specific approach using mixed methods, deploying comparative politics methodology.

We arrive at 4 hypotheses regarding party dominance:

*H1: More ethnically homogeneous countries produce dominant party regimes;*

*H2a: The more institutionalized a regime is, the more autocratic dominant party systems it will produce;*

*H2b: The more institutionalized a regime is, the more democratic dominant party systems it will produce;*

*H3: Regimes with first-past-the-point electoral rules are more likely to be autocratic dominant than democratic dominant;*

*H4: Regimes with British colonial past are more likely to be democratic dominant than those with French legacy.*

# Chapter 1: Dominant-party regimes: what they are and what they aren’t

## §1 Dominant-party regimes, causes and consequences

To build an effective theoretical model we first need to clearly define party dominance, building on different interpretations and major scientific works in this field. A compatible definition of democracy is needed as well. With our definition, we will then conceptualize factors, that potentially cause party dominance, as well as review consequences that can serve as controls in our analysis. Lastly, we will develop a theoretical model combining all of our concepts and definitions.

### 1.1 Definitions and approaches to party dominance

A dominant-party system is commonly defined as ‘a more-than-one-party system in which rotation does not occur’ (Sartori 1976). This definition places dominant-party regimes between multiparty and single-party regimes, but it does not describe any functions and attributes these parties have (Duverger 1951). By Sartori’s definition, a dominant-party system is also one, that can be two-or-multiparty, for example, through meeting the prerequisites of Duverger’s law, but cannot effectively mimic the mechanical aspects. By the mechanical aspect, we understand a defining feature of the deployed concept being met, and constant alternation of power and turnovers are what distinguishes multi-party systems over the dominant-party ones.

A popular way to identify a dominant party is by a longevity criterion, which ranges from 3 to 5 consecutive election wins depending on the author (Doorenspleet and Nijzink 2013; Green 2012; Sartori 1976). Combining the softest 3-year longevity criteria of Sartori with a part of Dunleavy’s analytic criteria and du Toit and de Jagger’s approach, our criteria for a democratic dominant-party regime is one, where for three consecutive elections wins a majority in the legislature (Dunleavy 2010; Sartori 1976; du Toit and de Jagger 2012).

### 1.2 Causes and consequences of party dominance

National independence and democratization in the African continent were a bumpy ride. The start of extensive colonization in Africa, known as the “Scramble for Africa” dates back to the end of the XIX century (Brooke-Smith 1987). It was driven by the economic and political interest of the main European powers, most notable of which were Britain and France (Frankema, Williamson, and Woltjer 2018). The process of dismantling and acquiring land was largely unfair, as it didn’t consider where tribes originally lived. Furthermore, extractive institutions that were set up wherever disease mortality rates of colonists were high, left a lot of African countries' economies dependent on the export of raw materials (Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson 2001; Southall and Melber 2009). Systems that the English, French, and others developed to keep the colonies in check largely ignored the population’s rights and benefited white colonists. Decades of racial segregation, restrictive laws, and overall white-dominance psyche created governance problems after independence. Thirty years later, we are still trying to all the various understand ways, in which colonial rule influenced both functional and dysfunctional regimes in sub-Saharan Africa.

We can identify a problem, related to institutions different nations established in their colonies. Most works on this subject focus on the English / French divide, focusing on the direct or indirect ruling. The former was shown to be characteristic of English colonies, as the colonizers were more willing to work with native hierarchies and leaders, granting them powers to rule on England’s behalf, in part because of financial constraints. The latter was a tactic of the French, influenced by republican ideology and extensive administrative planning (Müller-Crepon 2020). There are mainly two groups of scholars, first argues that the English / French divide of colonial rule matters for today’s institutions in Africa (Firmin-Sellers 2000; Müller-Crepon 2020), and the other one states that overall development was quite similar and didn’t have a significant effect on the post-independence period (Cogneau, Dupraz, and Mesplé-Somps 2018; Gerring et al. 2011). Therefore, our results on the colonial rule will contribute to the discussion regarding the effects of English and French institutions.

A lot of literature is aimed at discovering the relationship between electoral systems, and in particular, electoral rules and party systems. Electoral systems are at the core of forming cohesive and adequate party systems. To consider how different factors influence the emergence of dominant-party systems, or shifts in their behavior is to consider these factors in the specific context of an electoral system. This notion reflects the idea of context conditionality of the relationship between electoral rules and outcomes in a party system, where context mediates the effects of the former on the latter (Ferree, Powell, and Scheiner 2014). In the framework of Ferree, Powell, and Scheiner, which adapt it from Duverger, there are two levels to the relationship between electoral and party systems – a mechanical and a behavioral one. For statistical inference, only the mechanical level, i.e. the rules themselves is suitable.

The connection of party` systems to economic policies and performance is a major topic in academic debate. For our analysis, it is imperative to understand which features of economic strategy are predictors for party dominance, and vice versa, how party dominance influences economic policy and performance. Firstly, from 1990 to 2010 economic policies in now-independent African countries were largely about adapting to independent politics and neoliberal reforms under pressure from foreign donors. Under neoliberal reforms, we understand ‘policies consisting of balanced budgets; the privatization of parastatals; the reduction of fixed prices, tariffs, and subsidies; and the promotion of free trade’ (M. A. Pitcher 2019).

The relationship between private domestic businesses and dominant parties is relevant for this work primarily with regards to privatization and strategies of the latter towards the former. Recent works in this area highlight different aspects of the interaction between political actors and economic elites. The privatization of state enterprises as a process is said to be beneficial for democracy through the business support of the opposition as highlighted by Arriola (Arriola 2012, 2013). This approach builds on the idea that dominant parties use state resources to finance their activities, whilst the opposition has to depend on private funds to challenge them. Thus, more private firms potentially mean more competitiveness, as the opposition is a more viable actor when supported by private business. This argument can be criticized on the grounds of great variety across Africa’s regimes in business-party relationships. It can also be argued on methodological grounds - the financial autonomy of business is measured in the number of commercial banks and the provision of credit to the private sector, but the private sector can be informally controlled by a party or party seniors through intermediaries, and the typology of these relationships favors alliances between business and dominant parties. Such a typology is explored in Toni Weis’s work, which distinguishes between elite pact, domination, coalition-building, and informalisation strategies based on the strength of the private sector and party institutionalization (Weis 2014). We adopt this typology in our case studies to highlight the strategies of South Africa’s ANC, Namibia’s SWAPO, and Botswana’s BDP towards private sectors.

Party dominance is closely connected with extensive electoral spending (Dunleavy 2010). We believe it to be consequential to how the elections themselves work and how dominant parties handle them in particular. As incumbent spending is acknowledged as less effective than challenger’s spending, more money is required to defend a legislative seat, and in general, spending more seems to improve voter turnout and win more votes (Benoit and Marsh 2010; Hogan 2013; Jacobson 2015). Access to state institutions and business interest groups, as well as patron-clientism more frequently found in dominant-party systems, facilitates more financing and more spending, making dominant party regimes more likely to spend more on campaigns (Trantidis 2015).

Yet, the connection between businesses and parties is not the only economic influence we have to consider. A popular way to identify the economic underlying of party politics is by looking at the party system institutionalization. As political and party systems, as well as parties themselves, differ tremendously across sub-Saharan Africa, a useful optic would be to consider party systems, not characteristics of particular parties. This fits in our comparative statistical analysis. To determine the effects of economical factors such as GDP per capita or poverty levels, we need to be able to measure party systems institutionalization across different countries.

Party system institutionalization, the term first coined by Scully and Mainwaring, refers to the degree to which the party system is either institutionalized or inchoate (Scully and Mainwaring 1995). The former refers to a system with stable competition, established ideological and policy stances of parties, as well as acceptance of democratic transition and competition rules. The latter is the opposite, presenting with populist messaging, high electoral volatility, personalist, and ethnic salience. While it was originally used for Latin America, the concept was later adopted for studying African party politics (Kuenzi and Lambright 2001). In its more developed state, it includes criteria for age of parties, legislative volatility, and party fractionalization (Kuenzi and Lambright 2005). It is exceptionally useful for exploring the effects of economic conditions on party systems. When operationalizing PSI through electoral volatility, type A volatility reflects changes in the number of parties from one election to the next, and type B volatility is vote switching by voters amongst parties presented in parliament (Weghorst and Bernhard 2014). Total volatility captures both types. Results from Weghorst and Bernhard’s study show that inequality in basic needs satisfaction increases levels only of total volatility and growth deterred vote switching between established parties (Weghorst and Bernhard 2014).

Through these optics, we can also locate dominant-party regimes on the PSI scale. They are traditionally characterized by low legislative volatility, very different ages of parties[[3]](#footnote-4) , and low party fractionalization. However, the extent of these characteristics can differ along cleavages of economic performance, particular institutional designs, and other conditions. The connection between PSI and democracy is disputed in the African context. On one hand, studies suggest that low institutionalization is beneficial in the sense that it provides space for competition and representation. On the other hand, it contradicts with democratic stability[[4]](#footnote-5) of high institutionalization. Our task is, therefore, to locate democratic and autocratic dominant-party regimes across the PSI scale to determine the benefits and disadvantages of such regimes.

Ethnic fragmentation is one of the most important factors in African politics. Because many countries retain territories established under colonial rule, most of them aren’t ethnically homogeneous. This leads to the ethnicization of politics, where the representation of ethnos matters more than the policy or ideological leanings of a party (Mohamed Ahmed 2003). This contributes to experts’ inability to place African parties on the programmatic (ideological) spectrum (Kitschelt and Kselman 2013). This argument can be extended to state that wherever somewhat homogeneous societies exist, a party representing an ethnic majority will become dominant by gathering support from the majority of the population that will have no incentives to support other parties if the one in charge is sufficiently effective at handling both elite cohesion and advancing popular policy.

We can connect this to the theory of the distribution of goods by political parties. For example, research has shown that from the parties’ perspective, there are incentives to distribute goods unevenly, by ethnicity and party support (Franck and Rainer 2012; Jablonski 2014; Kroth, Larcinese, and Wehner 2016). There are, however, differences by goods’ type and contradictory results, suggesting that this relationship is dependent on the type of good distributed, as well as the salience of ethnicity in a particular society (Burgess et al. 2015; Dionne and Horowitz 2016; Kramon and Posner 2013; Travaglianti 2017). Therefore, there are two main ways to consider ethnic fragmentation in our analysis. Firstly, through voter identification and subsequent party and opposition schism. On one hand, it can result in proportional to ethic divide representation, which leads to the reduced programmatic salience in campaigning and lower accountability in autocratic rule of the ethnic majority. On the other hand, it can cause an incoherence of the political system, unable to unite voters under ideological and economic statements, resolve issues due to cultural spite and distrust, and overall poor law-making, development, and institutions. A second way to look at ethnic bias is through the optics of party clientelist networks that reward constituencies voting for a said party with resources and benefits, which limits democratic potential and increases polarization. Lastly, if the distribution of goods is homogeneous, it is an indicator of low ethnic salience and good governance.

A ruling party can also enjoy links to key social and interest groups (Dunleavy 2010). ANC, for example, retains a lot of apartheid fighters as party members, expanding support for itself among those supporting the democratic change. Civil society groups also tend to “fall in line” with the ruling party’s demands, as the latter can use structural agreements, reporting mechanisms and resource dependence for coercion (Chaney 2016; Payne 2011). On the local level, party branches can serve as an important intermediary between people’s demands and the government (Bénit-Gbaffou 2012). Interest groups can mobilize voters through systems of cooperation in their areas, as was the case with labor movements backing opposition for a win in Zambia’s 1991 election (LeBas 2019).

## §2 Theoretical model

To build an effective theoretical model, we need not only to consider, how different factors influence party dominance, but to pay attention to the relationships they have amongst themselves.

To make statements about the nature of party dominance in democracies and autocracies, as proposed by design, we need to develop a compatible definition of democracy. It is possible, that using a simple v-dem polyarchy score is going to skew results, as competitiveness in dominant democratic states is by definition lower than in democratic non-dominant states. This, however, is implicitly controlled for, like freedom of the press, freedom of association, and elected officials scores are usually lower in autocratic countries. This is also supported by the counting method of the index, which includes a "weakest link" argument for countries lacking in one of the components

The model looks like this:

Firstly, we believe that countries with low levels of ethnic fragmentation are more likely to form a dominant-party system. This is based on the argument of ethnic dominance translating into political dominance. A dominant ethnic group in a country, if a party representing it is sufficiently good in handling both elite cohesion and advancing popular policy, will vote largely for this party. As this process is based mostly on peaceful dominance and representational politics, we expect most of these regimes to be democratic-dominant. However, as other factors do matter in this scenario (economic development, religious and social cleavages, etc), we cannot hypothesize about democratic dominance alone, thus not specifying, which type this factor predicts better.

Another expectation is that low fragmentation ethnic countries are more likely to produce autocratic dominance if groups other than the majority are discriminated against.

Secondly, we expect higher PSI scores to predict democratic and autocratic dominance. This stems from the ability of institutionalized parties to utilize their resources in a strategically more sound way. These hypotheses are based on the connection between low volatility that is characteristic of institutionalized systems and dominance, which requires control over the opposition’s chances, either through law and coercive restraints or by sheer popular support.

In regards to representation systems, we believe that first-past-the-post majority systems are more likely to produce dominant-party outcomes. FPTP systems significantly increase incumbency advantages enjoyed by dominant parties and allow for almost complete domination of the political field. Proportional systems tend to be neutral for the dominant rule, where 65% + results are achieved, but in closer electoral battles, FPTP favors incumbency and translates fewer votes into more seats.

Considering colonial rule, we expect British institutions to promote democratic outcomes, and French – autocratic. The 3rd level of other colonial belonging in the past serves to check on the relative strength of the divide.

# Chapter 2: Macro-level approach to identifying relevant party dominance factors

## §1 Data and preparation

### Coding party dominance

For our dependent variable, we choose to code party dominance through analytical definitions of it, as using indices like ENPP or ENEP doesn’t allow us to create cut-off points that are logically consistent with actual features of party rule, such as holding an absolute majority, or having to form a coalition (Bogaards 2004). This being said, we have calculated both ENPP and analytic versions of measurement.

When defining party dominance as a whole, we relied on Sartori’s original coding rules. For clarifications on the actual process of coding, we used Eerd’s description of the technique. To distinguish between democratic and autocratic party dominance, we used Bogaard’s additional criteria.

Thus, the coding procedure unfolds as follows:

1. First, we count the relevant number of parties. RNP is defined to describe relevant parliamentary parties with the ability to influence policy and governance. We counted **one** relevant party, if it won an absolute majority in the lower chamber of parliament, and a presidency. We counted **two** parties when either a president didn’t belong to the party with an absolute majority, or if a party won an absolute majority, but the margin between the two largest parties was lower than 30%, and the second party won an absolute majority in a precedent election. Lastly, if no party won an absolute majority, we counted the party of the president, the party of the president’s strongest opponents, and the number of parties that had to be added to the president’s party to hold a coalitional absolute majority, arranged by size (van Eerd 2009).
2. Additional qualitative data was used, if either by law the president should be independent, groups of independent representatives were formed, and if a party was effectively co-opted by another party (van Eerd 2009). This happened on multiple occasions. The primaries system in Malawi is said to be quite chaotic and can often result in losing candidates running as independents, which accounts for their high size in the National Assembly. Researchers have shown, that these independents tend to join a strong presidential party in their voting (Young 2014). Considering that the presidential election was annulled this year, and after a fresh one, a candidate from a second-largest party took the seat, we expect independents to join either DPP or MCP, thus counting two relevant parties. In Rwanda, a dominant party holds less than 50% of seats and exactly 50% of its coalition. This party has been dominant in the past, and there were suspicions of it co-opting other parties. However, Rwanda's country report from Basel Institute on Governance suggests that the political field in the country is based on power-sharing and consensus decision making. We thus count four relevant parties.
3. Thirdly, we code autocratic dominance by Bogaard’s criterion. If a party wins an absolute majority and presidency, and for the year of the election Freedom House’s both Political Rights and Civil Liberties scores are equal or above 6, and requirements for two relevant parties are not met, the system has to be coded autocratic party dominant (Bogaards 2004; van Eerd 2009).
4. Lastly, if a party holds three consecutive absolute majorities in a row, a presidency, requirements for two relevant parties are not met, and it isn’t autocratic dominant, it has to be coded democratic dominant, following Sartori (Sartori 1976).

We thus get a variable that is coded as either 0 (non-dominant), 1 (autocratic dominant), or 2 (democratic dominant). As we use logical arguments for this definition, it is not continuous, but discrete.

### Sampling

The sample contains data on 42 sub-Saharan countries. The year attributed to all of them indicates last elections year, and data is confined to 2013-2018 as datasets that we extracted indexes and data from at times do not yet support later years. Each variable corresponds to a particular election year, except for colonial legacy.

We exclude several countries from our dataset based on the incompatibility with our definition of party dominance. Some countries have banned parties altogether, which blocks us from measuring its relevant parties count (Swaziland), that don’t have a functioning government (Somalia), or there isn’t substantive data. Below you can see countries covered in the sample.



*Figure 1 Sample countries*

### Operationalization of predictors

We deploy a lot of factors, influencing party dominance. It is only natural, that not all of them can be measured in a statistically robust way across a cross-national sample. Notably, Kuenzi and Lambright were the first to point out that not all criteria, namely, level of party cohesion and organization, can be operationalized throughout large cross-national samples. As we include case studies in our research design, we can account for this, when looking at three cases in-depth.

Regarding the predictors in our theoretical model, we will operationalize ethnic fragmentation using a simple ethnolinguistic fragmentation index (ELF), for a particular year a parliamentary election was held. For this, we use the EPR Core Database 2019 (Vogt et al. 2015). We extract info on all relevant political groups and using a mathematical ELF formula calculate a score for each country:

Sadly, this dataset doesn’t include data on 2018. For missing values, we will use scores up to 2017, given that there were no large demographic changes (wars, border changes).

For PSI I used a V-Dem Party system Institutionalization index, for the relevant election year. For two NAs – Mali’s 2013 and Guinea’s 2013 elections data on the closest available year was used.

Colonial legacies were coded as a 0 for no colonial past, 1 for former British colonies, 2 for former French colonies, and 3 for other colonial past. Continuity or Change? (In)direct Rule in British and French Colonial Africa Replication data was used for coding (Müller-Crepon 2020).

Electoral rules were extracted from the Database of Political Institutions dataset and reflect the houses indicator, which identifies the system by which the majority of seats in the lower chamber of parliament is elected.

I used 4 control variables to account for democracy level in a country, incumbency advantage, education level, and oil wealth.

## §2 Findings

To fit the model k-fold cross-validation method was used. Model assumptions were verified by producing the GVIF test, McFadden’s R2, AIC, accuracy and kappa values from k-fold. You can see the results in Table 1[[5]](#footnote-6).

For H1, we find no support that ethnically homogeneous countries produce more dominant-party regimes. Moreover, when running a logistic regression for consolidated dominant/non-dominant dependent variable, it yields identical results (see Appendix, Table 2). We believe that an interaction variable is appropriate here. However, implementation with multinomial regression was unsuccessful due to multicollinearity assumptions. For future research, ethnic concentration, following van Eerd, or status of ethnic group, perhaps tied to discrimination in the country could serve as an interaction (van Eerd 2009).

For H2, we find statistically significant evidence that in democratic dominant-party regimes higher levels of party system institutionalization are relevant for the installment of such regimes. This corroborates previous findings by … and thus confirms H2b.

For H3, no statistically significant evidence was discovered due to limitations (see [Limitations](#_Limitations)). However, signs of the coefficients reflect expectations.

For H4, we find no significant proof that suggests that English of French institutions were beneficial or harmful to party dominance in our sample.

Therefore, statistical inference confirms one out of four hypotheses and lays the groundwork for further exploration of respective topics. The point of showing that counting rules can be used as a dependent variable across multiple predictors is proven by correct coefficient signs. We attribute bad prediction capabilities to high standard errors that are associated with a small number of cases.

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Dependent variable:

---------------------------------------

autocratic dominant democratic dominant

(1) (2)

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ELF 13.802 -1.705

(10.138) (3.461)

PSI 18.931 13.528\*

(11.888) (7.567)

housesys 1.795 -1.768

(2.397) (1.411)

col\_legacy.f1 -9.064 0.115

(104.617) (2.450)

col\_legacy.f2 -6.554 2.143

(104.453) (2.689)

col\_legacy.f3 -0.671 0.282

(104.341) (3.086)

dem -75.690\* -11.383\*

(40.874) (6.466)

inc no incumbency 5.623 -4.531\*

(3.835) (2.341)

edu 9.725 0.647

(17.808) (7.629)

oil.x 0.059 0.286

(0.742) (0.721)

Constant 6.454 -0.297

(104.590) (4.752)

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Akaike Inf. Crit. 79.761 79.761

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Note: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

*Table 1 Multinomial logistic regression*

# Chapter 3: Case studies

As stated before, the aim of implementing a case study approach in this work is to examine particular institutional arrangements and contexts in South Africa, Botswana, and Namibia. We aim to develop a better understanding of specific factors, mainly the position of a dominant party and its structures in society, its role in day-to-day activities of citizens, historic party myth, that is used as a base for party identity and rhetorics, and financial autonomy of business, a party-business relationship. We are also looking for bias in after-election resource allocation by ethnic or partisanship criteria. It is our goal to connect three observer countries in terms of shared history and practices in maintaining party dominance or to separate them if these factors aren’t as important to the identity of wielding political power.

We define political myths as constructed narratives, that are used to promote certain political interests, have roots in historic events, and are shared by social groups (Tudor 1972). Approach formed by Della Sala and, in part, Bouchard, distinguishes simple narratives from ‘sacred’ ones – myths. This separation is characterized by four stages of myth-building: initial framing, diffusion, ritualization, and sacralization (Bouchard 2013; Della Sala 2010). We will thus view dominant party myths as those similar to national myths, in that they are as widespread and as important to the country’s identity in any particular moment, but confined to a single political group, however large.

Analysis of parties’ local-level activities is twofold. Firstly, a level of neopatrimonialism matters on the local level to us, because the exchange of goods there translates into votes, and a sufficient clientelist network is a major factor in explaining party dominance in certain constituencies. It is also region differentiation in votes compared to relative party strength in these constituencies that is of interest to us. Secondly, a definition of grassroots party organizations and activist networks is needed to understand their effectiveness.

In our analysis of party-business relationships, we use Weis’s criteria for interpreting these relationships. Firstly, a degree of how close economic and political elites are intertwined, and, secondly, if political elites are themselves, economical actors, through party-owned state enterprises. What also matters, is how independent the domestic private sector is, and how institutionalized a party is.

Degree

## §1 South Africa

We start with South Africa, because being a dominant power in a region, other countries’ relational positions are tied to it in international terms.

### 1.1 Liberation myth of ANC

To revise here a process of transitioning from apartheid to majority rule in South Africa would be to extend this paper longer than it should be. Regarding the origins of ANC – South Africa’s ruling party since independence is necessary with regards to what allows it to continue to be a center for popular support, as well as political power.

To start, the party was founded in 1912, as a representative body of Coloureds and Black Africans. It has extended its reach, and gathered popular support among oppressed racial groups, even after being banned in 1960. Through militant action and underground structures, while working out of adjacent countries. This has served as a platform for electoral success when F. W. de Klerk’s government transitioned to a non-racial system. Party system institutionalization literature suggests that after transitioning from colonial or autocratic rule, the party system will be highly fragmented, with lots of new and unknown parties, that don’t respect rules of the democratic competition and are likely to bend them in their favor. We argue that ANC enjoyed a substantive advantage, as it has been present in the political space, albeit not an official one, and has effectively served as a speaker for the non-white majority for more than seven decades.

This corresponds with a phase of framing and dispersing a political myth. It is ease to isolate that a transition period between apartheid rule and ANC dominance was a period of forming a protagonist narrative, where oppressed racial groups fought the oppressive regime. This is, by all definitions, a fact. From an information diffusion perspective, electoral campaigns served as great ground for stabilizing this myth. Furthermore, ANC acknowledged that more than 60 % of white population supported the reforms, and adopted a non-racial and political equality approach. This resonated with liberal notions in European and American societies, and enabled South Africa to establish itself as both a leader of African democracy, and a serious challenger in international politics.

However, what is truly remarkable, is the survivability of this myth. In the XXI century, ANC has been associated with allegations of corruption of Jacob Zuma, its leader and president of SA 2009 –2018. Yet, as partisan support is somewhat on the low with 57.5% of votes in the latest parliamentary election, the myth enabling party dominance is alive and well, as accusations of ineffectiveness, malgovernance and corruption are of no relation to the historic underpinnings of a ruling party. This argument, surely, reinforces the importance of the identity myth in politics, especially with such a clear narrative of apartheid as a true evil, and ANC as a fighter of cross-national importance in Southern Africa.

The survivability described here, we believe, is a consequence of sacralization of ANC liberation myth. After being a routine throught early 2000s, and much of 2010s, ANC has become what is best described in terms of a corporate body. It has both a functioning leadership with specific politicians, that can be cast out of a political space due to accusations, and a symbolic meaning for the history of South Africa, reinforced by the myth, that exceeds individual virtues and vices of the party’s representatives. Thus, when Zuma stepped down, it did not mean a political death of ANC’s body, but, rather, an opportunity to cleanse its ranks and continue with day-to-day business.

### 1.2 ANC in local politics and at large

This calls for an analysis of party influence in local politics. Firstly, under this a style of governance is understood. To move forward with analysis of local entities, an overall trend should be identified. In defining different types of parties, Diamond and Gunther identify clientelistic, class, and mass parties. The difference in handling voter relations and overall elections between clientelistic and mass parties is not the level of corruption, but level of personal association and patrimonialism in local and party structures (Gunther and Diamond 2003). There is rising tension in defining ANC’s role and South Africa’s destiny in academic circles due to ‘state capture’ as the predominant description of power-sharing and appointments in the higher levels of political power in the country (Isike and Onapajo 2017; Lodge 2014; Mkhize, Makau, and Madumi 2020; October 2015). By Lodge’s account, ANC is on its way to becoming more of a clientelistic party, than a mass one, partly due to overall mass party crises, but mostly because of its own history. The latter refers to 1) colonial legacy and nepatism in building ANC in the first place, 2) ties to criminal elites during ban years, and after first electoral succeses, 3) ‘patrimonial capitalism’ and association of political positions with enrichment (Lodge 2014).

This allows us to effectively characterize governance style of ANC as neopatrimonial, as two systems: unofficial clientelist and official bureaucratic are present. Firstly, private interests shape the internal dynamics of the party which, in turn, influences the allocation of appointments and government positions to satisfy the donors. This is mostly seen by the example of Jacob Zuma, and it remains to be seen how partisan structures will behave under new leadership of Cyril Ramaphosa. Secondly, a formal democratic bureaucratic system is operating elections and government work, that is unrelated to party activity.

Now, neopatrimonialism is said to be true on a local level as well. In the recent study on violence in KwaZulu-Natal region of South Africa, Mario Krämer identifies autochthonomy of poor Zulu villagers as the reason for electoral violence. As autochthons, or original inhabitants, protested against migrants from other parts of the country, a local ANC branch started to be dominated by these ‘migrants’, which sparked conflict (Krämer 2019). Pre-election violence from both ANC and South African Communist party saw to deaths of more than one hundred local politicians in the province. Among reasons that allowed this to happen and to continue into 2016, gatekeeping, infighting and factionalism in ANC have been named. We believe this is quite accurate, as it connects to neopatrimonial characteristics of the party on a larger scale, as well as the notion of ‘patrimonial capitalism’, when access to politics has value in terms of personal enrichment and patronistic influence on constituencies (Lodge 2014).

There is, however a case for evaluating clientism neutrally, without the negative connotations imposed by Western perspective. If we adopt this optic, then exchange of state goods and votes can be seen as accountability method (Anciano 2017). This notion enriches our understanding of local-level politics beyond simple ‘neopatrimonialism’ definitions and examples of it. In this logic, albeit clientelism cannot sustain actual democratic progress, it can be useful in mediating between poor residents and influential political class of ANC.

Having cleared up issues regarding overall evaluation of the party, we can now turn to analysis of party structure on the local level. The most basic and most important unit here is a party branch. They add up to form a regional office, that mirrors municipal division by districts, or metropolitan areas. These together constitute a provisional branch, that are aligned with administrative provinces. This structure provides for a vertical and regional representation in party. The most local level – branches, is grassroots. Its activities include holding meetings, promote political education and history of the party (diffusion of political myth), aid residents with communication to official structures of government, recruitment, fundraising, etc. In 2008, a study on organizational development of ANC cited membership as those, that supply the party with policy proposals, advocating that the party is accountable to local-level needs. This view is an unpopular one, as since 2008 scandals and corruption among higher-ranking officials, including the President, have determined the outlook of South Africa’s ruling party.

This being said, on the ground, through party structures, and formal and informal assistance of ANC, residents have a way to resolve social and bureaucratic issues. In this context, it is relatively easy to become a member of the ANC, and try to rise to higher ranks, as the party works vertically, with each level has control over the lower ones. These processes are, however, skewed, due to biased decision-making process at the top, that is not up to date with ANC’s local accountability claims. With the removal of Zuma, it remains to be seen just how (in)effective a party will be. To this day, formally, ANC is a mass party. Notions of clientism and neopatrimonialism in its way of handling things does not contradict this per se. Because party still relies on gathered funds, local support and elections to secure seats in legislatures, the formal structure continues to be beneficial to communities.

### 1.3 ANC and business – a mishandled relationship

When assessing through the lens of strength of both parties and domestic economic sectors, South Africa is firmly in a ‘elite pact’ category. This is a mode, where neither a dominant party, nor economic entities can co-opt another to serve their agenda (Weis 2014). However, a party needs funding, and economic actors seek access to political decision-making process, that can grant their businesses perks and preferential policies, which pushes them to form in alliance to everyone’s satisfaction.

ANC’s elite pact with business is built on the relationship with big business enterprises. The interesting part is, when entering political arena from years of being banned, ANC naturally had no ties to business, predominantly white. It thus had to rely on criminal money to ‘build an effective electoral machine’ (Lodge 2014). After establishing itself as the narrator in SA politics though, it turned to these businesses, for both financial and reputational reasons: white electorate was a target to please with truly non-racial steps, as stated in ANC Constitution (Ansie Van Wyk 2009).

This was not achieved at full scale, though, as small and medium sized businesses were more likely to favour the opposition. This can be described by Arriola’s notion of market competitiveness in political field, where for a opposition coalition to defeat a governing party, a free and competitive market, whose actors can support them with Rands should be present (Arriola 2013).

Some of the transactions between ANC and business should be considered corrupt, and some shouldn’t. Example in place – a relationship with mining companies such as Johannesburg Consolidated Investment Co. Ltd. The money, measuring in US$ 2.5 million were given to ANC, only to be returned to JCI, as the chairman was using these funds illegally. To add to this, ANC agued in court, that it should have the money, as they assisted said chairman ‘inderectly’. On the other side, since independence, a class of non-white businessmen emerged, that naturally support ANC. There is no proof that activities conducted with these organizations are in any way corrupt.

On the other hand, ANC also sets up self-owned enterprises. There have been controversies in contract distribution to companies, that ANC members were a part of. This is a first sign of the merging between state and party, but we reject this interpretation on the basis of two arguments. Firstly, liberal rhetorics in ANC discourses assume close connection to state, as social policies are best implemented in this way. Secondly, most of the transactions and relations between business and party are organized in an ‘elite pact’ way.

The relationship has been a mess during the presidency of Zuma. The nepotism under him, in accumulating wealth for himself and his family, as well as less than optimal attention to economic policies have solidified patrimonial capitalism, that is characteristic of nowadays South African state. Private interests have had access to government based on personal involvement with Zuma, and all around no particular adaptive strategy has been worked out in relation to business, especially small and medium.

To sum up, business and party in South Africa are characterized by elite pact relationship with personal ties being an important factor. Weis points out that informal links between the two are characteristic of weak parties and weak economies, but in this case, developmental push, induced by an after-apartheid period, as well as dominant position in the region, and high rents from natural resources exploration, politically weak leadership opted for suboptimal mode of communication. In this vein, it is not the business that is dependent on the party, but rather the other way around. As this is because of poor intentions and management from the Mbeki and Zuma administrations, it can be changed. This unpredictability allows us to still characterize the relationship as a pact.

### 1.4 Bias in goods distribution

Research has shown, that at least in 1996-2001 electrification was mainly aimed at core ANC constituencies, after it came to power. But there, enfranchisement was also a driver for electrification and non-white voters received treatment from both the National party and ANC. It is sometimes hard to identify particular electoral or ethnic bias in allocation of goods, as rural and racial biases are present.

There seems to be no systematic bias towards allocating goods in either core ANC constituencies or swing ones. This is corroborated by multiple studies. Firstly, Anaxagorou et all find no substantive evidence of disproportinate allocation of foreign aid. (Anaxagorou, Efthyvoulou, and Sarantides 2020). Their findings reveal that firstly, countries with good checks and balances systems such as South Africa are generally less likely to misallocate aid. South Africa also receives low amounts of Chinese aid, and more from World Bank, with the latter having better mechanisms against wrongful distribution (Anaxagorou, Efthyvoulou, and Sarantides 2020). However, this paper only looks at groups of countries in general, and not on South Africa in particular.

Mershon finds no evidence suggesting that ANC promotes better public goods delivery in opposition swing constituencies, and conflicted evidence of preferential treatment of core ANC constituencies. It is proposed that only if local chiefs wield significant power, and ANC backing is present, infant mortality rates and under-five deaths decline (Mershon 2020). This points to the value of patrimonial connections, as local power-holders can find ways to secure preferential treatments.

On subnational scale, the stronghold of opposition is the Western Cape, with its centre in Cape Town. It is run by Democratic Alliance, and if one was to expect bias in resource allocation, either underbudgeting or overspending would be found. However, Robert Cameron’s case study of Cape Town and Johanessburg grants and other finances allocation provides feasible support for absence of bias towards opposition’s municipalities. Notably, credit for this is given to robust constitutional constraints on executive and spending, and decentralization at large. This corroborates findings by Anaxagorou et all regarding checks and balances. Foreign aid, as well as domestic transfers is distributed equally due to harsh Ministry of Finances guidelines. Resnick’s analysis also supports this, while noting a bias towards best performing cities irrespective of part affiliation. Among those is also DA’s controlled Cape Town.

To sum up, no bias in allocating goods was found in ANC’s distribution of goods. Reasons for this include robust constitutional and normative acts, regarding financial transfers. Indirect effects, such as child mortality is also insignificant for stating any preferential treatment. Foreign aid allocation is effective due to World Bank’s and Ministry of Finances guidelines.

## §2 Botswana

### 1.1 An African success story: BDP as source of prosperity

In 2019 – 2024 Botswana’s Democratic Party Elections Manifesto, a following paragraph can be found:

*‘…Botswana’s first transformation was from a traditional low-income economy based mainly on the agricultural sector to an upper middle-income country based on mining and increasingly on tourism. This success was not accidental or out of mere luck. It was a result of prudent economic management and growth-promoting policies purposely put in place by the BDP-led government.’*

This excerpt is the simplest explanation of the nature of BDP symbolic meaning in Botswana’s history. The narrative of economic performance and good governance is a cornerstone in a mythical sense of a political party. Ideologically, BDP links hardly to traditional Tswana culture, up to the point where its vision is described by concepts, borrowed from Tswana language as untranslatable in English.

To compile a comprehensive account of BDP’s positioning and narratives, is a harder task than to identify the same features in ANC. The latter was more of a focus for scholarly research due to its remarkable upbringings and utilization of liberation reputation. BDP was never really a focus of research, as economic and democratic success of Botswana was a challenge to be explained. We mentioned that having a clear protagonist story with a conflict as a centre for a political myth is, perhaps, the most efficient in establishing a party as a moral superior. However, that is not the case for BDP, as it is universally agreed that the country enjoyed smoother colonial rule than most African countries.

A political myth of BDP-led Botswana is one of continuous success and succession of party ideals as a beacon for Botswana’s bright future. Lack of scholarly attention on BDP was partly due to less obvious ideological place of the party, and assumed equality between the ruling party and high-performing state. As we have seen from the party’s most recent Manifesto, BDP takes full credit for said high performance, and exploits it in a way that positions the party as necessary for development and progress in the country. It is much less historical and future-oriented than ANC’s stance.

Rhetorics used by BDP amplify traditional ways of communication and handling governance as natural reasons for country’s success. In doing so, it equates itself with traditional way of life, establishes a party as a successor to tribal predemocratic institutions. For example, kgotla system of settling conflicts is seen as largely relevant to this day as a legacy to ‘correct’ traditional institutions (Constance Moumakwa 2011). A term ‘Kagisano’, meaning ‘peace building’, is used among others to describe aims of BDP, as well as ‘Botho’, ‘humanitarism’ (Kenyon 2015; Scanlon 2002). The achievement of those is seen to be through ‘Therasanyo’, ‘inclusion’, which is a current political slogan.

The other important link between traditional culture and BDP’s rhetorics is through a personality of Sir Seretse Khama (Taylor 2002). A former Chief of a dominant Tswana ethnos, educated in South Africa, exiled for a marriage with a white woman, he became a consolidating force in the early days of independence. BDP was built by him, as was the dominant political system. From economic side of things, policies that centred on advancing resource exploration, market competitiveness and entrepreneurship were targeted. Researchers cite the emergence of efficient bureaucracy[[6]](#footnote-8) and national vision as determinants of good institutions in Botswana. All of these qualities – strong leadership of Khama, predemocratic tribal institutions and values, soft rule by Great Britain summed up to produce institutional platform of true competitiveness in Botswana.

Exploration of diamonds and development of mining industry were effective due to redistribution policies by BDP that targeted health, infrastructure and education. Hiring international consultants in absence of competent locals allowed for ruling Tswana class / BDP leadership to undertake reforms in agreement with bureaucracy. Produced growth became legacy of the party and its founder, cementing BDP as ‘the party that did everything right’.

To conclude, Botswana Democratic Party’s political myth is consistent of multiple notions. Firstly, it establishes the party to be a successor to traditional predemocratic institutions and values. Secondly, it exploits ‘all done right’ after-independence period and Khama leadership merits to highlight a crucial role in Botswana’s upbringing. Lastly, it extends good policies and economic successes of the past to carry into the future, logically maintaining BDP’s leading and, arguably, sacred role in Botswana’s history.

### 1.2 Kgotlas, neopatrimonialism and authority: BDP locally

A portrait of BDP as a party is nationalist and ordered around Tswana ethnic majority in contrast to ANC is half-true. 77.3% of Setswana speaking population are best represented by BDP, but according to reports, successful civic society groups regularly challenge the state on minority rights issues (Country/Territory Report - Botswana. 2021). Moreover, non-racial principles are deployed, and government does not discriminate based on ethnicity, when it comes to executive power.

The link of governance and ideology is especially pronounced in Botswana, as BDP’s policies are advancing the former and answer to the latter. It is important to note, that neopatrimonialsm in regard to Botswana is largely a mode of legitimation, than an obstacle to development. Traditional structures that reinforced client-patron relationships and authority legitimation were a conscious institutional choice by BDP, one that reflected accountability on a party itself. Recruitment of local chiefs to party, mainly from kgotlas, extended patrimonial expectations to party officials, linking party to native population (A. Pitcher, Moran, and Johnston 2009).

This effect was different from legitimizing power of clientelist exchange between voters and ANC. The former is based on Therasanyo, a process of consultation, which is argued to be democratic in nature by researchers and BDP (Constance Moumakwa 2011; A. Pitcher, Moran, and Johnston 2009; Seidler 2010). The latter is a manifestation of much more pragmatic exchange, which we already described. It is also true that BDP is not trying to be a Western-style mass party, like ANC does. Absence of pronounced discrimination provides more nuanced ethnic and not racial relations.

Distribution of welfare shows conservative and paternalistic features of governance. Distribution of welfare is targeted at families and tied to status hierarchy (Seekings 2017). Good governance in Botswana, however, cannot be said to benefit inly a few, moreover, programs aimed at electorate groups are typical before elections.

All around, local level patrimonialism is manifested through patrons-politicians to fulfill the needs of the people. However, membership in a party does not allow for a seat in the decision-making process, and in-party democracy is notably low. This stems from same authority notions of traditional culture that promote communication in local-level problem solving. BDP’s style of governing has been built on a vision, and not on input from followers, mainly because education was an issue, when the party started. Case in point – logo of the party is a Domkrag, which is what the people of Botswana misspelled instead of Democracy.

Communities on the local level are definitely tight, and mutual access of residents to elites and vice versa allows for quality in goods allocation and good results in governance, that are characteristic of Botswana’s regime.

To conclude, BDP’s brand of politics is much more centralized on the national and regional level, but locally a patrimonial traditional relationship that we interpret not only positively, but as a defining feature of Botswana’s success, allows for both accountability and responsiveness of local partisan authority and smart information-based allocation of resources. Lack of interparty democracy is a consequence of policy success and influential authority notion.

### 1.3 Diamonds are forever? De Beers and BDC; Meat industry

Diamond mining is the most dominant economic sector in Botswana, with 35-40% of government income coming from mining. Precious metals and gemstones are mined by both international enterprises and state-owned companies. The former is said to have an influence on political decision-making process (Gapa 2016). The 50/50 ownership of mines by Boswana state company and De Beers, largest diamond operator in the world, is a symbiotic relationship, in which state can be said to be a partner of the international conglomerate.

To further uncover the relationship between business and party in Botswana, it is worth to say that when a party came into power, no sizable enterprise was present in the domestic private sector. This effectively means that Botswana started out as domination of economy. It is correct to say that policies implemented by BDP fostered generations of businesses, particularly in meat industry, that received substantial investments and support, as well as preferential negotiated prices with international actors.

In this logic, BDP through state owned enterprises and a co-opted economic elites are seemingly in control of the economic situation. However, to exclude De Beers presence and effects on politics is to make a mistake. Firstly, De Beers is a major donor in any BDP election effort, which is, in other words, lobbying for political influence. Not only donating money, De Beers hired political consultants to run national election campaigns for BDP. Former presidents and current presidents have personal ties to De Beers’ leadership and received loans.

From the other perspective, with Russian, Australian and Canadian diamond operators uniting against the De Beers cartel in 2000, De Beers is dependent on the regulatory powers of Botswana’s government as well (Gapa 2016). If the latter was to cut support or nationalise the infrastructure, De Beers would suffer immensely, considering their assets’ concentration in Africa and Botswana.

In the meat market, another large segment of Botswana’s GDP, state-owned Botswana Meet Commission has the monopoly on growing, trading and exporting beef products. The sector is completely dominated by BDP.

To sum up, it is hard to determine which type Botswana’s economy belongs to – elite pact due to relationship with De Beers, or to domination over economic field. We believe the latter to be better describing of the relationship, as cattle industry and half of diamond mining are factually monopolized by the government.

### 1.4 Bias in goods distribution

BDP is rivalled by Umbrella for Democratic Change, UDC, that is a young socialist party that runs counter to conservative-paternalistic dominance. UDC won 15 constituencies in last elections. We found no evidence of funds or goods allocation disproportionalities.

Moreover, one could expect discrimination against non-Tswana ethnic population. However, all constituencies with high percent of non-Tswana residents enjoyed roughly the same treatment in resource allocation.

As Anaxagorou et all suggest, good constitutional checks on the executive promote homogenious delivery of goods (Anaxagorou, Efthyvoulou, and Sarantides 2020). In support for their research, Botswana is not cited as mishandling foreign aid either.

## §3 Namibia

### 1.1 War as electoral platform: SWAPO’s continued dominance since Border War.

The story of Namibia’s liberation movement is a similar one to ANC’s. South-West Africa, now Namibia has been under South African rule till 1990. Same apartheid dicriminatory policies persisted there. SWAPO, South West African People’s organization has been a liberation anti-South African political force. Through 1966 to 1990 a South African Border War was fought for independence of Namibia from South African apartheid regime. The war culminated in Namibia gaining independence and SWAPO rising to power.

SWAPO’s electoral success has been determined by its extensive liberation struggles, and even more so that that of ANC. While its South African counterpart was given subjectivity through apartheid government withdrawal and popular decline, SWAPO’s military wing, PLAN – People’s Liberation Army of Namibia has been a subject in war actions for over 20 years. The ‘people’s’ part of SWAPO’s naming typically refers to socialist and communist parties and movements. SWAPO received extensive support from USSR, Angola and indirectly, Cuba. It maintains that is representative of socialist ideology, however the real extent of this commitment is under question. On the other hand, SWAPO enjoyed UN and other African countries’ approval in its independence efforts.

Being this big a deal, SWAPO’s rise to power has reinforced a myth of a liberation movement in pretty much the same way as ANC did. Using rhetorics of achieved freedom and economic prosperity, SWAPO utilises same basic myth-building structures that ANC uses, mainly break from oppression, and heroism of combatants. SWAPO is said to manipulate Namibian identity to its liking through first and foremost, memory politics and narratives (Gorenflo 2020).

Like the ANC, SWAPO discriminates other liberation movements in an effort to cement its position as a sole savior of Namibia people. This is seen in discarding SWANU and other groups efforts. It is also a well-known belief among opposition that SWAPO is covering up its extreme witch hunt among its members in the period of war. It said that being sure of South African spies among the movement’s members, executions and interrogations among the ranks of SWAPO and PLAN took place with no respect for human rights (Breaking the Wall of Silence (BWS) 2010).

To sum up, a war liberation myth is one that SWAPO has continually used throught its dominant rule. The extensive role of international help shaped a maintained socialist paradigm in party’s self-identification. To uphold the myth, SWAPO filters information away from alleged war crimes and war hardships, and targets the role of its leadership and persistence in liberation struggles.

### 1.2 Elitist socialism of Namibia’s ruling party

The description of SWAPO in recent years constantly include words like ‘authoritarian’, ‘stagnant’, ‘dominated by old men’. This is due to highly concentrated focus on party elites in the party system of SWAPO. The first generation of SWAPO activists and a political elite class that emerged after the way still governs the country, and is seemingly invincible to change by younger politicians (Melber, Kromrey, and Welz 2017). This, in turn, affects the governance style of the party.

One example of this is little attention to grass-roots politics. Having gathered a lot of support among the core voter groups, SWAPO is detached from day-to-day struggles. It gathers support by advancing national and regional policies, but on the local level of party branches and sections – the basic unit of party presence including 15 to 50 members, it is rarely included in hearing social demands of the people. With the COVID-19 pandemic researchers found that local goods provision and social programmes have improved, and, moreover, previously rejected measures were implemented (Marenga and Amupanda 2021).

This traces back to a serious problem in both SWAPO’s myth-building and local politics issues. From the rise to power, socialist notions of the ruling party were not so well-received by the electorate, as SWAPO had hoped. Moreover, with the end of the war, the need in support from USSR and Angola has vanished, leaving the socialist agenda without reason. From that point, SWAPO embraced neoliberal capitalist policies and pragmatic approach to both ruling and business (Marenga and Amupanda 2021). Now, at the point of once again increasing popularity of soft left agenda, SWAPO is trying to hijack it by once again calling it a socialist party.

### 1.3 State ventures, and China’s expansion: SWAPO and business

The SWAPO Party Constitution in the aims and objectives section lists a following statement:

*‘to establish companies, close corporations and any other business organization, either wholly owned by the PARTY or the PARTY in partnership with either organizations or institutions, with the view to generating funds necessary to ensure the smooth function and operations of the PARTY.’*

Disregarding the need for party funding, this statement provides for a clear view of SWAPO’s desired place in Namibia’s economic system. The plan from the start was to nationalise important ventures and lead them to directive-based economy that is cost-effective and achieves social justice.

The implementation, however, resulted in Kalahari Holdings, a state-run enterprise that dominates contract allocation and is a tie from party to party-business elite that holds part of the economic power. While the role of Kalahari and other such enterprises is evident, SWAPO, much like the ANC inherited white-own business sector. By estimations, it was not as big as in South Africa to cause friction, but not as small to become dominated by the party. The relationship is described in familiar ‘elite pact’ way, however, our final conclusion of the party-business relationship in Namibia is not limited to this relationship. For one thing, non-white business elites that started to develop after the independence, naturally support SWAPO.

The relationship between SWAPO and Chinese firms is one of cooperation, sometimes at the expense of domestic business. It is true regarding tender allocations. It is not competitive and is reported to benefit either adjacent to the party structures, or external firms, notably Chinese. Specifically, Chinese-Namibian relations target mining, that is done primarily with China’s technologies, as well as retail, a traditional Chinese outlet for expansion, and construction (Melber 2019). Moreover, Chinese trained Namibian army for a period of time. The nature of the relationship as part of the China’s expansion to Africa is cooperative, with soft pushback by Namibians.

Several large media ventures are owned by the state through Kalahari. They are reported to be biased towards SWAPO, praising it. Overall, media freedom in the country is quite protected. While researching local and national opposition sources I have found pronounced and aggressive articles about SWAPO’s position, and it appears that criticism of the state is handled nicely by SWAPO, given its leading role in politics (Melber 2018). This also confirms the statement of that ‘SWAPO plays around with breaking the rules of the democratic game, but nonetheless upholds and continues to deliver on its promises as a liberator (Melber 2015).

### 1.4 Bias in goods allocation

Bias in allocation of public goods, if there is any, should be seen through areas with increased SWAPO support. These are Northern regions, the former Ovamboland. Opposition constituencies are situated in the South, occupied by Landless People’s Movement and in the North-west, Popular Democratic Movement. Ethnic distinction follows roughly the same lines, with SWAPO’s origins coming from the North.

Service delivery is reported to be skewed in favour of urban areas, and richer regions of the country (Melber 2018). Water supply and electricity availability is skewed and poor due to mismanagement and ineffective administration. However, Namibian ‘Namwater’ works directly with local and regional authorities to distribute equally under decentralization principle (Remmert 2016).

To sum up, mismanagement and one-time abuses of distribution of goods have occurred extensively, however we did not find any evidence to suggest SWAPO targeting constituencies or ethnic groups with service delivery. That is, however, does not mean a bias is not present. Huge rates of inequality in the country provide for bad understanding of people’s needs by rich party officials, which results in overall poor quality of governance on regional and local level.

## §4 Findings

Reviewing South Africa, Botswana and Namibia provided for an extensive understanding of context-specific factors, influencing party dominance in these countries, that cannot be measured by statistical methods. Regarding identity and shared traits, it is obvious that Botswana stands out both in terms of party origins, approach to business, and local politics. Policies and institutional choices that were made by BDP on the ‘fresh sheet’ which was Botswana after independence are unique and probably ungeneralizable as well as the style of governance by former liberation movements is. It, however, presents an incredible success story, one that is built on the commitment to good governance and exploitation of tradition for development’s sake.

Firstly, the role of the party myth, a narrative that produces grounds for the uniqueness of a ruling party’s position within a democratic system, is enormous. It is best seen in examples of ANC and SWAPO, as they do not build their image on extensive economic achievements like BDP, but exploit liberation struggles as justification for the moral superiority of the party. Careful maintenance of origin myths allowed for impressive 30 years of dominance and continuous popular support. However, in doing so, alternation of history in the context of memory politics has occurred. Whether it is denying human rights abuses, or simply not paying dues to other liberation movements, it is a defining characteristic of myth-building in these countries. Future research is needed to trace this phenomenon on a larger scale.

Secondly, we find that different strategies persisted in handling local politics with various success. Traditional mass participation with neo-patrimonial traits of ANC, use of traditional institutions by BDP, and concentration of power and efforts at the top of party management by SWAPO bear interesting results. Governance at large is tied to these strategies, and time will tell which of these will be most effective, however, at this point, we continue to hold local politics and grassroots efforts as necessary for democratic dominance.

Relationship with domestic and foreign business interests turned out to be crucial in understanding levels of institutional checks and balances, as well as constitutional framework robustness for such connections. In all three cases, institutions are built in a way that prohibits activities such as lobbyism or favoritism for specific companies. In cases when this framework fails to deliver, free press works and independent assessments can be made about the nature of corruption or lack thereof.

An important feature of a democratic dominant party seems to be the ability for the party to hold business interests, or to outright dominate the economy of the country while maintaining constitutional order. This is especially true with foreign companies, that are allowed to operate by a ruling party, and whose relationship with them is one of ‘elite pact’.

Lastly, it can be argued that resource allocation is not skewed by constituencies, core or swing, or ethnicity in reviewed countries due to institutional checks on the executive at large, and decentralization policies in particular. Having a robust system of public service delivery and goods allocation based on the performance of administrative units is a sign of good governance, and, potentially a defining feature of dominant democratic regimes in Africa.

# Conclusion

To conclude this paper, we shall provide results on factors that we have identified as relevant for democratic and autocratic party dominance.

Ethnos in party dominance is evident to be less important than institutional arrangements. Advancing a particular ethnic group appears to apply to dominant-authoritarian regimes, that use coercion as tools of maintaining control. Statistical tests and case studies detected no ethnic factor in either predicting the style of party dominance or in the allocation of goods in democratic settings. This can be explained by a dominant’s party desire to extend its electoral base, and discrimination of ethnic groups runs contrary to that. SWAPO and ANC are examples of multi-ethnos ruling parties with popular support. The question of economic approval also should be raised. These factors are reasons why it is not yet time to discard ethnos from the analysis. A more thorough approach to ethnic factor is needed for future exploration.

Talking about institutions, it is imperative to note, that they are by far the most defining connection of party dominance. It is indeed hard for a party to dominate an institutional system with good checks and balances, but prolonged party dominance, associated with incumbency advantage and funding throught co-opted or agreed with economic elites, has to do with institutionalization. The robustness of following the rules, uncommon for new democracies is a must for democratic dominant parties. It is also a place for making them. Adaptation of electoral rules for new parties are rarely a conscious choice, as shown by research. We agree with that notion in a sense that manipulation of rules, such as the extension of Namibia’s president terms in power, comes with time spent in a political system. Examples of Botswana, Namibia and South Africa prove that this is not mere coincidence that entrenchment in party politics is essential for dominance. The most important aspect of that is, of course, weakness of opposition and strong narratives.

And not only narratives, but political myths that allow a party to stay a moral superior to its rivals, or an effective developmental force, as BDP does it. Our research is showing that the break from colonial past is not a question of inherited institutions, but one of positioning as a new, yet valorized political force. This conclusion adds to a plast of literature, regarding liberation movements, and it is clearly seen through our optics, that electoral success comes from myth dispersion and sacralization.

## Limitations

The main limitation of this work is poor significance results from a regression model. It has been a point to show that counting parties and analytical definitions of party dominance are relevant to large-N analysis. Two points of view, statistical and case study, provide for rich and substantive content and somewhat of a conceptual innovation, however methodological rigor in statistical inference can be improved. Refining the model and looking for ways to extend its reach is the aim of future work.

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# Appendix

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Dependent variable:

---------------------------------------

autocratic dominant democratic dominant

(1) (2)

---------------------------------------------------------

ELF 13.802 -1.705

(10.138) (3.461)

PSI 18.931 13.528\*

(11.888) (7.567)

housesys 1.795 -1.768

(2.397) (1.411)

col\_legacy.f1 -9.064 0.115

(104.617) (2.450)

col\_legacy.f2 -6.554 2.143

(104.453) (2.689)

col\_legacy.f3 -0.671 0.282

(104.341) (3.086)

dem -75.690\* -11.383\*

(40.874) (6.466)

inc no incumbency 5.623 -4.531\*

(3.835) (2.341)

edu 9.725 0.647

(17.808) (7.629)

oil.x 0.059 0.286

(0.742) (0.721)

Constant 6.454 -0.297

(104.590) (4.752)

---------------------------------------------------------

Akaike Inf. Crit. 79.761 79.761

=========================================================

Note: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

*Table 1 Multinomial logistic regression*

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Dependent variable:

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partyreg

---------------------------------------------

ELF 1.161

(2.352)

PSI 11.814\*

(6.670)

housesys -1.149

(1.169)

col\_legacy.f1 0.319

(1.784)

col\_legacy.f2 0.584

(1.866)

col\_legacy.f3 -0.391

(2.483)

dem -14.298\*\*\*

(5.325)

inc no incumbency -1.936\*

(1.134)

edu -3.775

(6.312)

oil.x 0.183

(0.368)

Constant 2.566

(3.775)

---------------------------------------------

Observations 42

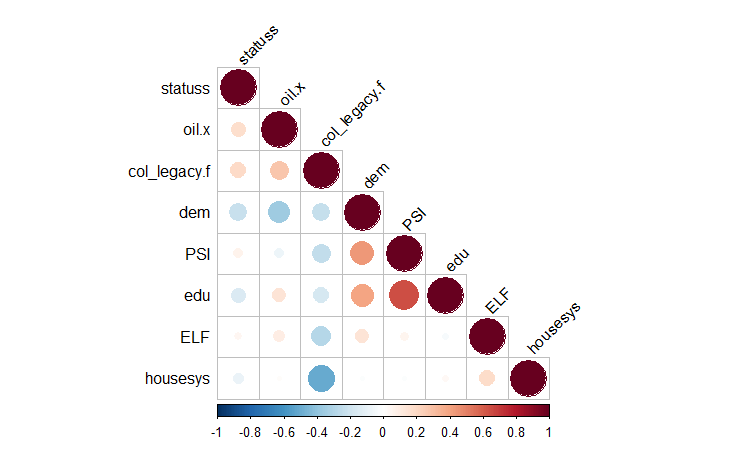
Log Likelihood -15.554

Akaike Inf. Crit. 53.108

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Note: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

*Table 2 Logistic Regression for ELF variable*



*Figure 2 Predictors correlation matrix*

1. Understood in terms of the ability to pass legislation [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Mostly seen in reduced numbers of coup d’état, civil wars and overall longer-lasting peace windows. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. For example, there can be one old and dominant party, and different young parties that contend them for short electoral windows, unable to institutionalize and gain access to power, and therefore die off after one cycle only to create more such parties in the next one [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Mainly, acceptance of democratic processes by all actors and developed ideological and economic party stances [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Here and further – duplicated in the Appendix [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. In a truly Webberian sense – as only a strong ruler can stop bureaucracy from expanding indefinitely [↑](#footnote-ref-8)