Africa's Cumbersome Cabinets:
Citizen Preferences and Economic Performance since the 1970s

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Abstract: Does government cabinet size impact economic performance in Africa? The literature on power sharing and "consociational" regimes identifies cabinets as a critically important characteristic of executives and an indicator of the quality of representation. Proponents of these regimes maintain that enhancing political representation does not adversely affect economic performance (Lijphart 1999; Norris 2008). Other evidence suggests that large cabinets undermine macroeconomic outcomes, particularly through coalition governments (Persson and Tabellini 2003). These claims have yet to be empirically evaluated in Africa, even though cabinets have grown dramatically since the 1970s and recent coalition governments have attracted criticism for profligate spending. Using data on 46 African cabinets between 1972 and 2004, our time-series analysis finds that cabinets with more portfolios are likely to have lower levels of patronage, deliver budgetary surpluses, and collect more revenue. However, coalition governments reverse some of these outcomes, as multiparty cabinets collect less revenue, are more likely to run deficits, and have lower rates of economic growth. We conclude that patronage distribution appears to occur largely outside the cabinet, and that multiparty coalitions face coordination problems that impair key areas of macroeconomic performance.

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INTRODUCTION

Does cabinet size in Africa impact economic performance? A growing literature explains variation in African economic performance by pointing to policy choices and the political institutions which shape them (Alence 2004; Bates 2008; Ndulu et al. 2008). Yet few studies consider the economic consequences of government cabinet size, an important political dimension of the policy process and a critical source of variation among executives. Using time-series cross-sectional data on 46 African cabinets between 1973 and 2004, we test for the impact of cabinet size on macroeconomic performance. Our statistical tests find that cabinets with more portfolios perform better on key macroeconomic indicators including consumption, revenues, and budgetary surpluses. But as the number of parties in the cabinet increases, governments are more likely to run deficits, collect less revenue, and experience slower economic growth.

The dearth of research on African cabinets is surprising for several reasons. Cabinets are important as a means of gauging how well the executive branch represents political and social diversity. Proponents of power sharing, "consociationalism," and varieties of "consensus government" maintain that enhancing political representation does not adversely affect macroeconomic performance (Lijphart 1999; Norris 2008). This is questioned by research on post-conflict policy making (Jarstad and Sisk 2008; Rothschild and Roeder 2005), by evidence from wealthy countries about the effects of multi-party coalition governments (Alesina et al. 1997), and by costly power sharing agreements in Kenya and Zimbabwe. Studying the consequences of cabinet size in Africa is important because it addresses these conflicting empirical findings. Moreover, African cabinets and the frequency of coalition governments have increased steadily since the early 1970s, and it is not always clear that this improves accountability or that citizen preferences drive these trends.

We first review literature which identifies cabinet size as a singularly important feature of regimes which seek to maximize political inclusion. We document a dramatic increase in African cabinet size which predates the democratization wave of the 1990s. We summarize research which both explains this growth and relates it to models of democracy that emphasize political representativeness over other democratic values. We add to this discussion by exploring some evidence for a cultural ethic of political inclusion, including recent Afrobarometer surveys which suggest that such norms are overstated. Second, we point to conflicting evidence – mostly from wealthy countries – about the economic consequences of cabinets. Given the growth of Africa's cabinets and recent popular complaints about the high financial costs of multi-party governments, the lack of empirical studies on the economic consequences of cabinets is surprising. Transaction costs theory suggests that Africa's undisciplined parties, weak collective cabinet responsibility, and strong presidential patronage systems should link large cabinets to inferior macroeconomic performance. Third, building on existing research, we take cabinet portfolios as the means by which patronage is distributed. We measure patronage in terms of general government consumption as a share of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). We hypothesize that large cabinets undermine macroeconomic performance because sustaining the ruling coalition is more expensive with more political actors in government. We surprisingly find that cabinets with more portfolios and more parties spend less money on patronage. Multiparty governments are also more likely to bring down inflation. However we also find that multiparty coalition governments are correlated with less fiscal discipline, weaker government capacity, and slower economic growth. These results hold across several different statistical specifications.

The conclusion highlights two sides of the story of preferences and performance. Large cabinets may enhance representation, but African voters today remain suspicious of inclusive governments given the limited state of political competitiveness.

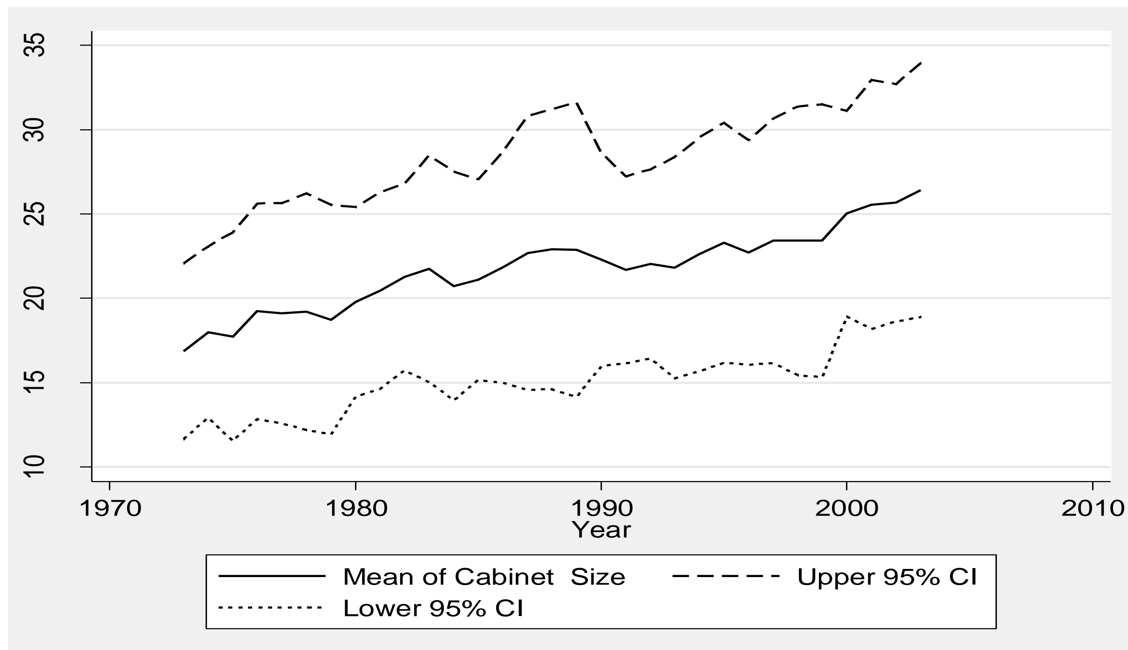
(1) EXECUTIVE CABINETS AND AFRICAN POLITICS OF INCLUSION

Africa's cabinets have grown from an average of 16.5 ministries in 1972 to nearly 27 in 2004. This remarkable growth is important because much of the comparative literature takes cabinet size as a key indicator of a government's representativeness. A handful of scholars have also considered the causes of cabinet size, linking African trends to factors such as population growth and the reemergence of multi-party democracy after 1989. We add to this analysis by using AfroBarometer surveys which suggest that domestic demand for political inclusion exists only in a few countries. In most countries citizens understand democracy instead in terms of the ability to defeat incumbents; in these cases we suggest that coalition governments with large cabinets may contribute to "preference gaps" between voters and politicians.

Growth in Cabinet Size

In a 1989 essay, written just before Africa's era of dramatic democratization, a leading Nigerian political scientist noted "a phenomenal increase in the size of the modern cabinet" (Osaghae 1989). Figure 1 documents the steady growth in the average size of cabinets in 46 African countries between 1972 and 2004. This includes 1,471 observations from the Arthur Banks data set reported with a 95 percent confidence interval.

Figure 1: Cabinet Size in Africa, 1993 - 2009



This steep increase in cabinet size illustrates what Lijphart describes as a global "wave of power sharing," a term meaning that government institutions strive to limit the range of interests excluded from the exercise of political authority (Lijphart 2002). In his broad model of

"consensus" government, cabinets are the single most important indicator of how well the government represents society. The number of parties present, he says, "epitomizes the contrast between concentration of power on the one hand and power-sharing on the other" (1999, p 62). Cabinets fundamentally affect "the breadth of participation by the people's representatives in the executive branch of government" (p. 90). A study of Nigeria's cabinets calls this representative quality of cabinets a "cardinal principle" of government. "For practical politics and peaceful coexistence of diverse elements, the composition of the cabinet should reflect the diversities in a polity" (Osaghae 1989). In Zambia, Posner tracks the ethnic background of cabinet ministers to demonstrate how perceptions of inclusiveness inform both voter choice and politicians' electoral strategies (Posner 2005). One recent study in fact uses African cabinet size as a proxy variable for political inclusiveness, noting that cabinet size is correlated with ethnic diversity (Arriola 2009). Cabinets are thus a fundamental feature of the "wave" of power sharing because they illustrate the executive branch's representativeness. In 1991, less than a quarter of the 13 government that we have data on were coalition governments. By 2003, 55 percent out of 36 African countries had coalition governments.

A number of demonstrable factors have driven the growth of Africa's cabinets in particular, including rapid population growth (Arriola 2009) and the return of multi-party politics, which ushered in a new wave of coalition governments (Oyugi 2006). The African Union formally recommends proportional representation for conflict-mitigation mechanism (Murray 2005), an electoral arrangement which increases the number of parties in government. Two types of executive power sharing have further contributed to the growth of Africa's cabinets. The first variety consists of post-war pacts which aim to protect the rights of sectarian interests. Such agreements formed part of the end to conflicts in Eritrea (1993), Sierra Leone (1996), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2002 and 2003), Côte d'Ivoire (2003), Sudan (2004), and elsewhere. In 2007, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire both formed governments of national unity designed to bring in former militant opposition. In the year following each of these power sharing agreements, the number of cabinet ministries increased. Pacts formed after failed elections constitute the other type of executive power sharing which has increased the size of Africa's cabinets. Violence following elections in Lesotho (1998), Kenya (2007), and Zimbabwe (2008) precipitated internationally mediated agreements to share power through multi-party coalitions that increased the size of the cabinet (LeVan 2010).

Cultural Origins of Inclusion?

Another contributing factor to Africa's wave of power sharing rests in political culture. This point of view criticizes the "winner-take-all" mentality generated by "western" style elections (Nwankwo 2002). Numerous African traditions do reflect strong norms of inclusion and power sharing. For example in *Sundiata*, the epic story telling the rise of Mali's empire in the 13th Century, griots[1] ridicule the scheming half-brother of the story's hero because he selfishly declares "power cannot be shared" (1965). In Nigeria, even before independence, several constitutions enshrined political inclusion through ethnic balancing of the bureaucracy, the legislature's top positions, and even the military (Ekeh and Osaghae 1989). For over half a century, dictators and democrats alike have implemented such practices. Senegal suggests another example, where the discourse of democracy emphasizes the Wolof idea of *demokaraasi*. In this tradition, voters seek conformity because it brings social security and they seek consensus

[1] A storyteller and oral historian in West African traditions.

because it brings stability. "Harmonizing" opinions is therefore more important than *alternance* – alternating political power between parties (Schaffer 1998).

Political rhetoric in the post-independence embraced the values of consensus building, with nationalists such as Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah arguing that political freedom requires unity and solidarity. Julius Nyerere declared in 1968 that "everyone must be allowed to speak freely, and everyone must be listened to. It does not matter how unpopular a man's ideas." In a resemblance to John Stewart Mill's *On Liberty*, he told Tanzanians that everyone's freedom depends upon the minority knowing that it is possible to convert the majority "if it argues properly and correctly," while the majority must remain open to persuasion (Nyerere 1973).

These cultural justifications for political inclusion are important because they link debates about different models of democracy to government performance. Nyerere goes on to say in "Freedom and Development" that after a decision has been made, everyone must obey the majority even though public discussions may continue. His "inclusive, participatory" model of governance with consensus building would both deepen democracy and facilitate economic growth (Baregu 1994). Writing about post-Apartheid South Africa, Fried says there is no "tradeoff" between good government performance and democratic quality enhanced by "inclusion." Cultural justifications for political inclusion are also important because they raise questions about the domestic demand for it. Friedman argues that the "delivery ideology" of South Africa's Government of National Unity treated inclusion instrumentally "as a temporary expedient," rather than "an end in itself" valued by citizens (Friedman 2004).[2] Senegal offers another example, where supporters of the incumbent party were more likely than the opposition to preach power sharing and reject *alternance* as pillars of democracy (Schaffer 1998).

Is there a Domestic Demand for Political Inclusion?

To conduct a fairer test of these contrasting views of democracy, we reconstruct AfroBarometer data to see how many respondents define democracy in language that first captures the spirit of consensus building and sharing power.[3] We operationalize a concept of "political inclusion" as broadly as possible, combining survey responses coded as "peace/unity/power sharing", "mutual respect", and "working together." We then compare these answers to a definition of democracy labeled "alternation" which adds together responses using the terms "majority rule," "change of government/leadership/laws," or "voting/elections/multiparty competition." Our rationale for doing so derives from a theoretical understanding of democracy as "temporary majorities" (Rustow 1970) in which the credible threat of replacement drives leadership accountability and inspires citizen participation. A third definition codes answers that define democracy in terms of civil and political rights.

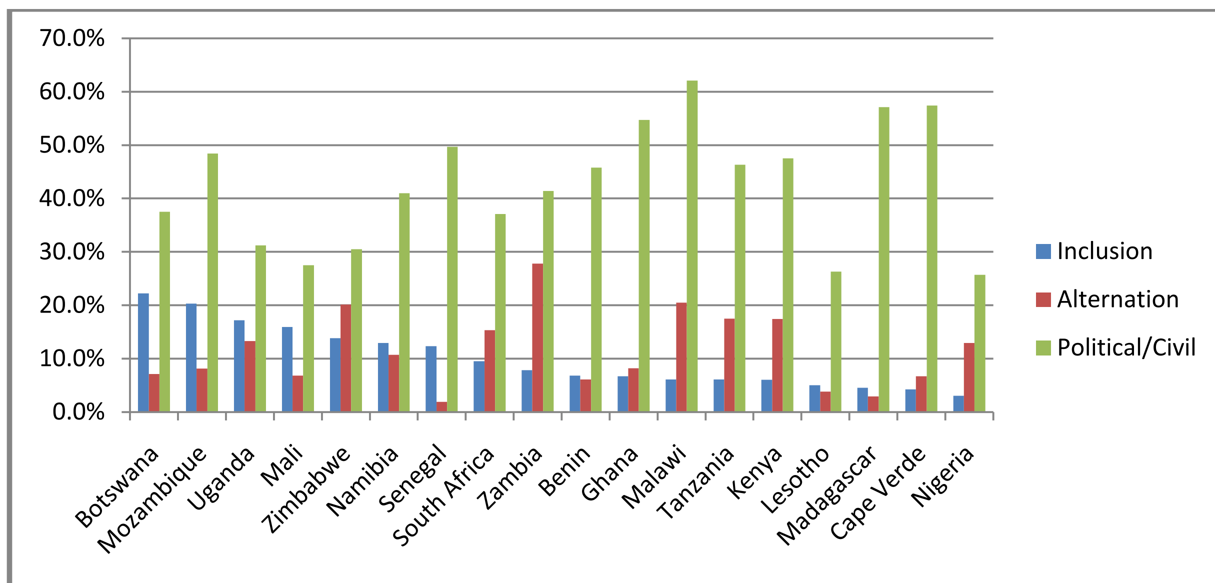
Figure 2 compares respondents' first answers using these different definitions.[4] Africans in all 18 countries most commonly define democracy in terms of civil and political rights, with an

[2] Friedman's critique is more generally focused on a different debate: whether Africans see democracy in purely "instrumental" terms as utility-maximizing individuals seeking material benefits, or if voting is instead an exercise of cultural self-expression.
[3] We use Round 3 data from 2005-06 because these answers were not available in Round 4.
[4] The bars do not add up to 100 percent because the question is open ended and not all responses are included here.

overall average of 41 percent.[5] A second result that stands out is that citizens in Botswana, Uganda, Mozambique, Mali, Namibia, and Senegal emphasize political inclusion over the more majoritarian principle of alternation of power. Since this accounts for a third of the countries with available survey data, this suggests that there are indeed some national-level differences in how citizens value inclusiveness compared to representativeness as democratic norms. Significantly, cabinet size increased in all of these countries, averaging more than six portfolios.

A third set of results appears in the countries where citizens clearly understand democracy in terms of alternation of power. Citizen satisfaction with democracy increases substantially in Africa an electoral alternation from one political party to another (Bratton 2008). Electoral defeat has yet to occur in Malawi, Tanzania, Nigeria, Zambia, Tanzania, or Uganda. Zimbabwe and Kenya are significant among these countries because despite the importance of electoral alternation to democracy, their governments recently adopted mechanisms of political inclusion.

Figure 2: Definitions of Democracy Compared



In

Figure 2, only 6.0 percent of respondents in Kenya define democracy as inclusive for their first response while 13.8 percent do so in Zimbabwe. Shortly after the survey, both of these countries held profoundly flawed elections which the political parties resolved by negotiating pacts to share power. There are obvious differences between these cases, such as Zimbabwe's steeper

[5] African responses are surprisingly similar to global surveys from 49 countries across four continents, in which respondents define democracy in terms of political and civil rights Dalton, Russell J., Doh Shin and Willy Jou. 2008. "How People Understand Democracy." In *How People View Democracy*, eds. Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1-15..

financial crises, its politicized military faction, and the pact's presumed role as a democratizing agent in itself. In both cases, cabinet size contributed to declining popularity of these agreements, potentially driving a wedge between citizens and political elites.

In Zimbabwe, there was grassroots support for a "unity government" to the extent that people viewed it as a means to weaken President Robert Mugabe's nearly three decade old hold on power. But opposition party activists also feared that joining a coalition government would effectively reward the violence used Mugabe's supporters with the political power that they failed to win at the polls (Bell 2009a, b). The main Zimbabwean trade union federation also criticized the agreement as a sellout. Over time though, Mugabe's unpopularity became more important than the pact's; one poll reported a 20 percent decline in his popular support between February and August 2009 (Guma 2009). Kenya faced a starker contrast between elite and citizen attitudes. The National Human Rights Commission said the bloated cabinet at the core of the agreement signaled the triumph of elite bargaining over the interests of strained taxpayers (Kiai 2008). The National Civil Society Congress called the agreement "a disappointment to the people of Kenya" (Bakano 2008). *The Nation* newspaper called it "an elite deal with no citizen involvement," even though the parliament voted on it (2008b). Surveys indicated a steady decline in support for the agreement, dropping from two thirds at the time of its signing to less than a few months later (Horowitz 2009). In 2008, AfroBarometer documented a rising demand for democracy alongside the steepest drop in supply – 40 percentage points – in any country, raising the specter of whether democracy is "deconsolidating" in Kenya (AfroBarometer 2009).

In sum, the size of African cabinets and the frequency of coalition governments have grown dramatically since the 1970s for a variety of reasons including population growth, post-conflict power sharing agreements, and proportional electoral systems that increase cabinet size. There is also some evidence that large cabinets reflect African cultural traditions of inclusiveness. However, surveys since Africa's democratization in the 1990s suggest that voters value party turnover, and some recent post-election pacts appear to work at odds with those preferences.

(2) ARE AFRICA'S CABINETS CUMBERSOME?

Theories about cabinet behavior suggest that cabinet size has important economic consequences, and complaints about big cabinets appear to be common in Africa. Yet we have few empirical studies which examine the economic effects of cabinet size outside of developed countries. Establishing such a causal relationship would be especially important for Africa because of the tension between popular understandings of democracy and elite support for the kinds of politically inclusive pacts just described. Africa also has the largest cabinets in the world, on average (van de Walle 2001). Comparative research on cabinets comes to conflicting conclusions about the economic impact of cabinets and multi-party coalitions. We conclude by identifying features of Africa's institutional environment which make portfolio allocation an especially important because of its potential for patronage. We therefore expect large cabinets to contribute to policy log rolls which undermine macroeconomic performance.

Competing Views of Fiscal Effects

Cabinet size is linked to economic performance in both classical theories of multi-party legislative coalitions and in more recent "selectorate" models which suggest that coalition size is

the distinguishing feature of democratic compared to authoritarian regimes. These literatures suggest competing conclusions about the fiscal effects of cabinets.

Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003) argue that large governing coalitions produce better distributive outcomes because they represent more preferences. Their theory of the "selectorate" claims that governing coalitions vary according to the size of the win set drawn from the universe of all possible government leaders. The winning coalition can distribute either private goods or public goods. They claim that large coalitions deliver more public goods because the distribution of private goods becomes more costly as coalitions increase in size. "Public welfare is enhanced when leaders depend on a large coalition to keep them in office. Under these conditions, those motivated to stay in power have no choice but to promote the public's welfare" (pp. 57-72). To keep the costs of side payments down, coalitions supposedly bargain to a minimum winning size (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2001; Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003). Because selectorate theory attempts to capture coalition behavior even in non-democratic regimes, it uses variables such as the ethnicity of the chief executive to proxy for coalition size (Heger and Salehyan 2007). Since dictatorships by definition have smaller winning coalitions, they possess stronger incentives to sacrifice long term economic growth (Collier 2001). Smaller coalitions "promote corruption, black marketeering, and cronyism," according to Bueno de Mesquita et al. (p. 214).

A more traditional understanding of coalitions comes from parliamentary politics, where a coalition is a set of political parties who: (1) agree to pursue common goals; (2) pool their resources in order to achieve this goal; (3) communicate and form binding commitments concerning their goal(s); and (4) agree on the distribution of payoffs to be received after the coalition meets its objectives (Browne and Dreijmanis 1982). Thus the size of the coalition derives from a direct measure of the number of political parties in the cabinet (rather than from a proxy). On average, this means that multiparty coalitions produce larger cabinets. In the Western European tradition, parties bargain to join the cabinet because they are interested in portfolios that payoff either by increasing their influence over policies they value ideologically, or by improving their chances in future elections (Austen-Smith and Banks 1988; Laver and Schofield 1998).

Adopting this definition, Lijphart argues that increasing representation in government does not require sacrificing economic performance. In empirical tests with data on 36 democracies, he contrasts majoritarian institutions which allow some political actors to be excluded from government, with more "consensual" governments which maximize representation through proportional representation, coalition governments, federalism, and other means. Similar to the critics of presidentialism and "western" style elections in Africa, he associates majoritarianism with a winner-take-all approach to decision making. He finds that consensus governments perform better in terms of economic growth and budget deficits. His influential study overall falls short of an affirmative finding that "consensus" governments produce better macroeconomic outcomes, largely because the results with regard to inflation are mixed. He admits "the empirical results do not permit the definitive conclusion that consensus democracies are better decision makers and better policy-makers than majoritarian systems" (Lijphart 1999, 274).[6]

[6] He also tests for unemployment, but the data for Africa are inadequate. We do not attempt his tests for political violence and riots since we are only focuses here on macroeconomic performance.

By contrast, other studies find that large cabinets and coalition governments undermine macroeconomic performance. In general, the literature on parliamentary behavior has long understood cabinets as patronage delivery tools, forming the basis for coalition politics (Laver and Schofield 1998). It is unsurprising then that numerous empirical studies report that coalition governments are more likely to have spending deficits (Alesina et al. 1997). The World Bank says that since coalition governments make so many compromises and payoffs, "fiscal outcomes are often worse than when majority governments are in power" (Bank 2002). Consistent with these findings, Persson and Tabellini report that majoritarianism produces the opposite result of smaller deficits, regardless of whether the system is parliamentary or presidential (Persson and Tabellini 2003). This data primarily cover wealthy countries and members of the Organization for Cooperation and Development in particular.

Cabinet Costs and African Government Performance

The existing research thus arrives at conflicting conclusions, and we know very little about the economic impact of cabinets in Africa. Why then would we expect to find a causal link between cabinet size and economic performance? With more ministries demanding payoffs, policy becomes a "log roll" that supplies payoffs to everyone. This becomes financially costly in the aggregate, which should appear as a strain on national budgets and other dimensions of economic performance. As cabinet size increases, so do the transaction costs of coordinating preferences to identify a solution in which payoffs cannot improve the welfare of one without affecting the welfare of all.[7] For cabinets to collectively arrive at such a solution (which selectorate theory infers from coalition size), an organization such as a disciplined political party must internalize the transaction costs of coordination.

The conditions of coalition behavior within Africa exacerbate the problems related to coordination and transaction costs in several ways. Few political parties are satisfied with payoffs that advance a platform or that increase policy influence in order to improve their chances in future elections. Instead, coalition members expect payoffs through more explicit patronage benefits. Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, and South Africa all engaged in reckless levels of spending through large cabinets, during the 1990s era of fiscal austerity (van de Walle 2001).

Another reason why African cabinets face additional transaction costs concerns the type of executives most common across the continent. Only one sub-Saharan country operates under a constitutional principle of parliamentary government. This is significant because the collective responsibility of parliamentary government creates incentives for restraint; parliamentary parties are motivated to be disciplined in order to avoid new elections (Strom 2000). However, nearly every African executive is classified as either a presidential republic in which the head of state is also the head of government, or a mixed republic with a president and a prime minister. A few countries are monarchies or pure military states.[8] In other words, the absence of collective responsibility in the parliamentary sense enhances the patronage potential of African cabinets.

[7] The Kaldor-Hicks model judges a policy as welfare-enhancing when a bundle of costless transfers benefit everyone. However transfers do have transaction costs in political terms among bickering cabinet members. In this way, logrolls yield efficiency losses in the aggregate.

[8] Cross-Polity Time-Series Database. State University of New York-Binghamton. www.databanks.sitehosting.net.

The expectation of patronage payoffs is particularly salient in the context of Africa's neopatromonial states with strong executives and weak political parties (van de Walle 2003).

(3) EMPIRICAL TESTS FOR THE CONSEQUENCES OF CABINET SIZE

Because African cabinets face high transaction costs and few incentives for organizational discipline which might improve coordination, we predict that larger cabinets undermine economic performance in several ways. As policy becomes a log roll, we expect the costs to be visible in increased budget deficits and the aggregate costs of patronage payments apparent in high levels of government consumption.

Operationalizations and Predictions

We measure cabinet size first with the variable, *cabinetsize*, illustrated in Figure 1. We also use a dummy variable for the presence of a coalition government. The variable c*oalition* is a dummy drawn from the Arthur Banks data set, which we recode so that 1 indicates a multiparty coalition cabinet and 0 indicates a one party government. Our sample includes 46 African countries between 1972 and 2004 for a total of 1,471 observations. We include both of these variables because doing so allows us to determine if the number of portfolios by itself impacts economic performance, implying that ministerial control is sufficient for the power to distribute patronage. Coordination for patronage and economic performance policy could instead occur through political parties. By aggregating fragmented interests dispersed throughout the cabinet, multi-party coalitions should produce one of two mutually exclusive outcomes: either they deliver on the promise of inclusive governance with good economic policies as Lijphart (1999) and Norris (2008) claim, or they collude to share the spoils of political power, consistent with the findings from Alesina (1997) and others. From this we hypothesize that larger cabinets have inferior macroeconomic performance.

Using our *cabinetsize* variable we expect the number of portfolios to impact economic performance in five ways. First, we expect it to increase the level of government consumption. We operationalize this with a variable from the World Development Indicators which measures government final consumption as a share of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). If the underlying logic of coalition bargaining from the research on Europe holds, more ministers should mean more patronage, appearing as a positive correlation with our *patronage* variable. Second, we expect large cabinets to increase budget deficits because fiscal indiscipline is a consequence of bargaining problems in these broader, more inclusive governments (Alesina et al. 1997). Smaller cabinets should coincide with positive values on the *surplus* variable. For the same reason, we expect large cabinets to struggle with inflation, our third measure of economic performance. Specifically, we expect it to be more difficult for large cabinets to control inflation, which would be indicated by positive values in the variable *inflation*, also from WDI. Fourth, because low government capacity to collect revenue could bias our variable measuring budget surpluses, we separately test for the impact of cabinet size and coalitions on revenue. This is also an important test because prevailing accounts of African governance associate weak government capacity and poor domestic legitimacy with poor economic performance (Hyden 2006; van de Walle 2001). Similarly, poor performers in Africa governments suffer from a domestic political legitimacy deficit (Englebert 2002), and revenue extraction provides a proxy for domestic political legitimacy (Brautigam et al. 2008; Levi 1988). Fifth and finally, we expect big cabinets to impair overall economic growth measured in per capita GDP with the *growth* variable.

We include a standard control for colonial history with a dummy variable for whether a country is former British colony. This is also important because these countries tend to be associated with other political characteristics, including more majoritarian models of democracy, Single Member District-plurality electoral systems, and looser controls on civil society (Widner 1994). We also include a control for checks on executive authority from the Database of Political Institutions (Keefer and Stasavage 2003). This variable controls for the possibility that non-democratic regimes with small cabinets pollute the results by making a false case against coalition governments and large cabinets: dictatorships with small cabinets might perform well. This is especially relevant since some of our sample precedes the democratization of the 1990s. The consolidation of executive authority had unclear implications for economic performance in Africa between 1960 and 2000. Whereas in several Southeast Asian cases, authoritarianism improved economic performance, precisely the opposite is the case in Africa, with checks on executive authority and high levels of democracy corresponding with the most sustained high rates of economic growth (Ndulu and O'Connell 2008). A value of 1 on the executive constraint variable indicates that the chief executive has virtually unlimited authority, while a value of 5 signals significant limitations and constraints on unilateral action.

Testing for the Consequences

We perform for each of our dependent variables (*patronage*, *surplus*, *inflation*, and *revenue*) under five different statistical specifications: First, a random effects model operates on a strong assumption of homogeneity across countries and across time. Second, a fixed effects controls for possible heteroskedasticity and extreme heterogeneity across countries. This is our least restrictive specification. Third, a between effects model (REG BE) uses average values of the variables across countries. Fourth, a generalized least squares (GLS) model controls for heteroskedasticity across countries and also correlation within each country. This is important because, for example, the share of government final consumption among countries in our sample sometimes differs greatly, and at the same time there is the likelihood of autocorrelation within each country as t+1 is similar to time t. Fifth, we use a mixed effects model. Consistent results across all of these models is a standard econometric check for robustness (Greene 2008).

The first test of our hypothesis is expressed in Equation 1, where $patronage_{it}$ is the general government final consumption expenditure as percent of GDP of the ith country at the tth year, CS_{it} is the size of the cabinet of the ith country at the tth year, EC_{it} is executive constraint variable, $GDPPCG_{it}$ is the GDP per capita growth, PBC_{it} is a dummy variable where a value of 1 indicates a previous British colony, and CG_{it} is a dummy variable for coalition government. Therefore a negative value of the *coalition* coefficient would imply that coalition governments deliver less patronage compared to single party government; a positive value implies multiparty governments spend bigger share of GDP as patronage.

Equation 1: $$Patronage_{it} = a_i + \beta_1 CS_{it} + \beta_2 EC_{it} + \beta_3 GDPPCG_{it} + \beta_4 PBC_{it} + \beta_5 CG_{it} + e_{it}$$

The results for this test of our hypothesis are displayed in Table 1. Rather than contributing more patronage, large cabinets and coalition governments both lead to *lower* levels of government consumption, rejecting our hypothesis. The results are particularly strong with

regard to cabinet size. Specifically, the negative coefficient on the *coalition* variable means that coalition governments on average spend 1.66 percent of GDP less patronage. The estimate for cabinet size is consistent across the models. Former British colonies are bigger patronage spenders, and the positive coefficient on *constraints* means that checks on executive discretion do not reduce patronage levels.

The second test of our hypothesis is expressed in Equation 2, where *surplus* is government surplus as percent of the GDP, calculated as revenues minus spending.

Equation 2: $$Surplus_{it} = a_i + \beta_1 CS_{it} + \beta_2 EC_{it} + \beta_3 GDPPCG_{it} + \beta_4 PBC_{it} + \beta_5 CG_{it} + e_{it}$$

The positive coefficients on the *cabinet* variable here indicate that cabinets with more portfolios are actually *more* likely to run a budget surplus, again contrary to our hypothesis. However these effects drop out with executive constraints in the between effects, GLS, and mixed models. Moreover, budgetary discipline declines with multi-party coalitions. There is some evidence that colonial history matters, specifically, that former British colonies are more likely to run a surplus.

The third test of our hypothesis measures the impact of cabinet size and coalition governments on the rate of inflation. It is expressed in Equation 3, where $Inflation_{it}$ is the inflation rate of the ith country at the tth year:

Equation 3: $$Inflation_{it} = a_i + \beta_1 CS_{it} + \beta_2 EC_{it} + \beta_3 GDPPCG_{it} + \beta_4 PBC_{it} + \beta_5 CG_{it} + e_{it}$$

Based on the results in Table 3, we find differential effects. Larger cabinets correlate with higher rates of inflation, though the statistical significance is weak and only holds in the GLS and mixed models. Governments in former British colonies on average experience nearly 6 percent (5.8) more inflation. The *coalition* variable shows that on average, coalition governments run 11.6 to 14.7 percent lower inflation compared to single-party governments. Executive constraints surprisingly have has no impact.

The fourth test of our hypothesis considers the effects on revenues, to see if the results of our tests with *surplus* were biased by lower revenue collection, and whether coalition governments coincide with weaker government capacity to collect revenue. Where $revenue_{it}$ is the of the ith country at the tth year:

Equation 4: $$revenue_{it} = a_i + \beta_1 CS_{it} + \beta_2 EC_{it} + \beta_3 GDPPCG_{it} + \beta_4 PBC_{it} + \beta_5 CG_{it} + e_{it}$$

The results from this test are displayed in Table 4. The positive values on *cabinetsize* our hypothesis, since they mean that cabinets with more portfolios correlated with better performance, measured in terms of revenue collection. This only holds in the random and effects and fixed effects models. However, coalition governments collect less revenue and *cabinetsize* loses significance in three out of our five models. Specifically, coalition governments collect on

average 1.8 and 7.2 percent of the GDP. This reinforces our findings with regard to budget surpluses in our second test. More importantly, the results suggest that multiparty coalition cabinets undermine this indicator of government capacity.

Our fifth and final test of our hypothesis measures the impact of cabinet size on economic growth in per capita GDP.

Equation 5: $growth_{it} = a_i + \beta_1 CS_{it} + \beta_2 EC_{it} + \beta_3 PBC_{it} + \beta_4 CG_{it} + e_{it}$

The results in Table 5 show that cabinets with more portfolios are weakly correlated with higher rates of economic growth. Though the effect is statistically significant in two of our five models, the actual effect on the rate of growth is only 0.2 percent. As with the tests for *revenue* and *surplus* dependent variables though, coalition governments are associated with inferior macroeconomic performance – in this cases weaker economic growth. British colonial history and executive constraints have no effect.

Special Cases

The generalized effects of coalition governments and large cabinets shown here are murky among two groups of African countries which are not isolated in our statistical models. One group consists of countries emerging from war. Demand for peace creates compelling incentives to form broadly inclusive governments, even if they impose financial burdens (Jarstad and Sisk 2008). But in the long run, borrowing, inflation, and deficit spending in these countries is likely to stimulate political uncertainty (Boyce and O'Donnell 2007). Somalia formed an oversized and cumbersome cabinet in 2006 (Menkhaus 2008). When the prime minister tried to scale it back the fragile government nearly imploded. Collier concludes that policies to promote economic growth through macroeconomic restraint are therefore the best guarantee for long term peace in the first place (Collier 2008). If our results are any indication of what these countries can expect, concern about budgetary discipline and low growth in these countries is indeed warranted.

The other group consists of countries that form coalition governments to address flawed elections. In Kenya and Zimbabwe, costs were at the center of criticisms of coalition government formed after botched elections in 2007 and 2008, respectively. The watchdog group Zimbabwe Watch complained that the primary beneficiaries are elites, mainly the 31 ministers and 15 deputies. Another civil society organization noted that each of these officials will be paid $10,000 US Dollars per month and will pay little in taxes (2008c; Candy 2008; Sithole 2008). In Kenya, cost estimates of Kenya's 42 cabinet portfolios run as high as 130 million US Dollars per ministry. The costs have been widely condemned by civil society groups and the media (Bosire 2008). As in Zimbabwe, people complained that expensive ministries will be paid for with cuts coming from education and the social sector (2008a; Bakano 2008). These cases differ from our generalized findings in that cabinets produce *direct* expenses such as ministerial salaries, and cabinet formation through extra-constitutional means divorces them from the political institutions conducive to accountability here (LeVan 2010). For these reasons, patronage is likely a part of these particular cabinets, apart from our more generalized findings.

Summary

With regard to patronage, the relationship is essentially the opposite of the one hypothesized. The same is true for inflation, once we focus on coalitions rather than merely the number of portfolios. We find compelling support for our hypothesis with regard to three other depdendent variables though. Countries with coalition governments demonstrate fiscal indiscipline through more frequent budget deficits, they possess less government capacity through lower levels of revenue collection, and overall they have slower rates of economic growth.

Another set of findings relate to the executive constraint variable, which has decidedly mixed effects. Checks on executive discretion increase the aggregate level of patronage, but they also increase revenue collection and significantly improve the likelihood of budget surpluses. Surprisingly, the variable has no effect on inflation.

Taking these two findings together, we interpret them to mean that coalitions governments do not coordinate to increase overall levels of patronage, and they do improve macroeconomic performance in terms of inflation. These results support the findings the consociational and power sharing models of democracy only with regard to patronage and inflation. They are especially surprising if the assumptions about transaction costs associated with undisciplined political parties and weak collective cabinet responsibility are correct. However the findings with regard to three other dependent variables challenge those same theoretical traditions. The difference between these two sets of results could be explained by further specification of the means of coordinating collective behavior. Additional information about parties could especially illuminate this picture, since large cabinets become unproductive in key areas not as the number of portfolios grows, but as the number of parties grows. There also may be an unexpected message for legislatures here: if so much coordination for patronage occurs outside the cabinet, then it is likely that legislatures since 1990 are part of the story.

(4) CONCLUSION

Our results challenge some of the key findings by Lijphart (1999), Norris (2008) and other scholars who argue for the benefits of coalition governments. Multiparty coalition governments do reduce the level of patronage spending and help bring down inflation. Multi-party governments may offer an alternate route to checks on executive authority, absent strong vertical accountability between voters and politicians in Africa. This could explain why party competition has not increased on par with democratization in Africa (Rakner and Van de Walle 2009): few parties have won the presidency by defeating incumbents but they manage to restrain executive authority through cabinets. We hope to test this in future research by incorporating other variables for the level of party competition and specifically the strength of the legislature.

More significantly, we find that coalition governments are more likely to run budgetary deficits, collect fewer revenues, and have slower rates of growth. We do not attempt to account for the other dimensions of consensus government, largely because the data for Africa are insufficient. But this literature does specifically identify cabinets as the most important executive institution, and our results do offer meaningful generalizations about the economic impact of African cabinets. And even where increasing the number of portfolios and the number of parties in the cabinet appears to offer a recipe for good economic performance, the executive constraints variable shows that adversarial political institutions remain part of the story which turn performance around.

In sum, our empirical findings show that multi-party coalition governments neither collude to engage in patronage spending, as hypothesized. But nor do they coordinate to deliver on nationally-oriented policies such as long term economic growth, fiscal discipline, and state capacity. These findings are especially stark in light of the evidence we first offered from survey data about the kind of democracy demanded by Africans. Large cabinets may enhance representation as consensual theories claim, but African voters today remain suspicious of inclusive governments given the limited state of political competitiveness. With big, multiparty cabinets, African may neither satisfy their preferences for democracy nor achieve good government performance.

Table 1: Dependent Variable *Patronage* (general final government consumption as percentage of GDP)

	RE	FE	BE	GLS	Mixed
Cabinet size	-0.215***	-0.223***	-0.0739	-0.132*	-0.132*
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.20)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Ex Constraint	0.0123	-0.0597	0.696	0.593**	0.593**
	(0.22)	(0.23)	(0.64)	(0.20)	(0.20)
GDP per cap growth	-0.0748**	-0.0762**	-0.0138	-0.0436	-0.0436
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.22)	(0.04)	(0.04)
British colony	1.746		1.221	1.071	1.071
	(1.81)		(2.04)	(0.72)	(0.73)
Coalition govt	-1.133	-1.343	-0.522	-1.664*	-1.664*
	(0.88)	(0.99)	(2.05)	(0.68)	(0.68)
constant	19.60***	21.06***	13.20*	15.93***	15.93***
	(1.82)	(1.58)	(5.66)	(1.62)	(1.63)
lnsig_e					
constant					1.757***
					(0.04)
r2		0.089	0.107		
chi2	32			41	41
N	357	357	357	357	357

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table 2: Dependent Variable *Surplus* (budget surplus as percent of GDP)

	RE	FE	BE	GLS	Mixed
Cabinet Size	0.302***	0.331***	0.00270	0.0956	0.0956
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.20)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Ex Constraint	0.588*	0.390	1.573*	0.891***	0.891***
	(0.23)	(0.24)	(0.65)	(0.19)	(0.19)
GDP per cap growth	0.0685*	0.0655*	0.156	0.118**	0.118**
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.21)	(0.04)	(0.04)
British colony	3.889*		1.155	3.224***	3.224***
	(1.88)		(2.09)	(0.67)	(0.68)
Coalition govt	-1.053	0.197	-5.301*	-3.902***	-3.902***
	(0.94)	(1.05)	(2.10)	(0.63)	(0.64)
constant	-7.408***	-6.721***	-0.714	-1.907	-1.907
	(1.93)	(1.67)	(5.79)	(1.52)	(1.54)
lnsig_e					
constant					1.682***
					(0.04)
r2		0.122	0.389		
chi2	47			137	134
N	352	352	352	352	352

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table 3: Dependent variable *inflation* (annual percentage rate)

	re	fe	Reg be	GLS	Mixed
Cabinet size	-0.000426	-0.00188	0.00805	0.00382*	0.00382*
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Ex Constraint	-0.00783	-0.00969	0.0000124	-0.00136	-0.00136
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)
GDP per cap growth	-0.00330*	-0.00333*	-0.00702	-0.00430**	-0.00430**
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.00)
British colony	0.0565	0	0.0347	0.0588*	0.0588*
	(0.06)	(.)	(0.07)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Coalition govt	-0.0586	-0.0229	-0.147*	-0.116***	-0.116***
	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.07)	(0.03)	(0.03)
constant	0.199**	0.240**	0.0153	0.0919	0.0919
	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.19)	(0.06)	(0.06)
lnsig_e					
constant					-1.596***
					(0.04)
r2		0.025	0.177		
chi2	11			44	43
N	335	335	335	335	335

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table 4: Dependent variable *revenue* (government revenue as percent of GDP)

	RE	FE	BE	GLS	Mixed
Cabinet size	0.180***	0.182***	0.229	0.0836	0.0836
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.31)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Ex Constraint	0.423*	0.334	2.536*	1.610***	1.610***
	(0.20)	(0.20)	(1.04)	(0.26)	(0.26)
GDP per cap growth	0.0167	0.0159	-0.0292	0.0594	0.0594
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.32)	(0.05)	(0.05)
British colony	6.051*		2.296	4.257***	4.257***
	(2.83)		(3.21)	(0.90)	(0.91)
Coalition govt	-1.852*	-1.475	-7.169*	-6.242***	-6.242***
	(0.83)	(0.86)	(3.21)	(0.85)	(0.85)
constant	11.13***	13.17***	5.921	11.51***	11.51***
	(2.17)	(1.37)	(8.89)	(2.08)	(2.10)
lnsig_e					
constant					2.005***
					(0.04)
r2		0.053	0.324		
chi2	26			166	163
N	365	365	365	365	365

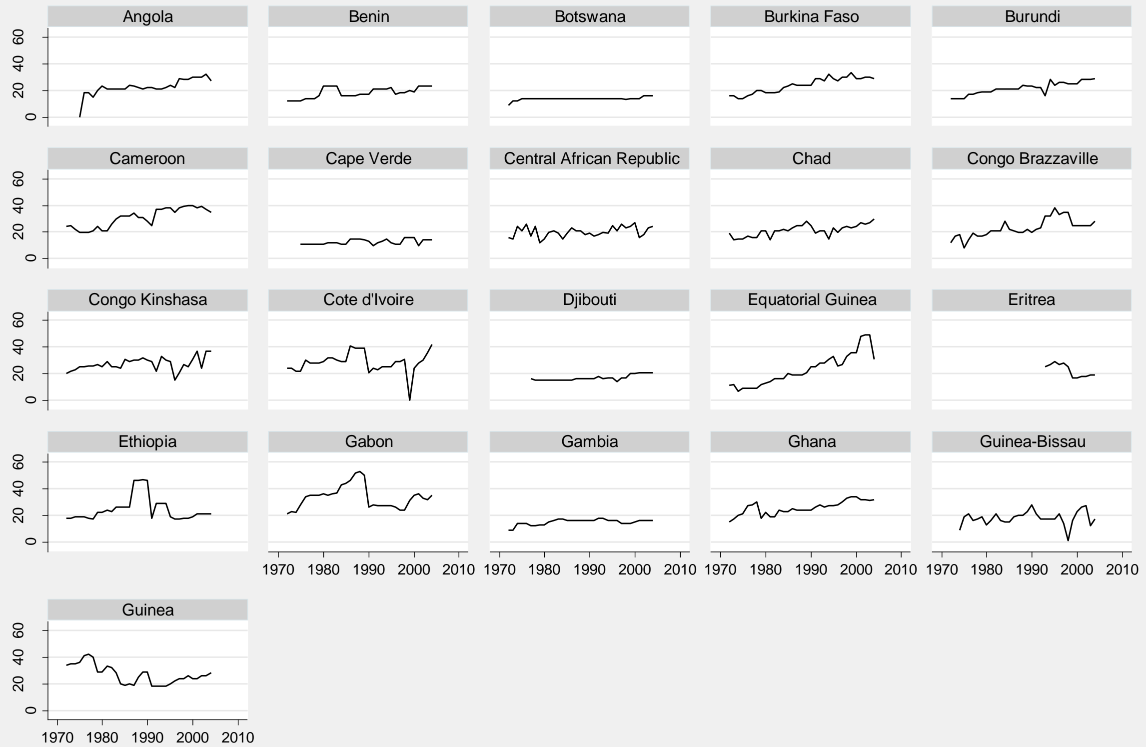
p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table 5: Dependent variable *growth* (per capita growth GDP)

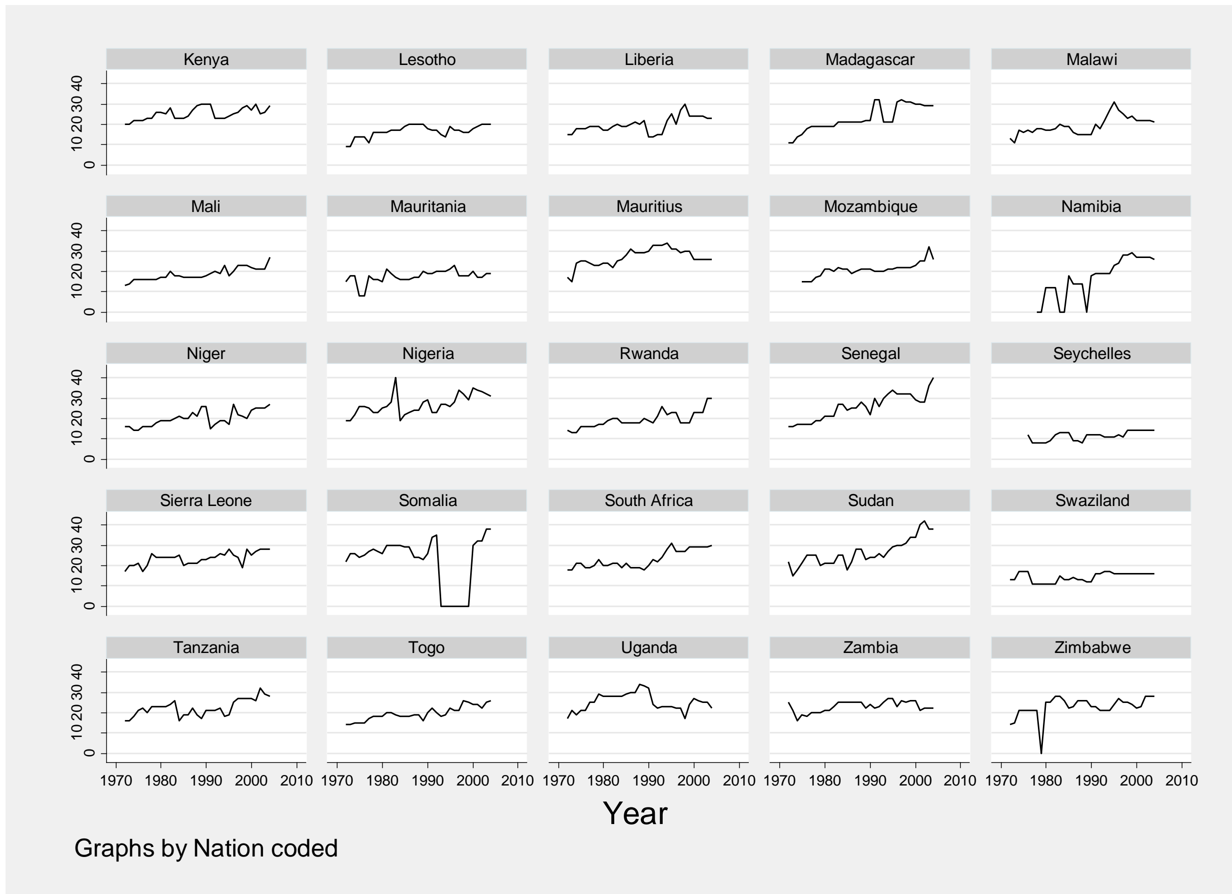
	RE	FE	BE	GLS	Mixed
Size of Cabinet~2007	0.190	0.116	0.292	0.243**	0.243**
	(0.11)	(0.13)	(0.20)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Executive Constrai~	-0.352	-0.207	-0.661	-0.275	-0.275
	(0.42)	(0.54)	(0.69)	(0.29)	(0.30)
Previous British c~o	1.399		1.871	0.270	0.270
	(1.97)		(2.12)	(1.02)	(1.03)
Coalition governme~)	-0.990	1.315	-2.776	-2.253*	-2.253*
	(1.54)	(2.31)	(2.08)	(0.97)	(0.98)
constant	-1.134	-0.745	-1.672	-1.971	-1.971
	(3.19)	(3.62)	(5.95)	(2.36)	(2.38)
lnsig_e					
constant					2.152***
					(0.04)
r2		0.004	0.168		
chi2	5			17	17
N	375	375	375	375	375

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001*

APPENDIX A: Size of Cabinet by Country, 1972 – 2004



APPENDIX A: Size of Cabinet by Country, 1972 – 2004 (continued)



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