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# Elite Coalitions and Power Balance across African Regimes: Introducing the African Cabinet and Political Elite Data Project (ACPED)

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**ABSTRACT** This article presents ACPED- the African Cabinet and Political Elite Data project. This project is a disaggregated set of cabinet ministers and positions by country month from 1997 into real time. Political representation of groups across Africa is often portrayed as a result of static, predictable ethno-demographic arithmetic. An associated perception is that regimes are ethnically exclusive as leaders over-represent co-ethnics, close allies and some strong challengers as a coup-proofing exercise. This paper measures the heterogenous political environments developing across African states, and presents evidence that African states are largely ethnically and regionally inclusive in formal political positions, with relatively low levels of co-ethnic favoritism and large group dominance. In modern autocracies and transitioning democracies, leaders select cabinet coalitions of elites that broadly inclusive, but distort the levels of power groups and elites enjoy within senior ranks. All ministers and ministries experience significant volatility, in line with how regimes manage, maintain and limit the influence of inclusive coalitions. In short, leaders keep power by spreading it around, but limiting the chances of others to capture it.

## Introduction

African regimes are frequently accused of engaging in exclusive politics through biased policies and distributions of power that mainly benefit co-ethnic supporters (Arriola, 2013; Francois et al., 2015; Roessler, 2011). High rates of violence, corruption, and illegitimacy are conclusively linked to exclusive politics (Buhaug et al., 2014). But the evidence of exclusion is often presumed (Berman, 1998; Ndegwa, 1997), estimated solely on ethnic demography (Posner, 2004) and informal political rankings (Wimmer et al., 2009), or based on the actions of poorly institutionalized regimes before 1990 (Gleditsch & Polo, 2016). Recent studies reinforce that African regimes cultivate corrupt practices, but find little evidence of exclusivity or co-ethnic favoritism as a standard and widespread practice (Albrecht, 2015; Arriola, 2009; Francois et al., 2015; Goldsmith, 2010; Osei, 2015;

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Posner & Young, 2007). There is growing evidence that African leaders build inclusive coalitions at senior scales, including in a political cabinet. Coalition building is good politics, as it allows for leaders to manage heterogeneous political agendas and identities that are commonplace across African states.

This article introduces comparative, robust data that measure and assess political representation and composition at senior levels. The African Cabinet and Political Elite Data Project (hereafter ACPED) collects consistent, reliable, updated and transparent representation information. ACPED tracks the presence, position, and demographics of ministers within African cabinets for each month from 1997 to the present. Ministers are associated with several demographic and political identifiers, including home region and associated ethnic community, political party, gender, and position within the cabinet at each month. With this information, ACPED creates ‘cabinet level’ monthly measures of representation and power balance, and group level information on power distortion rates.

Our motivation for generating a ‘living’ dataset of ministerial posts is to provide researchers with accurate and specific measures of minister and cabinet characteristics so that we can interrogate the composition and internal politics of African regimes. Current research underplays the formality of African institutional development, the activities and norms within specific institutions like the cabinet, and the strategies that leaders use to manipulate those institutions. By not incorporating these political developments into research agendas on governance and political outcomes, the politics of very diverse states are often reduced to a predetermined assessment of ethnic affiliations, group sizes, or regime type. Yet there are rich, largely qualitative, discussions on leader choices and elite transactions occurring outside the confines of the ‘ethnic demography’ debates. We aim to bring these together by demonstrating that leaders face two main decisions as they populate senior regime scales: the first is how to build the coalition that will integrate group representatives from across the state’s political identities; the second is how to establish a hierarchy of senior authority that maximizes the leverage and dependence between leaders and political elites.

Previous attempts at measuring representation relied heavily on ethnic group and regional demographics, as these identities have a strong influence on political support and patronage across Africa (Bratton & Van de Walle, 1994; Mozaffar et al., 2003; Posner, 2004; Van de Walle, 2003). But additional factors shape representation and cabinet composition, including a leader’s strategy to stay in power and repress the influence of competitors; elite and ministerial competence (Woldense, 2018); and the architecture of the patronage system (Geddes et al., 2014; Kroeger, 2018). We conclude that, based on the composition of cabinet coalitions, ethnic demography and regional affiliations of elites present options for how a leader may build a stable coalition. They do not pre-determine representation rates, and the ethno-regional composition of cabinets is flexible and volatile.

Inclusive, if unbalanced, senior regime coalitions is hardly the impression of African governments portrayed in research and the media, where accusations of exclusivity and ‘big manism’ are common. But following the Third Wave of democratization that swept Africa in the 1990s, regimes adapted to a new set of expectations. Bans on opposition parties were lifted and political contestation became, nominally, an open process. Many new political elites, and some former political insiders who had been exiled from government, re-entered the political arena (Bratton & Van de Walle, 1994). Long-time leaders such as Kaunda of Zambia or Banda of Malawi lost initial elections, showing that

supposedly entrenched regimes were not invulnerable to the various domestic political challengers. Consequently, leaders had to share power with relevant elites to bolster their chances of political survival, and bargaining between these entities played out in the organs and areas of the state (Rothchild, 1997).

Across African regimes, leaders now integrate a wide array of elites and interests in an attempt to hold onto power by redistributing material and symbolic rents from the center, and strengthen ties with their regional and political constituencies (Haass & Ottmann, 2017; LeVan & Assenov, 2016). In politically heterogeneous societies, the best strategy for leaders to secure a majority or plurality is through cross-group inclusive coalitions and balancing many identities, communities, and interests (Bayart, 1993; Muller, 2007; Rothchild, 1995). Broad, representative coalitions at a senior level of government—like cabinets—serve as a direct, identifiable manifestation of elite accommodation by leaders (Arriola, 2009; Goldsmith, 2001). Appointments are a public commitment by the leader, as a minister's identity is usually open knowledge (Chandra, 2007; Posner, 2004). A leader's cabinet, and its constituent ministers, is intended as a stabilizing coalition built to maximize buy-in from communities and limit opportunities for 'exclusivity' based grievances.

In turn, included elites offer a bridge between regimes and subnational group support. Cabinet positions are especially relevant, as 'a cabinet minister in Africa is considered "a kind of super representative" (Zolberg, 1969) who is expected to speak for the interests of co-ethnics, as well as channel resources to them' (Arriola, 2009, p. 1346). Cabinets are also the locus of policy decision-making and patronage opportunities from which the public may gain benefits. In this way, cabinet positions are a 'transaction' between a minister and a leader, but also suggest possible benefits to an elite's community.

Irrespective of such appointments, representation is not an altruistic act, and inclusive politics does not equate to balanced power between ministers, or a proportional composition of groups in cabinets. How leaders select and manage diverse and competing political identities and interests underlies the success or failure of several significant government functions (Burgess et al., 2015; Franck & Rainer, 2012; Langer, 2005; Wimmer, 2012). As a consequence, regime coalitions require significant 'management' by the leader. Indeed, the composition, hierarchy and assigned positions of elites and groups within cabinet is at the discretion of the leader and tailored to specific political circumstances. A cabinet's internal politics and the state's political environment shape the options leaders have in ministerial appointments, dismissals, and reshuffles (Arriola, 2009; Francois et al., 2015; Kroeger, 2018; Lindemann, 2011a). The result is a composition of senior political scales that is hierarchical, and prone to shifts in response to political changes.

The current debate about African regime composition and competition has largely focused on the size of coalitions, power-balancing, and the integration of competitors as 'coup proofing'. These are important considerations, but we argue that they do not account for the wide range of concurrent strategies that leaders use to manage and manipulate elite support at senior regime levels. Many regimes integrate their competitors and opponents, including representatives of large and small groups, in inclusive coalitions. However, ACPED finds that large groups have consistently lower levels of appointed cabinet seats than is expected by demographic balance. Further, there is more volatility in how many ministries each group is associated with, over whether those groups are included at all. In short, leaders will consistently represent most of the ethno-regional

political communities in their state, but they will regularly distort the balance of power between the included elites and groups.

The following article has three sections: the first reviews new directions for African regime research that concentrates on formal positions, inclusive representation and the strategies of leaders for their political survival. The second section introduces ACPED data, and the third details the cabinet and group composition metrics that are created from ACPED. A brief conclusion outlines further work in this area, and the expected release of subsequent versions of these data.

### **Coalitions and Balance**

Advancing research on the composition and internal politics of African regimes requires us to first reframe a number of assumptions about African political systems and representation. Rather than presuming that informal relationships and ethnic demography set the parameters for representation, leaders can assign formal positions to multiple combinations of elites who represent ethno-regional political communities. Both the positions and the exact ethno-regional balance is characterized by great volatility, which suggests that identity politics provides a range of options for leaders, rather than a pre-determined formula. Inclusive representation and the composition of cabinets are distinct and strategic choices by leaders, and they can take on various qualities: overall, building inclusive coalitions in cabinet is ‘good politics’, and an unbalanced assignment of seats and power in cabinet appears to be ‘good strategy’ for most leaders. We explore these below.

Our starting position is that formal roles and relationships in African governments—such as cabinets and cabinet ministers—represent a formal, senior, elite scale that are vital for the political survival of regimes. Despite adopting institutions, like parliaments, political parties, and regular elections, significant power remains concentrated at the senior levels of government and within regimes (Francois et al., 2015; McKie & Nan de Walle, 2010; Prempeh, 2007). The people in senior positions have significant and underappreciated influence over the executive and government. Therefore, who holds those seats is critical. As a reflection of government-group relationships, cabinets are expected to include a collection of constituency representatives deemed necessary for the continuation of the regime (Arriola, 2009), and ministerial positions thus serve as an important means to forge an intra-elite bargain shaped as the leader determines necessary (Bratton & Van de Walle, 1994; Lindemann, 2011a; Roessler, 2011). Indeed, cabinet positions are also key strategic ‘transactions’ (Arriola & Johnson, 2014), and are used by incumbents to co-opt ‘big men’ and influential politicians who can ‘activate their own networks’ to recruit supporters or deliver important votes for the regime (Bratton & Van de Walle, 1994; Diamond, 2008).

But who should sit in cabinet? Previous work on African political representation forwarded a simplistic equation between ‘ethno-demographic arithmetic’ and the direct political ‘weight’ and ‘authority’ of groups (Buhaug et al., 2008; Cederman et al., 2010; Fearon, 2003). Ethnicity, regional affiliation, and similar ‘club’ identities exert a strong and consistent influence on African politics, but the effects are not intractable or rigid. Indeed, the influence of ethnic and regional identity is not predetermined precisely because it is flexible. Previous research has shown that citizens have a dynamic ethno-political identity, and that a community’s power is not determined solely by demographic size (Posner, 2004). Voters, politicians and leaders actively negotiate the maximum influence of ethnic and regional community associations. This suggests that ethnicity, regional affiliation and demography

do not alone provide a clear political strategy for inclusion, but are vital components of how elites generate leverage in order to be selected as ‘important’.

Further, the lack of absolute ethnic or regional majorities in many African countries means that leaders cannot rely on static formulas, or their own groups, for political support to maintain power (Basedau et al., 2011; Bratton, 2008; Cheeseman & Ford, 2007; Erdmann, 2007; Fearon, 2003). A state’s political-social heterogeneity provides leaders with a range of possible combinations, rather than a pre-determined set of group representatives and interests. Leaders fill cabinets according to decisions that reflect the integration and balance of multiple interests and agendas within the state. These interests change, and, as a result, the coalitions in cabinets are volatile within even short periods of time.

### **Inclusivity Over Exclusivity**

In comparative studies of African regimes, there are two contradictory generalizations on regime power-sharing: a large body of research assumes African political systems are exclusive, and characterized by an active marginalization of groups and disproportional authority to a leader’s home group and region (Bratton & Van de Walle, 1994; Chabal & Daloz, 1999; Geschiere, 2009; Rothchild, 1995; Whitaker, 2005; Wimmer et al., 2009). Yet, these perceptions are largely based on the arithmetic of ‘ethnic demography’ and fail to appreciate the practices of regimes after 1990, when institutional changes and a significant number of political elites entered the political environment (Bratton & Van de Walle, 1994; Berman, 1998). Consequently, there is little recent evidence for widespread exclusivity based on ethno-regional associations.

Another literature argues that African regimes are broad-based coalitions that co-opt potential ethnic and political rivals through the allocation of government posts and access to state resources (Dollbaum, 2017; Lindemann, 2011b; Van de Walle, 2007). The ‘big tent’ model is a political safety net with substantial benefits to anchor elites to the regimes as resources, rents, and power entices and retains clients (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007; Lindberg & Morrison, 2008; Van de Walle, 2003). Rivals frequently accept offers of inclusion from the regime as these are privileged positions through which to enrich oneself and ones constituents (Arriola, 2009; Arriola & Johnson, 2014; Bratton & Van de Walle, 1994; Chabal & Daloz, 1999; Kieh, 2018). These coalitions can be created and maintained despite antagonisms.<sup>1</sup> Examples include alliances between President Kenyatta (Kikuyu) and Vice President Ruto (Kalenjin) in Kenya’s Jubilee Coalition or the coalition between President Ouattara (northerner) and former President Konan Bedie (Baule) in Ivory Coast.<sup>2</sup>

But most significantly, incumbents create coalitions of convenience to shore up support from multiple elites and constituencies, and to minimize known risks of removal. Arriola (2009) argues that larger coalitions are an effective strategy for facilitating intra-elite accommodation and warding off coups. Through widespread inclusion, a leader can mitigate the risks that would arise from a narrow ruling coalition that has excluded many groups and fostered grievances. Similarly, De Mesquita et al. (2005) argues that outside threats to incumbent rule—e.g. protests, civil wars, and revolutions—come from those who are deprived access to the resources of the state. Further, creating ‘oversized’ coalitions can mitigate against the threat of defections from within by enabling the ruler to maintain a winning coalition even after some insiders’ defect

(De Mesquita et al. 2005). Consequently, a ‘minimum winning coalition’ may be large enough to mitigate the threat posed by a defection of important elites from within the ruling coalition, and create an inclusive and expansive coalition to co-opt potential political opponents. This can limit the capabilities of opposition coalitions, and further enhance the incumbent’s chance of re-election (Gandhi & Buckles, 2016). The resulting inclusive, and often large, coalitions are a necessary step to limit challenges based on exclusivity and grievance. But they cannot address all significant internal challenges to regimes. Through inclusive representation, a leader addresses one form of domestic threat emanating from excluded groups, but may inadvertently increase the risk she faces from internal elites. To mitigate risks, it is necessary then for leaders to pursue strategies beyond inclusion.

### **Disproportional Power Over Balance**

Leaders choose members of their coalitions, and they accommodate these elites differently. Examples include assigning high value ministries to co-ethnics or giving selected groups and their elites more or fewer positions. What is the strategy behind disproportional power distributions? A prominent explanation is that leaders of autocratic and transitioning states are beset by challenges to their power by surrounding elites. Manipulating elite appointments in order to minimize their authority and maximize their dependence is a necessary corrective (De Mesquita et al., 2005; Egorov & Sonin, 2011; Haber, 2006; Quinlivan, 1999). This is not solved through changes in coalition size, but by managing the composition of coalition members.

The composition debate currently centers around whether a leader can protect themselves by representing their own community in a regime’s top positions, or whether they should prioritize elites from large, and possibly competing, groups. The literature remains undecided as regimes are characterized by both forms of distortion. Co-ethnic dominance is presented as one way to deal with internal threats<sup>3</sup> where the central arguments to co-ethnic promotion are that leaders can trust ‘their group’ more (Roessler, 2011), possibly because coup risk is presumed lower from groups directly receiving benefits from community elites in power (Lindemann, 2011b). But by this logic, any elite from the same group could be in power, which is motive for usurping a specific leader. Further, DeVotta (2005) claims that the integration of co-ethnics reduces the influence of hardliners within a coalition. However, to acquiesce to co-ethnic or demographic minorities places leaders in a weak, vulnerable position, and the argument that integration can ameliorate hard-line tendencies or provide adequate benefits to stall the removal of a leader, is equally applicable to all groups, not only a leader’s co-ethnics. The inclusion of any group should limit its grievances about access to power. These arguments promote widespread inclusion, rather than co-ethnic dominance, for which leaders often pay dearly in the trust of other elites.

Others argue that senior political power must be shared with large communities as their integration stabilizes ruling coalitions (Buhaug et al., 2008; Posner, 2004). Indeed, elites from large communities can be uniquely important and instrumental in a number of areas, including negotiations (Albrecht & Schlumberger, 2004); settlements (Di John & Putzel, 2009); the local consolidation of regime power (Bratton & Van de Walle, 1997); seeing off electoral challenges (Chabal & Daloz, 1999; De Mesquita et al., 2005); and quelling violent elite competition against the government. A variant of this argument called



'coup-proofing' suggests leaders co-opt potential rivals into government with arrangements which are disproportionately advantageous to challengers (Albertus, 2012; Quinlivan, 1999; Roessler, 2011). Prioritizing and over-representing groups occurs when leaders are dependent on the loyalty and co-option of 'rival' elites and communities to secure their hold on power. While the degree of coup-proofing through power sharing is often overstated in research (Quinlivan, 1999), it points to the difficult choices and management of agendas that characterize modern regimes.

Creating a coalition of competitors may have benefits: Lindemann (2011a) and De Waal (2015) claim that integrating members of competing groups will keep an eye on each other, which will deter conspiracy. This may be true, but so too is the opposite: by integrating and disproportionately advantaging multiple large communities, leaders may increase competition and fractionalization, as has occurred in Zimbabwe, Ethiopia and Sudan. Further, ruling coalitions in which power is dispersed among senior members, or in which partners have veto power, can limit the autonomy of the incumbent and lead to political gridlock (LeVan, 2011; Roeder, 2005). Power sharing with large communities may limit the leader's ability to influence policy changes, rent distribution, and the integration of other communities. In short, political arrangements and appointments can either reflect or detract from the power of large and rival groups.

It therefore follows that leaders may have both inclusive coalitions and unbalanced appointments. Many governments showcase the outcomes of an inclusive elite accommodation, even where the proportion of power acceded to competing groups is unbalanced. For example, coalitions designed by Nyerere in Tanzania, Kaunda in Zambia and Houphouët-Boigny in Ivory Coast all attest to the dividends of inclusivity and unbalanced power (De Waal, 2009; Lindemann, 2011b; Van de Walle, 2007). Other governments demonstrate the importance of including potential competitors, such as in Rwanda, where President Kagame formed a unity government by including key figures from the moderate Hutu party, the Republican Democratic Movement (MDR) (Green, 2011).

This suggests two possible realities to African regime building: firstly, widely inclusive cabinet coalitions offers some protection to leaders, who can point to the overall inclusion of groups in power. The composition of cabinets may not disproportionately advantage large groups, rivals or co-ethnics. It is equally plausible that leaders assign proportional or high-ranking seats to smaller group representatives, and specifically those with no ability to mount an internal threat without multiple collaborators. Distorted compositions of elite power may result from over or under incorporating groups of various sizes, by limiting the power of challengers, or taking advantaging of intra-elite competition. Recast in this light, an inclusive coalition offers leaders a wide range of composition options through which to reinforce political survival tactics.

Secondly, there is no standard, homogenous, 'one size fits all' policy of political survival and internal regime machinations when leaders are determining the composition and balance of seats across those already included in cabinet. No singular or definitive policy on inclusion and composition will equip leaders with the necessary flexibility to withstand crises and threats. A leader's calculations, and the resulting composition of elites and appointments, may vary over their tenure, and in response to crisis. Recent research has pointed to how elites leverage their ethnic, regional, business, financial, religious, international, and security associations in their negotiations with leaders (Goldsmith, 2001; Svoblik, 2009; Mozaffar et al., 2003; Van de Walle, 2007)<sup>4</sup> through political bargaining (Benson & Kugler, 1998) in the 'political marketplace' (De Waal, 2015). This results in



individual elite and group leverage rising or falling in comparisons with others. The leverage of elites is subject to change, and consequently the proportion and distribution of positions can vary widely across states and time periods. Therefore, the accommodation choices and practices of leaders are volatile, as they are shaped by various pressures and requirements of the regime at a particular moment (see Haber, 2006; Magaloni, 2006).

Consequently, there are multiple possibilities for representative and proportional power at any point in time and across cabinets. Countries that are ethnically inclusive may have a highly imbalanced government where one, or a few, ethnic groups have a ‘disproportionate’ share of cabinet positions; alternatively, an exclusive government may distribute power well across the few groups within its inner circle. We suggest that identifying and analyzing the various ‘states’ of representation allows us to address how leaders react to crises and competition through coalitions and cabinet composition decisions. The same assessment can be made for the political identity groups: which types of groups are regularly represented, and are they assigned seats proportional to their size and influence? These distinct measures can answer clear questions that have long plagued African politics: what does power sharing look like in practice? Which communities are privileged? And does ethnicity have a consistent influence on power distribution metrics? We present the ACPED data below, and demonstrate how the questions above can be addressed in future research.

### **Leader Choices and Elite Power Distributions**

ACPED tracks the presence, position and demographics of all ministers within African cabinets for each month from 1997 to the present. ACPED’s unit of analysis is the cabinet minister, by month and country. Each minister belongs to a formal named ministry, and a record of any movement is recorded as ministers can change positions and move in and out of cabinet. In turn, cabinets can expand and contract through the adding or firing of ministers and positions. Ministers are also associated with identifying characteristics including their gender, party affiliation,<sup>5</sup> home region, and the associated ethnic community that they claim to represent, if any. ACPED assumes that cabinet officers are representatives of the ethno-political and regional communities with which they are affiliated, yet there is no presumed direct effect of ministerial appointments to citizens, nor a guaranteed return for cabinet representation to communities. Information about the specific ways that monthly cabinets are accumulated can be found in the appendix (see supplementary data).

Twenty-three African states and their entire cabinets from 1997 to 2018 are included in ACPED- Version 1. These states include: Algeria, Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda and Zimbabwe. These states represent a range of regime types, including autocratic, transitioning, and democratizing; they span institutions with open and closed participation, varying levels of ethnic heterogeneity, active conflicts, persistent disorder, or general peace. A final list of all states, updated to 2020 will comprise version 2. From that period, ACPED will be updated by year. Information about all ACPED minister data categories in Version 1 is found in [Table 1](#).

ACPED is a supplement to, and significant expansion of, other data, notably the Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) project (see Cederman et al., 2010), and the African cabinet set by Francois, Rainer and Trebbi (FRT) (2015). The EPR data rely on static determinants of aggregated, large ethnic group ‘positioning’ in government, and is intermittently collected

**Table 1.** ACPED categories for ministerial appointments

	Definition	Example
Name	Cabinet Minister's name	Adolphe Muzito
Date	Month from 1997-present	October 2007
Country	Country of Cabinet	DR-Congo
Status	Whether and which change has occurred between the previous month and the last. Possible and mutually exclusive categories include: New: indicates first month as minister (either new to cabinet positions or after a period of leave) Dismissed: final month of position Reshuffle: month where position is changed Remains: in same position as previous month	October 2007: New
Position	Ministry that minister is responsible for	Minister of Budget
Party affiliation	Party of minister	PALU: Unified Lumumbist Party
Position significance	1 – Primary; 2 – Secondary; 3 – Tertiary	Primary
Ethno-regional identity	Ethnic affiliation within political context, expert-based and source assessed	Pende
Ethno-political ethnicity	Political-ethnicity of minister's stated public association (and size of aggregated group).	Pende-Yaka
Regional background	Regional background, expert-based and source assessed	Bandundu
Gender	Binary for gender of the minister. 1 - female 0 - male	0

with no formal or identifiable positions collected for groups, times, or states. As Rainer and Trebbi (2019) note in reference to EPR, 'hard' information on the participation of groups in government is more objective. Further, the 'artificial clustering of data into course subdivisions' such as EPR's seven-point categorical scale, obscures rather than elucidates the role, relationships, and variability between political groups. The use and objectivity of formal positions allows for analysis of subtle shifts in elite bargaining, regime consolidation, representation, and power sharing. ACPED and FRT annual cabinet set are similar: they represent a change in several dimensions of identity data by including direct references to ministers and formal political scales, a disaggregated unit of analysis such as the cabinet minister, the tenure of an individual, and the volatility of the cabinet. They also include multiple identity metrics such as gender, political party, ethnic group, and region. These data differ in the time period covered, and the time unit. These differences have significant effects on the thoroughness of the final data, the inclusion of all minister appointments, and the final cabinet measures of inclusion and balance.

ACPED is disaggregated to the month. This is a critical improvement over other data because of intra-annual variability: 21% of ministers have tenures that last 12 months or fewer, and during the year, 19% of ministers lose their position. Drastic increases and decreases in cabinet size are typically short-lived and last under a year, and ministries that are added or removed from the cabinet are often short terms.<sup>6</sup> New regimes are characterized by an almost total shift in ministers within a year. For example, in Congo-

Brazzaville, President Pascal Lissouba appointed 23 ministers in an attempted unity government in September 1997. These ministers were replaced when former president and rebel leader, Denis Sassou Nguesso, overthrew the Lissouba regime and installed his own cabinet in November 1997. Integrating these crucial sub-annual developments and shifts allows for analysis on dynamics at points where the elite bargain and settlement is breaking down. The comparative totals of each collection therefore differ: ACPED V1 includes 23 states, 161,026 minister-months and 3,911 individual ministers;<sup>7</sup> FRT data covers annual cabinets in 15 countries from 1960 to 2004, with 16,583 minister-years units. The ACPED V1 are therefore 10 times that of the FRT set currently, and will double as the dataset is complete for at least a 20-year period. For further details, see appendix (supplementary data).

ACPED covers states from 1997 to the near present in order to capture the extreme changes in the structure of African governments, as democratic transitions, elections, new political parties, and power sharing agreements brought widespread elite inclusion and many more groups into competition for power. ACPED's current data covers other notable points of political instability including the 2008 Guinea Coup, the 2011 Ivorian Crisis, the 2012 Mali Coup, the 2017 Zimbabwe Coup, the Tunisian Revolution, the DRC 2016–2018 Constitutional Crisis and the changes in the Ethiopian governments after the Oromo violence (2014 onwards).

### **Ethnicity and Elites**

The minister-level data includes references to ethnicity and regional affiliations. These attributes are pivotal for ACPED's cabinet wide metrics of inclusion and balance. Incorporating ethnic and regional information is associated with three issues: (1) assigning these attributes to individuals; (2) assessing the full roster of ethnic and regional relevant identities in a state; and (3) questioning whether ethnic or regional attributes are an appropriate demographic identifier in each state.

ACPED has addressed those issues in the following ways: in assigning an ethnic or regional attribute to an individual, ACPED first notes self-declarations and then relies on in-country expert opinion and subnational media sources. Multiple sources link a minister's stated identity to a politically-relevant identity group, and ACPED defers to expert opinion if sources differ. Furthermore, an ethnic identity is not consistently the same as the political community an elite claims to represent. Each minister has a 'politically relevant ethnicity' as politicians seeking office represent several identities and interests, but their ethnic identity for political purposes is often that of the largest community they associate with. For example, if a Nigerian politician vying for a national position is from the Berom community, she is unlikely to solely associate with this very small group's power in a political negotiation. She is more likely to cast herself as a 'Middle Belt' representative (or, if it would increase her leverage, a Christian, Middle Belt representative). The 'Middle Belt' designation is her ethno-political identity, over that of her ethno-regional Berom community (Scarritt & Mozaffar, 1999). Ethnic and regional identities are separate, as ministers of the same ethnicity often hail from different areas of the country.

A consistent issue within African political research is a tendency to reproduce standard and broad ethnic lists as a definitive range of relevant political identities. These static lists are weighted by population and often based on external (e.g. Atlas Mirodov Nira),

outdated (GREG), overly aggregated (EPR and GEO-EPR) or linguistic rather than political communities (e.g. Ethnologue). Regional affiliations can be further complicated by the changes to administrations that occur frequently across African states. ACPED creates an ethnic and regional macro-roster for each state composed from several sources including national experts and texts, for instance: Scarritt and Mozaffar's list of scaled communities (1999); Ethnologue, Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) (Wimmer et al., 2009), and Francois, Trebbi and Rainer (FRT) lists. Multiple sources are used to reflect the variety of subnational identities that may be politically relevant in states at different time periods: the roster is not a collection of all identities, but of those which have been activated as 'politically relevant communities'. National expert opinion is privileged if a discrepancy between source materials arises. All possible political identities in each state are then assigned a population weight generated from national (e.g. census) or demographic reports. Politically relevant groups are then further designated by whether they are 'very small' (less than 5%), small (5 to less than 10%), significant (10–25%), large (25–50%), and a plurality/majority (over 50%). In Version 1, there are 92 very small groups; 53 distinct 'small' groups; 39 distinct significant group; 16 large and 4 majority communities included.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, despite the prominence given to ethnicity within the African context, there are several countries in which ethnicity does not function as a way to generate support for political office: for example, Rwanda and Burundi are cases whereby the distribution of ethnic dominance and minority status makes both Hutu and Tutsi designations ineffective in generating community support for a candidate. In both cases, regional affiliations are important political characteristics. Zimbabwe and Tanzania are different examples, whereby the role of ethnic differences and community size is a muted attribute of a political elite, and again region is more important. For these reasons, ACPED includes both ethnic and regional attributes of political elites. Both are included as the relevance of either or both may change throughout a regime, or may be more important for some candidates than others. The ethnic and regional roster of a state can change to reflect the ways in which identities are politicized or exacerbated at different political moments within a state. By using expert opinion, we aim to track the changing political environment in which identities are 'activated'. If a state's ethnic and regional roster has changed, it will be reflected in an updated series. Each version of ACPED will be accompanied by the updated ethnic and regional roster used to generate the identities and variables for cabinet measures.

More information about the ACPED coding rules can be accessing in the appendix (see supplementary data).

### **Cabinet and Group Measures**

Through the constituent ministerial data, ACPED creates several aggregated monthly cabinet-month measures for representation, balance, size, and change levels. It also allows for group specific representation and balance rates to address 'how much' groups are incorporated into the cabinet; how many positions do groups hold in cabinets; and are the positions of those groups represented in cabinet allocated fairly based on population rates? Each is a variation on subnational and institutional inclusion metrics. [Table 2](#) summarizes the cabinet and group measures.

**Table 2.** ACPED cabinet and group measures indices

Scale	Measure	Description	Metric and Model
Cabinet-Month	Representation Index	The size of the ethnic population represented by the cabinet. Repeated for regional representation.	Between 0 and 1; 1 indicates highest representation. 0: cabinet has no ethno-political groups or regions. 1: cabinet includes all ethno-political groups or regions
Cabinet-Month	Malapportionment Index	The distribution of cabinet seats among group with at least one seat.	Between 0 and 1; 0 indicates perfect correspondence between demographic group weight and number of cabinet positions. 1 recorded when no relationship between cabinet positions and demographic weight of ethno-political group
Group-Month	Distortion	The difference between the ethno-political population (as a proportion) and their share of cabinet positions. Groups are divided into whether they represent a: Majority (over 50%) (4 in data); Large (25–49%) (16 in data); Significant (11–24%) (39 in data); Small (5–10%) (53 in data) and Very small (1–4%) (92 in data).	Indicates how under-allocated or over-allocated the seats are by group, by percent. These are simplified as High Under (more than –50%); Under (–49 to –11%); Proportional (–10 to 10%); Over (10–25%); and High Over (over 50%)

### *Size and Change*

The average size of African cabinets ranges from 24 ministers in 1997 to 29 in 2017 (see [Table 3](#)). This is significantly larger than the average cabinet size in the developed world, but similar to sizes in developing states.<sup>9</sup> Van de Walle (2001) notes that ‘African states have long been notorious for their large cabinets, with ministerial appointments that often have little relevance to policy-making priorities or the size of actual budgets’ (p. 103). Further to this point:

cabinet size represents the number of elite clients sustained by a regime’s leader, whether a democratically elected president or a coup-installed dictator. An increase in the number of cabinet ministers is interpreted as an attempt to expand the leader’s base of political support—for example, buying off critics of the government or bringing in representatives from particular ethno-regional groups. (Arriola, 2009, p. 1346)<sup>10</sup>

**Table 3.** Country representation and balance rates

Country	Cabinet Size (avg)	Represent (avg)	Represent (min)	Represent (max)	Balance (avg)
Algeria	32	98.8	66.7	100	22.6
Botswana	17	55.8	35.7	78.6	7.7
Burundi	26	67.4	66.7	100	16.2
Cameroon	40	83.1	72.7	100	24.2
Central African Republic	27	72.6	50	100	15.4
DR Congo	38	63.9	50	85	25.2
Ethiopia	31	66.1	60	70	12.6
Guinea	31	95.4	83.3	100	12.7
Ivory Coast	35	88.3	77.8	88.9	22.4
Kenya	32	54	40	64	11.6
Liberia	24	71	46.7	100	18.1
Malawi	24	84	71.4	100	15.2
Mali	30	87.7	44.4	100	14.5
Morocco	25	69.7	40	100	9.9
Nigeria	30	48	36.8	57.9	12
Rwanda	21	68.6	66.7	100	17.5
Sierra Leone	28	81.7	66.7	100	11.9
South Africa	33	88	70	100	14.7
South Sudan	28	57.7	8.3	75	11
Tanzania	31	66.4	56.5	91.3	23
Tunisia	30	100	100	100	0
Uganda	27	54	38.1	71.4	14.4
Zimbabwe	37	79.6	62.5	100	15.1

The strategic value of size is clear: governments create dual ministries or distinct ministries when trying to pack a cabinet. While there are common positions and standard ministries such as ‘Foreign Affairs’, ‘Security’, ‘Finance’, ‘Health’, etc., often several co-occurring ministries have an environmental, gender or youth remit. These additional ministries exist for a short time period but display little to no evidence of a bureaucracy behind them, including a budget, staff, agenda, or targets.

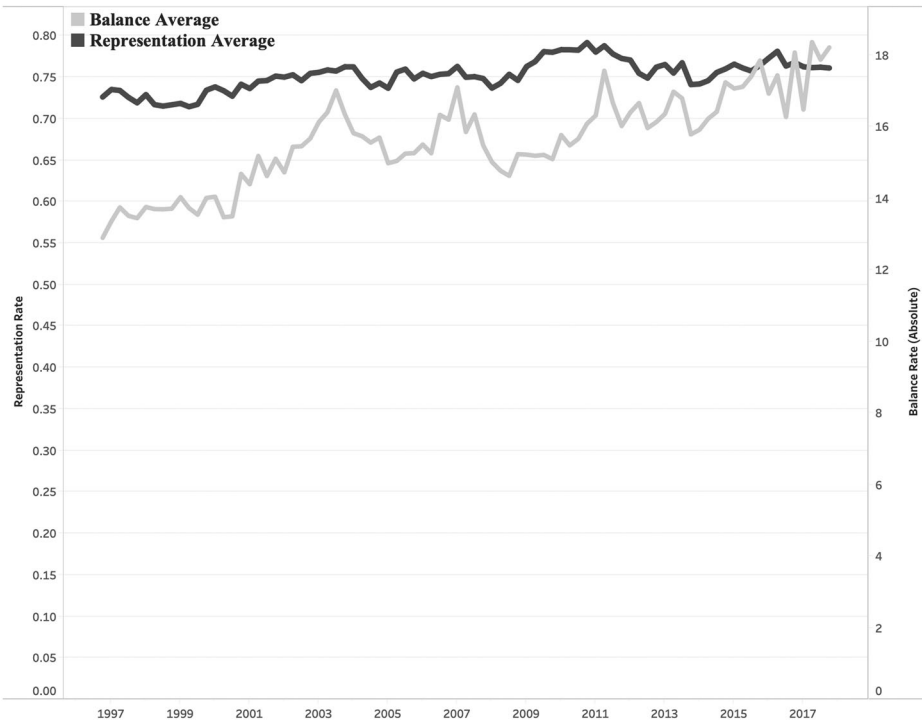
For each month in ACPEd, each minister is recorded as either remaining in position; being reshuffled in a promotion or demotion; fired and in their final month; or appointed and in their first month. Promotions and demotions are based on an assessment of the ministerial position’s significance (e.g. primary, secondary and tertiary positions). See Appendix 1 (supplementary data A1).<sup>11</sup> Using only reshuffles and firings, the average rates of change over the 20-year period across countries is 20% by year: this suggests that over a five-year period on average, every cabinet minister can expect to be replaced. Higher rates of change are recorded in Nigeria (26%), Central African Republic (32%) and DR-Congo (29%). All three states are the sites of significant political disorder.<sup>12</sup> Countries display an average of 1.9 reshuffles a year, meaning that for two months each year a cabinet is expected to show a change (ministers entering, leaving, reshuffling). But the number vacillates considerably across countries: Nigeria’s 2.95 means that on average, there are three separate months in which the cabinet undergoes any change; 0.65 for Cameroon means that the leader only rarely implements any changes on the cabinet, and many years have no change.

*Cabinet Coalition Representation*

Coalition Representation measures whether macro-roster communities have a representative in one or more cabinet positions, in a given country-month. It is summarized by the following notation:

$$\text{Representation}_{ct} = \sum_{i=1}^n y_{ict} \tag{1}$$

‘Representation’ for state *c* at time *t* is computed as the summation of presence *y* across all the represented ethnicities or regional groups *i*. The Representation index varies between 0 and 1; where values near 0 denote low representation of the state’s groups and values near 1 indicate at least one position for all ethno-political or regional groups in the cabinet. For example, Laurent Gbabo’s Ivory Coast cabinet during December 2005 represented all of the ethno-political groups in the country, and hence, the ethno-political representation score is ‘1’. In Zimbabwe, Mugabe’s cabinet during February 2009 included a representative from each of the country’s regions; therefore, the regional representation score is a ‘1’. This is converted into a percent for ease of interpretation. African cabinets are cross-ethnic and cross-regional coalitions: the representation rate of ethno-political groups across sampled African cabinets from 1997 to 2018 is, on average, 75% of a state’s total number of relevant



**Figure 1.** Representation and balance measures



groups: three quarters of all politically relevant groups are integrated into the cabinet at any time. Regional representation is, on average, 73%. Large countries and small countries are similar; heterogeneous countries and more homogeneous countries are similar. See Figure 1 and Table 3.

The rate of overall national representation in cabinets is relatively stable: while temporary deviations occur, all sample countries show low overall deviations within 10% (between 70-80%) across the 20-year period. Drastic changes are ‘corrected’ and mitigated over the course of months, resulting in more stable annual patterns.

### Internal Proportion and Balance

The ‘Representation Measure’ above provides an assessment of cabinet coalitions but leaders practice strategic and selective inclusion, and may choose to over- or under- allocate seats to elites from ethno-political or regional communities. Consequently, a group may be ‘represented’ but their level of power distorted. Similarly, a cabinet may be inclusive, but be unbalanced with significant deviations in seat allocations by group representatives. These measures tell us a different story: at the cabinet level, an unbalanced cabinet is one where the proportional assignment of seats have been altered to be unfair to ethno-regional groups and their elite representatives. This suggests that the leader is either not challenged by the constituent members of his regime and can assign seats to prop up his power, or that he is actively power-balancing to ‘spread power around to keep it’ (Haber, 2006). To determine which scenario is most likely, ACPED provides a parallel assessment of group level power in the same cabinets, indicating which groups or regions are favored or unfavored in a leader’s selection. We can then further assess whether more or fewer seats are conferred upon large, competitive, co-ethnic or smaller, dependent community representatives. In the examples and analysis below, we concentrate on ethno-political based metrics, rather than regional based metrics.

#### *Balance*

ACPED’s balance score measures how power is allocated in the cabinet. It is based on a proportional power distribution measure from electoral studies (Duncan & Duncan, 1955; Samuels & Snyder, 2001) which employ ‘disproportionality’ measures to describe deviations between party votes share and party seats share (Bortolotti & Pinotti, 2003; Gallagher, 1991; Lijphart, 1994; Taguepera & Grofman, 2003; Vatter, 2009). A modified version of the ‘disproportion’ index popularized by Loosemore and Hanby (1971, p. 469) and Gallagher (1991)<sup>13</sup> determines the discrepancy between the shares of cabinet positions and the shares of population held by included political-ethnic and regional groups. The formula is:

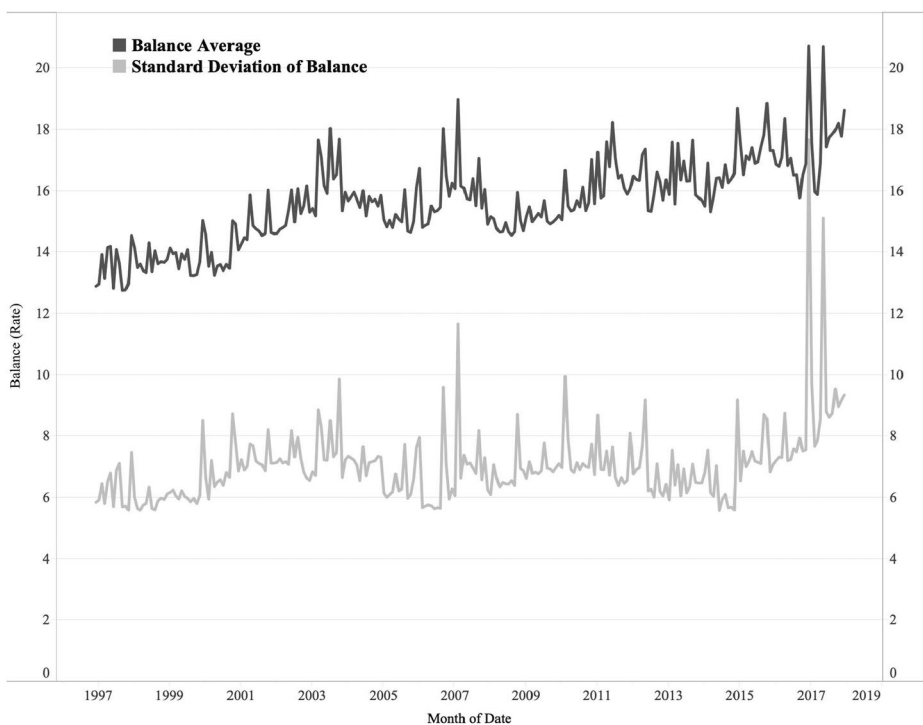
$$\text{Allocated Proportion Eth}_{ct} = \frac{(\sum_{i=1}^n |x_{ict} - y_{ict}|)}{2} \quad (2)$$

State  $c$  at time  $t$  has the summation of absolute values across all the ethnicities or regional groups of the difference between  $x$ , which is the share of the cabinet positions allocated to group  $i$ , and  $y$ , which is the share of the population of group  $i$  in the total population.

The above index ranges between 0 and 1. 0 denotes highly proportional/balanced power, where one or more groups hold the same ratio of positions as their relative demographic weight in the included cabinet. 1 denotes highly disproportional power, where one or more groups holds more or fewer seats compared to their relative demographic size.<sup>14</sup> This is inverted and converted into a percent for ease of interpretation.

Cabinets exhibit an imbalance: the average rate of misallocated seats is 16% of all cabinet positions, and 84% of all positions are allocated proportionally based on the group size. Balance has a maximum of 69% and a minimum of 6%: both extremes are present for a minimal number of months (see [Figure 2](#) and [Table 3](#)). As demonstrated in [Figure 2](#), the level of balance in cabinets has been above the average consistently since October 2008, and the average imbalance rate of recent cabinets at 21%, and continues to rise. Further, unlike representation, the standard deviation and variance of balance is quite volatile, and demonstrates strong temporal and cross-country variation. Imbalance in cabinets is where the most significant shifts are occurring.

These average measures can suggest many different power arrangements. For example, a country with an 84% balance rate in cabinet and three groups could have two groups underrepresented with a difference between their share of national population and their share of cabinet positions equal to 8%, or a third group could be overrepresented by 16%. However, this value could also be obtained by a different distribution of power: overrepresentation could characterize more groups, and the result would be equal.



**Figure 2.** Average and maximum balance rates

The annual correlation between cabinet level representation and balance is limited; overall patterns suggest that when representation is high—and many if not all the politically relevant groups within a country are included—balance is neither low nor high. It is shaped by an entirely different logic of internal strategy. The choices that dictate representation are different from the choices that determine allocation of seats.

### *Group Allocation and Distortion*

Perfectly proportional balance occurs when the ratio of ministry positions awarded to all groups matches the relative size of those groups within the state. The basis for assessing whether a specific group has an over or under allocation is the ratio of the seats allocated to a group (or region) relative to the size of that specific group (or region). Each month-group seat allocation score is classified as one of the following: High Under Representation (50% fewer than expected seats); Under Representation (between 49 to 11% fewer seats); Proportional (a range of between –10 and 10% expected seats); Over Representation (10–25% more seats than equitable); and High over Representation (over 50% more seats). This provides clear indications of how specific communities fare in regimes, and can supplement cabinet balance metrics to identify groups being brought in and out of government. An investigation of distortion metrics can be done by a named group or specific region over time, or by the ‘type’ of group.

Consider our examples of administrations for four periods (January 2014, 2015, 2016, with and 2017). In Cameroon, the Beti, Bassa-Bakoko-Douala alliance, Kanuri, and South West are allocated seats far above their normalized weight by demography, while the Kirdi, Fulani, Far North and North West group representatives are under allocated seats. But Central African Republic demonstrates great variation across four years of severe instability: the large Banda and Gbaya communities are allocated seats over and under their weight at different periods, as are the Riverene/Sango/Banzeri, Mbaka, Ngbaka, Sara, and Northerner community representatives. Only the very small communities of Fulani and Yakoma are consistently allocated more seats. See [Table 4](#) and accompanying examples in [Figure 3](#).

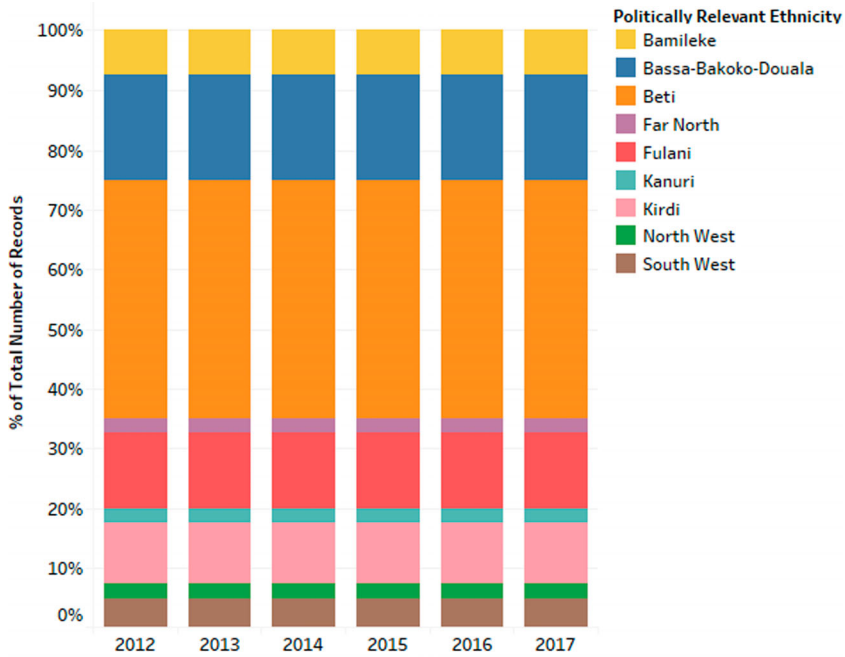
Each community can also be characterized by its relative size, which allows researchers to summarize whether the seat allocation patterns for particular types of groups are regularly distorted. Based on the overall seats that are assigned to political elites from each type of demographic group, large and majority groups are most commonly characterized by proportional or under-allocated seats (see [Table 5](#)). Much of the concern about exclusion is directed towards large groups which can organize against the government (see Buhaug, Cederman, & Gleditsch, 2014). The metrics presented here demonstrate that the integration and management of these groups is more complex than ‘exclusion’ assumptions suggest. Elite representatives of significantly sized groups garner most positions (a total of 787 distinct ministerial positions) and the highest number of minister months across all cabinets (at 32%). Significant, small, and very small groups have proportional or highly-over-allocated seats. Even a single seat can cause distortions due to the average size of these very small communities and the limits of possible cabinet seats. But often, very small groups have more than a single seat (in 2005 Central African Republic, 5 positions were assigned to politicians from the Ngbaka community; in 2007 Nigeria, seven positions were given to politicians from the Ibibio-Efik-Ijaw community). These metrics suggest that demography is not destiny for groups, but it can be used strategically by leaders (see [Table 5](#)).

**Table 4.** Distortion of group representation over time

		January 2014	January 2015	January 2016	January 2017
Cameroon	Bamileke	High Under (3 Positions)	High Under (3 Positions)	High Under (3 Positions)	High Under (3 Positions)
	Bassa-Bakoko- Douala	High Over (7 Positions)	High Over (7 Positions)	High Over (7 Positions)	High Over (7 Positions)
	Beti	High Over (17 Positions)	High Over (17 Positions)	High Over (17 Positions)	High Over (17 Positions)
	Far North	Over (1 Position)	Over (1 Position)	Over (1 Position)	Over (1 Position)
	Fulani	Under (5 Positions)	Under (5 Positions)	Under (5 Positions)	Under (5 Positions)
	Kanuri	High Over (1 Position)	High Over (1 Position)	High Over (1 Position)	High Over (1 Position)
	Kirdi	Over (4 Positions)	Over (4 Positions)	Over (4 Positions)	Over (4 Positions)
	North West	High Under (1 Position)	High Under (1 Position)	High Under (1 Position)	High Under (1 Position)
	South West	High Under (2 Positions)	High Under (2 Positions)	High Under (2 Positions)	High Under (2 Positions)
	Central African Republic	Banda	Under (7 Positions)	Proportional (9 Positions)	Proportional (9 Positions)
Fulani		N/A	High Over (1 Position)	High Over (1 Position)	High Over (2 Position)
Gbaya		High Under (2 Positions)	High Under (4 Positions)	High Under (3 Positions)	High Under (5 Positions)
Mbaka		Over (1 Position)	Under (1 Position)	Under (1 Position)	High Over (2 Positions)
Mbum		N/A	N/A	N/A	Over (2 Positions)
Ngbaka		N/A	Over (1 Position)	Under (1 Position)	High Over (1 Position)
Other		High Over (2 Positions)	High Over (1 Position)	High Over (1 Position)	High Over (3 Positions)
Riverene/Sango/ Banzeri		Over (5 Positions)	High Over (10 Positions)	High Over (7 Positions)	Under (2 Positions)
Sara and Northerners		High Over (10 Positions)	Under (3 Positions)	Proportional (3 Positions)	N/A
Yakoma		High Over (4 Positions)	Over (2 Positions)	High Over (3 Positions)	High Over (4 Positions)
Zimbabwe	Karanga	Proportional (9 Positions)	Under (6 Positions)	Under (7 Positions)	Under (7 Positions)
	Manyika	Proportional (5 Positions)	Over (6 Positions)	Over (7 Positions)	Over (7 Positions)
	Ndau	Under (1 Positions)	Over (2 Positions)	Over (2 Positions)	Over (2 Positions)
	Ndebele- Kalanga- (Tonga)	Proportional (8 Positions)	Over (9 Positions)	Proportional (9 Positions)	Over (10 Positions)
	Other	High Under (2 Positions)	High Under (2 Positions)	High Under (2 Positions)	High Under (2 Positions)
	Zezeru	High Over (16 Positions)	Over (13 Positions)	Over (14 Positions)	Over (13 Positions)

Note: the same number of positions can result in different distortion rates as the size of the cabinet changes over time

Cameroon



Central African Republic

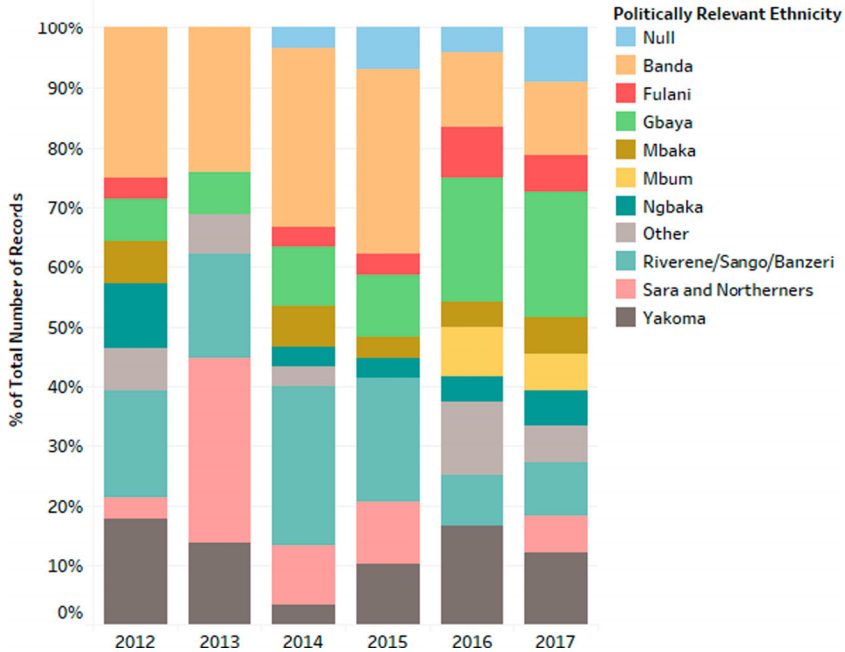


Figure 3. Specific group distortion rates

**Table 5.** Group distortion by size

Level distortion	Group type				
	Majority (%)	Large (%)	Significant (%)	Small (%)	Very small (%)
High Over	0	0	47	26	27
Over	0	24	61	13	3
Proportional	77	10	11	1	0
Under	68	22	8	2	0
High Under	67	22	9	2	0

Contrary to perceptions that the ‘big three’ (large groups, a leader’s own community, and strong competitors) are over-represented, very small groups can also be politically relevant despite their small size. Governments are much more likely to suppress the demographic leverage of majority and large communities, and to emphasize the presence and positions of political elites from significant and smaller ethnic communities. These lead to highly distorted allocations. Further, as the cabinets increase in size, the same number of seats can distort the level of proportional power and leverage each representative has; in this way, leaders can suppress or heighten the influence of any community through relative seat allocation calculus. Further details about co-ethnics of leaders can be found in the appendix (see supplementary data).

This analysis is a view into how leaders co-opt or suppress groups and elites. Simple group size metrics fail to appreciate the management calculations confronting regimes and leaders. We demonstrate the metrics and utility of ACPED across several countries and time periods in order to reiterate that there are few ‘one size fits all’ policies when it comes to governing different states. Each period, state and leader balance their collective and individual interests, abilities, and capacity relative to those of other political elites. This means that coup-proofing may be useful one month, but dangerous the next. Further, a group’s representative elite may be given a very senior post (e.g. Foreign Minister) but be presented with a range of problems that lessens their public appeal. A minister may get a position but no budget, staff, or agenda,<sup>15</sup> or be quickly removed or reshuffled. These patterns suggest that great volatility in the composition and size of the cabinet should be expected and serves as evidence of transactional politics.

## Conclusions and Future Research

This article suggests that African political analysis could be stronger if it reinforced two lessons: first, leaders create coalitions and hierarchies to integrate elite representatives at senior levels. Coalitions are broad and inclusive to protect regimes and leaders against excessive external challenges. But hierarchies are established through dis-proportional seat allocation. Regime management and maintenance strategies are reflected in the composition of cabinet and seat assignments of ministers and groups. The second is that the political trajectories of states are closely aligned to the activities between senior elites. Cabinet representation and position allocation data elucidate the domestic politics of the state, leader selection, the threats and opportunities available to leaders and senior elites to leverage their authority.

The ACPED-V1 collection of ministerial data and cabinet metrics provides a missing link in political research across African states. Recent significant changes to African regimes include how political representation is increasingly formalized through appointments that are highly inclusive of a state's relevant political communities. Yet, existing research lacks a standard measure that considers the political complexity of each state. Our previous reliance on ethnic group membership as the determinant of power presumes regimes respond automatically to ethnic demographics and privilege co-ethnics (Chandra, 2007). Though important, ethno-demographic assessments are insufficient at explaining changes in representation over time and the composition of group representatives at the senior level. Further, the present literature largely ignores the role of elites as representatives of group interests, and how leaders require elites to bridge voting constituencies with senior scales of governance. Within modern African states, elites have multifaceted identities and roles that they play in regime maintenance; they maneuver and consolidate their power base through a transactional political system. The result is a constant negotiation between elites and leaders and within elite circles.

But the internal composition of cabinets is the result of a leader's strategic and highly political selection. Leaders use several tools to create a cabinet that will serve them: they regularly manipulate the numbers of cabinet members; balance the seats assigned to small and large group representative elites; and replace one representative with another. ACPED-V1 allows researchers a much wider berth of study questions on leader selection, domestic politics, and political survival across African states.

In this introduction and analysis of 23 states, ACPED-V1 data demonstrate that the number, positions, and permanence of senior seats are not proportional or stable. Leaders pursue transactional, volatile and disproportionate distributions of power between elites within the cabinet. The accommodation of political elites, and the proportion of powerful positions assigned to representatives, can vary widely across states and time periods. The variance coincides with internal politics around elections, crises and protecting the leader.

The coalitions that result from these practices of elite management are central to regime continuity, maintenance, and consolidation. They reflect internal regime politics, rather than general political representation. Elite accommodation and power transactions by regimes are the main engines of change and instability in African states, but widespread representation is a 'good policy' and relatively painless. Seen as two co-occurring practices that reflect different but significant attributes of regimes, representation of ethno-political and regional communities via elites is important in states with stunted democratic performances—these acts limit the ability of groups to claim exclusion as the basis of political organization. However, the management of politics, abilities, leverage, and costs of senior elites in cabinets can explain high rates of change and elite circulation. We suggest that future research into analysis of the character and consequences of representation incorporate these data and findings on the composition of regimes and strategies of leaders.

Possible future research includes examinations of inner circle politicians, coups and removal politics (see Raleigh & Carboni, 2020), and the influence of external actors on the composition of cabinets. ACPED-V1 covers 14 cases of post-conflict 'unity governments' in 9 countries which are enforced by an external third party such as the UN. These agreements represent instances in which the leader's control over the allocation of government posts is reduced. Yet the leader still retains the option to either accept and honor the agreement, or refuse and undermine it. In this way, the cabinet still reflects a strategic dilemma of political survival: whether to surrender some authority to guarantee a



dominant position in government, or risk losing power altogether by refusing to acquiesce to international authority. The former option was taken up by Robert Mugabe in 2008 in Zimbabwe and Mwai Kibaki in Kenya in 2007, after both leaders potentially lost elections to the opposition. Yayah Jammeh of Gambia decided to hold onto power after losing an election in 2017 and was forced into exile by a regional peacekeeping force. Leaders may also act differently when supported by an external patron who will protect the leader against coups and rebellions (Decalo, 1989). In these cases, leaders may have less incentive to create a representative government as their security and political survival is already guaranteed. These, and other puzzles of African regime politics, will benefit from the availability of ACPED data and measures on the composition and competition within regimes.

### Supplemental Data

Supplemental data for this article can be accessed at <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2020.1771840> description of location.

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### Notes

1. Even political parties—especially regime parties, seek to be multi-ethnic but must integrate large communities in cooperation with each other (Cheeseman & Ford, 2007; Wahman, 2017).
2. During his tenure, Bedie cultivated rhetoric aimed at excluding northerners and Ouattara from the electoral process and fostered anti-northern sentiment (Langer, 2005).
3. see Lindemann (2011b) on Uganda and Zambia.
4. See Langer's (2005) study of elite exclusion in Ivory Coast; Lindemann's (2011a) study of inclusive elite bargains in Zambia and Uganda; and Arriola's (2009) statistical investigation of the 'politics of the belly'. Also see Bayart (1989, 1993). Roessler and Ohls (2018) measure the threat of an ethnic group by population size and distance of homeland from capital. When both are strong, the regime is likely to involve power sharing between these two groups.
5. Party affiliation indicates the political party or group of a minister; ministers with no political affiliation are recorded as 'civil society'. Affiliations may vary over the course of tenure.
6. For example, Ivory Coast experienced a high degree of sub-annual ministerial turnover in 2000: 27 ministers were appointed and dismissed in under a year, with the average sub-annual tenure being just 22 weeks. During the 12-month period, Ivorian junta leader General Robert Guei assembled 2 separate transitional cabinets and oversaw an election in the latter half of the year. The composition of the Ivorian cabinet—in terms of political identities also changed dramatically during this particularly unstable period.
7. Further, a total of 96 ministers included in ACPED V1 are missing from the FRT annual data in years and countries during which the projects intersect.
8. A roster is available upon request and the 'very small' groups have 23 'other' ethnic categories—1 for each state.
9. For example, India's cabinet is 32 positions.
10. Indeed, being included does not suggest great leverage: LeVan and Assenov's (2016) study of the effect of cabinet size on budgetary spending argues that ministers do not have the individual capacity to demand patronage of a significant scale.
11. In the assembled states, 49 ministers died in office.
12. The high rate of dismissal in Morocco is explained by attempts to placate a public and release some public motivation for an 'Arab Spring' moment.

13. In his study on the disproportionality of electoral outcome, Gallagher (1991) use a least squared version of the Loosemore and Hanby index to compare vote received and seat allocated to parties.
14. This assumption may overlook historically unequal power relations and thus in the robustness section we report a set of alternative definitions, substituting the geographical dimension to the ethnic one or with other alternative measures.
15. See <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/6260930.stm> where Kenyan ministers complained of boredom. We find that several positions, especially those of extremely short-term appointments, have no discernable infrastructure (e.g. Minister of Public Functions, or Zimbabwe's Minister of Psychomotor Activities) or are very closely associated with another ministry that has official standing (e.g. multiple youth related ministries are simultaneously assigned ministers).

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