Incumbency versus Change:
The Influence of Candidate Selection on the Turnover
of MPs in Emerging Democracies

Dr Magnus Öhman

IFES
1101 15th Street NW, Third Floor
Washington, DC 20005
USA

1 Edward Square, London N1 0SP
UK

mohman@ifes.org

Paper prepared for presentation at the IPSA 20th World Congress,
Fukuoka, Japan July 9-13 2006
Incumbency versus Change: The Influence of Candidate Selection on the Turnover of MPs in Emerging Democracies

Dr Magnus Öhman, IFES (mohman@ifes.org)

Abstract
This study focuses on the turnover of incumbent Members of Parliament during the candidate selection process within their political party. Studies from established democracies indicate that those already elected normally stand a very good chance of being re-selected, indicating a significant power of incumbency. However, this issue has received almost no attention in the context of emerging democracies.

The aim here is to take some first steps in rectifying this. This study focuses on a comparative analysis of the multiparty systems in sub-Saharan Africa. While political parties dominate electoral politics in almost all African countries, very little academic attention has been devoted to these organisations. Analysing data from 21 elections in ten countries, the results are revealing. The pre-electoral turnover of MPs in the studied African majoritarian electoral systems is much higher than in established democracies, with often more than half of MPs not returning as candidates for their own party. The candidate selection process is almost always more important for who sits in parliament than are the elections themselves. There are also indications that the turnover is normally forced upon the MPs, and not seldom due to pressure from below. The high level of turnover begs the question whether this is a particularly African phenomenon. To shed light on this we turn to other countries that have introduced multiparty elections during or since the Third Wave of democracy. The impression is that the turnover in general is markedly less that in the African cases, while still above the norm in established democracies.

Keywords: political parties, party organisation, candidate selection, parliamentary candidates, parliamentary turnover, Africa

IFES is an international, nonprofit organisation that supports the building of democratic societies. As one of the world’s premier democracy and governance assistance organisations, IFES provides targeted technical assistance to strengthen transitional democracies. Founded in 1987, IFES has developed and implemented comprehensive, collaborative democracy solutions in more than 100 countries. The views or opinions presented in this paper are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of IFES.
Introduction, the level of retention of Members of Parliament

“[t]he significance of candidate selection is easy to underestimate. It may seem at first sight to be one of the more obscure functions performed by political parties, a mere administrative procedure... of concern only to those directly involved... in fact it has far wider implications”.¹

Although there are many differences between the process of selecting candidates for legislative office in different political parties, countries and continents, certain things seem common.² Previous research on political parties in established democracies shows that one of the most important criteria for being made the parliamentary candidate of a political party is that you have already been elected to parliament on the ticket of that party. As Ranney has pointed out; “[i]n most parties in most countries there is a powerful presumption that an incumbent legislator who wishes to be a candidate for re-election will be reselected, usually without much fuss”.³ The strong incumbency effect means that the level of deselection of MPs (i.e. that an incumbent Member of Parliament is not made the candidate of his party) tends to be very low. This phenomenon was already noted by Michels, and Gallagher has stressed that “[i]n quite a few countries the deselection of an incumbent is a newsworthy event”.⁴ The ability of the Members of Parliament to retain their positions indicates that they have a strong position in this crucial element of party activity.
**Turnover of incumbents in established democracies**

Some examples regarding the situation in established democracies can be presented as a starting point for the analysis, all indicating low levels of turnover. In the US during the 1980s and 1990s, the average involuntary turnover of incumbent representatives in the party primaries was 1%, whereas 3.2% left voluntarily to accept or seek another political office between 1979 and 1992. Ware has pointed out that even in the 1992 election in the US, “in which incumbents were highly unpopular with the public”, only 5% of incumbents were deselected. The situation is the same in the UK. Since 1945, the average share of MPs who have been given “enforced retirement” is 0.8%, and “the majority of these have been due to the merging or changing of constituency boundaries rather than rejection for personal or ideological reasons”. In Japan, the candidacy turnover of Lower House incumbents between 1958 and 1990 averaged 8.3%, including voluntary retirement and deaths in office, and Ware claims that “an incumbent was hardly ever deselected by his party”. According to Professor Carty at the University of British Columbia, the deselection of incumbents in the Canadian parliament is typically limited to one or two (out of 301), and the National Party in New Zealand only saw three successful challenges of incumbents during its first 40 years of participating in elections. The retirement rate in Denmark between 1947 and 1998 was on average 10%, and almost all of these cases were related to voluntary retirement. These figures all lend support to Gallagher’s statement that in “virtually every country for which we have evidence, incumbents stand a far better chance of being selected than any other group of aspirants”. However, “evidence” has previously not been gathered for African countries, and this study will therefore set out to perform that task, to then see how the findings relate to those from other regions of emerging democracies.
Political parties in sub-Saharan Africa

Since the early 1990s, most African countries have introduced multiparty systems, and most have since held several parliamentary elections. There is no doubt that the party systems in many of these countries are weak and sometimes unstable, but it should be stressed that political parties dominate African electoral politics, with independent MPs holding an average of only 3% in sub-Saharan African parliaments.\(^{14}\) This is very different from for example the states in the former Soviet Union, with the parliaments of Belarus and Kyrgyzstan at times having a majority of independents. While most African political systems are dominated by the president, it should be noted that unlike countries such as Russia, also those running for president feel the need to stand on the ticket of a political party.\(^ {15}\)

Unfortunately, the resurgence of political parties in sub-Saharan Africa has not been accompanied with a similar increase in scholarly attention. As Erdmann has stated, research about political parties and about African politics “exists largely isolated from each other”, and research on African political parties has been “slow, sparse and late in arriving”.\(^ {16}\) It is necessary to rectify this if we are to fully understand the political systems in the quarter of the world’s countries that are situated in sub-Saharan Africa. Studying how these political parties select their candidates is one of the main ways of understanding the power dynamics within them.

The questions to be addressed in this paper

Also in African political parties, there seems to be reason to expect a low level of deselection. It is a common sentiment (also among academic scholars) that African elites are able to cling on to power. A good example of this is the claim by Patrick
Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz that African elites have showed a strong resilience, despite the political changes that took place during the 1990s. In a chapter called “recycled elites” they claim that “[u]nderneath the present froth of multi-party elections, there is surprising permanence at the top”, and more specifically, they have it that “[a] more detailed study of the members of parliament and government… reveals a high degree of continuity in personnel…” Interestingly, if the argument by Chabal and Daloz is right, this implies a significant correlation between African and Western party politics in that a high level of sitting Members of Parliament are retained as the candidate of their respective party. However, Chabal and Daloz present little data to support their claim.

As we will describe in more detail below, calculating the pre-electoral turnover does not tell the full story of the power of incumbency within parties, as some MPs will step down by their own choice. Attention should therefore be paid to how much of this form of turnover that depends on MPs being rejected by their party, so that those who are not re-selected by their party because they choose to step down are separated from those who are forced to do so. Studying this is not as straightforward as it may seem (incumbents facing defeat in the selection process for example commonly retire to avoid embarrassment), but we will use available information from the African cases to shed light on this issue.

Although Chabal and Daloz claims that MPs tend to remain in place over time, they fail to state whether this should be the result of activities on behalf of the central party leadership. In other words, is the fate of Members of Parliament due to the will of the party leaders, or is it governed by other actors within (or without) their party? Political
party theories do not lead us to expect any obvious correlation between power centralisation in a party and the turnover of MPs as candidates.\textsuperscript{19} In the cases where incumbents are deselected however, our understanding of the internal party dynamics can be aided by studying where this initiative comes from. Given the lack of data, this is difficult to do in a comparative study of this kind, but some information is available from various sources.

Finally, we should note that by definition, the multiparty parliaments in the countries studied here have not been in existence for a long period of time, and only few elections have been held. A reasonable assumption may therefore be that any variation in the turnover level in comparison with established democracies may be explained by a learning process. We will discuss this issue by looking at those African cases where elections have been held for a longer time.

Drawing from these discussions, this study of African candidate selection processes will therefore firstly seek to see \textit{how high the pre-electoral turnover of incumbent MPs is in African parties and parliaments} (and how important the candidate selection is for the total turnover of MPs). Secondly, we will seek information as to \textit{the prevalence of voluntary versus involuntary pre-electoral turnover of African MPs}, followed by a discussion concerning \textit{the level within the parties at which decisions on retaining MPs is taken}. Finally, we will debate \textit{whether the level of pre-electoral turnover is likely to change over time}. 

\textsuperscript{19} See, for example, Reinhard Bendix and Reinhold Wuthnow, \textit{Party and State in West Germany}, London, 1974, p. 84.
To put the pre-electoral turnover in African parties into context, the paper then moves on to emerging democracies elsewhere, focusing mainly on the first of the questions mentioned above.

**Studying the turnover of MPs in emerging democracies; theory and method**

As has been suggested above, studying the pre-electoral turnover can provide us with much valuable information about the power dynamics within the political parties. By its very nature, this issue cannot be studied until a country has gone through at least two consecutive parliamentary elections. It is argued here that it is now time to start such research in Africa, as 35 of the 48 countries in sub-Saharan African have undergone at least two consecutive parliamentary elections during the present electoral regime, and 29 have held at least three.

Pre-electoral turnover is defined in this study as the share of incumbent Members of Parliament at the time of an election who do not return as candidates for the same party in that election. This means that only turnover at general elections considered, not deaths in office or retirement in-between elections. In excluding turnover in-between elections, this study differs from those by Norris and Lovenduski and by Matland and Studlar, as they analyse the turnover from one general election to another. This difference is consistent with the fact that whereas their studies are mainly concerned with the parliamentary setup, the focus here is on the activities of political parties.

In electoral systems based on proportional representation, where the different parties present lists with candidates, incumbent MPs can be deselected by being denied a place on the list. However, an equally effective method is to place them on the list, but
to position them so far down that they stand no chance of retaining their seat. Whether an MP is deselected then largely depends on how many seats the party expects to win in a particular election (this is further complicated if the voters can change the list ranking). This means that the deselection of MPs is very difficult to calculate in PR systems without detailed information. Therefore, this study focuses on electoral system using Single Member District systems, although a few cases are also included where parliamentarians are elected through a multimember block system.

Studies of changes in the parliamentary set-up normally only include the changes in seats between parties. This is understandable given the low level of (especially involuntary) pre-electoral turnover in established democracies, but as we can see in Figure 1, the election is only part of the total turnover of incumbent Members of Parliament.

\[\text{Figure 1. Breaking down the turnover of incumbent Members of Parliament}\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-electoral turnover</th>
<th>Total turnover</th>
<th>Electoral turnover</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retirement</td>
<td></td>
<td>Electoral loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change of party</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deselection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figure shows us that the pre-electoral turnover can be either voluntary or involuntary. Voluntary turnover could be either because the MP decides to devote her or his time to something else, or because she or he chooses to join another party. In
established democracies, party shifts among MPs exist, but are rare. Admittedly, retirement is not always voluntary, as it can depend on failing health. As mentioned above, Members of Parliament may also die in office. In single seat electoral systems, deaths in office will normally trigger a by-election, and information about by-elections has been taken into account in this study (to the extent it has been available), and such cases are then not counted as turnover. Involuntary pre-electoral turnover occurs when an MP is not made the candidate in the next election, even though (s)he wishes to run. It is not possible to separate voluntary from involuntary pre-electoral turnover using election data, and as discussed above it may be difficult even with detailed information, but we will discuss the issue further below. In contrast, the electoral turnover is relatively straightforward. An MP who stands for re-election (for his/her own party, for another party or as an independent) may be accepted or rejected by the electorate.

There are therefore different fates that can befall a Member of Parliament when it is time for a new election. These different fates are described in Figure 2. From the different outcomes, we can calculate a series of variables, which are important in our understanding of the various aspects of the turnover of incumbent MPs. These variables are explained in Table 2, and will be calculated for the different African elections for which data is found.
Figure 2. The possible fates of a Member of Parliament

Table 1. Variables in the turnover of incumbent MPs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Calculation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Party turnover of seats</td>
<td>Not in figure</td>
<td>The share of seats that are won by a different party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-electoral turnover</td>
<td>C/A</td>
<td>The share of MPs who do not return as candidates for their own party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electoral turnover</td>
<td>(G+I)/(B+D)</td>
<td>The share of MPs who stand in the election and lose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total turnover</td>
<td>(E+G+I)/A</td>
<td>The share of MPs who do not return to parliament, for whatever reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of selectorate and</td>
<td>E/(E+G+I)</td>
<td>Share of all MPs exiting parliament who do not participate in the elections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>electorate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the calculations, see Figure 2.

The party turnover of seats shows how large the changes are in the party set up of the parliament, regardless of who the candidates are for the different parties. The pre-electoral turnover has been defined and its importance discussed above. The electoral turnover shows us how many of the sitting incumbents who participate in the election (for their own party, for another or as independents), but who loses his/her seat. This figure will in most cases depend on the size of “G” rather than of “I” (more MPs are likely to represent their own party than another). The total turnover (often referred to as “legislative turnover”) indicates the share of MPs who vacate
their seat, either as a result of retiring, losing the selection process and accepting
defeat, or as electoral candidates for their own or another party (or as independents).
In other words, the total turnover tells us how many Members of Parliament who do
not return to parliament after the election. Naturally, the total turnover is not the sum
of pre-electoral and electoral turnover, but depends on the relation of the two in each
constituency. If all deselected incumbents stand for another party or as independents,
the electoral and total turnovers will be the same. If no seat is won by another party in
the election, the total turnover will be determined by the pre-electoral turnover alone.

Finally, the importance of selectorate and electorate variable shows us how important
the candidate selection process is for the total turnover of MPs from one election to
another. Do the changes in the individual set-up of African parliaments depend largely
on the wishes of the electorate, or do the events before the election play a more
significant role? This is measured by studying how many of the MPs exiting
parliament who do this without facing the electorate.

It should be pointed out that the cases included in this study have not been selected
randomly due to the limited availability of data. The calculations require election data
for consecutive elections broken down at constituency level, and this type of
information is often very difficult to come by in the countries studied here. The
countries and elections included are those for which data has been found, and the
results presented here are not statistically significant of the population for African
emerging democracies. Although this can rightly be considered a significant flaw in
the design of the study, the approach taken here is arguably the most beneficial given
the lack of available data.
A comparative study of the turnover of MPs in Sub-Saharan Africa

**Question 1, The level of pre-electoral turnover in African political parties**

The pre-electoral turnover has been calculated for 21 complete parliamentary elections in ten countries (out of the 30 that use an applicable electoral system). Table 2 shows the values for the different variables that were discussed above.

**Table 2. Turnover variables in various African parliaments (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Party turnover of seats</th>
<th>Pre-electoral turnover</th>
<th>Electoral turnover</th>
<th>Total turnover</th>
<th>Importance of selectorate and electorate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambia</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritius</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritius</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritius</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritius</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seychelles</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean (weighted)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From these data we can conclude that a high pre-electoral turnover rate of incumbents existed in all cases for which we have information. This puts in doubt Daloz and
Chabal’s assertion of a high degree of continuity of parliamentarians.\textsuperscript{30} Looking at the different variables, one fourth of the seats on average changed from one party to another. However, the number of seats that changed from one \textit{person} to another (the total turnover) was on average 54\% (weighted by country to avoid bias). This means that on average, the parliaments concerned started their new term with more new Members of Parliament than incumbents. This is more than one and half times the average turnover that Matland and Studlar found when studying elections in 25 established democracies over time.\textsuperscript{31} After the 2001 elections in Zambia, only 11\% of the MPs had sat in parliament during the preceding period, which is remarkably low (especially since almost half the seats remained with the same party).\textsuperscript{32} Indeed, if the turnover is counted from one general election to another (including by-elections) the total turnover would even be somewhat higher in the African cases presented above.

Most interesting is the very high level of pre-electoral turnover. Very nearly half of the Members of Parliament in these cases do not return as candidates for their parties, varying from 4\% to as high as 72\%. In addition, the last column shows that of those MPs who exit parliament, three out of four do so because they retire or are not reselected by their parties, and then do not participate in the elections.\textsuperscript{33} It seems clear that the pre-electoral phase is very important for the fate of incumbent parliamentarians in the African countries under study. However, to understand these figures fully we need to study the prevalence of voluntary and involuntary pre-electoral turnover, and we therefore turn to this question next.
Question 2. Is the pre-electoral turnover voluntary or involuntary?

As was mentioned above, pre-electoral turnover can be divided into voluntary and involuntary changes, with the former being significantly more frequent in most established democracies. To quote Jackson; “[i]t is an axiom of candidate selection that any incumbent M.P. who wishes to stand again is readopted”. Is this the case in the African countries in this study? As sub-Saharan Africa is not a cohesive unit of analysis, it is not likely that any one factor can explain the high level of pre-electoral turnover. In-depth studies of each of the countries would probably reveal specific dynamics at play in each case.

Nonetheless, some factors might be similar. In no country under study here have there been reports indicating that the high level of pre-electoral turnover has predominantly been the result of voluntary retirement. Instead, there are ample reports of MPs being replaced as candidates against their will. Whereas the pre-electoral turnover within the governing CCM in Tanzania in 2005 was 43%, one report indicates that the voluntary turnover was only 3%. The fierce battles over candidacies rather suggest that a parliamentary seat is a price few are interested in letting go of voluntarily. It should also be emphasised that being in parliament can offer many advantages, and since almost all parliaments in sub-Saharan Africa have only been in existence for a maximum of three periods, relatively few Members of Parliament are likely to have become tired of their position.

There seem to be two main situations when large numbers of MPs do leave voluntarily. One is when opposition parties merge or when new opposition parties form. In these cases, opposition MPs are likely to join the team they deem most likely
to succeed in defeating the government. This can be seen as a part of the struggle to create a united opposition able to challenge the often dominant government party. This factor is a significant part of the explanation as to why MPs did not return as candidates for their opposition parties in Botswana 1999 and in Kenya 2002.

However, analysing the data above indicates that whether the parties are in government or opposition does not have any correlation to their pre-electoral turnover, and this form of party-hopping normally affects only a small share of the parliamentary seats, due to the limited strength of the opposition in most African legislatures. The other situation is therefore more important, as it affects the government party. This is the case when Members of Parliament leave the government party as a part of internal struggles, since they cannot accept the way that the presidential candidate is chosen, or since they think that their party might actually lose the election. This seems to be a reason behind the defection of some MMD MPs in Zambia to the unsuccessful FDD in 2000 and also influenced some of the Kenyan KANU MPs who defected to the winning opposition Narc party in 2002.

In Kenya, a majority of the incumbent MPs (from both the government and opposition side) who switched to stand for Narc managed to retain their seats. Nonetheless, it is important to note that in most cases when MPs switch from one party to stand for another, they do not jump from a weak team to a stronger one, but rather the other way around. Apart from in Kenya, they have also in general failed miserably in trying to retain their seat. Of the 129 MPs found to have stood for another party (or as independents) in any African election studied here, with the exception of Kenya, only 17 managed to retain their seats (note that this does not include by-elections). The
failure rate of 87% is surely a clear indication that party-switching is most often a desperate survival attempt by an ousted MP rather than a strategy to further his personal career. It also shows that in contrast to what is often assumed about African politics, the voters in the countries studied here are in general unwilling to follow an MP who changes his allegiance. It can be added that a Kenyan newspaper report from 2002 points out that none of the MPs who defected to another party after the 1992 elections remained in parliament after the elections in 1997, whereas none of the MPs who took the same action in Tanzania after the 2000 elections even succeeded in the primaries for the 2005 elections. This could all be seen as an indication of party institutionalisation (for whatever reason) in the mind of the electorate.

Party switching among MPs also seems to be less common than is sometimes assumed in writings on African parties. The 2002 Kenyan figure of 65% of not retained MPs running for another party is extreme, and is only matched by Botswana in 1999 where 46% stood again (this time opposition MPs unsuccessfully standing for another opposition party, an activity that was not repeated in the following elections). See further in Table 3, where the mean is presented both in simple form and weighted for country excluding the outlying case of Kenya in 2002.
Table 3. Members of Parliament running for another party than the one they represent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Share of not retained MPs running for another party</th>
<th>Share of all MPs running for another party</th>
<th>Share of all MPs winning for another party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambia</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritius</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seychelles</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td></td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean (weighted, excl Kenya 2002)</td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Excluding Kenya, only one in ten MPs who were not retained as candidates by their party participated in the elections, and those switching parties are of course even fewer compared to the group of all MPs. In the cases studied here, it was very rare indeed that MPs retained their seats while standing for another party (only 1% of all MPs).

Defeated MPs may also stand as independents (apart from in a few countries where independent candidates are banned). As was mentioned above, however, few African parliaments contain a significant share of independents. Standing on your own does not seem to be a viable strategy in most countries on the continent.
Most cases of party-switching included here, though not all, seem to support the general indications that the turnover in the parties studied is largely involuntary. This fact, combined with the few reports of voluntary retirements, lead to the conclusion that MPs in the parties studied here are much less powerful in relation to their colleagues in established democracies during the selection process.

**Question 3. Who is responsible for the high level of turnover?**

The question remains to be answered whether it is the national party leaders or the constituency activists who hold relatively more power over the elected representatives. In a previous study, I found that for the African cases studied, there was no statistically significant correlation between the level of centralisation in the candidate selection process and the level of pre-electoral turnover.\(^{38}\) It was also suggested that the relatively decentralised selection systems that exist in some African parties give the local party activists a significant say in whether incumbent Members of Parliament should be allowed to stand again. It should however be noted that the party leadership is often able to intervene in favour or against certain aspirants (incumbent or non-incumbent).

A key finding in that study was that the fairly decentralised systems are at least partly the result of clientelistic ties between political representatives and the local party activists and constituents. According to this argument, the problem for the MPs originates in popular conceptions about the tangible short-term benefits of a democratically elected leadership, which the MP finds difficult to live up to. This relates closely to Kitschelt’s rejection of the notion that there should be an “absence of bonds of accountability and responsiveness in clientelist arrangements”.\(^{39}\) In a
similar vein, Hadenius has argued that “[w]hen a patron somewhere in the chain is unable to deliver… his subordinates tend to establish relations with another and more capable patron instead”.  

Unfortunately, there is not enough data available to discuss at length to what degree local party activists affect the turnover of incumbents. I have previously showed that the high turnover in Ghana for the 2000 elections was largely an effect of local dissatisfaction, with the leadership of the two dominating parties both officially and behind the scenes trying to keep the rate of deselection down, but often having to bow to pressure from the constituencies.

There are indications that this is not unique to Ghana. Information from Kenya shows that the central party leadership was not in full control of the process. Reports noted that in KANU, “several Ministers including those thought to have been close to the senior party leadership” lost out in the nomination process, including President Moi’s eldest son. Meanwhile in Narc, “candidates known to be loyal to Mwai Kibaki’s Democratic Party (DP) lost to new politicians” (Kibaki was the Narc presidential candidate). In a case study it was also argued that “the nomination results in Uasin Gishu showed that the goals of the KANU leadership and those of [the party members who participated in the primary] were not the same… all the incumbents lost.”

Perhaps most directly, Cowen and Kanyinga have argued that “it was at the local level that an exceptionally high level of turnover of MPs, for all parties, was determined in 1997”.

19
Other information supports the idea that clientelistic ties between MPs and their constituents is a central factor behind the high level of turnover. In Kenya, an article about the decisions by party members involved in the candidate selection (headed “Why Kenyan [primary] Voters Rose Against the ‘Titans’”) noted that “[t]he reasons for voter disenchantment with the various categories of leaders range from personality flaws to failure to initiate development projects”. Apparently, failing to address local concerns seemed to be one of the major reasons for complaints, as regarding Rt Hon Peter Oloo Aringo, whose fall was attributed to “his being a 'Nairobi' politician who dwelt on national issues, disregarding constituency issues”.

There are similar indications from Zambia, where riots sometimes occurred before the 1996 elections to protest against incumbents being retained as candidates. Interestingly, there came also from then President Chiluba an “outcry that several of his incumbent Cabinet Ministers were not among the list of adopted candidates, demanding that DEC [the District Executive Committee] members should reconsider their positions”. This indicates that even the powerful Chiluba did not have full control over the process. Equally, it is reported that in a few cases in 2001, the party leaders had to change its decision to re-adopt MPs due to local protests. Through such public acts of dissent, grass root party activists are occasionally able to alter the outcome also in centralised selection systems. At least on occasion, this could amount to what Chabal and Daloz have referred to as “the blackmail of the ruled”. Even in the centrally controlled ZANU-PF in Zimbabwe, protests against the selection process reportedly occurred in all regions, and the protesters at one point even “detained a senior party official in charge of selection”.

20
It is interesting that such local dissatisfaction can coincide with a high level of party loyalty. This was put very succinctly by Michael Okema for the case of Tanzania “[i]t is a contradiction of sorts: citizens tending to stick to one political party at the national level yet, at the local level, the incumbent MP is barely tolerated”.

The power of incumbency can provide MPs with influence and resources to keep them in power, but they also have to cope with the expectations of the selectorate and electorate in a way that challengers do not.

On the other hand, there is also significant evidence that for many MPs, the end of their legislative career was a result of falling out with the national leadership or with the President himself, bearing evidence to the power of individual leaders in many parties on the continent. Yet others fall prey to factional struggles within the party that they represent in parliament. What is needed is further country and party-based studies as to how the future of incumbent MPs is determined in various parts of Africa.

**Question 4. Will the high level of turnover decline over time?**

When Matland and Studlar found that the turnover in Portugal was higher than in the other countries in their study (1970-1994), the explanation they offered for this was that the gradual institutionalisation of a parliament as it grows older makes MPs more interested in remaining in their positions. Since Portugal had never had an elected parliament before 1977, they argued that Portuguese MPs were therefore less willing to stand again. This argument could be relevant to our findings regarding African legislatures.
The question is then whether the high pre-electoral turnover will decline over the years to come, as the systems stabilise, decision-making and power structures within parties become more settled, and as popular expectations over what the MPs can produce become more modest.

This prediction is difficult to test at this early stage in the life of current African parties and legislatures, but it can be informative to study those few African countries where multiparty elections have been held for some time. The perhaps most interesting is Botswana, where multiparty elections have been held continuously since 1965, and during that time the electorate has been given nine opportunities to choose their parliamentary representatives. Botswana is also often presented as one of Africa’s success stories in terms of democratic development. Indeed, the pre-electoral turnover for all MPs was 21% in the 1994 elections, the lowest found in this study. For the dominant BDP, the turnover was 23%, the lowest found for a government party. This then seems to support the hypothesis of a declining pre-electoral turnover over time.

However, the 1999 election showed an entirely different image. The pre-electoral turnover for all MPs reached a high of 62%, but this is somewhat misleading, since this figure largely depended on opposition MPs running (apparently voluntarily but unsuccessfully) for a newly created opposition party. However, even in the governing BDP the deselection of MPs almost doubled, to a level just under the average for all parties included in the study. In the 2004 elections, the pre-electoral turnover declined again, but it still remain higher than it was ten years earlier, and significantly higher than in established democracies (33% nationwide and 30% in the governing BDP). This is especially interesting given that the size of Parliament was increased from 40
to 57 seats in this election, which should lead us to expect less pressure on sitting MPs from challengers within their parties.

Also Mauritius has held multiparty elections for several decades. The average pre-electoral turnover in the four elections between 1991 and 2005 was however just under the overall average (43% as compared to 47%). Yet another case is Zimbabwe, where six multiparty elections have been held since independence in 1980 (although the quality of these elections has declined significantly over time). The pre-electoral turnover for all MPs and within ZANU PF did decline in the 2005 elections after having increased in 2000, and lies below the average found in the study, though still high by international standards (33%). The pre-electoral turnover declined significantly in Ghana in the third elections of 2000, but then increased again in the latest elections. A similar increase could be observed in the latest elections in Kenya, although it remained stable in KANU.

From these findings, it is difficult to see any clear trend towards a lower pre-electoral turnover of MPs as the respective countries are going through more elections.

**Searching for clues outside of Africa**

Are these findings unique for Africa, or can they rather be explained in the context of emerging/new democracies? One way of finding information on these issues is to go outside Africa to study the situation in emerging and more consolidated third wave democracies on other continents. Unfortunately, the limited access to data (constituency level election results) is not unique for Africa, indeed access is difficult
even in several of the new EU member states. We can here study the pre-electoral turnover in 24 parliamentary elections.

**Table 4. Pre-electoral turnover in non-African parliaments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Turnover</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbados</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belize</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile (Chamber of Deputies)</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile (Chamber of Deputies)</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile (Chamber of Deputies)</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile (Chamber of Deputies)</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile (Senate)</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile (Senate)</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominica</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominica</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiji</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rico (House of Rep)</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rico (House of Rep)</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solomon Islands</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>29%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean (weighted)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>29%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In these fairly young democracies, where the political system has admittedly mostly been more stable than in most African countries, it seems that the turnover of incumbent MPs as candidates is lower than in the African cases we have found here.

Not enough data has been available for this study to go into the extent to which the pre-electoral turnover in these countries was voluntary. There are some indications
that in certain Latin American countries, MPs normally retire voluntarily after one or two mandate periods. Regarding Colombia, the results from a study by Escobar-Lemmon and Moreno indicate that “most deputies enter congress intending to serve only one or two terms”, and that this is a main reason for the country’s high pre-electoral turnover.\textsuperscript{55} Samuels has argued that the high pre-electoral turnover in Brazil is due both to career politicians leaving parliament and to challengers from within the party.\textsuperscript{56} It also seems that some of those not representing their own party in the 2001 elections in Fiji had switched voluntarily. As many as 29% of the MPs not representing their original party stood for another party in this election. However, it is interesting to note that only one of these (9%) managed to retain his seat.

It was noted above that there are no clear indications whether the high level of turnover within Africa’s generally young parties are likely to decline over time. Insufficient data is available to draw clear conclusions on the issue for non-African emerging democracies, although some interesting cases exist. One is Hungary, where sufficient data has been found for all elections held since 1990. This country shows exactly the type of trajectory suggesting that a high level of turnover is a temporary phenomenon that is a part of the introduction of multiparty elections (the figures included here only concern the 176 seats that were contested through a SMD system out of a total of 386 seats in parliament). In the second election, the pre-electoral turnover was similar to that found in the African cases discussed above, reaching 34%. However, in the third elections this fell to 18%, and in the fourth (2002) only 12% of MPs did not return as candidates for their party, which more resembles the situation in established democracies.\textsuperscript{57} The case of Chile is less supportive of this
model. Although the turnover in the Chamber of deputies did fall somewhat after the second elections, the change is not significant.

**Conclusion**

The pre-electoral turnover of Members of Parliament proved to be consistently high in the African parties and parliaments (elected through majoritarian electoral systems) included in this comparative study, often very high. The position of MPs is much less secure than that of their colleagues in other countries. On average around half the MPs did not stand again for their own party. Some of these cases will naturally be voluntary retirements, but there are few reports of MPs having grown tired of sitting in parliaments, most of which have only existed for some ten to 15 years. Some parliamentarians leave to stand for other parties, but their normally spectacular failure to succeed when doing so indicates that they are either very poor political strategists, or mainly switch when forced in one way or another to do so. On the whole, the available information indicates that the high rate of pre-electoral turnover is largely due to forced deselection. The indications here is therefore that in comparison to established democracies, African MPs have significantly less influence over their continued position as the parliamentary representative of the party.

Furthermore, it seems that although falling out with the party leaders can certainly end the career of a parliamentarian, the turnover is not only due to the opinions of the leadership. The information suggests that local party activists can have influence through protests and threats of withdrawing support. In one way, this could be seen as functioning as a way of exercising accountability, especially when the electoral turnover is very low. This is however open to debate. Money is often of the essence in
the process, and the foremost way to win local popularity is through providing
benefits, rather than offering policy alternatives. No clear evidence has been found
indicating whether or not we should expect the turnout to fall as the African political
parties and parliaments grow older and possibly more institutionalised. Members of
Parliament in the young African democracies may face an uncertain future also in the
years to come.

Thereafter, the level of pre-electoral turnover in emerging democracies outside of
Africa was analysed. On average, the turnover was lower in the countries for which
data has been found, and closer to what we expect to find in established democracies.
This implies that MPs in African political parties are less likely to return as candidates
than their colleagues in other countries that have recently introduced a democratic
political system. However, the lack of available data precludes us from drawing any
definitive conclusions. Perhaps the most important finding of this paper is the need for
continued research on pre-electoral turnover also in non-established democracies, in
order to better understand the dynamics of the political parties that inhabit them.
Notes

1 Gallagher (1988a) p 1.
2 The starting point of this paper is Ohman (2004).
5 The high level of incumbent retention as candidates in many established democracies is not accidental, nor solely a result of name recognition and superior resources. Often it comes from an (explicit or implicit) policy of the party. One example is the UK where a study showed that “[a]ll parties allow incumbents to by-pass part of the selection process”. Independent Commission to Review Britain’s Experience of PR Voting Systems (2002) p 6.
7 Ware (1996) p 273.
11 Pedersen (2002) p 59, calculated from Table 2.8. The average pre-electoral turnover in Norway between 1949 and 2001 was 18%. These figures include voluntary retirement, and it is unclear how many that were deselected. Valen, et al. (2002) p 207, calculated from Table 5.6. In Iceland between 1946 and 1995, an average of 17% of MPs were not re-nominated, and 4.8% were involuntary retirements (either defeats in the candidate selection or retirement due to internal party conflicts). Kristjánsson (2002) p 138ff. Calculated from Tables 4.3 and 4.4.
12 Gallagher (1988b) p 248.
13 In this paper, emerging democracies are defined as those countries that have introduced a multiparty system during or since the Third Wave of democracy. It is not to imply that these countries are necessarily similar in other regards, nor that all of them are essentially democratic.
14 Only 7 of the 41 (directly) elected multiparty parliaments in sub-Saharan Africa had more than 5% independent members on June 1, 2006 (DR Congo, Eritrea, Mauritania, Somalia and Sudan had no directly elected parliament, while political parties were not allowed in Swaziland and Uganda).
17 Chabal & Daloz (1999).
20 As of June 1, 2006. This statement does not imply that all or even most of these elections should be considered democratic. The selection of candidates is important regardless of the quality of the elections held. In fact, it can be argued that the more controlled the election process is, the more relevant will the candidate selection process be for who will take a place in the national legislature.
21 In practice, the list of MPs before an election is compared with the list of candidates for that election, after information about by-elections has been taken into account.
There is always a risk that MPs who are nominated in another constituency than the one they represent might inaccurately be listed as deselected. Systematic efforts have been made to identify and correctly code such cases. Constituency switching seems however to be relatively limited in most African countries. There may also be by-elections about which no information has been available, which can create slightly erroneous figures.


24 Unless the winner of the by-election is not retained by his party in the next general election. Cf Matland & Studlar (2004) p 92.

25 Constituencies where the political party of the sitting MP boycotts the following elections or becomes defunct are excluded, as are constituencies with independent MPs. In the case a party should split, the MPs is considered as retained if (s)he stands for either party (this does not include small splinter parties).

26 The sources of election data used are not enumerated in this paper, for the sake of brevity. These are available on request.

27 The seats held by the UDP have been excluded, since the party boycotted the 2001 elections.

28 Party turnover for the 1991 – 2000 elections in Mauritius has been excluded since the two main parties formed and split from joint coalitions in every elections.

29 House of Assembly elections. Sufficient data could not be found for six cases (out of 120).

30 This lends credence to the statement by Rijnierse regarding Chabal and Daloz’ book that there is a “tension between the limited scope of the research on the one hand and the generalised nature of their interpretations on the other”. Rijnierse (1999) p 6.

31 Matland & Studlar (2004) p 92f. The average total turnover for the period 1979 and 1994 was 32%. Please note that while this African study includes 21 cases, Matland and Studlar analysed 116 elections.

32 If we look at the share of constituencies represented by the same person and the same party, the average for the selection countries included here is only around 35%. The same (average) figure for the UK in the period 1945 – 1992 was 80%. Norris & Lovenduski (1995) p 30.

33 Some of the figures in Table 3 may be difficult to interpret. The reason that the party turnover (and pre-electoral turnover) was higher than the total turnover in Kenya in 2002 is that so many (mainly opposition) MPs stood for newly created umbrella party NARC and thereby retained their seats. The governing KANU party on the other hand lost many of the constituencies it had held.

34 Jackson (1980) p 106.


36 The turnover was calculated for 28 individual political party candidate selection processes.


Daily Nation (2002b).
Mushota (forthcoming) p 79.
Ohman (2004) Chapter 4 showed how this was the case in the NDC during the 2000 elections in Ghana.
Zimbabwe Information Centre (2005). Similarly, the parties in Mauritius before the 2005 elections were reportedly under “some pressure” not to select non-incumbent candidates. International IDEA and EISA (2006) p 9.
Okema (2005).
The Chilean senators sit for eight years, with half of the Senate being up for elections every four years.
The data for Hungary 2002 excludes MPs from the FKgP, as that party did not participate in the 2002 elections. For the calculation, the FIDESz, MDF and FIDESz/MDF were considered as one party (technically they are two parties, but fielded their candidates together in 2002, as they had done in part in 1998). Also, consideration has been taken to the MPs who did not stand as candidates in their constituency, but who did (successfully) stand on either a regional or national list.
The data from the 2000 and 2004 elections includes the 40 members elected in single seat constituencies, not the 11 elected proportionally.
Brazil’s Chamber of Deputies is elected through proportional representation, Samuels (2000).
Unfortunately, at the time of finalising this article, the detailed results from the 2006 elections were not yet available.
This is not to indicate that becoming an MP is necessarily a risky strategy for a politically ambitious African. Serving in parliament can presumably be an important stepping stone in a person’s political career, on this continent as well as elsewhere.
References


Independent Commission to Review Britain’s Experience of PR Voting Systems


Personal Communication with Prof Kenneth Carty, 26-05-2002 (Email).

Biographical note: Magnus Öhman received his PhD from the Department of Government, Uppsala University, Sweden and is now working as Programme Officer Africa & Middle East at IFES. Dr Öhman is based in London.