

POLITICAL REGIMES AND CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN SAHELIAN AFRICA

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Today, virtually all African regimes participate in the core rituals of democracy through the political institutions of multi-party elections. However, the degree of substantive political competition varies noticeably from country to country. As was the case in much of sub-Saharan Africa, the countries of the Francophone Sahel embarked on liberalizing political transitions during the 1990s. Yet, the outcomes of these transitions differ greatly within the sub-region where some

political party institutions—help explain the variation between these countries' political development.

Sahelian countries face endemic structural challenges to political stability. Taken together they are considered amongst the least developed countries on earth. Their regimes struggle to control demographic change, drug and arms trafficking, and in some cases deep social cleavages. More recently, significant pressures on regime stability emerged as a result

of the 2011 fall of the Qaddafi regime in Libya, the rise of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, the 2012 state collapse of Mali, and the spread of Boko Haram. Given these challenges, how have certain regimes remained stable and engaged in political liberalization, while other regimes broke down or became increasingly authoritarian?

My dissertation relies on a comparative approach to examine the differences which

contribute to regime trajectories in Burkina Faso, Chad and Senegal, following their adoption and implementation of multi-party elections. By comparing civil-military relations, civil liberties, and political parties in each of these countries, my research seeks to systematically analyze the interactive and reciprocal effects of institutional reform and social pressures on each country's political development and how these effects shape the prospects for political stability in each case.

Over the past year, I completed the fieldwork component of my

dissertation, began analyzing the research I conducted during this period, and began writing my dissertation. I presented initial findings from my research at the American Political Science Association meeting in Philadelphia in September 2016, at the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion in Atlanta in October 2016 and my research on political parties in Burkina Faso and Chad at the African Studies Association meeting in Washington D.C. in December 2016. I have also published some of my preliminary findings with the *Washington Post's* Research Blog "The Monkey Cage," Africa is a Country, and with the Africa Research Institute. I have engaged policy makers by discussing my research at invited presentations to the U.S. Department of State in Washington D.C. and the Defense Language Institute in Monterey Bay, California.

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countries became more democratic, others staunchly authoritarian, and still others experienced repetitive regime breakdown.

During eighteen consecutive months (June 2014 – December 2015) I conducted fieldwork split between Burkina Faso, Chad, and Senegal, seeking to explain differences in the political trajectories of these three countries. The evidence I gathered through hundreds of interviews conducted with political elites, civil society leaders, and other state actors suggest that three factors—civil-military relations, the development of civil liberties, and