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Abstract

Opposition unity is often described as prerequisite of successful regime transitions. Particularly in presidential systems with plurality elections, the degree of opposition unity or fragmentation seems to go a long way to explain the success or failure of opposition parties. But when do opposition actors unite against the President and his ruling party? When are they able to surmount their internal tensions and coalesce in their democratizing battle against authoritarian rule? When does the anti-regime cleavage cancel out personal, ideological, and other differences? Or defining the puzzle the other way round: what explains the eventual failure of strategic coordination? Electoral rules (Cox), authoritarian divide et impera strategies, societal cleavages (class, ethnic, regional, ideological), or personal rivalries? And indeed, can such variables explain outcomes, or should opposition unity be viewed as endogenous, in which the likelihood of successful democratization helps to unite a fragmentary opposition. The paper investigates these issues with reference to Sub Saharan African case materials.

About the Author

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1. Introduction

Opposition cohesion is often described as a pre-requisite for successful regime transitions. As long as the incumbent strong man is able to keep the opposition divided, it is argued, his¹ hold on power is safe. A relatively unpopular ruler can use incumbency advantages to maintain the upper hand, notably through state patronage and intimidation. In such cases, even relatively free and fair elections need not represent a threat to the incumbent since he can usually manufacture a victory with a plurality of the vote, as the opposition divides its support across numerous candidates.

Meanwhile, divided oppositions expend energy and political capital in internal squabbles. They criticize each other as much as the incumbent and the ruling party and inevitably lose some legitimacy in the process. In regime transition narratives, the unification of the opposition under a single banner invariably is presented as a watershed in the ousting of the incumbent, just as divisions within the opposition are invariably mentioned to explain the ability of the President to retain power. Thus, in descriptions of the democracy movement in Zambia in the early 1990s, the making of a grand opposition coalition uniting business and labor under the MMD banner has been described in nearly heroic terms (Rakner, 2004; Svasand and Rakner, 2003; Burnell, 2001). On the other hand, the survival of the Moi regime in Kenya through out the 1990s was widely blamed on the inability of the opposition to unite. This dynamic was particularly evident in the 1992 Kenya elections (Throup and Hornsby, 1998), when President Kenneth Moi was able to retain the presidency despite being able to garner only 36% of the vote, despite intimidation during the campaign and some fraud on election day. On the other side, three different candidates each managed at least 17 percent of the vote. Clearly, the Kenya story goes, had the opposition overcome its disunity, it might have booted Moi out of power. Opposition politicians were widely blamed in these latter cases for putting their personal interests above the cause of democracy.

These two narratives are paradigmatic: key political alliances are almost invariably part of the story in any electoral victory. The ability of incumbents to keep key supporters in the presidential fold helps to determine whether they retain power, while defections to the opposition often presage electoral defeat. There have not been many cases of opposition victories over incumbents in Sub Saharan Africa since 1990: by my count (see Table 1), out of the 92 presidential elections that took place between 1990 and 2004, electoral turnovers occurred 13 times. In addition, there are 5 cases of an electoral victory by an opposition candidate, in which no incumbent was defeated. The best example of the latter is perhaps the case of Kenya, once again: in the 2002 elections, the opposition, now united around Mwai Kibaki, defeated Moi's handpicked successor, Uhuru Kenyatta (Anderson, 2003). Moi chose to respect the constitution and not run for another term.

Thus, there appears to be a clear correlation between cohesion and electoral victory. But the issue of causation is far less clear. Do broad opposition coalitions bring about victory? Or do opposition candidates gain supporters as the prospects of victory

¹ The overwhelming majority of incumbent presidents in these illiberal electoral systems are men, so I will use the male pronoun throughout.

approach? Unfortunately, the information necessary to disentangle these two alternatives is not easily available in systematic form. Nonetheless, this paper will investigate the circumstances which influence the degree of opposition cohesion in electoral autocracies, and its relationship to electoral outcomes.

I start by defining the universe of states this essay focuses on, electoral autocracies or hybrid regimes (Diamond, 2002). Arguably, for reasons that will become clear, opposition cohesion is even more important to transitions in such regimes, defined as regimes that combine relatively competitive multi-party elections with low levels of executive accountability and various political practices associated with authoritarian rule. As has been acknowledged by a number of scholars (e.g., Diamond, 2002; Schedler, 2001, 2002), these are inherently ambiguous regimes, in which incumbents derive key advantages in the political game by resorting to a “menu of manipulation”, but oppositions nonetheless have a chance to advance to power through the ballot box. It is important to problematize the degree of democracy in the political system, in order to show that opposition cohesion is more likely to occur the more democratic the political system. I then examine transitions as a “tipping game”, in which opposition cohesion is not a cause of transition but rather a consequence of a growing probability of transition due to a number of interrelated factors that are hard to distinguish. I argue that the particular dynamics of political transitions can be understood to result from strategic behavior on the part of key political actors playing out a tipping game, in which, *ceteris paribus*, they wish to be on the winning side. Finally, in the second half of the paper, I examine the different factors that will condition the likelihood of opposition cohesion. I examine in turn, the constitutional correlates of cohesion, the international dimension and the socio-cultural factors. The discussion is largely based on a data set of 92 presidential elections in Sub Saharan Africa, but the implications are generalizable beyond that region.

2. How Electoral, How Authoritarian?

The discussion has so far assumed that multi-party elections are the defining events of the political transitions. But this is not always the case. On the one hand, in a number of cases, regime transitions are precipitated by military intervention or some form of extra-electoral action. Thus, in Mali, a pro-democracy military coup spelled the end of the Traore regime. It might have survived the street protests and diplomatic pressures, much like Robert Mugabe has in Zimbabwe (Compagnon, 2000), or Lansana Conte has in Guinea, if relatively junior officers had not conspired so effectively against it (Camara, 2000). In Congo (Quantin, 1997) and Benin (Decalo, 1998; Heilbrunn, 1993; Banegas, 1997), a national conference pushed the president out of office in favor of an interim government and elections, in what local observers labeled a “civilian coup”. In these cases, the founding election followed an *inter regnum*, and came well after the old regime had fallen. A temporary government organized the elections, and the different candidates and parties competing for seats rarely enjoyed the advantages of a typical incumbent, even if the interim government may have played favorites

Before the regime fell, either elections were so unfair as to preclude an opposition victory, or they were non-existent. In fact, in many cases, it was precisely the fact the

elections were unwinnable that led to the opposition to favor extra-legal means to gain power. In these cases, it is possible to argue that the key factors were the numerous defections suffered by the president in the preceding weeks that tipped the balance towards the opposition. In Benin, President Kerekou's regime progressively lost domestic support through out 1989-1991 because of simply disastrous economic performance and the explicit refusal of the major donors -- including France -- to support the regime without changes. The National Conference was the final event, but the fall of the government seemed inevitable long before it fell. In Mali, economic collapse in the early 1990s led to prolonged student and civil service protests against the regime. The regime's legitimacy having collapsed, top senior officers in the army did not rise to President Traore's defense when junior officers seized the presidential palace, and his two-decade-old regime was removed without virtually anyone willing to stand up for it (Vengroff, 1993; Thiriot, 1999). But clearly, the decisiveness of the military action that removed the Traore regime was not predicated on the breadth of support for it. The Malian army turned out to have democratic proclivities and organized elections, which introduced the current multi-party democratic regime. There are just as many instances in which the military intervened successfully in an antidemocratic manner, despite little popular support and no obvious political alliance behind it. The military coup in Algeria that prevented the victory of the Islamist FIS party at the polls in December 1991 is an example, as is the December 1999 coup in Cote d'Ivoire by General Robert Guei. The latter attempted to legitimize his rule with suspect elections a year later, but the absence of domestic support, plus intense international pressure eventually forced him to acknowledge the electoral victory of Laurent Gbagbo, himself an ethnic entrepreneur with little respect for democratic norms (Contamin and Losch 2000).

This essay is nonetheless primarily interested in countries in which the opposition political actors compete in elections that they generally consider imperfect, but winnable. In turn, this leads me to hypothesize that the *level of democracy* that exists in the system conditions the ability of the opposition to coalesce. Zimbabwe in the last decade offers an example of opposition cohesion existing despite very high levels of repression. But Zimbabwe stands out as a relative exception, and it seems intuitively clear that the ability of the opposition to coalesce and eventually win an election is in large part a function of the degree of democracy that exists within the system. This is not easy to test quantitatively without knowing much more about the dynamics within the opposition. Nonetheless, a crude test is possible: in a data set of 92 direct presidential elections in Africa between 1990 and 2004, I collected data on the share of the vote received by the leading opposition candidate, since the higher this score, the more likely the opposition is united. In fact, this number is significantly correlated ($p = -.44.5$) with the Freedom House scores of political rights and civil liberties.² Since some authoritarian leaders tolerate reasonably high scores by the leading opposition candidate in elections which they have no intention to lose, this is a remarkably high correlation. Clearly, the more democratic the country, the higher the share of the vote going to the opposition's top candidate.

² In two round voting systems, only the second round was used; the two freedom house scores were added, so the range of possible scores went from 2 (most democratic) to 14 (least democratic). This progression explains the sign on the correlation coefficient.

In some countries, no matter how popular the opposition is, it will not win an election because fraud, intimidation and gerrymandering (for parliamentary regimes) will rob it of the victory. In Chad, for instance, the Deby regime has countenanced regular elections since the early 1990s in order to assuage donor demands for governance improvements. Deby has even allowed the opposition to force him into a runoff (in 1996). But the regime has used a combination of electoral manipulation, intimidation and violence -- political assassinations have been common -- as well as cooptation of key elements of the opposition to dominate the political game (Buijtenhuijs, 1998). Various structural factors militate against opposition cohesion: Chad is a huge and under-populated country, with very low levels of literacy and poor communications systems. There is little experience of legislative politics and the party system is volatile and little institutionalized. Religious, regional and ethnic differences divide politicians and their parties. But Deby has masterfully used carrot and stick to worsen the effects of these structural dynamics.

Schedler (2002) may well be correct in his assessment that in all electoral autocracies, each election that is conducted provides a medium to long-term boost to the opposition and delegitimizes autocratic rule, but nonetheless a clear distinction exists between “grey regimes” and pure electoral autocracies such as Chad or Togo under Eyadema, where an opposition victory is simply inconceivable. In the “grey regimes”, on the other hand, the presumption exists that the opposition could possibly win despite incumbency advantages; in other words, it may secure such a decisive majority that incumbents cannot secure an official victory despite using various shenanigans. In such states constitutional legitimacy has some significant weight, and so governments cannot steal elections too blatantly. Thus, President Babangida’s best efforts were not enough to prevent the electoral victory of Abiola in the 1993 elections in Nigeria, for instance. In Madagascar’s December 2001 elections, similarly, incumbent President Ratsiraka appears to have tried various forms of fraud to deny a simple majority electoral victory to his rival, Marc Ravalomanana, in order to force a second round, which he hoped to win in some manner. The fact that distinguishing between these regimes is not easy does not mean that the distinction is not meaningful.

Thus, opposition cohesion and the possibility of an electoral victory over an incumbent is a function of the level of democracy in countries, which convenes multi-party elections. At the risk of stating the obvious, electoral fraud almost invariably benefits incumbents; thus the greater the amount of electoral fraud, the less likely a transition, even if oppositions are united. The perfect illustration of this is Zimbabwe, in which a relatively united opposition is not currently able to remove President Mugabe from power, because his core coalition remains intact, most notably the support of the military and internal security apparatus (Compagnon, 2000; Rotberg, 2004).

Table 1: Opposition Victories, Sub Saharan Africa, 1990-2004

#	Country	Year	Winner	Winner's share	Share of second candidate	Freedom House Score
1	Benin	1991	Nicephore Soglo	36.2	27.2	5
1	Benin	1991	Nicephore Soglo	67.5	32.5	5
2	Benin	1996	Nicephore Soglo	35.7	33.9	4
2	Benin	1996	Mathieu Kerekou	52.5	47.5	4
3	Burundi	1993	Melchior Ndadaye	65.7	32.9	14
4	Cape Verde	1991	Antonio Mascarenhas	73.4	26.6	5
5	Cape Verde	2001	Pedro Verona Pires	46.5	45.8	3
5	Cape Verde	2001	Pedro Verona Pires	49.43	49.42	3
6	CAR	1993	Ange-Felix Patasse	37.3	21.7	7
7	Congo-B	1992	Pascal Lissouba	35.9	20.3	6
7	Congo-B	1992	Pascal Lissouba	61.3	38.7	6
8	Ghana	2000	John Kufuor	48.4	44.8	5
8	Ghana	2000	John Kufuor	57.4	42.6	5
9	Guinea B.	1999	Kumba Yala	38.8	23.4	8
9	Guinea B.	2000	Kumba Yala	72	28	8
10	Kenya	2002	Mwai Kibaki	62.2	31.3	6
11	Madagascar	1992	Albert Zafy	45.9	28.6	8
11	Madagascar	1992	Albert Zafy	66.7	33.3	8
12	Madagascar	1996	Didier Ratsiraka	36.6	23.4	6
12	Madagascar	1996	Didier Ratsiraka	50.7	49.3	6
13	Madagascar	2001	Marc Ravalomanana	51.5	35.9	6
14	Mali	1992	Alpha Konare	45		5
14	Mali	1992	Alpha Konare	69	31	5
15	Malawi	1994	Bakili Muluzi	47.2	33.5	5
16	Niger	1993	Tandja Mamadou	34.3	26.6	8
16	Niger	1993	Tandja Mamadou	54.4	45.6	8
17	Senegal	2000	Abdou Diouf	41.3	30.1	7
17	Senegal	2000	Abdoulaye Wade	58.5	41.5	7
18	Zambia	1991	Frederick Chiluba	75.8	24.2	5

Notes: Data taken from author's data base. See text for definitions.

The link between the level of democracy and the prospects for the opposition are well captured in table 1, which provides information on the 18 cases in which the opposition managed to win a presidential election. The Freedom House Scores show that all of these elections have taken place in states that are “partly free” or “free”, with the exception of the victory of Ndadaye in Burundi, a tragically pyrrhic victory since he was assassinated in a military coup less than a year later.

In addition, the table shows that 11 of the 17 cases were decided in two round majority voting systems, which suggests that this electoral system facilitates opposition cohesion, a theme we return to below.

3. Transitions as a Tipping Game

Regime transitions and the ouster of an incumbent ruler in an electoral autocracy are often over-determined processes. After they have happened, several factors appear to each have played a central role. This is indeed one reason that scholarly debates continue in the “transitology” field about the relative explanatory power to attribute to different factors, from international pressures, to economic pressures, external shocks, elite fragmentation and opposition cohesion. Usually, a compelling case can be made for each factor.

Some of these explanatory factors are clearly exogenous. For instance, leaders’ actions cannot influence weather patterns or the international price of raw commodities, yet prolonged drought, or a worsening in the international terms of trade can negatively impact the domestic economy, with consequences for the popularity and stability of the regime in place. Similarly, positive shocks can benefit governments. Analysts typically emphasize negative shocks, but recent history provides plenty of examples of windfall revenue increases coming to governments because of a sudden jump in oil or coffee prices.

Of course, the actions of government also affect the economy. Thus, unpopular governments may be tempted to engage in excessive borrowing or unsustainable monetary policies to buy support with public expenditures in the short term, though this will eventually undermine macro-stability. Indeed, politicians have notoriously short time horizons and they may be tempted to pursue unsustainable policies in order to buy time in reaction to exogenous factors. Thus, the quality of Nigerian economic policy-making declined sharply subsequent to the oil price declines in the 1990s. A number of governments all over the world have reacted to economic shocks with unsustainable international borrowing, sometimes causing considerable damage to economic long-term prospects.

But many of the factors shaping the dynamics of a regime transition are not so clearly exogenous. To be sure, the behavior of political actors, both within the governing majority and within the opposition, can be explained in part with reference to such factors as ideological or ethnic factors that do not change quickly. In Cameroon, as well as in many other countries, for instance, the army has been ethnically shaped over many years by the regime; since his arrival to power, Paul Biya has made sure the officer corps is predominantly Beti and southern. The loyalty of top officers to the regime is strengthened by various links of kith and kin, as well as their rational calculation that Biya’s fall would result in the probable loss of a number of advantages from which they benefit today. In the early 1990s, democratization in Burundi was brutally ended by the Tutsi officer corps, which simply could not countenance the loss of power and privileges that elections and the emergence of a Hutu-dominated government implied. Dan Posner

(2004) and others may be right to say that ethnic identity and conflict are constructed but once they are constructed, their logic pervades economic and political institutions and can be considered as fixed in the short and medium term.

At the same time, the behavior of political actors is often highly contingent: self-interested and rational actors respond to events in a context of substantial information asymmetries and uncertainty. Even in ethnically or ideologically polarized political situations, institutional actors are likely to support a stable regime, but less likely to back one which is tottering or obviously unstable. Political actors want to be on the right side of history. Their support for a regime is in part self-serving, and they are more likely to withdraw the support if the regime's survival seems in doubt. Their main difficulty is gauging correctly the regime's chances of survival, which is typically difficult in a political environment without an effective press, poorly institutionalized parties and in general little transparency.

Defecting from the regime is risky, moreover, for if the incumbent manages to stay in power then defectors will pay a substantial penalty. In some cases, if the defector is correct in his assessment that the regime is doomed but defects too early, the penalty will be exacted before the incumbent actually falls. This is why highly unpopular and bankrupt regimes take so long to fall. To the bitter end, the regime manages to retain some support from would be defectors that do not want to defect too soon. Once it is clear that the incumbent's fate is sealed, however, things can move very quickly as numerous actors defect as quickly as they can to derive the benefits of defection.

Political transitions thus constitute highly contingent politics, in which actors act strategically in a context of information asymmetries. Opposition dynamics and the degree to which opposition groups coalesce successfully can be viewed as a "tipping" game. Political transitions can be understood as the rapid movement from one power equilibrium to another, in the course of which a majority of political forces moves from one coalition to another. The incumbent had a winning majority, but loses it, thanks to defections of key elements to the opposition.

I would like to argue that tipping, or "cascades" (Laitin, 1998) represent a useful heuristic to understand these dynamics in electoral autocracies. First, in mature democracies, the contingent politics of politicians is considerably less autonomous of voters and their preferences. It would be inconceivable for the socialist and communist-dominated trade unions in a country like France to switch their support to a right wing party, and even if they did, their members would be unlikely to follow suit. Ideological divisions and long-standing cleavages shape the actions of politicians, who seek the support of voters within a fairly narrow and well-established political space, in which economic and social policies dominate. On the other hand, in most multi-party systems that have emerged out of *the Third Wave* of democratization, political cleavages are not well-set and identity politics typically trump ideology. Voting is often closely tied to region, ethnicity, language and or religion. As a result, political alliances are more fluid and changing, and individual politicians have greater degree of autonomy in the deals and alliances they make to gain political power. I recognize that the previous statement is not

equally true in all countries and may change over time, and below I examine the impact of variance on this issue for the likelihood of opposition coalescence. But as a general statement comparing the modal electoral autocracy with the modal mature democracy, the statement can be viewed as relatively unproblematic. Tipping dynamics are essentially elite processes that seem more likely to take place in political system in which party platforms do not sharply polarize the party system and, as a result, the relationships across politicians and parties is more fluid.

Secondly, elections are not the entire show in the electoral autocracies with which we are concerned. Because elections are highly imperfect with fraud before and during election day, and because the incumbent uses various underhanded tactics to try to win the election, elite deal-making is an important dimension of politics. The decisions of key politicians weigh heavily on electoral outcomes and their legitimacy.

How do these tipping dynamics take place? In some circumstances, a single actor can tip the balance away from the incumbent regime. The defection of an important ethnic leader, who in effect represents a sizeable segment of the national electorate, may be the signal that the incumbent's fate is sealed and encourage a cascade of other defections. In Benin, for instance, the victory of Soglo in 1992 hinged on his ability to convince other opposition candidates, whom he had defeated in the first round, to support him. One key ally proved to be Adrien Houngbedji, who would be rewarded with the position of Speaker of the Parliament. Yet, four years later, it was the latter's open support for Kerekou, once again following the first round (in which he had come in third with 19.7 % of the votes) that would ensure the defeat of President Soglo. Kerekou would name Houngbedji his first Prime Minister.

More typically, no single actor can claim this leverage, or it is impossible to know in advance which actor will tip the balance in this manner. Then, the key dimension of a tipping game is a problem of coordination. Thus, the survival of the regime is conditional on the support of actors A, B, C, and D. It is probably the case that the regime only needs the support of two of these to survive. Thus, any of the four need to be sure that at least two of the others are defecting before it will choose to defect. A will defect from the regime, if A believes that at least two of the other actors are also defecting. The probability of defection is a closely guarded secret, since it will be severely punished by the regime if it manages to survive, or does not fall immediately, so it is very hard for A to know the intentions of the other key actors, and similarly, it is in A's interest to conceal his preferences. True, there may be a special reward to those actors who defect first and early, since they may be rewarded with a prominent position in the successor regime, but early defection is particularly risky.

Much the same dynamic takes place within the declared opposition. There also, problems of coordination are paramount. As long as the incumbent appears unassailable, opposition cohesion is less likely. Individual opposition leaders gain an advantage from maintaining their own autonomy, deriving notoriety and perhaps material advantage as leaders of a specific region, ethnic group or social class. As such leaders, they can negotiate with the incumbent ruler, who will have more of an incentive to deal with them

than if they were secondary leaders in a larger opposition alliance. Perhaps each would like to lead the opposition alliance, even if its defeat was assured, but deciding who that will be poses classic prisoners' dilemma situations, as each prefers the secondary gains of being a minor opposition leader to the larger but far more uncertain gain associated with being the leader of the opposition.

These calculations and collective action dilemmas change somewhat as the ruler becomes less popular and the regime begins to totter. On the one hand, the bickering over who gets to lead the transition becomes more acerbic as the fruits of victory become more tangible. But on the other hand, the incentive to strike a side deal with the regime goes down as its future appears less assured, and the gains from becoming even a lieutenant in the next regime more certain. Overall, opposition cohesion appears more likely when an opposition victory appears more likely. Of course, this cohesion may not last long. The "united front" that wrested power from the autocratic incumbent may fall apart after the election, when a new executive emerges and bickering over how to share power becomes inevitable. But in the run up to victory, it is not unusual to see a cohesive opposition.

We often see the phenomenon of regional or ethnic leaders sitting on the fence, not entirely of the regime, yet not of the opposition either, and willing to join the governing coalition, albeit temporarily, in exchange for various material and other benefits. Again, the tipping dynamic is characteristic: the movement of one actor away from the regime, or from the fence to the opposition, may be decisive in shifting perceptions about the viability of the regime.

It is indeed striking how often the new leadership following a transition is made up of politicians who were neither radically opposed to the old order, nor prominent in it. Far more typical is the emergence of political actors during the transition who may have played secondary roles within the regime before defecting, or who moved back and forth between regime and opposition through out their careers. Thus, in Senegal, Abdoulaye Wade and some of his closest lieutenants in the PDS had served in governments under Abdou Diouf at different points in the 1980s and 1990s, while Wade's victory in 2000 was in part due to key defections from the Diouf regime. In Eastern Europe in the 1990s, a surprising large proportion of the politicians that emerged from elections to participate or lead governing cabinets could not be described as hard-core opponents of communist rule, but typically had not been dissidents either. Instead, they were men and women who had "gotten along to get along" with the region's communist order.

If I have discussed opposition cohesion and regime defections together, it is because they are usually part of the same general dynamic. Thus, in Zambia, most of the components of the united opposition were elements of the UNIP regime until the end of the 1980s (Ihonvebere, 1998). In sum, the key dynamic of the Zambia transition was not the unity of the opposition, but rather the inability of Kenneth Kaunda to maintain the integrity of his ruling coalition. The defection of the labor movement from the presidential majority was as important to the victory of the MMD, as the fact that the union movement then became part of a bigger alliance. Opposition cohesion and

incumbent fragmentation are often mirror images of each other, and cannot be understood separately. Opposition cohesion is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for a regime transition. It is only when defections in the regime swell the opposition, and it manages to unite that the conditions for a transition are clearly met.

Clearly, it is important to distinguish the unity of the opposition from its breadth. The opposition can be reasonably united, but not nearly substantial enough to challenge incumbents. In the Cote d'Ivoire throughout much of the 1990s, Laurent Gbagbo was the undisputed leader of a united, albeit relatively inconsequential opposition, challenging the still united regime of Houphouet-Boigny and his PDCI, but unable to threaten it.

Nonetheless, there are few such cases, because it is difficult for the opposition to maintain its unity in the face of such pressures. In stable electoral autocracies like Togo, Tanzania, or in Uganda, the ruling party has weathered the political liberalization of the last decade without a significant enough threat to its hegemony for opposition cohesion to much matter (On Uganda, see Furley, 2000). In these cases, the government invariably combines "carrot and stick" to undermine opposition resolve. Using state resources, incumbents can encourage defections from the main opposition coalition and promote its fissiparous tendencies. State funding for political parties can constitute one particularly insidious form of bribery in an economic setting in which the financing of political activities is problematic. The promise of an important office for politicians who join the presidential majority is another. On the stick side, various forms of intimidation, from temporary arrests to murder, all feature on the "menu of manipulation".

The opposition may remain cohesive, even as it is reduced to a core of politicians whose political identities are so marked in opposition to the regime, that they are less easily able to rejoin the presidential majority. Thus, in Cameroon, Paul Biya managed to reestablish his hold on power in the 1990s, following a period in which it appeared extremely shaky. The opposition has been led through out by John Fru Ndi and his party, the SDF. Though at one point a relatively broad multi-ethnic alliance, the SDF has slowly but surely been reduced to a core of support in Douala and western parts of the country. Many SDF supporters and fellow travelers have rejoined the presidential majority, and Fru Ndi is now perhaps the only major politician left in the SDF opposition (Ebeko, 1999; Takougang, 2003). Much the same could be said of Gabon or Togo.

In sum, this first part of the paper has advanced two propositions about opposition cohesion. First, I have argued that transition episodes are characterized by tipping dynamics, which help to explain their pace and rhythm. The likelihood of opposition cohesion is largely determined by perceptions regarding the prospects for opposition victory. Second, such tipping dynamics are more likely to characterize electoral autocracies, in which elections are rigged enough to favor incumbents, but not so thoroughly that they will always necessarily win.

The remaining sections of this paper briefly investigate the factors which can affect these tipping dynamics.

Institutional Factors

What institutional factors affect the ability of the opposition to coalesce? This is a huge topic, but it is possible to make several points.

First, some electoral systems privilege coalition building more than others. For example, as suggested by the data presented above, two round majority voting systems clearly facilitate opposition unity. Parties can forge reciprocal agreements that each will support the candidates of their political partner whenever they emerge on top following the first round. These work well both in presidential and parliamentary elections. Thus, in Senegal, in the 2000 elections, Wade emerged from the first round in second place with 31 percent of the vote, behind the incumbent President Abdou Diouf who garnered 41.3 percent of the vote. In a first past the post system, this would have meant the victory of the incumbent. In Senegal, despite bitterly disputed first round in which different opposition candidates competed against each other, nonetheless, they forged an agreement to prepare for the run off second round. Moustapha Niassé, the long time Diouf associate who had recently left the PS to form his own party and had received 16.8 percent of the vote. Sensing the likelihood of an opposition victory, Niassé forged a deal with Wade, and publicly backed him. Wade won the run off with 58 percent of the vote and would name him Prime Minister in his first government. One might mention that a fourth candidate Djibo Ka, another mainstay of PS governments in the 1980s and early 1990s, chose to endorse Diouf for the second round, mistakenly believing the Socialist president would survive.

I have already alluded to a remarkably similar story of inter-round negotiation taking place in Benin. There as well, the incumbent won the first round before losing in the majoritarian run-off (See Table 1). The point is that the two round majority system is ideal for this wheeling and dealing. Candidates can use the first round to gauge their level of support, often determined by ethno-regional factors, and then bargain for a good deal for themselves with the candidate they calculate will win in the second round.

The two round majority system is thus relatively favorable to challengers. Nonetheless, manipulation of the process by incumbents can often trump this pro-challenger dimension. In Gabon through out the 1990s, for instance, President Bongo made sure to win a majority in the first round and thus avoid the dangers of a second round. Much of Francophone Africa has used some version of the two round system since independence, a clear case of the historical influence of France, the colonial power, since this has been the system in France's Fifth republic. For his part, however, Paul Biya in Cameroon changed the constitution away from the French model before allowing the country to return to multi-party rule in the 1990s; he preferred a one round plurality system, which is much more favorable to the incumbent. It allowed him to sneak through the highly fraudulent 1992 elections with an official score of 39.9% of the vote.

Second, we can ask: is opposition coalition more likely in presidential or parliamentary regimes? This is difficult to answer because outside of the old established democracies, there appears to be a negative correlation between the power of the

president and the degree of democracy in the system. Typically, electoral autocracies concentrate power in the hands of a president, while parliamentary regimes are more democratic than fully presidential ones.³ So, in practice, it is hard to tell whether it is the presidential form that undermines opposition cohesion or the fact that the regime is not democratic.

In the universe of African cases, the most democratic countries tend to be the few parliamentary countries: Botswana, Mauritius and South Africa stand out in this respect. Interestingly, only Mauritius has a history of coalition building and electoral turnover; both Botswana and post-apartheid South Africa have been dominant party regimes in which oppositions have never won an election.

Having said that, the characteristics of presidentialism does affect the likelihood of cohesion. On the one hand, as is well established, presidentialism results in weaker political parties and less institutionalized party systems (Maiwaring and Scully, 1995; Carey, 2002; van de Walle, 2003). It is possible to hypothesize that party discipline and party system stability facilitates the kind of deal making that is central to coalition building, so one would think presidential systems would be less conducive to opposition cohesion. On the other hand, as suggested by the Senegalese case described above, it is easier to make deals around a presidential election, which need not involve many individual parliamentary constituencies, but can be forged by a couple men based in the capital.

Historical/Cultural Factors

Again, room constraints prevent a complete discussion, but two specific points can be made. First, a history of past experiences with democratic forms of government, and in particular, with elections, favors the opposition in electoral autocracies. If the country has gone through past democratic episodes, the opposition can rely on past experiences with political parties. This is perhaps why political parties appear considerably stronger, and party systems more institutionalized in Latin America (Mainwaring and Scully, 1995) or Eastern Europe, for instance, than in Africa (van de Walle, 2003). In the former, the opposition is likely to be stronger and more skillful, thanks to the experiences gained in previous episodes.

Second, in earlier research (Bienen and van de Walle, 1991), I showed that there were systematic regional differences in the length of tenure of world leaders.⁴ Only 5 percent of Latin American leaders remained in power after 8 full years in office, while in Africa and the Middle East 30 percent of leaders remained in power. Thus, leaders in Latin America tend to stay in power less time. There are strikingly few leaders in Latin American history that stay in power for a decade or more. Only 18 of the more than thousand Latin American leader in office over the last two hundred years have been in

³ Steven Fish, in this volume, makes a similar argument vis a vis the regimes in East Europe and the ex-Soviet states.

⁴ The study was based on 2,256 leaders from over a hundred independent countries since the beginning of the 19th century.

power as long as 14 years. On the other hand, in Africa, even thoroughly mediocre leaders with a weak grasp of power, like Samuel Doe in Liberia, routinely stay in power a decade. These differences are not easily explained, and are not explained by the level of democracy, the likelihood of military intervention or whether or not the system is presidential or parliamentary. Instead, they appear related in complex ways to a region's political culture.

In many cases, tenures are set by institutional mechanisms such as term limits, which exist in many Latin American countries, even non-democratic ones. But such institutional mechanisms are clearly endogenous and are responses to culturally mediated demands for mechanisms to shorten leaders' tenure. If so, it makes sense to think that similar dynamics may exist to assist opposition cohesion in order to limit presidential tenures. This is clearly hypothetical, but if there is the perception that a president's time in power is limited and likely to end soon, opposition leaders are more likely to unite to force the issue. If on the other hand, the president's tenure seems legitimate and unquestioned, then the tipping mechanisms described above are more likely to militate against successful opposition cohesion.

Certainly, there are striking differences across regions in the turnover rates in recent converts to multi-party politics. The low rates of turnover in Africa's newly democratic systems contrast with the higher rates in other regions. Some of these differences may be related to institutional factors, and perhaps African incumbents benefit in part from more advantages than in other regions, but it can also be hypothesized that national political culture is more tolerant of long incumbency. Certainly, a number of Africanist scholars (Schatzberg, Chabal and Daloz) believe that there is a distinctive African political culture that is paternalistic and conservative.

Socio-Economic factors

Next, we want to ask: what is the impact of socio-economic factors on the likelihood of opposition cohesion? First, ethnic fragmentation and other forms of cultural pluralism obviously will make cohesion more difficult, *ceteris paribus*. Situations of ethnic diversity and polarization probably increase the costs of coalition building and provide a built-in advantage to incumbents who can more easily build cross-ethnic coalitions with the assistance of state resources (Moestrup, 1999; Crook, 1997). There is some evidence, for instance that ethnic fragmentation results in larger government cabinets; such deal-making is costly and often beyond the means of opposition parties. True, parties can forge deals involving the cabinet positions each member of the coalition will receive in the case of victory, but unless victory seems assured, such deals are harder to sustain, and it is easier for the incumbent to match opposition promises. Again, until defections and a loss of credibility have tipped the victory towards the opposition, ethnic fragmentation will favor the government.

Second, there is probably a positive correlation between economic development and the likelihood of opposition cohesion. There is probably a positive correlation between economic development and urbanization, on the one hand and a more institutionalized party system. In richer countries, municipal and provincial government

provides offices for opposition parties, even when they do not control national government. In poor countries, subnational administrations are far more likely to be dependent on the center for revenue and thus politically more dependent on the center, even if there is nominal democracy. Having a regional or municipal seat provides offices for party officials and patronage possibilities for the party rank and file, which is enormously helpful to opposition parties without evident means of finance.

If this is true, then it also follows that parties are stronger in richer countries, even if the country has no long experience of democracy (in fact of course richer countries tend to have stronger party systems because they have longer experiences of multi-party electoral politics). Strong parties and institutionalized party systems probably facilitate coalition building. In sum, there is a positive correlation between opposition cohesion and economic development.

International Factors

Finally, at least two international factors appear to have an effect on the likelihood of opposition cohesion. First, the presence of external pressures for democracy increases the costs faced by the incumbent of trying to steal the election and thus provide support for the opposition. Nonetheless, the case of Zimbabwe suggests that autocratic leaders can withstand considerable external pressure, so the importance of this factor should not be exaggerated.

A second international factor is financing for parties from expatriate communities. Little or no data exists on these financial flows, but anecdotal evidence suggests that expatriate communities can provide financial support to opposition parties, constituting a significant resource, and strengthening the ability of these parties to compete effectively.

In both instances, it is assumed once again that a stronger opposition is more likely to win and that as a result it is more likely to be able to coalesce successfully.

4. Conclusions

The discussion above has been illustrative and suggestive rather than definitive. It is clearly important to develop better measures of the concepts discussed here, and better data that would allow more formal tests of the hypothesis I have formulated. Nonetheless, several patterns appear highly suggestive. First, I have been able to show that opposition cohesion is positively correlated with opposition electoral victory, and, in turn with the level of democracy in a country. Second, the analysis has argued that cohesion is often the consequence of victory, rather than its cause. Clearly, a finer grade analysis of specific country cases is necessary to demonstrate this argument more conclusively. Finally, my analysis has shown that a number of factors can influence the likelihood of opposition cohesion. Most strikingly, the nature of the electoral system has a decisive effect. A striking proportion of the cases of successful electoral turnover take place in political systems with two-round majority systems, which appear to favor the opposition's ability to forge coalitions.

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