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Source: *International Political Science Review / Revue internationale de science politique*, January 2018, Vol. 39, No. 1, Special Issue: State capacity, elections and the resilience of authoritarian rule (January 2018), pp. 114-129

Published by: Sage Publications, Ltd.

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26956719>

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Electoral authoritarianism and weak states in Africa: The role of parties versus presidents in Tanzania and Cameroon

International Political Science Review
2018, Vol. 39(1) 114–129
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sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/0192512117692322
journals.sagepub.com/home/ips


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Abstract

State capacity is arguably an essential factor that stabilizes electoral authoritarian rule. Yet, in the context of sub-Saharan Africa many measures of state capacity are generally weak. What therefore explains the persistence of electoral authoritarianism in Africa? This study provides a comparison of Tanzania and Cameroon to highlight two divergent reactions to the problem of power consolidation in Africa. In Cameroon, a centralized presidency and comparatively large coercive apparatus underpinned a strong patrimonial state. By contrast, in Tanzania the ruling party became an institution that integrated elites and appeared to subsume the state. These regime configurations stabilized electoral authoritarianism in unique ways, and led to different dependence on the state during elections. The study sheds new light on contemporary Africa, and the diverse sources of authoritarian resilience in the face of multiparty elections.

Keywords

Africa, electoral authoritarianism, presidents, ruling parties, state capacity

Introduction

Sub-Saharan Africa is home to numerous and longstanding electoral authoritarian regimes (Bogaards, 2013), yet it also ranks low on many traditional measures of state capacity. Following the transition to independence, colonial powers bequeathed limited bureaucracies, disorganized militaries, and narrow tax bases. While state capacity differed moderately across the continent, it is uncontroversial to argue that at independence most African states lacked many of the basic technologies of empirical statehood (Herbst, 2000). By the multiparty era of the 1990s a large proportion of comparatively weak African states had stable electoral authoritarian regimes. This is a puzzle for

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scholars interested in the resilience of electoral authoritarianism. If state capacity is indeed an essential factor that contributes to regime stability in the face of elections, how is it that so many African electoral authoritarian regimes have endured? What factors compensate for Africa's apparent weaker states?

In this article, I argue that the resilience of African electoral authoritarianism can partially be linked to two divergent adaptations to the challenge of power consolidation in post-colonial Africa. The first involved the emergence of powerful presidential figures as the cornerstone institution that held together tenuous multiethnic coalitions (van de Walle, 2003). Often referred to as the patrimonial nature of the African state, these regimes were more effective when the state developed administrative and repressive features necessary to maintain ruling coalitions. While more extensive state features were not created, strong patrimonial states did emerge in Africa. A second response, less discussed in the African context, was the development of robust and credible ruling parties that could parallel and even subsume the state (Magaloni, 2008). The party could bring together disparate elites and assume many of the developmental initiatives that would otherwise be afforded to the state. These differences are rooted in unique historical circumstances, but had real consequences for how regimes later contested elections.

I make these points by contrasting two dissimilar cases: Tanzania; and Cameroon. Both are electoral authoritarian regimes of similar age, but they exemplify these different processes of regime and state building, and consequently different electoral authoritarian experiences. In Tanzania, the ruling party provided a credible institutional platform that bonded elites and reached citizens. Accordingly, elections were more easily contested and the state was less involved. By contrast, in Cameroon the presidency and patrimonial state were more pronounced. The transition to elections was challenging, and regime survival depended on leveraging the state's coercive capacities and the indomitable power of the presidency. Comparing these two cases sheds light on the logic of state building in Africa, but more broadly on the differential role of the state in electoral authoritarian contestation. The article proceeds with an overview of electoral authoritarianism in Africa, followed by a brief discussion of regime formation in Tanzania and Cameroon. I then contrast how these regimes utilized states and parties to contest foundational elections and consolidate into stable electoral authoritarian regimes.

The puzzle of electoral authoritarianism in Africa

The spread of multi-partyism across Africa in the 1990s is associated with the after-effects of regional economic stagnation, international pressure, and popular protest (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997). By 2013 there were only four African countries that were not holding regular multiparty elections. While this transition was initially heralded as Africa's "second liberation," with time it became evident that elections often did not live up to commonly held democratic standards. Despite some significant improvements, electoral turnover remained elusive and electoral authoritarianism became a modal regime type (Lindberg, 2006). This corresponds with the recorded global trend toward electoral authoritarianism since the end of the Cold War (Schedler, 2013). Depending on one's definition of democracy and electoral authoritarianism, by 2013 nearly 45% of African countries were electorally authoritarian, while just 29% were democratic.¹

The remarkable endurance of electoral authoritarianism in Africa is puzzling given the perception that state capacity is weak across the continent (Levitsky and Way, 2010). Table 1 presents some measures of administrative, extractive, and coercive capabilities (Hanson and Sigman, 2013). The table compares these measures between uninterrupted and interrupted electoral authoritarian regimes, and notes how the scores for Africa compare to non-member

Table 1. Measures of state capacity and presidential power in African electoral authoritarian regimes (1990–2013).

Indicators	Electoral authoritarian	Uninterrupted electoral authoritarian	Interrupted electoral authoritarian	Statistical significance	Compared to non-Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Statistical capacity	57.58 (33)	56.38 (19)	59.20 (14)	.	–
Income tax/ government revenue	19.73 (27)	20.60 (15)	18.64 (12)	.	–
Military spending per capita	38.17 (35)	46.88 (18)	28.95 (17)	.	–
Military personnel per 1000 people	3.05 (38)	3.74 (20)	2.29 (18)	.	–
Taxation/gross domestic product (GDP)	13.71 (27)	13.79 (15)	13.62 (12)	.	+
Revenue mobilization capacity	3.28 (30)	3.27 (16)	3.28 (14)	.	–
Natural resource rents/GDP	15.01 (38)	18.82 (20)	10.77 (18)	.	+
Executive constraint	3.78 (37)	2.94 (19)	4.68 (18)	***	–
Cabinet size	24.22 (38)	26.47 (20)	21.72 (18)	**	n/a
Party age	15.78 (36)	19.79 (18)	11.77 (18)	***	n/a

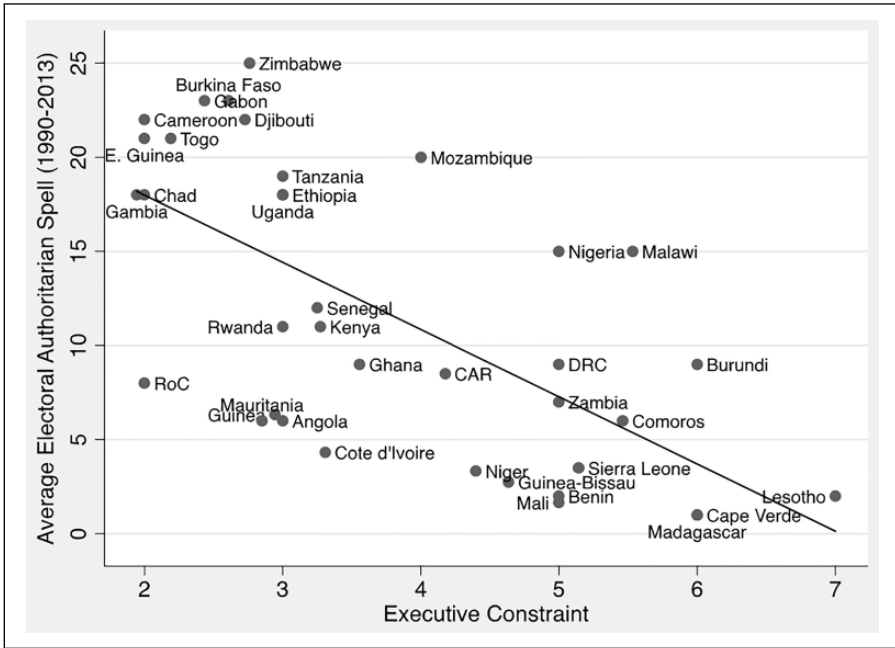
Notes: Column five reports a *t*-test comparison of means for samples with unequal variance. Number of countries indicated in parentheses.

Sources: World Bank (2014); Europa Publications (1990-2013); Marshall et al. (2014).

countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). First, with the exception of taxation as a percentage of gross domestic product, all other measures of state capacity are lower than in other non-OECD countries. Second, intra-African differences in state capacity are generally not statistically correlated with the longevity of electoral authoritarianism. The one exception is possibly military spending and military personnel, which appears to exert a substantial if not statistically significant impact. Generally speaking, resilient electoral authoritarianism is not associated with across-the-board stronger states, at least not in the sense articulated in this issue.

One answer to this puzzle is that successful electoral authoritarianism in Africa relates to the powerful role of African presidents and the unique nature of the African state. In the post-colonial moment, African rulers had little capacity to overcome dispersed social power, and therefore had to rely on centralized political authority to consolidate a narrow and generally urban elite. While this predicament was not unique to Africa, the comparative weakness of the African state combined with norms of reciprocal clientelism to produce a strong patrimonial order (Migdal, 1988). Power was overwhelmingly concentrated and personified in the office of the presidency. This control allowed presidents to selectively distribute state resources to elites, who often represented important ethnic groups. Notably, formal institutions were deliberately weakened so that elites could generate prebends from their positions of prestige and maintain their own clientelistic

Figure 1. Executive constraint and electoral authoritarian tenure in Africa.



networks. During elections, it is expected that elites will utilize their private networks and resources to mobilize constituencies in tandem with the state.

The patrimonial logic of the African state means that not all elements of state capacity are equally relevant. The African state is weak in the sense that most presidents do not have massive and predictable bureaucracies or tax authorities to direct resources and monitor voters. Nor is any African state home to something like a truly powerful intelligence service. However, *patrimonial states* are strong when they can generate sufficient distributive resources and when they develop some basic authoritative tools. As Thomas Callaghy notes, the ability of presidents to control territorial administrations, bloat civil administrations, and develop new coercive institutions is contingent, but useful for regime stability. The result is what he calls a “lame leviathan” – a state that cannot be exploited for massive social and economic projects, but nonetheless provides the necessary scaffolding for patrimonial orders (Callaghy, 1987).

Therefore, we expect stable electoral authoritarianism to coincide with presidential power and specific measures of patrimonial state capacity. Table 1 also presents data that approximate patrimonial strength. Presidential power can be measured formally by examining constitutions (Moestrup, 2011). However, in the African context presidential power involves numerous informal practices, which is why I prefer the Polity IV scale of executive constraint. The relationships are quite clear – less executive constraint and larger cabinets correspond with more resilient electoral authoritarianism. As with military spending, the role of natural resource rents does not rise to the level of statistical significance, but there are visible differences. These points are further elucidated in Figure 1, which plots the relationship between executive constraint and average electoral authoritarian tenure. Admittedly, this measure is gross, but nonetheless corresponds with a common understanding of the dominant role of presidents in African politics.

A second answer to this puzzle refers to the role of political parties in authoritarian politics. And indeed, the data show that African electoral authoritarian regimes can persist for extended

periods of time with relatively higher levels of executive constraint.² Although generally not discussed in reference to Africa, there is a burgeoning literature on the role of authoritarian institutions and particularly political parties in perpetuating authoritarianism. (Gandhi, 2008; Magaloni, 2008; Svobik, 2012). Robust and institutionalized parties are especially useful for resolving dilemmas of authoritarian power sharing. Parties can develop features that shape elite time horizons and sense of their own careers. Likewise, parties are also physical organizations that can reach voters, perhaps more effectively than state institutions. Table 1 indicates a relationship between the age of ruling parties – an imprecise proxy for institutionalization – and electoral authoritarian tenure, but the specific relationship between parties and authoritarian resilience is emblematic in the case of Tanzania.

The emergence of truly party-based authoritarianism in Africa is rare, but has different implications for the nature and role of the state. The conditions under which rulers would make institutional concessions that limit their own authority are very contingent. Unlike in East Asia, the emergence of a strong party in Tanzania originated in the weakness of the state and the need for an alternative mechanism of political control (Slater, 2010). Furthermore, in Tanzania the party was used to replace the state administration, and therefore also to limit its patrimonial tendencies and achieve real development goals. These attempts were uneven, but the drive was not toward greater presidential centralization and coercive authority. The question of whether this fostered a stronger state in a Weberian sense is debatable. However, what party-based authoritarianism did mean was that when the party ultimately disentangled from the state the regime had comparatively less control over bureaucracies and coercive institutions, yet retained fairly credible party institutions.

These different trajectories of regime and state building – whether presidential-dominant or party-based – have implications for electoral authoritarian contestation. Presidential-dominant systems are successful electoral authoritarian regimes when they can maintain ruling coalitions through patronage, and when they can leverage specific aspects of the patrimonial state like administrations and coercive institutions. Consequently, the transition to electoral authoritarianism, which in Africa generally involved economic crisis, was likely to be stressful with more overt use of the state to manipulate elections. By contrast, party-based systems are successful electoral authoritarian regimes when they maintain those intra-party systems for maintaining elite loyalty. The transition to elections was likely more manageable, and electoral contestation less coercive. The state might still play a role, but it will be secondary to the ruling party.

Tanzania and Cameroon's divergent paths of regime formation

Here I contrast the evolution of ruling regimes in Tanzania and Cameroon, and demonstrate how Tanzania evolved into a powerful party-based regime while Cameroon became a dominant-presidential system. As summarized in Table 2, by the 1990s the state's capacity was fairly similar along many measures. The major difference is the stronger patrimonial features in Cameroon – higher military spending, larger cabinets, and less executive constraint.³ These quantitative measures, however, do not reflect the qualitative differences in the integrity of ruling parties, or dissimilarities in the centralization of political authority. The brief narratives provided here examine how starting conditions at the critical juncture of independence shaped decision-making and reinforced patterns of regime construction that lasted until the multiparty era.

At independence, the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) in Tanzania was a fairly unified nationalist movement, but suffered from important organizational deficiencies. The absence of heavily politicized ethnic groups, along with the use of Swahili as the *lingua franca* facilitated a process of alliance building between TANU, tribal chiefs, rural peasants, and cooperative leaders.⁴ By the late 1950s TANU boasted 500 branches and two million members, and in the last colonial

Table 2. Measures of state capacity and presidential power in Cameroon and Tanzania (1990–2013).

Indicators	Cameroon	Tanzania
Statistical capacity	60.55	60.66
Income tax/government revenue	18.57	20.66
Military spending per capita	12.65	7.55
Military personnel per 1000 people	2.86	1.02
Taxation/gross domestic product (GDP)	9.37	11.94
Revenue mobilization capacity	3.55	3.88
Natural resource rents/GDP	9.37	15.56
Executive constraint	2	3
Cabinet size	40	24.95

Sources: (World Bank, 2014; Europa, Various; Marshall et al., 2014).

election of August 1960 the party won all but one seat. But, while TANU was a dominant institution this reflected its popularity rather than physical strength. The party lacked resources and membership declined quickly after independence. Likewise, Tanzania's father figure Julius Nyerere faced strong pressure from TANU's numerous branches, influential tribal chiefs, and religious organizations. These demands required a solution that TANU could not cope with (Bienen, 1970: 57–71).

Critically, the state that Nyerere inherited was limited and left him with little tools to exert authority. The British and Germans maintained several administrative sites, and only in 1925 did Dar es Salaam become the locus of political authority. The British practice of indirect rule, by which opaquely chosen tribal chiefs were selected to head Native Authorities, meant that there were very few Africans in the civil administration. After independence 25% of posts were left unmanned (Austen, 1968). Similarly, the extractive capacity of the state was weak and relied on difficult to collect poll taxes and the taxation of cash crops like coffee and sisal (Fjeldstad and Therkildsen, 2008). Finally, coercive capacity was negligible and the Tanganyika Rifles consisted of just 2000 men. In 1964 the military mutinied against its British officers. A new Tanzania People's Defense Force had to be created from scratch (Parsons, 2003).

Nyerere's recourse was to use the party as the institution through which to stabilize politics. This meant creating an ideology that articulated a nationalist vision for Tanzania (known as *ujamaa*), but also building an institution that gave elites real say. As Nyerere put it, "no party which limits its membership to a clique can ever free itself from fear of overthrow from those who are excluded" (Nyerere, 1968). In real terms the party was in comparative perspective much larger than others in Africa, but also had actual authority. There was a massive effort to expand into villages and factories, and by the mid-1970s there were an astonishing 7200 TANU branches (Mwansasu, 1979). Most famously, TANU invested in a system of party cells for every 10 homes. This not only gave the government an important authoritative tool, but also provided more opportunities for citizens to access the political system. Internally, TANU became a fairly transparent and internally democratic institution. Party congresses were institutionalized and imbued with decisional power. Remarkably, TANU held competitive legislative primaries, and eventually established a primary system for choosing the party's presidential candidate.

In terms of state capacity, the party overtook the civil administration but there were less investments in what would be considered a patrimonial state. State positions were amalgamated with party positions, spreading down to the level of the ward officer and TANU branch secretary (McHenry, 1994). The merger of government and party positions extended the regime's reach into

the countryside, but did not independently strengthen the state. Moreover, it was clear the system was imperfect, evident in the continued difficulty the central government had in collecting taxes (Hyden, 1980). In 1972 local government structures were temporarily abolished to address this issue (Fjeldstad and Therkildsen, 2008). The major sources of government revenue came from nationalization and eventually foreign debt. Importantly, while Nyerere insisted on party membership for military servicemen and the military grew to 40,000 people, it remained externally focused. There was no commensurate investment in internal security services (Parsons, 2003: 164–169).⁵

The story in Cameroon is quite different. There was no unified nationalist independence movement. Instead, Cameroon was home to several parties that reflected more pronounced and politicized ethnic and regional rifts. There were divisions between British and French Cameroon, as well as within each region.⁶ In British Cameroon, the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP) resonated with the northwestern grasslands, while the Cameroon People's National Convention (CPNC) was associated with the southwest (Johnson, 1970: 257–285). In French Cameroon, there were north–south divisions which loosely paralleled a Muslim–Christian divide. In the north, Ahmadou Ahidjo – who would become Cameroon's first president – led the Cameroon Union, which reflected his own Muslim and Fulani background. In the south, there were numerous parties like the Ewondo-based Party of Cameroon Democrats, the Beti-based National Action Movement, or the Bamileké-based Popular Front (Johnson, 1970).

As in Tanzania the nascent Cameroonian state had some significant deficiencies. In British Cameroon, there was practically no administration and taxation, and there were likely less than 150 Africans in uniform (Johnson, 1970: 201–205). The situation in French Cameroon was only slightly better. The French were reluctant to incorporate too many Africans into local governance. The Civil Commissioner of Cameroon appointed regional administrators, which were invariably non-African (Le Vine, 1964: 91–98). Extractive capacity was likewise limited, and the bulk of revenue came from taxes on exports. However, in 1955 the Union of People of Cameroon (UPC) – a nationalist party that operated primarily in the Littoral region – turned toward violent rebellion against the French. In response, the French enacted emergency laws that persisted after independence. Crucially, in response to the UPC rebellion the French invested heavily in the Cameroonian military, created a significant French-trained and financed *gendarmerie*, and developed an intelligence gathering service called the Service des Etudes et de la Documentation (Takougang and Krieger, 1998: 39–40).

Given these circumstances Ahidjo was poised to create a stronger patrimonial state. Ahidjo did not have a unified political movement, but could use his control of the comparatively stronger post-colonial state to consolidate authority. First, emergency rule let Ahidjo rewrite the constitution and cajole other parties to join a “Grand National Party,” which later became the Cameroon National Union (CNU). Second, Ahidjo weakened the federal structure of the country and created urgency for a unitary state that increased the powers of the presidency. Ahidjo appointed major state-level administrative figures and the federal inspector of administration. Through control of the purse strings and the territorial administration Ahidjo strategically directed the flow of resources. Unsurprisingly, in May 1972 a referendum to abolish the federal state passed nearly unanimously (Johnson, 1970: 200–213). Soon after the positions of Vice President and Prime Minister were eliminated, and Ahidjo restructured the country into seven provinces administered by presidentially appointed governors (Takougang and Krieger, 1998: 44–50). In tandem, Ahidjo was able to forge new coercive institutions like the Brigades Mixtes Mobiles (BMM) and a Presidential Guard (DeLancey, 1989: 55).

Importantly, the capacities of the ruling party were weaker. The party mimicked the territorial administration with 49 party sections, but the CNU had no regional party structure. Nor is it clear how institutionalized lower levels of the party were. Likewise, internally the party maintained a

plebiscitary character. Party congresses were simply opportunities for Ahidjo to announce national policy, and the party elite selected legislative candidates. As Mark DeLancey notes, Cameroon exemplified a patrimonial regime and relied on the “cohesion of a few important people, each of whom brought his/her loyalties to the party” (DeLancey, 1989: 52). At the apex stood the president, with monopolistic control over limited state resources and comparatively stronger coercive institutions. The party, inasmuch as it functioned, was primarily used for its distributive ends.

The essential contours of regimes in Tanzania and Cameroon did not change much prior to the introduction of elections. In 1977 TANU was renamed Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), and in 1985 leadership transitioned from Julius Nyerere to Ali Hassan Mwinyi.⁷ As part of economic liberalization, state positions were formally delinked from the party and party cells were eliminated from the workplace, army, and police. Yet, the size and internal structures of the party remained impressive. According to surveys at the time, CCM had nearly 40,000 cells and was the most familiar political office to most citizens (Mukandala, 2000). In 1982, leadership in Cameroon transitioned from Ahmadou Ahidjo to Paul Biya and the party was rechristened as the Cameroon People’s Democratic Movement (CPDM). Biya retained the regime’s essential elements, but the higher echelons of the party and security services were purged of Ahidjo-era figures in favor of Biya supporters, mostly his Beti co-ethnics (Takougang and Krieger, 1998: 77–92). Importantly, by 1990 Cameroon was producing approximately six million tons of oil a year, which bolstered the regime’s extractive capacity.

Tanzania and Cameroon’s divergent electoral authoritarianism

In this section I discuss how presidential-dominant and party-based regimes compete in multiparty elections. Table 3 summarizes the electoral authoritarian experience of these two cases. Two things stand out from this brief comparison. First, foundational elections impacted each regime differently. In Tanzania, the ruling party secured a strong victory while the margin in Cameroon was razor thin. Second, elections in Cameroon have consistently been more coercive, with less protection of civil liberties, higher state repression, and more electoral fraud. The following narrative demonstrates the role of the party rather than the state in Tanzania in preventing elite defection and reaching voters. By contrast, the centrality of the president and the coercive role of the patrimonial state are much more pronounced in Cameroon.

The challenge of foundational elections

The foundational election provides unique leverage because it found both regimes vulnerable. The transition to multi-partyism corresponded with economic crisis and deep cuts in the amount of resources available to distribute patronage. In Tanzania, decades of state intervention had compelled the country into negotiations with international lenders and structural adjustment (Campbell and Stein, 1992). In Cameroon, the global drop in oil prices, combined with internal economic mismanagement, plunged the country into an economic tailspin (Konings, 1996). At the time both countries had fairly large public sectors that were major sources of government revenue, and were forced to privatize and liberalize much of their public sector. These reforms were uneven but nonetheless challenged the financial basis of each regime.

Likewise, each regime faced important opposition mobilization. In Tanzania, there was no sustained public protest against CCM and the transition was more managed, but growing public corruption incensed several within and outside the party. Previous regime insiders formed the bulk of the new opposition parties, some with quite deep financial pockets. The Civic United Front (CUF) had strong Muslim support along the coast, while Chadema was tied to the economic interests of

Table 3. Electoral competitiveness in Tanzania and Cameroon.

Tanzania	Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) presidential vote share	CCM legislative seat share	Freedom house scores	Political terror scale	Electoral fraud
1995	61.8%	80.2%	(6,6)	2.5	1
2000	71.7%	87.5%	(4,4)	3	2
2005	87.4%	88.8%	(4,3)	3	2
2010	62.8%	77.9%	(4,3)	2.5	2
2015	58.5%	73.4%	(3,3)	3	N/A
Cameroon	Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) presidential vote share	CPDM legislative seat share			
1992	40%	49%*	(6,6)	3.5	1
1997	95.6%*	64.5%	(7,5)	3	1
2002	N/A	83%	(6,6)	3	1
2004	70.9%	N/A	(6,6)	3.5	1
2007	N/A	85%	(6,6)	3	1
2011	78%	N/A	(6,6)	2.5	1
2013	N/A	82.2%	(6,6)	2.5	1

Notes: Freedom House scores are the Political Rights and Civil Liberties scale in the year prior to the election. A higher number means less protection of those rights and liberties (Freedom House Various). Gibney's Political Terror Scale ranges from 1 to 5, with 5 indicating higher levels of state violence (Gibney et al., 2015). Electoral fraud is based on Lindberg (2006), and ranges from 1 to 4 with 4 indicating a free and fair election, with missing values calculated by author (Lindberg, 2006). *Election boycotted by major opposition parties.

Kilimanjaro. The National Convention for Construction and Reform (NCCR) benefitted from the defection of former Home Minister Augustin Mrema, who became the party's presidential candidate. Mrema was a popular figure with a strong anti-corruption message. His defection from CCM signaled to other disgruntled elites that leaving the party was safe (Mmuya and Chaligha, 1994). To make things worse, the 1995 election coincided with the end of Mwinyi's second term, and an astonishing 17 candidates vied for the presidency.

In Cameroon, the economic crisis precipitated a stronger popular reaction and violent clashes with the opposition. Biya was resistant to multi-partyism and refused to accede to a National Conference. It was only through persistent popular and international pressure that political parties were legalized in 1990 (Takougang and Krieger, 1998: 89–114). Initial opposition parties were also led by former regime insiders, but along more distinct ethno-regional lines. The Social Democratic Front (SDF) and its candidate John Fru Ndi were rooted in the Anglophone Northwest. The National Union for Democracy and Progress (NUDP) claimed most of its support from the Fulani north, while the UPC revived in the Littoral region. Business interests associated with the Bamileké community were initially sided with the SDF and UPC (Arriola, 2012).

The divergent response to foundational elections

In Tanzania, the presence of a presidential primary system helped the regime manage elite competition. The rules laid out a decade earlier were followed to the letter of the law: the party's central committee graded candidates and referred five names to the national executive committee who used preferential voting to whittle the list down to three. The finalist was elected by the party's

national congress in a majoritarian vote. During this process, several influential candidates like Lands Minister Edward Lowassa (who according to some polls was a frontrunner), Parliamentary Speaker Pius Msweka, and CCM's Vice Chairman John Malecela were eliminated. The campaign among the final three was contentious and Benjamin Mkapa narrowly outbid the popular youth candidate Jakaya Kikwete in a second round of voting. Nevertheless, none of the losers joined the opposition, a fact that was not lost on observers at the time (Mwase and Raphael, 2001).

Likewise, the party's mobilization tools, and especially the 10-house cell structure, proved useful. While there is no direct measure of the precise effect of the ten-cell network, cell leaders were paid modest salaries and tasked with voter registration and turnout. Opposition members highlighted the cell leader's role in distributing patronage, vote buying, and opposition intimidation. As one member of CCM noted, "the cell leader knows all the voters, members and their issues. They are directly with the people. If they do their job, we win, if they don't, we lost" (Author Interview, Anonymous CCM Secretariat Member, 31 October 2010). The party's sheer size was particularly useful in rural areas like Dodoma, where in 1995 CCM was able to campaign door-to-door in nearly every village, while opposition parties had to hold regional rallies (TEMCO, 1997: 87–95).

On the other hand, the evidence suggests that the state only marginally facilitated CCM's overwhelming victory. The president retained powers of appointment over the election management body, and could appoint regional and district commissioners and the chief of police. But in tangible terms the effect is unclear. One widely reported case was the denial of Emmanuel Makaidi's presidential nomination. However, he was from the small National League of Democracy (Mwase and Raphael, 2001). There was sporadic evidence that CCM candidates had preferential access to public resources, and limited instances where opposition parties were denied meeting permits. Most egregiously, a letter from the Home Minister to the police Inspector-General revealed pressure to build a criminal case against Augustin Mrema (Hoffman and Robinson, 2009). But no suit was actually brought against him or any other candidate. In fact, the loose control of the state seemed to get in CCM's way. For instance, there was an unexpected delay in the disbursement of funds to presiding officers and polling agents. In retaliation, several poll workers protested by opening their stations late or by holding their ballot boxes hostage. This was not clearly CCM's intention, and observers noted vocal disagreements between poll workers and returning officers. At moments CCM appeared to lose control of the election (Reeves and Klein, 1995).

By contrast, foundational elections in Cameroon significantly exacerbated tensions within Biya's ruling coalition. Without access to a steady stream of resources or a party that could channel elite disputes, the risk of defection was higher. Unsurprisingly, one of the first people to leave the CPDM was John Ngu Foncha – the former leader of the KNDP and architect of Cameroonian unification. Foncha cited his own personal disillusionment with the party as a reason for his defection (*FBIS*, 13 June 1990). There was also pressure from the CPDM's Northern and Littoral-based politicians. A progressive wing led by Jean-Jacques Ekindi unsuccessfully pressed the CPDM to hold a national congress to address grievances (Author Interview, 4 August 2015). Ekindi's eventual defection was followed by the departure of other prominent CCM members like François Sengat Kuo (Assistant Secretary General), Victoria Tomed Ndando (President, Women's Wing), and Garga Haman Hadji (Minister of Public Function) (*Jeune Afrique Economie*, May 1991). This left Biya heavily dependent on his co-ethnics.

Biya's survival in the 1992 election depended on leveraging his control of the administration and security services. In December 1991, all election management was placed under the Ministry of Territorial Administration (MINAT). Since MINAT was under the president's purview, and because it was given large leeway, the perceptions of bias were stark. MINAT's divisional and senior divisional officers were appointed or approved by the president, and guidelines were prone to change. One controversial MINAT provision prevented opposition parties from monitoring

sub-divisional tallying centers. Likewise, MINAT had the authority to redraw administrative units and create new polling stations, with some announced just days prior to the election. Revealingly, the governor of East Province divulged that he and other governors were pressured by MINAT to “do everything fair and foul to ensure at least a 60% victory for the CPDM party candidate” (NDI, 1993). These issues persisted into voting day, when according to NDI’s scathing observation report, “decisions often seemed arbitrary and resulted in a lack of uniformity on how regulations were interpreted” (NDI, 1993). There was evidence of ghost polling stations, security force intimidation, and opacity during final vote counting. NDI concluded that there was clear evidence of fraud and did not endorse the election. On 27 October 1992, the government declared a state of emergency to counter opposition protests, and mass arrests swept many parts of the country. The SDF’s candidate John Fru Ndi was placed under house arrest by the *gendarmerie* for nearly six months.

This helped secure a narrow electoral victory, and since the presidency remained the key gatekeeper Biya could easily entice groups back into his coalition. This was evident following the loss of the CPDM’s legislative majority in March. Biya quickly formed an alliance with the small Kirdi-based Movement for the Defense of the Republic (MDR), and appointed its leader Dakolé Daïssala as Minister of Posts and Telecommunications. Biya was also able to split the UPC by coopting its Bassa wing. Shortly after the presidential election, smaller parties like the National Party for Progress dismantled and its chairman Antar Gassagay became a deputy minister. To regain more northern support, Biya coopted two members of the NUDP, Hamadou Mustapha and Issa Tchiroma, with cabinet positions. The party’s chair joined the government a few years later. Finally, Biya made overtures to Bamileké leaders with offers to serve on the party’s central committee, act as appointed mayors, or join lists for future elections (Arriola, 2012).

Electoral authoritarian consolidation in Tanzania and Cameroon

Following foundational elections these regimes faced much less threatening environments, but the divergent regime capacities remained palpable. In Tanzania, the economic crisis faded and the opposition became fractionalized when Augustin Mrema dramatically abandoned the NCCR. The ruling party would not face significant competition again until 2010 and 2015. In 2010 Tanzania still suffered from the aftermath of the global financial crisis and the revelation of several large-scale corruption scandals. Between 2010 and 2015 CCM faced increased pressure to reform the constitution and crack down on public corruption, which led to overt factionalism within the party. During CCM’s presidential primary in 2015, an amazing 42 presidential candidates contended, and for the first time the opposition coalesced into a coalition, called *Ukawa*.

The continued ability of the party to manage elite ambition minimized the potential damage. This was clear in 2015 when CCM’s presidential primary system was significantly put to the test. In 2015 Edward Lowassa was assumed by many to be the heir apparent despite his association with major corruption scandals. But Lowassa violated party guidelines by campaigning early and reportedly spending \$10 million on nearly 750,000 party endorsements. The pushback from other party elites and presidential candidates was substantial, and forced the party’s central committee to make a tough choice. When Lowassa’s name was dropped from consideration he defected to Chadema as their presidential candidate, opening the door once again for other elites to leave. Yet, predictions of a mass exodus again never materialized. Instead, the party endorsed Minister of Public Works John Mafuguli, a clear consensus candidate who was not affiliated with any major faction. This choice signaled the primacy of the party’s rules over opportunistic behavior (*The East African*, 29 July 2015).

The importance of the party was also apparent as legislative primaries became more credible. Accusations of vote buying during the nomination process were rampant in 1995. This led to the

perception, especially among younger candidates, that access to higher political office was constrained by financial interests. But by 2000 the party had become more assertive and banned nearly 40 sitting members of parliament (MPs) due to violations of party ethics (*Tanzanian Affairs*, 1 September 2000). During the very competitive 2005 primary, 50 sitting MPs were eliminated (*The East African*, 7 September 2005). By 2010 CCM opened up primary voting to all party members rather than just delegates, and a record 77 incumbent MPs lost their primary (*The East African*, 9 August 2010). Throughout these elections, the extent of elite defection remained remarkably negligent. As one CCM member summarized, “you should learn to give in... Sometimes you must agree with what the party’s hierarchy has decided” (*The Citizen*, 18 August 2010).

It is also clear that the role of the state remained secondary.⁸ The most obvious use of the state involved the detention of opposition leaders, generally under the pretense that they held illegal rallies. This was used against Augustin Mrema in 1999 and 2001, CUF’s candidate Ibrahim Lipumba in 1999, 2001, 2005, and 2015, and against Chadema’s national chairman in 2011. Without disregarding their severity, in nearly every instance detention was brief and individuals were able to post bail. On the other hand, election observation reports note gradual improvements in the management of elections. In 2005, a permanent voter registry was created, which helped increase the number of voters from 9 to 19 million. Despite persistent issues, which again appeared more sporadic than systematic, by 2015 poll workers were better trained and the electoral process was more streamlined and transparent. The party, rather than the state remained the key mechanism through which the regime reached voters.

Turning to Cameroon, after foundational elections oil prices recovered and the process of structural adjustment stalled. In addition, with the NUDP and elements of the UPC in government, only the SDF remained a viable opposition party. However, in 1997 the SDF boycotted the presidential election and in 2004 the remaining opposition failed to forge an alliance. The SDF became increasingly fragmented, and since 1992 has suffered a number of deflating defections to the CPDM. The most significant challenge to the regime came in February 2008 when the urban transportation union organized massive protests in opposition to stagnant economic conditions, but also Biya’s controversial proposal to abolish presidential term limits. The 2011 and 2013 elections were conducted with these challenges in recent memory.

The keys to Cameroon’s resilience are the continued access to resources, Biya’s indomitable position, and the control of coercive institutions. First, Cameroon was able to skirt most of the reforms required by international lenders. By 2015, Cameroon had the largest cabinet in Africa, with over 60 appointed ministers, and numerous vice-ministers and deputies. Since the public sector remained significant, Biya could use these resources to secure support. For instance, the regime resisted privatizing the cotton parastatal SODECOTON in order to co-opt northern allies (Takougang and Krieger, 1998). Resistance to banking reform also likely kept the Bamileké beholden to the regime (Arriola, 2012). Second, Biya resisted all internal challenges to his position. In 1996 the Minister of Territorial Affairs, Victor Ayissi Mvodo, ran against Biya in the CPDM’s primary. Shortly thereafter he died, presumably at the hands of the security services. The Minister of Health Titus Edzoa also signaled his intention to challenge Biya, and was arrested and sentenced to 15 years on charges of embezzlement (*Africa Confidential*, 17 March 17 2008). In August 2008, Foreign Affairs Minister Jean-Marie Mebara was arrested over corruption allegations, but it was rumored that he planned to challenge Biya (*Cameroon Tribune*, May 6, 2012). In 2012, former Minister of Territorial Administration Marafa Yaya and former Prime Minister Ephraim Inoni – both Biya rivals – were arrested for their alleged connection with the same scandal (*BBC News*, 17 April 2012).

Third, coercive and to a degree administrative capacity helped Biya counter threats from opposition challenges. The state’s role in elections remained controversial, especially when it came to

the creation of new districts based on geography rather than population. The coercive apparatus was also unleashed harshly against the opposition.⁹ In 1997, Northwest and Southwest Provinces were placed under curfew, and John Fru Ndi was detained until just weeks before the election. In 2004, many opposition parties were barred from holding rallies in Center Province, and the SDF was denied access to most provinces until May. In 2006, Fru Ndi and other SDF members were bizarrely charged with murder, following a death at one of their rallies. Perhaps the most crucial development was the creation of the Rapid Interventions Brigade (BIR) in 2001. Ostensibly formed to cope with gang activity along Cameroon's borders, the BIR was deployed following the riots of 2008, when they reportedly killed over 100 people. In total, it is estimated that the BIR is responsible for over 700 deaths and is used extensively to retain law and order in cities rather than in rural and frontier areas (*IRIN News*, 29 August 2008).

Conclusion

This article has put forth two points with regard to the puzzle of electoral authoritarian resilience in Africa. First, electoral authoritarianism does not require robust states in either a purely autocratic or Weberian sense. Rather state power is relative to regime logics, and presidential-dominant regimes with some coercive capacities constitute fairly effective patrimonial states. Regimes like Cameroon's can win elections without massive tax bureaucracies, efficient administrations, or even extensive coercive capacities. What matters primarily is whether the state provides sufficient ability to manage elite coalitions. Second, strong and credible ruling parties can substitute for states in grounding autocracy and contesting elections. In Tanzania, the party was used to mitigate uncertainty after independence, and this legacy has meant that the regime sustained strong institutional mechanisms for organizing elites and reaching voters. The state in Tanzania might also serve a patrimonial logic, or perhaps even a Weberian one, but is secondary to the party during elections.

The corollary of this argument has been that presidential-dominant and party-based electoral authoritarianism contest elections in very different ways. This is a potentially important and comparative insight, since most studies of electoral authoritarianism focus on electoral authoritarian survival. In fact, electoral authoritarianism itself is highly heterogeneous and sustained by very different regime configurations. This is not necessarily unique to sub-Saharan Africa. A strong ruling party was key to the Mexican Partido Revolucionario Institucional's enduring and comparatively less repressive electoral authoritarianism. Logics of patrimonial state building and presidential power underlie more repressive electoral authoritarianism in some states of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. These findings further suggest very different pathways out of electoral authoritarianism. Party-based systems appear more flexible in the face of crisis because of their enduring internal systems for resolving elite disputes. This suggests not just comparative resilience but actual durability. By contrast, presidential-dominant systems rooted in strong patrimonial states are potentially more brittle – they rise and fall with the president and the availability of distributive and coercive resources.

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank Aurel Croissant and Olli Hellmann for organizing this issue and for their comments. Thanks also go to Lise Rakner, Leonardo Arriola, Rachel Beatty Riedl, and the anonymous reviewers for their insights and suggestions.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Notes

1. There are disagreements over the definition of electoral authoritarianism (Schedler, 2013). I use the criteria for identifying electoral authoritarian regimes provided in Roessler and Howard (2009)
2. Given that the scale only ranges from 1 to 7, a one-unit decrease is quite meaningful, and distinguishes Cameroon from Tanzania.
3. Both countries also have similar scores on Hanson and Sigman's state capacity index (-1.5) (Hanson and Sigman, 2013).
4. Tanzania is home to over 100 ethnic groups. However, many of Tanzania's ethnic groups are not centralized, which reduces the political saliency of ethnic identity.
5. The Tanzania People's Defense Force is one of Africa's only armies to fight an international war against Uganda, which helped maintain its corporal identity. The police in Tanzania were dependent on their relationship with the Tanganyika African National Union, but there were no robust intelligence services, Special Forces, or a Presidential Guard.
6. The British received a mandate over the territory bordering Nigeria, then called British Northern and Southern Cameroon. In 1947, Southern British Cameroon reunified with French Cameroon, creating the Federal Republic of Cameroon. Ahmadou Ahidjo was the republic's first president, and John Ngu Foncha Vice President and Prime Minister of the state of West Cameroon (Johnson, 1970).
7. The Tanganyika African National Union merged with the Zanzibar-based Afro Shirazi Party (ASP). The ASP was the ruling party on the semi-autonomous islands of Zanzibar, which has a distinct political history from the mainland and is not discussed here.
8. These assessments are based on reviews of the US Department of State's Annual Reports on Human Rights Practices and the Tanzania Election Monitoring Committee Organization.
9. These assessments are based on reviews of the US Department of State's Annual Reports on Human Rights Practices.

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