The Sources of Dominant Party
Survival & Defeat in Africa

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Paper prepared for Conference on Dominant Party Systems,
University of Michigan, May 9-10, 2014. Comments and citations
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Why are some parties able to sustain themselves in office for extended periods of time, while others either struggle to establish dominance or lose power quickly once constraints on competition are removed? In Sub-Saharan Africa, due to the semi-authoritarian or “hybrid” nature of most political regimes,¹ this question has two dimensions. On the one hand, protracted rule by single parties can be seen as related to debates over authoritarian durability, as most of the region’s oldest ruling parties were incumbents at the time of transitions to multi-party elections. In several of these countries, such as Cameroon, Ethiopia, and Zimbabwe, periods of party dominance have been partly sustained via authoritarian methods. In these and in other countries, ruling parties have strengthened their holds on power via electoral fraud, intimidation or violence, and media restrictions, albeit with differing levels of success. But, alongside less authentic dominant parties, there are some ruling parties that have won regular, contested elections for an extended period of time without recourse to systematic fraud or other violations of democratic norms. In countries like Tanzania, Namibia, and Mozambique, true party dominance seems a more accurate frame than authoritarian durability.² Understanding the factors driving differential party success in both relatively open and more closed hybrid regimes is the goal of this paper.

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¹ All of the countries addressed in this paper currently hold multiparty elections, and the majority of these regimes have held multiple rounds of multiparty elections since Africa’s

² The same would be true in South Africa, which is a full democracy. Another full democracy, Botswana, is the strongest case of party dominance in the region. The Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) has been in power since 1966, but opposition parties have won some degree of parliamentary representation in every election since independence. This case and the full range of party system outcomes will be discussed further below.
Much of the existing work on both authoritarian durability and party dominance emphasizes the qualities and resources of ruling parties themselves. According to this perspective, parties sustain power over time due to their own organizational efficacy and adaptability. Thus, successful dominant parties are those with strong party structures and routinized decision-making procedures that tie candidates to the party while allowing leadership renewal (Kohno 1992; Brownlee 2007; Smith 2005; also, Levitsky 2003). They position themselves as “catch-all” mass parties, in order to take advantage of broadly encompassing vote bases (Kirchheimer 1966). They make use of state resources, either for clientelistic redistribution or to boost public spending immediately before elections (Scheiner 2005; Greene 2007; Van de Walle 2003). Parties rooted in violent struggles, as in the Portuguese colonies or in the southern African apartheid states, may benefit from “non-material sources of cohesion” (Levitsky & Way 2012). In most cases of party dominance, the parties in question led their countries to independence, and they were therefore able to shape the rules of competition – and the form of state governance – to suit their own ends. In these accounts and approaches to party dominance, the active and decisive actor is the ruling party itself. Its success or failure hinges on its ability to preserve itself, to adapt to changing structural conditions, and to preserve its control over the patronage resources that play central roles in elections in both democratic and authoritarian regimes.

This perspective, however, writes opposition out of the picture. In the authoritarian durability literature, the assumption is that powerful and cohesive authoritarian regimes (or, more accurately, the party organizations behind them)
can coopt or successfully repress potential opposition. Within this framework, a viable opposition challenger has little of its own origin tale, nor are organized opposition or uncoordinated protest seen as independently contributing to party decline. Instead, ruling party crisis precedes and lays the groundwork for opposition's possible rise: “when parties have declined or disappeared, intraelite conflicts escalate ... [and] careerist politicians then defect from the regime and ally with the opposition” (Brownlee 2007: 13). The literature on dominant parties acknowledges more explicitly the problem of opposition coordination failure, but it shares with the authoritarian durability literature the presumption that opposition parties are shaped primarily by the actions of dominant parties and by individual politicians’ calculations of the likelihood of winning office. As with the authoritarian durability literature, ruling parties are viewed as actors that are autonomous from society and affected more by internal crisis than by opposition mobilization.

What do we lose by neglecting the quality and character of political opposition? The centrality of opposition character to dominant party survival is suggested through the example of Kenya. From independence in 1964 to 2000, the Kenya African National Union (KANU) governed the country. For a portion of this period (1981 to 1991), Kenya was a de jure one-party state, and KANU periodically banned opposition parties prior to the imposition of one-party rule. The party prevailed in the first two multiparty contests in 1992 and 1997 with small pluralities of the vote; had the opposition been unified, it would have won elections
handily. In 2002, KANU lost presidential and parliamentary elections to an opposition alliance, an alliance in which former KANU office-holders featured prominently. It is hard to interpret the party’s initial success and subsequent failure in multiparty elections, particularly if one limits one’s attention to KANU alone. Did the party’s defeat in 2002 suggest that it had weakened over time? And, in terms of placing KANU in comparative perspective, does the defeat in 2002 suggest the party was weaker or less skilled at cooptation than its counterpart in Cameroon, where the formerly authoritarian ruling party has won five rounds of multiparty elections? Do its victories in 1992 and 1997 suggest that it was a more effective party organization than authoritarian parties in Zambia or Madagascar, both of which were defeated in founding multiparty elections?

For those who know it well, Kenya is a case in which parties’ organizational weakness and strength have been largely incidental to political outcomes. By mirroring the ruling party’s style of fluid elite-based coalitional politics, the opposition faced a formidable collective action problem in each individual election, a feature of opposition that initially preserved KANU dominance. But the freedom with which alliances could be reconstituted in this system made a non-KANU minimum winning coalition highly likely, especially after substantial private funding

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3 In the 1992 elections, KANU won the presidency with a bare 36 percent of the popular vote; notably, the two leading opposition candidates were both Kikuyu and together captured 45 percent of the vote. KANU fared far worse in the parliamentary contest, winning only 24.5 percent of the popular vote (though this translated into 53 percent of seats due to Kenya’s first-past-the-post electoral system). In 1997, KANU reconsolidated its presidential and parliamentary vote shares to some extent, though it still garnered less than 50 percent of the popular vote in both contests. Significantly, opposition in Kenya was almost exclusively defection-fuelled: Oginga Odinga and his son Raila continue to be the only significant politicians in Kenya who did not begin their careers in KANU.
facilitated the negotiation of inter-elite pacts (Arriola 2012). Looking at this particular transition, it was neither incumbent weakness nor opposition strength that resulted in electoral turnover; instead, the primary force militating against party dominance was the style of politics that had been institutionalized during closed authoritarian one-party rule.

The argument pursued in this paper is a relational one. I suggest that the organization and character of opposition movements plays an important role in explaining dominant party survival or defeat, but this factor is in turn influenced by the governance choices of authoritarian parties during earlier periods. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the choices made by power-holders in the immediate post-independence period have substantial system-ordering effects. The power of “critical junctures” in setting up disparate regime trajectories has been appreciated by other historical institutionalist scholars (e.g., Slater 2010; Collier & Collier 2002), yet these scholars have often viewed the character of ruling coalitions as the key outcome. Thus, in Slater’s work, where elites faced system-threatening levels of contention, they constructed strong, coercive state apparatus in the early years of independence. In later periods, the choices made at the critical juncture resulted in more strongly structured and more durable authoritarian parties.

Because of the literature’s preoccupation with the resources and internal organization of ruling parties, variation in opposition’s organizational strength and in its ability to coordinate voters have not been viewed as outcomes to be explained. Not that opposition has been universally ignored. Outside of Africa, Greene (2007) makes opposition failure the central feature of his explanation of continued party
dominance in Mexico, and he helpfully draws a connection between opposition parties’ low electoral viability and the kinds of candidates and activists they attract. Because PRI’s resource and patronage advantages rendered it unassailable, those attracted to opposition politics were motivated by ideological commitment. This resulted in parties that were more extreme than the median voter, lying to either the left or the right of the PRI. It was only as PRI’s control of patronage resources declined that opposition parties became more “catch-all,” were able to attract mainstream voters, and were able to engineer election turnovers. This party positioning logic does not travel so well to Sub-Saharan Africa, where parties have tended to be ideologically void and where opposition fragmentation has seemed more a collective action problem than a product of principled differences. But the general point – that the character of opposition may play a role in its own political marginalization – is apt.

Other work, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, has placed opposition politics in a still more central role in the analysis of authoritarian durability and its failure. My book, from which the argument in this paper is derived, argues that authoritarian regimes that rely on corporatist strategies of societal control create mobilizing structures that can be appropriated by aspiring opposition movements (LeBas 2011). Arriola’s (2012) account of clientelistic politics conforms with the existing literature’s emphasis on the politicization of public resources as a route to party durability. But he then demonstrates that financial liberalization unsettles this equilibrium: by freeing the business community from dependence on the state, financial liberalization allowed for the funnelling of private resources to opposition
elites and the creation of encompassing opposition coalitions (through pre-election “pay-outs”). Though Riedl’s (2014) focus is party system institutionalization rather than party outcomes per se, her account also focuses our attention on how authoritarian patterns of rule are reproduced by incumbent and challenger parties.

Overall, these works suggest that the character of the opposition and its ability to coordinate action is not purely a function of ruling party strength or weakness. In what follows, I will argue that earlier patterns of opposition rule in some authoritarian regimes created or reinforced the power of autonomous societal institutions, which could later be used to coordinate opposition. Authoritarian rule in other contexts either did not rely on these kinds of organizational partnerships or they actively undermined these kinds of autonomous organizational capital. In these contexts, it was more difficult to coordinate opposition, and elite brokerage and negotiation determines political outcomes.

In terms of the organization of the paper, the next section discusses the problem of distinguishing and treating separately political regimes based on their degree of closure. After claiming for the paper the (near-)full universe of multiparty electoral regimes in Sub-Saharan Africa, I then turn to empirics. The first empirical section discusses trends across the region as a whole, drawing on data from 38 of Sub-Saharan Africa’s 48 regimes. The fourth section of the paper discusses how patterns of authoritarian rule affected both the scale and the form of opposition challenges to authoritarian parties in the post-authoritarian period. The final section offers some conclusions and directions for future research.

*Authoritarian Durability versus Electoral Dominance*
Due to significant variation in both party outcomes and the political contexts in which these outcomes unfold, Sub-Saharan Africa is a fertile terrain in which to refine our existing theories of both authoritarian durability and party dominance. Yet the ambiguous status of many African regimes in terms of political openness raises thorny questions about how to analyze party outcomes. In a substantial majority of dominant or proto-dominant party systems in the region, party rule spans different electoral regimes. For instance, Tanzania’s Chama Cha Mapunduzi (CCM) began to establish its political dominance in competitive elections from independence in 1961, yet it then effectively closed the political system via the implementation of de jure one-party rule in 1977. After the reinstitution of multiparty elections in 1995, the party continued to win elections and currently holds approximately 75 percent of seats in the National Assembly, as well as the presidency. From independence to 1990, the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) presided over a one-party state, and it fought a civil war against its major political competitor. Since the country’s first multiparty elections in 1994, however, FRELIMO has continued to dominate free and fair elections. In 2004 and 2009, the party increased its share of the parliamentary vote over competitors, a trend that is expected to continue in 2014. In these countries, even when we exclude a clearly delineated authoritarian past, we are still dealing with regimes that meet definitional standards for party dominance.

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4 The party was renamed CCM in 1977 after a merger with a regional opposition party; prior to 1977, including during the nationalist period, it was called the Tanzanian African National Union (TANU).
Other regimes are less clear. Both the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and Senegal's Socialist Party (PS), for instance, presided for decades over nominally open multi-party electoral systems. In one of these cases, Zimbabwe, a strong opposition challenge in 2000 was greeted with severe repression and state-sponsored violence. In Senegal, on the other hand, the PS peacefully handed over power to its opposition after its loss of the presidency in 2000 and of parliament in 2001. The 2000 election was free of manipulation and intimidation, and the PS continues to compete in elections to the present. As with the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in Japan, the Kuomintang (KMT) in Taiwan, or the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in Mexico, it is difficult to determine how to deal with these cases. Both countries had opposition representation in their parliaments, but there are doubts about how open these systems were to more substantial opposition victories. Does the PS's peaceful transfer of power in Senegal demonstrate that Senegal was a party-dominant democracy for decades, or does the electoral turnover in 2000 mark the end of a slow process of authoritarian opening? Should we view party dominance in Zimbabwe from 1980 to 2000 as enforced via authoritarian means – and therefore retroactively code the regime as a closed authoritarian system during this period -- or was there significant political closure or authoritarian backsliding from 2000 onwards?

In much of the literature on party dominance, there is an explicit attempt to draw lines that separate closed authoritarian systems from those in which electoral competition is constrained by institutional design, is unduly influenced by repression or fraud, or is otherwise less than “meaningful”. This paper begins with a
certain degree of agnosticism about the analytical usefulness and the empirical feasibility of walling off closed regimes from open ones. Across the range of regimes considered here, there are certainly those that are more closed, despite their holding of multiparty elections. But by restricting our attention to regimes that are less ambiguously open authoritarian regimes, we unintentionally truncate our sample: dominant parties that face significant opposition challenges are more likely to liberalize and more likely to lose power, while those that successfully undermine the basis for opposition can retain power via multiparty elections even as popular discontent rises.

Nor is party dominance assured in closed systems. The creation of party organizations and the holding of elections is one means of stabilizing authoritarian regimes, but not all dominant party aspirants survive, even in closed political systems. Of the region’s 48 countries, successful military coups terminated party rule at least once in seventeen countries. Though many of these failed party-ruled regimes were short, many lasted longer than a decade before their ouster. Two relatively stable party-states, Senegal and pre-1994 Rwanda, faced long-running insurgencies. In the latter case, insurgents were instrumental in overthrowing a long-ruling authoritarian party and establishing their own party-based state. Those party-based regimes that survive to political liberalization and meaningful competition have already survived organizational and other political hurdles. By comparing liberalized party-states to one another, we ignore what might be termed “shadow cases” from the other end of the liberalization spectrum. That is, when Kenya is compared to Tanzania (ruling party defeat / ruling party survival), it may
appear that KANU’s use of clientelism-based brokerage is a less successful party strategy than CCM’s more directly party-based rule. Yet if one compares Kenya to Cameroon, a similarly clientelism-based regime in which the authoritarian party has remained dominant (and a regime that is unquestionably more closed than the other two), then other factors must come into play.

Further, in contemplating whether to exclude more closed hybrid regimes from our analysis of party dominance, there is the additional problem of measurement. Freedom House scores are disproportionately affected by electoral turnover, such that African regimes that experience electoral turnovers often see drastic score improvements even in the absence of needed institutional reform or evidence of changes in political practice. Zambia’s 1991 elections – which boosted the country’s score to 2, 3, F immediately – are a case in point. Freedom House scoring is also more forgiving of African governments ruled by opposition parties. For instance, it continued to rank Kenya as 4, 3, PF even as evidence accumulated in 2007 and 2008 of widespread extrajudicial killings of suspected Mungiki members, including the formation of death squads; of widespread military abuses in areas of the country affected by organized paramilitary activity; and of ruling party involvement in intimidation, violence, vote-buying, and forced displacement connected to elections. Kenya had experienced an electoral turnover in 2002; prior to this period, fairly similar patterns of violence and state abuse had consistently earned the former regime 6, 5, NF or worse ratings. In Senegal, electoral turnover boosted the country’s score from 3, 4, PF to 2, 3, F, but this improvement was not scaled back even after the authoritarian tendencies of the country’s new president.
became clear. Polity’s inclusion of electoral competitiveness as a criterion systematically biases ratings against party dominant systems, and Polity occasionally produces strange codings for other African countries as well (e.g., Niger; DRC).

Most importantly, the exclusion of less open multi-party electoral systems from analysis of party dominance lessens our understanding of an important source of variation in dominant party survival and defeat. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the majority of parties that have managed more than ten years of continuous electoral control during the multiparty period were parties that ruled fully closed autocracies and then presided over processes of political liberalization. But there were also a number of former authoritarian ruling parties that did not survive political opening and the institution of multiparty elections. The intent in this paper is to suggest that differences in authoritarian rule shaped three separate outcomes: (1) the adaptability and cohesion of authoritarian parties during political opening; (2) the character of opposition challenge to these authoritarian regimes (extra-regime versus defection-fueled); and (3) the resources available to opposition for the coordination of voting or the solving of collective action problems. As I began to examine these questions across the full range of African regimes, another factor seemed to play a greater role than initially expected. Systematic ethnic exclusion is not necessarily associated with electoral defeat of former authoritarian parties (i.e.,

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5 The primary exceptions to this rule are the liberating armies in Ethiopia, South Africa, and Namibia. Zambia’s Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) and Malawi’s United Democratic Front (UDF), both of which won founding elections, are also exceptions. The MMD held power for twenty years, and the UDF lost executive control after 18 years when Joyce Banda acceded to the presidency in 2012. Unlike the MMD, the UDF never held a majority of seats in parliament.
these regimes seem no more susceptible to electoral defeat than those that are inclusive or “catch-all” parties). But these regimes do seem to be much more likely to suffer extra-constitutional removals, even where they hold multiparty elections (e.g., Liberia's True Whig regime, the PAIGC in Guinea-Bissau, the MRND in Rwanda). Further work should examine this dynamic.

If we accept that both more open and more closed political systems can shed light on the dynamics of dominant party survival and defeat, there remains the question of how to explain variation. The authors of the conference have circulated a document that includes an exhaustive list of explanations advanced in the literature for dominant party system maintenance and decline. These include internal causal factors, mostly linked to party resources or ties to constituencies (e.g., control over state-owned enterprises; declining efficacy of established identity- or clientelism-based electoral strategies; party strategies for controlling candidates). Other explanations focus on dominant parties’ inability to adapt to exogenous shocks or changing structural conditions (e.g., economic shocks that diminish the material resources to which the state has access; the extension of material and organizational support to opposition parties by international actors). In the interests of space, I will not review these mechanisms and discuss how well they travel to Africa.

Overall, this paper focuses on internal causal factors: though external shocks and international influences played an important role in creating the conditions for multiparty elections, there was not sufficient variation in their extent across cases to
explain variation in political outcomes. Political conditionalities played a role in pushing reluctant incumbents toward multiparty elections in some cases, but donors and international financial institutions were generally unwilling to penalize regimes for poor-quality elections or for human rights violations. In what follows, I lay aside the role of external leverage, which perhaps has been more consequential in Africa than in other regions.

I also implicitly bracket patronage politics. All African regimes faced fiscal crises to varying degrees in the 1980s and 1990s, and their ability to deliver benefits to important constituencies faltered. Indeed, the crisis of neopatrimonial rule was considered the necessary backdrop to the popular protests that sparked institutional reform in the early 1990s (Bratton and Van de Walle 1997). There are likely numerous ways in which different levels of public resources, or different patterns of patronage distribution, impacted the dynamics discussed below. For the moment, however, we will assume that Africa’s new multiparty regimes were

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6 See, for instance, the discussion of external versus internal drivers of democratization in Bratton and Van de Walle (1994). Their argument, which is consistent with the argument advanced here, is that regime transitions in Africa in the early 1990s were pushed forward in different ways by domestic protest movements. Exogenous shocks -- which were fairly uniform across the region -- played a role in spurring protest.

7 In the interests of transparency, I use the following shorthand in what follows. “Authoritarian parties” refer to parties that held power during countries’ authoritarian periods prior to the institution of multiparty regimes in the early 1990s. Thus, the term encompasses parties like CCM in Tanzania, which presides over a highly open hybrid regime, as well as ruling parties in political systems that remain closed, as in Cameroon or Equatorial Guinea. Senegal former ruling party, the Parti Socialiste (PS), Zimbabwe’s current ruling party ZANU-PF, and The Gambia’s People’s Progressive Party might also be considered authoritarian parties, even though the post-independence regimes they governed never abandoned multiparty elections.
similarly threatened by diminished access to patronage resources in the 1990s and the 2000s (in comparison to earlier decades).

**Party Dominance and Defeat in Sub-Saharan Africa**

This section discusses general trends across the continent, as well as variation in the style of authoritarian states established in the pre-multiparty period. But, first, let me comment on how we might consider grouping African regimes in terms of outcomes. In defining party dominance, I follow Greene’s definition that stresses a combination of party control, longevity, and meaningful competition (Greene 2010: 809-811). Each of these aspects constitutes a threshold below which party dominance is unclear. First of all, in terms of control, dominant parties in presidential systems control the executive as well as a majority of parliamentary seats; in federal systems, Greene suggests that they should also hold a majority of state governments. In parliamentary systems, dominant parties are indispensible coalition members, hold a plurality of seats, and control the prime ministerial position. It should be noted that majoritarian or single-member district (SMD) electoral rules give dominant party aspirants a sizeable advantage in winning parliamentary majorities, which effectively means that the bar for party dominance in Francophone and Lusophone Africa, where proportional representation (PR) prevails, is considerably higher than in Anglophone Africa. In terms of longevity, the threshold for achieving party dominance is the maintenance of power for four elections or twenty years.

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8 For a discussion of definitions of dominance used in empirical studies of party systems in Africa, see Bogaards (2004). Bogaards shows that dominant party systems dominate in Africa, regardless of the restrictiveness of the measure used.
Finally, party dominance occurs only in systems where there exists meaningful competition, though this is not determined by the competitiveness of elections. Since opposition coordination failure is one of the causes of continued party dominance (Chhibber and Kollman 1998; Greene 2007; LeBas 2011), the application of a threshold for opposition vote share or competitiveness will tend to miscode open systems as closed. Instead, meaningful competition can be presumed to exist where elections are regularly held, where opposition forces can form parties and contest elections, and where incumbent parties do not engage in outcome-changing fraud. That is, dominant parties may use intentional fraud to inflate what would still have been a winning electoral margin, or the use of fraud in downstream elections – so long as it does not determine the allocation of power at the national level – can occur in political systems with meaningful competition.

The third element of this definition, meaningful competition, is the most difficult to decipher in Sub-Saharan Africa’s hybrid regimes. In many of these countries, elections have been held on time and without substantial restrictions on the ability of opposition parties to form or to contest elections. Yet fraud and intimidation are a regular part of contestation in a range of regimes, including those that Freedom House ranks as free. For instance, Beber and Scacco (2012) find evidence of manipulation of presidential election returns in Nigeria’s 2003 elections and in Senegal’s 2007 elections. At the time of this fraud, Nigeria’s Freedom House score was 4,5,PF and Senegal’s was 2,3,F. Even in Africa’s best democratic performer, Ghana (FH score: 1,2,F for the past decade), Ichino and Nathan present evidence that suggests that parties engage in voter registration fraud (2012). The
difficulty is in determining the extent to which election irregularities – including election-linked violence and displacement – are responsible for party victories. In open political regimes, fraud and vote-buying may be substantial enough to swing primary contests and occasional elections at the constituency level. Election-related violence may also occur in these systems, though it tends not to be one-sided as it is in closed political systems.

What about regimes that do not meet the standard of meaningful competition? In these countries, violence and election-related displacement tend to be under the control of incumbent parties, and they likely have significant effects on opposition vote share, turnout, and whether the party holds onto power. Zimbabwe after 2000 and Kenya from 1992 to 1997 are cases in point.\(^9\) In other countries, dominant parties may still have won elections without use of fraud, but opposition parties viewed fraud and partisan use of state resources (e.g., media) as significant obstacles and periodically chose to boycott rather than compete in elections. In still others, significant opposition vote share does not translate into parliamentary representation due to electoral systems that unduly favor the ruling party. For instance, opposition parties in Djibouti won 37 percent of the popular vote in the 2003 parliamentary elections yet failed to win a single seat in parliament. The opposition subsequently boycotted the 2007 parliamentary elections but then competed in the 2011 elections, in which they won 30 percent of seats in the

\(^9\) Levels of election-linked violence may be higher in other countries, as they are in both Nigeria and in post-2002 Kenya, but this violence tends to be used by a range of political actors (both ruling party and opposition) and tends to have less clear-cut effects on election results.
National Assembly. The case of Djibouti suggests that there are limits to ruling parties’ ability to ensure favorable election results, even in closed regimes.

Table 1 separates regimes into four different categories: clearly party dominant; near dominant party systems (proto-dominant); emerging party dominant systems, which have strong incumbent parties that will likely retain their significant electoral dominance into the future; and non-dominant or fluid party systems. The last category is quite heterogeneous: it contains highly fluid and “pulverized” party systems, such as Benin and Kenya, stable two-party systems like Ghana, and seemingly stable pluralist systems like Lesotho, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. All four of the proto-dominant party systems (Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, and South Africa) will meet the twenty-year threshold within the next 18 months. Because of the difficulty of deciphering the meaningful-ness of election competition in partly closed hybrid regimes, Table 1 groups these countries separate from those that qualify as open – yet typically still flawed -- political systems.

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10 Eleven countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are excluded: Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Niger, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Swaziland. The bulk of these countries are excluded due to gross political instability, usually caused by civil war. In the case of Eritrea and Swaziland, multiparty elections have never been held. In the case of Comoros, information was limited.
Table 1: Party System Outcomes in 39 African Regimes

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<tr>
<th>Meet minimum standards of political openness</th>
<th>Party-dominant regimes</th>
<th>Proto-dominant regimes</th>
<th>Emerging dominant party regimes</th>
<th>No party dominance</th>
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<tr>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Benin</td>
<td>Malawi</td>
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<td>Gambia (1965-1994)</td>
<td>Namibia</td>
<td>Sao Tome &amp; Principe</td>
<td>Cape Verde</td>
<td>Mali</td>
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<td>Senegal (1960-2000)</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>Mauritius</td>
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<td>Seychelles</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Lesotho</td>
<td>Senegal (2000-)</td>
<td>Senegal (2000-)</td>
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<td>Liberia (2005-)</td>
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<td>Madagascar</td>
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<tr>
<th>May be classified as authoritarian durability</th>
<th>Party-dominant regimes</th>
<th>Proto-dominant regimes</th>
<th>Emerging dominant party regimes</th>
<th>No party dominance</th>
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<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>Equatorial Guinea</td>
<td>Angola</td>
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<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>Cote d'Ivoire</td>
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<tr>
<td>Djibouti</td>
<td>Gambia (1996-)</td>
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<td>Mauritania</td>
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<td>Gabon</td>
<td>Guinea (1993-2007)</td>
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<td>Togo</td>
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<td>Zimbabwe</td>
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Excluded: CAR, Chad, Comoros, Republic of Congo, DRC, Eritrea, Niger, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Swaziland.

Notably, party dominant regimes are nearly as numerous in Sub-Saharan Africa as are pluralist systems. Among open polities, party dominance is not uncommon.

Within hybrid regimes that remain closed, party dominance is the modal regime, especially if one relaxes the 20-year threshold slightly to admit Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, and Gambia to the full party dominant category (as they are all likely to pass this threshold within two years). Liberia under the True Whig Party is also a questionable case: it was exceptional on the African continent as an early party-based regime that never implemented *de jure* one-party rule. A case could be made for viewing it as similar in form to Senegal, Gambia, and Botswana, party dominant regimes in which opposition was never truly competitive but never truly repressed.

I have classified it under as a more closed regime due to heavily restricted suffrage until 1951 and the government’s violent suppression of religious societies in the
1920s and 1930s. It would seem reasonable to code the period 1951 to 1980 – the period of reformist and incorporative Presidents William Tubman and William Tolbert – as both open and party dominant (movement to the quadrant above).

Within the closed regime / dominant party category, there is significant variation in regime character. Ethiopia and Zimbabwe are ruled, like Mozambique, by highly mobilizing liberation armies that have substantial organizational reach into the rural areas, at least in most regions. Even absent the fraud, repression, and violence that characterize these regimes, their ruling parties would likely remain competitive – if not capable of winning clear majorities – in open elections.\(^{11}\) It is also important to underline that, despite the media’s focus on party leaders Meles Zenawi (now deceased) and Robert Mugabe, these are not personalized parties but are strongly structured and somewhat factionalized party organizations. Against these examples of strong party rule, there are the highly personalized authoritarian regimes of Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea. In these regimes, one can imagine deaths of long-ruling executives to prompt both political crisis and possibly the disintegration of the patronage-based parties they constructed. In some cases, it may be that the party could weather this death, as it did in Togo where Gnassingbé Eyadema was relatively seamlessly succeeded by his son Gnassingbé Fauré. In others, one might expect political instability and perhaps a military coup, as occurred in Guinea after the death of a long-ruling president in 2008.

\(^{11}\) Ethiopia would almost certainly continue to dominate elections absent violations of democratic norms. In Zimbabwe, ZANU-PF would certainly have lost elections in 2008 (and possibly would have lost power as early as 2000), but it would have easily retained party dominance from 1980 to 2000 without the use of violence.
Of those regimes that can be clearly considered open regimes (i.e., those in which multiparty electoral contestation is “meaningful”), nine can be considered party-dominant or proto-dominant regimes. As with the majority of the more authoritarian proto-dominant party regimes, all four proto-dominant parties are poised to pass the 20 year threshold within the next eighteen months. Unlike closed regimes, there is less heterogeneity among party dominant regimes that meet minimum levels of democracy and open contestation. These tend to be non-personalized, fairly well-structured parties. A substantial majority of them are left-wing or formerly socialist parties (Senegal, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, South Africa); three were parties that led liberation wars (Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa). Though party dominance is not uncommon, more fragmented party systems are the most common regime type in democratic Africa. Some of these regimes have established stable party competition (Ghana, Lesotho, Mauritius, possibly Zambia), and the new electoral regimes in Sierra Leone and Liberia seem to conform more closely to this pattern. In many of these regimes, levels of party system fragmentation have either remained high or have progressively elevated over elections rounds (e.g., Kenya, Malawi, Senegal, Benin, Madagascar). Accountability is difficult to establish where party names change frequently or where parliamentary and presidential candidates win elections with small pluralities. When looking at the “pulverized”

What explains variation in outcomes? If we take the authoritarian durability literature seriously, then the answer must lie in the structure or character of the

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12 Sao Tome is an ambiguous case, as it has lost executive control.
authoritarian parties themselves. Table 2 presents further information on countries’
degree of political opening, experience with multiparty rule, and, importantly, the
classification of past authoritarian regimes.

[Table 2 at end of paper]

It is difficult to convey the nuance of differences in authoritarian rule in a single
table for this large a selection of cases, but the considerable variation in
authoritarian party outcomes (survival to founding elections / survival of founding
elections / current status) does not seem tied to prevailing explanations of
dominant party survival. It is, of course, difficult to measure party strength in a way
that allows comparison across cases; however, there are easily observed
institutional differences in authoritarian parties.

Importantly, authoritarian regimes with some degree of institutional
isomorphism differ in terms of outcomes. For instance, Riedl argues that regimes
that rely on local power brokers and pre-existing informal networks are more
resilient as electoral competition becomes more open, while regimes that attempt to
replace these networks with party structures are more likely to lose power in
multiparty elections (Riedl 2014). Yet party-penetrative regimes have been both
exceptionally successful in surviving multiparty elections (Tanzania, Ethiopia,
Zimbabwe) and also unsuccessful (Cote d’Ivoire; Benin). The other side of Riedl’s
spectrum – parties that “subcontract” to local notables and ethnic brokers – also

13 Riedl’s cases are Benin and Zambia. Benin may fall into the “state substitution”
category seamlessly, but the Zambian case is more problematic.
includes examples of dominant party success (Senegal before 2000; Cameroon; Burkina Faso) and dominant party failure (Gambia; Kenya; Senegal from 2000).  

Multiparty systems that emerge from personalized one-party states or similarly narrowly-based military regimes seem to be generally more vulnerable to defeat in founding elections (Malawi, Mali, Benin). Yet several of the long-ruling authoritarian systems on the continent are highly personalized party-states (Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Togo). Nor does there seem an association between the ideological basis of authoritarian states and their subsequent electoral fortunes. Nominally Marxist-Leninist one-party states, some of which invested heavily in redistributive social policies, experienced a range of fates: early electoral defeat (Zambia, Madagascar), continued party dominance (Tanzania, Mozambique), and highly contested party survival (Zimbabwe).

What then explains differences in dominant party survival and failure? The next section will attempt to show that the ruling strategies of authoritarian parties set up very different landscapes for opposition parties. Even in countries where the character of authoritarian parties was fairly similar (e.g., Zimbabwe versus Tanzania; Kenya versus Cameroon), these parties undertook different policies with respect to social actors. In cases like Zambia, discussed in a moment, authoritarian parties established partnerships with autonomous non-state institutions, which allowed them to extent party presence and control over mass constituencies. These political choices, however, effectively armed the authoritarian party’s allies, giving

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14 The classification of these styles of rule become even more complicated if one allows for intra-country regional differences in styles of authoritarian party rule, as Koter (2013) suggests. See also Boone (1998).
them mobilizing structures, resources, and political visibility that could later assist in coordinating opposition. In other countries, state-society linkages were containerized: in countries like Kenya, ruling parties primarily relied on alliances within individual ethnic elites to mobilize voters in those elites’ home areas. Ethnic coalitional rule of this kind did not create organizational resources that were independent of individual leaders; more importantly, they did not create the “weak ties” across the lines of districts and regions that would allow for the coordination of protest voters or the construction of cross-ethnic parties. When opposition parties form in these contexts, they face particular challenges to coordination and are likely to remain organizationally weak with fragile links to popular constituencies.

*The Authoritarian Roots of Opposition Mobilizing Structures*

In the bulk of the literature, authoritarian legacies shape democratic transitions by what they make impossible: constraints are placed on mobilization and the peaceful organization of societal demands, and accountability is undercut by inherited institutions that centralize and personalize power. This section focuses instead on what might be instead termed the generative aspects of authoritarian rule. In order to understand the character and the scale of opposition challenges to ruling parties, we need not only to understand the basis of ruling party power – control over resources, effective internal party governance, “non-material sources of cohesion” – but also the ways in which authoritarian party-states created formal and informal institutions that would govern state-society interactions for decades to come. Though it is difficult to crisply summarize these governance strategies in the

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15 This section’s argument is developed in greater detail in my 2011 book, *From Protest to Parties.*
tables above, regimes established distinct patterns of societal associationalism that assisted their authoritarian parties in the mobilization of voters or in the achievement of other regime goals. In subsequent periods, as authoritarian regimes faced increasing popular demands in the early 1990s, these distinct patterns of state-society linkage either impeded or facilitated opposition coordination.

In this section, I first discuss how the political strategy of Zambia's first ruling party, the United National Independence Party (UNIP), created mobilizing structures that could be appropriated to coordinate political opposition in the period preceding the turn to multiparty rule in 1991. After I discuss the opposition-boosting effects of authoritarian state corporatism, I will briefly examine corollaries as well as alternatives to this form of governance, both of which could be seen as impeding the building of strong, cross-ethnic mobilizing structures that allow for the coordination of opposition forces.

Zambia is the best, least partial example of labor-based corporatist rule in sub-Saharan Africa. This was not an uncommon ruling strategy in Africa: highly centralized forms of labor corporatism were practiced in Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Algeria, Tunisia, and Egypt. In Francophone Africa, unions were organized geographically rather than sectorally, lessening the power of peak confederations; still, they were an integral part of party rule in Guinea prior to its overthrow in 1984 (Schmidt 2005). Though urban labor was marginal in both countries, authoritarian regimes in Cote d'Ivoire and Mali also relied on varieties of semi-corporatist rule to penetrate and order rural constituencies (Woods 2000; Bingen 1998). Outside of Africa, corporatist strategies played a significant role in supporting party-based
authoritarianism in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America (Burgess 1999; Collier & Collier 2001). In Zambia, UNIP’s choice to construct a strongly centralized and semi-autonomous trade union structure was contingent, but it was also shaped by the political realities that the relatively weak party organization confronted. Two essential factors tied UNIP’s hands: (1) there was already a strong trade union in Zambia, the mineworkers union, that had a proven track record of disrupting the economy through strikes and significantly stronger grassroots structures than UNIP; (2) the new government was heavily dependent on copper revenues, a revenue stream that strikes in the mining sector could easily disrupt. In the period 1965-69, for instance, copper production accounted for 42.3 per cent of Zambia’s GDP and 93 per cent of its exports; mineral taxes provided 60.8 per cent of the state’s earned revenue (Saasa and Carlsson 1996: 35).

For UNIP leaders, the primary threat to establishing political dominance and stability was the possibility of union-organized strike actions and spiraling wage demands. As in other African regimes, independence was followed by a strike wave - peaking in 1969 with a total of 1161 registered strikes in that year alone (Banda 1997: 18) – that seemed to substantiate these fears. In other contexts, when faced with similarly strong and threatening corporate interests, authoritarian regimes moved to build top-down centralized control apparatus that would diminish the power of these interests (if not liquidate them entirely). President Kwame Nkrumah, for instance, undertook this strategy in Ghana with respect to cocoa producers in the first years of independence; not only did this attempt fail, but it destabilized
Nkrumah’s regime, which was subsequently overthrown in a military coup (Boone 1998: 20-22).

The approach undertaken by UNIP instead resembled the kind of indirect rule via intermediaries that was characteristic of alliances between Senegal’s PS and local notables (Riedl 2014; Boone 1998; Koter 2013). Instead of undermining or manipulating existing union structures, the ruling party would attempt to control labor unrest by strengthening and preserving the autonomy of trade union structures. In other words, this was a system of labor control that relied on the action of autonomous non-state institutions to serve the party’s goals of labor discipline and also political mobilization. Union leaders were appointed to UNIP’s Central Committee, trade unionists ran for political office on the UNIP ticket, and the regime’s public discourse stressed the party-union “partnership in development.”

The system of semi-corporatism established in Zambia relied on two key ingredients: the creation of a centralized, top-down trade union structure, and the voluntary renunciation of interest representation by union leaders. In 1964, the UNIP government was directly involved in the creation of a union center, the Zambian Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU). In 1971, it passed the Industrial Relations Act (IRA), which substantially expanded the powers of the trade union confederation, required unions to affiliate with the congress, and tied union registration and participation in collective bargaining to the ZCTU structure. Finally, the IRA instituted the principle of “one union, one industry” in trade union registration. This led to an amalgamation of several smaller unions into larger, more centralized sector affiliates, many of which had much stronger national structures
than their predecessors. It also allowed the government to institute a check-off system of dues collection, in which all workers in a sector would have their dues for their sectoral union automatically deducted from their wages. These measures, obviously, strengthened the structures of Zambian unions, especially the ZCTU.

Importantly, these newly centralized union structures remained autonomous from the ruling party and had control over their own internal elections. Over the course of the 1980s, as economic conditions deteriorated, militant grassroots workers began to elect increasingly radical representatives at the branch and affiliate-level, and leaders of the ZCTU and of the affiliates felt increasing pressure to represent the interests of the rank-and-file over those of the party. By the late 1980s, the formal alliance between the party and organized labor had effectively broken. In 1989, the government rescinded the ZCTU's standing invitation to address May Day rallies, saying that these had become occasions for the abuse of government. A year later, labor leaders met with business and other societal constituencies at Garden House Hotel in Lusaka, where they launched the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD), an organization that would campaign for a ‘yes’ vote in an upcoming referendum on the introduction of multiparty competition. Within months, rallies for constitutional reform were drawing audiences of tens of thousands, Zambia’s major churches and other civic groups threw their support behind the MMD, and trade unionists became the most visible public faces of the movement.

After President Kaunda acceded to the demands of his party and amended the constitution without a referendum, the MMD transformed itself fairly seamlessly
into a political party. ZCTU district committees, formed a decade previously to coordinate the local branches of the national affiliates, served as the seed structures of the new party. Elections were held nine months later, and the MMD won 80 per cent of the popular vote and 125 of 150 National Assembly seats. The MMD retained power for the next 20 years, and it was not a loyal friend to labor. Former ZCTU Chair Frederick Chiluba liberalized labor laws, allowing for the formation of splinter unions and dismantling much of ZCTU's organizational muscle. Even though the MMD effectively undercut the influence and negotiating power of organized labor over the course of the 1990s, these actions did not translate into stable control over the constituencies associated with organized labor. In interesting work focused on the Patriotic Front, the primary challenger to MMD rule in the 2000s, Larmer and Fraser suggest that the PF capitalized on pre-existing associational networks to mobilize party support, including the unions (Larmer & Fraser 2009). The party also used populist rhetoric and a staunch opposition to economic liberalization, which particularly appealed to the coalition between workers and the urban poor that had formed the heart of the ZCTU's support base in the 1980s. In the 2011 presidential elections, PF leader Michael Sata won with roughly 42 percent of the vote, and the party also gained a plurality of seats in parliament. The 2006 and 2011 elections, in which the PF competed, demonstrated a slow reconsolidation of the party system after high levels of party system fragmentation in 2001 elections. This seems consistent with a narrative that emphasizes the existence of organizational resources, which are autonomous from the control of a single political party, that can be used to coordinate protest voters.
Patterns of alliance-based party building exist elsewhere, though they are not always built around organized labor. The Senegalese Parti Socialiste (PS) relied on autonomous societal institutions, the Sufi Muslim *mouride* brotherhoods, in order to mobilize voters and, as in Zambia, assist the ruling party in the control and disciplining of popular constituencies (Villalon 1996). Over the course of the 40 years of PS rule, relations between *marabouts*, the brotherhoods’ religious leaders, and the party passed through periods of contestation and cooperation, but this alliance between the parties and the brotherhoods was the defining political relationship. So long as the brotherhoods were strongly allied to the PS, their members – which comprised the majority of Senegalese – were not available as potential opposition voters (due to the nature of marabout-follower linkage). Since the PS-marabout alliance collapsed in the 1990s, the brotherhoods have never swung their support behind a single party in the same way, but individual *marabouts* have served as voter brokers for Abdoulaye Wade and the Senegal Democratic Party (PDS), which removed the PS from power in 2000.

The two patterns of state-society linkage discussed both resulted in authoritarian party defeat. In Zambia, defeat came quickly, in the first multiparty elections that UNIP had contested since 1973. In Senegal, the defection of allied societal institutions from the ruling party was as protracted as it was in Zambia, but the party’s loss of power in 2000 ended forty years of dominant party rule. What explains dominant party survival? First, the patterns of state-society linkage discussed above are only probabilistically associated with dominant party defeat. Zimbabwe’s pattern of rule resembles Zambia’s, yet the ruling party has retained
power in the midst of highly competitive elections featuring a strong labor-based opposition party. Secondly, countries with relatively unchallenged dominant parties over long periods may be distinct in their opposition-dampening character. Like its Leftist counterparts in Zambia and Zimbabwe, Tanzania implemented a form of semi-corporatist rule in the 1960s and 1970s. In addition to building strong and centralized labor structures, it also invested in rural cooperatives and other initially semi-autonomous societal associations. These organizations, however, never had the same degree of associational autonomy that trade unions had in Zambia, Zimbabwe, and elsewhere. In 1977, CCM formally folded the central trade union confederation into the party itself. Dominant party institutions are simultaneously more present and intrusive in Tanzania than in several other party-states: this is important not merely for preserving the support of the party’s constituencies, but it also leaves few associational spaces for the creation and coordination of opposition.

In Cameroon and in the other more closed party dominant regimes, ruling parties accomplish a similar end by simply leveling associational life. Where there exist no independent or semi-autonomous societal organizations, it becomes difficult to organize grassroots mobilization, especially across regional, ethnic, or other societal divisions. In these contexts, dominant parties retain a powerful advantage: elite actors must form alliances in order to assemble a viable cross-regional or cross-ethnic opposition, yet there are not under significant pressure from their disorganized and atomized constituencies. They are therefore able to be wooed back to the dominant party via patronage; alternatively, even where these elites are committed to opposition politics, coordination is more difficult where it is based on
negotiated alliance and is also less likely to be successful in the absence of strong organizational structures to mobilize opposition voter turnout and voter discipline. The increasingly fragmented party landscape in Kenya, even after the removal from power of KANU, is typical of these kinds of political landscapes.

Conclusions

This paper has provided an empirical introduction to party dominance in Sub-Saharan Africa. An examination of the range of party outcomes in most of the multiparty regimes on the continent suggests that party dominance remains the modal regime on the continent. Over the course of the 2000s, there has been some diminution of this tendency, particularly in the open regimes in the top quadrants of Table 1. Van de Walle suggested in 2004 that the modal regime was "a dominant presidential party surrounded by a large number of small, highly volatile parties" (298). The rise of fairly competitive party systems in new democracies Liberia and Sierra Leone, as well as the electoral defeat of the MMD in Zambia, suggest that competition and alteration have become more widely present across Africa. Yet it has also become clear that many of Africa’s more competitive party systems are increasingly characterized by another feature, extreme party system fragmentation, that undermines democratic accountability as surely as does party dominance. In Kenya, Malawi, and Madagascar, the defeat of authoritarian parties gave way to disorganized pluralism rather than disciplined party competition. As we look to the more disciplined party systems established under dominant parties in Botswana, Tanzania, and Mozambique (or even the rough-and-tumble contested party
dominance in Zimbabwe), one cannot help but wonder whether these might be contexts more amenable to the emergence of programmatic party competition.

In terms of contribution, the empirical analysis in this paper did not allow for the testing of the key hypotheses in the literatures on authoritarian durability and party dominance. Instead, the intent was to suggest that these literatures have neglected a key factor, the impact that past periods of authoritarian rule have on the resources available to opposition actors in the multiparty period. The small case narratives presented here are merely suggestive. Future work must establish a clear means of classifying state-society linkage and examining the associations between these patterns, opposition party coordination and organizational strength, and larger regime outcomes.
Bibliography


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<td>no</td>
<td>marginal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>5, 6</td>
<td>independence</td>
<td>ZANU-PF</td>
<td>(in power from 1980)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>remains dominant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>race-limited party</td>
<td>RF</td>
<td>1964-1979</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>dissolved 1981</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Excluded: CAR, Chad, Comoros, Republic of Congo, DRC, Eritrea, Niger, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Swaziland

1 Years of de jure single-party rule. Some ruling parties banned opposition parties on an ad hoc basis prior to instituting one-party rule; in other countries, the declaration of one-party rule followed military coups or other events that ended multiparty electoral regimes.

2 Mali had a brief interruption in 2012; multiparty democracy was restored with the 2013 election.