Cooptation or Repression: A Dynamic Model of Opposition Politics Under Dictatorships

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Abstract
I study the ruler’s control of opposition parties in dictatorships. I develop a dynamic model where, in each period, the ruler can repress the opposition, imposing significant costs on those parties and their supporters, or adopt cooptation tactics that consist of making institutional compromises. In contrast with conventional wisdom, I show that the incumbent is more willing to engage in cooptation if the opposition is weak. Poor economic opportunity spurs mobilization for the opposition, reinforcing their future organisational strength. Resisting cooptation has option value, and the opposition often rejects desirable offer by the ruler. The model sheds light on the large-scale of state-sponsored violence in Zimbabwe during the 2000s. The analysis also suggests that NGOs must be careful when designing training programs to strengthen opposition parties in hybrid regimes.

Keywords— Opposition Parties, Coordination, Dynamic Game, Dictatorships

Rulers frequently confront formal or informal challenges from opposition parties¹. These democratic or undemocratic confrontations has prompted comparative political scientists to maintain that whether rulers make concessions or negotiate depends on the opposition’s party strength. Namely, the opposition ability to seriously undermine the regime capacity to

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¹Hybrid regimes here refer to semi-democratic, semi-authoritarian regimes
govern. As the argument goes, facing intense pressure, the ruler is supposed to adopt collaborative strategies such as facilitating the incorporation of opposition parties in the parliament and in national assemblies, concerting with political parties for policymaking. Creating a forum for negotiation is the ruler’s attempt to co-opt the opposition and make policy concessions (Gandhi [2008]; Gandhi and Przeworski [2006, 2007]; Stepan [1997]; O’Donnell and Schmitter [1986]). However, when the opposition party is weak, the regime can simply engage in repressive tactics when facing opposition challenges, with no fear of consequences. For example, the incumbent ruler can design a repressive financial system that prevents the opposition to assemble the amount of resources necessary to forge a solid political coalition (Arriola, [2013]).

These arguments are usually coined in settings where the ruler’s tactics are treated in isolation, or the organizational strength of political parties is completely brushed aside. By party organisation, I mean the extent to which the opposition party is socially rooted, its ability to reach every corner of the country and its cohesion. Such neglects in the literature are surprising given how crucial it is to understand the determinants of political liberalization and how electoral competition finally emerges in democratizing countries. Understanding the drivers of political liberalization is necessary to make causal claims about when and how countries transit from dictatorships to democracies.

The present paper shows how allowing for the opposition’s organisational reach and the ruler’s flexibility in substituting tactics has far-reaching effects on the conventional logic. The argument is illustrated by the Zimbabwean political arena around the 2000s. Borrowing the cohesion and the organisational reach of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), a bulk of union groups that were established after the independence to help Robert Mugabe contain labor protest, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) emerged as a strong party on September 1999 against the ruling party, the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) [LeBas, 2006]. Many scholars have documented how the mere
existence of the MDC in Zimbabwe has turned the political sphere into a violent political environment. The MDC presence had increased the regime’s willingness to engage in targeted violence against MDC supporters. For example, according to ZHRNF [2001], Rutherford [2008] and Dorman [2005], approximately 10000 MDC supporters and activists were displaced by state-sponsored violence. The provincial governor Border Gezi during a public address in Bindura on March 26, 2000 alluded to the regime’s repressive tactics when he told ZANU-PF members attending the meeting that “they must warn supporters of opposition parties that the ZANU-PF is well known for spilling blood”.

In contrast, the ruler may strategically choose to politically incorporate an opposition party that lacks grassroot structure. For example opposition parties in Kenya did not benefit from an existing mobilizing structure that they could tap into to build a political formation that spanned network barriers [LeBas, 2011; Widner, 1992]. As a result, the opposition was not endowed with the degree of cohesion like the MDC in Zimbabwe. Opposition parties in Kenya were more likely to fragment and organized themselves around limited networks [Widner, 1992; LeBas, 2011]. Thus, we observed more opposition cooptation by the incumbent ruler in Kenya. For example, Widner [1992] argues that Kenya leader Jomo Kenyatta, after the independence institutionalized a mechanism called Harambee, partly to make compromise and co-opt opposition parties. Contrary to Zimbabwe, in Kenya, opposition parties were able to campaign publicly, and opposition supporters were rarely intimidated.

To examine how parties development might shape the ruler’s preference between cooptation and repression, I develop a model of dynamic tactical choice with three kinds of players: an Incumbent ruler, a representative opposition party, and citizens. The incumbent ruler chooses between co-optation and repression. For the purpose of this analysis, cooptation refers to the situation where the ruling party facilitates the political incorporation of the

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2Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, “Who is Responsible? A Preliminary Analysis of Pre-election Violence In Zimbabwe” (June 20, 2000).
opposition (no restrictions on opposition activities)\(^3\). On the other hand, repression consists of legally or forcefully impeding on the operations of opposition political parties (censure, imprisonment, intimidation etc...). The representative opposition party decides whether to collaborate, adopting moderate tactics against the ruling party, or not to collaborate, choosing confrontational or radical strategies. Citizens decide whether to mobilize for the opposition. The main take away is that an opposition formation emerging with solid organizational structure can be detrimental for political incorporation in infant democracies. Because the country is still at the early stage of democratization, the ruler can opt to revert to authoritarian strategies when facing strong challenges in order to secure the status quo, at least in the short term. The model predicts four important results.

First, when facing an opposition party with weak organizational strength, the ruler has a strong incentive to co-opt. When the opposition party is built around a very limited network and has weak organization, it is less able to mobilize citizens. Thus, these parties pose little threat to the regime. As a response, the incumbent ruler allows these opposition formations to participate in decision making. By doing so, the ruler improves her democratic credentials without any risk of unpleasant political outcomes. The political incorporation is selective and at the ruler’s prerogative. Participating in decision-making absorbs the opposition’s anti-regime activities in the future, and forces them to abide by the “rules” which is beneficial for a forward-looking ruler.

Second, the ruler represses more against an opposition with stronger party organization. The intuition behind this result is the following. Well organized opposition parties are more capable of representing citizens’ interest thanks to their strong grassroot ties within constituencies. Thus, such opposition parties are likely to garner citizens’ support and change-
nel that into “all-or-nothing” demands. Given that citizen mobilization for the opposition threatens the regime, the ruler has a strong desire to substitute cooptation with repression by intimidating supporters in an attempt to stymie the opposition’s strides.

This result suggests that the ruler intends to liberalize, but would like to control the pace and the extent of political liberalization. As Huntington (1991, pg 591) argues, “transformation [or regime initiated liberalization] requires the government to be stronger than the opposition”\(^4\). In the model the ruler internalizes this principle, and is willing to ease up on repression when it is less likely for the opposition to possess the capacity necessary to tip the balance of power down the road. This result is in stark contrast to the predominant understanding of opposition control in hybrid regimes (see Gandhi [2008, p88]; Gandhi and Przeworski[2006, p13.]; Gandhi and Przeworski [2007, p1283]). These conceptions of opposition control has led up to NGOs advocating for training programs that boost parties development in hybrid regimes, under the assumption that strong opposition parties is one necessary condition for democratization to kick in\(^5\). The model’s implication is that the existence of weak political parties could be better for political contestation in hybrid regimes, for having strong opposition parties can potentially give way to political violence\(^6\).

Thirdly, whether citizens mobilize for the opposition also depends on the level of economic opportunity. When the opposition has weak organization capacity, a fraction of the population with small outside option prefers to mobilize. The mobilization improves the opposition organizational reach, which pushes the incumbent ruler to change from cooptation to repression in the future. The result highlights a reason why a ruler in countries with poor

\(^4\)However, Huntington does not discuss the origin of party strength, or the existence of forward-looking players.

\(^5\)The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung is an example of foundation that promotes parties development around the world.

\(^6\)To be as clear as possible, I am not assimilating liberalization to cooptation. I am only pointing out that cooptation has the advantage that the ruler allows some form of political contestations, which can be conducive to liberalization. Also liberalization is not democratization: while fully participatory competitive elections is included in democratization, easing up on repression represents liberalization.
economic opportunity is willing to co-opt only weak parties. Such parties have the capacity to become stronger in the future, so making institutional compromises today and containing their activities is the ruler’s attempt to prevent that from happening later.

Finally, the model predicts that resisting regime cooptation has an option value. Forward-looking and weak opposition parties sometimes refrain from collaborating with the regime even though collaboration is the optimal action in the short run. Effectively, the opposition party “gamble for resurrection”, hoping that a positive shock to the party organizational strength would lead to increased popular mobilization in the future. Thus in the first period, the ruler’s repressive tactics against such opposition parties is a by-product of the option value effect.

In addition to scholars cited above, the paper contributes to the scant literature examining the interaction between cooptation and repression in dictatorships (Wintrobe [1998]; Vreeland [2008]; Conrad [2014]). Whereas Wintrobe [1998] develops an economic model to understand how the ruler’s choice between repression and the accumulation of loyalty affects the emergence of four types of dictatorships (totalitarian, timocracy, tinspots, tyranny), Vreeland (2008) and Conrad (2014) analyze the role of co-optative institutions on torture rates.

Because allowing the opposition party the freedom to conduct their affairs may contribute to democratization, the paper speaks to the literature examining the indigenous processes of democratization. The economic and political science literature identifies two major processes. First, the replacement processes in which democratization emerges after the overthrow of the government (Przeworski et al. [1996]; Acemoglu and Robinson [2001]; Boix [2003]); second, the transformation process of democratization mediated by an external agency (Levitsky and Way [2010]), following civil war (Wantchekon [2004]) or engineered by the regime (Stepan [1989])⁷. My analysis falls into the second category, and I contribute to this literature by

⁷Whereas a replacement process involves the collapse of the sitting government, the transformation process
examining the types of opposition parties that are likely to be politically incorporated in the process.

The paper is structured as follows. The next section presents the baseline model with a non-strategic opposition party, after which I analyze the setting where the opposition is strategic and decides whether to collaborate with the ruling party. The penultimate section presents evidence supporting the predictions from the model. The last section concludes.

**Baseline Model**

I develop a two-period model with two kinds of players: the dictator, and a continuum of population members uniformly distributed on the interval \([\alpha, \bar{\alpha}]\). The opposition is non-strategic in this section. The next section treats the case where the opposition decides whether to cooperate. In each period, each member of the population decides whether to mobilize for a (non-strategic and representative) opposition party. The dictator chooses whether to repress \((r)\), the opposition or co-opt \((c)\) them.

I adopt a very simple parametrization of the dictator’s payoff. The larger the population support, the more likely the opposition is capable of subverting the dictator’s authority. Opposition parties play two important roles in hybrid regimes. They compete in elections, but they also constitute a focal point that coordinates popular mobilization and protest to push political change forward (Schedler (2002)). Therefore, when a fraction \(S\) of the population mobilizes for the opposition party, the ruler’s payoff is \(-S\) if he co-opts the opposition (or adopts a seemingly passive response to anti-regime mobilization). However, openly repressing the opposition is costly for the incumbent ruler. Repressing the opposition yields \(-F\), where \(F \in (0, \infty)\). For example this is the cost of international isolation. Countries with a

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represents the situation in which the group in power takes the lead and initiates political reforms that contributes to the movement in the direction of democracy. Countries that experimented the transformation process of democratization are Spain after the death of Francisco Franco, and Brazil during the Ernesto Geisel and João Figueiredo regimes; among communist regimes, Hungary (Huntington, [1991]).
strong tie to the west have a larger cost of international isolation (Levitsky and Way (2010)).

When making her mobilization decision, a citizen compares her outside option to her benefit from mobilizing for the opposition party. A population member $\alpha \in [\underline{\alpha}, \overline{\alpha}]$ has an outside option $u + \alpha$, where $u \in \mathbb{R}$ is the common component on citizens’ payoff that captures the level of economic opportunity. Thus, citizens do not have equal appeal to demand political change. For example a population member $\overline{\alpha}$ has an outside option $u + \overline{\alpha}$ and is very happy under the current regime, while individual $\underline{\alpha}$ has the worst outside option.

Citizens are willing to mobilize for an opposition party if they believe the party has the capacity and the organisational flexibility to better represent their interests. Denote $\lambda \in (0, \infty)$ the parameter that captures how socially rooted the opposition party is, the degree of organisational reach, or the party cohesion. It is noteworthy, for the purpose of this analysis, that strong parties are those that develop stable and institutional linkages with their constituencies. Political parties are organizational vehicles for channelling and articulating the interest of different economic groups (Widner (1992)). A party’s ability to express and channel mass demands is strongly correlated with its organisational reach and cohesion. The parameter $\lambda$ is large for a political formation with well developed organisational structures. For example a political party that has strong grassroot ties can implement development projects in those constituencies if it takes control of the state. An opposition supporter has a payoff from mobilizing that is increasing in the opposition party organisational strength. Given that a fraction $S \in [0, 1]$ of the population mobilizes for the opposition, mobilizing yields a direct benefit of $\lambda S$ for a citizen. Moreover, mobilisation is costly if and only if the ruler engages in repressive tactics. In that case, a citizen that mobilizes incurs an additional

\[^8]\text{More precisely, the following organisational qualities are shared by the majority of strong parties: Penetration of the party at the local level, or \textquote{Societal Rootedness} (Mainwaring 1995); Organizational complexity, linkage between party and other socioeconomic organizations (Huntington 1968); Party penetration of civic associations and trade unions (Coppieters 1994); Authority resides in party rather than leader (Huntington 1968; Panebianco 1988); Communication and coherence across different levels of party organization (Panebianco 1988; Chhibber 1999).}
costs $c > 0$.

An individual mobilization action can take multiple forms. It may mean participating in the opposition rallies, providing electoral support for the opposition, campaign contribution, or joining the opposition in public protests.

In hybrid regimes, mass mobilization may be a particularly important aspect of party building and party durability. Therefore, a level of population mobilization in a period affects the distribution of party organisational strength next period. To make this insight more formal, I assume that the party organisational strength $\lambda_t$ in period $t$ is the realization of a random variable with Cumulative Distribution Function $H(.|S_{t-1}, \lambda_{t-1})$, conditional on $S_{t-1}$ and $\lambda_{t-1}$, with support $(0, \infty)$. $h(.|S_{t-1}, \lambda_{t-1})$ is the associated density. Where $S_{t-1}$ is the level of population mobilization in period $t-1$, and $\lambda_{t-1}$ is the degree of party organization in period $t-1$. If $S \supset S'$, then $H(.|S, \lambda)$ is a first order stochastic improvement of $H(.|S', \lambda)$; $H(.|S, \lambda) \leq H(.|S', \lambda)$. In other words, more mobilization this period is associated to an increase in the party organisational strength next period, in term of first order stochastic dominance. The distributions and $\lambda_0$ are common knowledge.

The common component of the outside option is also a realization of a random variable with Cumulative Distribution Function $G$, density $g$ and support on $[u, \bar{u}]$. The distributions and $u_0$ are common knowledge. The realization of $u_t$ is observed by all players.

In the baseline model, where the opposition is not a strategic player, the sequence of play in period $t \in \{1, 2\}$ is as follows:

1. The opposition party organizational strength $\lambda_{t-1}$ and the common component of the outside option $u_{t-1}$ are realized to the public.

2. Each individual $\alpha$ takes a decision $s^\alpha_t \in \{0, 1\}$ to mobilize for the opposition $s^\alpha_t = 1$ or not $s^\alpha_t = 0$.

3. The incumbent ruler observes the measure of population members who mobilized, $S_t$,
and decides on the tactic to adopt \( d_t \in \{0, 1\} \).

All players discount the future with a discount factor \( \delta \in (0, 1) \). Denote \( U_I^t \) and \( U_\alpha^t \) the instantaneous utility in period \( t \) for the incumbent (I) and a population member \( \alpha \), respectively:

\[
U_I^t(d_t, S_t; u_{t-1}, \lambda_{t-1}) = -d_t F - (1 - d_t) S_t \\
U_\alpha^t(d_t, S_t; u_{t-1}, \lambda_{t-1}) = s_\alpha^t [\lambda_t S_t - d_t c] + (1 - s_\alpha^t) [u_{t-1} + \alpha]
\]

**Analysis**

I look for pure strategy subgame perfect equilibria in which citizens coordinate on the highest level of mobilization. That is, if \( S_2 \in [0, 1] \) is the equilibrium level of mobilization, then given a set \( S'_2 \supset S_2 \), a population member \( \alpha \in S'_2 \setminus S_2 \) prefers not to mobilize. Furthermore, I assume that when indifferent, the dictator co-opts while citizen mobilizes.

**Second Period Tactics**

Denote \( u_1 \in [\underline{u}, \bar{u}] \) individuals’ common component of the outside option at the beginning of period \( t = 2 \). \( \lambda_1 \) the party organizational strength at the beginning of period 2, and \( S_2 \) the level of population mobilization observed by the incumbent. The incumbent chooses a tactic by comparing the payoffs from repressing and the payoffs from coopting.

First, note that if \( F \geq 1 \), then the dictator always co-opts the opposition party. When the country has strong ties to the West, engaging in opposition repression will discredit the regime’s democratic credential (Levitsky and Way (2010)). Countries with strong ties to west, are predicted to refrain from repressing opposition formations because of the fear of international isolation.
Given that this analysis focuses on countries with low linkages to western countries, such as Subsaharan African countries, I assume that \( F \in (0, 1) \) from now on. Suppose a fraction \( S_2 \) of the population mobilizes in period 2. Then, it is optimal for the dictator to repress if \( F < S_2 \). While co-opting is preferable if \( S_2 \leq F \).

**Proposition 1**  
*In the second period:*

- If \( F \in [1, \infty) \), then the incumbent co-opts the opposition.
- If \( F \in (0, 1) \), the incumbent represses if \( F < S_2 \), and co-opts if \( F \geq S_2 \).

**Second-period Mobilization Decision**

To analyze citizens’ mobilisation decision, I consider the choices of the \( S \)-marginal citizen. This is the citizen who is indifferent between mobilize and not mobilize when a fraction \( S \) of the population is mobilizing. Denote \( \alpha(S) \) the identity of the \( S \)-marginal citizen.

Note that when a fraction \( S \) of the population mobilizes, for an equilibrium to be consistent, every mobilizing citizen must prefer that action to the outside option. Moreover, the \( S \)-marginal citizen must prefer to mobilize. Citizens who do not mobilize must prefer the outside option to mobilizing\(^9\). Therefore, given that citizens are uniformly distributed on the interval \([\alpha, \overline{\alpha}]\), the identity of the \( S \)-marginal citizen solves \( \alpha(S) - \alpha = S(\overline{\alpha} - \alpha) \).

\[
\alpha(S) = \begin{cases} 
\alpha & \text{if } S = 0 \\
\alpha + (\overline{\alpha} - \alpha)S & \text{if } S \in (0, 1) \\
\overline{\alpha} & \text{if } S = 1 
\end{cases}
\]

Denote \( S^*_2(\lambda_1, u_1) \) the largest fraction of citizens in the population that mobilizes for the opposition in period 2 when the dictator represses the opposition party, given that all prefer

\(^9\)Note that the fact that there is an order on citizens’ outside option implies that for \( \alpha < \alpha' \), if a population member with identity \( \alpha' \) mobilizes, then so is individual \( \alpha \). This insight of parametrizing citizens’ preference is developed in Bueno De Mesquita (2013).
to mobilize in the group. Similarly, I denote $S_c^2(\lambda)$ the largest fraction in the population that mobilizes when the dictator co-opts.

$S_r^2(\lambda_1, u_1)$ is the largest $S_2 \in [0, 1]$ such that

$$\lambda_1 S_2 - c \geq u_1 + \alpha(S_2) \iff \lambda_1 S_2 - c \geq u_1 + \alpha + (\alpha - \bar{\alpha})S_2$$

similarly, $S_c^2(\lambda_1, u_1)$ is the largest $S_2 \in [0, 1]$ such that

$$\lambda_1 S_2 \geq u_1 + \alpha + (\alpha - \bar{\alpha})S_2$$

The following lemma delineates the maximal level of mobilization that is supported by each tactic.

**Lemma 1**

$$S_r^2(\lambda_1, u_1) = \begin{cases} 
1 & \text{if } \lambda_1 \geq u_1 + \bar{\alpha} + c \\
0 & \text{if } \lambda_1 < u_1 + \bar{\alpha} + c; \quad u_1 + \alpha > -c \\
\frac{c + u_1 + \alpha}{\lambda_1 - (\alpha - \bar{\alpha})} & \text{if } \lambda_1 < u_1 + \bar{\alpha} + c; \quad u_1 + \alpha \leq -c
\end{cases}$$

$$S_c^2(\lambda_1, u_1) = \begin{cases} 
1 & \text{if } \lambda_1 \geq u_1 + \bar{\alpha} \\
0 & \text{if } \lambda_1 < u_1 + \bar{\alpha}; \quad u_1 + \alpha > 0 \\
\frac{u_1 + \alpha}{\lambda_1 - (\alpha - \bar{\alpha})} & \text{if } \lambda_1 < u_1 + \bar{\alpha}; \quad u_1 + \alpha \leq 0
\end{cases}$$

*Proof: See the appendix*

Lemma 1 shows that when the opposition has very solid organizational capacity, it would initiate a large mobilization from the population. The reason is that an opposition formation with strong party cohesion and rigid grassroot ties within constituencies has more flexibility in representing citizens’ interest. For example, population members living in localities that
are geographically further away from places where government decisions are taken are very likely to have their interest represented in higher instances of the government by a political party that has established itself in their localities. Their interest could be represented through the implementation of development projects in their localities, or the support of policies that further their needs. However, when the party strength is low, and economic opportunity are good, the level of popular mobilization for the opposition is equivalently low as well. We also see that in a society with poor economic opportunity \((u_1 \text{ is small})\) citizens may have an incentive to mobilize for an opposition with moderate level of party strength.

The following result shows that in the second period, whether the incumbent uses repressive tactics depends on the realized economic opportunity and the opposition organizational strength.

**Proposition 2 (Second-Period Equilibrium Behavior)** Denote \(\lambda_1\) and \(u_1\) the realized party strength and economic opportunity at the beginning of the second period.

1. The second-period equilibrium tactics is repression if \(\lambda_1 \geq u_1 + \alpha\).
   
   i) If \(\lambda_1 > u_1 + \alpha + c\), the second-period equilibrium mobilization is “full mobilization” \(S_2^r(\lambda_1, u_1) = 1\).
   
   ii) If \(\lambda_1 \in (u_1 + \alpha, u_1 + \alpha + c]\) and \(u_1 + \alpha < -c\), the second-period equilibrium mobilization is “medium mobilization” \(S_2^r(\lambda_1, u_1) = \frac{c + u_1 + \alpha}{\lambda_1 - (\alpha - c)}\).
   
   iii) If \(\lambda_1 \in (u_1 + \alpha, u_1 + \alpha + c]\) and \(u_1 + \alpha > -c\), the second-period equilibrium mobilization is “no mobilization” \(S_2^r(\lambda_1, u_1) = 0\).

2. If \(\lambda_1 < u_1 + \alpha\) and \(u_1 + \alpha \geq 0\), the second-period equilibrium outcome is cooptation tactics with the absence of mobilization, \(S_2^c(\lambda_1, u_1) = 0\).

3. If \(\lambda_1 < u_1 + \alpha\) and \(u_1 + \alpha < 0\), the second-period equilibrium outcome is repression if \(\frac{u_1 + \alpha}{\lambda_1 - (\alpha - c)} > F\), and cooptation if \(\frac{u_1 + \alpha}{\lambda_1 - (\alpha - c)} \leq F\). When there is repression, the level of
population mobilization is \( S_2^r(\lambda_1, u_1) = \frac{c+u_1+u}{\lambda_1-(\alpha-\alpha_0)} \). When there is cooptation, the level of population mobilization is \( S_2^c(u_1, \lambda_1) = \frac{u_1+u}{\lambda_1-(\alpha-\alpha_0)} \).

Proof: See appendix.

Part 1) of Proposition 2 consists of an equilibrium with full mobilization and regime repression. Because the opposition has the ability to garner large support in the population, a support that represents a serious threat, the regime has a tendency to repress.

Part 2) describes an equilibrium where the opposition has weak organizational capacity. In this circumstances, the regime prefers to co-opt because the political is less of a threat.

To understand how economic opportunity shapes popular mobilization and the dynamic of tactical choice, I analyze the first-period equilibrium behavior.

First-period Tactics

I denote \( \lambda_0 \) the party strength, and \( u_0 \) the level of economic opportunity. \( V(\lambda_1, u_1) \) is the ruler’s continuation value given the realized party organization strength \( \lambda_1 \) and the level of economic opportunity \( u_1 \) in period 2. Denote \( S_1 \) the level of population mobilization in the first-period. Engaging in repressive tactics yields

\[
-F + \delta \int \int V(\lambda_1, u_1) dG(u_1) dH(\lambda_1 | S_1, \lambda_0)
\]

while engaging in cooptation yields

\[
-S_1 + \delta \int \int V(\lambda_1, u_1) dG(u_1) dH(\lambda_1 | S_1, \lambda_0).
\]

This implies that the ruler’s first-period tactics is similar to the second-period tactics. The only difference is embodied by the values of \( \lambda_1 \) and \( \lambda_0 \). An incumbent ruler who starts with higher \( \lambda_0 \) is more likely to face an opposition party with larger party strength in
the future. This is because higher values of $\lambda_0$ are amenable to more mobilization, and
$H(.|S', \lambda_0) \leq H(.|S, \lambda_0)$ if $S' \supset S$.

**First-period Mobilization**

A citizen’s decision in the first-period is equivalent to her decision in the second period. Thus, her decision has no effect on the aggregate level of mobilization, and therefore no effect on the continuation value. This is because a single member of the population has zero measure on the continuum $[\alpha, \bar{\alpha}]$. Thus, population members decision in the first-period is described by Lemma 1 after substituting $\lambda_1$ with $\lambda_0$.

In fact denote $V_\alpha(\lambda_1, u_1)$ citizen $\alpha$’s continuation value given the realized party organization strength $\lambda_1$, and the level of economic opportunity $u_1$.

Mobilizing for the opposition in the first period yields

$$U_1^\alpha(d_1, S_1, s_1^\alpha = 1; u_0, \lambda_0) + \delta \int_0^{\infty} \int_0^{\pi} V_\alpha(\lambda_1, u_1) g(u_1) h(\lambda_1|S_1, \lambda_0) d\lambda_1 du_1$$

while not mobilizing yields

$$U_1^\alpha(d_1, S_1, s_1^\alpha = 0; u_0, \lambda_0) + \delta \int_0^{\infty} \int_0^{\pi} V_\alpha(\lambda_1, u_1) g(u_1) h(\lambda_1|S_1, \lambda_0) d\lambda_1 du_1$$

Thus population member $\alpha$’s decision to mobilize is derived by comparing $U_1^\alpha(d_1, S_1, s_1^\alpha = 1; u_0, \lambda_0)$ and $U_1^\alpha(d_1, S_1, s_1^\alpha = 0; u_0, \lambda_0)$. The next proposition delineates the equilibrium behavior in the first period.

**Proposition 3 (First-period Equilibrium Behavior)** Denote $\lambda_0$ and $u_0$ the realized party strength and economic opportunity at the beginning of the first period.

1. The first-period equilibrium tactics is repression if $\lambda_0 \geq u_0 + \bar{\alpha}$.

   i) If $\lambda_0 > u_1 + \bar{\alpha} + c$, the first period equilibrium mobilization is “full mobilization”:
\[ S^c_1(\lambda_0, u_0) = 1. \]

ii) If \( \lambda_0 \in (u_0 + \alpha, u_0 + \alpha + c] \) and \( u_0 + \alpha < -c \), the first-period equilibrium mobilization is “medium mobilization”: 
\[ S^m_1(\lambda_0, u_0) = \frac{c + u_0 + \alpha}{\lambda_0 - (\alpha - \alpha)}. \]

iii) If \( \lambda_0 \in (u_0 + \alpha, u_0 + \alpha + c] \) and \( u_0 + \alpha \geq -c \), the first-period equilibrium mobilization is “no mobilization”: 
\[ S^c_1(\lambda_0, u_0) = 0. \]

2. If \( \lambda_0 < u_0 + \alpha \) and \( u_0 + \alpha \geq 0 \), the first-period equilibrium outcome is cooptation tactics with the absence of mobilization, \( S^c_1(\lambda_0, u_0) = 0. \)

3. If \( \lambda_0 < u_0 + \alpha \) and \( u_0 + \alpha < 0 \), the first-period equilibrium outcome is repression if 
\[ \frac{u_0 + \alpha}{\lambda_0 - (\alpha - \alpha)} > F, \]
and cooptation if 
\[ \frac{u_0 + \alpha}{\lambda_0 - (\alpha - \alpha)} \leq F. \]
When there is repression, the level of population mobilization is \( S^r_1(\lambda_0, u_0) = \frac{c + u_0 + \alpha}{\lambda_0 - (\alpha - \alpha)}. \)
When there is cooptation, the level of population mobilization is \( S^c_1(u_0, \lambda_0) = \frac{u_0 + \alpha}{\lambda_0 - (\alpha - \alpha)}. \)

Consider the situation where the opposition party initial organization capacity is weak \( \lambda_0 < u_0 + \alpha \) and the economic opportunity are poor \( u_0 + \alpha < 0 \). When \( \frac{u_0 + \alpha}{\lambda_0 - (\alpha - \alpha)} \leq F \) it is optimal for the ruler to use cooptation. Hence, the level of popular mobilization in the first period is \( S^c_1(u_0, \lambda_0) = \frac{u_0 + \alpha}{\lambda_0 - (\alpha - \alpha)} > 0. \) Given that \( H(.|S^c_1, \lambda_0) \) first order stochastic dominates \( H(.|0, \lambda_0) \) the next period party organization \( \lambda_1 \) is more likely to be larger than \( \lambda_0 \). Therefore, we have a situation where \( \lambda_1 \) is large enough such that the ruler feels necessary to switch to a repressive tactics in the second period after adopting cooptation in the first period.

This finding offers a theoretical interpretation of events related to the repression of leaders and members of the Cameroon Renaissance Movement (CRM) by the Cameroon’s government. The CRM was created in 2012 under very limited organizational capacity. However, the poor economic conditions has given way to mobilization for the CRM party, reinforcing therefore its grassroot ties. As a response, the current regime has switched to repressive
tactics in an attempt to intimidate CRM leaders and supporters. Multiple times the CRM rallies have been deemed unauthorized by the government, supporters and leaders arrested and imprisoned, and some were purposefully deterred from registering their candidacy for the last municipal election.

**Strategic Opposition Party**

The previous section assumes that cooptation is always successful. This section considers an opposition party that must decide whether to collaborate with the regime if this latter attempts to co-opt. For example, the regime may promise an important position in the government to the opposition leader in exchange for a reduction in anti-regime political activities. The opposition leader can then decide whether to accept the incumbent offer (collaborate) or not.

In this setup, the timing of the game is the following. After population members make their mobilization decision, and the incumbent decides to co-opt, the opposition leader can collaborate or not. If the opposition collaborates, they remained tied to the regime now and forever. If the opposition does not collaborate, the game moves to the second period with the same sequence of play. So the collaboration with the regime creates an absorbing state in this setup. The opposition gets to move if and only if the incumbent ruler engages in cooptation. When there is repression the opposition does not get to move and the game advances to the second period.

In period $t$, denote $a_t$ the action taken by the opposition. When the opposition collaborates ($a_t = 1$) it obtains the outside option plus the transfer $W$ credibly pledged by the regime. Thus, collaborating in period $t$ yields $u + W + \alpha_o$ in period $t$ and the same payoff in period $t + 1$. While not collaborate ($a_t = 0$) when the regime co-opts yields $\lambda_{t-1}S_t$. If the regime represses, the opposition enjoys $\lambda_{t-1}S_t - c$ and does not move. $\alpha_o \in [\underline{\alpha}, \overline{\alpha}]$ represents
the identity of the opposition leader.

A population member with \( \alpha \in [\alpha, \overline{\alpha}] \) gets the outside option \( u_{t-1} + \alpha \) if she does not mobilize, or if she does and the opposition collaborates with the regime. The incumbent ruler’s expected payoff is unchanged except that there is a transfer to the opposition if they reach an agreement.

Instantaneous payoffs in period \( t \in \{1, 2\} \) are described as follows:

\[
U_t^\alpha(a_t, d_t, S_t; u_{t-1}, \lambda_{t-1}) = s_t^\alpha \left\{ (1-d_t)[(1-a_t)\lambda_{t-1}S_t + a_t(u_{t-1}+\alpha)] + d_t[S_t\lambda_{t-1} - c] \right\} + (1-s_t^\alpha)(u_{t-1}+\alpha)
\]

\[
U_t^I(a_t, d_t, S_t; u_{t-1}, \lambda_{t-1}) = -d_tF - (1-d_t)(-a_tW - (1-a_t)S_t)
\]

\[
U_t^o(a_t, d_t, S_t; u_{t-1}, \lambda_{t-1}) = (1-d_t)[(1-a_t)\lambda_{t-1}S_t + a_t(u_{t-1} + W + \alpha_o)] + d_t[\lambda_{t-1}S_t - c]
\]

For the purpose of this analysis, I assume that \( W < F, W > 0 \). Thus, conditional on the opposition collaborating, the incumbent ruler always prefers to engage in cooptation rather than repressing. There is also an implicit assumption that when an agreement is reached between the opposition and the ruler, the bylaws of the contract involves the opposition reducing its anti-regime activities and the incumbent faces 0 anti-mobilization.

**Second-period Equilibrium Behavior**

Denote \( S_2 \) the second-period level of mobilization; \( \lambda_1 \) and \( u_1 \), the degree of party organization and the level of economic opportunity in the second period, respectively. The opposition leader does not collaborate with the regime if \( u_1 + \alpha_0 + W \leq \lambda_1S_2 \) and collaborates otherwise. If \( S_2 = 0 \), then the opposition collaborates if \( u_1 + \alpha_0 + W > 0 \); if \( S_2 > 0 \) it
collaborates with the incumbent ruler if $\frac{u_1 + \alpha + \bar{\alpha}}{S_2} > \lambda_1$.

Therefore, given a popular mobilization $S_2$, if the opposition party has a solid organizational strength $\lambda_1 > \max\{u_1 + \bar{\alpha} + c, \frac{u_1 + \alpha + \bar{\alpha}}{S_2}\}$ then it would never collaborate with the ruling party and the dictator would engage in repression, since the corresponding level of mobilization is $S_2 = 1$. On the other hand, if $\lambda_1 < u_1 + \bar{\alpha}$ and $u_1 + \alpha > 0$, in which case $S_2 = 0$, the opposition party is better off collaborating with the incumbent. The next proposition summarizes this result.

**Proposition 4 (Second-period Equilibrium Behavior)** In the second-period, there is an equilibrium where:

- The opposition party with strong party organization does not collaborate with the regime while the opposition party with weak party organization always collaborates.

- The incumbent ruler always represses an opposition with strong party organization and co-opts an opposition with weak party organization.

- The population mobilizes for an opposition if and only it has a solid party organization.

*Proof:* See Appendix.

**First-period Equilibrium Behavior**

The realized level of economic opportunity is $u_0$, and the realized level of party organizational reach is $\lambda_0$. Denote $V^\alpha(u_1, \lambda_1)$ the opposition party’s continuation value at the beginning of period 2. Given a level of population mobilization $S_1$, resisting cooptation in the first period yields an expected payoff of

$$\lambda_0 S_1 + \delta \int_u^\infty \int_0^\infty V^\alpha(u_1, \lambda_1) g(u_1) h(\lambda_1 | S_1, \lambda_0) du_1 d\lambda_1 \equiv \lambda_0 S_1 + \delta \overline{V}^\alpha(\lambda_0, S_1)$$
for the opposition, while reaching an agreement with the ruler yields

$$(1 + \delta)[u_1 + \alpha_0 + W].$$

Note that $\delta V^o(\lambda_0, S_1)$ is positive, since the continuation value is the upper envelop of linear functions of $u_1$ and $\lambda_1$ (see the appendix for a more formal proof of this statement). Given the equilibrium play in the second period, $V^o(u_1, \lambda_1)$ is given by

$$V^o(u_1, \lambda_1) = \begin{cases} 
\lambda_1 - c & \text{if } \lambda_1 \geq u_1 + \alpha + c \\
-c & \text{if } \lambda_1 \in (u_1 + \alpha, u_1 + \alpha + c); \quad u_1 + \alpha > -c \\
\frac{\lambda_1(u_1 + \alpha + c)}{\lambda_1 - (\alpha - \alpha)} - c & \text{if } \lambda_1 \in (u_1 + \alpha, u_1 + \alpha + c); \quad u_1 + \alpha \leq -c \\
u_1 + \alpha_0 + W & \text{if } \lambda_1 < u_1 + \alpha; \quad u_1 + \alpha > 0 \\
u_1 + \alpha_0 + W & \text{if } \lambda_1 < u_1 + \alpha_0 + W; \quad u_1 + \alpha \leq 0 \\
\frac{\lambda_1(u_1 + \alpha)}{\lambda_1 - (\alpha - \alpha)} & \text{if } \lambda_1 \in (u_1 + \alpha_0 + W, u_1 + \alpha); \quad u_1 + \alpha \leq 0 
\end{cases}$$

Therefore if $S_1 = 0$, the opposition collaborates with the regime if and only if

$$u_0 + \alpha_0 + W > \frac{\delta}{1 + \delta} V^o(\lambda_0, 0) \quad (1)$$

On the other hand, if $S_1 > 0$, the opposition cooperates with the ruler if and only if

$$\lambda_1 < \frac{(1 + \delta)[u_0 + \alpha_0 + W] - \delta V^o(\lambda_0, S_1)}{S_1} \quad (2)$$

Expression (1) and (2) describes the opposition’s equilibrium behavior in the first-period. This is a key result because it shows how the opposition adopts a less loosened threshold in the first period. This also implies that not cooperating with the regime has option value.
Consider the situation where the population does not mobilizes for the opposition in the first period $S_1 = 0$. Then, the opposition collaborates with the regime if (1) holds: $u_0 + \alpha_0 + W > \frac{\delta}{1+\delta} \varphi_0(\lambda_0, 0)$. Whereas in the second period the opposition collaborates following an absence of mobilization if $u_0 + \alpha_0 + W > 0$. The fact that $\delta \varphi_0(\lambda_0, 0) > 0$ implies that in the first period, there are circumstances where the instantaneous payoff from collaborating with the ruling party is larger than the payoff of not collaborating, but the opposition party chooses not to collaborate in the hope that there would be a shock to the party capacity leading to more mobilization in the future. A forward looking opposition party “gamble for resurrection”.

A similar argument holds when $S_1 > 0$. Note that $\frac{(1+\delta)[u_0+\alpha_0+W]-\delta \varphi_0(\lambda_0,S_1)}{S_1} < \frac{u_0+\alpha_0+W}{S_1}$. Thus in the first period, the opposition adopts a lower threshold following a positive fraction of mobilization. Whereas an opposition party with weak organizational strength $\lambda_0 \in \left( \frac{u_0+\alpha_0+W}{S_1} + \delta \left( \frac{u_0+\alpha_0+W-\varphi_0(\lambda_0,S_1)}{S_1} \right), \frac{u_0+\alpha_0+W}{S_1} \right)$ collaborates in the second period, it does not in the first period.

The finding has connotations in the Cameroon’s political landscape. According to some anecdotes, the current regime had made multiple failed attempts to appoint in government top positions high-ranked members of the CRM party. The model predict that CRM members sometimes turn down good offers from the regime because of the expectation that this would lead to an increase in the party organizational strength in the future.

Denote $V^I(u_1, \lambda_1)$ the incumbent’s continuation value following the realization of $u_1$ and
Given the second period equilibrium play,

\[
V^I(u_1, \lambda_1) = \begin{cases} 
-F & \text{if } \lambda_1 \geq u_1 + \alpha \\
-W & \text{if } \lambda_1 < u_1 + \alpha; u_1 + \alpha > 0 \\
-W & \text{if } \lambda_1 < u_1 + \alpha_0 + W; u_1 + \alpha \leq 0 \\
-\min\{F, \frac{(u_1 + \alpha)}{\lambda_1 - (\alpha - \alpha)}\} & \text{if } \lambda_1 \in (u_1 + \alpha_0 + W, u_1 + \alpha); u_1 + \alpha \leq 0 
\end{cases}
\]

The incumbent ruler always co-opts the opposition when \( S_1 = 0 \); repressing yields

\[-F + \delta \int \int V(u_1, \lambda_1) dH(\lambda_1|S_1, \lambda_0) dG(u_1), \]

while cooptation yields

\[-(1 + \delta)W \quad \text{or} \quad 0 + \delta \int \int V(u_1, \lambda_1) dH(\lambda_1|S_1, \lambda_0) dG(u_1) \]

(given that \( V^I(u_1, \lambda_1) \leq 0 \)). Intuitively, repressing creates the possibility that a positive shock in the future enhances the opposition capacity which can make them take confrontational strategies against the regime, while cooptation can absorb their activities now and forever. This result perfectly illustrates the Kenyan case.

When \( S_1 > 0 \) and \( \lambda_0 < \frac{(1+\delta)[u_0+\alpha_0+W]-\delta V^*(\lambda_0,S_1)}{S_1} \) it is optimal for the ruler to co-opt, and cooptation is successful. Coopting yields \(-(1 + \delta)W\) while repressing yields

\[-F + \delta \int \int V(u_1, \lambda_1) dH(\lambda_1|S_1, \lambda_0) dG(u_1). \]

When \( \lambda_0 \geq \frac{(1+\delta)[u_0+\alpha_0+W]-\delta V^*(\lambda_0,S_1)}{S_1} \) the decision to co-opt depends on how \( F \) is compared to \( S_1 \) because the opposition does not cooperate. If \( F \) is smaller than \( S_1 \) repression is optimal; if \( S_1 \) instead smaller than \( F \), cooptation is optimal. The population’s decision to mobilize is the same as in the second period.

**Proposition 5 (Second-Period Equilibrium Behavior)**

- When \( \lambda_0 < \frac{u_0+\alpha_0+W}{S_1} + \)
\[ \delta \left( \frac{u_0 + \alpha_0 + W - V}{S_1} \right), \text{ the ruler always co-opts the opposition party. The opposition collaborates with the opposition.} \]

- When \( \lambda_0 \geq \frac{u_0 + \alpha_0 + W}{S_1} + \delta \left( \frac{u_0 + \alpha_0 + W - V}{S_1} \right) \), the ruler co-opts if \( F \geq S_1 \) and does not if \( F < S_1 \).

**Evidence**

This part illustrates the main points of the theoretical model. I first present the emergence of strong party in Zimbabwe and weak parties in Kenya. The emergence of these parties is the outcome of differential extend of labour militancy. A developed mining sector is the only exogeneous variable that drove labour militancy in Zimbabwe and Kenya. Given that mineral exploration was limited in Kenya, the labour force was not powerful enough to create a labour movement that cannot be restrained by the state. The second section exposes the ruler’s response to parties development. Whereas Jomo Kenyatta instituted a mechanism called *Harambee* (“Let’s pull together” in Swahili) to co-opt opposition parties, the Robert Mugabe’s regime adopted repressive tactics.

**The Emergence of Weak versus Strong Parties**

**Zimbabwe**

Formerly Rhodesia, Zimbabwe is a country located in southern Africa with a population of about 14 million people. The country became independent in 1980 led by Robert Mugabe and liberation fighters of the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF). The country has a long history of labor militancy. One of the first and large organized labor movement was launched in early 1948. The 1948 strike over rising food prices featured approximately 100,000 participants, including railways workers, and was organized by Harare
and Bulawayo-based labor organization (Raftopoulos (1997); Phimister (1998) and Lunn (1999)). The 1948 labor strike culminated in the enactment of legislation that increased the state monitoring and regulation of African associations (LeBas 2011, Ch 3). The labor movement was splintered and weak at the time. There were a total of six union federations that, in 1981, were merged into one single union: the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU).

Initially, the ZANU-PF had some control over decisions and leadership selection in the ZCTU (Alexander 2001, Dansereau 2003). However, instances of corruption, embezzlement, maladministration, led to increased resistance against the regime involvement in ZCTU's affairs (Bond and Saunders 2005). During the 1985 ZCTU congress, rank-and-file members and leaders called for a greater autonomy from the regime, and by 1987 a new leadership was elected. The elected Secretary General was Morgan Tsvangirai from the Mines Union, and the President was Wilson Sabanda from the Railways Union (LeBas, 2011 Ch 3,5; Bond and Saunders, 2005).

In the early 1990s, International Financial Institutions (IFI) put pressure on African countries to adopt the so called Economic Structural Adjustment Plan (ESAP) as a response to world economic downturn. The IFI-pressure, in concert with economic mismanagement by Mugabe's cronies, led to public sector restructuring, including large cuts to the health and education budgets (McCandless 2011). The impact of ESAP enforcement upon workers, their families, resulted in a proliferation of labour activism in the 1990s (Bond and Saunders, 2005; Motombo and Sachikonye, 2010). Saunders (2001) documents 184 instances of activism between 1990 and 1997. It was said that the ESAP implementation has led to increased joblessness, hopelessness and economic insecurity (Raftopoulos 2000).

However, the labour protest was unable to achieve its intended goal because of low attendances during labour protest. At the time, workers had a limited understanding of the goal of the ZCTU, and its capacity to improve their working conditions (Alexander, 2001). In
response to these mobilization failures, the ZCTU engaged in multiple reinforcing strategies. These included expanding the rank-and-file basis and labour’s influence, to draw wider civil societies in shared struggle; strengthening the relationship between the ZCTU and non-union members of the society (Saunders 2011, LeBas 2011, Ch 3,5). The consolidation strategies finally increase the ZCTU organisational power. This was reflected by the unprecedented public sector strike between August and September 1996 with a turnout of 70,000 participants (Gwisai 2009, Saunders 2001).

Given that the labour movement led by the unions was still unable to stimulate better economic conditions for workers, ZCTU leaders understood that the real problem lied in the sector of misgovernance. Thus, they decided to transform the ZCTU into a political formation, and redirect the fight towards an end of authoritarianism (Moyo and Murisa, 2008). According to Alexander (2001, 387), the ZCTU’s 1995 economic policy document Beyond ESAP must be understood as aiming to transform ZCTU “from a largely vociferous organisation that no one seems to listen to, into a viable political force to be reckoned with”. This is the birth of the MDC, led by Morgan Tsvangirai.

Before the MDC enters politics, there had been a myriad of weak political parties that competed for election between 1980 and 2000. All of these parties ended up joining the ZANU-PF, or completely closing the door. The Zimbabwe African People’s Union, a contender in the “liberation election” in 1980, was incorporated into ZANU-PF in 1987 (Dorman, 2005). Other parties such as the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) splintered to form the Democratic Party and the Forum Party in 1993, but ended up boycotting the 1996 presidential elections (Dorman, 2005).

**Kenya**

Right after the Mau Mau uprising, Kenya obtained its independence under the leadership of Jomo Kenyatta, who moved swiftly to establish social peace before implementing any devel-
opment plan. He impeded the development of labor militancy, the nascent labor movement conducted by Mau Mau leaders. The lack of mining sector in Kenya was also one important variable that differentiates Kenya from Zimbabwe. It also explains the limited impact of labour militancy in Kenya and the flexibility of Jomo Kenyatta to control labour movement. Widner (1992), Arriola (2013, Ch 3) and LeBas (2011, Ch 4, 6) provide a concise documentation of the evolution of political parties in Kenya. The common theme that emerges from these accounts is that of factionalization of political parties in Kenya. Because the labour force was not as powerful as in Zimbabwe, Kenyatta’s regime had control over the unions. As a result, political parties were built around ethnic groups. While the KANU (Kenya African National Union) was mainly composed of Luo and Kikuyu, the KADU (Kenya African Democratic Union) was most represented by the Kalenjin and Luhya ethnic group (Widner, 1992). Therefore, by the time the multipartyism was reintroduced in 1991, political parties created at the time kept the same composition and were not as strong as to cause serious political challenge to the regime.

**Ruler Response**

**Zimbabwe**

The Mugabe regime’s response to the MDC’s progress and the large-scale of support it garnered was brutal. Rutherford (2008) recounts how in the build-up of the 2000 parliamentary election, farm workers were forced to demonstrate their fealty to the ZANU-PF, and any resistance was faced with torture, beatings and in some cases killings. The repressive operations were conducted by ZANU-PF activists, war veterans, and young militia. Because inhabitants of the rural areas mostly voted “No” to the 2000 constitutional referendum, proving their unconditional support to the MDC, “large groups of armed militia, roam the rural areas, disrupting the lives of rural people” (ZHRNF, 2001). Reprisals attacks in ur-
ban localities that recorded massive pro-MDC votes during the 2000 general election were operated by the police personnel (ZHRNF, 2001).

Kenya

While the Mugabe regime had an optimal strategy to repress supporters and leaders of the MDC, Kenyatta instituted the *Harambee* (meaning “let’s pull together” in Swahili), to co-opt the opposition (Widner, 1992). Kenyatta always advocated forums for debate. He favored a system tolerant of diverse points of view-within limits. “Kenyatta’s task was to manage these competing claims in a way that would prevent the rise of political extremes [in the future](...)” (Widner, 1992:54). His ultimate goal was to establish a single party state. In 1964, elites members of the KADU opposition party joined KANU (Widner, 1992:55).

Conclusion

I developed a dynamic model to understand the determinant of political cooptation versus repression, in hybrid regimes. I showed that rulers may be willing to substitute cooptation tactics with repression depending on economic, demographic or socio-political variables. Under the fear that the opposition’s strong grassroot ties in constituencies will tip the control of power towards the opposing side, the ruler engages in repression. However, when facing an opposition that lacks strong grassroot structure, the ruler has a strong appeal to co-opt. When economic opportunity are poor a weak opposition party today can become strong in the future, forcing the ruler to transit from cooptation to repression. The model also predicts that weak opposition parties sometimes resist cooptation in the hope that the future is bright and a positive shock will enhance the party capacity: they “gamble for resurrection”.

The paper has implications for theories of political transition. For example, from 1980 to 2017, while Zimbabweans experienced the leadership of only one president—Robert Mugabe—
Kenyans had experience with three different presidents, Daniel Arap Moi, Mwai Kibaki and Uhuru Kenyatta. For future research, one can examine whether the emergence of strong parties can delay the process of democratization in hybrid regimes. For example what are the consequences of the emergence of political parties with strong organisational structure on the transition to democracy, measured by political alternation?

References


Appendices

Proof of Lemma 1

When the incumbent ruler engages in repression, the maximal level of mobilization satisfies $\lambda_1 S_2 - c = u_1 + \alpha + (\bar{\alpha} - \alpha)S_2$. There is full mobilization if and only if, given the level of mobilization, the population member with outside option $u + \bar{\alpha}$ mobilizes (this result
relies on the fact that there is an order on citizens’ outside option). Thus, \( S'_2(\lambda_1, u_1) = 1 \) if \( \lambda_1 - c \geq u_1 + \bar{\alpha} \).

For the level of mobilization to be \( S_2 = 0 \), two conditions must be satisfied. First, the population member with the worst outside option must prefer not to mobilize (given the level of mobilization \( S_2 = 0 \)): \( u_1 + \alpha > -c \). Second, given a level of mobilization \( S_2 \in (0, 1] \), “no population member \( \alpha \in S_2 \) prefers to mobilize”: \( \lambda_1 S_2 - c < u + \alpha^*(S_2) \). Since \( \lambda_1 S_2 - c \) and \( u_1 + \alpha(S_2) \) are affine functions, the inequality holds if it is true for the initial point and the end point \( (S_2 = 1) \). Which is \( \lambda_1 - c < u_1 + \bar{\alpha} \). Now suppose \( \lambda_1 < u_1 + \bar{\alpha} + c \) and \( u_1 + \alpha < -c \). Then a positive fraction of the population mobilizes. The maximal level of mobilization \( S_2 \in (0, 1) \) satisfies \( \lambda_1 S_2 - c = u_1 + \alpha + (\bar{\alpha} - \alpha) S_2 \). That is, \( S'_2(u_1, \lambda_1) = \frac{u_1 + \alpha + c}{\lambda_1 - (\bar{\alpha} - \alpha)} \in (0, 1) \).

**Proof of Proposition 2**

Here I only describe the ruler’s equilibrium strategy. A population member equilibrium strategy follows from Lemma 1.

a) Using lemma 1, if \( \lambda_1 > u_1 + \bar{\alpha} \), then co-opting the opposition yields \(-1\) while repressing yields \(-F > -1\). Thus, it is optimal for the ruler to repress when the opposition has a solid party organization.

b) If \( \lambda_1 < u_1 + \bar{\alpha} \) and \( u_1 + \alpha \geq 0 \), if the ruler co-opts, he gets 0 while repressing yields \(-F < 0\). Co-opting the opposition party is optimal.

c) If \( \lambda_1 < u_1 + \bar{\alpha} \) and \( u_1 + \alpha < 0 \), by lemma 1 the equilibrium level of population mobilization if there is cooptation is \( S'_2(u_1, \lambda_1) = \frac{u_1 + \alpha}{\lambda_1 - (\bar{\alpha} - \alpha)} \). Hence, the ruler co-opts if \( F > \frac{u_1 + \alpha}{\lambda_1 - (\bar{\alpha} - \alpha)} \) and repress if \( F < \frac{u_1 + \alpha}{\lambda_1 - (\bar{\alpha} - \alpha)} \). If \( \lambda_1 < u_1 + \bar{\alpha} \) and \( u_1 + \alpha < 0 \), then \( \lambda_1 - (\bar{\alpha} - \alpha) < u_1 + \alpha < 0 \). Thus, \( \frac{u_1 + \alpha}{\lambda_1 - (\bar{\alpha} - \alpha)} \in (0, 1) \).

**Proof of Proposition 4**
Let us fix the degree of party organization $\lambda_1$ and the level of economic opportunity $u_1$.

**Step 1:** Players’ equilibrium behavior

*Opposition party.*

Denote $S_2$ the level of popular mobilization in the second period of the game with a strategic opposition. If $S_2 = 0$, the opposition leader cooperates with the regime if $u_1 + \alpha_0 + W > 0$ and does not if $u_1 + \alpha_0 + W \leq 0$. If $S_2 > 0$, the opposition leader cooperates if $u_1 + \alpha_0 + W > \lambda_1 S_2$, or $\lambda_1 < \frac{u_1 + \alpha_0 + W}{S_2}$.

*Incumbent ruler.*

If $S_2 = 0$, the ruler always attempts to co-opt the opposition leader whether he cooperates or not. Co-opting yields at least $-W$, while repressing yields $-F$. Given that $W < F$, the incumbent co-opt. If $S_2 > 0$ and $\lambda_1 \geq \frac{u_1 + \alpha_0 + W}{S_2}$ (the opposition leader rejects the ruler’s offer), cooptation yields $-S_2$ while repression yields $-F$. The incumbent co-opt if $S_2 < F$ and represses otherwise. When $S_2 > 0$ and $\lambda_1 < \frac{u_1 + \alpha_0 + W}{S_2}$ (the opposition leader accepts the ruler’s offer). Then, the ruler always co-opt the opposition and cooptation is successful.

*Population Mobilization:*

By Lemma 1, and given that the game is unchanged after the ruler represses, the maximal level of population mobilization in the second period is given by

$$S^r_2(\lambda_1, u_1) = \begin{cases} 
1 & \text{if } \lambda_1 \geq u_1 + \overline{\alpha} + c \\
0 & \text{if } \lambda_1 < u_1 + \overline{\alpha} + c; \quad u_1 + \alpha > -c \\
\frac{c + u_1 + \alpha}{\lambda_1 - (\alpha - \overline{\alpha})} & \text{if } \lambda_1 < u_1 + \overline{\alpha} + c; \quad u_1 + \alpha \leq -c
\end{cases}$$

To characterize the optimal proportion of mobilization, I distinguish two cases: $\alpha_0 + W > \overline{\alpha}$ and $\alpha_0 + W \leq \overline{\alpha}$.

- If $\alpha_0 + W > \overline{\alpha}$, then $\max\{u_1 + \alpha_0 + W, u_1 + \overline{\alpha}\} = u_1 + \alpha_0 + W$. Therefore,
$S^c_2(u_1, \lambda_1) = \begin{cases} 
1 & \text{if } \lambda_1 \geq \max\{u_1 + \alpha_0 + W, u_1 + \alpha\} \\
0 & \text{if } \lambda_1 < \max\{u_1 + \alpha_0 + W, u_1 + \alpha\}; \quad u_1 + \alpha > 0 
\end{cases}$

In fact, when $\lambda_1 \geq u_1 + \alpha_0 + W$ the opposition party never cooperates with the ruler, and when $\lambda_1 \geq u_1 + \alpha$ every member of the population mobilizes including the member with the identity $\alpha$. Note that this also relies on the fact that when the opposition is co-opted there is an absence of mobilization.

- If $\alpha_0 + W \leq \alpha$, $\max\{u_1 + \alpha_0 + W, u_1 + \alpha\} = u_1 + \alpha$. In this case,

$S^c_2(u_1, \lambda_1) = \begin{cases} 
1 & \text{if } \lambda_1 \geq u_1 + \alpha \\
0 & \text{if } \lambda_1 < u_1 + \alpha; \quad u_1 + \alpha > 0 \\
\frac{u_1 + \alpha}{\lambda_1 - (\alpha - \alpha)} & \text{if } \lambda_1 \in (u_1 + \alpha_0 + W, u_1 + \alpha); \quad u_1 + \alpha \leq 0 \\
0 & \text{if } \lambda_1 \leq u_1 + \alpha_0 + W; \quad u_1 + \alpha \leq 0 
\end{cases}$

**Step 2:** Second Period Equilibrium

I now describe the second period equilibrium when the opposition is non-strategic. I assume that $W < \min\{F, \alpha - \alpha_0\}$. The case where $\alpha_0 + W \geq \alpha$ is less interesting because the opposition always has an incentive to cooperate with the ruler even following a small and positive level of population mobilization.

- If $\lambda_1 \geq u_1 + \alpha$ (mobilization level is $S^c_2 = 1$ if the ruler co-opts). Thus, the ruler represses, $d_2 = 1$, and the opposition party never cooperates if $d_2 = 0$, $a_2 = 0$ (note that $u_1 + W + \alpha_0 < u_1 + \alpha$). If $\lambda_1 \geq u_1 + \alpha + c$, there is “full mobilization”; $S^r_2 = 1$. If $\lambda_1 \in (u_1 + \alpha, u_1 + \alpha + c)$ and $u_1 + \alpha > -c$, “absence of mobilization”, $S^r_2 = 0$. If $\lambda_1 \in (u_1 + \alpha, u_1 + \alpha + c)$ and $u_1 + \alpha < -c$, the level of population mobilization is $S^r_2 = \frac{c + u_1 + \alpha}{\lambda_1 - (\alpha - \alpha)}$. 

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• If $\lambda_1 < u_1 + \alpha$ and $u_1 + \alpha > 0$, $S_2^c = 0$ and the ruler co-opts; $d_2 = 0$. If the opposition does not cooperate it gets 0 while if it cooperates, it gets $u_1 + \alpha_0 + W > u_1 + \alpha > 0$. So it is optimal for the opposition to cooperate, $a_2 = 1$ and there is cooptation.

• If $\lambda_1 < u_1 + \alpha_0 + W$ and $u_1 + \alpha \leq 0$, there is absence of mobilization, the ruler co-opts and the opposition cooperates.

• If $\lambda_1 \in (u_1 + \alpha_0 + W, u_1 + \alpha)$ and $u_1 + \alpha \leq 0$. The level of population mobilization if $d_2 = 0$ is $S_2^c = \frac{u_1 + \alpha}{\lambda_1 - (\alpha - \alpha)}$. When $d_2 = 0$, the opposition party gets $u_1 + \alpha_0 + W$ if it cooperates with the regime and $\frac{\lambda_1(u_1 + \alpha)}{\lambda_1 - (\alpha - \alpha)}$ if it does not. Then the opposition party’s decision to cooperate depends on how large the idiosyncratic component of the outside option, $\alpha_0 + W$ is compared to the equivalent component for the $S_2^c$—marginal citizen. That is, iff $\alpha_0 + W < \alpha + (\alpha - \alpha)\frac{u_1 + \alpha}{\lambda_1 - (\alpha - \alpha)}$, the opposition does not cooperate with the regime. In the case where $a_2 = 0$, the regime represses iff $F < \frac{u_1 + \alpha}{\lambda_1 - (\alpha - \alpha)}$.

A population member $\alpha$ obtains $u + \alpha$ if she does not mobilize, or if she does but the opposition merges with the ruling party. The condition for the opposition party merging the ruling party is $\lambda_1 < \frac{u_1 + \alpha_0 + W}{S_2}$. Note that if $\lambda_1 \geq u_1 + \alpha_0 + W$, then level popular mobilization is $S_2 = 1$ if $\lambda_1 \geq u_1 + \alpha + c$. Thus, there is full mobilization if $\lambda_1 \geq \max\{u_1 + \alpha_0 + W, u_1 + \alpha + c\}$. On the other hand, if $\lambda_1 < u_1 + \alpha$ and $u_1 + \alpha > 0$, then $u_1 + \alpha_0 + W > 0$ and $S_2 = 0$. In this case it is optimal for the opposition leader to accept the ruler’s offer and there is absence of mobilization.

Proof of Proposition 5

Given the proof included in the main text it remains to demonstrate that for all $u_0$ and $\lambda_0$, $\overline{V}(\lambda_0, S_1) > 0$. The proof uses the fact that if a function $f$ defined on an interval $(a,b)$ is positive, then the primitive $F(x) = \int_a^x f(t)dt$ is strictly increasing on $(a,b)$. In particular, $F(b) - F(a) > 0$. To simplify the proof, I assume that $u + \alpha > c$. This is just to say that the population member with the best outside option $u + \alpha$ is happy under the
current regime.

$$\overline{V}(\lambda_0, S_1) = \int_{\lambda_0}^{\infty} \int_{u_1 + \pi + c}^{\infty} V_0(u_1, \lambda_1) g(u_1) h(\lambda_1 | \lambda_0, S_1) d\lambda_1 du_1$$

$$= \int_{\lambda_0}^{\infty} \int_{u_1 + \pi + c}^{\infty} (\lambda_1 - c) h(\lambda_1 | \lambda_0, S_1) d\lambda_1 g(u_1) du_1 +$$

$$\int_{\lambda_0}^{\infty} \int_{u_1 + \pi + c}^{\infty} (-c) h(\lambda_1 | \lambda_0, S_1) d\lambda_1 \mathbf{1}_{u_1 > -\alpha - c} g(u_1) du_1 +$$

$$\int_{\lambda_0}^{\infty} \int_{u_1 + \pi + c}^{\infty} \left( \frac{\lambda_1(u_1 + \alpha + c)}{\lambda_1 - (\alpha - c)} - c \right) h(\lambda_1 | \lambda_0, S_1) d\lambda_1 \mathbf{1}_{u_1 + \alpha \leq 0} g(u_1) du_1 +$$

$$\int_{\lambda_0}^{\infty} \int_{u_1 + \alpha + \omega + W}^{\infty} \mathbf{1}_{u_1 + \omega > 0} g(u_1) du_1 +$$

$$\int_{\lambda_0}^{\infty} \int_{u_1 + \alpha + \omega + W}^{\infty} \left( \frac{\lambda_1(u_1 + \alpha)}{\lambda_1 - (\alpha - c)} \right) h(\lambda_1 | \lambda_0, S_1) d\lambda_1 \mathbf{1}_{u_1 + \alpha \leq 0} g(u_1) du_1$$

Considering $V_1$ and $V_2$ in the previous equation, we get

$$V_1 = \int_{\lambda_0}^{\infty} \int_{u_1 + \pi + c}^{\infty} (\lambda_1 - c) h(\lambda_1 | \lambda_0, S_1) d\lambda_1 g(u_1) du_1$$

$$= \int_{\lambda_0}^{\infty} \int_{u_1 + \pi + c}^{\infty} \lambda_1 h(\lambda_1 | \lambda_0, S_1) d\lambda_1 g(u_1) du_1 - \int_{\lambda_0}^{\infty} \int_{u_1 + \pi + c}^{\infty} \mathbf{1}_{u_1 + \omega < \alpha + W + c} g(u_1) du_1$$
$$V_2 + V_3 = \int_{\bar{u}}^{\bar{\pi}} \left[ \int_{u_1 + \bar{\pi}}^{\pi} \left( \frac{\lambda_1(u_1 + \omega + c)}{\lambda_1 - (\bar{\alpha} - \alpha)} \right) h(\lambda_1|\lambda_0, S_1) d\lambda_1 \right] g(u_1) du_1$$

$$- c \int_{\bar{u}}^{\bar{\pi}} \left[ H_{\lambda_0,S_1}(u_1 + \bar{\alpha} + c) - H_{\lambda_0,S_1}(u_1 + \alpha) \right] g(u_1) du_1$$

Note that for $\lambda_1 < u_1 + \bar{\alpha} + c$, $\frac{\lambda_1(u_1 + \alpha + c)}{\lambda_1 - (\bar{\alpha} - \alpha)} > \lambda_1$. Thus,

$$V_1 + V_2 + V_3 > \int_{\bar{u}}^{\bar{\pi}} \left[ \int_{u_1 + \bar{\pi}}^{\infty} \lambda_1 h(\lambda_1|\lambda_0, S_1) d\lambda_1 \right] g(u_1) du_1 - c \int_{\bar{u}}^{\bar{\pi}} \left[ 1 - H_{\lambda_0,S_1}(u_1 + \bar{\alpha}) \right] g(u_1) du_1$$

$$> \int_{\bar{u}}^{\bar{\pi}} \left[ \int_{u_1 + \bar{\pi}}^{\infty} (u_1 + \alpha) h(\lambda_1|\lambda_0, S_1) d\lambda_1 \right] g(u_1) du_1 - c \int_{\bar{u}}^{\bar{\pi}} \left[ 1 - H_{\lambda_0,S_1}(u_1 + \bar{\alpha}) \right] g(u_1) du_1$$

$$> 0 \text{ since } \bar{u} + \bar{\alpha} > c$$

Finally, it is straightforward that $V_4 + V_5 + V_6 > 0$ since $u_1 + \alpha_0 + W > 0$, and $\frac{\lambda_1(u_1 + \alpha)}{\lambda_1 - (\bar{\alpha} - \alpha)} \in (0, 1)$.

$Q.E.D$