

The Comparative Logic of Autocratic Survival

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1. Introduction

In the developing world autocracy constitutes the most common form of political regime. Although we have a good understanding of how democracy works, we know much less about how autocracies behave and their institutional diversity. My approach builds on two seminal contributions in the study of dictatorship, Geddes (2003) and Przeworski and Gandhi (2006). Geddes work underscores the significance of political parties for the longevity of dictatorships. Gandhi and Przeworski talk about how these institutions come about. I ask the following fundamental questions: why do political parties achieve for the dictator and the ruling clique? Why do some dictatorships proscribe opposition political parties while others allow them to contest elections?

The central argument of the paper is that institutions under dictatorship must be understood as tools designed to make deals to share the spoils of office between the dictator and the members of his ruling coalition credible. A dictator can promise that he will share power with members of the ruling coalition that brought him to power, but this promise is not fully credible. Once in office, the dictator will be able to employ his immense powers to renege on his promises. This makes life hard for the dictator, as Tullock (1987) suggests, because those who surround him will want to plot against him. One way to make power sharing deals credible, I suggest, is by creating political parties and institutions to guarantee to the ruling coalition that the dictator will not abuse them. Parties will thus work at reducing the vulnerability of dictators to plots by officials of high rank, by allowing for credible power sharing deals. The credibility mechanism hinges, in part, upon the difficulty the dictator would face in reversing these institutions, as well as the fact that parties are expected to last into the future.

This approach generates important empirical implications with respect to the logics of autocratic survival in various types of dictatorships, which I classify along two dimensions: the nature of what Haber (2006) calls the “launching organization” –military coups, dynasties, or mass-based movements or wars – and the degree of institutionalization –absence of political parties and institutions for leadership succession, a single-political party, or multiple political parties. The paper employs empirical data to map along these dimensions the universe of autocratic regimes between 1950 and 2000 and to describe differences in the patterns of regime transformation.

The paper unfolds as follows: the first section presents my theory about the logic of autocratic survival. The second section presents the implications of the theory for the comparative study of dictatorship. The third section takes the theory a step further by generating a typology of dictatorships, which will be used in subsequent work for systematic empirical testing. The paper then maps the universe of dictatorships in the world between 1950 and 2000 and depicts how this universe changed during the period. The fourth section studies patterns of regime transformation, including the frequency with which different types of dictatorships collapse and how many of these terminations result from military coups.

2. Conceptualizing autocracy

My approach conceives dictators as motivated by a quest to achieve absolute power. Hence, in this sense my approach differs from Geddes’ (2003) seminal work, which proposes a three-fold categorization of dictatorships –military, single-party and personalist dictatorships. Geddes models the logic of survival and demise of these regimes with the use of three radically different political games based on the assumption that “the goals of leaders

in different kinds of authoritarian regimes typically differ from each other” (p. 53).¹ In my approach, all leaders are presumed to aspire to become “personalist dictators” regardless of their types. However, in their quest for greater power they are constrained by the ruling clique.

Haber (2006) underscores that differing autocratic equilibria must be understood as resulting from power struggles between the dictator and the members of his “launching organization.” He claims that there are three distinct political equilibria resulting from this conflict –terror, collusion and organizational proliferation.² A similar insight can be drawn from Bueno de Mesquita et al (2003), who argue that dictators need to rule by co-opting a critical “winning coalition” that is drawn from a larger pool called the “selectorate.” The larger the “selectorate”, the more dictators will need to share power and rents with their cronies. What is missing in these theories is a better specification of the bargaining game between the dictator and his ruling clique.

To uncover this game, I emphasize two set of variables: how dictators seized power in the first place, which roughly determines the size of the “selectorate”; and the existing institutions (parties, elections, rules of succession) that shape contracts between the dictator and his ruling coalition. Both of these tell us how power is being distributed among key players –the dictator, his party and the army –and the extent to which the autocratic regime incorporates groups within society.

¹ Military regimes are modeled with a coordination game, where the main challenge is to solve coordination problems among military officers who want to return to the barracks and those who want to hold onto power. Single-party regimes are modeled with a Stag Hunt game where the unique equilibrium is to co-opt everyone. Personal dictators will invariably need to repress opponents that seek to dislodge them by force.

² In a first equilibrium, the dictator eliminates the power of the launching organization through terror and purges. The second strategy is one of collusion where the dictator seeks to preempt military coups by ensuring to the other leaders of the ruling coalition a stream of rents. A third political equilibrium is one of “organizational proliferation” where the dictator encourages the creation of competing organizations to increase the costs of collective action by the launching organization.

1. Origins of dictatorship

Some dictators take power by force through military or palace coups; others reach power launched by a mass-based movement –either a political party or a combatant organization; and others ascend to power following dynastical rules of succession. Since these organizations were powerful enough to bring the dictator to power, they also must possess the resources to depose him (Haber, 2006). The origins of dictatorships can tell a great deal about the nature and size of the “selectorate” or the critical actors the dictator needs to share power with.

Roughly speaking, dictators can assume power launched by an elitist group –a faction of the military or a dynastical family, in which case membership in the launching organization is highly restricted. These are in sharp contrast to cases where power is attained through a mass-based political movement – e.g., a founding election after independence, a rigged election in an electoral dictatorship, or a civil war. In these cases, the launching organization will be more numerous and highly heterogenous, composed of many disparate parties, factions and interests. Following Bueno de Mesquita et al (2003), one of the basic implications of this argument is that dictators that come to power through a mass-based political movement or through a civil war will need to co-opt a larger set of players and groups within society than those who seize power through military coups or under dynastic rules of succession.

Dictatorships that ascend to power through a military coup will have the most to fear from other generals capable of plotting and executing coups. To succeed in their quest for dictatorial power, some will imprison, exile, and kill their opponents and even one-time allies. Uganda’s Idi Amin, who drew worldwide condemnation for atrocities against opponents, serves as an example. However, in their quest for secure power, military dictators

can also create their own parallel civil organizations, political parties in order to neutralize the armed forces. The Trujillo and Torrijos dictatorships in Latin America are cases where parties and legislatures served to boost the dictators' personal rule and cement their alliance with some groups in society beyond military circles.³ This view is consistent with Geddes (2007), who proposes that dictators create political parties after seizing power due to their desire to create a “cheap and relatively unthreatening support base as a counterbalance to rivals whose support is located within the military” (p. 1).

Geddes' (2003) view is that most military dictatorships aren't longer lasting because officers are concerned about professional unity –some generals perceive their political role as temporary and others want to usurp power forever, but beyond that difference, they want to protect the unity of the military. An alternative explanation of why military dictatorships are short-lived returns to the underlying cause that brought them to seize power by force in the first place. In other words, the political instability of military regimes derives more from the underlying deadlock among the relevant societal players than from disagreements among military officers over returning to the barracks.

Consider Burundi as an example. The country gained independence in 1962 while retaining its monarchical form of government under Tutsi rulers. Rivalry between the majority Hutu population and the Tutsis resulted in an abortive coup in 1965. General Michel Micombero repressed the rebellion and then became prime minister. He suspended the constitution, dissolved the National Assembly and deposed the King. Another attempted Hutu uprising that led to thousands of deaths and countless refugees produced another

³ Although often these organizations often function as instruments of the dictator, it is possible that they eventually develop some power of their own. In Togo Etienne Eyadema gained power through a military coup and created the regime-supportive Rally of the Togolese People (RPT), but this party became a significant player when multiparty elections were finally introduced.

coup against Micombero in 1972 by Jean-Batiste Bagaza, who was overthrown in 1987 in a military coup by Pierre Buyoya after strong condemnations for repressing Hutus and escalating violence. Buyoya suspended the constitution and the National Assembly and created a Military Committee for National Salvation (CMNS), in an attempt to oversee a transition process, which crucially hinged upon the reconciliation of Hutu and Tutsi. The Hutu party defeated Buyoya in the first democratic elections in 1993. However, the victorious candidate, Melchior Ndadaye, was killed in an abortive coup by Tutsi paratroopers, resulting in escalating violence and serious deadlock. This case suggests that minority Tutsi military dictators in Burundi were short-lived because they couldn't establish political order vis-à-vis the majority Hutu population, with which they refused to compromise.

In other cases, order is hard to establish because of the underlying political polarization among social classes –military regimes in the Southern Cone are clear examples (O'Donnell, 1971). These regimes came about to repel pressures of redistribution from the “popular sector” and were characterized by high levels of repression against leaders of left-wing parties, unions, students and social organizations suspected of having strong ties to these groups. Military regimes were significantly more prevalent during the Cold War, as I show below, because there was sharper ideological polarization between left and right that interacted with poverty and economic instability to generate propitious structural conditions for the armed forces to intervene (Londregan and Poole, 1992). Acemoglu and Robinson (2006) and Boix (2004) provide a view of the origins of dictatorship that focuses on economic inequalities among social groups or classes that is consistent with this argument.

Although this is an accurate depiction of some dictatorships, the theory can't account for an extremely prevalent form of dictatorship where the political class collectivizes

parts or all of the capital stock that is then used as a tool to reconstruct political order and build political loyalty. This form of dictatorship, I argue, tends to emerge when dictators ascend to power through a mass-based political movement –a political party or a combatant organization after a civil war. These dictatorships do not emerge to protect the assets of the rich from the threat of expropriation by the masses. They normally seize these assets, which are then employed as instruments of power.

The PRI in Mexico illustrates why the creation of political order after a civil war is not trivial. At the end of the revolution, much of the country was controlled by local warlords and powerful caciques. Competition for political power among the top revolutionary generals proved to be extremely deadly –every single president from the outbreak of the revolution in 1910 until the PRI was created in 1929 was exiled or assassinated (the same fate befell to many other revolutionary generals). The PRI was created reflecting a pact among the revolutionary warlords to share the spoils of office among themselves rather than fight over them. The warlords were so powerful that presidential reelection had to be proscribed. Presidential elections in Mexico thus took place every six years, giving rivals an incentive to wait for their turn instead of scheming assassinations against the sitting president and each other. To keep this power sharing deal, every time elections took place spoils were generously and widely distributed among the various party factions and organizations to keep them loyal within the ruling party. Thus, in contrast to the military regimes of the Southern Cone that governed to avert threats of redistribution, the PRI appropriated the capital stock and employed state resources to sustain its political monopoly.

The warlordism that characterized Mexico after the revolution is probably extreme and does not characterize the origins of most single-party regimes (Geddes, 2007). The modal route to the establishment of single-party autocracies in Africa was ascension to

power through elections rather than civil war. When independence leaders and their mass movements overwhelmingly won the first multi-party elections against weak or fragmented opponents, they normally took advantage of their hegemonic power to modify the constitution in order to outlaw rival political organizations and to strengthen the powers of the presidency. Leaders thus elected soon established permanent dictatorships. In these autocratic regimes, power became significantly more concentrated in the hands of the dictator and a small group of cronies than in Mexico, for reasons that will become apparent below. However, the overwhelming majority of African dictators that took power after winning the first mass elections chose to govern by retaining their support parties, where loyalty had to be bought by sharing privileges, state resources, and government positions. These single-party dictatorships are significantly more stable than those established after the violent seizure of power through military coups (Geddes, 2003).

2. Institutions under dictatorship

A second dimension that differentiates autocratic regimes is their institutionalization—the existence of parties, elections, and legislatures. These institutions play a central role in authoritarian politics by shaping power struggles between the dictator and his ruling clique. Gandhi and Przeworski (2006) propose a novel theory of why dictators create these institutions. They argue that dictators create these institutions to entice the cooperation of potential opponents or “groups within society”—they offer to them *limited policy influence* and a place in the legislature in exchange for their acquiescence to the existing regime. They suggest that policy concessions to potential opponents require the creation of a legislature. “Policy compromises require an institutional forum access to which can be controlled, where demands can be revealed without appearing as acts of resistance, where compromises can be

hammered out without undue public scrutiny, and where the resulting agreements can be dressed in a legalistic form [...] and legislatures are ideally suited for these purposes” (p. 14). The stronger the opposition and its ideological polarization, the more the authors expect dictators to resort to these institutions. A similar prediction is advanced by Smith (2005), who argues that strong political parties emerge when opponents are weak and dictators do not have access to funds. My account suggests instead that in highly polarized societies military regimes, which normally govern with no political parties, should be more likely than party dictatorships.

Although this approach to autocratic institutions as reflecting a bargain between the dictator and the potential opposition is compelling, the theory remains underdeveloped for various reasons. First of all, to make the central argument compelling, the authors would need to show why legislatures are preferable to other strategies of cooptation.⁴ Legislatures play very limited roles in most autocracies. The authors recognize at some point that these legislatures are weak. However, the heart of the theory requires that these legislative seats confer some power –if not, why would a strong opposition accept the deal?

Second, Gandhi and Przeworski’s (2006) theory remains agnostic as to how dictators solve more dangerous threats of intra-elite conflict. They propose that “consultative councils, juntas, and political bureaus are the first institutional trench for dictators. These smaller institutions neutralize threats from within the ruling elite while legislatures and parties constitute the second institutional trench and *are designed to counteract threats by groups within society*” (emphasis mine: p. 17) My approach underscores, instead, that dictatorial institutions primordially shape the distribution of power between the dictator and his ruling

⁴ Arriola (2004) demonstrates that African dictators resort to the expansion of cabinet to forge multi-ethnic alliances and co-opt the opposition.

coalition. Below I provide an alternative vision of dictatorial institutions that stress the role of parties and elections over legislatures.

a) The Role of Parties

My approach to political parties is functional –these organizations play critical roles, which might or might not be the reason why they emerge in the first place. In large number of single-party regimes parties emerge *prior* to the dictator’s ascension to power. In other cases, parties are created *ex post* by coup leaders seeking major alliances with civilians. In yet other cases, parties are the forum where military warlords collude to share power rather than continue to kill each other. Notwithstanding the reasons why parties emerge in the first place, they play several key functions for the dictator and these functions explain why dictators *invest in their recreation* –why, that is, dictators choose to maintain them and govern with their support.

First and foremost, political parties allow the dictator to make power sharing deals credible. Consider the following decision theoretic framework of a potential rival who must decide whether to organize a coup or a rebellion against the dictator or remain loyal. The rival has a probability ν of gaining control of office, O , by using the instruments of violence. Fighting imposes a cost of c . The dictator will not be able to co-opt his potential rival unless he gives him a transfer, T , which must be at least equal to the expected value of seizing office by force and becoming the next dictator. The potential rival will not rebel as long as $T^* \geq \frac{1}{1-\delta} \nu \bar{O} - c$. The payoffs are discounted at a rate $\delta \in (0,1)$ reflecting the fact that the benefits of power are expected to last into the future. \bar{O} denotes that a successful rival takes over absolute power. Dictatorships are thus in permanent danger of being overthrown

because potential opponents extract concessions only to the extent that they control the instruments of violence.

Now suppose that the dictator has a way of offering his rivals future access to a *share of power*, rather than transfers on the spot. The potential rival has a probability, n , (for nomination) that he will be rewarded by the dictator with privileges in the future, in the form of access to office, $O_{t+1} < \bar{O}$. This payoff is also discounted at a rate $\delta \in (0,1)$. The dictator offers some form of progressive ambition, so that the next office is more valuable than the previous one. To simplify, assume that the value of the share of office increases through time according to a constant parameter π such that $O_{t+1} = O_t(1 + \pi)$. The potential rival who remains loyal would get a payoff which is the expected value of getting 0 in this period and getting an increasing share of power derived from office in the future. The potential rival will not rebel as long as:

$$\frac{\delta}{1-\delta} n O \left[\frac{1+\pi}{\pi} \right] > \frac{1}{1-\delta} v \bar{O} - c \quad (1)$$

The official will abstain from attempting to seize absolute power by overthrowing the dictator despite getting no transfers in this period as long as the continuation value of remaining loyal (the value from now onwards) is larger than the pay-off of plotting a palace coup. This is a *power sharing contract* that allows the dictator to co-opt his potential rivals through promises of future privileges. The rival abstains from seizing the larger office today by plotting a coup or a rebellion in which he might get killed, in exchange for future benefits from smaller offices controlled over a long period of time.

The contract requires, however, that the dictators' promises be credible. The power sharing deal is only credible, I argue, when the dictator establishes a *predictable and regularized method for political recruitment and promotion that is expected to last into the future*. The progressive ambition component, $\frac{1+\pi}{\pi}$, has to be high enough to offset the opportunity cost of not attempting to capture absolute power today, replacing the dictator. Political parties under dictatorship play the fundamental role of making inter-temporal power sharing deals possible.

When parties exist potential rivals can anticipate that the dictator will honor his part of the deal because it becomes *institutionalized* through the party. If the dictator opted to renege on his part of the deal by simply closing the party, this act could easily inspire a coordinated rebellion among other powerful members of the ruling clique. The ruling coalition can control dictatorial abuses not so much because there is social consensus about the limits of power, as in Weingast (1997), but because institutions serve as critical focal points for coordinating members of the ruling clique.⁵

There are two central implications of my approach to dictatorial political parties in terms of the comparative logics of dictatorships. First, when dictators govern with political parties they will be able to co-opt a larger number of potential rivals than when they don't. Without the party, the dictator can only co-opt with transfers on the spot, which can become

⁵ Fearon (2003) argues that the institutions of elections to allocate power serve as focal points to coordinate opponents against potential dictatorial abuses. His theory is about why rulers in democracies abstain from openly rigging elections, but it can easily be extended to explain why dictators respect certain institutions, often including holding regular elections, that serve as critical focal points for coordinating the ruling clique. The mechanism is clear when considering the Mexican dictatorship. The constitution in Mexico was constantly changed to suit the sitting president's policy goals and many of these changes were substantial (e.g., some reversed property rights and others expanded these rights) such that the dictatorship could not commit to respecting investment. However, the only rule that was never changed was that of presidential succession every six years. When General Alvaro Obregon attempted to reverse this rule, he was assassinated before taking office, creating a powerful precedent that no president after him could ever attempt to establish a permanent dictatorship (Magaloni, 2006).

extremely expensive when threats of coups or rebellion are credible. The party allows the dictator to instead co-opt by promising future privileges. The system is brilliant because it makes potential rivals vest their interests in the survival of the dictatorship –for party cadres a regime collapse implies losing one’s privileges and power positions so they are better off not conspiring against the dictatorship.⁶

A second related implication of my approach is that political parties reduce the risks that dictators will be overthrown through coups. The model suggests that potential rivals will be more predisposed to plot against the dictator when their *continuation value of remaining loyal drops*. Dictatorships with no political parties exhibit low continuation values because, first they lack regularized mechanisms for elite recruitment and promotion, and second, they can’t handle leadership succession. Political parties can generate high continuation values by making peaceful leadership succession possible.

The key insight that emerges from Tullock’s (1987) theory of autocracy is that dictators are in permanent risk of being deposed through conspiracies that most of the time would come from officials of high rank. He suggests various ways in which dictators can deal with these risks, including preventing others from getting positions of firm power by shifting people around; deposing of people who are rising to power; and interrupting communications among potential conspirators. However, none of these reduce the incentives officials of high rank possess to plot against the dictator.

⁶ Lazarev (2007) presents a model of dictatorial parties that is congenial with my approach. In his model, the dictator and his ruling clique are able to extract large rents while buying-off the rank-and-file with a mere promise of bureaucratic ascension to power positions. In this model, the rank-and-file perform key services for the dictator, such as spying and informing on the citizenry. To enforce the system, the communist party profits from its control of the means of production because it holds the monopoly of jobs. However, the system requires that the dictator honors his party off the deal by effectively ascending the rank-and-file to power positions.

My approach suggest that political parties can mitigate the dictators' dilemma by giving officials of high rank incentives to remain loyal in the hope of becoming the dictator's successor. Top-level party officials with high expected chances of becoming the dictator's successor will possess incentives to defend existing institutions as well as the dictator's life, rather than plotting to overthrow him.⁷

Monarchies are highly institutionalized forms of dictatorship because they possess a mechanism to handle leadership succession -- the passing of the throne to an heir within the family. However, autocratic regimes can handle leadership succession also when they have political parties. The extreme case makes the point --the Mexican long-lasting PRI replaced presidents every six years⁸ during close to seventy years of uninterrupted rule. Although not as often as in Mexico, most party dictatorships have been able to handle the succession of their founding leader successfully. This is not only true for communist dictatorships in China, the USSR and most of Eastern Europe, but for a large number of cases in Africa and Asia, where dictatorial political parties were able to pass power, at least once, to a successor upon the deaths or retirements of founding dictators, most of whom concentrated immense powers for prolonged periods of time.

b) Why multiparty elections?

Schedler (2002) calculates that the most common form of autocracy today is hidden behind elections: "The dream [of these regimes] is to reap the fruits of electoral legitimacy

⁷ The dictators' dilemma is, however, no easy task to solve because it is necessary that he can deceive the most powerful players into believing that each has a reasonable high chance of becoming *the* successor. Castaneda (2002) explains the intricacies of the process in the Mexican context

⁸ Tullock (1987) rightly underscores that presidential succession every six years was a truly remarkable trait of the Mexican dictatorship. Although not as remarkable as Mexico, many dictatorships have also accomplished *frequent* leadership succession -- Brazil and to some extent Malaysia are cases in mind.

without running the risks of democratic uncertainty.” (p. 37) Diamond (2002) and Levitsky and Way (2002) also highlight the prevalence of electoral dictatorships. These elections differ from single-party elections where only candidates endorsed by the official candidate can compete. All of the communist regimes and most of the African autocratic regimes prior to 1990 held single-party elections. By contrast, the Mexican PRI, the Senegalese PS, the Zimbabwe’s ZANU-PF, the Mahathir’s UMNO, the PAP in Singapore, among many other, have permitted multi-party elections. These are what I have called hegemonic-party autocracies, which differ from single-party dictatorships where competition only occurs under the auspices of the ruling party (Magaloni, 2006).⁹

The conventional argument regarding why autocratic regimes allow multiparty elections is that these elections create a democratic façade for the regime and thus enhance its regime’s legitimacy. Reflecting on the Mexican PRI, Crespo (2004), for example, argues that “a hegemonic party like the PRI, insofar it tried to avoid becoming a one-party system in order to preserve a certain democratic legitimacy, had to honor democratic rituals. It was obliged to adopt institutions and procedures typical of a democracy, even though in reality these institutions and procedures lost their original function” (p. 7).

No doubt autocratic regimes often need to adopt the façade of elections so as to deceive others, especially international donors. This argument, as Joseph (1999) explains, might to a large extent account for why politicians in some of the poorest autocracies in Africa chose to institute multi-party elections for the first time in the 1990s. Indeed, as can be seen in figure 2 below, the end of the Cold War can to a large extent account for the explosion of competitive elections around the world. After the fall of communism, the language of “democracy promotion” became dominant among international donors and this

⁹ As argued in Magaloni (2006), these regimes also differ from what Pempel called “uncommon democracies.”

led numerous autocrats in the developing world to adopt elections so as to get access to international funds.

However, not all autocratic regimes have adopted elections to please international donors. Malaysia, Mexico, Senegal, Taiwan, Zimbabwe, Singapore, Gambia, and Paraguay, to name some cases, adopted multi-party elections well before the Cold War ended and when elections were not necessary to get funds from foreign donors. These autocracies were able to sustain their rule for prolonged periods despite holding regular multiparty elections in which opposition parties could field candidates and campaign under more or less “free” political environments, albeit characterized by huge incumbency advantages. Ruling parties won massive margins of victory in most of these elections. But even if geopolitical changes played a powerful role in enticing single-party dictatorships in the 1990s to legalize multi-party elections, this argument can’t fully account for why these institutions remain binding.¹⁰

My approach conceives multiparty elections under autocracy as a contract signed between the dictator and his party. Violence constitutes the principal bargaining chip in most dictatorships –to get concessions from the dictator, potential rivals must be able to use credible threats of rebellion. Given the high cost of collective action, this situation confers the upper hand to the dictator, who will need to offer concessions –i.e., faster promotions to more power positions and spoils --to a small subset of players, most notably those in control of the means of violence. How, then, can the ruling elite obtain a larger share of the pie from the dictator?

I suggest that the institution of regular multiparty elections can play a powerful role in increasing the bargaining power of the party vis-à-vis the dictator. The legalization of

¹⁰ Gandhi and Przeworski’s (2006) theory of dictatorial institutions does not explicitly address the question of multiparty dictatorial elections.

multiparty elections will work at increasing the number of players the dictator will need to take into account. In addition to those players in control of the means of violence, others with significant peaceful *mobilizational capabilities* can damage the dictator by splitting the incumbent party. Multiparty elections thus increase the bargaining power of the ruling coalition vis-à-vis the dictator because officials of high rank can always create or join a rival electoral organization with which to challenge the regime through elections. This course of action is not available when multiparty elections are proscribed, in which case the only alternative is to seize power through a military coup, mount a costly violent rebellion, or risk being repressed by the dictator after mobilizing one's followers into the streets.

Thus, where multiparty competition is allowed, potential rivals possess two alternative courses of action –engage in violence or compete for power through elections—and this second option is less costly. It can be easily shown that multiparty elections strengthen potential opponents within the ruling party. The probability of winning office through an election can be expressed as e . Thus, the party official who defects to a rival political organization gets $\frac{1}{1-\delta}e\hat{O}$, where \hat{O} denotes the value of attaining the full value of office through electoral means. The party official in a multi-party autocracy will remain loyal to the dictator's party as long as:

$$\frac{\delta}{1-\delta}n\bar{O}\left[\frac{1+\pi}{\pi}\right] > \frac{1}{1-\delta}eO > \frac{1}{1-\delta}v\bar{O}-c \quad (2)$$

Or as long as the continuation value of “queuing” for jobs and privileges is larger than the expected value of defecting, which is a function of the probability of obtaining power either through an election or through violence. When the expected chance of winning

an election against the autocrat's organization is near zero, there are no incentives to join a rival organization.¹¹ For obvious reasons, the price necessary to buy off political loyalty increases as the probability of attaining office by running against the dictator's organization in an election increases.

A clear implication of this approach is that dictatorial political parties will be in a stronger bargaining position because they can employ non-violent instruments to damage the dictator as well as violent ones. Multiparty elections thus work to constrain the dictator not so much because legislatures confer policy influence to opponents, but because they give members of the ruling elite a credible "exit" option – a peaceful avenue to challenge the dictator, who will need to offer concessions and policy favor to his party to keep it loyal. In fact, in most of the hegemonic-party autocracies opposition legislators gain no policy influence unless they can veto constitutional change or laws and reaching these thresholds of seats can take years. Furthermore, ruling party politicians possess no incentives to vote against the dictator's line because they run serious risks of expulsion from the party. To extract concessions from the dictator, top level officials rather play the game of electoral threats.

Since the potential for electoral mobilization constitutes a key bargaining chip in these dictatorships, ruling party officials at the top will possess incentives to invest in the creation of organizations –unions, farmers, employees, women, etc. Thus, in my approach the strategy of "organizational proliferation" is not driven by the dictator's desire to increase the costs of collective action by the ruling clique, as in Haber (2006), but rather results because potential opponents at the top find it in their interests to create these organizations to extract concessions from the dictator.

¹¹ Rivals can defect, of course, when they feel a strong ideological distaste for the autocrat that makes them forgo completely the expectation of power, privileges and spoils.

For this argument to work, it is imperative that the dictator be unable to silence its potential ruling party rivals simply by suspending the elections. However, as suggested above, if the dictator attempts to silence opponents by eliminating elections, members of the ruling party whose interests are collectively damaged will most likely orchestrate a rebellion. Thus, multiparty autocratic elections are not simply mass rituals devoid of significance even when these might not be competitive at all. Multiparty elections play the crucial role of limiting personal dictatorship and spreading the spoils of office more broadly *among the members of the ruling party*.¹²

Another key implication of this theory is that in electoral dictatorships elite unity requires mass support while the absence of mass support boosts potential opponents' chances to attain power by forming a rival political organization and mobilizing citizens against the dictator. Thus electoral dictatorships can only survive for prolonged periods if they are able to mobilize citizens in their favor (Magaloni, 2006).

A reason why dictators aspire to win supermajorities is that this allows them to project an image of invincibility and strength. The message is intended to discourage potential elite opponents, who will be convinced that outside official channels there is nothing but political limbo. This image of strength is in part created by mobilizing voters in great numbers to the polls, painting the streets and walls in the party's colors, and winning

¹² My approach provides a strong rationale as to why there are budget cycles under electoral dictatorships or systematic spikes in government spending before elections despite the fact that elections might not be competitive at all (Magaloni, 2006; Blaydes, ms). Elections, even if not competitive, increase the vulnerability of the dictator by providing an avenue for potential ruling party defectors to peacefully challenge the regime. If the dictator wants to avert electoral splits, he must take the interests of the various factions into account by offering privileges.

elections with huge margins. Low voter turnout signals the presence of strong latent voter dissatisfaction, which can boost subversive coalitions emerging at the top (Magaloni, 2006).¹³

Citizens are likely to despise the autocrat who is not a “benevolent dictator” that can promote economic growth, invest in public goods, and make everyone prosper. This is one reason why economic growth boosts electoral dictatorships –as citizen rally in support of the dictator there are fewer incentives for elites to defect from the ruling party. However, only a few countries have succeeded in establishing growth-enhancing autocratic regimes –e.g., Singapore, Taiwan, Malaysia, Chile, and more recently China.

An alternative way to construct citizen support is through a “punishment regime” (Magaloni, 2006; Diaz-Cayeros, Magaloni and Weingast, 2001). By making the distribution of benefits –subsidies, cash transfers, public goods, irrigation projects, housing, health services, and the like -- contingent on citizen support, the dictator can induce their loyalty even in the absence of prosperity. Citizens will remain loyal to the dictator in part because of the benefits they receive and in part because of the fear of being expelled from the party’s spoils system. This means that to survive in office, electoral dictatorships will require massive vote-buying and the operation of a “punishment regime” through which the dictator can credibly threaten to sanction voters who defect. The system is one of perverse accountability, using Stokes’ (2005) terminology, where voters can be lead to support the dictator often despite corruption and lack of economic growth. This perverse system of incentives can work only as long as voters can be deterred from making “ideological investments” in democratization.

However, the higher the median income of voters, the harder it will be for the dictator to deter voters to voice their discontent unless he becomes a “benevolent ruler” and shifts strategies by producing economic growth. As argued in Magaloni (2006), this explains

¹³ However, Simpser (2006) suggests that electoral fraud in autocratic regimes plays the role of discouraging turnout in detriment of the opposition.

why electoral dictatorships can survive in countries like Zimbabwe despite staggering economic mismanagement, and in countries like Singapore or Taiwan, where economic performance was remarkable. The growth-destroying strategy is not a self-sustaining equilibrium, however, because deteriorating economic conditions make the dictator increasingly dependent on vote-buying and fraud, leading him to eventually exhaust the state's fiscal base.

2. Types of Dictatorships

This section attempts to map the theory into categories, which can then be employed for systematical comparative analysis. In much of the comparative politics literature, the study of cross-country variation often begins with the creation of categories, grouping cases into abstract types –types of party systems (Duverger, 1956; Sartori, 1978; Cox, 1997); political regimes (Dahl, 1959; Lipset, 1966; Przeworki, et al, 2000; Boix, 2004; Boix and Stokes, 2005); varieties of capitalism (Iversen and Soskies, 2004); types of political institutions (Linz, 1982; Shugart and Carey, 1997; Tsebelis, 2003), and the like. To account for cross-country variation, these categories are then employed as dependent or independent variables. Although this line of research begins with categorization, explanatory models of variation are often deductive and derived from first principles, as in the economics tradition.

The creation of meaningful categories that would allow for systematic comparisons among autocratic regimes has proven significantly trickier because we know much less about these regimes. Arendt (1968) classic study highlighted the uniqueness of totalitarianism. O'Donnell (1973) analysis of the Argentine military regimes led him to propose another type of autocracy, “bureaucratic authoritarianism”, which he believed was established to promote

the deepening of industrialization in middle-income societies. Building on some of these works, Linz (2000) provided a longer list of types of autocracies. The main distinction was between totalitarian (fascist and communist) and autocratic regimes, although he also added a third category of “sultanistic” or personalist regimes.¹⁴ He further proposed a rather confusing form to distinguish autocratic regimes -- bureaucratic-military, organic statism, mobilizational authoritarian, and racial and ethnic democracies. Linz later added to the list post-totalitarian authoritarian regimes. The criteria for this classification are ambiguous.

Part of the problem with these categorizations, as Haber (2006) points out, is that they are not derived deductively from first principles. Geddes (2003) constitutes a useful starting point. She categorizes dictatorships into single-party, military and “personalist.” However, her approach generates numerous “hybrid regimes,” often making the distinctions between the types unclear. Furthermore, as suggested by Hadenius and Toerel (2007), every dictatorship exhibits some degree of personalism, which needs to qualify the types rather than constitute a category of its own. These authors propose to divide dictatorships into military, monarchy, single-party and multiparty. Although my approach is largely congenial, it better permits to identify *within regime variation* –differences among single-party dictatorships, monarchies and multi-party dictatorships.

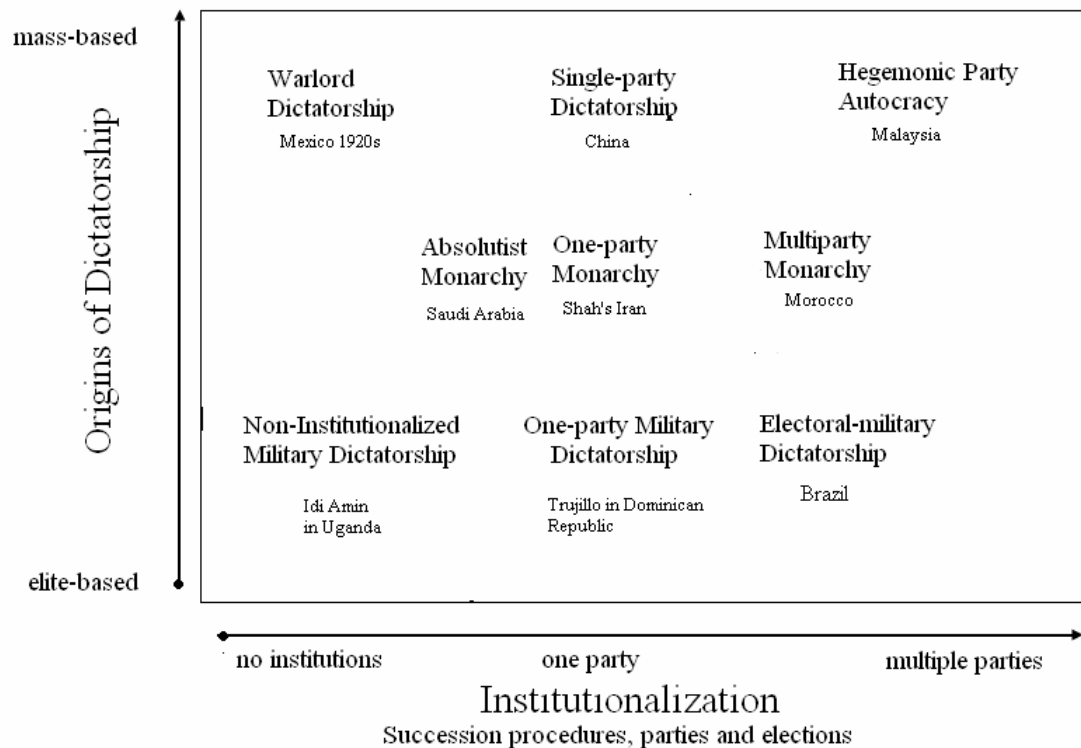
I derive categories from a theory that conceives the logics of autocratic rule as a function of two main independent variables: origins and institutions. Figure 1 maps the types. The vertical dimension is the origins of the dictatorship, going from a less numerous “selectorate” to a more numerous one –from mass-based movements or wars, to dynastical rules of succession, to military coups. The second dimension is the dictatorship’s

¹⁴ Some of the economists have also relied on similar categories -- Tullock (1987), for example, began with the proposition that autocracy was different from totalitarian regimes. Linz’s (2000) classification of totalitarian, autocratic and sultanistic regimes is also not that different from Wintrobe’s (1998) totalitarian, tinpots, and kleptocracies. His types derive from suppositions about the preferences of the dictatorships.

institutionalization, going from dictatorship with no parties and succession rules, to those where there are multiple political parties.

Autocracies in the lower left quadrant possess small ruling coalitions, which have no instruments to sanction dictatorial abuse. These dictators rule through terror and purges. The opposite type of dictatorships falls in the upper right quadrant. These dictators rule by sharing power with a larger number of factions, powerful enough to obtain concessions, and by incorporating larger groups within society. Cases in the upper left quadrant possess large ruling coalitions that are overwhelmed by collective action dilemmas. The last scenario is in the lower left quadrant –dictators colluded with small ruling coalitions that can act against the dictator.

Figure 1: A Map of Autocratic Types



Hegemonic-party autocracies such as Malaysia's UMNO, Senegal's PS or Mexico's PRI fall in the upper right quadrant. In these autocracies numerous factions within the ruling elite engage in the mobilization of outside groups to obtain concessions from the dictator, who can co-opt a large portion of society through inter-temporal power sharing deals and vote-buying.

Electoral monarchies and the *electoral military dictatorships* are close to these regimes in their level of institutionalization that allow the ruling coalition to constrain the dictator, but are more exclusive because they respond to smaller selectorates. In some of the electoral military dictatorships, such as those of Central America, the selectorate is a rather small group of property holders interested in averting pressures for redistribution.

Thus, there are important differences among multiparty dictatorships not highlighted yet. One of the most important difference for the purpose of my theory relates to the fact that in hegemonic-party autocracies the dictator can be challenged through elections, whereas in electoral monarchies (and also often in the electoral military dictatorships), only the legislature and/or subnational governments can be elected in multiparty elections, reducing the ability of top level officials and members of the dynasty to constrain the dictator.

The most tyrannical of the dictatorships are those in the lower left quadrant – dictatorships that seize power through a military coup and rule with no institutions. I label these *non-institutionalized military dictatorships*. Idi Amin in Uganda and Jean-Batiste Bagaza in Burundi are prototypical. These dictators rule mostly through terror and repression. These are highly insecure dictators whose life is short and dangerous. Because they can't make credible power sharing deals with the ruling clique and emerge in bifurcated societies, they are in constant danger of being overthrown.

In between these two extremes are one-party dictatorships and there are three types. What I label here as proper *single-party dictatorships* that emerge out of a revolution, independence movement or a civil war such as China, the USSR, and Gabon, Kenya, Tunisia, and Tanzania prior to the introduction of multiparty elections, to name a few. Proper single-party dictatorships are similar to hegemonic-ones in that they have mass-based origins and a large “selectorate,” but in these dictatorships power is significantly more concentrated in the hands of the dictator and his cronies. Another important difference between single-party dictatorships and hegemonic ones, as suggested above, is that only the latter need to engage in massive vote-buying.

There are, of course, important differences among single-party dictatorships in their level of institutionalization. One of the most significant is whether there has been presidential succession or not. The institutionalization in China and the USSR prior to the deaths of Mao and Stalin was lower than after the communist parties successfully handled leadership succession. Most of the single-party dictatorships in Africa handle leadership succession years after the original seizure of power and in this sense they were significantly more “personalistic” than the communist dictatorships.

The other type of one-party dictatorship are what I call *single-party monarchies* where the royal family creates a political party; and *single-party military dictatorships* where a general seizes power through a violent coup and soon after he creates his own political party. Examples of single-party military dictatorships are Etienne Eyadema in Togo and Trujillo in Dominican Republic. Political parties are much less important in these single-party dictatorships because they possess little organizational thickness with no real penetration in society. Moreover, these parties are not the route to ascension of positions of real power, which means that most of the political bargaining takes place elsewhere, in non-

institutionalized arenas. Thus, in these dictatorships parties are often token institutions that serve as instruments of the dictator. These and some of the most successful non-institutionalized military regimes fall closest to Geddes' (2003) personalistic dictatorships.

Finally, *warlord dictatorships* are those which arrive to power through a violent mass-based movement and rule with no institutions. Mexico between 1910 and 1929s fits this characterization. Although all the presidents in those years held the title of general, they all fought in the revolution and thus are here categorized as having a mass-based origin. Elections might take place in these warlord dictatorships, but these are not well institutionalized because of the absence of political parties with national reach. These and the non-institutionalized military dictatorships approximate closest to the “rovin bandits” in Olson (1993) because they have no institutional constraints and, unlike the absolutists monarchies, possess no institutions to handle the succession.

Thus, in figure 1 what I have labeled *absolutist monarchies* (kings who rule with no political party and without legislatures) are mapped to the right of the other non-institutionalized dictatorships because although they rule without parties, succession is institutionalized. My theory has less to say about the logics of monarchical regimes.

4. Dictatorships in the post-independence era

How does the universe of dictatorships in the post-independence world map to this typology? How prevalent are these types in different moments? To answer these questions, I classify dictatorships with empirical data. I employ rather simple criteria that make my classification easy to construct. The first one is to determine whether a country is democratic or not. In order to make this call, I employ the update to 2000 of the Przeworski et. al (2000) classification of political regimes from Matt Goldberg (2006). Once dictatorships are

separated from democracies, I employ the Banks dataset to classify autocratic regimes. The rules are relatively simple.

1. An autocratic regime is a **monarchy** when the effective executive type in the Banks classification (S21F5) is a monarch
2. An autocratic dictatorship is **military** when the Banks' "type of regime" variable (S20F7) is coded as military or military-civilian
3. All the regimes that are not monarchies or military are presumed to have a **mass-based origin**¹⁵
4. An autocratic regime is a **single party** when political parties exist and exactly 100 percent of the legislature is composed of members of one ruling party
5. A dictatorship has **multiple parties** when the ruling party has less than 100 percent of the legislative seats
6. When the above criteria lead to no classification of a regime, the data is marked as missing, except when this is one year in the middle of a clearly identified regime where no leadership change has occurred, in which case it is recoded to the value of that regime.

With the use of these variables I generate the types of dictatorship from 1950 to 2000, displayed in table 1. Proper single-party dictatorships constitute the most common observation, accounting for 20% of the country-years, followed by hegemonic-party autocracies (15%), then non-institutionalized military dictatorships (9%) and absolutist monarchies (6%).¹⁶ The other dictatorships are not very prevalent although they merit some attention. It is important to highlight that between 1950 and 2000, 60% of the world's regimes were autocratic.

This table does not establish, however, whether different types of dictatorship were more common in the past and which are now. To answer these questions, figure 2 displays the evolution of political regimes by year from 1950 until 2000. For visual purposes, the least common dictatorships are lumped into the category of "hybrid types." In 1950, 46% of the country-year observations were democracies and 54% were autocracies, of which 35%

¹⁵ I am in the process of coding the origins of these civilian dictatorships –e.g., civil war, independence movement, or rigged election.

¹⁶ I am in the process of coding the warlord dictatorships –those that emerged from a civil war or guerilla movement and established no political party.

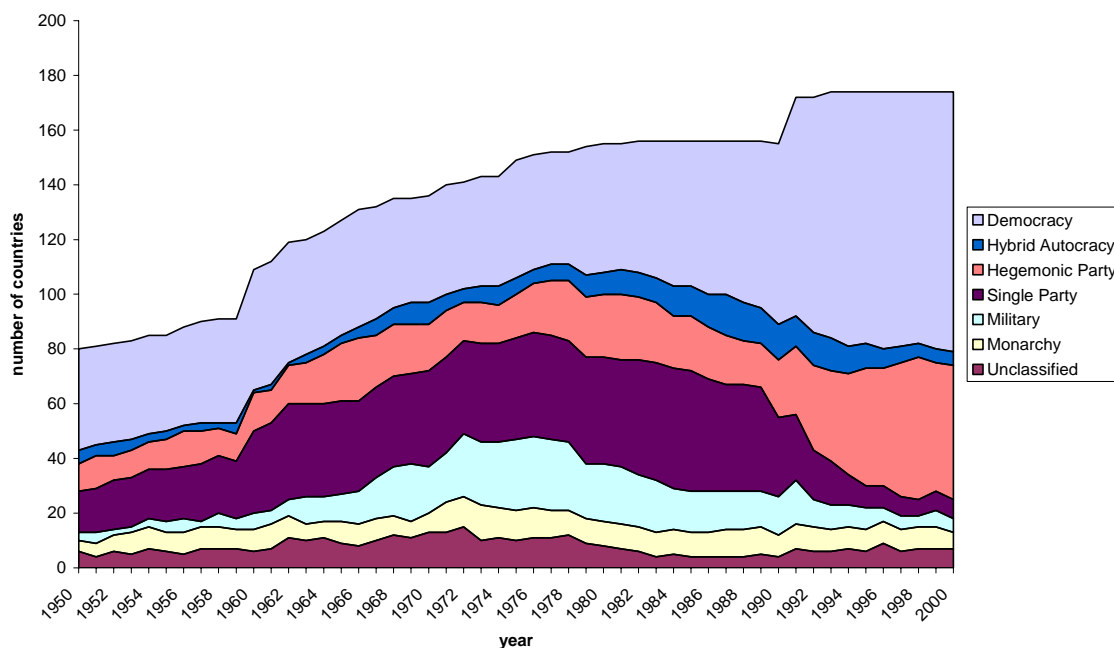
were proper single-party dictatorships, 23% were hegemonic-parties autocracies, 9% were monarchies and 7% are military tyrants. As more countries gained independence, the percentage of autocracies dramatically increased, reaching a peak of more than 70% in the 1970s. Proper single-party autocracies remained the most common form of dictatorship until the 1990s. Non-institutionalized military regimes are fairly common from the late 1960s until 1980, representing in this period around 20% of the dictatorships. Monarchies remain quite constant over the fifty years and military regimes have a marked tendency to disappear at the end.

Table 1: Classification of political regimes, 1950-2000

REGIME TYPE		N	% total Dictatorships	% total Regimes
Mass-Based	Single Party (SP)	1,431	37	20.4
	Hegemonic Party (HP)	1,085	28	15.5
Dynastical	Absolutist Monarchy	427	11	6.1
	Electoral Monarchy	64	2	0.9
	One-Party Monarchy	38	1	0.5
Military	Non-Institutionalized military Dictatorship	630	16	9.0
	Single-party military Dictatorship	91	2	1.3
	Electoral Military Dictatorship	148	4	2.1
	Democracy	2,702		38.6
Unclassified	393		5.6	
Total		7,009		100

Perhaps the most important tendency, also noted by Hadenius and Toerel (2007), is the recent surge of hegemonic-party autocracies as the most prevalent form of dictatorship. In 2000 these dictatorships represent 62% of the autocratic observations, followed by proper single-party regimes (9%), monarchies (7%) and non-institutionalized military dictatorships. It should be noted that during the decade of the 1990s, the world is almost evenly distributed between democracy and autocracy, democracy becoming slightly more frequent at the end.

Distribution of Regimes Types



Since most of the autocratic world today holds multiparty elections, “electoral transitions” will probably constitute the modal transition route to democracy. These transitions differ from previous democratic transitions in that parties and voters rather than a “select group of actors” play the decisive role. As suggested by McFaul (2002) the earlier transition literature focused mostly on elite bargaining, stressing that successful democratization was most likely where moderates within the government and the opposition entered into a “political pact”¹⁷ that limited the agenda of policy choice and excluded the masses. However, the masses play a fundamental role in the electoral transitions primordially in their role of voters.¹⁸ In Magaloni (2006) I study the central dilemmas voters and opposition parties confront in these transitions: first, opponents must defeat entrenched

¹⁷ As defined by O’Donnell and Schmitter (1986), political pacts take place among a “select group of actors” that seek to “(1) limit the agenda of policy choice, 2) share proportionally in the distribution of benefits, and 3) restrict the participation of outsiders in decision-making” (p. 41)

¹⁸ The literature stressed different “modes of transition” and argued that if the transition was not pacted, it was most likely to fail (Karl, 1990) and Karl and Schmitter (1991).

ruling parties through elections despite huge incumbency advantages, including extremely unequal access to state resources, the lack of an independent news media, and serious institutional biases in the existing electoral rules. Second, voters must be able to make “ideological investments” in democratization despite the numerous risks of defecting to the opposition as well as to overcome their coordination dilemmas. Third, opposition forces must be able to entice the dictator to abstain from using his immense powers to rig the elections and reverse their outcome.¹⁹

5. Autocratic Collapse

Unfortunately, there is no inexorable process leading to democracy. As noted by Huntington (1991), one can expect reverse waves towards dictatorship from the current situation in which a very large number of countries have democratized. Hadenius and Toerel (2007) provide a somewhat optimistic reading of the prospects for transformation of autocratic regimes by showing that multiparty dictatorships are most frequently transformed into democracies. However, by concentrating on regime change after 1972, the analysis by Hadenius and Toerel overestimates the likelihood that hegemonic parties will become democratic.

The full range of post-war regime transformations calculated here suggests, instead, that hegemonic-party autocracies during the 1950s turned as frequently into single-party rule or military dictatorships than they are transforming into democracies after the end of the Cold War. In fact, the most common path of transformation towards democracy during the

¹⁹ The logic of this electoral game is modeled in Magaloni (2006 and 2007). In an excellent paper, Hayde and Marilov (2007) study the role international observers play in these elections. Simpson (2007) also studies electoral fraud.

last 50 years does not go through hegemonic-party rule, but rather through the return to democracy after a regime has been interrupted by military rule.

This section presents a first empirical approximation at the origins and collapse of the various dictatorships with the study of a *transition matrix*, which reveals the patterns of institutional transformation as well as of collapse of dictatorships. Table 2 shows the transitions between autocratic regimes among the 169 countries coded in the dataset from 1950 to 2000. The way to read this table is to note that each row represents a regime before it makes a shift, while the column headings represent the regime it morphs into. It should be noted that the unit of analysis is regimes and not individual dictators, which means that in some of these regime transitions the same dictator can remain in power, as when single-party dictatorships introduce multiparty elections. Taking the regime as the unit of analysis makes sense, especially considering that in the most prevalent forms of authoritarianism parties exist to handle leadership succession.²⁰

In the line for hegemonic-party dictatorships there is virtually the same number of transitions into military and single-party rule as towards democracy. Thus, hegemonic-party autocracies can terminate by democratizing but they can also transform into single-party regimes, as when the dictator bans opposition political parties, or through a military coup. Transformations into single-party regimes were common in the first years after independence. However, once elections take hold, hegemonic-party dictatorships seldom transform into single-party ones, suggesting that dictators find it hard to reverse these institutions.

²⁰ Bueno de Mesquita et al (2003) and Gandhi and Przeworski (2006) take the individual dictator as the unit of analysis. This creates some problems because the longevity of cases such as Mexico, Malaysia, Senegal, and even China and the USSR is missed by taking the dictator as the unit of analysis.

The cell that transforms military regimes into other institutional arrangements shows that 45 military regimes moved towards democracy. Most of these were returns to democracy after it had been interrupted. It is clear in the cell that moves democracy to other regimes that 37 of the democratic regimes broke down into military dictatorships. The data thus reveals that military dictatorship is prevalent in countries where democracy is unstable or, as I suggested above, where highly polarized groups can't bargaining over a stable political arrangement. The most common transition route for military dictatorships is into democracy. However, they also transform into hegemonic-party and single-party dictatorships. Most of these transitions happen because the military dictator finds it in his interest to create a political party, as Geddes' (2007) account suggests.

Single-party dictatorships are likely to be deposed by military coups or to transform into hegemonic-party regimes. Hadenius and Toerel (2007) highlight this last transformation, from single-party, to hegemonic party, to democracy, but it is only the more prevalent one during the last decades.

Table 2: Transition Frequencies between autocratic regimes and democracy

Regime at t+1	Monarchy	Military	Single-Party	Hegemonic	Democracy
Regime at t					
Monarchy		6	2	8	1
Military	3		18	35	45
Single party	1	33		29	10
Hegemonic	4	23	25		21
Democracy	0	37	1	12	

Note: Military regimes here include non-institutionalized as well as institutionalized dictatorships. The same is true for Monarchies.

The transition between regimes can be conceived as a Markov chain process, in which countries can move, any given year, among various institutional forms. Table 5 shows the Markov chain probabilities of the matrix that characterizes the transitions among regimes in the average country years during the 1950-2000 period. A Markov chain is a stochastic

process in which events can fall under a finite number N of possible states; but in which the current state provides all the necessary information to predict the future state (the Markov property). Such process is said to be memoryless, because movements from state i to state j between time t and $t+1$ are given by a fixed probability p_{ij} that does not depend on events occurring before time t . The Markov chain transition matrix describes the fixed probabilities of movement between the N states.

Table 3: Transition Probabilities and the transformation of dictatorships

Regime t+1	Monarchy	Military	Single Party	Hegemonic	Democracy	Missing	N
Regime t							
Monarchy	0.9709	0.0103	0.0034	0.0137	0.0017	0.0000	584
Military	0.0030	0.8957	0.0182	0.0354	0.0455	0.0020	988
Single Party	0.0007	0.0219	0.9501	0.0193	0.0066	0.0013	1,504
Hegemonic	0.0036	0.0205	0.0223	0.9339	0.0188	0.0009	1,120
Democracy	0.0000	0.0142	0.0004	0.0046	0.9808	0.0000	2,609
Missing	0.0000	0.1250	0.0417	0.0833	0.0000	0.0075	24
Frequency	0.0842	0.1445	0.2161	0.1658	0.3860	0.0034	100

Note: military regimes include non-institutionalized as well as institutionalized dictatorships. The same is true for Monarchies.

In this particular application, each row shows the probabilities of moving from the regime represented by that row to other regimes denoted by the columns from one year to the next (or remaining in the same regime, as denoted by the diagonal cells). Transition matrixes have been used in a wide range of areas to describe social mobility, voting behavior, transition to democracy and migration.

The probability gives the frequency with which a regime shifted into another regime, or stayed in the same regime, from one year to another. The diagonal in the table makes it clear that most regimes remain stable from year to year. However, the diagonal also shows that democracies and monarchies are the most stable, remaining with no transition in 98 and 97 percent of the time, respectively. Military regimes, in contrast, witness transitions away

from military rule in more than 10 percent of the cases, any given year. Dictatorships that possess political parties are more stable than military regimes, providing support to some of my theoretical arguments.

The advantage of the transition matrix in table 3 is that it can provide an overview of the most likely shifts among regimes, although it is primarily a descriptive device. This does not provide any information on whether some patterns or sequences of regimes are more likely to occur through time, or any information about the durability of individual regimes in particular countries. But it summarizes in a convenient fashion very large amount of information.

The transition matrix is not characterized by what is known as a “steady state.” A steady state matrix yields a distribution of regimes to be expected in the long run.²¹ An absorbing state is one to which all regimes converge after enough repetitions. Neither of the dictatorial types serves as an absorbing state.

If the process of the next 50 years were characterized by the mean transitions we have observed in the last 50 years, we can apply the transition matrix to the distribution of regimes we observe today (where there are a fairly large number of democracies (54.6%) and hegemonic-party autocracies (29.3 percent), and relatively few single-parties, military and monarchical regimes, in order to simulate what the world might look like in the long run. This simulation yields good news for democrats, but not the dream of a democratic world. Only around half of the regimes (53 percent) would be democratic. The popularity of hegemonic-party regimes would, however, only be a fleeting phenomenon. Autocratic regimes would become more or less evenly distributed between the three main types:

²¹ In particular, if a transition matrix (M) is applied to obtain the distribution of regimes (v), a steady state matrix is the one in which further applications of M yield the same distribution of regimes: $v=v'M$. In this case, further applications of the transition matrix only yield a steady state distribution after around 1000 years.

hegemonic-party systems (16%), single-parties (13%) and military dictatorships (14%). The simulation would leave a few monarchies surviving fifty years from now (4%). This distribution can be understood when one notices that monarchies and democracies are particularly stable institutional regimes, and that hegemonic-party systems, instead, are as likely to become democracies as military or single-party autocracies.

It is possible, however, that the appropriate Markov chain matrix to apply were not the one from the average transitions over the last 50 years, given that the geopolitical conditions of the Cold War, which clearly permeated many of the regime transitions before 1990s, are no longer present. The Cold War polarized societies and these conditions were particularly conducive, as I have suggested, for the emergence of military dictatorship. The end of the Cold War favored the emergence of hegemonic-party dictatorship.

To capture some of the effects of changing geopolitical conditions, one can simulate the future using two alternative Markov chain transition matrixes, one of the years between 1965 and 1980 and a second one of the last decade between 1990 and 2000. In the first case, the future would look rather pessimistic: after 50 years 29 percent of the countries would be democracies; 33 percent would fall under military rule; 24 percent would be single-parties, and only 8 percent would be hegemonic-party regimes. This provides support for the contention that the Cold War favored the reproduction of autocracy, especially the emergence of military dictatorship.

But one can also simulate the future using the Markov chain transition matrix of the last decade the future would look highly auspicious to democracy: in 50 years time, 77 percent of the regimes in the world would be democratic; and hegemonic party autocracies would be practically the only form of authoritarianism in 18 percent of the countries. Monarchies, military rulers and single-parties will be anachronic reminders of a bygone era

(with 1.5, 2.6 and 3.6 percent of the countries respectively). Thus, the end of the Cold War must unquestionably be associated with the reproduction of electoral dictatorship.²²

5. Conclusion

This paper has presented a theory of the comparative logic of autocratic rule. The theory highlights power struggles between the dictator and his ruling coalition, whose composition varies depending on the origins of the dictatorial regime. Military regimes tend to emerge in bifurcated and polarized societies where one faction captures power through a coup, often in order to avert pressures for redistribution. Dictatorship, however, can also have mass-based origins –civil wars, independence movements, elections. Dictators in these autocracies do not emerge to avert pressures of redistribution, but rather seek to capture the capital stock, which can subsequently be employed for the construction of political order (Huntington, 1968). Monarchies arise, for their part, from the ascent of dynastic families.

To survive in office, dictators need to establish power sharing contracts with their ruling coalitions. Without institutions, these contracts are not credible, generating incentives for officials of high rank to resort to threats and acts of violence. Thus, dictators are faced with a perpetual dilemma because they cannot credibly commit to share power with members of the ruling coalition. To solve this dilemma, dictators can resort to political parties through which they guarantee a share of the spoils of office by creating a regularized and predictable mechanism for elite recruitment and promotion that is expected to last into the future. The credibility of the contract lies in that the dictator can't simply reverse these

²² In this simulation democracy performs much better because it becomes almost an absorbing state: most of the regimes move towards democracy, whenever they fail to survive, and democracies almost never transit to a different regime (in those 10 years, only 5 democratic breakdowns are observed, and 3 of them are towards hegemonic-party systems). However, this might be a particularly optimistic scenario because any particular decade of the last fifty years is, in fact, somewhat idiosyncratic.

institutions without inspiring a coordinated rebellion among the ruling coalition. Parties also are vital for handling leadership succession, which makes officers of high rank who aspire to the leadership align their interests in favor of the survival of the dictator rather than perpetually plotting against him.

The paper also studied the fundamental institutional difference between single-party and multiparty dictatorships. The theory proposes that multiparty elections play a significant role in increasing the bargaining power of the ruling party against the dictator. Multiparty elections allow potential rivals at the top to threaten electoral splits, affording them peaceful instruments to challenge the dictator.

The empirical implications of the theory are substantial. The theory highlights differences in the logics of autocratic rule between dictatorships with political parties and without them, and between single-party and multi-party dictatorships. A central difference between dictators that govern with political parties and those without them relates to the risks of being overthrown. My theory predicts that violent seizures of power by officials of high rank should be less common when parties are present or when there are alternative institutions to handle leadership succession. The argument requires that party regimes (and monarchies) be significantly less likely to end in violent coups than military regimes.

However, since military regimes tend to emerge in bifurcated societies they exhibit an intrinsic propensity to instability. For this reason, a critical test of the argument consists in comparing variation within different types of military regimes –what I have called non-institutionalized military regimes should exhibit higher propensities to end in violent coups than one-party military and multiparty military regimes.

My approach also yields important implications about the differences between single-party and hegemonic-party dictatorships. It suggests that dictators will be significantly more

constrained by their support parties when multiparty elections are held than when they are proscribed. This proposition can be evaluated with the use of the “natural experiment” afforded by numerous long-lasting dictators, especially in Africa, who have remained in power after legalizing multiparty elections.²³

My approach suggests that multiparty elections create incentives for officials of high rank to engage in *mobilizational strategies* or to invest in the creation of electoral organizations capable of generating the potential to mobilize groups of voters for and against the dictator. Thus, hegemonic-party regimes should be significantly more inclusive of groups within society than single-party ones.

My approach also yields implications about the relative importance of popular support necessary to survive in power in different types of dictatorships. Voter dissatisfaction is significantly more problematic for multiparty autocracies than for single-party ones. The more voter dissatisfaction there is, the more the dictator of a hegemonic-party regime has to fear from members of the ruling party, because they can credibly threaten to form electoral organizations that against the leader as well as defect to opposition political parties. There are two empirical implications: economic crisis should affect multiparty dictatorships more than single-party ones. Vote-buying should also be more prevalent in these multiparty dictatorships.²⁴

Lastly, repression should be more prevalent in single-party dictatorships than in hegemonic-party ones. In single-party regimes, rivals confront serious risks of being incarcerated, repressed or killed, whereas in multiparty dictatorships *electoral organizations*

²³ Bongo's Gabon is, for example, an ideal case to study this process.

²⁴ This last proposition can also be assessed with the use of the “natural experiment” afforded by dictatorships in Africa, controlling for underlying structural conditions of poverty which commonly give rise to electoral clientelism (Lemarchand, 1972, Kitschelt, 2000).

cannot easily be outlawed. The institution of multiparty elections is enforced, I have argued, through credible threats of rebellion among members of the ruling party as much as by societal and international pressures. The approach thus allows for empirical research into the micrologic of dictatorial rule within a broad cross-national design.

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