Opposition Unity and Cooptation in Hybrid Regimes

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Abstract

In presidential elections, the failure of opposition parties to unify behind a single candidate to challenge the incumbent is often attributed to successful "divide and conquer" strategies. The incumbent makes pre-electoral promises about post-electoral gains, promising cabinet positions in exchange for parties' agreement to not join a unified anti-incumbent alliance for the election. We highlight two critical factors: the challenges of forming coalitions for parties – independent of incumbent behavior – and the costs of cooptation for incumbents. Because parties differ in their ex ante likelihood of joining an opposition electoral alliance and cooptation is a costly strategy, incumbents should strategically provide their finite resources to only those parties that can credibly threaten to form an alliance in the first place. To assess this argument, we investigate the relationship between parties' decision to join an anti-incumbent electoral coalition and their receipt of a cabinet portfolio after the incumbent's electoral victory. Non-participation in an opposition alliance should increase the likelihood of obtaining a cabinet portfolio after the election – but only for parties who were at risk of coordinating against the incumbent in the first place. We find modest support for our claim using a unique dataset of over 800 political parties in 17 Sub-Saharan African countries.

Introduction

After the end of the Cold War, many authoritarian regimes legalized political competition and held multiparty elections for national-level offices. In some of these cases, incumbents lost power, giving way to new regimes – many of which have not yet become consolidated democracies. All of these regimes are "hybrid" to the extent that they combine the formal institutions of democracy with some of the behavioral patterns of autocracy: partisan elections in which the incumbent or his party seldom loses.[1]

Partisan elections give opposition leaders the opportunity to contest for power, but they also present them with the task of effectively mobilizing supporters and coordinating with numerous other parties and organizations that may not share common political objectives. Coordination is important for developing parties with wide geographic reach that can organize voters and get them to the polls. It is also critical for determining candidate entry so that parties do not undercut each other by splitting the vote. These coordination dilemmas are starkly illustrated when parties engage in the task of forming pre-electoral coalitions: agreements among opposition parties to support a unity candidate to challenge the incumbent president in the election.[2]

When opposition parties form these electoral alliances, they sometimes are able to dislodge long-time incumbents from power (Howard and Roessler 2006, Donno 2013). In the Philippines, for example, Salvador Laurel, head of the largest opposition party, supported Corazon Aquino's candidacy in snap presidential elections called by Ferdinand Marcos in 1985. In Kenya in 2002, leaders of several opposition parties, including Raila Odinga, agreed to

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[1] Throughout the paper, we use the terms "incumbent", "government", and "regime" interchangeably.
[2] By "opposition," we refer to any party that is not the ruling party.

support the candidacy of Mwai Kibaki under the banner of the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC). While in Ukraine, the alliance among opposition parties led by Viktor Yushchenko, Oleksandr Moroz, and Yulia Tymoshenko contributed to Yuschenko's victory over Leonid Kuchma in the 2004 election. In all of these cases, opposition coalitions were critical in bringing about regime change – from People Power in the Philippines to the Orange Revolution in Ukraine.

Yet not all opposition parties create or join such coalitions even when a unified electoral strategy would seem to be in their best interests. In South Korea, for example, neither of the "two Kims" (Kim Dae-jung and Kim Young-sam) was willing to yield in their quests to become president, clearing the way for the government-sponsored candidate, Roh Tae-woo, to win the 1987 election. And in Kenya, the site of one of the most-discussed cases of coalition formation in 2002, opposition parties failed to coordinate their electoral strategies in the previous two elections, allowing Daniel Arap Moi to claim reelection with just a plurality of the vote.

The fragmentation of the opposition is usually attributed to the incumbent's "divide and rule" tactics: by offering political offices and rents, the regime can buy the acquiescence of opposition elites, deterring any attempts to unify (Arriola 2014, 2009; van de Walle 2003, 2007). Prior efforts to form coalitions in Kenya, for example, foundered because central opposition leaders agreed to collaborate with the regime: both Kibaki and Odinga had served as cabinet ministers in various governments under Moi – the latter as late as six months before the transitional elections in 2002. In comparison to the political positions and fiscal resources that the regime can offer, opposition parties have little to offer to build their own coalitions.

The "divide and conquer" account of opposition fragmentation is compelling, but underappreciates two features of the strategic situation that are critical for the relationship

between cooptation and coalitions. First, incumbents do not have infinite resources with which they can coopt opposition elites, and in fact, the use of these resources for opposition cooptation can be costly. Second, parties face a number of challenges when attempting to form opposition coalitions – challenges that exist quite apart from whatever the incumbent is doing to deter unity (Arriola 2013, Gandhi 2013, van de Walle 2006). Therefore, the incumbent should try to coopt only those parties that can credible threaten to join an opposition electoral alliance in the first place. For parties that exhibit a low risk of joining, attempts to coopt them would be a costly waste of resource.

With the strategic targeting of resources, the incumbent can use pre-electoral promises about post-electoral gains to fragment the opposition. During the pre-electoral period, incumbents make offers to parties, promising cabinet positions in exchange for their agreement to not join a unified anti-incumbent alliance for the election. If the party takes the offer, then it does not join an opposition pre-electoral coalition. If the incumbent wins reelection, after the election, the party is rewarded with its cabinet portfolio(s). But accepting a pre-electoral deal with the incumbent to forgo joining an opposition coalition in exchange for post-electoral gains is a difficult proposition to assess empirically since we do not observe pre-electoral bargaining between the incumbent and opposition parties. We observe only which parties join opposition electoral alliances and receive cabinet portfolios after the incumbent has won the presidential election. To determine whether there is evidence for our account of strategic divide and conquer with the information at hand, we assess whether receiving a portfolio is conditional on forsaking membership in an opposition alliance. But our account suggests that there should be differential effects of not joining an opposition electoral alliance on the post-electoral distribution of portfolios: forgoing an electoral alliance with other opposition forces leads to post-electoral

cabinet benefits from the re-elected incumbent only for those parties who were at high risk of joining an opposition alliance in the first place. For parties with low risk of joining an alliance, there should be no relationship.

The paper proceeds as follows. In the next section we discuss in more detail the formation of anti-incumbent electoral alliances and the incumbent's use of "divide and conquer" to break up such potential challenges. In the third part of the paper, we focus on our account of the incumbent's pre-electoral promises of post-electoral gains as a mechanism of "divide and rule" and arrive at the central hypothesis our paper. In the last substantive sections, we test our argument using a unique dataset of over 800 political parties in 49 presidential elections in 17 sub-Saharan Africa from 1990 to 2014. Our results provide modest support for our claim. The paper closes with a brief conclusion.

The Effects of Cooptation on Opposition Unity

With an increasing number of authoritarian governments holding national-level elections and allowing parties to form, the challenge for many opposition groups in these regimes no longer is legal existence, but rather effective action. Similarly, in hybrid regimes, where democracy has not fully consolidated and incumbents win elections through un-level playing fields, parties must consider the best strategies for countering incumbent advantage gained through fraud, manipulation, and repression. Whether they are boycotting, protesting, or contesting elections, opposition groups are most effective when they are united.

One of the most obvious manifestations of opposition unity are electoral coalitions. These coalitions can take a number of forms, including common policy platforms that call for political liberalization. But the most effective coalitions appear to be those in which opposition parties actually coordinate their candidate offerings. In legislative elections, this entails non-compete

agreements among parties across constituencies. In presidential elections – our focus here – it entails some opposition parties agreeing to not field candidates in order to support a flagbearer against the incumbent. The examples of Aquino in the Philippines, Kibaki in Kenya, and Yushchenko in Ukraine are some of the most well-known opposition standard bearers. Just as recently in 2015, opposition parties in Tanzania coalesced around the candidacy of Edward Lowassa, minimizing the incumbent party's vote share to its lowest level in half a century.

The formation of opposition coalitions can be critical for efforts to dislodge authoritarian incumbents. Aquino was ultimately successful in dislodging Marcos from power, not solely because of the People Power protests after the election. The vote was so close – which led Marcos to resort to fraud – precisely because Laurel's supporters were willing to cast ballots for Aquino in the first place. Similarly, Kibaki's victory and the end of almost 40 years of dominant party rule in Kenya seem directly attributable to the formation of an opposition coalition (Kasara 2005). In addition to prominent cases, more systematic evidence shows that electoral coalitions yield advantages for the opposition: they lead to more liberalized outcomes (Howard and Roessler 2006), especially when paired with international conditionality (Donno 2013). Even when coalitions alone do not lead to regime change, their formation appears to be an important component of any opposition strategy to challenge the existing regime (Bunce and Wolchik 2010).

Yet not all opposition parties create or join such coalitions. Besides the infamous cases of failure in South Korea and Kenya where the process to create coalitions appears to never have really gotten off the ground, there are other cases in which parties began talks or formed coalitions that only ended up collapsing prior to the election. In Gabon, for example, parties signed on to the High Council of Resistance, pledging cooperation for the 1998 election. But

within a year, the coalition dissolved with the parties fielding separate candidates for the election. In our sample, in fact, opposition parties form a successful electoral coalition – one in which member parties stand behind a unity candidate – in only 64.9% percent of elections.

One central reason for opposition fragmentation is incumbent tactics of "divide and rule." Then is the role of the incumbent and his often very active attempts to undermine opposition unity through tactics of "divide and rule." Incumbents command overwhelming resources to insure victory in elections – not only for buying votes and paying for repression, but also for coopting the opposition. They may offer fiscal resources or political offices to induce elites to either join the regime coalition or, at least, damage any attempts at unifying the opposition. Political offices may be especially attractive to leaders of opposition parties. For some, government positions are valuable for the personal payout they provide to officeholders. An opposition leader in Kyrgyzstan, lamenting the ease with which his colleagues succumbed to the incumbent, explained: "everyone knows how much a post costs, and how much an official can generate from that position in a year… [in some cases] it's millions of dollars" (as quoted in Huskey and Iskakova 2010). For other leaders, political office provides resources to perform constituency service which is critical for maintaining their base. Still for other more principled opposition leaders, positions in government enable them to participate in policymaking in ways that would otherwise be closed to them.

Cabinet portfolios, in fact, are especially valuable to elites for all these reasons. Knowing this, incumbents incorporate them into their cabinets to deter challenges to their rule (Arriola 2014, 2009). Taking up positions in the executive makes party leaders less likely to coordinate with others to depose the incumbent; it is unlikely that anyone else can offer a better patronage deal than that currently provided by the incumbent. As Arriola (2013: 216) observes about

parties in sub-Saharan Africa: "Bargaining among opposition politicians breaks down because each politician seeks to maximize his own payoff by negotiating him or herself into the incumbent's patronage network rather than bargaining with his or her opposition counterparts." Moreover, becoming "bedfellows" with the incumbent sews distrust among opposition forces. In their comprehensive survey of opposition leaders in Kyrgyzstan, Huskey and Iskakova (2010) found that "a lack of trust of other members of the opposition (an inability to take others at their word)" complicated efforts to cooperate. The lack of trust emerged because members of the opposition recognize how strongly actions are driven by "personal ambition" and that this ambition is often satisfied by joining forces with the incumbent government. By revealing the willingness of opposition elites to sell out the anti-regime cause, the acceptance of cooptation offers makes coordination against the incumbent very difficult.

The Difficulties of Opposition Unity and Incumbent Cooptation

The conventional story emphasizes how incumbents are able to coopt members of the opposition and as a result, impede opposition unity. While this argument characterizes important features of the dynamic between the incumbent government and the opposition, it misses two critical aspects of the story: the inherent challenges of forming pre-electoral coalitions and the incumbent's costs of cooptation. Parties confront a battery of obstacles in constructing coalitions – ones that are quite separate from the incumbent's attempts at "divide and rule." They must coordinate their expectations about the likelihood of winning as a coalition and resolve commitment problems that may arise in the event of an electoral victory. As a result, not all parties will be equally likely – or from the incumbent's perspective, "at risk" – of joining a coalition. The incumbent, in turn, faces his own challenges. While his resources are large, they are not infinite. Nor is their

deployment in coopting opposition elites completely costless. As a result, incumbents must coopt opposition leaders strategically. If the intent of cooptation offers is to deter an opposition electoral alliance, incumbents should make offers to those parties that are most at risk of joining such a coalition.

The problem of opposition unity.　In order to be effective, a pre-electoral coalition for a presidential election is a set of parties that agree to support the same candidate to oppose the incumbent in the election. This entails parties B, C, and D, for example, agreeing to support the candidate of party A. In exchange for having foregone the opportunity to field their own candidates in the election, parties B, C, and D receive promises of political offices should the coalition candidate win the election. For example, party A may promise to party B that should the coalition achieve electoral victory, the new president (who is a member of A) will appoint the leader of B as Minister of Finance. In negotiating who gets what, party size and ideology usually is important (Bargsted and Kedar 2009, Carroll and Cox 2007, Cox 1997, Golder 2006, Laver and Schofield 1998). Moreover, in order to win the election in the first place, parties B, C, and D will need to convince their constituents to vote for the coalition standard-bearer who is a member of party A.

These strategic dilemmas are well-studied in the literature on parties and electoral coalitions in democracies. But parties in authoritarian and hybrid regimes face two additional difficulties: assessing the likelihood of regime transition and resolving commitment problems amongst themselves. These challenges make the formation of pre-electoral coalitions inherently difficult – independent of whether the incumbent attempts to coopt members of the opposition.

First is the problem of incumbents and regime change. Parties in authoritarian and hybrid regimes – unlike in democracies – cannot take for granted that the incumbent is willing to lose

the election (Gandhi and Reuter 2013, Wahman 2013). In these regimes, incumbents often do everything they can – fraud, manipulation, repression – in order to prevent an electoral defeat. And even if they do lose the counting, incumbents do not always willingly abide by the results. As a result, in order for parties to bear the costs of forming a coalition, they may need to have reasonably high expectations that an opposition candidate can win the election (i.e., will not be so disadvantaged by fraud or repression) and that the incumbent would step down in the event of an electoral defeat (i.e., not use force to hold onto power). In Uganda, for example, several opposition parties have rejected the notion of a coalition, citing any chance of electoral victory in upcoming elections as "mission impossible."[3] So while opposition coalitions may make regime change more likely, coalitions themselves are endogenous to regime transitions (van de Walle 2006).

The second strategic dilemma for parties arises in the form of a commitment problem. Electoral alliances are created before the election. As a result, parties make promises to each other *before* the election about the distribution of political positions that will be realized *after* the election. With presidential elections, if the unity candidate wins the election, the critical issue is whether he and his party will honor these pre-electoral promises after the election (Arriola 2013, Gandhi 2013). If the parties are unable to resolve this commitment problem, then they are unlikely to join an electoral alliance even if it has the potential to win. Prior to the 2011 elections in Uganda, for example, a number of smaller parties refused to join forces with Kizza Besigye and his party, Forum for Democratic Change, even though they were the most popular and organized opposition force around. The leader of the People's Progressive Party even went so far

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[3] "Uganda: Chaos in Opposition Camp," *The Independent*, 15 May 2015. http://allafrica.com/stories/201505260317.html (Downloaded September 1, 2015).

as to say that Besigye was likely to be just another Museveni since they both had military backgrounds and behaved like autocrats.[4] Similarly in Zimbabwe, attempts to form a coalition with Morgan Tsvangirai and his Movement for Democratic Change, the largest opposition party, foundered in both the 2008 and 2013 elections because leaders of other parties insisted that they could not trust Tsvangirai to honor his promises and not behave as an autocrat.[5] In fact, opposition leaders appear to have worried about more than just reneging on promises of cabinet positions. As one political commentator, speaking of Tsvangirai, observed: "If you are prepared to beat people up when you are still in opposition, what would happen if you have the state machinery at your disposal – you have the CIO, the army, police – would anybody be able to stand up against you?"[6]

Parties must overcome a number of different strategic dilemmas that arise independently of any incumbent attempts to divide and conquer. They must coordinate their expectations about the likelihood of taking power, convince their supporters to vote for the unity candidate, bargain over how political positions will be distributed, and insure that these power-sharing agreements will be respected. Some parties are better able to resolve these dilemmas than others. As a result, parties can be characterized by their likelihood of joining an electoral alliance – an *ex ante* trait that exists before they must consider whether to accept cooptation offers from the incumbent.

The costs of cooptation.   While incumbents typically have impressive state resources with which they may coopt members of the opposition, their resources are not finite and they often

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[4] "Besigye and Museveni the Same," DP Uganda, 14 November 2010. http://dpuganda.blogspot.com/2010/11/besigye-and-museveni-same.html (Downloaded August 15, 2015).
[5] "Zim: Parties consider coalition," *Mail and Guardian*, 28 June 2013. http://mg.co.za/article/2013-06-28-00-parties-consider-coalition (Downloaded August 15, 2015).
[6] "Of Mutambara Rally and the MDC Split," Association of Zimbabwe Journalists in the UK, 16 May 2006. http://www.zimbabwejournalists.com/story.php?art_id=398&cat=3 (Downloaded March 20, 2008).

must be used to construct coalitions *in support of the incumbent*. Regime coalitions are usually composed of parties that are willing to publicly voice their support for the incumbent or government-sponsored candidate. In the Central African Republic, for example, the incumbent François Bozizé ran as an independent candidate, heading the eight-party National Convergence coalition in the 2005 presidential election. Even those incumbents who have the support of their own parties must sometimes construct coalitions. As the president of Ghana, Jerry Rawlings ran for reelection as the candidate of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), a party that he had founded while in power. But for the 1996 election, he also formed the Progressive Alliance, joining his NDC with two other parties. In exchange for supporting the incumbent, parties are sometimes awarded spoils before the election and political positions after the election. With parties to reward within the regime coalition, there may be few political positions and resources left over with which to coopt opposition elites.

Even when incumbents run for reelection without a coalition, they often do so with the support of a regime party. Of the 127 presidential elections in Africa (from 1990 to 2014) in which an incumbent ran for reelection, in 110 of them, the incumbent ran under a partisan label. While some of these parties are undoubtedly ephemeral, many are powerful institutions at the apex of party-dominated regimes. Elites belong to the regime party because this institution provides them with a regularized system through which they may advance their careers and receive spoils (Svolik 2012). In exchange, they lend their support to the incumbent and are especially crucial in mobilizing supporters for elections (Reuter and Remington 2009). This arrangement means that incumbents running for reelection must compensate their own party elites – to reward them for their efforts at electoral mobilization, but also to fulfill general expectations about how power and resource-sharing works, especially in a dominant party state.

The result is that incumbents seeking reelection have finite resources with which they can then coopt parties outside of the regime. Moreover, they may have to contend with party elites who do not agree with the value of coopting opposition elites. In Kenya in 2004, for example, President Kibaki invited members of the opposition into a unity government. This move created tensions within the ruling coalition that ultimately led some members to exit from his government. Similarly after the 1988 election in Senegal, President Diouf wanted to coopt Abdoulaye Wade, a central opposition figure, by offering him the position of vice-president. High-ranking members of Diouf's governing Socialist Party were so opposed to the plan that they were able to effectively veto it. Due to the resource and political constraints that they may face, incumbents must strategically deploy their resources when coopting members of the opposition.

As a result, we should expect that incumbents coopt opposition leaders and parties selectively, and there is prima facie evidence of this. While the distribution of fiscal resources for cooptation is opaque, the granting of political offices in exchange for support is observable. In Algeria, for instance, opposition parties of various sizes and ideologies have been coopted by President Abdelaziz Bouteflika. In 2014, over 26 parties supported President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's bid for reelection to a fourth term and several parties were rewarded with cabinet positions after the election.[7] Yet, not all parties that supported Bouteflika's campaign were given political positions, while two opposition parties that were vocal critics of the regime – the Socialist Forces Front and the Worker's Party – received offers of ministerial positions from Bouteflika. When incumbents offer political offices, such as cabinet positions, to opposition leaders, they do so selectively.

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[7] "Algérie: plus de 30 partis appellent Bouteflika à se présenter pour un 4e mandat," Agence France-Presse, 1 February 2014.

We argue that parties differ in the degree to which they are "at risk" of joining an electoral alliance and that incumbents must behave strategically in making cooptation offers in order to prevent such an alliance. The result is that the incumbent has an incentive to attempt to coopt an opposition leader only if the latter can credibly threaten to join with others in forming an electoral alliance. The incumbent has little need to "waste" resources on low risk parties that cannot rise above their squabbling in order to form a coalition.

Pre-electoral Promises for Post-Electoral Gains

Given that incumbents can practice "divide and conquer" through the distribution of political offices, how exactly can cooptation deter opposition unity? One mechanism is through the use of pre-electoral promises about post-electoral gains. During the pre-electoral period, incumbents make offers to parties, promising cabinet positions in exchange for their agreement to not join a unified anti-incumbent alliance for the election. If the party takes the offer, then it does not join an opposition pre-electoral coalition. If the incumbent wins reelection, after the election, the party is rewarded with its cabinet portfolio(s). From the point of the view of the opposition party, it must decide on whether to take the incumbent's offer – which has consequences for whether it may join in an electoral alliance to defeat the incumbent. Parties are essentially weighing the value of an electoral alliance with other opposition parties against the benefits of taking a deal with the incumbent.

When the incumbent promises cabinet portfolios to opposition parties before the election, there appears to be little reason, in fact, for parties to not accept them. If an anti-incumbent electoral coalition has little chance of taking power, then parties that accept cooptation offers are

forgoing little. If the coalition actually has a good chance of winning the election, then the party who is a supporting member of the coalition (i.e., not the party of the unity candidate) must weigh the promise of political office given by the incumbent versus that same promise given by the flagbearer of the coalition. Since both the incumbent's and the coalition candidate's promises of post-electoral gains suffer from credibility problems, parties may decide to just go with "the devil they know."

Accepting a pre-electoral deal with the incumbent to forgo joining an opposition coalition in exchange for post-electoral gains is a difficult proposition to assess empirically. The challenge is that we do not observe the pre-electoral bargaining between incumbents and opposition parties. We observe only whether a party joins (or does not join) an opposition electoral alliance and whether it receives a cabinet portfolio *after* the election. Portfolios received by opposition parties after the election are not adequate proxies of pre-electoral incumbent offers of portfolios; we fail to capture all the offers that were made but rejected.

In order to empirically assess this cooptation story with the information at hand, we reason as follows. If receiving a portfolio is conditional on forsaking membership in an opposition alliance, then at a minimum, we should observe that not joining an alliance before the election increases the likelihood of obtaining a cabinet seat after the election. But this relationship should only be evident for parties that were at high risk of joining an electoral alliance in the first place. If divide and conquer has merit as a strategy, it should be especially effective in deterring electoral alliances among those parties who would have been likely to band together against the incumbent. Low risk parties are unlikely to receive a cooptation offer. Therefore, if they do not join an electoral alliance, it is for reasons that have nothing to do with the incumbent (i.e., not because they received a cooptation offer). Consequently, for these

parties, there should be no relationship between failure to join an alliance before the election and receipt of a portfolio after the election. Put differently, our account suggests that there should be differential effects of not joining an opposition electoral alliance on the post-electoral distribution of portfolios: forgoing an electoral alliance with other opposition forces leads to post-electoral cabinet benefits from the re-elected incumbent only for those parties who were at high risk of joining an opposition alliance in the first place. We turn to empirically assessing this argument in the next section.

Data and Methods

In order to test this account, we collect data on both the electoral behavior of opposition parties and the cooptation offers made by incumbents for 49 presidential elections in post-1990 sub-Saharan Africa. Because we posit that parties vary in the degree to which they are at risk of joining a coalition and the exchange of political positions for the rejection of anti-incumbent alliances occurs at the level of the party, our unit of analysis is the party-country-election year. We have data on whether each party ran candidates, joined (regime or opposition) coalitions, or received offers of cabinet positions from the incumbent. We combine these data with other sources of country-year and election level data to assess the relationship between cooptation and opposition unity. Figure 1 shows the countries and number of elections included in our sample.

Sample. A country is included in the sample if all of its multiparty presidential elections during this period have been regular and concurrent. Regularity is defined as having at least two presidential elections held under the same regime (e.g., Mozambique under FRELIMO, Tanzania under CCM) or, if under different regimes, when the same parties are competing in the elections (e.g., multiparty elections before and after the transition to democracy in Ghana and Senegal).
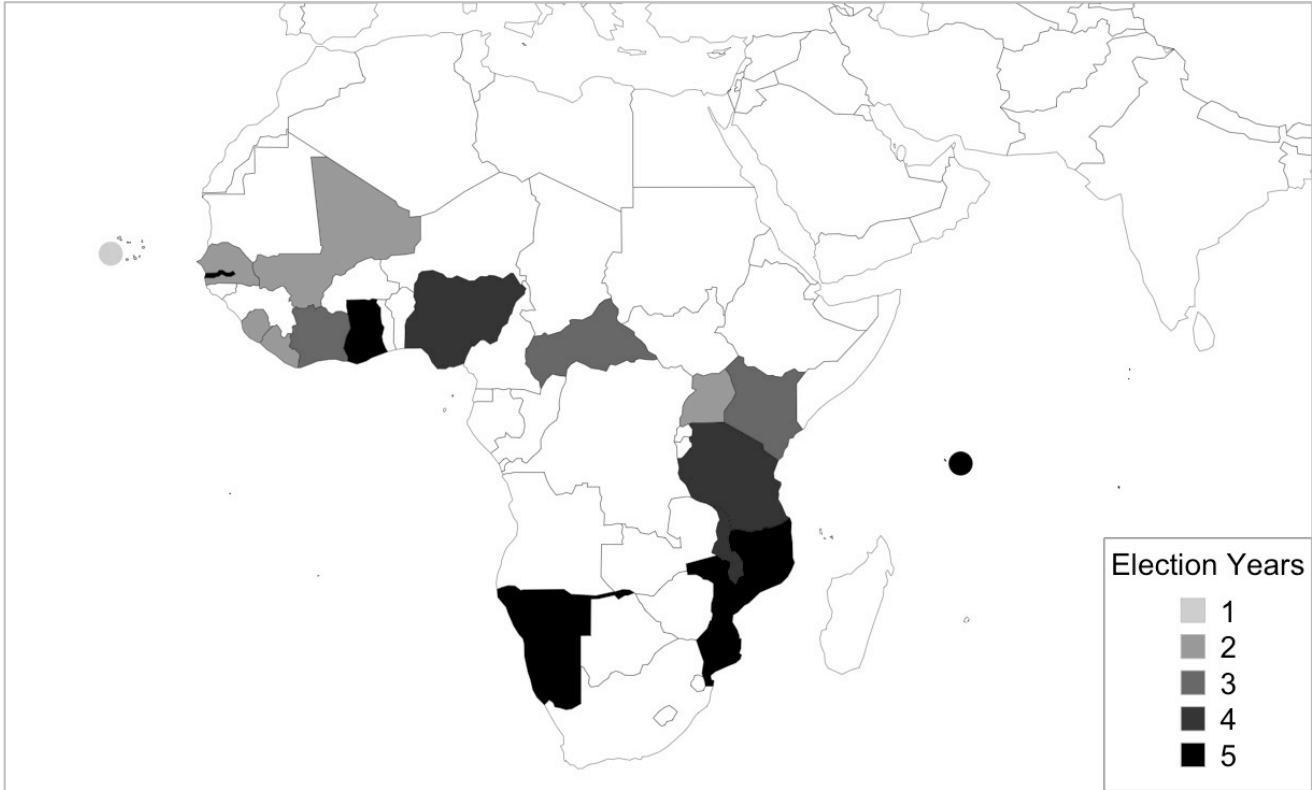
Figure 1. Number of election years per country in the sample

Presidential and legislative elections held within one calendar year of each other are considered

concurrent. Of these countries, only elections featuring an incumbent or designated successor

which did not result in a regime transition are included. The reasons for these restrictions on the

sample are as follows.

We focus our analysis on countries with regular elections because it is unlikely that

candidates and parties will have had the opportunity to compete, learn, and exhibit the strategic

behavior in which we are interested if they participate in one-off or irregularly-held elections.[8]

We restrict our analysis to countries with concurrent elections to avoid selection bias. Our

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[8] For example, in Angola and Burundi multiparty presidential elections have occurred only once during this period. Alternatively, in Sudan, the 1996 election was non-partisan, and while the 2000 election saw multiple parties compete, the next election was not held until ten years later due to the ongoing civil conflict.

reasoning is illustrated with the aid of Table 2. In elections, parties decide not only whether to join an opposition coalition, but also whether to run in the election in the first place. Table 2 displays the four categories that parties occupy depending on their decisions to compete and form coalitions in presidential elections.

		Join a coalition?			
		Yes		No	
Compete in the election?	Yes	i.	Run as the opposition flagbearer	ii.	Run as an individual candidate
	No	iii.	Support the opposition flagbearer	iv.	Do not put forward a candidate

Table 1. Possible electoral strategies of opposition parties included in the sample

If we were to rely only on the results of presidential elections to determine which parties to examine, we would correctly identify parties that occupy cells i and ii. To insure that we have included parties in category iii – those that gave up their aspirations to run for the presidency in order to support a unified candidate – we collect detailed membership information about opposition coalitions (discussed below). But this would still not guarantee that we have included parties that neither run in the elections, nor lend their support to any of the candidates (category iv). And since these parties may be the target of cooptation attempts by the incumbent – to deter entrance into the race or support for a coalition candidate – we want to include them in our sample. The difficulty of filling in this cell, however, lies in the fact that in many of these countries, party system volatility is very high with parties emerging, disappearing, and sometimes reappearing (under new names). The result is that identifying those parties that are serious enough to have been able to offer a candidate in the election, but chose not to do so is not

as easy as in established democracies. So we use concurrent legislative elections to identify those

parties that were substantial enough to sponsor candidates in constituencies but chose not to

compete in the presidential race.[9] In these countries, elections must have a government candidate

(incumbent or designated successor) since our argument is not relevant in the absence of such a

candidate who can make cooptation offers. Finally, the incumbent who makes cooptation offers

before the election must be around after the election to deliver on these promises. Hence, we

look only at elections that do not result in a regime transition. This produces a total of 806 party-

country-election year observations.[10]

Main variables.   Our dependent variable, *Cabinet*, is a dichotomous variable that is coded

as 1 if the (non-ruling) political party received an offer of at least one cabinet-level position from

the incumbent, 0 if not. While lists of cabinet members in many Sub-Saharan states are readily

available, finding the partisan affiliation of these members at the time of their ascension to power

is extremely difficult (Ariotti and Golder 2015). To code this variable, it was easier to track

down the top leadership within each party and then determine whether any of them received

cabinet positions after the election using a variety of sources. This procedure does not allow for

the construction of a count measure of cabinet positions for each party (at least, not one in which

we have strong confidence). In addition, it reflects incumbent cooptation of a party as an

institution rather than of individual members (who may be expelled from their party for taking a

portfolio).

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[9] In future iterations of the paper, we plan to include countries that have held mostly concurrent elections (e.g., Benin, Zambia, Zimbabwe).

[10] The countries and elections in the final sample are: Cape Verde (2006), Central African Republic (1999, 2005, 2011), Gambia (1992, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2011), Ghana (1992, 1996, 2004, 2008, 2012), Ivory Coast (1990, 1995), Kenya (1992, 1997, 2007), Liberia (1997, 2011), Malawi (1999, 2004, 2009, 2014), Mali (1997, 2007), Mozambique (1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014), Namibia (1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014), Nigeria (1999, 2003, 2007, 2011), Senegal (1993, 2007, 2012), Seychelles (1993, 1998, 2001, 2006, 2011), Sierra Leone (2002, 2012), Tanzania (1995, 2000, 2005, 2010), Uganda (2006, 2011).

One of the main independent variables we are interested in capturing is whether a party joined an opposition electoral alliance against the incumbent. *No alliance*, is a dichotomous variable that takes the value of 1 if the political party did not join a pre-electoral coalition that supported an opposition unity candidate in the current presidential election, 0 otherwise. The coalition must be an explicit agreement by member parties to support a single candidate; coalitions that form on the basis of common policy platforms or promises to govern in a post-election government without having coordinated on a single candidate are not included. In collecting the information on electoral coalitions, we are careful to exclude the latter types of groupings since they do not entail the same commitment problem that makes coalition formation inherently difficult. We used a variety of sources to locate the nature and composition of the alliances.

The second factor of interest is whether a party is "at risk" (from the incumbent's perspective) of joining an anti-incumbent electoral in the first place. We proxy "at risk" in two ways. First, *Previous Coalition* is coded 1 if the party in the current election was involved in an opposition pre-electoral coalition that supported a unity candidate in any past presidential election, 0 otherwise. Parties with prior coalition experience should be more likely to join a new one because they may have greater familiarity with or trust in their colleagues, making the opposition candidate's promises of post-electoral gains more credible than that of the incumbent. Second, *Legislative Coalition* is coded 1 if the party is a member of an opposition pre-electoral coalition in the concurrent legislative election. The idea here is that if a party is able to cooperate with others in an electoral alliance for assembly seats, it is more likely to be able to coordinate for the presidential race. Cooperation in one realm makes cooperative behavior in other areas more likely.

Model.   Our expectation is that parties that do not enter an electoral alliance against the

incumbent will be rewarded with portfolios after the election. But this effect should be especially

true for those parties that were at high risk of becoming members of an anti-incumbent electoral

alliance in the first place. To assess this idea, we estimate the following model:

$$Cabinet_{itj} = \beta_1(No\ alliance_{itj}) + \beta_2(At\ risk_{itj})*(No\ alliance_{itj}) + \beta_3(At\ risk_{itj}) + \beta_4\mathbf{V}_{itj} + \beta_5\mathbf{Z}_{it} + u_{itj}$$

where i stands for country, t for election year, and j for party. $\mathbf{V}_{itj}$ is a vector of country-election

year-party variables and $\mathbf{Z}_{it}$ is a vector of country-election year variables that influence the

distribution of portfolios after the election. The main coefficients of interest are β_1 and β_2. Since

parties that forgo an opposition alliance are more likely to be rewarded by the incumbent after

the election, especially if they were "high risk joiners" to begin with, the net effect of β_1 and β_2

should be positive.

Control variables.   We include controls that are likely to influence both the distribution of

political rewards by the incumbent and the formation of opposition coalitions. One party-level

variable fits this criteria. *Pre-electoral protest*, coded 1 if the political party initiated organized

protests, violent riots, or anti-government violence against the incumbent or regime in the year

prior to the election, 0 otherwise. The variable is coded using the Social Conflict Analysis

Database (Salehyan et al. 2012). Participation in pre-electoral protest is a strong sign of a party's

willingness to challenge the incumbent, leading it to be more likely to join an anti-incumbent

electoral alliance. It also is likely to influence whether the incumbent reaches out to coopt the

party although we are somewhat agnostic about the expected sign of the coefficient. It is possible

that incumbents are more likely to try to coopt those parties that constitute a threat "on the street"

(Gandhi 2008, Slater 2010), but it may also be the case that regimes marginalize those opposition

forces who do not play by institutionalized rules (Lust-Okar 2006).

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Social cleavages often influence parties' electoral strategies (Cox 1997, Mozaffar et al. 2003). A greater number of social cleavages may encourage the entrance of more parties into the race and therefore, reduce the likelihood of a pre-electoral coalition. Social cleavages may also affect the composition of cabinets. In very heterogeneous societies, incumbents may need to be more inclusive to govern, and therefore incorporate different parties in cabinet. In sub-Saharan Africa, where ethnic-based parties and electoral appeals are common, ethnic fractionalization captures the relevant cleavage structure (Eifert et al. 2010). The source of this time invariant measure is Fearon (2003).

The final control variable is level of economic development. One possible way that parties considering an electoral alliance can address the commitment problem is by bargaining over goods that do not create time inconsistency problems for the actors (Arriola 2013). Rather than form coalition agreements on the basis of political offices that will be distributed after the election, parties may just pay others upfront in exchange for their electoral support. They can offer these payments only if a substantial private sector exists and is willing to support opposition efforts. In his analysis, Arriola shows that the size of the commercial banking sector is positively correlated with the likelihood of coalition formation. To minimize the loss of observations, we instead use *GDP per capita* (divided by 1000) as a proxy for private economic activity. The data are from the World Bank's *2011 World Development Indicators*. As income levels increase, the likelihood of a coalition also is expected to increase. In addition, the wealth of countries is positively correlated with the size of government (Ram 1986). With more portfolios to distribute, incumbents may use them to coopt more parties (Arriola 2009). As a result, we expect *GDP per capita* and *Cabinet* to be positively correlated.

Table 2 provides descriptive statistics for all the variables used in the analysis.

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Cabinet	800	0.051	0.221	0	1
No alliance	806	0.851	0.356	0	1
Previous coalition	788	0.114	0.318	0	1
Legislative coalition	789	0.120	0.326	0	1
Pre-electoral protest	764	0.030	0.171	0	1
Ethnic fractionalization	788	0.809	0.063	0.724	0.953
GDP per capita/1000	802	2.395	2.816	0.262	20.364

Table 2. Summary statistics of variables in analysis

In general, cabinets are occupied by either members of the ruling party or independent technocrats; only five percent of opposition parties in our sample received a portfolio after the election. Fifteen percent of these parties participate in anti-incumbent electoral alliances while very few of them are engaged in pre-electoral protest (although here we are less certain about the quality of the data). As expected, this sample of Sub-Saharan countries is marked by high ethnic fractionalization (average of 80 percent with low variance) and low economic development (average per capita income of just over 2000 PPP dollars with high variance ranging from Liberia at the bottom to the Seychelles at the top).

Analysis

Our hypothesis is that some parties – for various reasons – are initially very likely to join an opposition electoral alliance. They view the incumbent at vulnerable and have solved how to

share power in the case of victory. From the perspective of the incumbent, these parties are "at risk" of banding together against him. If the incumbent is able to deter them from forming a pre-electoral coalition, he will follow through on rewarding them with political positions after the election. To test this, for each political party, we estimate the log odds of receiving a cabinet position from the re-elected incumbent after the election using a logit model. Table 3 displays results from three models. In Models 1 and 2, we proxy parties' "at risk" status by whether they have joined an opposition pre-electoral coalition in the past (*Previous coalition*). In Model 3, "at risk" is indicated by whether parties have agreed to form an electoral alliance for the concurrent legislative election (*Legislative coalition*).

	Previous coalition as "At risk"				Legislative coalition as "At risk"	
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	β	e^β	β	e^β	β	e^β
No alliance	0.213 (0.753)	1.237	-0.088 (0.902)	0.916	-0.581 (0.494)	0.559
*No alliance * "At risk"*			0.796 (0.174)	2.216	1.161 (0.337)	3.193
"At risk"	0.818 (0.050)	2.267	0.203 (0.762)	1.225	-1.414 (0.220)	0.243
Pre-electoral protest	0.649 (0.443)	1.914	0.571 (0.501)	1.771	0.758 (0.366)	2.134
Ethnic fractionalization	-3.288 (0.574)	0.037	-3.771 (0.515)	0.023	-3.939 (0.482)	0.020
GDP per capita	-0.199 (0.299)	0.819	-0.194 (0.317)	0.823	-0.239 (0.169)	0.787
Constant	-0.179 (0.971)		0.463 (0.923)		1.310 (0.779)	
Wald Chi^2	12.19		10.31		10.67	
Pr > Chi^2	0.0322		0.1123		0.0992	
Log-likelihood	-150.923		-150.456		-151.396	

Dependent variable is *Cabinet*: 1 if party receives at least one portfolio, 0 otherwise.
740 parties, 15 countries. Standard errors clustered by country.
β is the coefficient. p-value in parentheses. e^β is odds ratio except for interaction term where e^β is the ratio of the two odds ratios of constitutive terms.

Table 3. Determinants of post-electoral cabinet portfolios as rewards

First we compare the results of Models 1 and 2. Model 1 incorporates *No alliance* and *At risk* (i.e., *Previous coalition*) as only additive terms while Model includes the interaction of these terms. The results of Model 1 show that parties with high risk of joining coalitions are, in fact, over two times more likely to be included in the re-elected incumbent's post-electoral cabinets. The coefficients on the interaction and constitutive terms in Model 2 have the expected signs, but

we cannot reject the null that most of these coefficients are zero. The coefficient on the interaction term is just above standard levels of statistical significance, but both Wald and likelihood ratio tests indicate that we cannot reject the null hypothesis that the coefficient equals zero. Similar results emerge when we proxy "at risk" with *Legislative coalition*. In all of these models, the coefficients on the control variables are also not significantly different from zero.

As discussed earlier, in considering whether to form an electoral coalition, opposition parties must determine not only how to share power amongst themselves in case of victory, but also whether victory is even possible in the first place. While our proxies for "at risk" of joining an electoral alliance reflect on parties' ability to work well with each other, they do not speak to the likelihood of opposition victory and alternation in power. We attempt to look at this issue by dividing the sample between those election in which the incumbent was the government candidate in the election versus those in which a designated successor (determined either by the outgoing incumbent or the ruling party).

The government's electoral prospects appear more vulnerable if its candidate is not the actual incumbent, but rather a designated successor for a number of reasons. Successors usually emerge from succession struggles within the regime that create sore losers out of those who were passed over. In addition, a new successor may need to work to win over the support of civilian and military elites, making the regime appear vulnerable, and his ability to bring voters to the polls has not yet been proven.[11] In this context, our "at risk" parties are especially dangerous to the incumbent: not only have they determined how to share power in the case of victory, but they also have increasing belief that they can actually win and take power. And so, we expect that our

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[11] A good illustration of this point is the 2002 election in Kenya. More parties gravitated towards NARC, the opposition electoral alliance, because these parties perceived the government's vulnerability under Uhuru Kenyatta's candidacy. Kenyatta had emerged as the ruling party's candidate after a bitter succession fight, resulting in several defections from KANU (especially led by Raila Odinga).

hypothesized relationship should be evident in elections with designated successor rather than those with sitting incumbents.

Table 4 shows the results of splitting the sample between elections with the sitting incumbent (Model 1) and those with a designated successor (Model 2).[12]

	Model 1 (*Incumbent*)		Model 2 (*Successor*)	
	β	e^{β}	β	e^{β}
No alliance	0.749 (0.364)	2.115	-2.382 (0.069)	0.092
*No alliance * "At risk"*	0.142 (0.697)	1.153	2.735 (0.046)	15.404
"At risk"	0.740 (0.310)	2.095	-0.968 (0.566)	0.380
Ethnic fractionalization	-4.358 (0.495)	0.0128	-3.163 (0.738)	0.042
GDP per capita	-0.132 (0.620)	0.876	-0.083 (0.772)	0.921
Constant	0.167 (0.973)		1.158 (0.888)	
No. parties	542		218	
No. countries	15		7	
Wald Chi^2	10.12		185.55	
Pr > Chi^2	0.0718		0.0000	
Log-likelihood	-121.187		-29.933	

Dependent variable is *Cabinet*: 1 if party receives at least one portfolio, 0 otherwise. Standard errors clustered by country. β is the coefficient. p-value in parentheses. e^{β} is odds ratio except for interaction term where e^{β} is the ratio of the two odds ratios of constitutive terms.

Table 4. Determinants of post-electoral portfolios, under re-elected incumbents and newly-elected successors

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[12] *Pre-electoral protest* is dropped from these models because it does not exhibit enough variation.

None of the coefficients in Model 1 are significantly different from zero. But the results from Model 2 show some modest support for our claims. When facing a successor, "low risk" and "high risk" parties exhibit differences.[13] When they forgo forego membership in an opposition electoral coalition, "low risk" parties are less likely to receive a cabinet position after the election (odds ratio is 0.092). When "high risk" parties decline the opportunity to coalesce against the government candidate, they are 42 percent for likely to be rewarded with a cabinet post after the election (than if they had joined a coalition).[14] The effect is modest and we are cautious in drawing bold conclusions from a sample size that is much reduced and restricted to a selective set of countries (Ghana, Ivory Coast, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, and Tanzania). But the result suggests some empirical support for our argument.

Conclusion

In an effort to remain in power, incumbents often practice the politics of cooptation. They extend spoils and political offices to elites in an attempt to deter their coordination into anti-incumbent movements (Arriola 2009, 2014). When the threat appears in the form of opposition electoral alliances, incumbents use tactics of "divide and rule" to neutralize this potential threat to reelection. One procedure for "divide and rule" is for the incumbent to make pre-electoral promises of political office to parties in exchange for their non-participation in an opposition electoral coalition. The decision to turn their backs on opposition colleagues yields post-electoral

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[13] For Model 2, we can reject the null hypothesis that the coefficient on the interaction term equals zero: Wald chi2 (1) = 3.97; Prob > chi2 = 0.0463.

[14] For high risk parties, not joining an electoral alliance yields a change in the log odds of 0.353 (-2.282+2.735). The odds ratio is exp (0.353) = 1.42.

dividends for only those parties that were at risk of joining an electoral alliance with the potential to win in the first place.

Our findings show modest support for this proposition. As such, they are suggestive that in many hybrid regimes, the politics of government formation is not driven solely by the usual factors identified by the scholarship on government formation in democracies. While parties' electoral performance is undoubtedly important in determining which ones get cabinet portfolios, so might be the pre-electoral politics among parties. Carroll and Cox (2007) discuss how the bargaining among parties joining a pre-electoral coalition may influence the distribution of portfolios after the election. Here we emphasize how the bargaining between incumbents and opposition parties may determine who gets what if incumbents are able to win reelection.

Much of the literature on hybrid regimes or electoral authoritarianism focuses on the critical decisions and behavior of regime incumbents and elites. This seems natural given that elections are not free and fair and incumbents lose so infrequently. But as Huskey and Iskakova (2010: 231) observe: "[T]he literature is largely silent… on the opposition elites' own failures to cooperate at strategic junctures, which has complicated the rise of a legitimate opposition." In agreement, we highlight how features of opposition parties are critical for understanding incumbent behavior. Opposition parties are not just passive actors who condition their electoral behavior on the receipt of cooptation offers from the incumbent. Their ability to resolve their own strategic dilemmas has an important influence on whether incumbents can successfully practice "divide and conquer" in the first place. Moreover, the decision of opposition parties to accept incumbent offers and forgo the opportunity to coordinate with others is important for understanding how incumbents remain in power (Buckles 2015). How some parties go in and out of the cabinet – essentially exchanging the labels of "opposition" and "government" – suggests

that politics is more complicated than models of "the dictator" versus "the opposition" might

imply.

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