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NEOPATRIMONIAL REGIMES AND POLITICAL TRANSITIONS IN AFRICA

By MICHAEL BRATTON and NICOLAS VAN DE WALLE *

INTRODUCTION: COMPARING POLITICAL TRANSITIONS

THE current wave of scholarly studies of democratization and political transition is not fully comparative. Conceptually, these studies employ models of political change that are useful in explaining the demise of bureaucratic forms of authoritarianism but cannot account for transitions from more personalistic types of rule. Empirically, entire regions of the world are excluded. Whereas most studies of democratization have focused on Latin America and Southern Europe and latterly on Eastern Europe, Africa has received much less attention. In this article, we examine recent patterns of political change in Africa and on that basis propose revisions to the theory of political transitions.

Africa is not immune from the global challenge to authoritarianism. Between 1990 and 1993 more than half of Africa's fifty-two governments responded to domestic and international pressures by holding competitive presidential or legislative elections. The dynamics and outcomes of these transitions have been highly variable: in some cases, a competitive election has led to an alternation of political leaders and the emergence of a fragile democratic regime; more often the transition has been flawed (with the incumbent stealing the election), blocked (with the incumbents and opposition deadlocked over the rules of the political game), or precluded (by widespread civil unrest).¹ While democratization is clearly incomplete in Africa, it has already discredited military and one-party regimes, few of which are likely to survive intact. And recent African experience poses

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¹ Of the 18 presidential elections held in Africa between 1990 and March 1993, 9 were vouchsafed as "free and fair" by international observers, and 8 resulted in the peaceful replacement of the incumbent ruler. In all cases where the incumbent survived, the opposition charged electoral fraud. See Michael Bratton, "Political Liberalization in Africa in the 1990s: Advances and Setbacks" (Paper presented at a donors conference on Economic Reform in Africa's New Era of Political Liberalization, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, D.C., April 14-15, 1993).

interesting general questions: Why do some regimes undergo transitions from authoritarian rule while others do not? Are there different paths of transition? Why do some transitions occasionally result in democracy but others fall short? Why, in Africa, are transitions to democracy generally problematic?

In this article, we argue that the nature of the preexisting regime shapes the dynamics and outcomes of political transitions. Our thesis is as follows: contemporary political changes are conditioned by mechanisms of rule embedded in the *ancien régime*. Authoritarian leaders in power for long periods of time establish rules about who may participate in public decisions and the amount of political competition allowed. Taken together, these rules constitute a political regime. Regime type in turn influences both the likelihood that an opposition challenge will arise and the flexibility with which incumbents can respond. It also determines whether elites and masses can arrive at new rules of political interaction through negotiation, accommodation, and election, that is, whether any transition will be democratic.

We cast the argument comparatively in order to highlight differences among political regimes, initially between Africa and the rest of the world and subsequently among African countries themselves. First, we compare African transitions with those in Latin America and Southern Europe and find that transition dynamics in Africa have been distinctive. We attribute this to the neopatrimonial nature of African authoritarian regimes, which we contrast to the corporatist regimes that democratized in Southern Europe in the mid-1970s and in Latin America in the mid-1980s. Thereafter, we compare transitions within Africa. Based on the degree of political participation and contestation tolerated under the *ancien régime*, we distinguish several regime variants under the general rubric of neopatrimonialism and show that here, too, regime characteristics can help explain transition processes. The argument, though driven by African examples, can be generalized to neopatrimonial regimes elsewhere.

Especially for Africa, the scholarly study of political transitions has vacillated between ideographic case studies (with detailed description of events and actors) and abstract ruminations about principles of democracy supported by little systematic evidence. This article makes a modest effort to bridge the gap between these two extremes. We emphasize political institutions in a bid to develop midlevel generalizations and to help make the study of regime transitions more comparative.

The article is divided into four sections. The first section argues that the literature on political transitions has focused excessively on the contingent interactions of key political actors and underestimated the formative impact of political institutions. A second section defines neopatrimonial-

ism as a regime type and describes its characteristic features in Africa. Third, we discuss how the features of neopatrimonialism are likely to mold transitions in patterns quite different from those observed in transitions from other regime types. A fourth section distinguishes variants of the neopatrimonial regime, which we use to explain transition dynamics and outcomes observed recently in sub-Saharan Africa. A conclusion extends the argument about the distinctiveness of transitions from neopatrimonial rule and discusses its implications.

REGIME TYPE AND POLITICAL TRANSITION

Are there relationships between regime type and the likelihood, nature, and extent of political transition? Scholars have so far only scratched the surface in understanding political transitions in terms of the structure of the preceding regime. Karen Remmer argues that once one recognizes the “enormous range of variation concealed within the authoritarian (and democratic) categor(ies),” political outcomes vary systematically with regime type.² From recent Latin American experience she proposes that inclusionary democracies tend to collapse as a result of intrigue among the political elite, whereas exclusionary democracies are more likely to succumb to pressure from below. Moreover, once inclusionary regimes have held power, the reimposition of an exclusionary regime requires heavy doses of state coercion.³ It is unclear, however, whether Remmer’s generalizations apply to the demise of autocracies as well as to the breakdown of democratic rule.

Huntington’s analysis of “third wave” democratic transitions in thirty-five countries finds little overall relationship between the nature of the incumbent authoritarian regime and the pattern of political transition.⁴ He contends that whereas political transitions are most likely to be initiated from the top down, such dynamics are equally likely in one-party military or personalistic regimes. Nevertheless, leaders of one-party and military regimes are somewhat more likely than personal dictators to engage the opposition in a negotiated transfer of power. Indeed, personalistic regimes are more susceptible than other regime types to collapse in

² Remmer, “Exclusionary Democracy,” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 20, no. 4 (1986), 64–68.

³ *Ibid.*, 77–78.

⁴ Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991). Huntington classifies transitions into three main types: transformation, replacement, and transplacement. These labels are unnecessarily jargonistic; we prefer to speak of three routes—top-down, bottom-up, and negotiated political change—distinguished according to whether state elites, opposition forces, or both take the lead in pressing transition forward. On this theme, see Dankwart A. Rustow, “The Surging Tide of Democracy,” *Journal of Democracy* 3, no. 1 (1992), 119–22.

the face of a popular protest. Huntington notes that dictatorial leaders usually refuse to give up power voluntarily and try to stay in office as long as they can.⁵

The notion of an underlying structure to regime transitions runs counter to the most penetrating and influential contemporary work on this subject. Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter eschew the possibility of systematic causality and instead advance what can be termed a contingent approach to transitions. They argue that transitions are abnormal periods of "undetermined" political change in which "there are insufficient structural or behavioral parameters to guide and predict the outcome."⁶ Compared with the orderliness of authoritarian rule, transitions are marked by unruly and chaotic struggles and by uncertainty about the nature of resultant regimes. Analysts cannot assume that the transition process is shaped by preexisting constellations of macroeconomic conditions, social classes, or political institutions. Instead, formerly cohesive social classes and political organizations tend to splinter in the heat of political combat, making it impossible to deduce alignments and actions of any protagonist. Political outcomes are driven by the short-term calculations and the immediate reactions of strategic actors to unfolding events.

There is much merit in this contingent approach, which captures well the chaotic nature of regime transitions, but we remain dissatisfied with the open-ended implication that any one transition process or outcome is just as likely as any other. The excessive voluntarism of O'Donnell and Schmitter's framework has been criticized by other commentators. Nancy Bermeo notes that "the authors' emphasis on individual actors . . . constitutes a most significant challenge to the structuralist perspectives that have dominated . . . (comparative) political science scholarship."⁷ Terry Lynn Karl makes a case for what she calls structured contingency, an approach "that seeks explicitly to relate structural constraints to the shaping of contingent choice."⁸ In her words:

Even in the midst of tremendous uncertainty provoked by a regime transition, where constraints appear to be most relaxed and where a wide range of outcomes appears to be possible, the decisions made by various actors respond to and are conditioned by the types of socioeconomic structures and political institutions already present.⁹

⁵ Huntington (fn. 4), 588.

⁶ O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 3. See also Guiseppe Di Palma, *To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transitions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

⁷ Bermeo, "Rethinking Regime Change," *Comparative Politics* 22 (April 1990), 361.

⁸ Karl, "Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America," *Comparative Politics* 5 (October 1990).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 6; emphasis added.

We agree that there are potentially fruitful avenues for research at a “meso” level between individual choice and structural determinism.¹⁰ To date, most propositions in the transitions literature concern the effects of deep socioeconomic structures. For example, Bermeo posits that “authoritarian regimes do not seem to collapse during periods of relative prosperity”;¹¹ Karl suggests that democratic consolidation depends on “the absence of a strong landowner elite engaged in labor-repressive agriculture.”¹² Important as the condition of the economy and the formation of classes may be, we feel that these propositions focus on structures that are *too* deep. There are more proximate, political institutions—which together constitute a political regime—that are likely to have a direct bearing on transitions.

The argument that the political institutions of the preceding regime condition historical transitions is of course not novel; it runs through the historiographic literature, notably on revolutions.¹³ But the recent transitions literature has not grappled with regime types, in part because the universe of relevant country cases has displayed a relatively uniform set of dominant political institutions.¹⁴ It has tended to assume the presence of the corporatist institutions that predominated in the bureaucratic authoritarian regimes of Southern Europe and Latin America.¹⁵ In Africa, however, political institutions have on the whole evolved within neopatrimonial rather than corporatist regimes, forcing us to assess the impact of regime type.

¹⁰ For general theoretical discussions of this point, see Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: An Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Cambridge, Mass.: Polity Press, 1984); and Michael Taylor, “Structure, Culture and Action in the Explanation of Social Change,” *Politics and Society* 17, no. 2 (1989).

¹¹ Bermeo (fn. 7), 366–67.

¹² Karl (fn. 8), 6–7.

¹³ This central point is made in relation to the French Revolution by Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1955); and in a comparison of the Russian and German revolutions by Barrington Moore, *Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1978), 357–75, where differences in outcomes are linked to differences in the strength of political institutions.

¹⁴ Interestingly, two recent comparative studies of regime change are based on the analysis of political institutions. Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena: Critical Junctures, the Labor Movement, and Regime Dynamics in Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Huber Stephens, and John D. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

¹⁵ Not all extant analyses assume corporatist institutions and ignore regime variations. See Robert M. Fishman, “Rethinking State and Regime: Southern Europe’s Transition to Democracy,” *World Politics* 42 (April 1990); and Terry Lynn Karl and Philippe Schmitter, “Modes of Transition in Latin America, Southern and Eastern Europe,” *International Social Science Journal* 128 (May 1991). See also the interesting analyses of the role of political parties as an explanatory factor in Brazil’s transition in Scott Mainwaring, “Political Parties and Democratization in Brazil and the Southern Cone,” *Comparative Politics* 21 (October 1988); and idem, “Brazilian Party Underdevelopment in Comparative Perspective,” *Political Science Quarterly* 107 (Winter 1992).

NEOPATRIMONIAL REGIMES

In the main, African political regimes are distinctly noncorporatist. Leaders of postcolonial African countries may have pursued a corporatist strategy to the extent that they promoted an organic ideology of national unity and attempted to direct political mobilization along controlled channels. But African leaders have rarely used bureaucratic formulas to construct authoritative institutions or granted subsidiary spheres of influence to occupational interest groups within civil society. Contemporary African regimes do not display the formal governing coalitions between organized state and social interests or the collective bargaining over core public policies that characterize corporatism. At best, African efforts to install corporatist regimes have been a "policy output" of an ambitious political elite rather than a reflection of organized class interests within domestic society.

Rather, the distinctive institutional hallmark of African regimes is neopatrimonialism. In neopatrimonial regimes, the chief executive maintains authority through personal patronage, rather than through ideology or law. As with classic patrimonialism, the right to rule is ascribed to a person rather than an office.¹⁶ In contemporary neopatrimonialism, relationships of loyalty and dependence pervade a formal political and administrative system¹⁷ and leaders occupy bureaucratic offices less to perform public service than to acquire personal wealth and status. The distinction between private and public interests is purposely blurred. The essence of neopatrimonialism is the award by public officials of personal favors, both within the state (notably public sector jobs) and in society (for instance, licenses, contracts, and projects). In return for material rewards, clients mobilize political support and refer all decisions upward as a mark of deference to patrons.¹⁸

Insofar as personalized exchanges and political scandals are common in all regimes, theorists have suggested that neopatrimonialism is a master concept for comparative politics. Theobald argues that "some of the new states are, properly speaking, not states at all; rather, they are virtually the private instruments of those powerful enough to rule."¹⁹ And Clapham maintains that neopatrimonialism is "the most salient type (of authority)"

¹⁶ Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968). See also Robin Theobald, "Patrimonialism," *World Politics* 34 (July 1982).

¹⁷ Samuel N. Eisenstadt, *Traditional Patrimonialism and Modern Neopatrimonialism* (London: Sage, 1972); Christopher Clapham, ed., *Private Patronage and Public Power* (London: Frances Pinter, 1985); and Richard Snyder, "Explaining Transitions from Neopatrimonial Dictatorships," *Comparative Politics* 24, no. 4 (1992).

¹⁸ See Richard Joseph, *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), esp. chap. 5. On the recent evolution of these phenomena, see the excellent analysis in René Lemarchand, "The State, the Parallel Economy, and the Changing Structure of Patronage Systems," in Donald Rothchild and Naomi Chazan, eds., *The Precarious Balance: State and Society in Africa* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1988).

¹⁹ Theobald (fn. 16), 549.

in the Third World because it “corresponds to the normal forms of social organization in precolonial societies.”²⁰

We draw a finer distinction, namely, that while neopatrimonial practice can be found in all polities, it is the *core* feature of politics in Africa and in a small number of other states, including Haiti, the Philippines, and Indonesia. Thus, personal relationships are a factor at the margins of all bureaucratic systems, but in Africa they constitute the foundation and superstructure of political institutions. The interaction between the “big man” and his extended retinue *defines* African politics, from the highest reaches of the presidential palace to the humblest village assembly. As such, analysts of African politics have embraced the neopatrimonial model.²¹

Neopatrimonialism has important implications for the analysis of political transitions. On the one hand, one would expect transitions from neopatrimonial rule to be distinctive, for example, centering on struggles over the legitimacy of the discretionary decision making by dominant, personalistic leaders. On the other hand, one would also expect the dynamics of political change to be highly variable, unpredictably reflecting idiosyncratic patterns of rule devised by strongmen. Hence the need to emphasize both the commonalities *and* variations in transition dynamics and outcomes. Bearing this in mind, let us now turn to our central questions: how does neopatrimonialism influence whether transitions ever begin, how they unfold, and how they turn out?

COMPARING REGIMES AND TRANSITIONS

The recent literature on democratization in Europe and Latin America²² converges on a modal path of political transition. The transition begins when a moderate faction within the state elite recognizes that social peace and economic development alone cannot legitimate an authoritarian regime. These soft-liners promote a political opening by providing

²⁰ Christopher Clapham, *Third World Politics: An Introduction* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 49.

²¹ John Waterbury, “Endemic and Planned Corruption in a Monarchical Regime,” *World Politics* 25 (July 1973); Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg, *Personal Rule in Black Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); Thomas Callaghy, *The State-Society Struggle: Zaire in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984); Richard Sandbrook, *The Politics of African Economic Stagnation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Joseph (fn. 18); Jean François Bayart, *L'Etat au Cameroun* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale de Sciences Politiques, 1985); and idem, *L'Etat en Afrique* (Paris: Fayard, 1989).

²² In addition to works already cited, see Enrique A. Baloyra, ed., *Comparing New Democracies: Transitions and Consolidation in Mediterranean Europe and the Southern Cone* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1987); James M. Malloy and Mitchell A. Seligson, eds., *Authoritarians and Democrats: Regime Transitions in Latin America* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1987); Robert A. Pastor, ed., *Democracy in the Americas: Stopping the Pendulum* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1989); Karen L. Remmer, “New Wine or Old Bottlenecks? The Study of Latin American Democracy,” *Comparative Politics* 23 (July 1991).

improved guarantees of civil and political rights and later conceding the convocation of free and fair elections. The greatest threat to democratic transition comes from a backlash by elements of a hard-line faction, most commonly when the military executes a reactionary coup. To forestall hard-liners and complete the transition, government and opposition leaders meet behind the scenes to forge a compromise "pact" to guarantee the vital interests of major elite players.

We propose that political transitions in neopatrimonial regimes depart from this modal path in the following major respects:

1. *Political transitions from neopatrimonial regimes originate in social protest.* As is well known, the practices of neopatrimonialism cause chronic fiscal crisis and make economic growth highly problematic.²³ In addition, neopatrimonial leaders construct particularistic networks of personal loyalty that grant undue favor to selected kinship, ethnic, or regional groupings. Taken together, shrinking economic opportunities and exclusionary patterns of reward are a recipe for social unrest. Mass popular protest is likely to break out, usually over the issue of declining living standards, and to escalate to calls for the removal of incumbent leaders. Unlike corporatist rulers, personal rulers cannot point to a record of stability and prosperity to legitimate their rule.

Endemic fiscal crisis also undercuts the capacity of rulers to manage the process of political change. When public resources dwindle to the point where the incumbent government can no longer pay civil servants, the latter join the antiregime protesters in the streets.²⁴ Shorn of the ability to maintain political stability through the distribution of material rewards, neopatrimonial leaders resort erratically to coercion which, in turn, further undermines the regime's legitimacy. The showdown occurs when the government is unable to pay the military.

Przeworski has argued that the stability of any regime depends not so much on the legitimacy of a particular system of domination as on the presence of a preferred opposition alternative.²⁵ It may be true that a powerful autocrat can coerce unwilling popular compliance over very long periods of time if he retains control over the executive and military bureaucracies. But regimes built on personal loyalty rather than bureaucratic authority are susceptible to institutional collapse when patronage resources run

²³ See Sandbrook (fn. 21); and Callaghy (fn. 21).

²⁴ Thus, Allen argues that "in failing to pay salaries [the Kerekou regime in Benin] . . . signed the death warrant it had drafted by its own gross corruption, for it led to the actions of 1989 that in turn caused the regime's collapse." See Christopher Allen, "Restructuring an Authoritarian State: Democratic Renewal in Benin," *Review of African Political Economy* 54 (July 1992), 46.

²⁵ Adam Przeworski, "Some Problems in the Study of the Transition to Democracy," in Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, eds., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 51.

out. In these cases, a crisis of legitimacy may be a sufficient condition to undermine or topple a regime, and there need not yet be an organized opposition offering a programmatic alternative.

As a result of twin political and economic crises, political transitions are more likely to originate in society than in the corridors of elite power. The existing literature is inconsistent on this point. O'Donnell and Schmitter assert that "there is no transition whose beginning is not the consequence—direct or indirect—of important divisions within the authoritarian regime itself."²⁶ Yet the same authors note that authoritarian rulers usually miss opportunities to open up when the regime is riding a wave of economic success and that instead they "attempt liberalization only when they are already going through some serious crisis."²⁷ We read this as implying that political liberalization is an elite *response* rather than an elite initiative. It also begs the question of how leaders apprehend the existence of a "crisis"; presumably, elites are awakened to the necessity of reform by an outpouring of popular protest.²⁸

The well-known distinctions between top-down, bottom-up, and negotiated transitions are helpful here.²⁹ One might be tempted to predict that neopatrimonial regimes would undergo elite-initiated transitions, since personal rulers concentrate so much decision-making power in their own hands.³⁰ But in an earlier analysis, we found instead that transitions in Africa seem to be occurring more commonly from below. Of twenty-one cases of transition in sub-Saharan Africa between November 1989 and May 1991, the initiative to undertake political reform was taken by opposition protesters in sixteen cases and by incumbent state leaders in only five cases.³¹ In general, neopatrimonial rulers are driven by calculations of personal political survival: they resist political openings for as long as possible

²⁶ O'Donnell and Schmitter (fn. 6), 19.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁸ Elsewhere, O'Donnell and Schmitter (fn. 6) concede that ordinary citizens commonly take a leading role in transitions: whereas "political democracies are usually brought down by conspiracies involving a few actors . . . the democratization of authoritarian regimes . . . involves . . . a crucial component of the mobilization and organization of large numbers of individuals" (p. 18).

²⁹ Juan Linz, "Crisis, Breakdown and Reequilibration," in Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, eds., *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); Samuel Huntington, "How Countries Democratize," *Political Science Quarterly* 106, no. 4 (1992); René Lemarchand, "African Transitions to Democracy: An Interim (and Mostly Pessimistic) Assessment" (Revised version of a paper presented at a seminar on Democracy and Economic Development, Oslo, February 1992).

³⁰ Samuel Huntington finds only six cases of transitions by "replacement," that is, from below; see Huntington (fn. 29).

³¹ See Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle, "Popular Protest and Political Reform in Africa," *Comparative Politics* 24 (July 1992). The five exceptions were Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Madagascar, Sao Tome, and Tanzania. Of these, only Cape Verde and São Tomé have completed a protest-free full transition. See also M. Cahen, "Vent des Iles: La victoire de l'opposition aux Iles du Cap Vert et à São Tomé e Príncipe," *Politique Africaine* 43 (October 1991). In Madagascar massive protests erupted in mid-1991, when it became clear that President Ratsiraka's reforms were only window dressing. The

and seek to manage the process of transition only after it has been forced upon them.³²

The structure of political incentives in neopatrimonial regimes helps to explain why state elites rarely initiate political transitions. When rule is built on personal loyalty, supreme leaders often lose touch with popular perceptions of regime legitimacy. They lack institutional ties to corporate groups in society that could alert them to the strength of their popular support. Instead, they surround themselves with sycophantic lieutenants who protect their own positions by telling the leader what he wants to hear and by shielding him from dissonant facts. Thus, even skillful personalistic leaders lack a flow of reliable information on which to base sound judgments about the need for, and timing of, political liberalization. Instead, they react to popular discontent by falling back on tried-and-true methods of selective reward and political repression. To make themselves heard—to penetrate the conspiracy of silence surrounding the suprema—ordinary citizens therefore have little choice but to persist with protest and raise the volume of their demands.

Ironically, neopatrimonial rule also undercuts civil society, thus weakening the foundation for antisystemic change. Because personal rulers are sensitive to threats to their authority, they set about weakening all independent centers of power. Migdal shows how fear of rivals drives dictators to emasculate the very state institutions that could institutionalize their rule.³³ The same irrational logic of political survival informs the attitudes of personal rulers toward the institutions of civil society. Most African leaders have demobilized voters and eradicated popular associations except those headed by hand-picked loyalists. Therefore, when political protest does erupt in neopatrimonial regimes, it is usually spontaneous, sporadic, disorganized, and unsustainable. Because civil society is underdeveloped, the completion of the transition and the consolidation of any subsequent democratic regime are problematic.

2. *Neopatrimonial elites fracture over access to patronage.* By arguing for popular agency, we are not stating that elite factionalism is unimportant in African political transitions. But we side with the view that “political struggle . . . begins as the result of the emergence of a new elite that arouses a

elections of February 1993, which brought the opposition to power, were clearly the result of popular pressures. See “Madagascar: Hanging on in the Face of Change,” *Africa Confidential*, September 1991, p. 7. Finally, in Tanzania and Guinea Bissau, political liberalization has fallen well short of a full transition.

³² African states with particularly acute fiscal crises were also vulnerable to donor pressures to engage in political liberalization. See Bratton and van de Walle (fn. 31) for a discussion of the relative role of domestic and international factors in recent African transitions.

³³ Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), chap. 6.

depressed and previously leaderless social group into concerted action”³⁴ rather than with “a move by some group within the ruling bloc to obtain support from forces external to it.”³⁵ At issue is whether the leadership of the reform coalition comes from inside or outside the incumbent group. We favor the latter interpretation.

At face value, one would expect elite cohesion to be particularly problematic in governing coalitions built on the quicksand of clientelism. But the dimensions of elite factionalism are distinctive in personalistic regimes.³⁶ The conventional distinction between hard-liners and soft-liners does not capture the essential fault line within a neopatrimonial elite.³⁷ Instead of fracturing ideologically over whether or not to liberalize, neopatrimonial elites are more likely to take sides on pragmatic grounds in struggles over spoils. Their political positions come to be defined according to whether they are insiders or outsiders in relation to the patronage system.

Fragmentation occurs as follows. Neopatrimonial regimes are characterized by rapid turnover of political personnel. To regulate and control rent seeking, to prevent rivals from developing their own power base, and to demonstrate their own power, rulers regularly rotate officeholders.³⁸ Moreover, few rulers tolerate dissent; they typically expel potential opponents from government jobs, from approved institutions like ruling parties, or even from the country itself. Even if most individuals can expect eventually to be forgiven and brought back into the fold, such practices establish a zero-sum, nonaccommodative pattern of politics. Whereas insiders enjoy preferential access to state offices and associated spoils, outsiders are left to languish in the wilderness. The more complete their exclusion from economic opportunity and political expression, the more strongly outsiders are motivated to oppose the incumbent regime. Outsiders take refuge from official institutions in civil society, the parallel economy, or international exile. From these locations, they mount a campaign against the incumbent regime that attributes economic decline to the personal failings of the supreme ruler and his coterie. These oppo-

³⁴ Dankwart Rustow, “Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model,” *Comparative Politics* 2 (April 1970), 352.

³⁵ Przeworski (fn. 25), 56.

³⁶ A large literature analyzes factional conflict within the African state elite; see, for example, Sandbrook (fn. 21); and Bayart (fn. 21).

³⁷ In Huntington’s work (fn. 29), for example, the success of democratization hinges largely on the ability of “liberal reformers” within the government to outmaneuver the standpatters.

³⁸ As Waterbury (fn. 21) argues with respect to the monarchy in Morocco, “The king’s degree of political control varies directly with the level of fragmentation and factionalization within the system. . . . The king must always maintain the initiative through the systematic inculcation of an atmosphere of unpredictability and provisionality among all elites and the maximization of their vulnerability relative to his mastery” (p. 552).

nents grasp for control of popular protest movements, usually by promoting symbols (such as multiparty democracy) that can convert economic grievances into demands for regime change.

Meanwhile, the insiders in a patrimonial ruling coalition are unlikely to promote political reform. Stultified by years of obeisance to the official party line, they have exhausted their own capacity for innovation. Recruited and sustained with material inducements, lacking an independent political base, and thoroughly compromised by corruption, they are dependent on the survival of the incumbent regime. Insiders typically have risen through the ranks of political service and, apart from top leaders who may have invested in private capital holdings, derive their livelihood from state or party offices. Because they face the prospect of losing all visible means of support in a political transition, they have little option but to cling to the regime and to sink or swim with it.

Even if the state elite does begin to fragment over the pace of political reform, such splits are governed more by considerations of self-interest than of ideology. As patronage resources dwindle, incumbent leaders try to tighten their grip on revenues (especially export returns and foreign aid) in order to reward the loyalty of remaining insiders and to attempt to buy back the outsiders.³⁹ At some point during the transition, waverers may calculate that their access to rents and prebends is best served by crossing over to the opposition.

Thus, the operations of neopatrimonialism tend to create simultaneously a defensively cohesive state elite and a potential pool of alternative leaders outside of the state. The neopatrimonial practice of expelling rather than accommodating dissenters is a primary cause of the emergence of organized opposition. For this reason we stress the cleavage between insiders and outsiders rather than the divide within the ruling clique between hard-liners and soft-liners. Given the weakness of civic associations and the repression of opposition organizations, it is striking how commonly opposition in Africa today is led by former insiders who have fallen out of official favor.

3. *Elite political pacts are unlikely in neopatrimonial regimes.* Pacts are "more or less enduring compromises . . . (in which) no social or political group is sufficiently dominant to impose its ideal project, and what typically emerges is a second-best solution."⁴⁰ They figure prominently in the literature because of their role in the transitions of countries like Spain,⁴¹

³⁹ Nicolas van de Walle, "Neopatrimonialism and Democracy in Africa, with an Illustration from Cameroon," in Jennifer Widner, ed., *Economic Change and Political Liberalization in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).

⁴⁰ O'Donnell and Schmitter (fn. 6), 38.

⁴¹ Raymond Carr and Juan Pablo Fusi Aizpurua, *Spain: Dictatorship to Democracy* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1979).

Brazil,⁴² and Venezuela.⁴³

Some conditions conducive to pact making, such as the inability of any single political actor to impose a preferred outcome, are present in the late stages of neopatrimonial rule. But other conditions are absent. First, incumbent and opposition leaders are usually so polarized as a result of winner-take-all power struggles that there is slim possibility that moderate factions from either side can negotiate an agreement. Instead, transitions unfold along a path of escalating confrontations until one side or other loses decisively. To the extent that transitions occur without setting a precedent for compromise, the chances are reduced that any resultant democratic regime can be sustained and consolidated.

In addition, the likelihood of pacts is a function of the degree of formal political institutionalization in a regime. In corporatist regimes the parties to a political pact are the acknowledged leaders of major interest blocs within state and society; by carrying their supporters along, they can make agreements stick. In neopatrimonial regimes political leaders may represent no more than a tiny coterie of clients and may be unable to build a political consensus around any intralite agreement. The emerging political parties and civic organizations typically lack traditions, experience, and funds, and find it difficult to escape factionalism.⁴⁴ As a result, contending opposition leaders within a pluralistic social movement do not usually have the authenticity and legitimacy to strike a deal on behalf of all dissident factions. Pacts are only likely where well-developed institutions—for example, the military on the government side or political parties on the opposition side—present cohesive bargaining positions and demonstrate credible political clout. In other words, pacts tend to form after leaders build institutions that replace the shifting alliances of convenience that characterize neopatrimonial regimes.

Under neopatrimonialism, the prospect of political compromise depends more on the personality, management skills, and governing institutions of the incumbent ruler. A leader who has attempted to legitimate a personalistic regime with populist rhetoric—for example, of “peoples” democracy or “African” socialism—is more likely to respond positively to demands for political liberalization than is a leader who has ruled on the basis of claims of traditional paternalism or revolutionary purity. A leader who has allowed political rivals to live freely within the country is more

⁴² Frances Hagopian, “Democracy by Undemocratic Means? Elites, Political Pacts and Regime Transition in Brazil,” *Comparative Political Studies* 23, no. 2 (1990).

⁴³ Terry Lynn Karl, *Petroleum and Political Pacts: The Transition to Democracy in Venezuela*, Latin America no. 107 (Washington, D.C.: Wilson Center, 1981).

⁴⁴ Thus, by 1991, some 76 parties had been officially recognized in Cameroon, 42 in Guinea, 27 in Gabon, and allegedly over 200 in Zaire. In these countries, as well as in the Ivory Coast, the opposition's credibility and strength has been undermined by internal divisions, ethnic rivalries, and personal disputes. See Yves A. Fauré, “Nouvelle donne en Côte d'Ivoire,” *Politique Africaine* 20 (December 1985).

likely to strike a deal on the rules of transition than is a leader who has systematically eliminated opponents. But we contend that neopatrimonial practice reduces the possibility of the “grand” compromise of power sharing. Rather, a common condition of political transition is that the strongman and his entourage have to go.

4. *In neopatrimonial regimes, political transitions are struggles to establish legal rules.* As struggles over the rules of the political game, political transitions determine the future constellation of winners and losers in the socio-economic realm. Here, too, regime type shapes the status of rules and the nature of rule-making conflicts. Corporatist regimes elsewhere in the world may have been installed by extraconstitutional means and may have suspended constitutional rights. But to the extent that corporatist rule is bureaucratic, it is rule governed and elites and masses are acculturated to an orderly rule of law.

But because personalistic leaders enjoy sweeping discretion in making public decisions, political transitions in neopatrimonial regimes are concerned fundamentally with whether rules even matter.⁴⁵ The opposition leadership, which commonly includes lawyers within its ranks,⁴⁶ calls for a rule of law. Indeed, the law, in its different national and international manifestations, is one of the more potent weapons the opposition has at its disposal. In an effort to establish the primacy of legal rules, it challenges the regime to lift emergency regulations, allow registration of opposition parties, hold a sovereign national conference, limit the constitutional powers of the executive, or hold competitive elections. At some moment in the struggle, the contents of the constitution and the electoral laws become key points of contention. In other words, the opposition attempts to reintroduce rule-governed behavior after a prolonged period in which such niceties have been suspended.

Part of the opposition’s objective in establishing legal rules is to gain access to resources monopolized by the ruling clique. In the context of a democratic transition, the opposition is most immediately interested in the regime’s control of the media and other electoral campaign assets. In the longer run, business interests in the opposition may be keen to alter the rules of government intervention in the economy permanently. At this point, internal conflicts may emerge within the opposition over the extent

⁴⁵ Confronted by a journalist on national television with evidence that the government had disregarded its own laws in the manipulation of voter lists on the eve of the legislative elections of March 1992, the Cameroonian minister of territorial administration explained that “laws are made by men, and are no more than reference points.” Cited in Célestin Monga, “La recomposition du marché politique au Cameroun (1991–1992)” (Unpublished paper, GERDES, Cameroon, 1992), 10.

⁴⁶ The national bar associations played leading opposition roles in Cameroon, Mali, the Central African Republic, and Togo. See Paul John Marc Tedga, *Ouverture démocratique en Afrique Noire?* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1991), 64–72.

of regime transition, with old-guard politicians seeking to limit rule changes and thereby ensure that they can benefit from state patronage once they capture state power. Thus, the struggle over political rules is often a pretext or a prelude to even more fundamental economic struggles that are laid bare in efforts to strip neopatrimonial rulers of their power.

5. *During transitions from neopatrimonial regimes, middle-class elements align with the opposition.* Struggles over the status of property rights reveal the deeper structure of a regime's social base. The relationship between state and capital in Latin America and Southern Europe is very different from that in African countries. Corporatist regimes promote accumulation through "triple alliances" with foreign and national private capital, and they draw domestic political support from the expanding entrepreneurial middle classes.⁴⁷ This structure of political support has maintained or deepened great inequalities of wealth and income, which in turn limit the options for transition. Under capitalism, democracies can be installed gradually only if the distribution of assets is not to be disrupted; if they occur by a popular upsurge, a rapid transition, and the introduction of redistributive policies, right-wing forces may be prompted to intervene to reverse the transition. Some analysts argue that in order to achieve a stable democracy, the Right must do well in a founding election and the Left must accept the inviolability of the bourgeoisie's property rights.⁴⁸

Because neopatrimonial regimes are embedded in precapitalist societies, one would expect a different transition scenario in Africa. The pervasiveness of clientelism means that the state has actively undermined capitalist forms of accumulation. Property rights are imperfectly respected and there are powerful disincentives against private entrepreneurship and long-term productive investments. Unlike in Latin America, governing alliances between military rulers and national bourgeoisies are uncommon. Instead, the weak national bourgeoisies of Africa are frustrated by state ownership, overregulation, and official corruption. Rather than regarding the incumbent regime as the protector of property rights, private capital opposes the use of the state machinery by a bureaucratic bourgeoisie to appropriate property for itself. Thus, instead of demanding that property rights be ruled out of bounds, would-be capitalists want to use a transition from neopatrimonialism as an opportunity to include them in the new rules of the political game.

This explains the tendency of emergent middle classes in Africa to side with the democratic opposition rather than to uphold the incumbent gov-

⁴⁷ Peter Evans, *Dependent Development: The Alliance of Multinational, State and Local Capital in Brazil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); David Collier, ed., *The New Authoritarianism in Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

⁴⁸ O'Donnell and Schmitter (fn. 6), 62, 69. For a critique of these arguments, see Daniel H. Levine, "Paradigm Lost: Dependence to Democracy," *World Politics* 40 (April 1988).

ernment. Businessmen and professionals often take on political leadership roles in the opposition, drawing in other middle-class groups, like public servants, whose downward economic mobility is a powerful impetus to forge an alternative ruling coalition. These elements are unlikely to pose a threat to the acceptance of a new government established by a founding election, not only because any new government is likely to be more economically liberal than its predecessor but also because bourgeois elements are unlikely to turn to military officers in a quest to reverse democratization. In transitions from neopatrimonial rule, the threat of backlash comes mainly from the military acting alone, with the emergent middle classes being the strongest and most articulate advocates of civilian politics.

VARIATIONS IN NEOPATRIMONIAL TRANSITIONS IN AFRICA

The unifying theme of this paper is the concept of neopatrimonial rule. So far, we have defined the concept and explored its general implications for the dynamics of political transitions. Yet the variety of transition trajectories—occasionally democratic but more commonly blocked or flawed—that unfolded in Africa between 1989 and 1993 demands further explanation. Hence, recognizing that not all African leaders govern in identical ways, we now explore variations on the theme of neopatrimonial rule. Meaningful variants exist within the general type of African regime. These differences are due in part to the proclivities of individual leaders but, more importantly, to institutional structures that have evolved historically in response to political crises and needs.

First, regime variation can be traced to the political dynamics of the immediate postindependence years.⁴⁹ The circumstances in which different leaders consolidated power partly determines the degree of pluralism that came to characterize the existing regime. When a dominant party emerged early during the period of competitive party politics at independence, that party was typically able to integrate, co-opt, or eliminate other political parties and to install stable civilian single-party rule, at least until the first leader retired.⁵⁰ In the absence of a dominant party, ensuing regimes have been characterized by instability and a greater reliance on coercion, notably through military intervention.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Ruth Berins Collier, *Regimes in Tropical Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

⁵⁰ Numerous studies have chronicled and analyzed this process. The locus classicus remains Aristide Zolberg, *Creating Political Order: The Party States of West Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966). But see also Henry Bienen, *Tanzania: Party Transformation and Economic Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967); and William Foltz, "Political Opposition in Single-Party States of Tropical Africa," in Robert Dahl, ed., *Regimes and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973).

⁵¹ Henry Bienen, *Armies and Parties in Africa* (New York: Africana Publishing, 1979); Samuel Decalo, "The Morphology of Military Rule in Africa," in John Markakis and Michael Waller, eds.,

Partly overlapping this first set of factors, distinct variants of neopatrimonial regimes emerged as a result of specific historical attempts to overcome tensions created by ethnic, linguistic, and regional heterogeneity. Very few regimes in Africa adopted a discourse of exclusivity;⁵² the preference instead was to expend resources to promote cultural assimilation and a sense of nationhood.⁵³ Some leaders extended material inducements and social concessions to promote stability through various kinds of intraelite accommodation, arrangements that have resulted in relatively high levels of elite participation.⁵⁴ Governments have agreed to ethnic, communal, or regional quotas for official positions and rent-seeking opportunities, and traditional chiefs have been allowed to retain at least limited authority over their domains. Other regimes have pursued approaches that rely more extensively on a mixture of ideology, coercion, and strong limits to pluralism to maintain national unity and political stability. This has often been the case for radical military regimes, such as Ethiopia under Mengistu or Burkina Faso under Sankara, where state leaders have sought to rely less on material inducements or to place strict limits on beneficiaries.⁵⁵

Various typologies of African regimes have been advanced in the recent literature to capture such institutional differences.⁵⁶ Following Dahl's classic formulation,⁵⁷ we find it is useful to distinguish the neopatrimonial regimes in sub-Saharan Africa according to two distinct dimensions: the extent of competition (or contestation) and the degree of political participation (or inclusion).

First, African regimes have varied in the extent to which members of the political system are allowed to compete over elected positions or public pol-

Military Marxist Regimes in Africa (London: Frank Cass, 1976); and idem, *Coups and Army Rule in Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976).

⁵² The exceptions include South Africa, of course, but also arguably present-day Sudan and Mauritania, where Arab/Islamic regimes are increasingly excluding non-Arab/non-Muslim segments of the population.

⁵³ See, for example, Crawford Young, *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), esp. chap. 3.

⁵⁴ Bayart (fn. 21, 1989). See also Donald Rothchild and Victor Olorunsola, eds., *State versus Ethnic Claims: African Policy Dilemmas* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1983).

⁵⁵ On Ethiopia, see Christopher Clapham, "State, Society and Political Institutions in Revolutionary Ethiopia," in James Manor, ed., *Rethinking Third World Politics* (New York: Longman, 1991). On Burkina Faso, see René Otayek, "The Revolutionary Process in Burkina Faso," in Markakis and Waller (fn. 51), 95-96.

⁵⁶ For a proposal of seven regime types based loosely on seven diverse criteria, see Naomi Chazan et al., *Politics and Society in Contemporary Africa* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1988). For competing typologies, see also Crawford Young, *Ideology and Development in Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); Roger Charlton, "Dehomogenizing the Study of African Politics: The Case of Interstate Influence on Regime Formation and Change," *Plural Societies* 14, no. 1-2 (1983); and Dirk Berg-Schlosser, "African Political Systems: Typology and Performance," *Comparative Political Studies* 17, no. 1 (1984).

⁵⁷ Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).

icy. Even when state elites have worked to eliminate, control, or co-opt opposition parties, they have sometimes tolerated pluralism within the single party or lobbying activities of nonstate associations. At one extreme, opposition parties have formed and even been allowed into the legislature in a small number of countries. At the other extreme, some regimes have banned any contestation of the policies formulated by an inner group of politicians. In between, islands of contestation have been tolerated, either independently of the state or formally under the authority of the ruling party.

Second, African regimes have varied in the degree of political participation allowed, most obviously, through the timing and frequency of legislative and executive elections. Postcolonial African regimes that have held elections have rarely limited the franchise. In contrast to the historical record in Europe or Latin America, women in Africa have generally enjoyed the same formal political rights as men. Nor have African states instituted literacy, property, or income requirements for the right to vote. Nonetheless, decision making in public affairs in African regimes is typically restricted to elites with a narrow social base. Only rarely is the population at large consulted in policy-making, and then through a single party or approved membership associations such as farmer cooperatives or trade unions.

Competition and participation may vary independently of each other. We use these two dimensions to construct a schema of political regimes in Africa, as presented in Figure 1. The axes of the figure depict the extent to which a regime is competitive (along a scale from authoritarianism to democracy) and participatory (along a scale from exclusiveness to inclusiveness). By using the Dahlian dimensions, we endeavor to ensure consistency with existing theoretical literature and comparability across world regions. At the four corners of the table lie four ideal regime categories, for which we adopt Remmer's conceptual terminology: exclusionary authoritarianism, inclusionary authoritarianism, exclusionary democracy, and inclusionary democracy.⁵⁸

Actual regimes occupy real-world locations within the space bounded by the idealized extremes. The specific coordinates of actual regimes derive from the extent to which they are more or less competitive and participatory. While transition from exclusionary authoritarianism involves changes along both dimensions, democratization is essentially a process of securing increased opportunities for political competition. Hence we draw finer distinctions along this dimension. We thus derive six regime variants for Africa.

⁵⁸ Remmer (fn. 2).

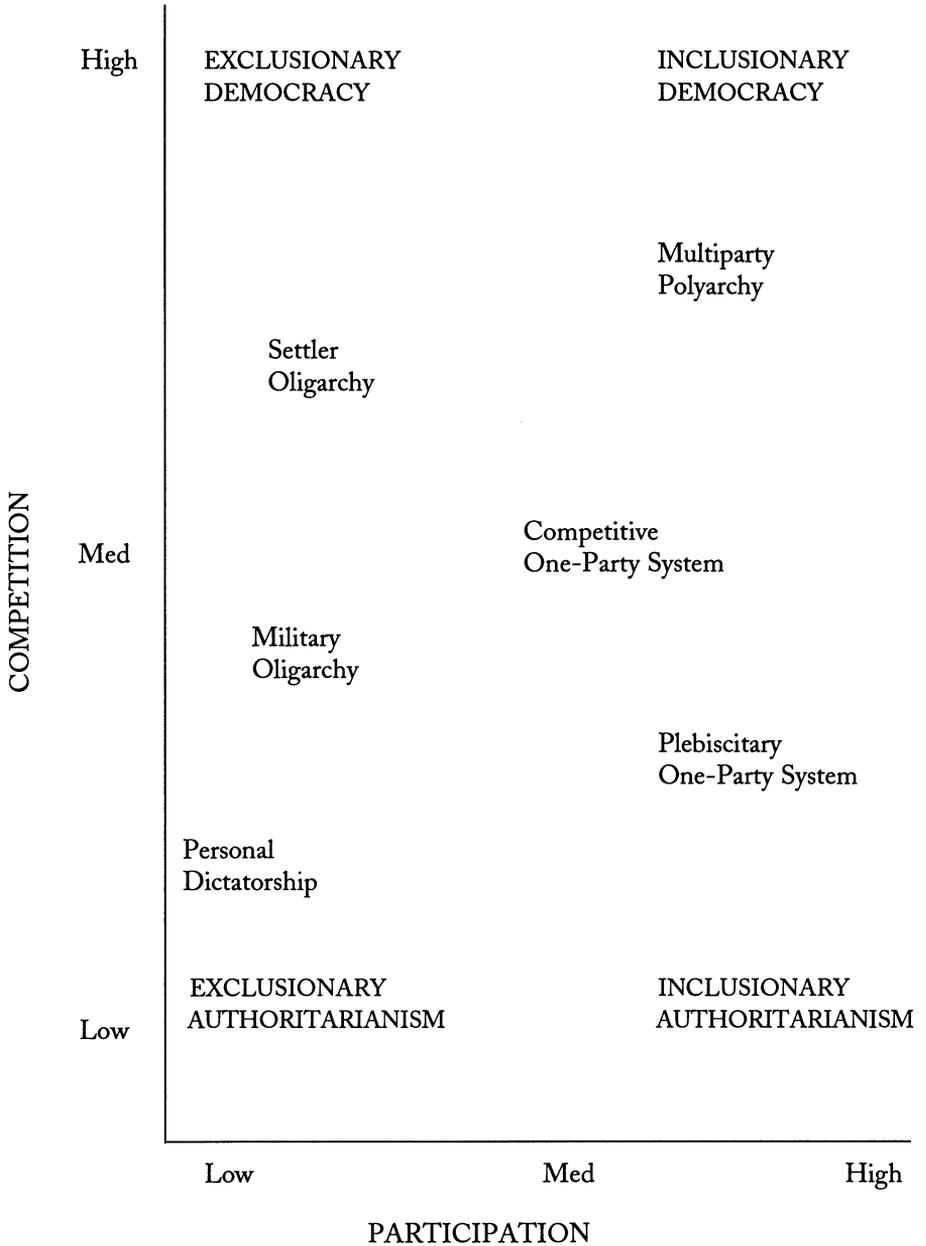


FIGURE 1
REGIME VARIANTS IN AFRICA

Four of these regime variants are consistent with personal rule and can be regarded as varieties of neopatrimonialism: personal dictatorship, military oligarchy, and plebiscitary and competitive one-party systems.⁵⁹ They are distinguished by whether the strongman's following is broadly or narrowly mobilized (participation) and by the plurality of political association within governing institutions (competition). When the supremo "subcontracts" executive functions to subordinate barons, power is divided and decisions are made only after some degree of competition and bargaining has occurred among the powerful. But because these barons recruit clients and operate state agencies as personal fiefdoms, they tend to reproduce varieties of neopatrimonialism rather than another genus of regime. Although party and military organizations may have been built to buttress a regime, these structures have not been institutionalized to the extent that they inhibit a strong leader from taking personal control of decision making.

We wish to stress that the proposed regime variants are neither rigid nor immutable. Actual African regimes reflect their own peculiar histories, which even during the postcolonial period may encompass shifts from one regime variant to another. In part as a result of these changes, actual regimes may display characteristics of more than one variant, with combinations of personal dictatorship with military or single-party structures being quite common. In fact, this possibility is inherent in the logic of our framework, which proposes neopatrimonial rule as a master concept that embraces a variety of subsidiary regime variants. But even if a given regime at a particular time is not a perfect exemplar of one of the variants in our model, it can usually be categorized roughly for analytic purposes (see Figure 2).

The remaining regime variants found in Africa are settler oligarchy and multiparty polyarchy. Since they are not neopatrimonial regimes, we limit our discussion to a few comments.

Multiparty polyarchies display relatively high levels of both participation and competition and have already completed a democratic political transition.⁶⁰ A plurality of political parties contest open elections and voters enjoy guarantees of a universal franchise and equality before the law. African regimes that have sustained this type of regime for at least a decade include Botswana, Gambia, Mauritius, Senegal, and Zimbabwe. Each of these

⁵⁹ These categories and labels build on existing typologies. Ruth Collier distinguishes military, multiparty, and two types of one-party regime: plebiscitary and competitive. Huntington identifies four regime types: personal, one-party, and military regimes, plus the special category of racial oligarchy for South Africa.

⁶⁰ Dahl (fn. 57) labeled regimes that had been "highly popularized and liberalized" as polyarchies rather than democracies because, he argued, no large system in the real world is fully democratized (p. 8).

Personal dictatorships	Zaire, Malawi, Equatorial Guinea, Somalia, Djibouti, Swaziland, Guinea ^b
Military oligarchies	Nigeria, Ghana, CAR, Uganda, Sudan, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Burundi, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Liberia, Niger, Comoros, Lesotho
Plebiscitary one-party systems	Gabon, Togo, Congo, Benin, Madagascar, Guinea-Bissau, Cameroon ^b
Competitive one-party systems	Tanzania, Kenya, Zambia, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Cape Verde, São Tomé, Seychelles
Settler oligarchies	South Africa, Namibia
Multiparty polyarchies	Botswana, Gambia, Mauritius, Senegal, Zimbabwe

FIGURE 2
AFRICAN COUNTRIES BY REGIME VARIANT
(IN 1989)^a

^a That is, before the emergence of recent democracy protests.

^b All countries have particular histories that cannot be neatly encapsulated within static analytic categories. In the figure above, African countries that experienced regime changes in the postcolonial period were categorized according to the regime variant that prevailed for the longest interval and that therefore had the most formative influence on the structure of political institutions. For example, whereas Guinea may have become a military oligarchy by 1989, it had been a personal dictatorship for the previous three decades. And whereas President Biya officially introduced a measure of political competition within the ruling RPD in 1985, Cameroon had formerly displayed—and in important part still displays—the institutional attributes of a plebiscitary regime. In some countries, notably Angola and Mozambique, internal war since independence has precluded the consolidation of any clear regime variant.

regimes could be further democratized by curtailing intimidation of opposition supporters (Zimbabwe), guaranteeing the neutrality of electoral officials (Senegal), or strengthening opposition parties to enable an electoral change of government (Gambia, Botswana). While these regimes are imperfectly democratic, personal power is significantly checked by formal-legal rules, leadership turnover, and a measure of objectivity in decision making.

Settler oligarchies approximate exclusionary democracy. This form of bureaucratic regime is found in places in Latin America and Africa where European settlers gained independent control of the state.⁶¹ We consider the settler variable to be just as formative of the institutional structure of postcolonial politics as the culture of the colonizer. In these regimes the dominant racial group uses the instruments of law to deny political rights to ethnic majorities, usually through a restrictive franchise and emergency legislation. At the same time, however, because settlers permit a good degree of political competition within their own ranks, settler oligarchy, while exclusionary, is also competitive.⁶² The classic contemporary case in Africa is, of course, South Africa, but at least half a dozen other African countries, mostly in the eastern and southern subcontinent, have a settler colonial heritage. Comments on the transition prospects of this regime type can be found in the conclusion.

We now examine in greater detail the characteristics of the four main neopatrimonial regime variants and predict the distinct dynamics of political transition in each case.

PERSONAL DICTATORSHIP

This regime variant is the quintessence of neopatrimonialism. It is highly exclusionary because the strongman rules by decree; institutions of participation exist in name only and cannot check the absolute powers of the chief executive. The regime disallows even a semblance of political competition, for example, by physically eliminating or indefinitely incarcerating opponents. The strongman may even preempt his own removal from office by declaring himself "president for life."

A personal dictator can emerge from either the army or a dominant political party but then consolidates power by weakening these formal political structures or by asserting total control over them.⁶³ He rules per-

⁶¹ See Michael Bratton, "Patterns of Development and Underdevelopment: Toward a Comparison," *International Studies Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (1982); and Remmer (fn. 2), 71-76.

⁶² Remmer (fn. 2) even holds that "it is possible for exclusion to be achieved even more effectively under competitive political arrangements than under authoritarian ones. Exclusionary democracy not only makes it possible to secure regime support from dominant social groups in a highly stratified society, it obviates the costs of coercion and problems of regime legitimacy that are associated with exclusionary authoritarianism" (p. 74).

⁶³ Writing about Mobutu's consolidation of power, Callaghy (fn. 21) speaks of the systematic "dismantlement of inherited structures, especially departicipation and depoliticization," including the

sonally by controlling the flow of public revenues and selectively disbursing rewards to a narrow entourage of familial, ethnic, or factional clients. He takes exclusive charge of policy-making (rather than relying on technocratic planning) and implements instructions through personal emissaries (rather than formal institutions). In recent times, the archetypal personal dictators in Africa have been Idi Amin of Uganda, Bokassa of Central African Republic, and Macias Nguema of Equatorial Guinea. Of those still in power and currently confronting demands for political transition, we refer below to Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire and Hastings Banda of Malawi (see Figure 2).

The personalization of power in these regimes has several implications for the dynamics of political transition. First, transitions are likely to be driven almost completely by forces outside of the state, either in domestic society or from the international arena. Personal rulers are unlikely to initiate political liberalization from above or relinquish power without a struggle; they have to be forced out.⁶⁴ Self-generated reform is problematic because the regime has no mechanism of competition or participation to bring alternative ideas to the surface. Power is so concentrated that the disposition of the regime is synonymous with the personal fate of the supreme ruler. Real political change is unlikely as long as the ruler remains, since he has made all the rules. Likewise, opportunity for regime change occurs only with the death, deposition, or flight of the strongman, which becomes the primary objective of the opposition throughout the transition.

For his part, the supreme leader tends to identify the sustainability of the regime with his own political survival and is likely to make major efforts to ride the wave of protest. This confusion between self and national interest is not unique to personal dictatorships, but it has more serious implications there, given the institutional realities of these regimes. Leaders in other regimes might believe themselves to be essential, but they are rudely reminded of the need to compromise by other institutions, for example, when the military and judiciary refuse to repress protest. Because personal dictators can deploy public revenues (however limited these may be) in support of personal survival, they can avoid accountability to the state's own institutions.⁶⁵

emasculatation of parliament, the elimination of the position of prime minister, the banning of all parties and youth organizations, and the centralization of state power away from the provinces to Kinshasa (p. 171).

⁶⁴ For a similar argument, see Snyder (fn. 17).

⁶⁵ News reports in mid-1992 indicated that Zaire's national currency, printed in Germany, was being flown directly to Mobutu's luxury yacht on the Zaire River, for use as he saw fit (*Africa News*, May 24, 1992). Amidst a crumbling economy, in which the average civil servant had not been paid in months, Mobutu was still personally ensuring the support of key followers, including elements of the armed forces charged with protecting him. See also "Mobutu's Monetary Mutiny," *Africa Confidential*, February 5, 1993; and "Zaire, a Country Sliding into Chaos," *Guardian Weekly*, August 8, 1993.

The willingness of personal dictators to step down often depends on whether they fear prosecution for their egregious abuse of state powers and privileges. They tend to cling desperately to power. Even when friendly powers promise protection from extradition demands as an inducement to accept retirement, leaders with a poor human rights record and a history of state violence may hesitate to give up the protection of office. They believe the opposition's promises to prosecute them and, recalling the ignominious exile of Marcos of the Philippines or the Shah of Iran, fear they can never be safe.

As a result, the demise of personal dictators is usually protracted and painful, with incumbents tenaciously attempting to control the transition. President Mobutu of Zaire provides perhaps the best example of this process. Although officially acceding to popular and Western pressures to democratize, he has exercised considerable guile to manipulate events and maintain effective power. He has flouted his own reforms, subverted the constitution, manipulated the electoral process, and tried to bribe, intimidate, and co-opt the opposition; he has been willing even to destroy his nation's economic and political structures.⁶⁶ Over time, the state's authority over territory and the very existence of the state as an organized body may become a fiction. The leader shrinks to little more than a local warlord who survives by controlling residual resources and retaining the loyalty of a segment of the old coercive apparatus.

Transitions in personal dictatorships are also conditioned by the weaknesses of political institutions. In the absence of institutional mechanisms for political competition, the protagonists find difficulty in reaching a compromise formula to end the regime. Because it provides few institutional channels for negotiation over rules and power sharing, personalistic rule instead gives rise to all-or-nothing power struggles. As far as participation is concerned, personal dictatorships are characterized by an absence of civic associations. Even if the crisis has generated an outpouring of social protest against the regime, there are few mass organizations capable of effectively contesting the regime. True, opposition parties, human rights organizations, and trade unions mushroom as soon as the regime's repressive capabilities weaken, but they are fragmented, impoverished, and themselves lacking traditions of participatory politics. In this context, the emergence of the church as a primary actor in the transitions reflects, as much as its own prestige and power, the scarcity of credible secular candidates to lead the opposition.⁶⁷ The absence of institutions and habits of competition and par-

⁶⁶ René Lemarchand, "Mobutu and the National Conference: The Arts of Political Survival" (Manuscript, University of Florida, 1992).

⁶⁷ See Tedga (fn. 46).

icipation combine virtually to eliminate the chances that a transition from personal dictatorship will end in the consolidation of a democratic order.

PLEBISCITARY ONE-PARTY SYSTEM

This is a more inclusionary form of authoritarian regime in which a personal ruler orchestrates political rituals of mass endorsement for himself, his officeholders, and his policies. Voters are mobilized and controlled through the mechanism of one-party "plebiscites."⁶⁸ Electoral turnout rates and affirmative votes for the president typically exceed 90 percent, results that cannot be achieved by electoral fraud alone. Between elections, the regime employs a party machine to distribute patronage to a wider array of economic and regional interests than is customary in personal dictatorships. While more inclusive, plebiscitary one-party systems are nevertheless decidedly undemocratic because they preclude genuine political competition.⁶⁹ Opposition political parties are proscribed and only one candidate from the official party appears on the ballot. As rituals of ratification, plebiscites can postpone but not eradicate a legitimacy crisis.

One-party plebiscitary systems in Africa are usually headed by first-generation leaders, whether civilian or military. If civilian, the leader is usually the "grand old man" of nationalist politics who won independence in the early 1960s; if military, he commonly came to power in the first round of coups in the late 1960s or early 1970s. This latter group of leaders typically tries to civilianize and legitimize the regime by abandoning military rank and uniform and attempting to construct mass mobilizing political parties. Examples include Presidents Eyadema in Togo and Bongo in Gabon.

In these regimes, national conferences are the distinctive institution and watershed event of the transition. Patterned on both traditional village assemblies and the Estates General of the French Revolution, national conferences bring together national elites to address the country's political problems and attempt to formulate new constitutional rules. National conferences have been held in over half a dozen West and Central African states, resulting in governmental changes in Benin, Congo, and Niger, and the exertion of intense political pressure on incumbent rulers in Zaire and Togo.⁷⁰

We argue that the characteristics of the plebiscitary one-party regime make the national conference appealing to both opposition and ruling elite. These regimes have a tradition of participation, notably within the single

⁶⁸ Collier (fn. 49), 104–8.

⁶⁹ For country examples of these practices, see Bayart (fn. 21) on the Ahidjo regime in Cameroon (pp. 141–84); and Comi M. Toulabor, *Le Togo sous Eyadema* (Paris: Karthala, 1986), on Togo.

⁷⁰ See Lemarchand (fn. 29); Pearl T. Robinson, "The National Conference Phenomenon in Francophone Africa" (Paper presented at the colloquium on the Economics of Political Liberalization in Africa, Harvard University, March 6–7, 1992); and Fabien Eboussi-Boulaga, *Les conférences nationales en Afrique Noire: Une affaire à suivre* (Paris: Karthala, 1993).

party, but much less real effective political competition. The regime has sustained a modicum of legitimacy through ritualistic plebiscitary elections that, while seriously flawed as democratic instruments, nonetheless provide the citizenry with a limited political voice.⁷¹ The regime is attached to these rituals, which it considers politically useful. When the crisis of legitimacy erupts, it is predisposed to holding a national conference—an institution that harks back to familiar forms of direct democracy but poses little real threat to the regime. Such a forum will allow the regime to make minimal concessions, let off steam, and perhaps even end up with a show of support. Rulers believe that they can turn such events to their advantage, just as they have always done.⁷²

But the plebiscitary tradition has created enough political space for the emergence of a nascent opposition, to whom the national conference also appeals for several different reasons. First, the existing rules of the political game provide considerable built-in advantages to the regime, and the opposition quickly understands that reform of those rules is a prerequisite for political change. The opposition conceives of the national conference as an impartial public forum in which to refashion more advantageous ground rules that for the first time will include provisions for genuine political competition. Second, participatory structures are strong enough that the regime is incapable of completely disregarding or repressing calls for a national conference. Unlike more competitive systems, however, they are too weak for the transition to advance without a forum such as the national conference; the opposition is too divided and inexperienced to contest elections successfully, particularly if they are carried out by the administration under the current rules. The opposition is typically composed of several dozen parties, few of which have a national appeal or program; furthermore, they are poorly organized outside of a few urban areas. As in Ivory Coast and Gabon, when the regime organized quick elections, opposition leaders know they are likely to lose an electoral contest in which the regime holds all the cards. The national conference appeals to the opposition for strategic reasons, therefore, because it is perceived as a forum that will less expose its weaknesses.

Leaders and oppositions thus proceed toward a national conference with very different expectations. The former see it as a harmless participatory ritual that will provide the regime with a much needed boost, whereas the latter see it as the first step in a democratic takeover. Such a misunder-

⁷¹ Collier (fn. 49), 119–24. See also Aristide Zolberg, “The Structure of Political Conflict in the New States of Tropical Africa,” *American Political Science Review* 62, no. 2 (1968).

⁷² As Allen (fn. 24) argues in relation to the national conference in Benin: “It was conceived originally by the government as a means of discussing mainly the political and economic problems of the time . . . and of co-opting the opposition into a joint solution in which the government would retain the leading role” (p. 48).

standing cannot last long, and the critical point comes when the national conference demands full sovereign power. The regime resists, recognizing that real political competition would pose grave dangers to its hold on power. The ultimate outcome, which for these transitions is hard to predict, then depends on the relative strengths of the parties: strong leaders like Biya or Eyadema were able to avoid the conference or limit its impact; more desperate leaders like Kerekou and Sassou Nguesso gave in, convincing themselves it had become the best alternative.

Although the national conference is a logical extension of the institutional configuration of plebiscitary regimes, it is important to note that contingent forces do influence whether or not they occur. In particular, specific leaders have learned from the transition experiences in neighboring countries. Initially, leaders in Benin and Congo quickly agreed to national conferences in the belief that their regime would survive largely unscathed. In each case, however, the conference turned into a devastating public inquisition into patrimonial malfeasance and incompetence: it ultimately stripped the leaders of executive powers. Other leaders learned the lesson that there was little to be gained from agreeing to a conference, and they have steadfastly resisted opposition demands. Plebiscitary forms continue to appeal to these leaders, but they now seek them elsewhere, for example, in organized mass marches on behalf of the regime.

MILITARY OLIGARCHY

Military oligarchies are exclusionary regimes in the sense that elections (even mock elections) are suspended and all decisions are made by a narrow elite behind closed doors. Although there is a visible personal leader, power is not concentrated exclusively in his hands. Rather, decisions are made collectively by a junta, committee, or cabinet that may include civilian advisers and technocrats in addition to military officers. There is a degree of debate within the elite, and objective criteria may be brought to bear in assessing policy options. A relatively professional civil or military hierarchy implements policy, and executive institutions are maintained in at least a token state.⁷³

Military oligarchies in Africa tend to be led by a younger generation of junior military officers that came to power in a second, third, or later round of coups during the late 1970s and the 1980s. Political participation is severely circumscribed because there are no elections of any kind, especially in the early years of military rule. Existing political parties and many civic associations are banned, although in self-professed radical regimes such as Ethiopia or Congo, the military has usually established "people's

⁷³ Bienen (fn. 51), 122–45; Decalo (fn. 51, *Coups and Army Rule in Africa*), 231–54.

committees" or a vanguard party to disseminate its message.⁷⁴ Even when military oligarchs espouse a populist ideology, however, their methods of rule do not include genuine participation, at least not until these leaders begin to make good on promises to return to civilian rule—as Huntington noted, most militaries harbor a deep distrust of politics.⁷⁵ Yet, even when they would like to, military elites lack the organizational capability to develop grassroots support.⁷⁶ This variant of neopatrimonial regime is exemplified by the governments of Jerry Rawlings in Ghana and Ibrahim Babangida in Nigeria.

Managed transitions from above are most likely in a military oligarchy. Because leaders come to power by force and govern with force, these regimes commonly encounter a crisis of legitimacy, which also results from their inability to deliver the economic growth they had promised during the takeover, the population's democratic aspirations, and the military's own promises of an eventual return to civilian rule. Yet the eventuality of a political transition is inherent to the logic of most military regimes: military oligarchs can respond to the crisis by renewing promises of a managed transition and agreeing to a more precise and perhaps shorter timetable. Thus, in Guinea and Ghana popular discontent in 1990 and 1991 compelled the regimes to speed up a managed transition that had been allowed to lapse. Military regimes as varied as Burundi, CAR, Guinea, Ghana, Lesotho, Nigeria, and Uganda have all been undergoing managed transitions since 1991. On the other hand, the annulment of the May 1993 Nigerian elections by General Babangida indicates dramatically that many of these promises to hand back power may be less than genuine.⁷⁷ And the reactionary coups that followed elections in both Nigeria and Burundi emphasize that military forces are loath to abdicate power and may easily reverse democratic gains.

The degree of military penetration of polity and society is a key regime variable in determining the prospects for regime transition. Where the military is not immersed in governmental affairs, it can easily adopt a hands-off attitude; but where it has led or participated in the governing coalition,

⁷⁴ Even then, the military has sought to limit the power and autonomy of the party, despite Leninist principles regarding the supremacy of the party over all other political institutions. See Decalo (fn. 51, "Morphology of Military Rule in Africa"), 134–35.

⁷⁵ Samuel Huntington writes: "The problem is military opposition to politics. Military leaders can easily envision themselves in a guardian role; they can also picture themselves as the far seeing impartial promoters of social and economic reform in their societies. But with rare exceptions, they shrink from assuming the role of political organizer. In particular, they condemn political parties." See Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 243.

⁷⁶ Henry Bienen, "Military Rule and Political Processes: Nigerian Examples," *Comparative Politics* 10 (January 1978).

⁷⁷ On these events, see "Nigerian Military Rulers Annul Election," *New York Times*, June 24, 1993; and "Nigeria: About Turn!" *Africa Confidential*, July 30, 1993.

it necessarily plays a more directive role. The latter is true of the regimes we classify as military oligarchies, in which small networks of military men dominate decision making with a shallow stratum of senior civil servants, and participatory politics is severely limited. In contrast to Latin America, however, African military rulers are more reticent about handing power back to civilians, and they initiate managed transitions either without great sincerity or in response to popular protest and pressures.⁷⁸ In this sense, among others, transitions from military oligarchies remain typical of the general neopatrimonial pattern.⁷⁹

A managed transition appeals to the military for several reasons. First, it flatters the military's idealized view of itself as a rational, orderly, and organized force trying to impose order on a discordant civilian political process. For military oligarchs, the biggest challenge is the gradual introduction of political participation. The efforts of Babangida and Rawlings to engineer the transition process, specifying rules about the formation of voluntary associations, political parties, and phasing in elections, are revealing in this respect. Second, the military's near monopoly on the means of coercion significantly enhances its control over the dynamics and outcomes of the transition. Maintaining popular support and legitimacy during the transition is less crucial for military governments, which can resort to force and repression more systematically than can civilian regimes.⁸⁰

Moreover, because military oligarchs have repressed participatory politics, the transition unfolds with little or no organized opposition powerful enough to contest the regime's timetable. Military oligarchies have, for example, typically imposed a ban on party activity. In more pluralistic systems, political leaders may want to manage the transition unilaterally, but their plans are overturned by civic organizations strong enough to push their disagreements with the regime. In military oligarchies, by contrast, these organizations are weak and have no choice but to accept the government's plans. Moreover, whatever defects the managed transition may have, it does have the advantage of reducing uncertainty and imposing on the state a kind of accountability that weak social actors may find advantageous.⁸¹ For its part, the regime finds the reduction in political uncertain-

⁷⁸ Christopher Clapham and George Philip, "The Political Dilemmas of Military Regimes," in Clapham and Philip, eds., *The Political Dilemmas of Military Regimes* (London: Croom Helm, 1985).

⁷⁹ For a discussion of this point, see Claude Welch, "Cincinnatus in Africa: The Possibility of Military Withdrawal from Politics," in Michael F. Lofchie, ed., *The State of the Nations: Constraints on Development in Independent Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971).

⁸⁰ Nonetheless, the military coup by junior officers that toppled the Traoré regime in Mali in March 1991 shows that there are limits to the extent to which even a military regime can rely on force to maintain its power. See Jane Turritin, "Mali: People Topple Traoré," *Review of African Political Economy* 52 (November 1991).

⁸¹ As Lemarchand (fn. 29) argues: "Transitions from above are the more promising in terms of their ability to 'deliver' democracy in that they tend to be rather specific about the time frame, procedural

ty appealing; it can promote political compromises that bring outsiders back in, protect the position of the military as an institution, limit the possibilities of getting punished for its role in various abuses of power, and slow down or halt the transition if it begins to evolve in an unfavorable direction.⁸²

COMPETITIVE ONE-PARTY SYSTEM

This variant of the one-party system is as inclusive as the plebiscitary variant but also (as the label suggests) somewhat more competitive. This regime is distinguished from the military oligarchy by the locus of limited competition at the mass level. Elections in these systems allow for two or more candidates in party primaries or parliamentary elections. Voters possess a restricted electoral choice among candidates from a single official party with an established policy platform. They seem sufficiently attracted by the available choices to sustain turnout figures at relatively high, though declining, levels.⁸³ Such regimes have also been relatively stable, resisting military intervention.

As an aspect of institutional longevity, competitive one-party regimes are often headed by nationalist founding fathers like Kaunda of Zambia and Houphouët-Boigny of Ivory Coast.⁸⁴ In some cases, the original ruler has previously engineered a smooth but nondemocratic leadership transition to a hand-picked successor (such as Moi of Kenya or Mwinyi in Tanzania). In these regimes, long-serving leaders have consolidated and

steps and overall strategy of transition. Unlike what often happens with transitions from below, the net result is to reduce uncertainty" (p. 10).

⁸² In addition to the aborted transition in Nigeria, one might note events in Ghana, where Rawlings lifted the ban on political parties in May 1992 in preparation for pluralist elections in November, while simultaneously having the constitution rewritten to protect members of the ruling Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) from prosecution by future governments. Rawlings won the elections of November 1992, in a contest widely perceived to have been marred by extensive fraud; see David Abdulai, "Rawlings Wins' Ghana's Presidential Elections," *Africa Today* 39 (Fall 1992), 66-71. In Uganda, President Museveni slowed down his country's managed transition in order to give himself time to build a new political party with a broad ethnoregional base; see *Africa Confidential*, April 17, 1992.

⁸³ These trends can be attributed to elite efforts at demobilization of formerly active participants and the co-optation or elimination of opposition power centers. They are well covered by Nelson Kasfir, *The Shrinking Political Arena: Participation and Ethnicity in African Politics with a Case Study of Uganda* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976). On the characteristics of single-party elections in Africa, see the following: D. G. Lavroff, ed., *Aux urnes l'Afrique! Elections et pouvoirs en Afrique Noire* (Paris: Pedone, 1978); Naomi Chazan, "African Voters at the Polls: A Re-Examination of the Role of Elections in Africa Politics," *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 17 (July 1979); and Fred M. Hayward, *Elections in Independent Africa* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1987). On competitive single-party elections in Tanzania and Kenya, see Goran Hyden and Colin Leys, "Elections and Politics in Single-Party Systems: The Case of Kenya and Tanzania," *British Journal of Political Science* 2 (April 1972); and Jankees Van Donge and Athumani Liviga, "The 1985 Tanzanian Parliamentary Elections: A Conservative Election," *African Affairs* 88 (January 1989).

⁸⁴ Ivory Coast moved progressively to competitive primaries within the single party after 1980. See Tessi Bakary, "Côte d'Ivoire: Une décentralisation politique centralisée," *Géopolitique Africaine* 2 (June 1986).

institutionalized support in ruling parties and are, or consider themselves, politically secure.⁸⁵ They tolerate a degree of pluralism, which allows for significant opposition to the government on the fringes of the single party, in the press, and in various civic associations, which are strong by African standards.

These regimes are vulnerable to collapse when economic crisis and donor-mandated economic policy reform programs cut the resources available to the ruler for managing the political game. The rotation of the political personnel becomes more frenzied, with the ranks of outsiders swelling and security declining for insiders. This paves the way for discontent and recriminations. The political transition is sparked by an upsurge of popular sentiment against the regime, which then causes stress in the elite coalition. The first casualty of political crisis tends to be the sustainability of the integrative formulas that cemented national unity and ensured political stability. The pluralistic mechanisms that promoted elite accommodation and compromise now hasten the transition and at the same time channel it.

Although the rules of the political game favor the regime, the opposition is confident enough to move directly to an election without first convening a national conference. They calculate that there are adequate opportunities to win a multiparty election under existing institutional arrangements. They demand only minor adjustments to the rules of participation and competition to ensure that elections are free and fair.⁸⁶

Incumbents respond according to whether they are first- or second-generation leaders. Old-guard nationalists like Houphouët or Kaunda calculate on the basis of their past electoral record that they still enjoy personal political legitimacy and that their parties have the organizational strength to win a competitive election. As a result, they are willing to accept the opposition's call for elections.⁸⁷ That regular elections are held distinguishes these regimes from others in Africa. Rulers see them as a mechanism for retaining power, confident not only that they retain substantial support within the population but also that official control over the press and the electoral machinery, plus the availability of public funds to finance the rul-

⁸⁵ Henry Bienen and Nicolas van de Walle, "Of Time and Power in Africa," *American Political Science Review* 83 (March 1989).

⁸⁶ The 1991 transition in Zambia was "a struggle over the rules of the political game and the resources by which it is played (in which) . . . the ruling party employ(ed) all its strength to tilt the rules of political competition in its own favor." See Michael Bratton, "Zambia Starts Over," *Journal of Democracy* 3, no. 2 (1992), 82. Even so, the opposition successfully forced incumbent president Kaunda to forgo a referendum on multiparty politics and move directly to elections. They also felt confident enough to contest the October 1991 election under a less-than-perfect voter register and constitution.

⁸⁷ In the case of Ivory Coast at least, this calculation proved to be sound. Thus, regarding Ivory Coast, Fauré (fn. 44) argues that the victory of the ex-single party was due to the fact that "the government, thanks to its effective and very loyal territorial administration, and to the PDCI apparatus, present all over the country down to the most isolated hamlet, controlled electoral operations throughout . . . and all official information sources" (p. 37).

ing party, will ensure a comfortable electoral victory.

The situation is more troubling for second-generation civilian leaders who lack the historical legitimacy of their predecessors. Without a well-established personal political base, they are less willing to risk multiparty elections; instead, they prevaricate and delay. Mwinyi has stretched out the transition in Tanzania for more than half a decade. When, by 1992, Moi could no longer avoid elections, he tried to restrict debate about political reform, amended the electoral code to his own advantage, and pumped up the national money supply for a massive vote-buying campaign.⁸⁸ The likelihood of ethnic tensions increases sharply in these regimes if the transition does not proceed smoothly. Leaders who lack confidence about their popular base may attempt to develop one through ethnic demagoguery once the old integrative formulas no longer appear capable of assuring political stability.

Despite these very real obstacles, the prospects for a democratic process are greater for transitions from competitive one-party regimes than from other forms of neopatrimonial regime. The reason lies in the structure of political institutions in which competitive one-party elections laid a foundation for both political participation and contestation. While incumbent and opposition forces in a transition distrust each other deeply and squabble over constitutional and electoral regulations until the eleventh hour, they also are in sufficient agreement on the rules of the political game to allow an election to take place, with each side betting it has a chance to win. Even if the losers of a transition election complain about malfeasance, they will often eventually and reluctantly accept its results and begin to organize to win the next one.⁸⁹

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In this essay, we have argued against the prevalent view that political transitions are driven contingently and unpredictably by the initiatives and responses of key actors. We have also contended that a search for democratic prerequisites that focuses on deep structures of economic and social

⁸⁸ Joel Barkan, "Kenya: Lessons from a Flawed Election," *Journal of Democracy* 4 (July 1993); Bard-Anders Andraesson, Gisela Geisler, and Arne Tostensen, *A Hobbled Democracy: The Kenya General Elections, 1992* (Bergen, Norway: Chr. Michelson Institute, 1993).

⁸⁹ On the Ivory Coast, for example, see the sanguine assessment of the recent progress being made toward a stable pluralist system in Yves A. Fauré, "L'Économie politique d'une démocratisation: Éléments d'analyse à propos de l'expérience récente de la Côte d'Ivoire," *Politique Africaine* 43 (October 1991), 46-47. And however flawed the December 1992 election in Kenya, the transition led to democratic gains. True, the opposition did not win the election, but nowhere do we claim that this is a requirement for a democratic transition. Instead, the opposition has de facto accepted the results of the election by taking its seats in parliament; see Barkan fn. 88. Moreover, there is a new plural division of power in Kenya and a functioning opposition in parliament. These are positive factors for democratic consolidation that even paradigmatic African cases of democratic transition like Zambia do not yet enjoy. On the importance of opposition for democratic consolidation, see Stephanie Lawson, "Conceptual Issues in the Comparative Study of Regime Change and Democratization," *Comparative Politics* 25, no. 2 (1993).

modernity overlooks important proximate political influences. Instead, we think that the institutional characteristics of the preexisting political regime impart structure to the dynamics, and to a lesser extent the outcomes, of political transitions. Regime type provides the context in which contingent factors play themselves out. If this claim is true for the weakly institutionalized neopatrimonial regimes in Africa, then it challenges political scientists to reveal the structures underlying regime transitions from more bureaucratized forms of authoritarianism in other world regions.

Our main point is that political transitions from neopatrimonial rule display distinctive features. These intervals of dramatic political change are likely to be driven from below rather than initiated by elites; they tend to be marked by factional struggles over patronage rather than by divisions of political ideology; and they are usually backed rather than resisted by emerging middle classes. Evidence for these arguments is found in the dynamics of current transitions in sub-Saharan Africa, in which the relations between state and society are shaped by personal authority, the absence of stable property rights and opportunities for capitalist accumulation, and the weakness of civic associations and political organizations. These characteristics impinge decisively on the way that political transitions unfold. Even if transitions are characterized by considerable uncertainty and some serendipity, the outcome of political struggles hinges on the way that power had been exercised by personalistic rulers.

When subjecting Africa to comparative analysis, we have tried to avoid reducing a complex continent to a single, undifferentiated category. Instead, we draw attention to variants of political regime. In the second half of this essay we have compared African neopatrimonial regimes, based on regime dimensions with proved analytic utility, and related the comparison to the continent's recent history of political turmoil. On the basis of this schema, we argue that the dynamics of political transition and the likelihood of a peaceful transition to democracy are shaped by the amount of formal political participation and competition allowed by the *ancien régime*.

We contend that our approach has greatest utility for analyzing transition dynamics, that is, the way political transitions unfold, rather than how they turn out. Within Africa we perceive several distinctive tendencies. Typically, transitions from personal dictatorships are driven by spontaneous street protests, focus on the fate of the ruler, and, in the absence of effective political institutions to channel political participation and contestation, tend to dissolve into chaotic conflict. Military oligarchs aim at more orderly dynamics. They seek to regulate and graduate the pace at which civilian political participation is reintroduced. To this end, they initiate and attempt to manage the process of political reform, albeit sometimes with-

out any real intention of forfeiting power. By contrast, transitions from plebiscitary one-party regimes hinge on the issue of political competition and tend to come to a head when a national conference asserts rules that challenge the long-standing political monopolies enjoyed by incumbents. Finally, in transitions from competitive one-party regimes, the dynamics of political struggle center on whether elections, to which all parties ultimately agree, are free and fair.

Do any of these processes lead to democracy? Because political transitions in Africa are ongoing at the time of writing, we insist that it is too early to make definitive judgments. But there are beginning to emerge a few tentative trends that can serve as hypotheses for further research.

First, a consolidated democracy is much less likely to eventuate from the abrupt collapse of a personal dictatorship than from the gradual reform of a competitive one-party system. For these regime variants, levels of participation and competition are mutually reinforcing: participation and competition exist at at least moderate levels for the competitive one-party systems, yet both are extremely low for the personal dictatorships. Thus the constellation of institutional attributes (or lack of attributes) is particularly clear for these regimes, and it is somewhat easier to predict transition trajectories. Democracy is possible only in the presence of a set of political institutions that allows protagonists to propose, negotiate, and win popular acceptance for political accommodations; even then, it is never guaranteed.

Second, the messy outcomes of transitions from military oligarchies and plebiscitary regimes currently defy prediction. Transitions from these regimes invariably end imperfectly, incompletely, or ambiguously. These transitions are racked by cross-pressures deriving from a mixed institutional heritage, which promotes either limited competition without participation (military oligarchies) or symbolic participation without competition (plebiscitary systems). In military regimes the efforts of soldiers to manage participation are likely to foster artificial political institutions that lack genuine popular legitimacy. In plebiscitary regimes incumbents and opposition disagree so fundamentally about whether the rules of the game should allow political competition that repression, stalemate, or open conflict are likely to result. Although our model allows us to note tendencies in transition dynamics in these cases (that is, by a managed handover to civilians or a confrontational national conference), we cannot presently foresee outcomes.

Third, we note the particularly vexatious nature of transitions from dictatorial and plebiscitary regimes, both of which generate unregulated political conflict. This is because in both regime variants, political contestation is outlawed rather than channeled through political institutions. This sug-

gests the general proposition that political competition is essential for a transition to democracy. While personalistic rulers may sometimes promote inclusive coalitions of support or rituals of mass participation, they cannot tolerate independent centers of political opinion and power. They would rather permit open political conflict and the decay of political institutions than share or abdicate power. Thus, getting to democracy is easier from a regime where competition is tolerated and where the main challenge is to broaden political participation; getting to democracy is much more difficult from a regime that has no tradition of political competition, however inclusive and participatory it may be.

Finally, if our logic is correct, the prospects for democracy are better in transitions from regime types other than neopatrimonial ones. This is so because greater progress has been made in other regimes in routinizing participation and (especially) competition in formal political institutions. We do not know enough about political transitions outside Africa to assess the effects of various bureaucratic authoritarian regime structures there. But our model suggests, perhaps counterintuitively, that within Africa the prospects for democracy are better in transitions from settler oligarchies than from all variants of neopatrimonial regime. Recall that settler regimes established traditions of pluralistic politics, competitive elections, and loyal opposition but that their fatal flaw was the restriction of political participation to a racial elite. Transition in these regimes is less a struggle over the right of political actors to hold diverse political beliefs than over the extension of the franchise to previously excluded sections of the population. In South Africa—in contrast to the neopatrimonial pattern outlined here, and following other bureaucratic authoritarian regimes in Latin America and Southern Europe—political transition is occurring by pact between the moderate leaders of corporate factions in the government and opposition. One might even assert that settler oligarchies stand a better chance than most other African regimes of consolidating democratic institutions. There is already evidence that former settler colonies tend to become somewhat more democratic regimes than do nonsettler colonies: for example, Zimbabwe and Namibia became multiparty competitive polyarchies after independence; and Zambia and Kenya adopted competitive, rather than plebiscitary, forms of one-party rule. These observations suggest that although political transition in South Africa may be protracted and punctuated by violence, it may well ultimately occur by negotiation. And the long-term prospects for democratic consolidation may be better there than in other parts of contemporary Africa.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Analysts are divided regarding the prospects for democracy in South Africa. On the one hand, South Africa's lack of national homogeneity, of broad-based economic development, and of unambiguous defeat of the old order predispose the country to continued conflict. The posttransition gov-

One might object that an argument linking the institutional makeup of the ancien régime to the process of transition is trivial or circular. Are we simply suggesting that the more pluralistic the regime the likelier the transition will produce a pluralist democracy, surely not a very interesting theoretical claim? In fact, our argument links institutional characteristics only tangentially to the outcomes of transitions but directly to their internal dynamics, so this criticism is at best only partly on the mark. The criticism is nonetheless worth addressing in order to bring out the implications and limits of the thesis.

That history moves in incremental steps is not an earth-shattering proposition, although the current emphasis in the transitions literature on individual agency perhaps makes it a useful one. Indeed, we have tried to show that the prospects for democracy in African regimes depend on prior traditions of political pluralism. It is theoretically useful to investigate the reasons for this correlation. Bermeo has emphasized the importance of learning in the process of democratization in which changing attitudes and norms lead actors to accept new modes of political behavior.⁹¹ Our argument suggests that organizations both within and outside the state, and the interaction between them, provide critical arenas for this learning. It will be difficult, that is, to institute new rules of accountability, tolerance, and participation if political parties or trade unions are missing or underdeveloped and if judicial and legislative bodies have no tradition of independence from the executive.

This article also stresses the formal status of institutions. For example, if civil society is weakly and informally organized, the incumbent government will probably be able to ride out any pro-democracy protests. Opportunities may exist for the fall of the regime, but in the absence of formal organizations to engineer the transition, the regime may well survive. Chazan and others have argued forcefully that, as African states repressed formal participatory structures, people shifted their efforts into

ernment may also be tempted to use the formidable apparatus of repression inherited from the current government for its own ends. See Herman Giliomee and Jannie Gagiano, eds., *The Elusive Search for Peace: South Africa, Israel and Northern Ireland* (London: Oxford University Press, 1990); and Herman Giliomee, "Democratization in South Africa" (Paper presented at the congress of the American Sociological Association, Miami, Fla., August 1993). On the other hand, some commentators see "an individually-based liberal democracy" as a viable option for permanently settling conflict in the country. See Sammy Smooha and Theodor Hanf, "The Diverse Modes of Conflict-Regulation in Deeply Divided Societies," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 33 (January-April 1992), 41; and F. van Zyl Slabbert, *The Quest for Democracy: South Africa in Transition* (Johannesburg: Penguin Forum Series, 1992). Our claim is comparative: we do not say that consolidated democracy is easy, imminent, or preordained in South Africa but only that it is more likely than in those African neopatrimonial regimes where political competition has been outlawed. For a similar argument, see Samuel Huntington, "Will More Countries Become Democratic?" *Political Science Quarterly* 99 (Summer 1984); and idem (fn. 4), 111-12.

⁹¹ Nancy Bermeo, "Democracy and the Lessons of Dictatorship," *Comparative Politics* 24, no. 3 (1992).

informal organizations, which flourished.⁹² These structures—such as market women's associations, ethnic associations, and credit clubs—have directly improved peoples' welfare and by sapping the government's legitimacy may even have laid the groundwork for political liberalization. But, in the final analysis, only formal institutions—such as trade unions, human rights organizations, and, especially, political parties—can force recalcitrant governments into amending constitutions and calling elections, and appear to populations as plausible alternatives to the government in power.

Last, we emphasize that the relationship between regime type and transition is not mechanistic. Especially in relation to political outcomes, the structure of the preceding regime provides only a template that predisposes, but does not fully determine, particular results. The remainder of the explanation of political change must be derived from other factors. We consider that the effectiveness of contending state and societal organizations at achieving preferred outcomes is largely a function of the political and economic resources at their disposal during the transition. Within every regime there is a wide band of potential differences in the levels of these resources. For example, the strength of state organizations depends on the ability of leaders to maintain a flow of discretionary spoils and to sustain prebendal networks of support. Within the opposition, the strength of unions and parties depends on achieving a significant funding and membership base independent of the state and an organizational network that extends outside of the capital and into the countryside. It is these differences in resources that explain the dissimilar outcomes in, say, Benin and Togo. The tremendous fiscal crisis of Benin forced Kerekou to compromise, whereas Eyadema's intransigence has been buttressed by his continued access to international and domestic resources.⁹³ Unfortunately, there is currently little systematic information on the resource attributes of state and opposition organizations in Africa, and this remains a priority for future research.

⁹² Naomi Chazan, "The New Politics of Participation in Tropical Africa," *Comparative Politics* 14 (January 1982); Jean François Bayart, Achille Mbembe, and C. Toulabor, *La Politique par le Bas en Afrique* (Paris: Karthala, 1991).

⁹³ Marc Pilon, "La transition togolaise dans l'impasse," *Politique Africaine* 49 (March 1993), 136–40; John R. Heilbrunn, "Social Origins of National Conferences in Benin and Togo," in *Journal of Modern African Studies* 31, no. 2 (1993).