Opposition Coordination in Legislative Elections under Authoritarianism[*]

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Why are opposition forces so often divided in authoritarian regimes and under what conditions will they unite against the regime? Authoritarian elections are frequently designed to divide the opposition. But the failure of opposition parties to form pre-electoral coalitions to contest dictatorial incumbents is not an artifact of regime machinations alone. Like political parties everywhere, opposition groupings contesting elections under dictatorship seek to maximize their political power both in current and future periods. The twist in authoritarian elections is that these parties must consider what strategies best suit their purposes given that the future may hold a regime transition. As parties consider how best to amplify their political power both now and in the future, the possibility that the regime might collapse to be followed by a new democratic regime complicates the electoral calculus surrounding coalition formation. We argue that as the likelihood of a democratic transition increases the incentives for opposition parties to form pre-electoral coalitions first increases and then declines. The incentives to coordinate first increase as opposition parties perceive that cooperating might propel incumbents to lose power, but then decrease as parties confront the prospect that coordination might be unnecessary in achieving their goals. That is, the chances of opposition coordination first increase as the probability of transition increases, but then decrease as the probability of transition becomes very high. A quantitative analysis of all legislative elections in non-democratic states from 1946 to 2006 provides some evidence for these claims.

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## I Introduction

In recent years, much of the focus in the study of authoritarianism has shifted to the study of regimes that hold multi-party elections (Levitsky and Way 2002, Schedler 2006, Magaloni 2006, Greene 2007). And while the phenomenon of multi-party elections under dictatorship is far from new, the 21st century authoritarian regime is clearly not the single-party or strong-man dictatorship that dominated popular (and even scholarly) perceptions of dictatorship in the mid-20th century. In 2002, 72 percent of the world's authoritarian regimes had held multi-party elections within the previous five years. These regimes may hold elections in order to enhance their own legitimacy, curry favor with the international community, gather information on supporters and opponents, demonstrate their dominance, or assuage and coopt domestic opponents.

Whatever the reason they decide to hold elections, authoritarian incumbents do not intend to permit alternation via the ballot box. While sometimes electoral institutions abet the downfall of these regimes, dictators are, perhaps not surprisingly, quite adept at winning the electoral contests that they hold. Most efforts to explain the regime's success at winning elections has focused on their "menu of manipulation" which may include fraud, repression, patronage distribution, control over information, and general abuse of state resources (Schedler 2006). Regime parties can win electoral contests by maintaining high levels of elite coordination that deprive the opposition of strong candidates and leaves voters with no choice (Brownlee 2007, Reuter and Remington 2009). Moreover, by selectively distributing spoils and designing rules that pit opposition parties against each other, authoritarian incumbents usually are able to prevent the emergence of a coordinated opposition (Lust-Okar 2005). For the post-war period, the average effective number of opposition parties competing in authoritarian legislative contests was 5.6 while in democracies was only 3.45.[1] It seems that there is a good reason why exasperated proponents of democracy frequently lament the inability of the opposition to overcome its differences in order to challenge authoritarian incumbents.

Yet parties in non-democracies sometimes manage to maintain a cohesive front in challenging incumbents. In the Philippines, for example, Salvador Laurel, head of the largest opposition party, agreed to support Corazon Aquino's candidacy in snap presidential elections called by Ferdinand Marcos in 1985. Similarly, in Kenya, opposition leaders formed the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) in support of Mwai Kibaki, leading to his victory over the regime-sponsored candidate, Uhuru Kenyatta. In both of these countries, the cooperation of opposition parties led to the defeat of incumbents and a democratic transition. On the basis of these examples and more systematic data, scholars have made the plausible claim that opposition coordination is integral to ending authoritarianism (Howard and Roessler 2006). But even as these examples illustrate that the electoral behavior of opposition parties has important consequences for regime survival, they also beg the crucial question: what explains the variance in the behavior of opposition parties? Why do they contest elections sometimes

[1] The effective number of parties under authoritarianism is based on data from 1946 to 2006 while the figure for democracies is constructed from data from 1946 to 2000.

divided and at other times united?

In answering this question, we believe that the incumbent's use of the "menu of manipulation" is important, but that it is not the whole story. In particular, we claim that the prospects of a democratic transition influence the decisions of opposition parties over whether to coordinate. When the chances of democratic transition are very low, then opposition parties stand little chance of achieving victory, even if they coordinate. In such cases, they will be unwilling to pay the costs of coordination and will find it difficult to reach accommodation. As the probability of transition increases, then opposition parties calculate that a coalition may help them secure victory and propel the regime to relinquish power. With the prospect of transition and holding democratic office, only attainable through coordination, opposition coalitions should become more likely. But as the prospects of regime change approach certainty, coordination will become difficult.[2] When parties foresee that they have the opportunity to gain democratic office without paying the costs of coordination, they will be disinclined to form coalitions. In these situations, individual parties see little reason to bargain with future rivals when they stand a chance of winning on their own political offices under democracy.

Consequently, the probability of democratic transition should have a curvilinear effect on opposition coalitions: as the probability of transition rises, opposition coalitions become more likely, but as the probability of transition eclipses some threshold, coalitions become less likely again. We test these propositions by first estimating a first stage discrete duration model of democratic transitions. Predicted probabilities of democratic transition are then included as an independent variable in a second stage model that models the probability of opposition coalitions and opposition coordination more generally. The results of the model are largely consistent with our theory.

In analyzing the incentives of opposition parties to form pre-electoral coalitions under dictatorship, we draw on the idea, well-established in the study of party behavior in democratic elections, that decisions over whether to enter an electoral contest and how to contest it are strategic ones. Electoral rules condition voters' and parties' expectations about winning such that parties enter electoral competition only when they expect to obtain votes (Duverger 1954, Cox 1997). Parties either field their own candidates or coordinate with other parties to create joint lists of candidates under pre-electoral coalitions. Electoral rules again influence this decision (Strom, Budge, and Laver 1994, Ferrara and Herron 2005), but so do other factors such as asymmetries in electoral strength, potential size of a coalition, and ideological dispersion (Golder 2006).

What makes the study of opposition cooperation in authoritarian elections different is that the electoral behavior of parties is related to regime transitions. Here we challenge the argument that opposition coalitions *cause* democratic transitions in a simple linear matter (Howard and Roessler 2006). In fact, we argue that the direction of causality is reversed, though in a more complicated, non-linear fashion. Indeed, democratic transitions when they are imminent may have the reverse effect and inhibit the formation of opposition

[2] By regime change or regime transition, we mean a democratic transition, and we use these terms interchangeably.

coalitions. This is important for a larger set of questions about the durability of authoritarian rule. Scholars have demonstrated that authoritarian institutions, such as parties and legislatures contribute to the longevity of authoritarian regimes (Gandhi and Przeworski 2007, Brownlee 2007). Our findings raise the possibility that some authoritarian regimes may survive longer than they otherwise would, due to the avarice of the opposition. Perhaps ironically, this is more likely to be the case when the opportunity for transition is otherwise quite ripe.

The paper proceeds as follows. In Section II we demonstrate the increasing prevalence of multi-party elections under authoritarianism. In Section III we discuss the structure of the problem facing opposition parties contesting elections, explaining how the prospects for democratic transition affect the formation of pre-electoral coalitions. Section IV includes a description of the data and methods used to test our propositions followed by the results of our models and their interpretation. The paper closes with a brief conclusion.

## II Authoritarian Elections

Elections on an uneven playing field are not a new phenomenon. Incumbents using elections to perpetuate their power were common throughout Western Europe and Latin America in the 18th and 19th centuries before the advent of democracy (Posada-Carbó 1996, Zeldin 1958). From 1946 to 2000, legislative elections occurred in approximately fifteen percent of all country-years under dictatorship.[3] In any given year, anywhere from 8 to 38 percent of all dictatorships were holding legislative contests. Figure 1 shows the frequency of legislative elections in which independents only, single party candidates, and multiple party challengers ran. Multiparty dictatorships have always comprised a major proportion of the world's dictatorships, but in recent years they have come to comprise the vast majority.

[Figure 1 about here]

The figure shows that after excluding communist dictatorships, the frequency of single party elections has declined precipitously since its highpoint in the early 1980s.[4] What appears to have changed over time is the relative frequency of single party plebiscitary contests in comparison to contests in which incumbents face challenges from opposition parties. Clearly, multi-party elections have become the norm under authoritarian regimes (although it is interesting to note that multi-party elections always have occurred with greater frequency), giving rise to the study of "electoral authoritarianism" and "competitive authoritarianism" (Schedler 2006, Levitsky and Way 2002).

Incumbent authoritarians are believed to hold elections for a variety of reasons. They may hold elections in order to enhance their legitimacy before domestic audiences (Hermet

[3] For democracies during this period, the equivalent proportion is roughly thirty percent.
[4] Legislative elections in communist dictatorships (i.e., Eastern Europe, Soviet Union, Mongolia, North Korea, Vietnam after 1976, Laos from 1975, and Cuba from 1959) are excluded.

1978, Schedler 2002). Such a democratic facade can also be helpful in securing international aid or favor (Diamond 2004). Domestically, dictators may use elections as a means by which to recruit the most talented elite and distribute spoils to them (Blaydes 2008). Resounding victories in electoral contests, in turn, may be a method of disciplining internal factions (Magaloni 2006, Schmitter 1978). In addition, incumbents may use electoral contests to collect information on sources of societal support or to measure the performance of allies (Brownlee 2007, Magaloni 2006). Finally, if their rule must come to an end, incumbents may also opt to hold elections as a way of lowering the costs of defeat, with the assumption that losing power at the ballot box is less costly than violent overthrow (Cox 2008). Whatever their purpose, elections under authoritarianism are not intended as a mechanism for holding leaders accountable or for representing societal interests.

Authoritarian leaders employ a range of methods to insure that uncertainty is kept to a minimum. Incumbents may try to insure victory before voters even go to the polls. Control of the media, the extra-constitutional use of state resources along with intimidation and repression of voters and candidates are well-known and probably the most visible methods of authoritarian manipulation (Lust-Okar 2006, Schedler 2006). If these tactics fail, authoritarian incumbents may resort to electoral fraud in an attempt to "steal" a victory (Lehouq 2002, Magaloni 2007). They use large electoral victories to prevent defections from their own coalitions and to make opposition challenges appear futile (Magaloni 2006, Geddes 2005).

## III. Explaining Coordination

While the focus of the literature has been to describe and analyze the ways in which dictatorial incumbents use elections to maintain their power, there also is a growing body of work that seeks to understand how these institutions can be used to challenge authoritarian rule. Indeed, elections appear to be a double-edged sword: one used to perpetuate authoritarian rule in the short-term, but perhaps while planting the seeds of the regime's demise in the future. Democratization may be possible when authoritarian regimes hold repeated elections in which opposition parties participate (Eisenstadt 2004, Lindberg 2006). These elections may teach opposition parties how best to challenge the incumbents (Beissinger 2007).

More specifically, with each successive contest, opposition parties might come to realize the necessity of forming electoral coalitions which increasingly eat away at the regime's electoral dominance. Coordination in elections among opposition parties can take a variety of forms, including the issuing of joint statements, the creation of joint electoral lists for legislative elections, and the formation of a pre-electoral coalition behind a single presidential candidate. To describe these actions, the choice of the word "coordination" is deliberate. Like Howard and Roessler (2006), we refer to opposition "coordination" (or alternatively, "cooperation") rather than "cohesion" to signify that our understanding of coalitions is not premised on the ideological proximity of parties. Indeed, in many authoritarian contexts in the developing world, party systems are fluid, encompassing

many parties with few distinct ideological identities. In addition, even in more stable authoritarian party systems, the anti-regime dimension may overwhelm any ideological distinctions so that seemingly strange bedfellows may find strategic reasons to cooperate.

Dictatorial incumbents view the formation of coalitions as a threat, hence their many attempts to keep the opposition divided *before* the election. The regime may explicitly prohibit certain types of coordination. After the pro-Kremlin United Russia party survived several close calls at the hands of electoral blocs in regional elections, for example, the ruling party moved to ban electoral blocs at both the national and regional level (Kynev 2005, Golosov 2008). In a similar vein, authoritarian leaders may selectively ban some political parties from competing in elections. This move hinders opposition coordination not only by limiting the set of potential partnerships but also by making those parties that are allowed to compete more invested in the regime (Lust-Okar 2005). Aside from banning coalitions and parties, incumbents may try to craft electoral rules that disadvantage and divide the opposition (Lust-Okar and Jamal 2002). Finally, authoritarian leaders also employ carrot and stick strategies to keep the opposition divided. Providing patronage, perks, and offices to some members of the opposition while excluding others is a well-hewn tactic for keeping opposition forces crave and divided amongst themselves (Lust-Okar 2005). After the emergence of multiparty competition in several sub-Saharan dictatorships such as Senegal and Kenya, leaders attempted to co-opt opposition leaders with cabinet positions.

Indeed, the concerns of incumbents appear to be for good reason since the formation of pre-electoral coalitions may lead to their downfall. Kasara (2005), for example, argues that a coalition among opposition parties in Kenya was essential for ousting Moi and KANU in the 2002 presidential elections. Since Moi won two previous elections with only a plurality of votes, a political transition might have occurred earlier if opposition parties had not remained divided. Besides pealing voters away from the incumbent and mobilizing the electorate "to view the opposition as an alternative governing coalition," Howard and Roessler (2006) argue that opposition coordination makes political liberalization (including transitions to democracy) more likely because it thwarts the regime's attempt to "divide and rule" and raises its perceived costs of repression and manipulation. In fact, in examining fifty competitive authoritarian elections from 1990 to 2002, they find evidence that pre-electoral opposition coalitions lead to "liberalizing electoral outcomes."[5]

Yet in considering the relationship between opposition coordination and democratic transitions, Van de Walle (2006: 78) cautions: "…opposition cohesion is not a cause of transition but rather a consequence of a growing probability of transition due to a number of interrelated factors." Indeed, forming coalitions are costly for opposition parties in two ways: first, party militants or constituents may refuse to support coalitions with parties that are incompatible – ideological or otherwise – with their own organizations. Second, a coalition that may threaten the ruling power may draw its ire: incumbents may withdraw any benefits or may even repress candidates and supporters of the coalition. In contrast,

[5] Although Howard and Roessler (2006) elide the distinction between political liberalization and democratization, the two can be thought of as distinct phenomena.

the benefits of forming a coalition may be uncertain as it is not clear which parties may join, whether they will succeed at the polls, and whether incumbents would cede power in the event of electoral defeat. As a result, Van de Walle argues that the formation of a coalition is subject to a bandwagon effect (Kuran 1991, Tucker 2007) in that parties will not join unless they perceive that the benefits of such cooperation are likely to be realized. This occurs only if they believe that a regime change is likely. In this account, then, as in Howard and Roessler (2006), opposition coordination should be positively correlated with democratic transitions, but the direction of causality is reversed. When opposition parties perceive a transition to be likely, they will form pre-electoral coalitions.

Besides highlighting the difficulty of identifying the direction of causality, Van de Walle's (2006) claim emphasizes an important point about authoritarian elections and democratic transitions. Regime change in this context has components that are both endogenous and exogenous to the behavior of opposition parties in dictatorial elections. It is endogenous in part because the parties' decision to form a coalition determines whether they garner enough votes to win the election and take political office. The opposition's victory in Kenya in 2002 illustrates this point. Similarly, in Niger, after the MNSD's (i.e., the ruling party's) presidential candidate won a plurality of votes in the first round of elections in 2003, opposition parties formed the Alliance of Forces of Change (AFC) in support of a single candidate, Mahmane Ousmane, who went on to victory in the second round (Villalón and Idrissa 2005). The AFC also won enough seats in concurrent legislative elections to become the new majority. As these examples illustrate, the formation of an opposition coalition eventually may result in alternation and the end of the dictatorship. So whether opposition parties occupy political office under a new democratic regime is in part determined by their electoral strategies.

Yet even with the votes, opposition parties can obtain political office under a new democracy only if incumbents are willing to yield power, and the willingness of incumbents to step down in the case of electoral defeat is determined by factors exogenous to the formation of an opposition coalition.[6] In other words, it is not the opposition's vote totals, themselves, that convince authoritarian incumbents that they must leave office. The fact that the opposition is competitive within the election indicates the willingness of authoritarian incumbents to refrain from using so much manipulation and fraud such that electoral outcomes would be foregone conclusions. As a result, the decision to step down likely would have occurred prior to the election. Indeed, much of the literature on democratic transitions locates the source of regime change in splits within the authoritarian elite (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986, Przeworski 1991, Wood 2000).[7] In addition, recent work on dictatorships examining how ruling parties are

[6] It is in this regard that authoritarian elections differ from democratic ones: elections are democratic if there is certainty that incumbents would cede power were they to lose; they are non-democratic if rulers' willingness to step down is uncertain (Gandhi 2008).

[7] The reasons for why the ruling elite may split vary. Wood (2000), for example, discusses how economic elites in El Salvador and South Africa came to support a political settlement entailing democratization because the current dictatorship was no longer serving their economic interests. Barros (2002), for example, details how some members of the junta in Chile broke with Pinochet because they believed that prolonged military rule would politicize the armed forces.

essential in holding together elite coalitions, implies that elite fissures, first and foremost, are required for political change (Geddes 1999, Magaloni 2006, Brownlee 2007). In other words, splits within the ruling elite are necessary for incumbents to make the decision to step down from power. The holding of elections in which opposition parties have a chance to win is simply a manifestation of that decision.[8] The important implication is that the likelihood of a transition can be treated as an exogenous feature of the political environment that opposition parties factor into their decision about whether to form a pre-electoral coalition in the first place.

Yet there are reasons to be less sanguine about the relationship between regime change and the electoral behavior of opposition parties. Consider Table 1 which includes all legislative elections from 1946 to 2006 (for which we have the requisite data) in which the regime party (or those parties affiliated with the regime coalition) received less than a majority of votes and seats. It is reasonable to assume that these are cases in which the regime is vulnerable to defeat. Prevailing wisdom would suggest that opposition parties would seize the opportunity to unite against the regime in these cases and that a positive relationship between democratic transitions and opposition coordination would be evident (regardless of direction of causality). Yet of the 37 observations listed, opposition parties formed coalitions and a transition to democracy occurred in only six cases. When transitions do occur (in 17 cases), opposition parties are twice as likely not to coordinate.

[Table 1 about here]

As Table 1 suggests, the relationship between regime transitions and opposition coalitions is less straightforward than might be expected. We think that the reason for this is as follows. Like all political parties, opposition formations seek political power and must decide whether a coalition best promotes these goals. Moreover, this decision must be made in the context of a hegemonic actor (i.e., regime incumbents) who deploys a large amount of resources to deter the formation of an agreement. In light of all these considerations, the decision to "contract" with other parties by entering a coalition is not obvious.

Even apart from what incumbents may do to prevent a coalition, the structure of the problem facing opposition parties poses significant challenges to forming a pact. Like any political party, opposition parties under dictatorship seek to maximize their political power both in current and future periods. The twist in authoritarian elections is that these parties must consider what strategies best suit their purposes given that the future may hold a regime transition. As parties consider how best to amplify their political power both now and in the future, the possibility that the regime might collapse to be followed by a new democratic regime complicates the electoral calculus surrounding coalition formation.

Consider two parties, A and B, deciding whether to form a pre-electoral coalition. Assume that the goal of opposition parties is to have political power. Power is a function of the regime type under which these parties occupy office. Occupying office under

[8] For dissenting views on this point, see Eisenstadt (2004) and Howard and Roessler (2006).

authoritarianism brings perks, privileges, and some, even if limited, access to decision-making. But if parties were to occupy power under a new democracy, political offices would be more valuable because they would allow for control over policy and patronage unchecked by a dictator.

When there is little chance of incumbents yielding, then opposition parties have little incentive to form pre-electoral coalitions. Contracting to form a coalition requires costly effort on the part of the parties to negotiate with each other, to convince their constituents to support such a deal, and to withstand any attempts by the regime to block such coordination (e.g., repression). If A and B anticipate that the dictator is so determined to stay in office that there is no chance for the opposition to take power, they will be unwilling to pay the costs of forming a coalition. With or without a coalition, the likelihood of coming to power is too small.

Therefore, as it becomes more likely that the dictator would be willing to yield in the event of an electoral defeat, A and B have more incentive to form a coalition. With a coalition, the opposition might be able to defeat the incumbent, leading to a regime transition and the opposition's rise to power. As the prospects for transition increase, but still remain uncertain, opposition party leaders are likely to reason that the prospects of a democratic transition would be improved if they were to form a coalition. Since the value of offices is higher under democracy than under authoritarianism, party leaders are likely to have significant incentives to consider coordination.

Yet once a regime transition becomes more imminent, perhaps even becoming a foregone conclusion, each party may worry more about the prospects of needlessly paying the costs of coordination and how coordination might actually diminish its relative political power under a new regime. If a regime change is highly likely for reasons exogenous to the electoral behavior of opposition parties, then parties may conclude that there is little reason to pay the costs of forming a pre-electoral coalition when it would be unnecessary for forcing incumbents out. Moreover, in forming a pre-electoral coalition, each opposition party agrees to moderate its grab for power by agreeing to an *ex ante* division of political offices. But if parties anticipate that a regime change is imminent, they know that the value of their offices will be greater under democracy than under authoritarianism. In addition, because political office under democracy is so valuable, parties may become more concerned about their relative share of political power. For a larger opposition party, for example, helping its future rivals or sharing power in a post-transition cabinet is undesirable when it has a plausible chance of becoming the largest party in a post-transition parliament on its own. Such an advantage may bring with it significant agenda setting privileges in transition bargaining (Geddes 1996, Lijphart 1996). The end result is that in attempting to form a pre-electoral coalition, parties will bargain harder, making cooperation less likely. For these reasons, Przeworski (1991: 67) observes that the struggle for democracy "creates a dilemma: to bring about democracy, anti-authoritarian forces must unite against authoritarianism, but to be victorious under democracy, they must compete with each other. Hence, the struggle for democracy always takes place on two fronts: against the authoritarian regime for democracy and against one's allies for the best place under democracy." Consequently, we expect to

observe a curvilinear relationship between the likelihood of a transition and the formation of an electoral coalition: initially the latter is increasing in the former, but when the likelihood of transition reaches some threshold level, the relationship becomes negative.

## IV. The Effect of Anticipated Transitions on Coordination

To determine whether the likelihood of a democratic transition has a curvilinear effect on the formation of opposition coalitions, we examine the electoral behavior of opposition parties in all legislative elections under dictatorship during the post-war period. While opposition parties compete in elections for the chief executive under dictatorship as well, legislative elections constitute our focus here because they are fundamentally different from presidential elections in one important respect: they are not winner-take-all. While a coalition for presidential elections requires one party to give up its pursuit for the office at stake, in legislative elections, parties, in agreeing to not compete against each other within electoral districts, still can expect to obtain a share of seats within the assembly. This feature is important for two reasons. First, opposition parties are more likely to win some office in legislative rather than presidential elections because the regime is willing to see them win a share of seats, but not the office of the chief executive. The result is that legislative elections are less likely to present "hopeless" situations in which there is no point in thinking about forming a coalition because there is no way to win anything. Second, in legislative elections, the pie can be divided among opposition parties which should give them reason to cooperate. Therefore, parties have all the reasons to cooperate in legislative elections, and so it is a puzzle as to why so often they do not.[9] To explain the variance, we have collected the results of 428 legislative elections in all non-democratic regimes from 1946 to 2006.[10]

### *Data and Methods*

To measure we pre-electoral coordination, we use two measures. The first is the *Effective Number of Opposition Parties (ENOP)*, or a count of opposition parties competing in the election that takes into account each party's respective size.[11] We follow the standard formula for computing the effective number of parties pioneered by Laakso and Taagepera (1979) with two notable variations First, since we are strictly interested in opposition fragmentation (as opposed to the party system as a whole), each party's vote share is computed as a percentage of total vote share garnered by opposition parties.

[9] This reasoning also suggests that we should see some differences in coalition formation between legislative and presidential elections, but this is a topic for future research.

[10] To identify non-democratic regimes, we use Cheibub and Gandhi (2004) for the 1946-2002 period and Polity2 for the 2003-2006 period. We modify both extant regime variables to insure that we have captured the regime type under which the legislative election was held. Appendix II provides information about sources for all variables.

[11] Due to the way in which most sources record election results, included are only those opposition parties that received at least either 1.5 percent of total votes or 1 seat. Since we are interested primarily in the level of coordination among opposition forces and not the process of translating votes into seats, we use the seat shares of parties where vote shares are not available. Thus in 168 out of 560 elections (30 percent), we have only seat share results.

Constructing the variable in this way required identification of regime or regime-supportive parties through Banks (various years) and other sources. Thus, the effective number of opposition parties is computed as, $ENOP = \frac{1}{v_i^2}$, where $v_i$ is the share of the opposition votes/seat share received by the *i*th party.

Second and relatedly, any measure of effective number of opposition parties must address the issue of independent candidates (e.g. Taagepera 1997, Golder 2004). In established democracies however, the issue takes on a nuisance character since the vast majority of candidates carry party affiliations. In authoritarian regimes, independent candidates are quite common. The average vote (or seat) share garnered by independents in authoritarian elections is 7 percent. In 63 elections (or nearly 10 percent of the cases for which we have data), independents received more than 30 percent of the votes or seats. Note, however, that this figure does not include elections in which all candidates run as independents. Indeed, as Figure 1 shows, 1 in 10 authoritarian elections since 2000 have been held on an independent-only basis.

The problem with independents is that because they bear no partisan label, one does not know whether they should be considered pro-government or pro-opposition which, in turn, creates problems in weighting each party by its votes as a share of total votes to only the opposition. To remedy this problem, whenever independents compete in an election, we compute the effective number of parties in two ways: one by counting all independents as pro-government and the other by including all independents as pro-opposition. In these cases, the effective number of opposition parties is computed as the average of these two measures.[12]

The second dependent variable, *Opposition Coalition*, is a dichotomous measure that takes the value 1 if any opposition parties formed a pre-electoral coalition, 0 otherwise. A coalition may take the form of a public statement of mutual support or a division of electoral districts for each party to contest. Our sources (e.g., Banks) do not allow us to distinguish between such loose and tight commitments.[13] Yet they provide enough information that we are able to ensure that the coalition was made *prior* to the *legislative* election at hand.[14]

Our primary independent variable of interest is the *Likelihood of Democratic Transition*. We know, of course, those cases in which a transition did occur. But to include a measure of transitions as an independent variable would introduce problems of endogeneity, biasing our results. To overcome this problem, we include instead the probability of a democratic transition, as estimated by a model of transitions in which all right-hand side

[12] This method is similar to the solution for factoring independents into the effective number of parties offered by Taagepera (1997).
[13] In this regard, our measure differs from some indicators of pre-electoral coalitions in democracies (Carroll and Cox 2005, Golder 2006).
[14] Parties sometimes form coalitions after the election to create cabinets and legislative majorities. In addition, opposition parties sometimes form pre-electoral coalitions for concurrent presidential elections; whether these electoral agreements extend to legislative races varies.

variables are exogenous to the formation of an opposition coalition.[15] In the econometric sense, these variables can be thought of as exogenous instruments for transition, but they also carry substantive importance insofar as they are observable to opposition parties and enable them to form expectations about the survival of the regime and whether they should form pre-electoral coalitions. To capture the expected curvilinear effect of regime transition on coalitions, we include the variable along with its square. The linear term should be increasing in coalition formation while the quadratic term should be decreasing. In other words, as the probability of democratic transitions increases, parties should be more likely to coordinate as they realize that cooperation could push the regime toward transition, but then as the probability of transition increases beyond some threshold and transition seems imminent, then opposition parties will be unwilling to form coalitions as the difficult of negotiating post-transition division of spoils becomes more difficult.

In addition to our primary variables of interest, we include a number of substantively important control variables to account for other factors that may encourage or dissuade opposition parties from forming coalitions. A well-founded literature posits electoral rules and social heterogeneity as the primary determinants of party system fragmentation (Duverger 1954, Cox 1997). The most recent analyses have shown that social heterogeneity is the primary motor of party system fragmentation with electoral rules playing a modifying role (Clark and Golder 2006). In studying pre-electoral coalitions in democracies, Golder (2006) finds that permissive electoral rules play a significant role in dissuading electoral coalitions. Thus, in order to control for the effect of electoral institutions on opposition parties coalition behavior we include the log of district magnitude (*LogDM)*.

Social heterogeneity must also be taken into account. Social cleavages, whether they are based on class, ethnicity, religion, or some other marker, influences the number and types of parties that can attract support from voters (Lipset and Rokkan 1967, Cox 1997). In heterogeneous societies in which different segments of the population are organized into separate political forces, it may be difficult to persuade voters to support coalitions that bind parties across social cleavages. Moreover, coalitions may be most difficult to establish when they require cross-ethnic cooperation (Alesina et al. 1999, Fearon 2003). To account for the increasing difficulty of forming coalitions in ethnically heterogeneous environments, we include *Ethnic Fractionalization*, measured as $1 - \Sigma^{I}_{i=1} (n_i/N)$, where n is the number of people in the $i^{th}$ group, N is the total population, and I is the number of ethnic groups in the country. In order to assess whether social heterogeneity and electoral rules interact to impact electoral coordination as they do in democracy we include the interaction of *LogDM* and *Ethnic Fractionalization.*

In addition, we include a dichotomous measure of *Concurrent Presidential Elections*, coded as 1 if presidential elections are held within 12 months of legislative elections, 0 otherwise. Presidential elections are thought to influence legislative fragmentation

[15] To obtain the predicted probabilities, transitions are modeled as a function of GDP, lagged economic growth, the number of other democracies in the world, and the sum of previous democratic transitions. For more details, see Appendix I.

through a coattails effect: as parties anticipate that voters will pay more attention to presidential rather than assembly races, they coordinate their legislative campaigns with that of their party's presidential candidate. As a consequence, temporally proximate presidential elections reduce the number of parties competing in democratic legislative elections (Cox 1997, Shugart and Carey 1992).

For both substantive and methodological reasons, we also include the lagged dependent variable, entitled *Previous Coalition*. Opposition coalitions formed in previous elections make it more likely that they will form for current contests. Previous experience with coalitions can help opposition parties more quickly identify trustworthy partners and reach agreements. In addition, preceding occurrences of coalitions might help "sell" the idea of cross-party cooperation to each party's core constituents. *Previous Coalition* takes on a value of 0 for those observations that mark a country's first multiparty election after a period of military or single party rule or an authoritarian regime's first multiparty election after independence. Besides addressing these substantive concerns, inclusion of the lagged dependent variable addresses the problem of serial correlation within the data.

We also control for the share of votes (or seats) received by the *Largest Regime Party.* This is intended to account for the fact that as the share of the vote received by the hegemonic party grows, the number of opposition parties tends to decrease and hence the possibility of a coalition may decrease.

A final important factor to consider has to do with the institutional architecture of the regime. While authoritarian regimes can influence the decision of opposition parties to form coalitions by fomenting ethnic conflict or manipulating electoral institutions, they also can exert a more direct impact by extending benefits to opposition parties in an attempt to break apart coalitions. Yet regimes differ in the degree to which they can offer spoils and perks to the opposition. Many dictatorships have hegemonic parties that are useful instruments by which rulers can maintain the loyalties of elites (Brownlee 2007, Geddes 1999, Magaloni 2006), but their effectiveness in co-opting outside opposition is not clear. Indeed, regime leaders may find themselves in a difficult position. The spoils of office must be distributed to their own party elite in order to keep them loyal. Elite commitment to the ruling party is not a foregone conclusion: when the future of stream of benefits provided by the party is in doubt, commitment cannot be achieved (Reuter and Remington 2009). If the regime also wishes to keep the opposition crave and divided with perks, then these spoils will be needed to distribute as carrots to certain members of the opposition in order to ensure its fragmentation. Since the absolute amount of spoils is fixed, the regime may face a dilemma: how to "divide and rule" the opposition when resources are committed to maintaining elite cohesion.

The severity of the dilemma should vary with the entrenchment of the ruling party. When a hegemonic party has been long entrenched in its position of power, the distribution of spoils is usually formalized and rule-governed. As part of their efforts to keep elite members committed, dictators often relinquish some institutional control, control over cadre nominations, and policy to party organs. Key elite figures are likely to base their own calculations about commitment to the regime on the rule-governed distribution of

benefits. Expectations about the future are fixed. The *nomenklatura* system in the Soviet Union is the clearest example of this, where the CPSU kept a "table of appointments" to party posts that served as the basis for cadre politics. Long-lived, well entrenched parties can thus constrain leaders by increasing the costs of diverting resources away from the hegemonic party. Or even more directly, the distribution of spoils may be partially beyond the dictator's control if it is controlled by party organs. To capture the degree of entrenchment of the ruling party, we include *Age of Ruling Party*.[16] The expectation is that older hegemonic parties should be correlated with more coalitions since they are unable to draw resources away from the regime elite to be used in coopting and dividing the opposition.

The unit of analysis is the legislative election. Our sample includes 428 elections from 1946 to 2006. Sub-Saharan Africa is the source of 34 percent of the observations while Latin America and Asia follow with 24 and 20 percent, respectively. Given its limited number of country-years under dictatorship, Southern Europe (Cyprus, Greece, Portugal, and Spain) constitutes the lowest share with only two percent.

To summarize our econometric approach, we capture the effect of the likelihood of a democratic transition on the formation of opposition coalitions by using a two-stage model. In the first stage, we estimate:

$$D_{it} = \alpha \mathbf{Z}_{it} + v_{it}$$

where D is a dichotomous indicator for democratic transition in a given year, **Z** is a vector of variables, and the subscripts i and t stand for country and year, respectively. The structure of the data is that of discrete duration data. Therefore we estimate a probit model with cubic splines to account for duration dependence. This model generates predicted probabilities, $\check{D}_{it}$, that are included in the second stage:

$$Y_{it} = \beta_1 \check{D}_{it} + \beta_2 \check{D}^2_{it} + \beta \mathbf{X}_{it} + \varepsilon_{it}$$

where Y is a measure of opposition coordination, $\check{D}$ is the predicted probability of a democratic transition (in linear and quadratic forms), and **X** is a vector of control variables.

*Results*

The results of the models are consistent with the propositions laid out above. As the likelihood of democratic transition first increases, the probability of opposition coordination also increases. But as the likelihood of transition increases still further, the

[16] Many hegemonic parties dominated political life in their respective country prior to independence. It is plausible to assume that the party builds institutional capacity during this period. Therefore, our variable, *Age of Ruling Party*, begins counting the age of the party from the moment that the party wins 50 percent of seats in colonial or territorial assembly elections. Relatedly, if the hegemonic party previously existed as a single party we back-date the coding of the variable to begin when the single party took office. These rules bespeak our intention to measure the age of the party as an organizational entity, rather than the age of the regime per se.

prevalence of opposition coordination begins to wane. These results are more robust for the dichotomous measure of opposition coalitions, than they are for the indirect, continuous measure of the effective number of opposition parties. Columns 1 and 2 of Table 2 show the results of a probit model with *Opposition Coalition* as the dependent variable. The only difference between column 1 and column 2 is the absence of *LogDM* and its interaction with *Ethnic Fractionalization* in the second column. Missing data on electoral rules reduces the sample size significantly; therefore we report results for all of our models with and without *LogDM.* Columns 3 and 4 report the results of OLS models with *Effective Number of Opposition Parties* as the dependent variable. We first discuss our control variables and then move to consider our primary variables of interest, the predicted probabilities of democratic transition.

The first, and perhaps most important, 'non-result' to emerge from our models is the failure of *LogDM, Ethnic fractionalization,* or their interaction to achieve statistical significance.[17] Numerous studies of the effective number of parties, and at least one study of opposition coalitions, in established democracies has shown electoral rules to be a predictor of coordination (Cox 1997, Golder 2006). So it may seem odd that they appear to have no impact in authoritarian regimes, especially since authoritarians sometimes design electoral rules in order to keep the opposition divided. Yet this finding squares with country-specific studies of party systems in new democracies that have shown that in inchoate party systems, electoral rules do not always have anticipated effects on the number of parties. In under-institutionalized party systems, for example, SMD rules inhibit cross-district linkages and thus discourage coordination at the national level (Moser 2001, Gunther 1989). In addition, incumbents in authoritarian regimes may craft electoral rules with other goals aside from dividing the opposition, such as maintaining elite commitment to the ruling party (Smyth et al. 2007). Thus, while electoral rules do not seem to operate in the same uniform, linear fashion that they do in democracies, we do not believe that they are meaningless in authoritarian regimes, only that their causes and effects remain poorly understood.

Another interesting non-result is that of *Concurrent presidential election.* Again, we believe that the fluidity of opposition party systems in authoritarian regimes contributes to this non-result. Recent work on established democracies has shown that the reductive impact of "presidential coattails" depends heavily on the number of presidential candidates that enter the race (Golder 2006). In a study of post-communist democracies, Fillippov, Ordeshook, and Shvetsova (1999) found that presidential systems increased the number of parties. They attribute this result to the fact that in inchoate party systems, where the information required for successful coordination is often lacking, the institutional strength of the presidency encourages many non-viable entrants. In authoritarian regimes, the difficulty of unseating incumbent presidents may at once discourage entrants and discourage coordination among those who do enter.

[17] This being an interactive model, the conditional impact of these variables can only be assessed by taking the first derivative with respect to that variable. These variables are not significant in any linear combination with values of their interacting counterpart, nor are they significant in linear, additive models (not shown).

*Age of Party* does not have any effect on opposition coordination, nor does, surprisingly *Ethnic Fractionalization.* As expected, the lagged values of both *Opposition Coalition* and *Effective Number of Opposition Parties* have strong and positive impacts on the prevalence of opposition coordination.

Our main variables of interest are *Likelihood of Democratic Transition* and its square. For the *Opposition Coalition* dependent variable, *Likelihood of Democratic Transition* should be increasing in its first term and decreasing in its second. This is indeed what we find. When the probability of democratic transition is very low, the likelihood of opposition coalitions is also low. As the probability of transition rises, so does the probability of transition. When transitions become very likely, opposition coalitions become improbable.

For our second measure of opposition coordination, *Effective Number of Opposition Parties*, the results reveal a similar story. The signs on the two terms are opposite of those in the probit models. A lower of number of effective opposition parties indicates more coordination. Thus, as the likelihood of transition increases, the number of opposition parties first increases and then declines. The results indicate that the probability of democratic transitions, as determined by exogenous factors that are known and visible to opposition forces, impact the decision of opposition leaders to coordinate with one another.

## V. Conclusion

Elections under dictatorship typically are viewed as mere instruments by which incumbents perpetuate themselves in power (Levitsky and Way 2002). Yet the electoral process does present moments when the opposition can organize itself in order to better challenge authoritarian rulers (Schedler 2002). Indeed, as Brownlee (2007) observes, from an empirical standpoint the evidence is rather mixed: elections sometimes have helped consolidation of authoritarian rule while at other times, has led to regime failure.

One such moment that opposition parties can seize is the period before elections when they must decide whether to form a pre-electoral coalition. In deciding on the best strategies to pursue, however, opposition parties face competing pressures: they recognize the benefits of being united in challenging the dictatorship, but may be wary of each others' gains particularly when a transition to democracy is likely. If parties have some expectation that they will be able to win seats in an assembly that will have political power under a new democratic regime, they are less willing to form cooperative agreements that might require them to share their potential legislative gains. As a result, as the likelihood of a democratic transition due to exogenous reasons increases, opposition parties first are more likely to form pre-electoral coalitions, but then are less willing to cooperate with each other. Examining all post-war multiparty legislative elections in non-democratic regimes, we find evidence broadly consistent with this idea. So while autocratic incumbents do much to divide and conquer challengers competing in

elections, opposition unity actually becomes less likely when authoritarian regimes are most vulnerable.

**Appendix I: First-stage Model of Democratic Transitions**

Our substantive interest is in modeling the effect of an anticipated transition to democracy on the formation of opposition pre-electoral coalitions. Assuming that parties can observe conditions that might influence a regime change, we generate the predicted probability of a democratic transition using a probit model with the following variables included in the specification.

| Variable | Description | Source |
|---|---|---|
| *New Country* | Dummy variable coded 1 if country is a newly independent country, 0 otherwise | Przeworski et al. 2000 |
| *GDP per capita* | Per capita income (base year 2000) | Penn World Tables 6.2 |
| *Sum of Past Transitions* | Sum of transitions from authoritarianism | Przeworski et al. 2000 (updated to 2006) |
| *Other Democracies in the World* | Other democracies in the world, percentage | Przeworski et al. 2000 (updated to 2006) |
| *Lagged GDP Growth* | Growth of per capita income, lagged one year | Penn World Tables 6.2 |

The results of this model are in Table 3.

[Table 3 about here]

**Appendix II: Data and Sources**

| Variable | Description | Source |
|---|---|---|
| *Age of Ruling Party* | Age of hegemonic party in years | Banks et al. (various years) and other historical sources |
| *Concurrent Presidential Elections* | Dummy variable coded 1 if presidential election occurs within 1 year of legislative election, 0 otherwise | Constructed from Nohlen et al. (1999, 2001, 2005), African Elections Database, Adam Carr's Election Archive, IFES, and other historical sources |
| *Effective Number of Opposition Parties* | Number of opposition parties in legislative election, weighted by vote or seat share | Constructed from Nohlen et al. (1999, 2001, 2005), African Elections Database, Adam Carr's Election Archive, IFES, and other historical sources |
| *Ethnic Fractionalization* | Time invariant measure of ethnic heterogeneity in a country | Fearon (2003) |
| *Likelihood of Democratic Transition* | Predicted probability of regime change from dictatorship to democracy | See Appendix I |
| *Opposition Coalition* | Dummy variable coded 1 if any opposition parties form a pre-electoral coalition, 0 otherwise | Constructed from Nohlen et al. (1999, 2001, 2005), African Elections Database, Adam Carr's Election Archive, IFES, and other historical sources |
| *Previous Coalition* | *Effective Number of Opposition Parties* or *Opposition Coalition*, lagged by one election | |

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**Table 1: Opposition Coordination and Democratic Transition When Authoritarian Regime Obtains Minority Share in Legislative Elections, 1946-2006**

| Country | Election year | % Votes to regime party* | % Seats to regime party* | Opposition coalition | Democratic transition** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Armenia | 2003 | 47.2 | 45.6 | Y | N |
| Brazil | 1982 | 43.2 | 49.1 | N | N |
| Burkina Faso | 1978 | 42.5 | 49.1 | N | N |
| Cape Verde | 1991 | 33.6 | 29.1 | N | Y |
| Georgia | 2003 | 21.3 | 25.3 | Y | Y |
| Ghana | 2000 | 41.2 | 46.0 | N | Y |
| Indonesia | 1955 | 43.2 | 44.4 | N | N |
| Iraq | 2005 | 41.2 | 46.5 | Y | N |
| Kazakhstan | 1999 | 30.9 | 29.9 | Y | N |
| Kenya | 1992 | 24.5 | 49.5 | N | N |
| Korea, S. | 1973 | 38.7 | 33.3 | N | N |
| Korea, S. | 1978 | 31.7 | 29.4 | N | N |
| Korea, S. | 1992 | 38.5 | 49.8 | N | Y |
| Lesotho | 1970 | 48.0 | 40.0 | N | N |
| Malawi | 1994 | 33.7 | 31.6 | N | Y |
| Mexico | 1997 | 39.1 | 47.8 | N | N |
| Mexico | 2000 | 39.2 | 42.2 | Y | Y |
| Nicaragua | 1990 | 40.8 | 42.4 | Y | Y |
| Niger | 1993 | 30.7 | 34.9 | N | Y |
| Paraguay | 1993 | 43.4 | 47.5 | N | N |
| Paraguay | 2003 | 35.3 | 46.3 | N | N |
| Peru | 2000 | 42.2 | 43.3 | N | N |
| Peru | 2001 | 4.8 | 2.5 | N | Y |
| Sao Tome and Principe | 1991 | 30.5 | 38.2 | Y | Y |
| Serbia | 1992 | 31.4 | 34.1 | Y | N |
| Serbia | 2000 | 13.2 | 14.8 | Y | Y |
| South Africa | 1948 | 37.7 | 46.7 | N | N |
| South Africa | 1994 | 20.4 | 20.5 | N | Y |
| Suriname | 1987 | 9.3 | 5.9 | Y | Y |
| Thailand | 1979 | 16.3 | 19.2 | N | N |
| Turkey | 1950 | 39.9 | 14.2 | N | N |
| Turkey | 1961 | 36.7 | 38.4 | N | Y |
| Turkey | 1983 | 23.3 | 17.8 | N | Y |
| Venezuela | 1958 | 26.8 | 25.8 | N | Y |
| Venezuela | 2000 | 44.4 | 46.7 | N | N |
| Zambia | 1991 | 24.7 | 16.7 | N | Y |
| Zambia | 2001 | 28.0 | 46.0 | Y | N |

* Votes and seats affiliated with hegemonic party and its allies

** Regime change occurs within election year or following year

**Table 2: Effect of Transition Probabilities on Opposition Coordination**

| Model | (1) Probit | (2) Probit | (3) OLS | (4) OLS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Dependent Variable** | *Opposition Coalition* | *Opposition Coalition* | *ENOP* | *ENOP* |
| *Likelihood of Democratic Transition* | 17.163** | 18.480** | -97.897* | -92.329** |
| | (7.407) | (6.431) | (54.649) | |
| *Likelihood of Democratic Transition$^2$* | -57.199** | -62.49** | 268.5055 | 266.530* |
| | (28.255) | (24.639) | (188.184) | (150.531) |
| *LogDM* | -.089 | - | .242 | - |
| | (.219) | | (1.094) | |
| *Ethnic Fractionalization* | .129 | .449 | -.855 | -1.005 |
| | (.617) | (.421) | (3.28) | (2.255) |
| *LogDM*Ethnic Fractionalization* | .146 | - | .933 | - |
| | (.354) | | (1.873) | |
| *Largest Regime Party* | -.002 | -.003 | -.089** | -.058** |
| | (.004) | (.004) | (.0295) | (0.247) |
| *Concurrent Presidential Elections* | -.222 | -331 | .406 | -.382 |
| | (.218) | (.203) | (1.293) | (1.178) |
| *Age of Ruling Party* | -.002 | .001 | -.021 | .005 |
| | (.006) | (.006) | (.042) | (.038) |
| *Previous Coalition* | 1.239** | 1.083** | - | - |
| | (.313) | (.289) | | |
| *Previous Effective Number of Opposition Parties* | - | - | .224** | .281** |
| | | | (.042) | (.039) |
| *Constant* | -1.334** | -1.560** | 10.427** | |
| | (.439) | (0.355) | (2.567) | |
| *Pr > $\chi^2$* | 0.0009 | 0.0001 | - | - |
| *Pr>F* | | | .0000 | .0000 |
| *N* | 260 | 323 | 240 | 301 |

Standard errors in parentheses; ** signifies $p \leq 0.05$

**Table 3: Predicting Democratic Transitions**

| **Model** | **Probit model with cubic splines** |
|---|---|
| **Dependent Variable:** | Transition |
| *New Country* | -.347** |
| | (.115) |
| *GDP per capita* | -.0000182 |
| | (.0000126) |
| *Sum of Past Transitions* | .353** |
| | (.057) |
| *Other Democracies in the World* | 1.415** |
| | (.576) |
| *Lagged GDP Growth* | -.0088 |
| | (.0059) |
| *Spline 1* | .0198* |
| | (.0116) |
| *Spline 2* | .005 |
| | (.009) |
| *Spline 3* | -.0123 |
| | (.0204) |
| *Constant* | -2.801** |
| | (.301) |
| N | 3581 |
| Number of Transitions | 87 |
| Pr>$\chi^2$ | 0.0000 |

Standard errors in parentheses; ** signifies $p \leq 0.05$, * $p \leq 0.10$

**Figure 1: Legislative Elections under Authoritarianism, 1946-2006**