

How Autocrats Compete: parties, patrons, and unfair elections in Africa by YONATAN L. MORSE.

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Nearly 30 years after Africa's third wave of democratisation began, its results have been decidedly mixed, with the majority of the sub-continent governed by electoral authoritarian (EA) regimes. Yonatan L. Morse's *How Autocrats Compete: parties, patrons, and unfair elections in Africa* traces these contemporary non-democratic trajectories to legacies of single-party rule. This volume makes many laudable contributions, in particular by offering a new typology of electoral authoritarianism and developing a novel theory of what drives non-coercive electoral popularity of authoritarian regimes. Morse's book is a model of rigorous mixed-methods research carried out in difficult research settings and an exemplary demonstration of on-the-ground field expertise that gives voice and agency to the political actors his work engages.

Morse's account seeks to explain variation in *how* EA regimes contest elections and argues that two factors shape the level of fraud and repression they use: (1) the formation of 'credible' political parties under single-party rule and (2) whether international actors utilise pro-democracy tools such as election monitoring, democracy support and aid conditionality linked to governance reforms. The book focuses on Cameroon, Kenya and Tanzania from the post-colonial period through to the present day. Tanzania's ruling party (Tanganyikan African National Union (TANU), later Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM)) established a nationwide footprint of local offices. This institutionalised internal dispute resolution mechanisms and intraparty competition and cultivated a broad, socially diverse support base that underlies its sustained electoral popularity. By contrast, Kenya and Cameroon's weak efforts to build credible parties make multiparty election returns uncertain, requiring the ruling regime instead to rely on repression and electoral manipulation to stay in power. When international actors use policy instruments to promote democracy, ruling parties that are not credible cannot offset their weakness through manipulation and repression. Public sector reforms, election observation and opposition support from international actors propelled the defeat of Kenya African National Union (KANU) in Kenya's 2002 elections, while the absence of such engagement accounts for Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM)'s durability. Morse's core empirical work focuses on testing this explanation, bringing together analyses of historical and archival research on the evolution of single-parties, elite interviews and party-level data on internal conflict and leadership competition, and citizen survey data on the social bases of ruling-party support. He also draws on documents from international actors on development aid and democracy support.

Africa has received comparably less attention from the literature on electoral authoritarianism, despite the fact that EA regimes predominate in Africa and this is where most EA regimes are found. Morse's book contributes to the EA literature through its new conceptualisation of electoral authoritarianism and its subtypes as well as its presentation of a new dataset, both of which will be of great value for scholars. He further refines existing explanatory variables in the EA literature (organisational power; international leverage) and focuses on a novel dependent variable

(manipulation/coercion) that has generally been considered symptomatic of EA regimes but has not been the focus of explanations of its variation.

The monograph is also important for African politics. It studies the puzzle of Africa's divergent experiences with multipartyism and weaves a compelling historical narrative that attributes long-term trajectories to important moments of the post-colonial and single-party periods. Moreover, in a region where political parties are characterised by their weakness, Morse offers a counterintuitive insight on the consequences of strong parties: they may not produce democracy, but they promote cleaner elections, offer intraparty competition as a substitute for accountability at the ballot box, and displace the prominence of identity-based politics found across the sub-continent. This raises important normative questions about the fate of elections and democracy in Africa. It also speaks to growing interest in the consequences of foreign aid.

There is, however, an unresolved tension in the work regarding how Tanzania's credible ruling party emerged and blossomed. Morse offers that the combination of (1) socio/political cleavage structure, (2) existing state capacity and (3) leaders themselves (Nyerere, Adhidjo, Kenyatta) explains variation in efforts to establish a credible party. TANU/CCM's continued dominance is thus attributed to unique characteristics of Nyerere and his particular vision of how to translate a popular, but poorly institutionalised political organisation (TANU) into a vessel of state-building. This raises two considerations.

First, it is not clear that the credibility of Tanzania's ruling party should be attributed to party-building efforts distinct from state-building. Much of CCM's current strength derives from State or quasi-State institutions the party inherited during the multiparty transition. Its extensive network of party offices formerly provided government services; competitive nominations managed intraparty cohesion but also functioned as national elections, conferring on CCM contemporary electoral credibility. Institutions like these were originally created in the name of statecraft rather than party-building.

Second, the work misses an opportunity to engage with subnational variation in ruling party credibility. Chama Cha Mapinduzi was formed as a merger of mainland Tanzania's TANU and Zanzibar's Afro-Shirazi Party, undermining the credibility of the existing ruling party apparatus within Zanzibar. CCM now faces its strongest electoral competition there and the regime engages in higher levels of repression and fraud than elsewhere in Tanzania with little intervention from international actors. This suggests that the consequences of party-building may lead to an outcome of tolerant hegemony nationally, but also subnational instances of repressive hegemony.

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