

Contesting Autocracy: Explaining the Origins of Opposition Parties in Africa

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Abstract: In an era of democratic instability and electoral autocracy, understanding the nature of opposition under authoritarianism has become increasingly important. This paper seeks to better understand the geo-spatial nature of opposition parties by explaining where and why they are able to win in founding multiparty elections. We argue that opposition parties should arise in areas that have both the grievance and capacity to oppose the regime. Thus, opposition parties should be most successful in places that have been historically marginalized or oppressed by the regime, but also feature a history of centralized political institutions, in other words, constituencies that used to be home to precolonial kingdoms. We find preliminary support for this theory using geo-located constituency-level electoral data for founding multiparty elections in the cases of Angola, Cameroon, and Zambia.

The process of democratization has been a central theme in comparative political science for decades, but in the current era of resurgent authoritarianism—specifically electoral authoritarianism—there is a renewed urgency for understanding this process. In particular, there is a pressing need to better explain the nature of opposition under autocracy. On the whole, opposition parties in autocratic and transitioning regimes are poorly understood. Although we have theories of why dictatorships might choose to allow opposition parties in the first place (Brownlee 2011; Gandhi 2008; Svobik 2012) and how and why opposition parties become successful or not (Adrienne LeBas 2011; Arriola 2012; Bunce and Wolchik 2011), few studies have sought to understand why and where opposition parties actually arise.

During political openings, it is clear—even from just a simple glance at local electoral returns—that opposition party strength is not randomly distributed across constituencies. Instead, during founding multiparty elections, opposition parties tend to dominate in some constituencies and languish in others. For example, in Tanzania, the Civic United Front (CUF) opposition party wins nearly all of their electoral seats from constituencies geographically located in the islands of Zanzibar. In fact, since the founding of multiparty elections, the CUF has never lost any of the ten seats in the region of Pemba South, frequently winning these constituencies with more than 80 percent of the vote. Similarly, in Cameroon, the opposition Social Democratic Front (SDF) wins time and again in the same constituencies clustered in the Anglophone Northwest region of the country, such as Mezam, Boyo, Bui, and Momo. While we generally understand why incumbent parties tend to dominate autocratic elections (Levitsky and Way 2010; Schedler 2002) and African elections more generally (Wahman 2015; van de Walle 2003), we lack a theory for understanding where and why opposition parties thrive.

With the threat of repression and the unwinnable nature of autocratic elections, why do opposition parties bother to form? Given widespread dissatisfaction with many autocratic regimes, why do opposition parties garner support in some constituencies but not others? This paper seeks to answer these questions by explaining the origins and geography of opposition party strongholds. By understanding where and how opposition parties arise, we can better explain the motivations of such parties, and how they cultivate voters from particular constituencies. A theory of the origins of opposition parties can provide a framework for identifying the sources of contestation in autocracies, potentially shed light on the foundations of democratization, and help to explain why some opposition parties usher in true electoral competition while others aid the rise of electoral authoritarianism.

While the existing literature on electoral autocracies and democratization might propose an economic theory of opposition strength—either that opposition would arise in areas that have been economically neglected by the state *or* in the most developed and urbanized areas of country—we propose a different argument that opposition strongholds should surface in areas that have been more aggressively marginalized or discriminated against, but also where elites have the capacity to organize institutionalized resistance to the regime. On the one hand, in autocratic regimes, some districts may have historical grievances against the state that are rooted in past repression. However, while many constituencies may have grievances against the regime, not all of them have the capacity to organize sustained opposition to the regime. Thus we argue that in addition to past grievances, areas that also possess precolonial histories of centralized political organization may be better situated to build on such historical institutions to successfully oppose the regime. In general, organized opposition to authoritarianism is difficult

to sustain, and we argue that some communities—specifically those with strong non-state institutions—should be better positioned to organize this resistance.

The first section of this paper further elaborates on our core argument and the mechanisms of opposition formation under authoritarianism. The second section presents some preliminary quantitative data to test our argument as well as the alternative explanation. The next section unpacks these quantitative findings by qualitatively analyzing three cases of transition: Angola, Cameroon, and Zambia. We show that, where they exist (such as in Angola and Cameroon), historical grievances appear to matter most in areas that feature precolonial political organization. However, in Zambia, which faced very little community-level repression under authoritarianism, economic factors appear to be most important: opposition appears to arise in the most developed, urban areas. The final section discusses our preliminary conclusions from this data, and how we hope to improve the work moving forward.

Explaining the Origins of Opposition Success

Economic theories of opposition

Although we do not have a unified theory to explain the origins of opposition parties, one of the oldest theories of democratization, modernization theory, argues that economic development and urbanization create demand for democracy (Lipset 1959). According to the original theory, as citizens living under autocracy become more educated, develop longer time horizons, and experience more heterogeneous socialization, they develop more democratic values such as tolerance and openness. As a result, we might expect calls for democratization and support for opposition under authoritarianism to come from areas of a country where such educated, middle-class citizens live. Indeed, protests are most common in urban areas and Koter

(2013) has demonstrated that support for incumbents in Africa in general is primarily rural.

According to modernization theory, therefore, we should expect that opposition strongholds arise primarily in urban districts and cities.

Alternatively, however, the literature on electoral authoritarianism suggests an opposing hypothesis. Scholars who have tried to explain why citizens vote for autocratic ruling parties have overwhelmingly argued that they participate in expectation of material rewards—either through vote-buying, clientelistic relationships with candidates, or the expectation of constituency-level patronage spending by the regime (Blaydes 2011, Chapters 4 and 6; Lust-Okar 2006; Magaloni 2006, Chapter 4; Miguel, Jamal, and Tessler 2015). According to this logic, citizens vote for the ruling party in the hopes of receiving a material reward for doing so.

Building on an enormous literature focused on democratic elections (e.g., Cox and McCubbins 1986; Dixit and Londregan 1996; Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007; Lindbeck and Weibull 1987; Nichter 2008; Stokes 2013), the scholarship on electoral autocracies is split on exactly how the regime uses spending and patronage to influence electoral participation. On the one hand, Magaloni (2006) argues that in order to encourage citizens to vote for the ruling party, the state spends more in ‘swing’ districts that narrowly voted for the party in the previous election. The logic implies that citizens respond to these incentives, supporting the ruling party in order to receive more local spending. On the other hand, Blaydes (2011) has argued that the ruling party uses a ‘punishment regime’ (64) to manage electoral support. Local spending is instead focused on ‘core’ constituencies, rewarding districts that vote overwhelmingly for the ruling party. For the purposes of understanding the origins of opposition strongholds, however, the core logic of these different theories remains the same: citizens base their support for the regime on local spending patterns and patronage networks. Building on this logic, we might

therefore expect that opposition strongholds arise in constituencies that receive the least amount of spending from the regime.

However, it is important to note that these theories of electoral behavior explain the *maintenance* of ruling party and opposition strongholds, but do not directly address where these constituencies would come from in the first place. Government spending is reactive to electoral behavior; in other words, it is the dependent variable. However, the logic implies that the relationship between spending and turnout is not linear, but cyclical and interdependent. The government rewards core or swing constituencies precisely in order to affect turnout in future elections. Thus, we extend this logic by proposing that opposition should arise in reaction to antecedent spending levels (i.e. government spending before the transition to multiparty elections).

Because the literature on competitive authoritarianism has focused so heavily on the role of electoral patronage in explaining vote choice, this argument better explains why people choose to vote for the ruling party as opposed to why people would support the opposition. The problem with this approach is that if citizens vote primarily in expectation of patronage, it never makes sense to vote for the opposition. From the perspective of the citizen, even if your constituency receives few resources, the best strategy should always be to vote for the ruling party in the hopes that renewed support for the regime in your constituency will change its fortunes vis-à-vis state spending. However, perhaps during a period of political opening—when opposition parties are allowed for the first time—the electoral prospects of the opposition may seem more credible to voters, and thus a strategy of voting for the opposition may be more rational. It is only over repeated election cycles that the apparent unwinnability of the opposition becomes more evident.

Further, while government spending and investment may be a piece of the puzzle in understanding the origins of opposition under autocracy, at the turn of the century, when most African countries were holding their first multiparty elections, few areas of any country had seen significant investments from the state. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, most African states were notoriously weak and had failed to deliver on their developmentalist promises of the independence era. Thus, since most areas of most countries would have seen few investments, yet opposition was the exception—not the norm—it seems unlikely that government spending would be the core explanation for understanding the origins of opposition parties.

The Role of State Repression and Organizational Capacity

Instead, we argue that a combination of more serious grievance paired with the capacity to organize opposition are key to understanding the origins of these parties. First, the origins of opposition strongholds may arise from historical factors tied to political repression and marginalization. Classically, Horowitz (1985) argues that when ethnic, linguistic, or other identity aligns with economic inequality--i.e. an identity group is consider 'backwards' vis-à-vis a more 'advanced' group in society—conflict and opposition will be likely, particularly if the 'backwards' group is geographically defined. For example, in Cameroon, the opposition SDF is strongly associated with the Anglophone minority group, particularly in the Northwest region of the country. The majority of Cameroonians are Francophones, and Anglophones have historically been marginalized from politics. Thus, one of the primary issues of the SDF manifesto is increased regional autonomy. Similarly, the CUF in Tanzania has also made regional autonomy a centerpiece of their electoral platforms (albeit far more successfully), as much of their constituency is based on the historical grievances of the Zanzibari regional identity

group, and the historic distinction Zanzibaris draw between themselves and mainland Tanzanians. Thus opposition strongholds should be more likely to arise in areas that have been historically persecuted by the state.

However, historical grievance may not be a sufficient condition for understanding opposition parties. Opposition parties also need the capacity to organize institutionalized resistance. Under authoritarianism, coordinating opposition is a considerable task that requires significant risk-taking to overcome the collective action problem. While it is possible that dissatisfaction with the incumbent regime was widespread across most African countries on the eve of democratization (and not implausible given the dire straits of most African economies in the 1980s and 1990s), opposition parties did not arise everywhere, and where they did arise, they rarely became nationalized. Both the incumbent party's near-monopoly on state resources as well as the regime's use of repression makes the organization of an opposition party exceedingly difficult (Levitsky and Way 2010; Schedler 2002).

Which types of communities are best equipped to formalize opposition parties? A recent strand of literature has argued that the historical legacies of precolonial institutions have had a lasting impact on economic development because of their effect on the ability of local elites to organize. Gennaioli and Rainer (2007) stress the higher levels of accountability of traditional leaders in areas with legacies of more centralized precolonial institutions, while Wilfahrt (2018) points to the importance of in-group identities and social networks in explaining the link between centralized precolonial institutions and public service delivery. Regardless, the ability for communities to organize and coordinate may likewise lend itself to the building of opposition parties. On the one hand, successful opposition-building requires power-sharing and elite coordination in order to ensure that the party is inclusive enough to attract a host of party elites

who can serve as candidates. The democratization era in sub-Saharan Africa was notorious for the proliferation of personalized parties that failed to institutionalize because of their reliance on loyalty to a single politician. As Wilfahrt (2018) has argued for public goods provision, elites who can build on historical networks of reciprocity are better positioned to coordinate. On the other hand, elites who can also draw on historical in-group identities built on legacies of precolonial statehood may be better positioned to call on ordinary citizens to support opposition parties and cultivate lasting partisans.

Thus, communities endowed with reciprocally-oriented networks of elites and historical legacies of strong in-group identities should be better positioned to create formal opposition parties than areas that lack a historical community built on strong institutions. In the context of African polities, it is increasingly believed that the attributes of precolonial societies most strongly correlate with such features. However, this organizational capacity may go underutilized in the context of opposition politics if the political community lacks historical grievances against the regime. Grievance and capacity should work together to provide the foundation for opposition parties to thrive.

Overall, understanding the sources of opposition during transitions to multiparty elections is important to explaining a host of issues related to autocratic stability and democratization. If the source of opposition in autocracies is primarily driven by government investments, then the regime is well-positioned to coopt opposition areas and create a 'loyal' opposition. Likewise, if a country is primarily with rural with a small urban middle-class, it may be easier for the government to buy off any opposition. However, if opposition parties arise where communities share a deeply-rooted historical legacy of reciprocity, the regime may find it more difficult to

contain demands for democracy. Further, if opposition parties are driven by demands from historically persecuted identity groups, electoral competition may be especially contentious and prone to violence, as we are currently seeing with the so-called ‘Anglophone crisis’ in Cameroon. The implications of these findings are seemingly central to understanding politics in Africa’s divergent regimes. The next section presents some preliminary quantitative data to test our argument, and the following section digs qualitatively deeper into the three cases.

Quantitative Data and Methods

Data

To quantitatively investigate the origins of opposition strongholds, we examine constituency level vote share in the first presidential democratic election after a country’s transition from autocracy. Our preliminary analysis focuses on presidential elections in Angola (1992), Cameroon (1992), and Zambia (1991), three cases for which we have been able to obtain data. Our main dependent variable is the vote share of the opposition party with the highest vote share in the constituency. In alternative analyses we use the sum of the vote share for all opposition parties in a constituency and the results are substantively similar. For Angola, the data for this variable comes from the African Elections Database. The data for Cameroon was collected in the form of Supreme Court decrees from the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization in Yaoundé. For Zambia, the data was collected from the online archives of the Zambian Electoral Commission.

In order to examine the sources of opposition support across several dimensions, we include constituency level measures of night light, political discrimination, pre-colonial centralization, and armed conflict. Descriptive statistics for these main four independent variables and our dependent variable are shown in the table below.

First, we rely on satellite imagery of night light to capture the level of public investment and urbanization at the time of the transition. Satellite imagery has been used as a means of testing arguments about economic development (Michalopoulos and Papaioannou 2013) and the politics of electricity provision (Min 2015). Satellite data on night lights has also been demonstrated to be a reliable proxy measure for electricity provision in the developing world and specifically in rural Africa by comparing it to ground-based measures (Min et al 2013, Min and Gaba 2014). The night light data are provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.¹ For our main measure in this paper we calculate the average level of night light intensity for each constituency in 1992, which represents the earliest year for which this kind of data is available.

To measure political discrimination and historical grievances we rely on data from the Minorities at Risk (MAR) project, as well as the Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) dataset (Vogt et al 2015; Wucherpfennig et al 2011). We construct a measure of political discrimination by first matching the ethnic groups in the MAR dataset to their locations as defined in the EPR geolocated data. We then use the “poldis” variable from MAR² to construct an index measure of discrimination for each group, g , in each constituency, j . We first calculate the share of the ethnic group’s geographic area that overlaps with each constituency. We use this information, in conjunction with EPR data on the ethnic group’s relative size in the national population, to construct a final index score for a constituency which is a sum of the weighted discrimination scores for all groups located in the constituency. Specifically, the discrimination score is

¹ Data available at: <http://ngdc.noaa.gov/eog/dmsp/downloadV4composites.html>

² The poldis variable is coded by MAR for each group-year as follows: 0 = No discrimination, 1 = Neglect/remedial policies, 2 = Neglect/no remedial policies, 3 = Social exclusion/neutral policy, and 4 = Exclusion/repressive policy. See MAR codebook for further details.

calculated as follows:

$$discrimination\ score_j = \sum_{g=1}^n (poldis_g * geographic_share_{g,j} * popsize_g)$$

To construct a constituency measure of pre-colonial centralization, we use historical data from Murdock (1957) and Gray (1998) on the pre-colonial centralization of ethnic groups. Our measure reflects the geographic share of each constituency that is covered by historical groups that are categorized as a larger chiefdom or pre-colonial state. In the Murdock data, this corresponds to groups that have a jurisdictional hierarchy beyond their local communities of at least two levels. Level Two corresponds to a “larger chiefdom,” Level Three to “states,” and Level Four to “large states.”

Finally, we also include data from UCDP’s Geo-referenced Event Dataset to explore the role of armed conflict on opposition vote share. The UCDP data begins in 1989 and thus captures the short-run conflict dynamics in the lead-up to the first democratic elections in the early 1990s. Our primary measure is a count of battles between the state and non-state armed groups between 1989 and the first transition election.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	count	mean	sd	min	max
Opposition Vote Share (largest party)	221	62.7	27.3	.01	95.4
Opposition Vote Share (all parties)	221	65.4	26.3	.01	95.9
Political Discrimination Index	221	.333	1.17	0	7
Night Lights (mean)	221	1.45	5.39	0	44.2
Battles (count)	221	1.77	7.63	0	57
Large Chiefdom Share	221	.325	.402	0	1

Data limitations

Our current collection of data for these preliminary analyses is insufficient to rigorously test our argument. One limitation stems from our reliance on the spatial overlap of ethnic groups

and constituencies without the use of fine-grained data on population at the constituency level. This hampers our interpretation and/or measurement of several of our variables. First, electricity is both a measure of urbanization as well as government investments, which are conceptually distinct factors that may affect opposition. To help account for this we also include the size of the constituency as a control, reasoning that larger units are more likely to be rural while small units are more urbanized. An additional problem, for which we do not currently account, is that our measures of pre-colonial centralization and post-colonial discrimination are based purely on the ethnic group's geographic boundaries and do not take into account the uneven distribution of the population within that area.

Additionally, like many other important questions in the social sciences, statistical analysis and the interpretation of our results is made more difficult by the differential timing of our independent variables of interest. Since we test both pre-colonial and post-colonial explanations for our outcome, we are introducing post-treatment measures that are thought to be endogenous to levels of pre-colonial centralization, thus possibly biasing our estimates. For instance, higher levels of pre-colonial centralization have been linked to both higher levels of local economic development (Michalopoulos and Papaioannou 2013) and armed conflicts and instability at the national level (Paine 2018). However, if we omit these variables from our analysis then we run the risk of introducing omitted variable bias.

Methods

Our analysis uses OLS regression to estimate the relationship between our 4 main indicators and opposition vote share. Specifically, we estimate the following equation via OLS:

$$OppositionVoteShare_j = \alpha + \beta_1 * Light_j + \beta_2 * Disc_j + \beta_3 * Central_j + \beta_4 * Battles + X_j' + \varepsilon_j$$

Where X_j' is a vector including the controls for constituency size and country level dummy variables. In our main specifications we pool observations from constituencies across all three of our countries and the country dummies help to account for the varying levels of opposition support within them. In alternative specifications we drop each country, as well as re-run the analysis using only observations from each country alone. In all of the analyses, we cluster standard errors at the constituency level.

Results

Pooled Analysis

The results of the pooled analysis are presented in Table 2. Standardized coefficients are presented, meaning that a one unit increase for each variable is equal to the standard deviation of that variable. Model 1 uses the opposition vote share of the largest single opposition party in the constituency as the dependent variable, while Model 2 uses the sum of vote share for all opposition parties. Model 3 replicates Model 2 using an interaction terms between 'Political Discrimination' and 'Larger Chiefdom Share.'

Table 2: Opposition Strongholds

	(1) Opp1Percent	(2) OppAllPercent	(3) Interaction
Night Lights (mean)	2.329 (0.787)***	2.489 (0.839)***	2.492 (0.826)***
Battles (Count)	9.609 (1.668)***	7.952 (2.048)***	7.960*** (2.066)***
Political Discrimination Index	6.447 (1.424)***	7.953 (1.340)***	8.741 (1.646)***
Larger Chiefdom Share	2.692 (1.487)*	2.269 (1.488)	2.158 (1.479)
Discrimination x Larger Chiefdom Share	--	--	-1.514 (0.862)*
Constituency Area	-3.173 (1.698)*	-2.414 (1.666)	-2.420 (1.667)
Cameroon dummy	31.408 (8.038)***	29.019 (9.866)***	28.768 (9.866)***
Zambia dummy	57.533 (7.349)***	48.696 (9.093)***	48.791 (9.082)***
Constant	16.280 (6.675)**	25.426 (8.431)***	25.495 (8.423)***
R^2	0.34	0.27	0.272
N	221	221	221

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

Note: OLS regressions with standard errors clustered at the constituency level. Standardized coefficients shown.

First, we observe considerable heterogeneity across the countries in our sample. The dummy variable for Cameroon implies an average opposition vote share that is 31 percentage points greater than Angola, while Zambia's is 57 percentage points greater. Overall, we find support for the argument that political discrimination and pre-colonial centralization are key to understanding opposition support (where they exist), and some preliminary evidence that their interaction may be important. An increase of one standard deviation in political discrimination (1.16 units on the index) is associated with an increase of 6.45 percentage points for the largest opposition party in a constituency. This relationship is statistically significant as well ($p < 0.001$)

and holds across both models 1 and 2. This suggests that constituencies that were home to groups that experienced more discrimination were more likely to also have higher levels of opposition vote share. Meanwhile, constituencies with greater pre-colonial centralization also appear to have higher levels of opposition vote share. In Model 1, an increase of one standard deviation in the pre-colonial chiefdom share (0.40 units) is associated with an increase of 2.69 percentage points for the opposition. This result is however not robust to the alternative dependent variable in Model 2.

On the other hand, we find that constituencies with higher mean levels of night light intensity are associated with higher levels of opposition vote share, indicating that low-levels of state investments are not likely driving opposition support, but inversely, that perhaps more urban, educated, middle-class areas may be more oppositional to the regime. An increase of one standard deviation in night light intensity is associated with an increase of 2.33 percentage points for the oppositions vote share. Considering our lack of population data, we interpret this result with caution but we do note that the sign of the constituency size variable is consistently negative. This is in line with what we would expect if the size variable were a proxy for population density.

Finally, we also find evidence that areas with greater levels of conflict between the state and armed non-state groups are also associated with higher levels of opposition vote share. An increase of one standard deviation (~7.6 battles) in the conflict variable is associated with a large increase of 9.6 percentage points for the opposition. This variable is also statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) across both models. We explore this result further in the disaggregated results below and show that it is the key explanatory factor in the Angolan case.

Disaggregated Analysis

In this section we explore the correlates of opposition strongholds for each of our three countries in separate regressions. The results are presented in Table 3. Model 3 presents the estimates for the Angola case, model 4 presents the Cameroon analysis, and model 5 reflects the case of Zambia. Overall, the analyses suggest that heterogeneous explanations for the rise of opposition strongholds across the three cases: 1) patterns of armed conflict appear to be driving the results in Angola, 2) the presence of larger chiefdoms are associated with greater opposition vote share in Cameroon and 3) more developed areas are associated with greater opposition support in Zambia. Although the results are not included in Table 3, the inclusion of an interaction term between ‘political discrimination’ and ‘larger chiefdom’ is insignificant for all three countries.

In Angola, only the variable for armed conflict is estimated at a statistically significant level, though this is not entirely surprising given the small number of observations. Still, the explanatory power of armed conflict is quite striking. By itself, it accounts for around 62% of the variation in the outcome and exhibits a large substantive effect. A one standard deviation increase in the number of battles (~17) is associated with an 8.1 percentage point increase in a constituencies opposition vote share. This is particularly large when considering the low baseline for the opposition’s vote share in Angola (~33%). This strong association suggests that violent opposition maps quite closely to electoral opposition in Angola. The results in Table 3 further illustrate that the effect for the armed conflict variable in the pooled analysis is driven entirely by the case of Angola since neither Cameroon or Zambia exhibit any conflict during the period under study (according to UCDP).

In Cameroon, we find support for the pre-colonial centralization hypothesis. An increase

of one standard deviation in the share of a constituency that is covered by large chiefdoms (or states) is associated with an increase of 10.84 percentage points in opposition vote share. This relationship is statistically significant at conventional levels. There is also marginal support for the political discrimination hypothesis. The political discrimination index variable has a positive sign as expected but falls just outside of conventional levels for reporting statistical significance ($p=0.108$). Finally, the Cameroon analysis also suggests a very strong negative relationship between the size of the constituency and the opposition's vote share. An increase of one standard deviation in the size of a constituency is associated with a large 24.79 percentage point decrease in opposition support.

Lastly, in Zambia we find little support for our core argument. This may in part be a function of the coarseness of our data on political discrimination, as the MAR discrimination data shows no variation in Zambia and it is therefore omitted from the analysis. Still, we find only marginal evidence for a relationship between pre-colonial centralization and opposition strongholds ($p = 0.116$). However, we do find a relationship between night lights and opposition support ($p=0.005$). An increase of one standard deviation in a Zambian constituency's measure of mean night light is associated with a 2.93 percentage point increase in support for the opposition. This leads us to believe that where systematic repression against communities is rare or nonexistent, the modernization thesis may hold the most explanatory power.

Table 3: Opposition Strongholds by Country

	(3) Angola: Opp1Percent	(4) Cameroon: Opp1Percent	(5) Zambia: Opp1Percent
Night Lights (mean)	8.986 (15.297)	-2.228 (2.252)	2.928 (1.023)***
Battles (count)	8.103 (3.359)**		
Political Discrimination Index	15.464 (16.180)	3.030 (1.854)	
Larger chiefdom share	-1.676 (4.341)	10.841 (4.803)**	2.492 (1.575)
Constituency Size	-0.786 (2.890)	-24.791 (7.936)***	6.400 (7.952)
Constant	14.336 (6.099)**	49.372 (4.403)***	72.194 (2.301)***
R^2	0.69	0.32	0.03
N	18	53	150
Country	Angola	Cameroon	Zambia

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

Note: Constant variables omitted from analysis. Coefficients are standardized.

While these results are suggestive, the current data limitation prevent us from making any definitive conclusion about our argument. Therefore, the following section unpacks these findings qualitatively for each case. The qualitative data largely supports the quantitative findings, though further analysis is warranted.

Cameroon: Opposition Emerges in Areas in with Stronger Precolonial Institutions

Cameroon offers the clearest illustration of our core argument about the dual role of targeted repression and precolonial institutions. It provides this evidence through it's unusual level of variation on both of these indicators: its over 200 different ethnic groups provides range on the measure of precolonial political institutions, and its history of targeted repression of specific identity groups varies across different types of ethnic institutions.

By way of political background, Cameroon's first multiparty elections arose out of a long history of single party elections, held since independence from France and Britain in 1960-1961. The first president of Cameroon, Ahmadou Ahidjo, a Fulani Northerner who was hand-picked by the French to manage Cameroon's independence, quickly worked to consolidate power, establishing a *de jure* single party regime under the *Union nationale Camerounais* (UNC) in 1966. Following a health scare in 1982, Ahidjo hastily transferred power to his own hand-picked successor, Paul Biya, a Beti from the South region of Cameroon. However, Ahidjo regained his health and seemingly came to regret his decision to step down. He attempted to reclaim control via the UNC, but when this failed, the rift between Ahidjo and Biya came to a head in April 1984, when a coup attempt by several northern officers was successfully thwarted. Although Ahidjo denied any involvement in the coup plot, he was tried in absentia while in exile in France and found guilty. The coup attempt drastically altered Biya's approach toward governing, as he tightened his control over the military, his cabinet, the party, and the institutions of the state in general.

Despite some cosmetic efforts at liberalizing the party, Biya began to face mounting criticisms as the Third Wave gathered momentum in the early 1990s. Under intense domestic and international pressure, Biya was forced to open elections to opposition parties in 1992. During this period, three primary opposition parties rose to the forefront of the protests: the SDF, UNDP, and UDC. John Fru Ndi's Social Democratic Front (SDF) was clearly the most prominent organizational force behind the democratization effort, spearheading the *villes mortes* campaign. Based in Bamenda, its natural constituency was the anglophone regions, particularly the Northwest. But during these early days, Fru Ndi made significant inroads in the francophone West and Littoral regions. The UNDP arose to represent the (by now politically relegated)

interests of the “greater north” encompassing the Adamawa, North, and Far North regions. Adamou Ndam Njoya and the UDC arose as a strong opposition figure in the heart of the Bamoun Kingdom in the Noun *département* in the West Region.

Unlike Angola, where we will see that the opposition was older and considerably more unified, Cameroon’s fractured opposition parties seemed to arise out of a *tabla rasa*. In a case with a less violent history, our reading of Cameroonian history suggests that older institutions from the precolonial period may have played the strongest role in the ability of communities to organize opposition to the regime, specifically in areas that already had considerable grievances against the regime.

Precolonial Centralization in the Grassfields

Cameroon is one of the most diverse countries in Africa, with at least 250 ethnic groups—though it is so diverse that even this number is an approximation. Nonetheless, during the 19th century, most of these groups were acephalous or organized primarily at the village level. This is especially true of the Centre, South, and East regions, which are mostly covered in dense jungle, inhibiting the formation of highly centralized societies. The grassfields in the Northwest, however, featured hierarchal societies at the time of colonization—the Bamiléké, Bamoun, and Nso are all clustered closely around what is today the border between the Northwest and West regions. The capitol of the Nso people is Kumbo, close to the birthplace of John Fru Ndi, though Fru Ndi is not Nso himself. The Bamoun established their kingdom in the 14th century in modern-day Noun district. The Sultan, or Mfon, descends from the Njoya family, and the current Sultan, Ibrahim Njoya, is a member of the RDPC political bureau. Adamou Ndam Njoya, leader of the

opposition UDC, and current mayor of Foumban, the capitol of the Bamoun Kingdom, is his half-brother.

The grand north also featured a number of hierarchically-organized societies at the moment of colonization, including part of the Kotoko kingdom. [ADD MORE HERE]

Finally, the Duala people on the coast also emerged as an economic force during the 17th century as they developed a central role in European trading routes, particularly the slave trade. Of course, the Duala live in what would become Douala, the largest city in Cameroon, which also happens to be home to some of the most competitive electoral districts in Cameroon. However, it is unclear if there is a connection between the political institutions of the Duala people and this opposition activity; indeed, the Duala are actually seen as adherents to the RDPC, as they view migrants, specifically the Bamiléké (who largely support the SDF) as politically threatening (Geschiere 2009, 50). It is more likely that the urban environment itself is conducive to opposition activity, and that the Bamiléké diaspora in Douala is driving the organizational capacity of the opposition in that city.

History of Persecution: Bamiléké, the Grand North, and the Anglophones

Throughout Cameroon's history, several groups have been targeted by the central state with repression. The first and arguably most violent round of targeted repression occurred in the 1950s and 1960s. As France began experimenting with limited self-governance after WWII, promoting a handful of pro-France political parties in Cameroon, the Union des populations du Cameroun (UPC), founded in 1948 and led by Ruben Um Nyobé, quickly turned from a group of trade unionists to a "radical" nationalist party by the early 1950s (Joseph 1977). Demanding independence from France within ten years and reunification with the anglophone regions, the

French outlawed the UPC in 1955 as its leadership went underground and began the process of turning the UPC from a political party into an insurgent movement (Gardinier 1963, 66–71).

Notably, the party had an ethnically-based leadership in the Bamiléké and Bassa heartlands. The French brutally crushed the UPC rebellion, assassinating Um Nyobé in 1958 and taking a “scorched earth” policy to the UPC’s strongholds in the West (LeVine 1964, 160–61). It is estimated that the French killed tens of thousands of civilians, primarily Bamiléké. After independence, Ahidjo continued the war against the Bamiléké until the rebellion was largely over by the end of the 1960s, though the indiscriminate violence left an indelible mark on politics amongst the Bassa and Bamiléké.

After several decades of calm under the Ahidjo presidency, the immediate pre-multiparty years in the 1980s were dominated by the feud along the North-South axis. After the attempted coup, Biya cracked down heavily on the north, purging the army of northerners and reorienting spending away from the north. Many perceived that the North was overly-favored by Ahidjo and welcomed this reorientation. The northerners, of course, deeply resented their fall from grace.

Finally, at the time of the transition, the anglophone regions also held deep-seated grievances towards the central government. They had entered into a union with francophone Cameroon as equals in a federation. Ahidjo slowly eroded this equality in order to bolster his own power, ultimately destroying the federation in 1972, turning Cameroon into a unitary state. The anglophones never forgave Yaoundé for this abrogation of their unifying agreement, nor did they feel that the central government ever made amends for this erosion of their autonomy. Rather, many anglophones feel that they are second class citizens in their own country. The government is largely dominated by francophones, and even ordinary citizens feel alienated from their French-speaking brethren. Though these grievances had been simmering for a long time,

they came to a head during the time of the transition, with anglophones at the heart of the mass protests against the regime.

Overall, the constellation of precolonial kingdoms, particularly in the grassfields area, are tightly connected to modern opposition activity, even in its diaspora abroad and in larger cities such as Douala. It is suggestive that such groups with deeper institutional roots were better positioned to mount opposition to the regime at the time of political opening than groups in traditionally acephalous areas, such as in the East, South, and Centre regions. Further, it is important to note that historically persecuted groups are not equally situated to organize opposition to the regime: While the Bamiléké have been central to the strength of the SDF, the Bassa have been considerably less successful at sustaining opposition activity. Although the UPC resurfaced during the transition as an opposition party—gaining some electoral support in the Bassa heartland of Nyong et Kellé—it quickly fractured after the first legislative election, indicating that groups lacking institutional strength may be unable to sustain organized opposition to an autocratic regime. Similarly, anglophone support of the SDF has come primarily from the Northwest constituencies closest to the Nso and Bamiléké heartlands. In the acephalous Southwest region, support for the SDF has fractured considerably. Finally, the most aggrieved identity group at the time of the transition was arguably the ‘grand north,’ which did indeed mount a preliminary resistance to the regime. However, perhaps because the lack of institutionalized capacity, this opposition crumbled after the first election.

Angola: Opposition Emerges in Historically Persecuted Regions

Angola offers an illustration of our argument under starkly different political and historical circumstances. Like several other African countries experiencing political liberalization during the Third Wave of the early 1990s, Angola conducted its first multiparty elections as part of a broader peace process aimed at bringing an end to a long-running civil war. After Portugal's withdrawal in 1975, a government of national unity among three nationalist movements quickly fell apart as the Popular Liberation Movement of Angola (MPLA) moved to sideline its rivals for power, as the National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA) and the Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) withdrew to rural areas to launch guerrilla wars. The MPLA quickly neutralized the FNLA in the northern part of the country, but it could not manage to defeat UNITA, which grew over time to become an effective fighting force (James 1992). Both sides eventually agreed to peace talks as their military confrontation became a stalemate and their foreign sponsors began to withdraw in the wake of the Cold War's end. The resulting Bicesse Accords included provisions for presidential and parliamentary elections that were supposed to usher in a new era of peaceful political competition (Ottaway 1998).

Angola's 1992 elections were supervised by the United Nations. In the presidential race, the incumbent president and MPLA's candidate, José Eduardo dos Santos, won 49.6% of the vote to 40% for UNITA's leader and presidential candidate, Jonas Savimbi. In the parliamentary elections, MPLA won 129 seats with 54% of the vote, and UNITA won 70 seats with 34%. The two presidential candidates were supposed to participate in a runoff because neither had won a majority in the first round, but the runoff never took place because Savimbi rejected the results by alleging that they were fraudulent. Nevertheless, what the election results made clear is that opposition support in Angola was geographically concentrated among the core constituencies

that supported UNITA throughout the civil war (Marcum 1993; Orre 2014). UNITA managed to outperform MPLA among the mainly ethnic Ovimbundu voters concentrated in the country's south-central provinces: Benguela, Bié, Huambo, and Kuando Kubango. In these areas where UNITA had been able to conduct rebel operations during the civil war, Savimbi secured 80% of the presidential vote and UNITA averaged 76% of the parliamentary vote (Pereira 1994).

What factors enabled UNITA to win by such high vote margins in a geographically defined area? The evidence indicates that a perception of historic persecution among those living in areas associated with UNITA is critical to understanding support for the opposition and that this overlaps with the Ovimbundu kingdom, which provided the institutional capacity for both sustained insurgency, as well as opposition support in multiparty elections. However, there is not enough variation along these two dimensions (precolonial centralization and targeted repression) to offer us definitive evidence of our theory.

Persecution in UNITA's Opposition Strongholds.

UNITA's electoral support in 1992 drew from widespread perceptions among the Ovimbundu of historic persecution first under Portuguese colonial rule and then under MPLA wartime occupation. Under the Portuguese, the Ovimbundu had actively resisted colonial administrative control of their traditional polities. For example, Savimbi's own grandfather, Sakaita Savimbi, participated in the Bailundo revolt against the Portuguese in the early 1900s and was subsequently punished for doing so (Heywood 1989, 50). Colonial administrators would go on to subject Ovimbundu areas to coercion in order to mobilize labor for urban areas and coffee plantations as well as to identify sources of nationalist opposition (Marcum 1976; Pereira 1994). Independence did not bring the Ovimbundu relief from such repressive control. The

MPLA retained many of the administrative structures employed by the Portuguese, while adapting them to Marxist-Leninist principles. During the civil war, Ovimbundu perceptions of repression would be further reinforced by the MPLA's decision to create regional military councils to impose direct military control in provinces affected by UNITA's insurgency. These councils were empowered to restrict movement, confiscate property, and hold military courts to try a range of economic and political crimes (Sidaway and Simon 1993). Ovimbundu experiences with militarized governance occurred in the very same provinces—Benguela, Bié, Huambo, and Kuando Kubango—where UNITA would go on to outperform the MPLA in the 1992 elections.

MPLA's military campaign to reassert territorial control in the south-central provinces in the 1970s and 1980s served to further alienate many in the Ovimbundu population. UNITA was able to depict Angolan government forces, supported by Cuban troops, as the "new colonialists" who perpetuated violent repression (Heywood 1989, 58). Such perceptions would be exacerbated as the MPLA forced the evacuation of rural areas surrounding towns as part of its efforts to maintain control over critical infrastructure and population centers (Pearce 2012). MPLA's southward march to push back UNITA rebels and their South African allies proved devastating to civilian populations caught in the crossfire of a war that was fought to a standstill. Not only did the conflict result in thousands of civilian casualties and thousands more being displaced throughout Angola's south-central provinces (Heywood 2011), but the indiscriminate planting of landmines in populated areas turned those provinces into an area with one of the highest ratios of amputees in the world (Human Rights Watch 1993).

Precolonial Political Organization among the Ovimbundu.

Although this persecution and violence is central to understanding support for UNITA, it is confounded by the fact that UNITA support comes primarily from the Ovimbundu—a politically centralized kingdom before colonization. UNITA was able to mobilize large numbers of Ovimbundu throughout the south-central provinces because Savimbi purposefully attached himself to pre-colonial institutions to legitimize his nationalist movement. Prior to colonialism, the Ovimbundu were organized through several kingdoms with clear hierarchies and relatively stable boundaries by the end of the 18th century (Edwards 1962). During the civil war, even after UNITA had been forced to give up territory to advancing MPLA forces, Savimbi sought the support of traditional Ovimbundu authorities — sekulus (elders), osomas (chiefs), and ocimbandas (religious practitioners) — in order to maintain his ties in rural areas. These authorities held sway over their constituents because, as Heywood (1998, 149-151) explains, the Ovimbundu had been able to maintain their political and cultural traditions through colonialism and then redeploy them in supporting UNITA during the post-independence civil war. Understanding that Ovimbundu viewed their sekulus and ocimbandas as legitimate representatives of their interests, Savimbi made sure to include them in UNITA leadership (Heywood 1998, 165). By the time UNITA competed against the MPLA in the 1992 elections, informed observers described UNITA as being “dependent on the rural authority of traditional chiefs” (Marcum 1993, 219). Thus, it is clear that both grievance and capacity played a role in the origins of UNITA support, however, because there is only one case of opposition in Angola, it is unclear which factor was most important to explaining the rise of UNITA. Because of its extreme ethnic diversity, Cameroon provides a better test of our theory.

Zambia: An Opposition That Transcends Geography

In Zambia, the opposition managed to bring about one of the first peaceful alternations in power in the multiparty era that swept across Sub-Saharan Africa in the early 1990s. In some respects, this was a surprising result because the political monopoly that President Kenneth Kaunda had built around his United National Independence Party (UNIP) approximated the single-party template commonly found in the region, for example in Cameroon. The president had centralized power in his hands, closed the scope for civic or political activity outside the ruling party, and employed clientelistic politics to reward followers and punish defectors (Baylies and Szeftel 1992). The formation of an opposition strong enough to defeat Kaunda was therefore not a foregone conclusion.

A broad-based opposition, nevertheless, coalesced under the umbrella of the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) that went on to win the transitional 1991 elections. Built as an alliance among trade unions, businesspeople, professionals, religious leaders, and students (Bartlett 2000), the MMD went on to secure a landslide victory against the ruling party. In the presidential election, MMD candidate Frederick Chiluba received 76% of the vote, while the MMD won 83% of parliamentary seats in single-member districts (125 of 150). Notably, the MMD's opposition victory transcended ethnic and political geography. Chiluba's vote share exceeded two-thirds in 8 of 9 provinces, ranging from a low of 68% in North West Province to a high of 89% in Copperbelt Province; Kaunda only won a majority, 70%, in Eastern Province, his political home (Osei-Hwedie 1993; Scarritt 2006).

Why was the opposition vote in Zambia's transitional elections not geographically clustered? The case materials for Zambia do not allow us to falsify the conventional hypotheses. We find no support for the idea that economic deprivation drove patterns of economic support:

the nature of Zambia's prolonged economic crisis meant that no ethnic or administrative region felt unusually targeted. There is also no support for our argument because the single-party regime did not disproportionately repress any particular region or identity group. In addition, the literature on Zambia does not corroborate the idea that MMD support was mainly mobilized through traditional authorities, though this may be because of a lack of targeted political repression. Instead, we find in the unique case of Zambia that opposition was mobilized primarily through unions and business networks in urban and more developed areas, indicating that organizational capacity may still be the key factor to understanding opposition strength, but that, under certain circumstances, ethnic networks may not have a monopoly on how this capacity is achieved. Instead, where repression is not targeted, countries may follow a more traditional 'modernization' path towards opposition.

Non-Discriminatory Public Investment

The distribution of developmental investments in Zambia, as in many African countries, has been widely perceived to be biased in favor of the president's coethnics or coregionalists. Kaunda did, in fact, strategically distribute public resources for patronage purposes, namely, by allocating expenditures or appointments to secure the support of key constituencies within UNIP. However, Posner (2005) finds no convincing evidence to support the notion that the president's home region was favored or that any other region was unusually discriminated against.

The prolonged decline of the Zambian economy from the 1970s through the early 1990s that allowed economic grievances to transcend ethnic or regional cleavages. Declining world prices for Zambia's main export, copper, coupled with unsustainable policies produced a series of economic crises that the government could not overcome. To the contrary, Kaunda's

inconsistent policy approach, oscillating between ramped-up bureaucratic procedures and donor-supported structural programs, failed to stanch the economic losses. These policy reversals incited widespread political resistance. When the government adopted the New Economic Recovery Program (NERP) in 1985 to impose greater administrative controls over economic transactions, it alienated both trade unions and businesses (Rakner 2003). And when a new IMF stabilization program resulted in higher prices for staples in 1989, food riots exploded in urban areas (Baylies and Szeftel 1992). Such repeated policy failures ultimately imposed costs on all Zambians without regard to geography: the country experienced a 30% decline in real per capita growth between 1975 and 1990 (Rakner 2003, 53).

Non-Targeted Repression of Opponents

The evolution of single-party rule in Zambia generally conforms to growing authoritarianism seen in other African countries after independence. After having established *de jure* one-party rule in 1972, Kaunda progressively dismantled the constraints on his personal authority, all while centralizing power at the highest levels of the party and simultaneously restricting the basic liberties of citizens (Bratton 1992). However, Kaunda's efforts to limit the scope for political competition—and thereby hold onto power—did not result in geographic targeting of repression. Instead, rather than indiscriminately terrorizing the civilian population, as occurred in neighboring countries, Kaunda focused on repressing individual elite politicians—but without regard to ethnicity or region. Baylies and Szeftel (1992, 83-84) point out that the MMD's list of parliamentary candidates in 1991 was notable for the number who had personal grievances against Kaunda's regime: "at least 32 of the 150 candidates had suffered one or more of: dismissal from office, exclusion from election, arrest and detention without trial, and public

humiliation. A few had even been accused of treason... There were also four candidates whose fathers had suffered for opposing the government.” In this respect, Kaunda’s non-regional approach to persecuting his political opponents helped to create the conditions in which elites from nearly every province would unite under the MMD banner in the run-up to the 1991 elections.

The Absence of Precolonial Political Organization

There is no evidence in the case study material that precolonial ethnic structures facilitated the mobilization of opposition in Zambia. Country experts like Burnell (2001) have remarked on the fact that neither UNIP nor MMD, as national parties, had an ethnic or linguistic base. While some minor parties have periodically emerged among a particular ethnicity, Burnell further notes that groups like the Lozi have often fragmented their vote despite their hierarchical traditional structures. Similarly, Scarritt (2006) has stressed the multiethnic nature of dominant as well as minor opposition parties, which also tend to espouse national rather than ethnic appeals.

Rather than relying on ethnic or precolonial structures, the MMD’s successful rise as an opposition party in the early 1990s was largely due to an alliance of urban-based trade unionists and business people (Bratton 1992). In particular, the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) brought together the human and organizational resources that allowed the MMD to have nationwide reach. The ZCTU’s 19 affiliated unions and some 350,000 members, some 80% of the formally employed workforce, were able to mobilize in support of the MMD across the country’s urban areas (Bartlett 2000). In one of Africa’s most urbanized countries, the MMD’s organizational advantage allowed it to secure its electoral victory across Zambian provinces.

In regards to understanding the formation of opposition under autocracy, the case study materials echo the quantitative findings, suggesting that different conditions may matter in different contexts. In a country with a long history of violence and war, such as Angola, these patterns of violence and repression are clearly central to understanding the rise of opposition. In Cameroon, where repression and discrimination existed, but was considerably less widespread in comparison to Angola, precolonial institutions seem to adopt important functions in the formation of opposition parties. In places where citizens hold deep grievances against the state *and* non-state institutions for organization and mobilization exist, it appears that opposition may be well-suited to form. Finally, in Zambia, where repression and discrimination was largely non-existent, it appears that oppositional elites turned away from precolonial institutions as a form of organization, and instead relied on business and trade organizations to mobilize support. This is perhaps why we see the strongest returns for the opposition in the more urban and developed areas of Zambia.

Conclusion

This paper has developed and tested a core argument in order to explain the origins of opposition under autocracy. We find little support for the argument that opposition should arise in the least developed areas of an autocratic regime. Instead, we find that where repression and discrimination exist, aggrieved groups are more inclined to develop into opposition areas, but only where they possess the institutional capacity to do so. In Cameroon and Angola, we have found that groups with a precolonial history of hierarchical political institutions are more likely to develop and support opposition parties. However, in Zambia, where repression and discrimination was non-ethnic and elite-centered, opposition to the regime did not evolve around

ethnic or identity politics. Instead elites organized opposition around business and trade networks, and successfully mobilized voters through these institutions instead of precolonial political institutions. Where repression is not targeted at identity groups, opposition appears more consistently in urban areas with educated voters who are organized through secular institutions such as trade unions.

Moving forward, we hope to build on these findings, primarily by improving the quantitative analysis of the paper. The primary challenge has been finding countries with both shapefiles that match the electoral administrative boundaries of the first multiparty elections as well as constituency-level electoral data for those first elections. At the moment, the most promising cases appear to be Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Ghana and Uganda. By adding more cases, we hope to obtain more variation on the key independent variables of the study.

In addition, we hope to improve the quality of the data our measures of these independent variables. The Murdock data on precolonial political organization is especially problematic, as it contains a lot of missingness, and we suspect that there is some miscoding of important groups. Additionally, our reliance on the Minorities at Risk data is problematic, as we fear it does not capture the nuance in discrimination that our hypothesis is proposing. For both of these measures, we hope to be able to hand-code the data ourselves.

Appendix

Table 4z: Opposition Strongholds by Varying Sample

	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Opp1Percent	Opp1Percent	Opp1Percent
Night Lights (mean)	0.639 (2.804)	2.297 (0.795)***	1.681 (0.905)*
Battles (count)	5.471 (1.848)***	6.333 (4.485)	
Political Discrimination Index	6.641 (1.997)***	-28.185 (17.831)	0.856 (1.082)
Larger Chiefdom Share	4.060 (5.182)	2.889 (1.702)*	5.286 (1.619)***
Constituency Area Size	-6.256 (2.796)**	-9.357 (3.399)***	-20.921 (6.386)***
Constant	43.583 (4.940)***	59.607 (4.492)***	60.880 (2.108)***
R^2	0.27	0.14	0.13
N	71	168	203
Country	Angola, Cameroon	Angola, Zambia	Cameroon, Zambia

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

Note: constant variables omitted from analysis. Coefficients are standardized

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