

**Dynamic Patronage Coalitions
A State-Society Framework for Interpreting African Politics**

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This study suggests that the framework of dynamic patronage coalitions, based on Roker's coalition theory and the workings of patron-client networks, can fruitfully be utilized in analyzing African politics, particularly in light of the increasing prevalence of state-society approaches and the need for a comparative referent. The dynamic of coalition narrowing helps explain the frequency of coups, secession attempts, and exile invasions in the first decade or so after 1960, while coalition retraction accounts for the disengagement of portions of the citizenry from the channels of state in more recent years. The current sociopolitical turmoil affecting many African states indicates that coalitions stemming from an anti-incumbent class identity may successfully challenge stagnating coalitions of long-entrenched patrons.

The increased utilization of state-society approaches in the analysis of African politics in recent years has significantly augmented or replaced models based solely on modernity, dependence, state institutionalization, or other perspectives. The seminal work by Migdal (1988) and the stimulating and insightful anthology edited by Rothchild and Chazan (1988) exemplify this type of approach which focuses on the dynamics of intertwined political, societal, and economic factors. The state-society perspective highlights the complexity and nuances of the sociopolitical processes of power and choice, and permits a multi-faceted interpretation of the politics of African states. As Chazan (1988: 141) submits in "Patterns of State-Society Incorporation and Disengagement in Africa,"

The reorientation of political analysis away from the official and visible and toward the interactive and dynamic

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may assist in breaking away from the narrow confines of formalistic frameworks. It may also redirect research concerns and their practical ramifications to better reflect the rhythm of ongoing political processes in Africa.

However, avoiding "formalistic frameworks" while retaining nuanced complexity is a challenge that must be met by those wishing to undertake comparative political analysis in Africa using state-society approaches. How best to come to grips with the task of comparing politics in states using an approach that provides sufficient richness without becoming overly formalistic or deterministic? This study suggests a framework, herein referred to as dynamic patronage coalitions, which may help overcome this dilemma and aid in interpreting comparative politics in the African context. By fusing aspects of Riker's coalition theory and the workings of patron-client networks one may usefully conceptualize regimes in Africa and elsewhere as being comprised of coalitions of patrons, regardless of the power of an individual autocratic head of state or the robustness of a given single-party political system. These coalitions are dynamic in that they are subject to pressures leading to changes in membership and form.

The wave of coups d'etat and secession attempts in the years following African decolonization, the subsequent withdrawal of sizeable segments of society from the formal channels of state, and the recent social unrest leading in some cases to the introduction of multiparty systems are generalized trends that can be explained in comparative terms by the dynamic patronage coalition framework. The driving force behind this pattern of activity can be viewed as a quest for the minimum winning coalition by competing or cooperating groups of patrons.

Coalitions And Patron-Client Networks

One of the leading tenets of Riker's seminal work, *The Theory of Political Coalitions*, concerns the "Size Principle" of the minimum winning coalition. He finds that "in social situations similar to n-person, zero-sum games with side-payments, participants create coalitions as large as they believe will ensure winning and no larger" (1962: 32). Coalition partners, to paraphrase Riker, seek to form and maintain coalitions just large enough to rule, but as small as possible so as to maximize their own share of power, "pork," prestige, etc., resulting from their positions of influence. Hinckley,

referring to the Size Principle, notes, "this conclusion, which is important and not obvious in its political implications, has been widely adopted and tested" (1981: 29).

An important corollary to the Size Principle is what Riker calls the "Information Effect." He avers that "the greater the degree of imperfection or incompleteness of information, the larger will be the coalitions that the coalition-makers seek to form and the more frequent will winning coalitions actually formed be greater than minimum size" (1962: 88). Few African political systems have anything remotely approaching perfect information. This is partially a result of the infrequency of competitive elections (which serve as feedback mechanism to parties and politicians) and to a lesser degree to the lack of public opinion sampling methods available to poor countries with underdeveloped infrastructures.

The dynamics accompanying the quest for the smallest possible ruling coalition can contribute to political instability. In "The Instability of Minimum Winning Coalitions" Frohlich argues that in many situations such coalitions are inherently unstable, as political losers have incentives to form countercoalitions from which to challenge the incumbent regime. To prevent the formation of countercoalitions members of the ruling coalition must vie with losers for the favor of potential members of the countercoalition by offering them coalition membership or by other means, possibly creating ruling coalitions larger than minimum ruling size (Frohlich, 1975: 943). Incomplete information as to what constitutes minimum ruling size in systems based on sheer political power rather than those base on parliamentary majorities, for example, further adds to the potential for instability.

Although Riker's work on coalition theory is particularly relevant to the study of well-established parliamentary democracies, can it also be employed in the analysis of political systems which infrequently exercise constitutional regime change and have sometimes opaque domestic political structures? Lijphart concludes that the applicability of Riker's Size Principle is limited to two types of societies, those which are homogeneous and consensual, and those "societies marked by extreme internal antagonisms and hostilities" (1977: 27). Many African states are beset by internal antagonisms and hostilities, although there is wide variation in the degree of extremity. Lijphart argues that in plural society where political stakes are often high, a grand coalition may be more appropriate than politics based on rival groups or coalitions vying for power (1977: 27). However, due to the "high stakes" and internal antagonisms and hostilities

extant in many African states, an authentic grand coalition in Lijphart's sense may not be easily attainable. Many regimes settle for what we will call a pseudo grand coalition, a regime form associated with the dynamic of coalition retraction, discussed below.

The dearth of functioning parliamentary democracy in much of sub-Saharan Africa does not preclude the notion of political coalition formation and maintenance from being an important political dynamic--but it does force us to focus on something other than coalitions of political parties or factions in the Western sense. Coalitions of what, then? Patron client relationships, linking the state center to the national periphery, appear to function in varying degrees of importance in most African states, regardless of political orientation, level of development, ethnic mix, colonial heritage, or governmental form. "Throughout the postcolonial period in Africa, patron-client and patron-patron relations became the most common form of political exchange" (Chazan, Mortimer, Ravenhill, & Rothchild, 1988: 172), and seem to offer a viable alternative to political parties and factions as the building blocks of coalitions in the African context.

An important difference between coalitions of political parties and those composed of patron-client networks needs to be noted. Party members in many European states can easily change parties for whatever reason, facing a veritable smorgasbord of options if not satisfied with their current political allegiance. In Africa the relevant patron-client networks are typically based on ethnoregional or corporate identity, although these commonly overlap. Ethnoregional networks may spring from family, clan, village, ethnic, provincial, language-group and/or regional ties. Corporatist networks are based on formal and informal hierarchies in organizations such as civil service, police, military, or party structures. Clients, therefore, can join another patron-client network only with great difficulty in most cases. The resulting option for disgruntled clients is not "which of several others," but "in or out." Rather than opting for complete incorporation or disengagement from the state system via the patron-client network, many individuals become adept at straddling--the "constant movement between the official and unofficial, the private and the public, the rural and the urban" (Rothchild & Chazan, 1988: *ix*)

Patron-client networks, as a type of social relationship, have been examined by scholars in hundreds of vastly differing cultures and polities. James Scott (1977: 124-125) offers the following useful, if general, definition:

The patron-client relationship--an exchange relationship between roles--may be defined as a special case of dyadic (two-person) ties involving a largely instrumental friendship in which an individual of higher socioeconomic status (patron) uses his own influence and resources to provide protection or benefits, or both, for a person of lower status (client) who, for his part reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services, to the patron.

This study will employ a more overtly political, specialized variation of the general patron-client relationship. Eisenstadt and Roniger (1984: 230) develop the concept of "Patron-Brokerage," a situation in which a national-level politician (in the typical African case, the head of state) seeks out the support of local or regional elites/notables and offers an exchange of access to the "center" for the local patron's political support.

These "Patron-Brokerage" relationships may evolve into what Eisenstadt and Roniger term "Organizational Brokerage," by merging the relationship with a formal organization such as a political party. These specialized patron-client relationships "tended to engage in redistributive activity to secure wide support through the grant of actual favors or through the promise of help proffered by party- and faction-directed brokers" (Eisenstadt & Roniger, 1984: 231). The success of such relationships depends on the patrons' "access to the organs of the state and to the channels of delivery of its resources, as well as on their ability to use them in a particularistic way to gather political support" (Eisenstadt & Roniger, 1984: 231).

Over time, two interlocking tiers of patron-client networks may emerge. The first links the Grand Patron (usually the head of state) to the other patrons in the ruling coalition, as in the relationship between a head of state and his cabinet ministers. The second binds a patron and his primary constituency (e.g., a cabinet minister and his rural clients). In fact, the minister's primary clients may themselves serve as patrons on an even more peripheral scale, but these micro-networks are beyond the scope of this study.

Patrons directly participating in ruling coalitions at the state center frequently hold ministerial portfolios, although other positions of power and influence in the civil service, military, judiciary, or parastatal sector may also indicate coalition membership. A head of state will form and/or

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maintain his ruling coalition by selecting partners who can contribute to the political power base of the regime. Thus, the popular governor of X province becomes the minister of transportation, the son of a powerful clan leader in the president's ethnic group becomes minister of commerce, and the former chief of police becomes the new minister of the interior. The relevant political medium is not the fraction of parliamentary seats held by the coalition, but the much more ambiguous objective of controlling a dominant share of political power or authority in a given polity.

Dynamics: Coalition Depth Versus Breadth

Two predominant types of coalition dynamics can be discerned from an overview of the past three decades of politics in Africa. Both can be thought of as efforts by the ruling coalition to reach minimum size, as Riker's Information Effect suggests many African coalitions will be oversized initially. The first dynamic deals with the narrowing of the political base of a regime as entire patron-client networks (usually based on ethnoregional or corporatist identities) are cast off by the remaining coalition partners. The second, coalition retraction, is characterized by atrophying links between patrons, who may be members of a pseudo grand coalition, and their clients in the periphery. Coalition narrowing and retraction, if not checked, may lead to secessions or coups being mounted by countercoalitions in the first case, or gradual disengagement by the citizenry from the state in the second. Both have important implications for regime stability and performance, and are dealt with in greater detail below.

Coalition Narrowing. At independence many newly empowered African governments faced legal opposition primarily from ethnic or regionally based rival parties (Chabal, 1986: 7). Mazrui writes that "as independence approached, the nature of ethnic politics began to shift away from 'race' as the ultimate line of cleavage to 'tribe' and region" (1975: 67). The liberal democratic constitutions inherited at decolonization were undermined in many cases by incumbent rulers who "were neither secure enough in their positions nor firm enough in their commitment to liberal ideologies to maintain these arrangements" (Chazan, 1988: 166). However, Jackman (1978: 1271) found the pre-independence political alignments and structures to be a surprisingly durable factor in explaining threats to incumbent regimes by coup-mounting challengers. Thus, in the years following independence both successful and losing coalitions were

frequently comprised of patron-client networks based on ethnoregional, or later, corporatist identities.

Due to the vagaries and dangers arising from imperfect information in the context of coalition formation, many independence-era and subsequent ruling coalitions erred on the side of inclusiveness (Riker's Information Effect). Both a colonel plotting a coup d'etat and a party loyalist maneuvering for position in a succession struggle were apt to over-reach when attempting to cobble together a potential winning coalition. First, the imperfection of available information in determining how much "power" is needed to form a ruling coalition (how many battalions or party notables does one need?) makes the whole calculation very tenuous. Secondly, underestimation of the size necessary to form a winning coalition could be a matter of life and death--particularly in the colonel's case.

Once the "overly inclusive" coalition takes office, Riker's Size Principle may set in motion the drive toward minimum size. The partners (perhaps led by the head of state) may judge that the coalition could be safely shrunk by some amount. Since cabinet slots are rarely abolished, the "excess" coalition partner may be shipped off as an ambassador or otherwise dumped. Portfolios could then be reshuffled to the remaining patrons in the slimmer coalition, or a non-patron "cipher" put in the empty cabinet seat. More likely, the ousted patronage network will be replaced by another more closely mirroring the remaining coalition partners' interests--if a southern patronage network is cut away from a northern-dominated coalition, the vacant slot might be filled by another northern patronage network, thus narrowing the political base of the coalition.

The dynamic of coalition narrowing may stop before the coalition surpasses minimum size. At some point, however, the lack of information in the system may lead the regime to shrink beyond minimum ruling size. Not only do patrons in the coalition partnership have to deal with incomplete information, but the size of the minimum winning coalition may change over time. Yesterday's larger-than-minimum coalition may fall beneath minimum size today as a result of exogenous variables such as a natural calamity, global market shifts, external political changes, etc. Once that indistinct line is crossed, the narrowed regime may be the victim of a coup d'etat, exile invasion, secession movement, or other direct challenge mounted by a competing coalition.

The plethora of non-constitutional regime changes and secessionist attempts in Africa, particularly in the late 1960s, highlights the difficulty with which ruling coalitions were able to discern (and exceed) minimum

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size in newly-independent states. From 1965-69 some 21 successful coups d'etat were carried out in Africa, compared with an average of less than ten in subsequent five-year periods (McGowan & Johnson, 1986: 542). Given the fact that ethnoregional and/or corporatist (particularly after a coup) identities frequently served as the initial basis for coalition formation, it should not be surprising to find that coalition shrinkage toward minimum winning size in the years following independence proceeded along ethnoregional or corporatist lines. Groups of patrons excluded from the ruling coalition and shut off from practical legal channels of winning political power resorted to non-constitutional means to achieve this end through mounting coups d'etat, secessionist movements, exile invasions, etc. Thus, the high degree of regime instability in African states in the decade following decolonization may partly have arisen as a result of coalition narrowing--which allowed excluded and uncowed ethnoregional and/or corporatist patrons the possibility of establishing rival coalitions with which to challenge the incumbent regime.

The dramatic coalition narrowing which occurred in Uganda from 1966 until 1979 is well documented in Kastir's (1976) The Shrinking Political Arena and elsewhere. Mazrui (1975: 49) notes the narrowing ethno-military base of support from Obote's to Amin's rule. Uganda's ruling post-1966 northern coalition was sundered by Acholi-Langi versus West Nile rifts which resulted in Amin replacing Obote in 1971. The West Nile coalition narrowed drastically following the 1974 Lugbara-led coup attempt and amazingly survived for five agonizing years--supported by its tiny Kakwa-Nubian power base, Amin's ruthlessness, and imported hired guns--until overthrown by invading Tanzanian troops and Ugandan exiles.

Less well publicized but equally illustrative of this dynamic is the radical narrowing of the ruling coalition in Burundi in the decade following Micombero's successful coup d'etat in 1966 against the Tutsi monarchy. This move can be interpreted as an attempt by the Tutsi oligarchy to reconsolidate its rule over the restive Hutu majority. Hutu parliamentary victories in 1965, followed by the killing of Hutu parliamentarians by Royalist troops, spawned rumors of Hutu coup plots which encouraged the bickering Tutsi clans to close ranks.

After the coup a northern Tutsi, Albain Nyamoya, was named Prime Minister, while Micombero, from the southern Bururi region, became President (Legum, 1974: B143). Tutsi solidarity cracked in 1971 when a clique of northern patrons failed to oust Micombero and his southern-based coalition. After thwarting the coup attempt, Micombero and his southern

coalition partners swept the Northerners from all positions of power in the government. The newly created vacancies were filled by Bahima Tutsi patrons from Micombero's home Bururi region. This division in the Tutsi camp helped spark the bloody revolt of 1972, in which Mulelist rebels invaded Burundi from Zaire, touching off a massive uprising by the Hutu majority (comprising some 85 percent of the population) against the Tutsi oligarchy (Melady, 1974). The invasion/uprising quickly degenerated into genocidal confrontations between spear and machete-wielding Hutu mobs and groups of Tutsi armed with automatic weapons. Estimates of deaths range from 100,000 to 150,000 (Lemarchand, 1989: 688) out of a population of around four million people.

Micombero, realizing that Tutsi unity was vital to his continued rule, by 1973 had reconstituted his government, evenly spreading cabinet posts among patrons of the various Tutsi clans. However, nine of the twelve seats in the key National Council were filled by Southerners from Bururi region. The following year a rivalry between southern sub-regions threatened the ruling coalition again, as powerful patrons from Rutovu (Micombero's home district) sparred with those from the neighboring Matana district for dominance within the Bururi ruling faction. The debilitating infighting of the Bururi coalition partners spurred young military officers from both Rutovu and Matana districts to mount a coup d'etat against the Micombero regime on November 1, 1976. The coup, in effect, restored a working Bururi (Bahima Tutsi) coalition to power.

Thus, the ruling coalition in Burundi shrank from all Tutsi (November 1966) to southern Tutsi clans (early 1972). Despite the cosmetic Tutsi reconsolidation following the Hutu uprising, by 1974 the regime's power base had been narrowed to a coalition of Bahima Tutsi patrons from Bururi region. The Rutovu-Matana split in 1976 within the Bahima patrons proved the coalition's undoing, and indicates that the minimum ruling coalition in Burundi at that time was a grouping of southern Bahima Tutsi patrons from Bururi region.

Not all African states experienced coalition narrowing, particularly not as extreme as Uganda and Burundi, but by the early to mid 1970s enough regimes had been destabilized by coups, separatist movements, or exile invasion attempts led by excluded and uncowed patrons that ruling coalitions began to consider the need for neutralizing potential countercoalitions. Broadening the ruling coalition was seen as one means to this end.

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Coalition Retraction. Coalition retraction refers to the atrophy of existing patron-client ties, usually concomitant with an increase in the number and importance of the relationships between the coalition partners themselves, particularly the patrons and the Grand Patron. If "too many" patrons are brought in to the coalition (and the negative fallout of coalition narrowing demonstrates that it is dangerous to expel them), then coalition retraction may result in the exclusion of clients from the distribution of some goods and devalue the political support they cede to their patrons. Long-term incumbency and drastic economic decline amplify the impact of coalition retraction on patron-client networks linking the center and periphery. Broadening the ruling coalition by drawing in more patrons via a mass, single party system or other mechanism does not necessarily arrest the effects of Riker's Size Principle and Information Effect--it may merely change the direction of the shrinkage pressure from longitudinal (excluding entire patron-client networks) to horizontal (neglecting clients while bringing in more patrons).

According to Rothchild and Foley (1988: 241), "not only must African leaders accommodate ethnoregional strongmen to compensate for their lack of regulatory capacity, but they must also incorporate them into the elite cartel to prevent the formation of a counter-coalition." They go on to present detailed accounts of over a dozen African regimes which have purposely attempted to form pseudo grand coalitions, or "elite cartels," and add that while this can foster political stability, it may not be conducive to economic growth (1988: 233). Buchanan and Faith (1987: 1031) arrive at similar conclusions, although approaching the issue from the direction of the economics of taxation and secession. They contend that

once all of the rich are within the sharing coalition, the additional entry of members who are poor will tend to be opposed. Those who are poor remain outside the sharing coalition and because they are poor, cannot readily secede.

Potential countercoalition members resisting co-optation have been exiled, imprisoned or worse.

With lengthening incumbency, members of the ruling coalition may discover that their clients in the hinterland are of decreasing importance--that what really counts is keeping on good terms with the Grand Patron. Because of the political necessity to "overextend" the coalition, there are now relatively fewer resources per patronage network to be distributed. A

general economic decline may exacerbate the distribution problem, meaning even fewer resources per patron. Patrons may decide to limit the flow of resources to their clients in the periphery in order to continue to lead the lifestyle to which they have grown accustomed in the capital, and perhaps to continue or increase kickbacks offered to the Grand Patron to insure his favor. While clinics, schools, roads, and bridges may deteriorate in rural areas, few cabinet ministers are likely to trade in their Mercedes for bicycles.

Lemarchand (1988: 154-155) notes that the privatization of state resources by the ruling elites, corruption, and the penetration of the world economy into African arenas has led to the atrophy or elimination of patronage systems. MacGaffey, pulling no punches, characterizes those at the top in Zaire as having "behaved like parasites sucking the lifeblood of the economy for their own benefit" (1988: 175). If patrons in a pseudo grand coalition no longer depend on clients' political support and thus need not share access to the center's resources, leaderless clients may opt for some degree of disengagement, "the tendency to withdraw from the state and keep at a distance from its channels..." (Azarya, 1988: 7). Lemarchand contends that once the protection of patron-client relationships is lifted, "how to avoid, circumvent, or mitigate the predaciousness of the state is the central dilemma confronting the rural masses" (1988: 155).

Omar Bongo's regime in Gabon offers an interesting example of the dynamic of coalition retraction caused by "over inclusion," economic decline, and long-term incumbency. Bongo witnessed his political godfather and predecessor, Leon Mba, unseated by Fang coup-makers in 1964, only to be reinstated by French troops (Darlington and Darlington, 1968: 126-142). Mba, himself a member of Gabon's largest ethnic group, the Fang, had split his ethnoregional base of support by, inter alia, alienating Fang cultural partisans by allegedly ordering Bibles and other books printed in Fang--as opposed to French--burned. On Mba's death the then Vice President Bongo, a member of the small, isolated Teke ethnic group, realized he stood on very narrow political footings and set out to create a broad-based ruling coalition.

Bongo, as the "Grand Patron," studiously attempted to sidestep the pitfalls of coalition narrowing by employing the country's vast oil revenue to co-opt potential opponents. He created the "Parti Democratique Gabonais" (PDG) to serve as an institutional buttress for the ruling coalition, and intimidated or neutralized potential rivals (Pean, 1983). Estuary Fang were included in the coalition via the figurehead premiership

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of Leon Mebiame, while key northern Fang patrons went into exile in France. By the mid 1980s the coalition was so large that the cabinet of this small country included over 40 powerful patrons--some rumored to receive monthly salaries of several tens of thousands of dollars, in addition to special "business opportunities" doled out by the Grand Patron. Nearly as privileged were the coalition members directing the three dozen or so large (money-losing) parastatal enterprises. Important patrons from all regions, ethnic groups, religions and most key families were included in this far-flung coalition. Flush with petrodollars, Bongo appeared to have broadened the coalition while avoiding serious retraction.

Nevertheless, clients in the hinterland began to feel the pinch of atrophying patronage ties following the fall of world oil prices in 1986. While the government built the 433-mile Transgabonais Railway from the coast to Bongo's home province in the far southeast, the rest of the country's rural infrastructure began to deteriorate. In a country the size of Colorado, there were perhaps 300 miles of hard-surfaced roads--including the streets of once-gleaming Libreville. By 1988 provincial hospitals stopped performing surgery for lack of surgical silk, rural clinics received dwindling supplies of even basic medicines, schools physically deteriorated, and worse, unmaintained market roads turned to rivers of mud and bridges collapsed into ravines. Gabon's national infrastructure was quickly being reclaimed by the jungle. Meanwhile, the PDG planned a massive celebration to mark its twentieth year of rule. By the end of the 1980s it became apparent that even Bongo's Gabon, with the highest per capita income in sub-Saharan Africa, had insufficient resources to sustain a well-managed effort to simultaneously deepen and broaden the ruling coalition, and had instead opted for a pseudo grand coalition at the expense of neglected clients.

There is no particular reason why coalition retraction must be preceded by coalition narrowing. Sao Tome and Principe, for example, appears to have avoided significant coalition narrowing for reasons based on historic, ideological, ethnic, and familial factors, yet in the late 1980s it suffered from severe coalition retraction. Independence came to this archipelagic microstate only in 1975, after continental Africa had experienced over 30 successful coups d'etat, demonstrating possible dangers of coalition narrowing. The socialist leadership of the Movement for the Liberation of Sao Tome and Principe (MLSTP), having been handed the keys to the country following the leftist coup in Portugal, established itself as the sole political party patterned on the classic East Bloc model (Hodges

and Newitt, 1988: 90-114). With a largely homogeneous population, Sao Tome and Principe (STP) has few important ethnic or clan divisions, apart from a small number of citizens of Angolan and Cape Verdian descent. Principians, although isolated, poorer, and speaking a different Creole than Sao Tomeans, unfailingly placed at least one patron in the highest echelons of the MLSTP. Finally, overlapping family connections within the ruling MLSTP contributed to curbing coalition narrowing. During the late 1980s, President Pinto da Costa's wife served as the leader of OMSTEP (the women's wing of the party), while her sister chaired the Popular National Assembly. The Prime Minister was married to the Minister of Education, while the PM's brother held the Minister of Cooperation portfolio. Almost everyone in the ruling coalition, it seemed, was related.

The monolithic MLSTP regime, while eluding coalition narrowing for reasons outlined above, by the late 1980s was unable to avoid significant atrophying of established patron-client links. Besides long-term incumbency, a major contributing factor was the collapse of the all-important cocoa sector. Cocoa exports dropped from a pre-independence peak of 35,000 tons per year to about 4,000 tons in 1988, largely due to the wonders of state-run collective agriculture, while in the meantime the international price of cocoa dropped by half.

With medicine, foodstuffs, spare parts, and clothes disappearing from the company stores of the state-owned cocoa estates, senior members of the MLSTP coalition got new cars. Over two dozen new Hyundais, a gift from the Republic of Korea following official diplomatic recognition, appeared in the capital, parked at night in front of the MLSTP patrons' homes (usually air conditioned former Portuguese colonial residences). Although Sao Tome is arguably among the least corrupt and most egalitarian states in Africa, it became readily apparent by 1989 that the "masses" were suffering mightily while their patrons in the capital, the MLSTP elite, were living better than ever. Furthermore, with Pinto da Costa defended by Angolan troops and access to the "center" restricted to the long-entrenched MLSTP Central Committee and the Politburo, the clients in the periphery appeared to matter less and less.

Using the framework of dynamic patronage coalitions, the political instability of the fifteen years or so following widespread decolonization in Africa can be attributed in part to ruling coalitions being narrowed beyond minimum winning size. During the second half of this period non-constitutional regime change became more infrequent, as rival patrons were co-opted into pseudo grand coalitions or otherwise neutralized. Economic

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decline and long-term incumbency amplified the impact of coalition retraction, leading to the shriveling of patron-client networks and disengagement of individuals from the state. Until 1989 the minimum winning size of retracted or pseudo grand coalitions appeared to be quite small in most cases. Very few regimes were displaced because of coalition retraction, as the response of disgruntled citizens was likely to be disengagement rather than rising to challenge the established order. Domestic democratic movements and frustrations, fueled by the demonstration effect of the "Revolutions of '89" in Eastern Europe, changed all that.

The 1990s: Transitory, Class-Based Coalitions?

Class identity, temporarily replacing ethnoregional or corporatist affiliations as the paramount sociopolitical cleavage in many African states, may have been stoked by the demonstration effect of the mass demonstrations by Eastern Europeans in 1989 which succeeded in overthrowing the long-entrenched single party systems in that region. Following the events in Eastern Europe, Benin, Togo, Mali, Cote d'Ivoire, Gabon, Cape Verde, Sao Tome and Principe, Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Zaire, Ghana, Congo, and other states experienced widespread social unrest leading toward (or to, in a few cases) the ending of single party rule and the implementation of multiparty democratic systems. Class identity, based primarily on anti-incumbent sentiments rather than proletarian or other solidarities, became the defining cleavage as coalitions of ruling patrons were faced by angry coalitions of spurned clients.

Schatzberg, in his "triple helix" analogy of Zairian politics, writes that "in some situations, and at certain times, one component [state, class, or ethnicity] will be dominant. At other times, in other circumstances, a different strand (or both concurrently) will come to the fore" (1988: 11). Ninsim (1988) also posits a class-based component, characterizing "intra-class" coalitions (akin to our competing patron-client groupings) as subject to constant change by coups, while polities experiencing "inter-class" struggle may witness delinking of the state and other sections of society.

The revolutions in Eastern Europe can be viewed as an exogenous event which made numerous incumbent pseudo grand coalitions suddenly smaller than minimum ruling size. The challenging class-based coalitions are perhaps best characterized as comprising not completely disengaged citizens, but semi-disengaged individuals who believed they had a future

within the channels of the state. Students, taxi drivers, the lower salariat, small shop-keepers, and other, largely urban, segments of society frequently joined together in strikes, demonstrations, and occasionally riots and insurrections to force change on the retracted elitist regimes. The author witnessed firsthand two such challenges mounted by spurned clients against entrenched coalitions of patrons those of Sao Tome and Principe and of Gabon.

In Sao Tome the first serious rumblings from angry clients came to light in 1989, when President Pinto da Costa conducted a series of town meetings throughout the archipelago. Perhaps shaken by the depth and breadth of popular discontent, Pinto da Costa convened an open Party Conference in December, 1989. The author, one of the few Westerners to attend this landmark convention, observed the assembled MLSTP Politburo unmercifully lambasted by the massed rank and file. Spurned clients, having publicly wrecked their revenge on effete patrons, successfully pressed for the adoption of a new constitution, separation of party and state, and concrete steps toward accountable multiparty democracy--in which patrons' very positions would depend on the active political support of their clients.

Next door on the mainland, a protest by Gabonese university students against corruption in the Ministry of Higher Education erupted in January, 1990, into a week of anti-regime rioting in Libreville and elsewhere. Subsequent strikes and violence by employees of parastatal enterprises alleging mismanagement and graft paralyzed Libreville and the interior. When walkouts spread to the private sector and the civil service, the coalition moved to reconfigure its atrophied patron-client links by political means.

Bongo convened a national political conference in March, 1990, open to all factions and nascent political parties. At that conference, the author viewed angry ex-clients nearly hijack the proceedings, demanding the establishment of a fledgling multiparty system. The death of a leading opposition figure in May touched off even more serious violence, resulting in the intervention of French forces to evacuate threatened Westerners and protect French interests in the country. Sacrificing leading coalition partners on the altar of multipartyism failed to assuage the calls for change, and by September, 1990, Bongo and his coalition accepted the need for a multiparty system.

While groups of neglected clients have formed coalitions successful in bringing down pseudo grand coalitions, evidence indicates that the anti-

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incumbent class identification may weaken once the political arena is again opened to other types of competition. Opponents of multiparty democracy sometimes drag out the shibboleth of "democracy leads to ethnoregionalism leads to instability," but Nigeria and other states have worked seriously to construct structures precluding narrow ethnoregional politics. Simple mechanisms such as requiring national parties to register a substantial portion of their backers in all regions may prove to be an effective broadening measure. The jury is not yet in on what types of systems might replace overthrown pseudo grand coalitions, but political accountability will hinder retraction, and clear guidelines on what constitutes a minimum winning coalition may help prevent ruling coalitions from shrinking below that size.

Conclusions

Many African regimes in the first part of the independence era were based on ethnoregional and/or corporatist ties and tended to be "overly-inclusive" at the onset due to Riker's Information Effect. Attempts to shrink to minimum winning size (Riker's Size Principle) led in some cases to coalition narrowing and political instability, as excluded and uncowed patrons formed countercoalitions to challenge the incumbents. Bringing potential rivals into the ruling regime precipitated coalition retraction, as fewer resources per patron were available to be passed on to clients--who politically mattered less and less. Clients disengaged from the state, as coalitions of "client-poor" patrons formed pseudo grand coalitions. The Revolutions of '89 may have spurred widespread social unrest by anti-incumbent strata in many African states, some of which were successful in bringing down the incumbent coalitions.

To foster political and economic development, systems need ruling coalitions that remain accountable to clients or other types of supporters (to curb retraction) and have clearly defined rules and structures defining "minimum size" to avoid destabilizing, non-constitutional challenges by countercoalitions. Multiparty democratic systems with mechanisms in place to prevent narrow ethnoregional or corporatist politics from predominating may be one solution, but there may be others as well which are now evolving in the quickly changing political landscapes of many African states. Ethiopia, for example, is embarking on a type of federalism based on ethno-linguistic provinces in order to provide an outlet for ethnoregional aspirations within the larger state system. This may serve to institutionalize

ethnoregional patron-client links, but may also exacerbate Ethiopia's centrifugal tendencies.

Finally, the author would like to suggest other regions of the world in which the framework of dynamic patronage coalitions could usefully be matched with state-society comparative approaches. This perspective seems especially applicable to political systems with infrequent constitutional regime change, long-term incumbency, declining economies, and potentially divisive geographic and corporatist patron-client networks. The case of the Peoples Republic of China appears to be a prime candidate for such analysis, as do the politics of various Persian Gulf monarchies (Crystal, 1989), Myanmar, the Russian Federation (Willerton, 1987), Indonesia, Afghanistan, and others.

NOTES

The view's expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Military Academy or the Department of the Army.

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