

## How Autocrats Compete

Most autocrats now hold unfair elections, yet how they compete in and manipulate them differs greatly. *How Autocrats Compete* advances a theory that explains variation in electoral authoritarian competition. Using case studies of Tanzania, Cameroon, and Kenya, along with broader comparisons from Africa, it finds that the kind of relationships autocrats foster with supporters and external actors matters greatly during elections. When autocrats can depend on credible ruling parties that provide elites with a level playing field and commit to wider constituencies, they are more certain in their own support and can compete in elections with less manipulation. Shelter from international pressure further helps autocrats deploy a wider range of coercive tools when necessary. Combining in-depth field research, within-case statistics, and cross-regional comparisons, Morse fills a gap in the literature by focusing on important variation in authoritarian institution building and international patronage. Understanding how autocrats compete sheds light on the comparative resilience and durability of modern authoritarianism.

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# How Autocrats Compete

*Parties, Patrons, and Unfair Elections in Africa*

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*Dedicated to my parents for instilling in me the love of a good  
debate and a sense of adventure.*

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## Abbreviations

CND	Centre National de Documentation
CNU	Cameroon National Union
CPDM	Cameroon People's Democratic Movement
CPNC	Cameroon People's National Convention
COTU	Central Organization of Trade Unions
CHADEMA	Chama Cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo
CCM	Chama Cha Mapinduzi
CUF	Civic United Front
CUT	Cooperative Union of Tanzania
DP	Democratic Party
ELECAM	Elections Cameroon
PDCI	Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire
PDG	Democratic Party of Gabon
FORD	Forum for the Restoration of Democracy
FORD-A	Forum for the Restoration of Democracy-A
FORD-K	Forum for the Restoration of Democracy-K
IDEA	International Institute for Electoral Assistance
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPPG	Inter-Parties Parliamentary Group
IRI	International Republican Institute
KADU	Kenyan African Democratic Union
KANU	Kenyan African National Union

KNDP	Kamerun National Democratic Party
KPU	Kenya People's Union
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party
MDR	Movement for the Defense of the Republic
MINAT	Ministry of Territorial Administration
FRELIMO	Mozambican Liberation Front
RENAMO	Mozambican National Resistance
NAK	National Alliance Party of Kenya
NCCR-M	National Coalition for Reconciliation and Reform
NCEC	National Convention Executive Council
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NDP	National Democratic Party
NELDA	National Elections Across Democracy and Autocracy
FONADER	National Fund for Rural Development
NARC	National Rainbow Coalition
NUDP	National Union for Democracy and Progress
OTTU	Organization of Tanzanian Trade Unions
RPP	Peoples Rally for Progress
QED	Quality of Elections Data
RPT	Rally of Togolese People
BIR	Rapid Response Brigade
PDS	Senegalese Democratic Party
PS	Senegalese Socialist Party
SPPF	Seychelles People Progressive Front
SDF	Social Democratic Front
SCNC	South Cameroonian National Council
TAA	Tanganyika African Association
TANU	Tanganyikan African National Union
TLP	Tanzanian Labor Party
TYL	TANU Youth League
UPC	Union of Peoples of Cameroon
JUWATA	Union of Tanzanian Workers
UC	Cameroonian Union

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UDC	Cameroon Democratic Union
UDP	United Democratic Party
UNIP	United National Independence Party
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
V-DEM	Varieties of Democracy
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union

## Preface and Acknowledgments

This book is an examination of the ways by which autocrats compete in unfair elections, and the underlying factors that structure those contests. The ideas that guide it were first discussed in graduate seminars held back in 2007, at a time when terms like competitive and electoral authoritarianism were just coming into vogue. Now, over ten years later, the initial motivations for this study seem entirely justified, and perhaps more needed than ever. As an era of electoral authoritarianism continues to unfold, to understand the challenges that democracy faces we must also contend with the evolving and complex nature of authoritarian government. This is my modest attempt at shedding some light on these issues, and adding new perspectives on the intersection of authoritarian and electoral politics.

However, this book is also very much reflective of my own evolution as a scholar. I did not start out as an Africanist, nor had I even visited the continent prior to this project. I was initially inspired by my experiences living in the Middle East. In college I was an Islamic studies major, and spent a summer intensely studying Arabic in Jordan. When I entered graduate school, my initial impulse was to learn more about the challenges of democracy in the Middle East. I delved into the burgeoning literature on electoral authoritarianism and authoritarian institutions. The rise and fall of the Mexican Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) stood out in particular. For over seventy years the PRI dominated unfair elections without having to expend that much coercive effort. Instead, the PRI relied on a novel turn in authoritarian politics – institutionalized succession. I wondered whether there might be something like the Mexican PRI in the Middle East. It turned out that I was off by a few degrees of

latitude, since it was in Tanzania and its ruling party CCM that I found the strongest parallels.

This set me off on a transformative path that reshaped the project as one that would be Africa-centric and firmly qualitative. In 2010, I left for a six-month trip to Tanzania. I spent countless hours speaking with average citizens and interviewing dozens of political elites who shared stories of living under unfair elections. My fieldwork expanded to Kenya, and in 2012 I visited the remains of the once mighty KANU party, by then relegated to a small compound behind a shopping mall. In 2015, I travelled to Cameroon and spent extensive time making inroads with regime insiders and confidants who could share stories of life in the ruling party. Many of the ideas I was discussing, such as the role of international actors, were specific to Africa and even just a select number of cases. My commitment turned to using comparative politics theory to inform our understanding of Africa, but also to using cases from a vastly diverse continent to inform comparative politics. In other words, I wanted to write a book that spoke to broader issues regarding modern authoritarianism, yet was still context driven. Interviews, thick description, and case studies became my key methodological tools.

These ten years of work in diverse and novel geographies could obviously not be accomplished without a tremendous generosity of time and spirit offered by so many. Whether it was detailed comments, help with fieldwork, or just a quick word of encouragement, I owe a true debt of gratitude to a global network. They pushed and prodded me to make the best book that I could write. I cannot say that the process was brief! But, with each additional step I learned not only about the painstaking process of generating knowledge, but also the importance of mentorship, collegiality, and friendship. The opportunity afforded me to write this book has been one of the greatest privileges of my life.

My first thanks must go out to the members of my dissertation committee. Daniel Brumberg challenged me to think about the concept of authoritarianism and the very paradigms that guide how we study the world. I was lucky to have him on my committee, and later as my boss at Georgetown's Democracy and Governance program. A draft of this research was written for Andrew Bennett's seminar on qualitative methods. He supported the project with razor sharp comments, and encouraged me to think seriously about qualitative and case-based research. Scott Taylor graciously joined my committee from Georgetown's African Studies program, and was instrumental in my conversion to "Africanist." Finally, my chair Marc Morjé Howard has been an endless supply of

support and inspiration. He has been my champion and critic, and continues to serve as a role model for what it means to be a scholar, activist, and mentor.

Georgetown University is also responsible for many of the opportunities that made this project possible. The Department of Government provided funding for my first trip to Tanzania, and the African Studies Program hired me to be the field director for a study abroad program in Dar es Salaam in 2012. In 2013 I also became the associate director of Georgetown's Democracy and Governance program. Support from the affiliated Center for Democracy and Civil Society (CDACS) helped fund my 2015 fieldwork in Cameroon, and the position allowed me to make some important connections with the democracy promotion sector. I am grateful for the advocacy of my department chairs: George Shambaugh, Michael Bailey, and Charles King. Many other faculty at Georgetown have also been influential figures and deserve thanks: Harley Balzer, Matthew Carnes, David Edelstein, Desha Girod, Thane Gustafson, Steven Heydemann, Diana Kapiszweski, Stephen King, Eric Lagenbacher, Eusebio-Mujal Leon, Hans Noel, Lahra Smith, and Clyde Wilcox.

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Two critical platforms were fundamental for this project's success and were also sponsored by Georgetown University's Department of Government. First, Georgetown funded my participation in the Institute for Qualitative and Multi-Method Research (IQMR) at Syracuse in 2011. In classes led by David Collier, Thad Dunning, James Mahoney, and Jason Seawright I grounded myself methodologically and embraced a social science that accounts for complexity, contingency, and nuance. Second, Georgetown funded a book workshop held in April 2016. I was immensely lucky to have the participation of Daniella Donno, Sebastian Elischer, Jennifer Gandhi, Adrienne LeBas, and David Waldner. Their collective comments constitute some of the most substantial input into the contents of this book. Importantly, they taught me about the process of

book writing itself. I am grateful to them for their generosity, and helping me find my voice as an author.

In 2016 I left Georgetown for my current academic home, the University of Connecticut, and I could not have asked for a more collegial and caring department. Specific thanks go to David Yaloff for his countless words of encouragement. Our coffee sessions at Atticus Books in New Haven were instrumental in working through my book writing neurosis. My colleagues Matthew Singer and Prakash Kashwan have also been kind enough to spend time with this project, and I must thank Cyrus Zirakzadeh for his very helpful title suggestions.

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