

Activist Origins of Political Ambition

Why do people run for office with opposition parties in electoral authoritarian regimes, where the risks of running are high, and the chances of victory are bleak? In *Activist Origins of Political Ambition*, Keith Weghorst offers a theory that candidacy decisions are set in motion in early life events and that civic activism experiences and careers in civil society organizations funnel aspirants towards opposition candidacy in electoral authoritarian regimes. The book also adapts existing explanations of candidacy decisions derived from advanced democracies that can be applied to electoral authoritarian contexts. The mixed-methods research design features an in-depth study of Tanzania using original survey data, sequence methods, archival research, and qualitative data combined with an analysis of legislators across authoritarian and democratic regimes in Africa. A first-of-its kind study, the book's account of the origins of candidacy motivations offers contributions to its study in autocracies, as well as in leading democracies and the United States.

KEITH WEGHORST was Assistant Professor of Political Science at the V-Dem Institute in the Department of Political Science at University of Gothenburg. His research focused on political opposition, legislatures, and civil society in electoral autocracies, with a regional specialization in sub-Saharan Africa.

Activist Origins of Political Ambition

Opposition Candidacy in Africa's Electoral Authoritarian Regimes

KEITH WEGHORST

Göteborgs Universitet



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-009-01151-8 — Activist Origins of Political Ambition
Keith Weghorst
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)



Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India
103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of
education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009011518

DOI: 10.1017/9781009019705

© Keith Weghorst 2022

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions
of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take
place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

First published 2022
First paperback edition 2024

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-316-51992-9 Hardback
ISBN 978-1-009-01151-8 Paperback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence
or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this
publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will
remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>page</i> viii
<i>List of Tables</i>	x
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xii
1 Running against All Odds	1
1.1 The Puzzle of Opposition Candidacy	4
1.2 Existing Explanations of Legislative Candidacy	10
1.3 The Argument in Brief	15
1.4 Contributions	20
1.5 Organization of the Book	30
2 A Theory of Opposition Candidacy	35
2.1 Electoral Authoritarianism	36
2.2 Existing Theories of Candidacy	37
2.3 Original Theory: Political Paths to Ambition	44
2.4 Original Theory: Strategic Candidacy Framework under Electoral Authoritarianism	54
2.5 Linking the Theory’s Parts Together	74
3 Electoral Authoritarianism in Tanzania	78
3.1 Electoral Authoritarianism in Africa	79
3.2 Electoral Authoritarianism in Tanzania	81
3.3 Empirical Approach and Data Resources	104
3.4 Analytical Strategy	112

4	Roots of Ambition: Civic Activism and Career Partisanship	127
4.1	Opposition versus Ruling Party Paths to Candidacy	130
4.2	Results	133
4.3	Further Survey Evidence	135
4.4	Contextualizing Results in Tanzania	137
5	From Roots to Branches: Career Pathways to Candidacy Choices	148
5.1	Sequence Analysis: Political and Vocational Careers	148
5.2	Sequence Analysis: Party, CSO/NGO, and Government Vocational Careers	149
5.3	Statistical Analysis of Vocational Careers	153
5.4	Statistical Analysis of Political Party Careers	156
6	Winning Party Nomination Contests	165
6.1	Candidate Selection in Electoral Authoritarian Regimes	168
6.2	Candidate Selection in Tanzania	170
6.3	Candidate Perceptions of Nomination Procedures	175
6.4	Candidate Experiences with Nominations	177
6.5	How Civic Activism Impacts Nominations	181
7	Winning General Elections	185
7.1	Hyper-Incumbency and Campaign Resources	188
7.2	Overcoming Structural Constraints through Campaign Strategy	190
7.3	Maximizing Electoral Returns from Campaign Expenditure	194
7.4	How Civic Activism Impacts Election Strategy	197
8	Benefits of Winning (and Losing) Elections	205
8.1	Benefits of Candidacy in Electoral Authoritarian Regimes	207
8.2	Benefits of Losing Elections	217
8.3	Origins of Benefits: Life Histories and Socialization	223
9	Costs of Competing in Authoritarian Elections	228
9.1	Violence and Repression in Tanzania	229

	<i>Contents</i>	vii
9.2	Risk and Time Perspectives through <i>Methali</i>	232
9.3	How Civic Activism and Career Partisanship Shape Candidacy Costs and Risk Attitudes	237
10	Testing the Argument across Africa	244
10.1	Opposition Candidacy in Sub-Saharan Africa	244
10.2	Data Resource: African Legislatures Project	247
10.3	Testing the Theory in Other Electoral Authoritarian Regimes	251
10.4	Scope Conditions: Dominant Party Democracies	265
10.5	Scope Conditions: Competitive Democracies	273
10.6	Conclusions for African Politics and Authoritarian Regimes	279
11	Elections and Authoritarianism in the Twenty-first Century	282
11.1	Main Findings	283
11.2	Limitations	287
11.3	Implications	289
	<i>Appendix A</i> Qualitative and Survey Interviews: Sample Design, Response Rates, and Representativeness	297
	A.1 Legislator Survey	297
	A.2 Candidates and Noncandidate Surveys	302
	<i>Appendix B</i> Statistical Results, Analysis Details, and Robustness	307
	B.1 Supporting Material for Chapter 2	307
	B.2 Supporting Material for Chapter 4	307
	B.3 Supporting Material for Chapter 5	312
	B.4 Supporting Material for Chapter 6	320
	B.5 Supporting Material for Chapter 7	321
	B.6 Supporting Material for Chapter 8	322
	B.7 Supporting Material for Chapter 9	332
	B.8 Supporting Material for Chapter 10	337
	<i>References</i>	341
	<i>Index</i>	371

Figures

1.1	Opposition candidacy in authoritarian elections	<i>page 9</i>
2.1	Full theory inclusive of paths into candidacy	46
3.1	Toleration index for Africa’s electoral authoritarian regimes	86
3.2	Toleration index for notable electoral authoritarian regimes	87
3.3	Opposition party institutionalization in electoral authoritarian regimes	101
3.4	Ruling party institutionalization in electoral authoritarian regimes: Permanent local party offices	103
4.1	Civic activism versus career partisanship, membership variables	133
4.2	Civic activism versus career partisanship, life history calendar	135
4.3	Main activities of opposition youth wings	137
4.4	CCM positions held by CCM legislators and opposition legislators formerly in CCM	138
5.1	Vocational career and opposition candidacy	154
5.2	Career partisanship sequence examples	158
5.3	Career partisanship and optimal matching distance	163
7.1	Total campaign expense	189
7.2	Campaign tactics: Turning out supporters and luring voters from other parties	191
7.3	Campaign expenditures: Opposition winners versus losers	195
7.4	Civic activism and opposition victory	199

List of Figures ix

7.5	Impact of civic activism and campaign expenditure on opposition victory	200
7.6	Impact of civic activism on campaign strategy	203
8.1	Benefits of running for office	209
8.2	Party performance in providing benefits	217
8.3	Benefits of losing elections	220
8.4	How civic activism and career partisanship impact benefits preferences	225
9.1	Risk and time perspectives with <i>methali</i>	235
9.2	Risk tolerance, <i>methali</i> Pair 1	239
9.3	Risk tolerance, <i>methali</i> Pair 2	241
10.1	Civic activism versus career partisanship: Occupation before becoming MP	260
10.2	Evidence of career partisanship through party service	261
10.3	Career partisanship and prioritizing party interests	262
10.4	Policy views on legislative duties, ruling party versus opposition	264
10.5	Civic activism versus career partisanship: Occupation before becoming MP in dominant party democracies	270
10.6	Evidence of career partisanship through party service in dominant party democracies	270
10.7	Career partisanship and prioritizing party interests	271
10.8	Policy views on legislative duties, ruling party versus opposition in dominant party democracies	272
10.9	Civic activism versus career partisanship: Occupation before becoming MP in competitive democracies	277
10.10	Policy views on legislative duties, ruling party versus opposition in competitive democracies	278
B.1	Components of a sequence	314
B.2	Possible elements in career partisanship sequences	315
B.3	Visualizing sequences of career partisanship	316
B.4	Evidence of career partisanship through party service	338
B.5	Career partisanship and prioritizing party interests	339
B.6	Comparing policy views on legislative duties across regimes	340

Tables

2.1	Political competition in electoral authoritarian regimes	<i>page</i> 38
2.2	Benefits of legislative office in Africa	65
2.3	Benefits of candidacy: Literature and theory	68
2.4	Strategic candidacy framework review	75
3.1	Qualitative interviewees	106
3.2	Nomination seeking and candidate emergence	108
3.3	Reasons for seeking candidacy, survey items	118
3.4	Reasons for seeking candidacy	118
5.1	Vocational career sequence examples	151
6.1	Direction of candidate market, all MPs	174
6.2	What barriers do nomination seekers face?	176
6.3	Number of competitors faced in nomination contests	179
6.4	Legislative turnover in Tanzania	180
6.5	Civic activism and opposition nominations	182
10.1	Classifying African Legislatures Project regimes	249
10.2	External validity in Africa’s electoral authoritarian regimes	259
10.3	Scope conditions for Africa’s dominant party democracies	269
10.4	Scope conditions for Africa’s competitive democracies	276
A.1	Distribution of respondents	299
A.2	Sample representativeness	301
A.3	Opposition sample representativeness	305
B.1	Analysis of V-Dem party-level data regarding candidate selection	308
B.2	Regression corresponding with Figures 4.1 and 4.2	308
B.3	Robustness of alternative civic activism measures for analysis corresponding with Table B.2	311

<i>Tables</i>	<i>xi</i>
B.4 Regressions corresponding with Figure 5.1	313
B.5 Substitution matrix	318
B.6 Alternate Matrix 1	319
B.7 Alternate Matrix 2	319
B.8 Alternative specifications and robustness of career partisanship sequence analysis	320
B.9 Robustness of alternative civic activism measures for analysis corresponding with Table 6.5	321
B.10 Descriptive statistics corresponding with Figure 7.2	322
B.11 Descriptive statistics corresponding with Figure 7.3	323
B.12 Regressions corresponding with Figure 7.4	323
B.13 Regressions corresponding with Figure 7.5	324
B.14 Regressions corresponding with Figure 7.6	324
B.15 Benefits of running for office	325
B.16 Survey items capturing reasons to not run for office	325
B.17 Reasons to not run for office	326
B.18 Party performance in providing benefits	327
B.19 Benefits of losing election contests	327
B.20 Benefits of losing nomination contests	330
B.21 Regression corresponding with Figure 8.4	331
B.22 Risk attitudes and proverbs	333
B.23 Risk and retrospection through proverbs	334
B.24 Time horizons through proverbs	335
B.25 Partisan and civic activism and risk and time attitudes	336
B.26 Policy views on legislative duties	337

Acknowledgments

A lesson about success is found in a number of Swahili *methali* that highlight the role of collaboration and cooperation: *Panapo Wengi, hapa-haribiki neno* (“Where there are many, nothing goes wrong”), *Mti pekee haujengi* (“One tree alone cannot build anything”), *Kusaidiana ni mali* (“Helping one another is wealth”), among others. There is wisdom in this view and it absolutely applies to the experience of writing this book. This manuscript is the final output of a process of intellectual growth and development that started before I attended graduate school and evolved through graduate training, a postgraduate research position, and experiences as a junior faculty member. I have been motivated by the puzzle of why opposition candidates run for office in Africa’s electoral authoritarian regimes for about ten years and this intellectual curiosity could not have resulted in a book without the sustained and countless contributions collaborators, colleagues, friends, and family have made to me and to my work. This book is a reflection of those efforts.

I want to start by recognizing the Tanzanians without whom this book project would not have been possible. The book centers around three prominent Tanzanian politicians whom I hold in the highest regard: Ismail Jussa Ladhu, January Makamba, and James Mbatia. Each is principled, driven by a commitment to improve the lives of Tanzanians, and has made tremendous sacrifices in pursuit of that goal. Over the years I have been working on this project, they willingly shared their time with me in order to tell their stories. While the book’s narrative differentiates pathways to opposition versus ruling party candidacy, I hope it is clear that all three should inspire hope about the quality and types of leaders that

Acknowledgments

xiii

can emerge in electoral authoritarian settings. I am particularly grateful for the friendship I have developed with Jussa over years of working in Zanzibar. Many other leaders and activists from CHADEMA, CUF (and later ACT-Wazalendo), NCCR-Mageuzi, and CCM shared with me their passion for politics and their personal stories of how they came to be involved in public life in Tanzania and hundreds participated in the survey the empirical analysis of the book centers on.

Many research assistants contributed to the book, especially in the survey effort. This includes an enumerator team at the Parliament of Tanzania (Fidel Hassan, Deman Yusuph, Richard Alphone, and Paul Lousulie) and the Zanzibar House of Representatives (Riziki Pembe Juma, Abdallah Ali Abeid). Yulli Jeremia has also helped my work tremendously – as an enumerator, field supervisor, and research coordinator. Additionally, non-legislator surveys were carried out with the support of party activists in CHADEMA and Civic United Front: Silas Bwire, Victor Kingu, Innocent J. Kisanyage, Edward M. Makabayo, Bonifasia Mapunda, and Aminata Saguti.

A number of Tanzanian academics also supported me in various ways throughout my years working in Tanzania, including Mohammed Bakari, Benson Bana, Max Mmuya, and Bashiru Ally at the Department of Political Science and Public Administration at the University of Dar es Salaam and Vice Chancellor Dr. Idris Ahmada Rai at the State University of Zanzibar. Early on in the project, Aikande Kwayu was especially helpful in connecting me with political figures in Northern Tanzania and sharing her academic and personal perspectives on Tanzanian politics.

Finally, though he is a Wisconsinite by birth, most Tanzanians who know “Makame” Sterling Roop would welcome him as one of their own. I am indebted for his support in Zanzibar as a colleague and coauthor. His connections and access to guarded political networks unlocked much of what was accomplished in my fieldwork and his expertise on the internal workings of party politics in Tanzania is exceptionally rare. His companionship on the “Wazee” basketball team in Zanzibar and on various marathons and half marathons in Tanzania and elsewhere have been of even greater meaning over the decade we have known each other – *Njia in rafiki*.

This project began as my dissertation at the University of Florida, under the supervision of Staffan Lindberg and Michael Bernhard. Thanks to Dr. L for his mentorship, from coursework and coauthorship to my apprenticeship on the grill at Friday “Firesites.” Thanks to Michael Bernhard whose sharp wit taught me to think on my feet. Both shaped my

project through my graduate training and in their feedback on countless ideas and iterations of this project. They learned how to get the best work out of me and have remained supportive and engaged with me in the early stages of my career. Göran Hydén had formally retired before I arrived in Gainesville, but he remains a towering intellectual figure in Tanzania. His willingness to read early drafts of my work and introduce me to colleagues at the University of Dar es Salaam early in my PhD (many of whom he had trained) were incredibly valuable.

Thanks also to Ben Smith, a dissertation committee member, one of my first instructors at the University of Florida and the reason I will always be able to explain my book to my grandmother. The Department of Political Science at Florida has a uniquely collaborative faculty who supported my work, including other dissertation committee members Bryon Moraski, Charles Peek, and Ken Wald, as well as faculty members Michael Martinez and Dan Smith. The Center for African Studies is one of the world's premier homes for the study of Africa. I greatly miss the vibrance of the African studies community there and the opportunities it provided to interact with scholars from sub-Saharan Africa and for interdisciplinary exchange. Tremendous gratitude is owed to Leo Villalon and Todd Leedy, who led the center during my time in Gainesville. Thanks also to Scott Feinstein, Will Hicks, and Dominic Listanti for the ways their friendship shaped my development as a scholar in these pages and outside of them. As an institution, the University of Florida provided significant financial and logistical support for this project.

The kernels of my interest in autocracy in Africa go back to my time as an undergraduate at Northwestern University, where Will Reno showed me how exciting researching politics in Africa could be. I owe my expertise in Tanzania to the experience studying African Studies at UCLA. Katrina Daly Thompson helped me learn Swahili and to see it for its cultural, social, and political power, a perspective that is found throughout these pages. Without her mentorship, I doubt I would have been able to navigate the Tanzanian political research environment. At critical times of doubt, both Will and Katrina gave me confidence to pursue a PhD in Political Science.

During the research and writing process, I was fortunate to spend time at the Kellogg Institute of the University of Notre Dame. Michael Coppedge was tremendously supportive during my time there, Guillermo Trejo's feedback shaped how I view the nexus of civil society activism and political parties, and the Measuring Democracy working group there generated feedback on early versions of this project. New York University's

Acknowledgments

xv

Wilf Family Department of Politics welcomed me into their academic community while I prepared dissertation grant applications.

Much of this book was written in my time on the faculty of political science at Vanderbilt University. I have been lucky to work in a department that is as intellectually rigorous as it is welcoming and warm. Many colleagues from my time at Vanderbilt influenced this book in various ways; I am especially grateful to Amanda Clayton, Dave Lewis, Jon Hiskey, John Sides, Tariq Thachil, Alan Wiseman, and Liz Zechmeister for feedback at various stages of the project. Allison Anoll and Sharece Thrower were supportive “accountability buddies” as we pushed our book projects forward. I also benefited from the intellectual exchanges with Africanist faculty, especially Gregory Barz and Moses Ochonu. Vanderbilt provided material support for the book project at the department, college, and university levels. A special thanks to Noam Lupu for substantive feedback, mentorship in navigating the book revision and publication process, and friendship throughout.

I was fortunate to have the opportunity to be a visiting scholar at the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Institute at the University of Gothenburg during my work on this book. V-Dem is a one-of-a-kind place for scholars interested in the shape of democracy in the twenty-first century and I am grateful for the insights shared by its faculty, as well as other visiting scholars in residence during my visits. As I was completing this book, I joined the faculty of V-Dem and the Department of Political Science at the University of Gothenburg and am incredibly excited to begin a new chapter of my career working with them.

The scholars who have supported me throughout this work are too many to count. Ken Greene, Allen Hicken, Nic van de Walle, and Rachel Beatty Riedl participated in a full-day book workshop and were instrumental in shaping the revisions reflected in this manuscript. The same is true for two anonymous reviewers at Cambridge University Press.

My collaboration with Karisa Cloward on studying the linkages between NGO careers and candidacy in Africa broadly has helped refine my thinking about what makes candidacy dynamics in authoritarian regimes similar and different from democracies in the subcontinent. I learned about sequence methods from Matthew Charles Wilson and he was incredibly helpful in my early stages of using them. I think Leo Arriola and Rachel Beatty Riedl are tied for the award of “Most Times Served as Discussant” for components of this book, making even more impressive the creative insight and fresh contributions they offered each time they read my work.

Others who provided valuable feedback include Jaimie Bleck, Matthias Bogaards, Jen Brass, Sarah Brierley, Ruth Carlitz, Danny Choi, Michaela Collard, Jeffery Conroy-Krutz, Kim Yi Dionne, Anna Gryzmala-Busse, Jessica Gottlieb, Shelby Grossman, Robin Harding, Adam Harris, José Antonio Hernández-Company, Kevin Fridy, Willa Friedman, Matthew Gichohi Catherine Kelly, Dominika Koter, Eric Kramon, Adrienne Lebas, Ellen Lust, Andrew Little, Melanie Manion, John McCauley, Michael Miller, Yonatan Morse, Sigrun Marie Moss, Mathias Poertner, Dan Paget, Lise Rakner, Amanda Robinson, Ora John Reuter, Merete Seeborg, Dan Slater, Elizabeth Sperber, Kharis Templemann, Aili Mari Tripp, Kjetil Tronvoll, Michael Wahman, Shana Warren, Yael Zeria, and Brigitte Zimmerman. Many of these connections were made at meetings where the work was presented; thanks to the organizers of MGAPE, CAPERS, and MWEPS, an ad-hoc “conference within a conference” at the annual meeting of the Southern Political Science Association, and panel organizers, participants, and attendees at many annual meetings of the African Studies Association, American Political Science Association, International Studies Association, and Midwest Political Science Association.

The production team at Cambridge University Press has made the publication process smooth and rewarding. Particular thanks to my editors Rachel Blaifeder and Sara Doskow for their support, enthusiasm, and patience.

Writing this book has been a personal journey for me and I am proud that what resulted is a reflection of my voice and who I am as a scholar. At some point in my career, I set my sights on externally oriented professional goals of what I thought it would mean to be successful and anchored my personal ambitions to that vision. In doing so, I lost track of why I pursued this career, what made me unique as a scholar, and, more fundamentally, what I had to contribute to the world. While comparison is the core enterprise of what we do as political scientists, applying that frame of thinking to professional development and achievements really can, as the saying goes, steal the joy that comes with doing this work. I’m grateful for the support of mentors and advisors for critical guidance on course corrections within my career. Close friendships have helped me achieve greater balance in my life and my family has been steadfastly supportive throughout.

I am also lucky to have discovered running as an outlet to reflect, manage stress, and prioritize physical and mental health. Running has taught me many lessons applicable to my career and my life, including the value of process-based goals, knowing when to push myself (and when not to), navigating doubt and discomfort, and the power of community. To those

Acknowledgments

xvii

who I have shared miles with, including coworkers in my department, colleagues at annual conferences, friends in my local running community, and my teammates in Rogue Running's Renegades Worldwide training group: thank you. It has meant more than you probably know.

My family has been unwavering in their support and understanding throughout the process of writing this book. I attribute my initial interest in Africa to my mother, whose work as an artist and tapestry weaver exposed me and my siblings to the vibrant fiber arts of West Africa and how seemingly simple objects often carry complex historical, social, and political meaning. Her passion inspires the personal touch of this narrative and its creativity. I credit my father for giving me the desire to "know" and to approach challenges – within a research question and in my life – through goal-oriented problem-solving. My parents' dedication to social justice has instilled in me the desire to understand the adversity that others face in their lives and generate knowledge that helps in part to alleviate it. As teachers, my brother and sister have shown me the value and reward of pursuing a career in education.

Thanks to my partner in life, Kristin Michelitch. Kristin is an exceptional scholar and her feedback on countless versions of this project is imprinted throughout the pages of this volume. I remain amazed at all of the improbable, random events that aligned for us to first meet at a summer workshop in Ghana and the journey we've navigated together since. I cannot imagine my life without the inspiration that Kristin provides and the appetite for adventure she brings to team Michelhorst. You are my best friend. I am so lucky to share life's mountains and valleys with such a caring companion.

And finally, nothing but love to our daughters Josephine Moto and Margot Moyo. Josephine, I see in you the curiosity to ask why the world is how it is and the passion to bend it to your will (in a good way ... mostly). Margot, over your first months, your love for smiles and laughter have brightened every day.