

# Electoral transfers of power and presidential candidate selection in Sub-saharan Africa

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March 2020

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**Keywords:** electoral transfers of power, presidential candidate selection

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# **Electoral Transfers of Power and Presidential Candidate Selection in Sub-Saharan Africa**

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## **Abstract**

Drawing on Tsubura's studies (2019a; 2019b) that analyse how presidential candidates have been selected and critical defections avoided among dominant parties in countries of sub-Saharan Africa (hereinafter referred to as Africa) that have regular presidential succession, the present paper examines presidential candidate selection among ruling parties that have failed to establish one-party dominance in Africa. Specifically, this paper explores whether electoral transfers of power in the region are attributable to the failure to maintain party coherence in the selection of new presidential candidates. The paper conducts a two-stage analysis. First, it proposes a typology of electoral transfers of power in Africa by identifying two major dimensions: 1) whether ruling parties were dominant or non-dominant when they first lost multi-party elections and 2) whether ruling parties lost incumbent or open-seat elections. This classification reveals that no dominant party has lost open-seat elections in Africa, suggesting that, once one-party dominance is established, the dominant party is likely to continue managing leadership succession successfully. The second stage of the paper analyses presidential candidate selection of 1) non-dominant parties that lost incumbent elections and 2) a dominant party that lost an open-seat election. The two sets of analysis suggest that the maintenance of party cohesion in presidential candidate selection may have been more critical for the establishment of dominant-party systems than for their endurance in Africa.

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## 1. Introduction

Since the arrival of the ‘third wave’ of democratisation in Africa in the late 1980s and 1990s, some African ruling parties have reinforced their dominant power by recurrently winning multi-party elections, while others have lost elections and transferred power to opposition parties. In dominant-party states in the region where presidential succession occurs regularly, factional competition within ruling parties has tended to culminate in the selection of their presidential candidates, a process which is frequently more competitive than a general election. Therefore, it is crucial for dominant parties to manage factionalism in presidential candidate selection, maintain party coherence and win elections. Against such a backdrop, Tsubura’s papers (2019a; 2019b) examine the ways in which dominant parties in five African countries with regular presidential succession, namely, Botswana, Namibia, Mozambique, Tanzania and South Africa, have dealt with factional competition, avoided critical defections in presidential candidate selection and continued to win elections. By demonstrating various strategies employed by leaders of dominant parties in the selection of their new presidential candidates and the accommodation of rival factions, Tsubura’s studies highlight succession management as a crucial internal factor for the endurance of one-party dominance in some African countries. Building on her studies, the present paper examines whether electoral transfers of power in Africa are attributable to the failure to maintain cohesion in ruling parties when they select their new presidential candidates. Concretely, the paper examines the selection of presidential candidates within ruling parties in Africa that have experienced electoral transfers of power. The paper is aimed at re-examining Tsubura’s (2019a; 2019b) underlying assumption of the significance of succession management in the endurance of one-party dominance in the region.

The present study engages in two stages of analysis. First, it proposes a typology of initial electoral transfers of power in Africa by identifying two major dimensions: 1) whether ruling parties were dominant or non-dominant when they lost multi-party elections for the first time and 2) whether ruling parties lost elections contested by incumbent presidents (i.e. incumbent elections) or by new presidential candidates (i.e. open-seat elections). This analysis reveals that in no African country has a dominant party lost an open-seat election. The second stage of the analysis demonstrates the failure of ruling parties in five non-dominant-party states (Ghana, Mali, Kenya, Sierra Leone and Liberia) to maintain cohesion in presidential candidate selection, resulting in that party’s defeat in open-seat elections. The analysis also demonstrates the failure of the ruling party in one dominant-party state (Nigeria) to maintain cohesion, resulting in the electoral

defeat of the incumbent president. The two sets of analysis suggest that, contrary to Tsubura's (2019a; 2019b) underlying assumption that party cohesion in presidential candidate selection played a central role in cementing one-party dominance in some African countries, party cohesion may have been more critical in establishing one-party dominance than in ensuring its endurance.

The paper is organised into five sections. Following the introduction, the second section reviews the literature on dominant parties and presidential term limits to provide definitions of dominant parties employed by the present study. The third section presents a typology of initial electoral transfers of power in the region along two dimensions: 1) dominant or non-dominant parties and 2) incumbent or open-seat elections. The fourth section summarises the processes of presidential candidate selection within ruling parties in the countries in the two groups of the typology to demonstrate the influence that their succession management failure had on the parties' defeat in presidential elections. The fifth section presents the conclusion.

## **2. Dominant Parties and Presidential Term Limits in Africa**

Several studies have examined dominant parties in sub-Saharan Africa (see Tsubura 2019a: 3–5 for a detailed literature review) and offered various definitions of dominant parties in Africa and worldwide (Erdmann and Basedau 2013: 26–30). Most scholars apparently agree that the fundamental characteristic of dominant parties is that they operate 'within a legal framework of multi-party politics' (Erdmann and Basedau 2013: 26). Some scholars specialising in party systems in Africa consider Sartori's (1976) definition, counting rules of political parties and typology of party systems, most suitable for identifying one-party-dominant systems in the region (Bogaards 2004: 174; Erdmann and Basedau 2008; Erdmann and Basedau 2013). Sartori (1976) defines a dominant party as the party that gains an absolute majority (a 50% plus one majority) of seats in parliament in fluid party systems, and he identifies dominant parties as 'predominant parties' once party systems have become institutionalised. Furthermore, Sartori (1976) only considers as systematically relevant and worth counting the parties 'in parliament that are relevant for party competition and government formation' (Erdmann and Basedau 2008: 242–243). Following Sartori (1976), Erdmann and Basedau (2008) suggest the following indicators for institutionalisation of party systems:

1. There have been at least three consecutive elections;
2. There has been no period of undemocratic rule, coups (unless there are three

subsequent elections), serious civil unrest, or civil war;

3. A minimum level of institutionalisation within the party system itself: the volatility (seats) according to Pedersen (1979) is not higher than a value of 40,<sup>1</sup> and the (average) party age must be at least 15 years or nearly as high as the years passed by since the founding elections when being held after 1990 (Erdmann and Basedau 2008: 245).

In short, Erdmann and Basedau (2008: 246) consider the party system in a given country to be characterised by one-party dominance if the same party has secured an absolute majority of parliamentary seats in three consecutive elections, and if the country further meets all above three criteria of institutionalisation, they call the system '[one-party] predominant'. The present study applies these indicators and examines political parties aged 15 years or older once they have gained an absolute majority of seats in parliament in three consecutive elections, without any undemocratic interruptions or a high degree of volatility. For simplification, the present paper uses the term 'dominant parties' to refer to predominant parties in institutionalised party systems.

In relation to the definition of dominant parties discussed above, the minimum requirement for winning the three consecutive elections, which is Erdmann and Basedau's (2008: 245) first indicator, is particularly important for identifying dominant parties. Given that many African countries have adopted two-term limits for the presidency (Reyntjens 2016: Appendix; Posner and Young 2018: 261), victory in three consecutive presidential elections means that at least two consecutive presidents are selected from the same parties, indicating the establishment of one-party dominance, rather than the continuation of personal rule by the same presidents. Thus, this study focuses only on multi-party elections in those countries where presidential term limits have been respected.

The present paper further distinguishes between incumbent and open-seat elections because the literature on presidential term limits worldwide and in Africa suggests that open-seat elections increase the chances for the opposition to win elections. A growing body of studies has examined presidential term limits in sub-Saharan Africa (for example, Cheeseman 2010; Reyntjens 2016; Posner and Young 2018). Some scholars such as Maltz (2007) and Cheeseman (2010) highlight incumbency advantages in elections in presidential systems and the significance of presidential term limits for electoral transfers of power. They demonstrate that, in presidential systems, when an

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<sup>1</sup> Pedersen's volatility index is calculated as a half of the total net change. See note 7 in Erdmann and Basedau 2008: 255.

incumbent president cannot contest an election because of term limits, health, or internal party rules, the ruling party is likely to perform worse in that election (Cheeseman 2010: 139). By analysing electoral authoritarian regimes, Maltz (2007: 134) contends that incumbent presidents maintained power in 62 (93%) of the 67 elections that they contested, while their successors won only 11 (52%) of 21 elections between 1992 and 2006. Furthermore, by demonstrating that half of all the electoral transfers of presidential power in Africa between 1990 and 2009 occurred in open-seat elections, Cheeseman (2010: 140, 143) argues that presidential term limits have increased the likelihood of electoral turnover in the region because of difficulties in managing leadership succession in ruling parties. Yet it is also important to note that presidential term limits do not automatically contribute to the consolidation of democratisation in Africa given that term limits have co-existed with dominant-party rules in some countries in Africa, such as Tanzania and Mozambique (LeBas 2016: 172). As long as ruling parties succeed in maintaining coherence in selecting new presidential candidates, open-seat elections do not necessarily raise the likelihood of electoral transfers of power. Indeed, successful management of leadership succession has contributed to the endurance of one-party dominance in the region (Nijzink and Doorenspleet 2013; Tsubura 2019b).

By applying the definitions of dominant parties described above and taking into account the importance of presidential candidate selection within ruling parties before open-seat elections, the following section investigates the characteristics of ruling parties (i.e. whether they were dominant or not) and presidential elections (i.e. whether they were incumbent or open-seat) when the first electoral transfers of power have occurred in Africa. The subsequent section examines succession management of the selected countries.

### **3. Classification of Electoral Transfers of Power in Africa**

Twenty out of 49 countries in sub-Saharan Africa (i.e. Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Nigeria, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Zambia) have experienced at least one transfer of power in multi-party elections (see Appendix). Among them, ten countries are excluded from the present study: Lesotho and Mauritius (because they have a parliamentary system of government)<sup>2</sup>; Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso (because initial electoral

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<sup>2</sup> There is no term limit for the prime minister in Lesotho and Mauritius. See Appendix for sources.

transfers of power occurred immediately after democratic interruptions); Cape Verde, the Gambia and Senegal (because of the lack of presidential term limits at the time of initial electoral turnover)<sup>3</sup>; Democratic Republic of Congo (because the newly elected president formed a coalition government with his immediate predecessor) and São Tomé and Príncipe (because of the recurrent power struggles between president and government under the semi-presidential system) (IFES; Seibert 2016; Reyntjens 2016: 63; Reuters 2019).

While seven out of the ten countries (i.e. Benin, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Sierra Leone and Zambia) that are included in the present study have experienced several democratic transfers of power, the present paper focuses only on the first transfers of power because of their significant influence on political systems in these countries; once opposition presidential candidates and parties come to power, power dynamics between new ruling and opposition parties are expected to differ significantly from the previous period, and the subsequent electoral turnover is likely to be affected by factors that did not exist before the first electoral turnover.

Initial electoral transfers of power in the ten countries are classified along the two dimensions: 1) dominant or non-dominant parties and 2) incumbent or open-seat elections (see Table 1).

**Table 1 First Electoral Transfers of Power in African Countries with Presidential Term Limits**

	Incumbent election	Open-seat election
Non-dominant party	Benin (1991) Zambia (1991) Madagascar (1993) Malawi (1994)	Ghana (2000) Mali (2002) Kenya (2002) Sierra Leone (2007) Liberia (2017)
Dominant party	Nigeria (2015)	N/A

Note: The year in brackets indicates the year in which a transfer of power occurred in a direct multi-party presidential election for the first time. See Appendix for more details.

Sources: Compiled by the author, based on Cheeseman (2015: 223–237), BBC Country Profiles, IFES and African Election Database.

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<sup>3</sup> In Cape Verde, the limit of two five-year presidential terms was introduced in 1992, one year after the electoral transfer of power occurred in the first multi-party election in 1991. The former ruling party, African Party for the Independence of Cape Verde (PAICV), staged a comeback in the third multi-party and open-seat presidential election in 2001, while it failed to gain a majority in the legislative election in the same year. See Appendix for sources.

This exercise reveals that all but one of the initial electoral transfers of power in the region occurred under the rule of non-dominant parties. Among them, the transfers in Benin, Zambia, Madagascar and Malawi occurred in the first multi-party elections that incumbent presidents contested. These cases indicate that incumbent presidents and their parties were unable to manipulate the democratisation processes despite their considerable advantages in controlling the electoral playing field gained from their rule during the one-party period. Although the failure in succession management was one of the reasons for some of these cases (e.g. Zambia), these countries did not show any sign of one-party dominance in the multi-party period. Thus, the present paper does not further investigate them.

The other five initial transfers of power (i.e. Ghana, Mali, Kenya, Sierra Leone, and Liberia<sup>4</sup>) occurred in the first open-seat elections, or third multi-party elections that new candidates from ruling parties contested after the incumbents' completion of their terms. While these cases demonstrate signs of initial one-party dominance after the introduction of a multi-party system, those parties failed to retain enough electoral support for their new presidential candidates.

The only dominant party in Africa to have won three consecutive presidential elections and maintained a majority in three consecutive parliamentary elections that eventually allowed a transfer of power was the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in Nigeria in 2015. As will be discussed later, the failure in elite coordination and defections of senior party representatives was one of the main factors for the PDP's defeat in the 2015 election. In no country in the region have dominant parties lost open-seat elections. Put differently, no dominant party in Africa has failed to manage elite coordination resulting from its presidential candidate selection. This finding may not be surprising given that African democracies are still young and the number of multi-party elections held in the region so far is relatively limited. Thus, the pattern of victorious dominant parties in open-seat elections in the region should be treated as a preliminary finding. Nevertheless, Tsubura's (2019a; 2019b) underlying assumption about the significance of party cohesion in presidential candidate selection in the context of enduring one-party dominance in Africa needs to be revisited. If the findings of the present study and Tsubura's papers (2019a; 2019b) are combined, it can be suggested that, once ruling parties have managed to maintain a majority in three consecutive legislative elections and established their dominance, they are unlikely to fail in subsequent leadership succession.

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<sup>4</sup> The electoral transfer of power in Liberia in 2017 occurred in the fourth multi-party election because of a civil war between 1999 and 2003 (Cheeseman 2015: 235; IFES).

On the basis of the above classification, Section 4 briefly analyses presidential candidate selection of five non-dominant parties in Africa (in Ghana, Mali, Kenya, Sierra Leone and Liberia) that have lost open-seat elections and Nigeria's PDP, the only dominant party with regular presidential succession that has lost a multi-party election in the region, to explain how critical defections resulting from presidential candidate selection affected their electoral performance.

#### **4. Presidential Candidate Selection of Six Ruling Parties before Losing Presidential Elections for the First Time: Ghana (2000), Mali (2002), Kenya (2002), Sierra Leone (2007), Liberia (2017) and Nigeria (2015)**

The failure of succession management by ruling parties in selecting new presidential candidates was one of the common contributing factors for the first electoral turnover in the cases of Ghana, Mali, Kenya, Sierra Leone and Liberia during the multi-party period. In Ghana, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) lost the third multi-party presidential election in 2000. In the 1992 and 1996 elections, incumbent President Jerry Rawlings won, and his party, the NDC, maintained a majority in parliament. In 2000, while John Atta-Mills was selected by the party as Rawlings's successor, his team struggled to secure campaign financing, partly because of an economic crisis in the country but also because of the failure of the party elite to maintain support. Before the 1996 election and after the resignation of Vice President K. N. Arkaah, President Rawlings looked for a running mate to contest the forthcoming election. While he apparently preferred his loyal associate, Goosie Tanoh, Rawlings's wife and her loyalists strongly opposed Tanoh because of a conflict with him over a cassava business, and moreover, she had presidential aspirations. As a result, Rawlings abandoned Tanoh and chose John Atta-Mills as his running mate as advised by his closest advisers, although Rawlings and Mills had never previously met (Nugent 2001: 413).

When Rawlings publicly endorsed Mills as his successor in 1998, two years before the 2000 election, NDC members who had called for an internal election to select Rawlings's successor defected from the party to form an opposition party, the National Reform Party (NRP), under Tanoh's leadership. Rawlings's wife abandoned her presidential aspirations and retreated from active politics. Tanoh and Rawlings's wife withdrew funding from the NDC. Furthermore, after Mills was formally approved as the NDC presidential candidate at the party's Congress in December 1998, Abed Asamoah, a former close ally of Rawlings's wife, sought to vie for the vice-presidency. However, Mills chose Martin Amidu, Asamoah's ministerial deputy, as his running mate, because

Mills had a weak support base within the NDC and wanted a less powerful running mate than himself. As a result, Asamoah and his supporters withdrew from the campaign, and as chairman of the NDC Finance Committee, he did not provide sufficient financial backing to Mills's campaign (Nugent 2001: 414–415). Therefore, the lack of party cohesion contributed to Mills's defeat in the 2000 election; he gained 44% of the vote, while his challenger, New Patriotic Party (NPP) candidate John Kufour, won 49.5%. Kufour won the presidency with 57% of the vote in the second round (IFES).

In Mali, a military coup led by Lieutenant Colonel Amadou Touré ousted General Moussa Traoré in 1991, and the *Alliance pour la Démocratie en Mali* (Alliance for Democracy in Mali: ADEMA) was established by three resistance movements that had fought against Touré's regime. In the following year, the first multi-party elections were held, and Alpha Konaré, running as the ADEMA candidate, was elected president with 69% of the vote. He was re-elected president with 96% of the vote in the 1997 election, which was boycotted by the main opposition parties. In the run-up to the elections in 2002, after Konaré had completed two terms in office, senior party members competed intensely over the selection of the new presidential candidate. Ibrahim Keita, the former prime minister and party chairman, was marginalised by a reformist faction within the ADEMA. Consequently, he left the ADEMA with a number of his loyalists and formed his own party, Rally for Mali (*Rassemblement pour le Mali* [RPM]). In the first round of the 2000 presidential election, Keita gained 21% of the vote to split the ADEMA vote, while independent candidate Amadou Touré secured 29%, and ADEMA's candidate, Soumaïla Cissé, won 21%. Prior to the second round of the race, Keita mobilised support against ADEMA. Many senior ADEMA leaders followed suit and campaigned against Cissé, enabling Touré to win 65% of the vote in the second round, and an opposition coalition including the RPM won an absolute majority in the legislative election held in the same year (van Vilet 2013; African Election Database).

In Kenya, the defeat of the ruling Kenya African National Union (KANU) in the 2002 election was characterised by the complete failure of its leadership succession. Kenya had been ruled by President Daniel Moi of the KANU for 24 years before he stood down in 2002. Nine months before the 2002 elections, Moi and his allies within the KANU reshuffled the party leadership and promoted young politicians including Uhuru Kenyatta, son of the first president, Jomo Kenyatta, sweeping aside the old guard of the party. Three months later, Moi declared that Kenyatta had been selected as KANU's presidential candidate without receiving wide support of the party executive. Because of Kenyatta's lack of political experience, party cadres were concerned about losing the forthcoming election. KANU's prominent leaders who had been marginalised by Moi and

his loyalists defected from the party two months before the elections, formed their own party, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), and agreed to build a new opposition alliance, the National Rainbow Coalition (NaRC), with the other opposition alliance led by Mwai Kibaki of the Democratic Party (DP). In the election, Kibaki won 62% of the vote, beating Kenyatta, who gained 30% (Anderson 2003; Cheeseman 2010: 144; IFES).

The electoral transfer of power in Sierra Leone in 2007 was also affected by an internal split within the ruling party, the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), in selecting a new presidential candidate. In September 2015, the SLPP selected Vice President Solomon Berewa as a successor to President Ahmad Kabbah. This caused the defection of an SLPP presidential aspirant, Charles Margai, son of the second prime minister, who then formed a new opposition party, People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC). The SLPP suffered from this split because it had already been challenged severely by opposition politician Ernest Koroma, from the All People's Congress (APC). The PMDC appealed to some of the SLPP's constituencies, especially in the southern and eastern parts of the country (Cheeseman 2010: 143). In the 2007 election, no candidate won an absolute majority, as Berewa gained 38% of the vote, while Koroma and Margai received 44% and 14%, respectively (IFES). Instead of supporting his former colleague, Berewa, Margai campaigned for Koroma in the second round of the presidential race, and the SLPP lost votes in its traditional constituencies, enabling Koroma to win 55% of the vote and take power (IFES; Cheeseman 2010: 144).

In Liberia, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, of the Unity Party (UP), completed her two terms in office in 2017. George Weah, candidate of the Congress for Democratic Change (CDC), won the second round of the presidential election, beating Vice President Joseph Boakai, UP's presidential candidate. Boakai's defeat was partly because of his failure to consolidate UP support around his candidacy. Most importantly, outgoing President Sirleaf did not support Boakai's presidential campaign (Ballah 2018). Consequently, Sirleaf was expelled from the UP by Boakai and returned to the party later in 2019 (Daily Observer 2019).

Nigeria is the only African country in which a dominant party has lost an incumbent election. Nigeria's PDP was established jointly by several political associations in 1998, one year before the first multi-party elections were held. After PDP's victory in four consecutive elections, President Goodluck Jonathan ceded power to an opposition leader, Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress (APC), who won 54% of the vote in the 2015 presidential election (IFES). Succession management of the PDP was upset by President Jonathan, who assumed the presidency when he was Vice President after the death of President Umaru Musa Yar'adua in 2010.

The PDP had developed a custom of leadership rotation between the north and the south, among major ethnic groups and between Muslims and Christians, as a result of violent coups and civil war in the mid-1960s. While the first president under multi-party rule, Olusegun Obasanjo, was from the south, the second president, Umaru Musa Yar'adua, was from the north. Although Jonathan, a southerner, allegedly promised PDP leaders that he would serve only one term as president, he ran for a second term in the 2015 election, causing serious internal dissent. Furthermore, his alienation of Obasanjo, who was opposed to Jonathan's presidential bid for the second term, led to Obasanjo's defection from the PDP in 2015. Many senior PDP leaders also left the party, including former Vice President Atiku Abubakar. Against this background, Buhari of the APC succeeded in establishing his party's support base, which also received Obasanjo's support, and won the 2015 election (BBC 2015a; BBC 2015b; The Guardian 2015; Owen and Usman 2015: 457–458).

All six cases have demonstrated that failed succession management in ruling parties was one of the factors contributing to electoral transfers of power in Africa. The analysis of the elections in which the first electoral turnover occurred also suggests that opposition candidates had already been emerging in these countries, and party leaders who left ruling parties mobilised support for the emerging opposition candidates, instead of winning the presidential elections by themselves. This implies that critical defections have occurred not merely because of defectors' dissatisfaction with the selection of ruling-party presidential candidates but also because of their calculation of the likelihood of future electoral turnover, given the growing electoral influence of opposition presidential candidates and their parties.

## **5. Conclusion**

The present paper has examined whether and how the failure of African ruling parties to manage presidential candidate selection has led to electoral transfers of power in the region. The paper has proposed a typology of electoral transfers of power with presidential term limits by identifying two major dimensions: 1) whether ruling parties were dominant or non-dominant parties when they lost multi-party elections for the first time and 2) whether ruling parties lost incumbent elections or open-seat elections. This analysis has revealed that no dominant party in Africa has lost open-seat elections. Based on this finding, the second stage of the paper has demonstrated that internal splits within ruling parties resulting from the mismanagement of leadership succession have contributed to electoral transfers of power in the region. Furthermore, electoral transfers

of power have tended to occur when surging opposition candidates have received support from senior ruling-party defectors. The two sets of analysis suggest that, once African ruling parties have succeeded in retaining a majority in three consecutive legislative elections and established themselves as dominant parties, they are unlikely to fail in subsequent leadership successions. This also suggests that in African countries the maintenance of party cohesion in presidential candidate selection may be more critical for the establishment of dominant-party systems than for their endurance.

Tsubura (2019a; 2019b) and the present paper demonstrate that, whereas ruling parties in many African countries have experienced some defections of party elites in selecting their presidential candidates, some parties have managed to re-establish party unity and win presidential elections, while others have not. In other words, the impacts of intense factional competition and defections of dominant parties in African countries examined in Tsubura (2019a; 2019b), namely, Botswana, Namibia, Mozambique, Tanzania and South Africa, were effectively controlled, while defections of ruling parties discussed in the present paper turned out to be critical party splits, resulting in electoral defeats. The next step of research is to compare the two groups of parties to identify the factors that have caused different electoral outcomes despite their similar experiences of factional competition and defections of party elites.

## Appendix: Electoral Transfers of Power in Sub-Saharan Africa

Country	1st multi-party presidential election	2nd multi-party presidential election	3rd multi-party presidential election	4th multi-party presidential election	5th multi-party presidential election	6th multi-party presidential election	7th multi-party presidential election	8th multi-party presidential election	Presidential term limit, democratic interruption, etc.
1 Benin	1991 Soglo (UTRD)	1996 Kerekou (independent)	2001 Kerekou (FARD-Alafia)	2006 Yayi (independent)	2011 Yayi (independent)	2016 Talon (independent)			5 years × 2 terms since 1990. No parliamentary majority in 1991, 1996, 2006, 2011 and 2015.
2 Burkina Faso	1991 (Compaore, ODP-MP) (unopposed due to opposition boycott)	1998 Compaore (CDP) (boycotted by major opposition)	2005 Compaore (CDP)	2010 Compaore (CDP)	2015 Kabore (MPP)				7 years × 2 terms since 1991 and 5 years × 2 terms since 2002. Turnover after political unrest in 2014-5. No parliamentary majority in 2002 and 2012.
3 Cape Verde	1991 (Monteiro, MPD)	1996 Monteirum, (MpD) (unopposed)	2001 Pires (PAICV)	2006 Pires (PAIDV)	2011 Fonseca (MPD)	2016 Fonseca (MPD)			5 years × 2 terms since 1992. No parliamentary majority in 2001.
4 Comoros	1990 (Djohar, UDZIMA)	1996 Taki (UNDC) --> 1998 Massoude	2002 Assoumani (independent)	2006 Sambi	2010 Dhoinine	2016 Assoumani (CRC)	2019 Assoumani (CRC)		5 years × 2 terms since 1992 and 6 years since 1996. Rotating presidency between the three main islands for 4-year terms since 2001. Coups in 1995, 1999 and 2007. Since 2018, the President is elected in two rounds by absolute majority vote to serve for 5 years × 2 terms and the office of the President rotates between the three islands every ten years.
5 Cote d'Ivoire	1990 Houphouët-Boigny (PDCI-RDA) --> 1992-3 Bédié (PDCI-RDA)	1995 Bédié (PDCI-RDA)	2000 Gbagbo (FPI)	2010 Ouattara (RDR)					5 years × 2 terms since 2000. Coup in 1999, and civil war in 2002 and 2011. No parliamentary majority in 2000 and 2011.
6 Democratic Republic of Congo	2006 Kabila (independent)	2011 Kabila (PPRD)	2018 Tshisekedi (UDPS)						5 years × 2 terms since 2006. Alleged deal between Kabila and Tshisekedi in 2018. No parliamentary majority in 2007 and 2011 and majority by an opposition coalition in 2018.
7 The Gambia	1982 Jawara (PPP)	1987 Jawara (PPP)	1992 Jawara (PPP)	1996 Jammeh (APRC)	2001 Jammeh (APRC)	2006 Jammeh (APRC)	2011 Jammeh (APRC)	2016 Barrow (UDP)	5 years × no term limit. Military rule in 1994–1996. No parliamentary majority in 2017.
8 Ghana	1992 Rawlings (NDC)	1996 Rawlings (NDC)	2000 Kufuor (NPP)	2004 Kufuor (NPP)	2008 Atta Mills (NDC) --> 2012 Mahama (NDC)	2012 Mahama (NDC)	2016 Akufo-Addo (NPP)		4 years × 2 terms. No parliamentary majority in 2000, 2008 and 2012.
9 Kenya	1992 Moi (KANU)	1997 Moi (KANU)	2002 Kibaki (NARC)	2007 Kibaki (PNU)	2013 Kenyatta (Jubilee)	2017 Kenyatta (Jubilee)			5 years × 2 terms. No parliamentary majority in 2007, 2013 and 2017.
10 Lesotho	Monarchy								No term limit for prime minister.
11 Liberia	1997 Taylor (NPP)	2005 Sirleaf (UP)	2011 Sirleaf (UP)	2017 Weah (CDC)					6 years × 2 terms since 1986. Civil war in 1999-2004. Parliamentary majority by oppositions in 2005 and no parliamentary majority in 2011, 2014 and 2017.
12 Madagascar	1993 Zafy (UNDD)	1996 Ratsiraka (AREMA)	2001 Ravalomanana (TIM)	2006 Ravalomanana (TIM)	2013 Rajaonarimampianina (FIDIO)	2018 Rajoelina, (TGV)			Semi-presidential system. 5 years × 2 terms since 1992. The 1996 election followed the impeachment of President Zafy and the appointment of his interim successor, Norbert Ratsirahonana; 2002 civil unrest, 2009 military takeover.
13 Malawi	1994 Muluzi (UDF)	1999 Muluzi (UDF)	2004 Bingu wa Mutharika (UDF)	2009 Bingu wa Mutharika (DPP) --> 2012 Banda (PP)	2014 Peter Mutharika (DPP)	(2019 Peter Mutharika (DPP) - nullified)			5 years × 2 terms since 1995. No parliamentary majority in 1994, 1999, 2004, 2014 and 2019.
14 Mali	1992 Konaré (ADEMA)	1997 Konaré (ADEMA)	2002 Touré (independent)	2007 Touré (ADP)	2013 Keita (RPM)	2018 Keita (RPM)			5 years × 2 terms since 1992. Coup in 2012. No parliamentary majority in 2002, 2013 and 2018.
15 Mauritius	Parliamentary system								Presidents elected by the National Assembly, largely play ceremonial roles.

	Country	1st multi-party presidential election	2nd multi-party presidential election	3rd multi-party presidential election	4th multi-party presidential election	5th multi-party presidential election	6th multi-party presidential election	7th multi-party presidential election	8th multi-party presidential election	Presidential term limit, democratic interruption, etc.
16	Nigeria	1999 Obasanjo (PDP)	2003 Obasanjo (PDP)	2007 Yar Adua (PDP) --> 2010 Jonathan (PDP)	2011 Jonathan (PDP)	2015 Buhari (APC)	2019 Buhari (APC)			4 years × 2 terms since 1999. No parliamentary majority in 2011.
17	Sao Tome and Principe	1991 Trovoada (supported by PCD-GR, CODO) (unopposed after incumbent Costa's withdrawal)	1996 Trovoada (ADI created by Trovoada's followers)	2001 Menezes (ADI)	2006 Menezes (MDFM-PCD)	2011 Costa (MLSTP/PSD)	2016 Carvalho (ADI) (unopposed in the second round after Costa's withdrawal)			Semi-presidential system. 5 years × 2 terms since 2003. Power struggle between president and prime minister.
18	Senegal	1978 (Senghor, PS)	1983 Diouf (PS)	1988 Diouf (PS)	1993 Diouf (PS)	2000 Wade (PDS)	2007 Wade (PDS)	2012 Sall (APR)	2019 Sall (BBR)	7 years × 2 terms since 2001, but Wade contested in 2012. Parliamentary majority by an opposition coalition in 2012. No parliamentary majority in 2019.
19	Sierra Leone	1996 (Kabba, SLPP)	2002 Kabba (SLPP)	2007 Koroma (APC)	2012 Koroma	2018 Bio (SLPP)				5 years × 2 terms since 1991. Coup/civil war in 1997-2002. No parliamentary majority in 1996 and 2007. Parliamentary majority by opposition in 2018.
20	Zambia	1991 Chiluba (MMD)	1996 Chiluba (MMD)	2001 Mwanawasa (MMD)	2006 Mwanawasa (MMD) --> 2008 Banda (MMD)	2008 Banda (MMD)	2011 Sata (PF) --> 2014 Guy Scott (PF)	2015 by-election Lungu (PF)	2015 Lungu	5 years × 2 terms since 1991. No parliamentary majority since 2001.

Note: Orange: electoral transfer of power in an incumbent election, Green: electoral transfer of power in an open-seat election, Blue: election after democratic interruption, ‘-->’: succession due to the death of the incumbent president.

Source: Cheeseman 2010: 233–237; African Election Database; IFES; BBC Country Profiles; Constitutions.

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