# State Capacity and Elite Strategies for Party Formation in Electoral Authoritarian Regimes

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# Abstract

Why do politicians run for office when they know they will not gain power? Existing theories of party and party system formation do not explain why elites choose to compete under unfair conditions – why they form loyal opposition parties in electoral authoritarian regimes. I argue that party formation under dictatorship depends in part on a state's ability to implement policy through a capable and independent bureaucracy. At lower levels of state administrative capacity, authoritarian regimes manage rent-seeking elites through clientelism, which encourages politicians to either join the ruling party or form a large number of small parties. As state capacity increases, bargaining over public goods becomes a viable option. Under those conditions, elites have an incentive to form larger and more stable political parties, leading to greater collective action within the parliamentary opposition. My dissertation establishes an overall cross-national relationship between state capacity and opposition fractionalization in electoral authoritarian regimes based on an original dataset of authoritarian election results from 1972-2015. I then test the causal nature of this relationship with interview and survey-based case studies demonstrating that policy-motivated elites are more likely to form parties in countries with more effective bureaucracies. In the Kyrgyz Republic, a state with low administrative capacity, politicians are more interested in access to patronage than implementation of policy and those who do seek to advance legislation can only do so within the ruling party. By contrast, Armenian bureaucratic reforms made the state a nexus of policy bargaining and opposition elites formed parties and coalitions to take advantage of this opportunity.

# Chapter 1

# Introduction

On April 22, 2018, back-bench MP Nikol Pashinyan stood at the head of tens of thousands of protestors demanding the resignation of Serge Sargsyan, Armenia's president for the previous ten years. After Sargsyan reneged on his promise not to stay in power after the country transitioned to a parliamentary system, Pashinyan's Civil Contract Party coordinated with social movement leaders to organize public opposition in a multi-week march to the capital Yerevan. After Pashinyan and two fellow MPs successfully used their parliamentary immunity to avoid arrest, Sargsyan resigned on April 23. His party remained in power, however, and protests continued as MPs gradually split from the ruling party and voted to elect Pashinyan prime minister under the rules established by his predecessor. Armenia's velvet revolution had many classic markers of a successful transition – notably cascading public protests and the government's inability to maintain control through force – but also demonstrates the role of parliamentary opposition parties in authoritarian politics and transitions. Civil Contract party members provided a key link between social movement organizers and the formal political system, and were able to take positions in government immediately when the unexpected happened: victory.

The Armenian case is not a unique one. The 2018 election victories of parliamentary opposition parties in countries as varied as Malaysia and the Maldives serve as a reminder that since the end of the Cold War, one-third of elections in authoritarian regimes have led to political liberalization (Roessler and Howard 2006, Edgell et al 2018). At a time when the vast majority of dictatorships hold elections,[1] politics in authoritarian states is expressed through a wide variety of party systems. Elites in multi-party dictatorships may be organized into dominant parties that hold a small majority of seats in parliament alongside a handful of authorized parties (as in Russia), a two-party system where elites are divided into fronts supporting and opposing the government (as in Zimbabwe or Venezuela), or parties with a super-majority of seats in parliament and other elites organized in a large number of small parties or as independent candidates (as in Egypt). Each model represents a different form of elite cooptation and opposition cohesion – a different manifestation of elite relations in

[1] In 2020, 79% of dictatorships held elections, and 89% of those allowed more than one party to compete. That year, only two dictatorships had no legislature (Eritrea and Sudan) and only four countries banned all parties (Kuwait, Qatar, Syria, and Uzbekistan). Data based on author calculations from the 2023 V-Dem dataset (Coppedge et al 2023).

the formal political sphere – with consequences for regime policy and durability. Fragmented oppositions are coopted by authoritarian regimes; unified oppositions can overthrow them at the ballot box or through popular protest.

While the relationship between multiparty competition and outcomes such as economic growth and political stability has been extensively studied and debated, less attention has been paid to the origins of different forms of party competition. I examine the question of why different types of parties and party systems emerge in different dictatorships from its microfoundation: why do elites join political parties that they know will not win elections? Elite self-interest drives most theories of party formation, but the decision to form a party that participates in rigged elections but does not reap the benefits of alignment with the leader seems a contradiction. Are these politicians simply bought off by the regime in other ways, or do they have more complex motivations? How do social conditions, leader decisions, and the state influence this choice?

In tracing the variation in elite preferences and strategies under authoritarianism from the individual to the party-system level, I focus on one influence on elite decisions to form parties: a state's ability to implement policy (state administrative capacity, or infrastructural power). I argue that when a state is better able to implement policy, parliamentary oppositions in authoritarian regimes are more likely to coalesce. Bureaucratic development makes bargaining over policy a rational option for political elites, which creates incentives for collective action among a parliamentary opposition.

At low levels of state administrative capacity, politicians primarily have incentives to adopt rent-seeking behavior. They pursue patronage from an authoritarian leader in exchange for their support and participation in the political system. Because these benefits accrue to the individual, there are few incentives for politicians to work together to obtain them. Instead, politicians who seek influence through elections will build personal brands by campaigning as individual candidates or heads of small parties, leading to a fractionalized party system. Political networks are vertical – linking leaders to politicians and their voters – in a traditional clientelistic hierarchy.

As a state bureaucracy's capacity for policy implementation increases, incentives for collective action among elites rise. While a leader will still be able to coopt individual politicians through patronage, leader promises of policy reform gain credibility and the probability of the success of influencing the government through legislation rises. Politicians who are interested in policy reform gain incentives to participate in elections and to work together to negotiate for public goods. Parliamentary opposition parties begin to organize around these goals and these horizontal networks of like-minded politicians can coalesce into larger groups, increasing opposition unity.

I find evidence to support these claims both cross-nationally and in case studies of two electoral authoritarian regimes in the former Soviet Union. Using an original dataset of party representation in authoritarian legislatures from 1970-2015, I find a negative relationship between state capacity and parliamentary opposition fractionalization that is robust across

multiple specifications of the variables and statistical models. In states with moderate levels of free expression, party system fractionalization begins to decline five years – one election cycle – after state capacity begins to increase, indicating that politicians adapt when provided new incentives for policy coordination.

Case studies of two electoral authoritarian regimes that vary across state capacity further demonstrate the role policy negotiation and implementation plays in shaping elite motivations under authoritarianism. Based on semi-structured interviews and elite surveys in the Kyrgyz Republic and Armenia (prior to its velvet revolution), I demonstrate that in Kyrgyzstan (where efforts to reform the bureaucracy were never implemented) politicians are primarily motivated to join parties to gain access to clientelistic networks. With a few exceptions, they purchase positions on party lists to profit from the resulting opportunities to provide patronage to their personal networks. The exceptions – politicians who seek to advance policy reform or constituent interests – needed to join the ruling party to achieve their goals. In Armenia, which partially reformed its bureaucracy after twin political and economic crises in 2008, politicians increasingly began to form opposition parties organized around seeking policy concessions from the ruling party.

State capacity cannot explain all variation in party formation under authoritarianism. Social cleavages provide focal points for elite coordination. Electoral laws, while endogenous to a leader's strategy to maintain power, exert a mechanical effect on how political parties are represented in a legislature. Finally, leader decisions about the degree and targets of repression play a strong role in determining who forms or joins a party.

Incorporating the state into our analysis of authoritarian party politics, however, enhances our understanding of when oppositions coalesce despite the constraints of dictatorship – when they can become influential even in unfair elections. It grounds a key distinction in leader strategies for managing opposition – divide and conquer versus elite pacting – in different levels of state capacity. When policy bargaining is meaningful, leaders can attract more elites to participate in the political system, but it also creates incentives for greater coordination among these elites. Bureaucratic reforms instituted by a ruling party to improve responsiveness to the public or attract international investment can therefore have unintended consequences. State capacity can create a new focal point (public goods) around which parties can organize and contributes to the creation of viable oppositions ready to take power at the ballot box when conditions allow.

## 1.1 Why Study Authoritarian Parties?

Conventional wisdom holds that the "other" parties in an authoritarian system – non-ruling parties that participate in elections – do not matter, that they are simply coopted by the regime to provide a veneer of democracy to an otherwise repressive system. So why bother studying these parties and the elites that form them? In short, because these parties influence the politics of their authoritarian regimes, the stability of those regimes, and the politics of the regimes that follow.

*Parliamentary opposition parties vary.* While most research on authoritarian politics focuses on leaders and their ruling parties, many other actors play roles in authoritarian politics. One limitation of the current literature on authoritarian institutions is its exclusive theoretical foundation in models of revolt. Most models of authoritarian politics are binary: dictators either repress or coopt and elites either support or rebel (Wintrobe 1998; Bueno de Mesquita et al 2003; Magaloni 2008; Svolik 2012; Gelbech et al 2016). While this simplification of elite decision-making has advanced our understanding of core principles, it does not adequately represent the actual choice set of elites in an authoritarian regime. There are few electoral authoritarian regimes where elites face only two options. The existence of loyalist and parliamentary opposition parties under authoritarianism suggests a more complex choice environment.[2] Why, when it would appear the benefits of either regime change or joining the ruling party are higher than forming a parliamentary party, would a politician choose to engage with the regime, but organize as a separate party? This variation in authoritarian parties has not yet been either fully described empirically or theorized. Existing research focuses primarily on the formation of pre-election coalitions by opposition parties (Ong 2022) rather than the formation of individual parties, although elite motivations for joining parties in electoral authoritarian systems have been studied in the African context (Weghorst 2022).

*Authoritarian parties influence regime durability.* Existing scholarship has found that dictatorships where the ruling party controls more than 70-75% of the seats in parliament last longer than those with smaller ruling parties (Gandhi 2008, Svolik 2012, Kim et al 2024). The literature further concludes that the formation of coalitions among opposition parties is a significant factor in the collapse of the latter category of electoral authoritarian regimes (Howard and Roessler 2006, Brownlee 2009; Bunce and Wolchik 2010, Wahman 2013). In leaving the origins of these institutions unexamined, however, it remains possible that regime durability is a function of underlying elite and social relations that shape both institutions and durability (Pepinsky 2014, Gandhi 2015). This is a particular challenge in authoritarian regimes, where the rules of competition are an arena for contestation, not a constraint (Levitsky and Way 2010; Schedler 2013). Core questions such as whether dictators allow competition because they believe they are strong enough to manage it (Slater and Wong 2013) or because they are too weak to prevent it (Way 2015),[3] remain unanswered. By examining the origins of these institutions, I contribute to our understanding of how authoritarian regimes function and to the larger debate on the role of authoritarian institutions in regime durability.

*Authoritarian parties endure.* While research on authoritarian successor parties focuses on former ruling parties (Gryzmala-Busse 2002, Reidl 2014, Loxton 2015), other parliamentary parties also play a role after transitions. The most obvious cases are when parliamentary oppositions win at the ballot box and take power, but parliamentary opposition parties

[2]For example, parties such as A Just Russia that differ little from the ruling party but maintain a separate brand, or coalitions like the Democratic Unity Roundtable (and later Unitary Platform) in Venezuela that oppose the regime but have participated in elections.

[3]Meng (2020) makes a similar argument that leaders will implement institutional constraints – although not specifically party competition – when they are weaker and need to share power.

make up a significant portion of the competitors in founding elections, although with varying degrees of success. In an environment where the causes of democratization are complex and overlapping, it is important to understand more sources of variation in initial conditions and outcomes, so that we may gain greater insight into how countries move from managed to free competition.

## 1.2 Theories of Authoritarian Cooptation

The most prominent current theories of authoritarianism argue that party system formation is primarily a function of decisions made by the leader or ruling party. Two models of elite relations in multi-party autocracies predominate: 1) divide and conquer and 2) elite pacting. Leaders are strategic in which parties they allow to operate (and under what rules) so that they can maintain control, either by dividing the opposition or by formalizing power-sharing among the elite. Lust-Okar (2005) argues that by allowing multi-party competition, authoritarian leaders in the Arab world divided their opposition into loyal and illegal factions, creating coordination problems that prevented anti-regime mobilization. In this environment, elites compete with each other for patronage from the regime, as Blaydes (2011) demonstrated in Egypt under Mubarak. Similarly, in Russia, President Vladimir Putin has used electoral rules and the creation of coopted parties to disrupt opposition coordination (Kortukov 2023).

By contrast, Magaloni (2008) argues that multi-party competition is a way to formalize power-sharing between authoritarian leaders and other elites. By providing elites a within-system mechanism to challenge the leader, multi-party competition in authoritarian Mexico incentivized elites to bargain over policy rather than seek to change the overall rules of the game. In this environment, elites join ruling parties in order to more readily gain access to benefits (Svolik 2012, Reuter 2017) and form second and third parties in order to use them as bargaining chips with the regime (Greene 2007; Reuter and Robertson 2015).

While the above arguments share a focus on elite agency and strategic decision-making, other scholars have found that parties in authoritarian regimes, as in democratic regimes, are grounded in socioeconomic cleavages. These cleavages may be created by the regime, either as part of its formation (Levitsky and Way 2012) or through the differential allocation of resources to different groups (Lebas 2011, Riedl 2014). In addition, not all authoritarian leaders have the ability to fully restrict all political activity, and so party systems in these cases can reflect the socio-economic cleavages and the democratic "legacy" parties that represented them (Golosov 2013, LaPorte 2015). Political parties in electoral authoritarian regimes may therefore partly reflect socioeconomic divisions (elite or societal), as they do in democratic regimes.

Finally, those scholars who focus on the role of the state in authoritarian party formation focus on repression and resource allocation. Leader control over the security services determines a state's ability to repress protest and manage election outcomes (Gelbach and Simpser 2015, van Ham and Seim 2018). State control over economic resources (extractive

capacity) similarly determines its ability to create the uneven playing field characteristic of electoral authoritarian regimes. A ruling party cannot misuse "administrative resources" in an election without those resources being present; economic resources are necessary to establish and exploit clientelistic relationships with the public (Greene 2010, Seeberg 2018). Strong states can therefore strengthen a leader's ability to maintain control with or without political parties.

## 1.3 The Argument in Brief

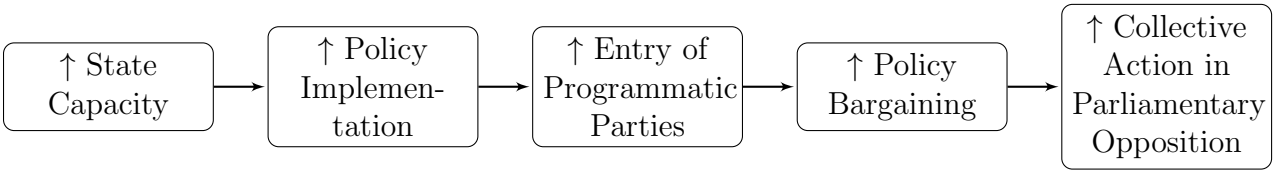
Building on these insights, I argue that while regime repression and socioeconomic cleavages matter – for example, they influence the presence of ethnic parties and the degree of political activity allowed – state capacity determines how these factors manifest – specifically, how parliamentary oppositions unify. I argue that different elite strategies operate in different types of states. At low levels of administrative capacity, the strategy of divide and conquer operates: leaders manipulate party systems to weaken political oppositions. At higher levels of state capacity, the elite pacting and policy bargaining seen in Mexico are possible – parliamentary parties become an asset to the opposition in achieving a broad range of goals, not a tool to undermine them.

State administrative capacity is a state's ability to develop and implement policy through its bureaucracy (Hanson 2018). It requires human capital (technical expertise and training within the bureaucracy), routinization (regular use of the institutions themselves; Levitsky 1998), and a degree of bureaucratic independence (Weber [1922] 2012). It is distinct from the coercive capacity or extractive capacity of the state, which contribute to authoritarian control. For example, consider the role of state capacity in managing elections. Coercive capacity determines a regime's ability to arrest political opponents and end post-election protests. Extractive capacity determines a regime's ability to buy votes, either directly or indirectly through local public goods. Administrative capacity, by contrast, determines a regime's ability to deploy election officials around the country and tally results. Administrative capacity in this case is value neutral. It can be deployed to implement international standards and reduce the possibility for fraud or to undermine the electoral process by efficiently manipulating vote counts.

Administrative capacity shapes the credibility of different incentives a leader can offer to other elites for their support. At lower levels of state administrative capacity, the only credible commitments a leader can make are over particularistic benefits (money, contracts, or government jobs, for example). When the benefits of political activity accrue to the individual, elites either join the dictator's ruling party (should one exist) or form a large number of small parties, bidding for influence based on the individual support they can rally in an election. As a state's ability to implement policy rises, policy commitments by a dictator become a more credible concession to other elites. Elites who are interested in policy reform now have an incentive to form parties for that purpose because the benefits of seeking policy concessions through party formation rise. Parliamentary opposition parties are best able to bargain with the ruling party when they represent a larger number of elites,

and so coalitions and mergers of opposition parties rise with state capacity (see Figure 1.1).[4]

Figure 1.1: Causal Chain between State Capacity and Collective Action




## 1.4 Research Design and Preview of Results

Testing this theory and its implications requires a multi-method approach. I evaluate my argument using cross-national statistical analysis and case studies of two electoral authoritarian regimes. First, using an original dataset of parliamentary election results in 94 electoral authoritarian states from 1970-2015, I establish that an increase in state administrative capacity is associated with a decrease in later parliamentary opposition fractionalization, but only in dictatorships with lower levels of political repression. Using time series statistical analysis, I show that increased state capacity takes time to impact political calculation – there is a lag of five years (or one election cycle) between an improvement in administrative capacity and a decline in party system fractionalization. While these results are consistent across multiple operationalizations of the variables and model specifications, the poor quality of data on state capacity and different rates of change in state and party system development limit the conclusions that can be drawn from statistical analysis alone. I therefore examine the behavioral implications of my theory across two medium-repression dictatorships that vary across levels of state capacity: Armenia (prior to its 2018 revolution) and the Kyrgyz Republic. Using structured interviews and surveys, I test the hypothesis that elites are more likely to bargain over policy in countries with higher administrative capacity.

These countries were selected because they vary across the outcome (party system fractionalization) and my explanatory variable (administrative capacity), but share a common history. They share a recent legacy of violence: Armenia engaged in international war after the end of the Cold War and the Kyrgyz Republic faced two violent popular uprisings in 2006 and 2010. They are similar in size (small) and geography (mountainous), meaning they face similar basic advantages and disadvantages to implementing bureaucratic control across the country. They had similar levels of state repression – in both countries, the ruling party used

[4]This argument is similar to Bustikova and Corduneanu-Huci (2017), who argue that clientelism is prominent in states with a traditional failure to deliver public services through regular channels, but where they focus on public trust in the state and reputation for competence as the mechanism through which weak bureaucracies encourage clientelism, I focus on elite relations. I build on the ideas in Keefer and Vlaicu (2007), who argue that patron-client networks thrive in low-credibility states due to the reputations built by their leaders.

corruption and manipulation of state resources to maintain themselves in power, but freedom of expression and organization were both high (for authoritarian states). Finally, they share many political institutions, including legacy communist parties, due to their common history as constituent republics of the Soviet Union, and are both lower income countries with relatively low levels of inequality. These cases differ, however, in one key way: state administrative capacity. Using the World Bank Governance Indicators as a point of reference (Kaufmann et al 2011), the Kyrgyz Republic scores near the bottom of the index, while Armenia turns in average performance (see Table 1.1). These differences manifested themselves in different party systems. In Armenia, the parliamentary opposition consisted of fewer parties that controlled a larger number of seats, while in the Kyrgyz Republic, the ruling party held the presidency and one-third of the seats in parliament, forming governments with a rotating series of parties.

Table 1.1: Armenia and Kyrgyz Republic: Key Indicators, 2015

| | IV | | Controls | | DV |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | State Capacity | State Repression | GDP per capita | Gini Coefficient | Party System Fractionalization |
| Armenia | Medium | Medium | Low-Middle | Low | Low |
| | -0.33 | 0.61 | $3,666 | 32.4 | 2.73 |
| Kyrgyz Republic | Low | Medium | Low | Low | Medium |
| | -0.98 | 0.75 | $1,136 | 29 | 4.82 |

Note: State Capacity data are their World Bank Government Effectiveness scores, and state repression is the V-Dem Free Expression Index. GDP and inequality data come from the World Bank. Fractionalization is the effective number of legislative parties.

While these two states allow for a strong most similar systems case study design, they are not a perfect comparison. The Kyrgyz Republic's electoral law (party list proportional representation) differed from Armenia's (a mixed system), which had mechanical effects on the representation of parties in parliament during the time period studied. Interviews, however, showed that Kyrgyzstan's electoral law encouraged the representation of a larger number of parties with a significant number of seats in parliament, but did not strengthen its party system or elite coordination overall. Thus, while the Kyrgyz Republic's party system appears less fractionalized, the underlying weakness of parties and high volatility demonstrate its lower consolidation overall, and when its electoral law was changed to remove incentives for collective action (in 2021, beyond the scope of this study), the fractionalization of its parliament increased to 13.66 (ENLP, from 4.82 in 2015).

In addition, while Armenia and Kyrgyzstan share many historical legacies, including ethnic conflict, the nature of ethnic cleavages in each country is different: Armenia has a relatively uniform population (98% Armenian), while the Kyrgyz Republic is divided on ethnic lines (73% Kyrgyz and 15% Uzbek). This is a significant difference for my study: In Armenia, engaged in an international war with Azerbaijan, the ethnic cleavage generated a strong incentive to form a unified opposition to communist rule and a legacy of large catch-all op-

position parties through the 1990s. In Kyrgyzstan, civil conflict emerged along ethnic lines during the fall of communism and after the 2010 Tulip Revolution. Ethnicity does motivate some politicians to join particular political parties, but the fear of ethnic war led to the passage (and implementation) of laws to require ethnic diversity across all political parties, eliminating single-ethnicity parties from electoral competition.

I use these case studies for both illustrative and causal purposes. They illustrate the cross-national variation established by my statistical analysis by demonstrating the difference between countries with similar patterns of repression but different levels of state capacity. Armenia's parliamentary opposition coordinated to bargain over policy, while the Kyrgyz Republic's did not. I demonstrate the causal nature of the relationship by showing both change over time (or the lack thereof) within a case and how my proposed mechanisms – entry of new parties and policy bargaining – operate (or do not) in each country. Interviews and elite surveys in the Kyrgyz Republic, which did not engage in meaningful bureaucratic reform, show that even when individual candidates were programmatically motivated, their reasons for joining parties and coalitions were based on short term calculations about access to power. The bureaucracy was primary a source of patronage, not policy, and access to positions and connections dominated discussions of politics. Politicians were often unable to describe policy goals beyond the general tenets of their party platforms and few politicians tracked the implementation of legislation or engaged in bargaining over it. Those who did engage with policy primarily joined the ruling party to do so.

Armenia, by contrast, experienced a gradual reform of its bureaucracy beginning in 2000 that decreased outside economic influence and increased its technical competance. The parties that formed after these reforms took hold were much more likely to both focus on passing legislation and to form coalitions to do so. A wide range of politicians (policy and patronage-motivated) operated in each country, but only in Armenia did elite bargaining take place over policy issues – and only in Armenia did parties form based on policy cleavages. This key distinction – the type of bargaining elites engaged in – was linked to the ability of states to implement legislation passed by parliament. Politicians in Armenia discussed how they negotiated with the bureaucracy and the ruling party to enact laws, while policy-oriented politicians in Kyrgyzstan focused on the difficulty of implementing any legislation outside the ruling coalition (see also Figure 1.2).

## 1.5 State capacity as an exogenous source of change

I do not argue that state capacity is the sole factor influencing party choice and party system formation. Socio-economic cleavages can determine whether parties are likely to form along ethnic or class lines. Regime repression determines how many and which elites are willing to participate in the formal political system. And electoral laws exert their well-established mechanical effects, even in authoritarian systems. State capacity is, however, a contributing cause to parliamentary opposition unity in many regimes. Equally important, it is a potential source of change in otherwise static systems.

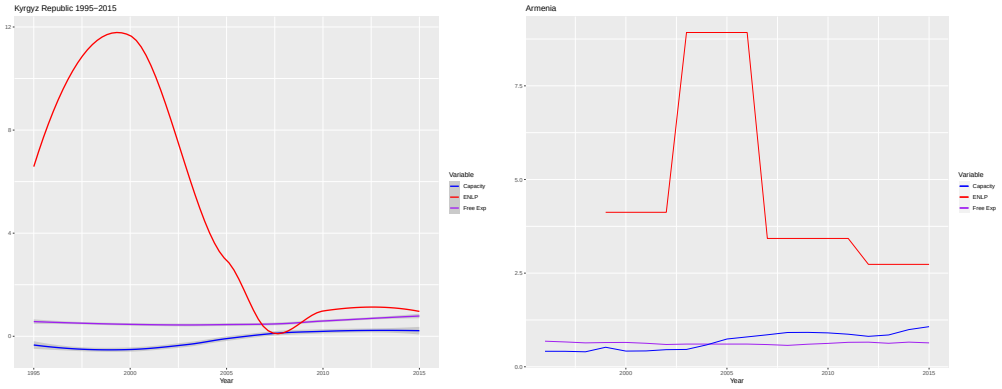



Figure 1.2: Comparison of Change in State Capacity and Party System Fractionalization in Kyrgyz Republic and Armenia

Note: The ENLP for the Kyrgyz Republic has been scaled down by a factor of five in order to make change in the other variables visible in the same graph. The graphs show that a decline in fractionalization took place after a rise in state capacity in Armenia, but that change in party system fractionalization was not related to state capacity in the Kyrgyz Republic. As discussed in Chapter 6, the initial decline in fractionalization followed a change in Kyrgyzstan's electoral law.

Most research on party competition and bureaucratic independence focuses on the reverse causal direction – the impact of competition on government corruption. Scholars generally find that party competition fosters greater bureaucratic independence, lower levels of state capture, and higher levels of public service delivery (Shefter 1994, O'Dwyer 2004, Gryzmala-Busse 2007, Bäck and Hadenius 2008, Rosenzweig 2015, Ricciuti et al 2019). Electoral competition reduces avenues for patronage politics because it increases monitoring of bureaucrats (as politicians seek effective service delivery for constituents) while regular turnover incentivizes leaders to have a professional bureaucracy (to deny their successors the ability to pack the bureaucracy with loyalists). Competition does not have a uniformly positive effect on bureaucratic performance, however, because high turnover can decrease the ability to monitor. The instability that accompanies democratization then often increases corruption (Pepinsky et al 2017, Knox and Janenova 2022).

The influence of competition on state development does not eliminate the reciprocal effect, however. Authoritarian leaders reform their bureaucracies for a variety of reasons, including improving service delivery to the public (as in Taiwan and South Korea), pressure from international financial institutions (as in most developing countries), or limiting the influence of rivals (as in Russia) (Carothers 2022, Peters 2023). In none of these circumstances does a leader reform a bureaucracy to manage elite cooptation, unless it is to remove "disloyal" bureaucrats from the government.

Where bureaucratic reform precedes meaningful political competition – as in Armenia – it can serve as an exogenous source of change. Whether international pressure or service delivery are the motivations, when leaders invest in their bureaucracies, they create new avenues for policy implementation and engagement. When loyal oppositions choose to take advantage of this, they are more successful when they coordinate. State capacity can thus explain some

of the variation we see in authoritarian party politics and in some cases, bureaucratic reform can generate unintended consequences – even eventual opposition victory at the polls.

## 1.6 Roadmap

The rest of this dissertation proceeds as follows:

Chapter 2 focuses on key issues of conceptualization. After identifying the criteria I use to define electoral authoritarian regimes and administrative capacity, this chapter introduces the classification system I use for authoritarian party systems. In addition to using traditional measures of party system fractionalization, I used cluster analysis to identify four types of party systems in authoritarian states. Non-party systems (such as Belarus) have parliaments dominated by independent candidates and small parties, and tend to be found in countries where parliament plays little role in policy development. Multi-party systems, where the ruling party wins less than 50% of the seats in parliament, are a diverse group of regimes, where the ruling party typically runs in coalition with other parties (as in Malaysia) or where the political system is weakly consolidated overall (such as Ukraine). In predominant party systems (such as Mexico), the ruling party consistently controls a majority in parliament and between 50 and 70% of its seats. It does not hold enough votes to amend a constitution and two or three significant parties typically win the remaining seats in parliament. Finally, in dominant party systems, the ruling party holds a super-majority in parliament (more than 70% of the seats, as in Egypt) and has enough power to change the constitution without input from other actors. This analysis confirms the distinction drawn in most literature on authoritarian party systems – a difference between ruling parties that hold more or less than 70% of seats in parliament – but also highlights the variation found in regimes that do not hold a super-majority in parliament.

Chapter 3 elucidates the theory that state capacity shapes party systems in more detail. It begins by outlining the influence of state capacity on different mechanisms of authoritarian rule, leader credibility and elite collective action. I then trace how capacity can impact choices at the individual, party, and party system levels. I identify the testable implications of my theory with four hypotheses on parliamentary fractionalization, individual motivations for party choice, and elite perceptions of leaders in authoritarian regimes.

Chapter 4 describes the cross-national relationship between state capacity and party systems. Using a time series statistical model (with fixed effects and lagged variables for state capacity), I find a negative relationship between administrative capacity and party system fractionalization in electoral authoritarian regimes (as state capacity increases, fractionalization declines). The results are conditional on the level of repression in a state – capacity does not influence fractionalization in cases of high repression. In lower-repression authoritarian states, increasing state capacity supports party system consolidation with a five-year lag. In other words, after administrative reform, politicians begin to organize increasingly programmatic parties for the next election cycle. The results are weakened, however, by the difficulty of separating two dimensions of state capacity – repressive and administrative. A

state's ability to repress its opposition is correlated with its ability to implement policy, and existing measures are unable to effectively separate the two aspects of capacity.

The next two chapters delve into case studies of the relationship between state administrative capacity and party systems. Chapter 5 provides a case study of the Armenia, while chapter 6 discusses the Kyrgyz Republic. These chapters combine primary and secondary source research on bureaucratic change in each country with interview and elite survey data to show the consolidation of the parliamentary opposition in Armenia and continued instability of political parties in Kyrgyzstan. In Kyrgyzstan, where bureaucratic reform has largely been absent, elites join parties primarily to gain access to patronage for themselves and their personal networks – bargaining takes place over private goods. In Armenia, which experienced gradual bureaucratic reform, elites had a wider range of motivations, including policy implementation, and formed parties to accomplish these goals.

My dissertation concludes by commenting on the external and internal validity of this study. My study speaks primarily to durable electoral authoritarian regimes with moderate levels of free expression. Additional research is needed to study the effect of bureaucratic reform in highly repressive states (such as Azerbaijan). My research does, however, point to the value of assistance to develop state capacity and bureaucratic independence – these reforms may have the short term result of bolstering an authoritarian state by making it more effective, but can also encourage the development of a more effective political opposition over the long term.

# Chapter 2

# Conceptualization

## 2.1 Introduction

This dissertation covers several broad concepts – electoral authoritarianism, party system fractionalization, and state capacity – that do not have widely accepted operationalizations.[1] This chapter describes and justifies the measurement of each of the concepts I study. In sum, I define electoral authoritarian regimes as those that have not had a change in the party or leader in power and do not meet a minimum standard of political freedom. I use the "Regimes of the World" definition of electoral autocracy in the Varieties of Democracy dataset to capture this idea (Coppedge et al 2023). For party system fractionalization, I use both standard continuous measures (equations based on the number of seats parties hold in parliament) and develop a new categorical measure of fractionalization that captures the distinction between party systems in authoritarian states based on the control of a ruling party over its parliament and the fractionalization of opposition parties. Finally, I describe two measures of state capacity that capture the idea of a state's ability to implement policy. For my quantitative analysis, I use the continuous measure of state capacity developed by Hanson and Sigman (2021), which combines reliability with broad year coverage. For my qualitative analysis, I focus on criteria developed by public administration and development professionals to evaluate a bureaucracy's independence, professional training, and ability to formulate policy.

## 2.2 Scope: What is electoral authoritarianism?

The scope of this study is electoral authoritarian regimes. While definitions of electoral authoritarianism (including Levitsky and Way 2010, Schedler 2013, and Knutsen and Nygard 2015) vary, they all share a key characteristic: an uneven playing field. Limits on opposition access to financial resources, media, and equal treatment under the law mean that while a regime holds elections, they are not free and fair. Opposition parties and politicians do not

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have a real chance of gaining power, and these limits on competition are typically accompanied by violations of civil liberties.

Translating these concepts into a set of countries over time has proven challenging. Many definitions of electoral authoritarianism either rely on ad hoc classification (Levitsky and Way 2010, Schedler 2013) or artificial cutoffs that either generate artificially short regime durations (Wahman et al 2013)[2] or classify countries widely considered to be democracies (such as pre-Modi India and post-2000 Mexico) as dictatorships (Hadenius and Teorell 2007). While some regimes do have short duration (for example, a founding democratic election followed by a military coup), constitutional reforms and human rights standards require time to make them reliable indicators of a transition to or from democracy. The passage of legislation weakening the independence of the judiciary does not mark a slide into dictatorship unless it is accompanied by additional reforms to remove constraints on a presidency, arrests of dissidents, and other restrictions on political freedoms that keep ruling elites in power. When regimes quickly reverse course on anti-democratic reforms it is a sign of weak democracy rather than a transition to authoritarianism.[3]

In order to study longer-term relationships between political institutions, their antecedents, and their outcomes, I use a categorical variable that measures limits on political freedoms with an indicator of their success: the persistence of the elites in power across multiple elections. Specifically, I use the "Regimes of the World" category 2 – electoral autocracy – to define the scope of my study. This variable, part of the Varieties of Democracy dataset, has four regime types – Closed autocracy, Electoral autocracy, Electoral democracy, and Liberal democracy. Electoral autocracy is defined as a regime where multiparty elections for the chief executive and the legislature take place, but these elections are not free and fair – they do not meet a minimum polyarchy score (Coppedge et al 2023). It is distinguished from closed autocracy, where no multiparty elections take place, and electoral democracy, which have free and fair elections but limit only some freedoms or rule of law. Specifically, electoral autocracies score above 1 on the VDEM multiparty elections indicator (*v2elmulpar_osp_leg/_ex*), but score below a 2 on free and fair elections (*v2elfrfair_osp*) or below 0.5 on the Electoral Democracy Index (*v2x_polyarchy*).[4]

[2]While Wahman et al's classifications are precise, they result in multiple short regime "transitions." For example, according to these criteria (which are based on the presence of elections and a 0.7 polyarchy score cutoff), Macedonia experienced five transitions during the first decade of its independence and Kenya and Guatemala experienced three regime transitions each in the 2000s.

[3]While some argue the concept of regime transitions is problematic because it can imply all countries are moving toward democracy (or moving toward a clear regime type at all, Carothers (2002)), identifying categories of regimes still has value. Not only are current categorical variables widely used in the political science literature, but they have genuine meaning to citizens of countries around the world who are working to make their countries more democratic.

[4]Note that this definition does not precisely match my focus on elite persistence across elections. Indeed, it classifies some cases (such as Albania) as electoral authoritarian even though no party has held power for more than two elections in a row since the end of communism. I use the more widely accessible definition of electoral authoritarian in order to avoid creating my own coding of regime change, when many already exist. See Appendix 1 for a comparison of different definitions of electoral authoritarian.

This variable includes 241 spells of electoral authoritarianism in 130 countries between 1970 and 2015. I eliminate several additional countries from this list. The VDEM classification codes several years where single party states held elections as electoral authoritarian (Vietnam, Cape Verde, and Cameroon before 1992, for example). I eliminate these cases from my study. In addition, I eliminate some single (or two) year spells of electoral authoritarianism, such as India 1975-76 or Poland in 1989.[5] This study is not meant to evaluate the causes of instability or rapid regime change, but the dynamics and sources of change within long-term electoral authoritarian regimes.

The result is 109 spells of electoral authoritarianism in 94 countries between 1970 and 2015 (see Appendix 1 for list of cases).

## 2.3 DV: Opposition Party Fractionalization

My dependent variable is party system fractionalization – specifically, the unity (or conversely, fractionalization) of the parliamentary opposition under dictatorship.

In selecting this as my variable of interest, I am making one key assumption. I am using representation in parliament as a proxy for elite relations in an electoral authoritarian regime. This assumption has precedent within the study of authoritarianism – a broad literature exists arguing that parliaments are a locus of intra-regime debate in authoritarian regimes (Gandhi 2008, Svolik 2012, Jensen et al 2013, Reuter and Robinson 2015, for example) – but it does exclude elites outside the formal political system. It minimizes the impact of non-parliamentary actors – whether in business, civil society, or the security services – in authoritarian politics. Even when dictators allow competition to gauge regional popular support or the capability of individual elites, the fraud inherent to authoritarian elections means that election results cannot reflect the "true" popular will or cleavages in society. Rather than evaluating the full scope of authoritarian politics, however, this study examines one aspect of it – elite divisions that can contribute to policy reform or regime change. In this case, examining who leaders allow to gain political office and how those elites choose to organize themselves is relevant.[6]

[5] I also eliminate short spells of full autocracy or democracy in between periods of electoral authoritarianism. For example, I code Bangladesh 1973-1991 as a single spell rather than three separate cases separate by two three-year breaks.

[6] The tradition of focusing on parties in dictatorships as a reflection of elite, rather than public, interests dates to Sartori (1976), who distinguished authoritarian parties by the fact that they do not perform the key function of expressing the public interest. Elections in authoritarian countries serve not as a way to translate public opinion into policy via political parties, but as a way to manage and maintain elite and public support. They allow limited freedom in order to signal the emergence of particular social problems (Manion 2015) or support for individual politicians (Blaydes 2010), but the results are controlled through mechanisms that range from clientelism to overt fraud (Magaloni 2006). While ruling parties (particularly in single party states) can serve to incorporate public support for the regime, few non-ruling parties in authoritarian systems have mass-based political organizations designed to aggregate and express public opinion. Public opinion cannot drive party formation when it cannot be freely expressed; rather, multiparty competition in authoritarian regimes represents organized interaction among the elite - within a single party, through multiple political organizations, or through no formal organization.

Existing measures do not fully capture this concept. They are either bespoke and not replicable (as in the individual selection of pre-election coalitions in Wahman 2011 or Howard and Roessler 2006) or based on a cutoff of the percentage of seats held by the ruling party.[7] While the number of seats held by the ruling party is an important indicator of the nature of competition within the regime, it provides little information on coordination within the opposition.

### 2.3.1 ENLP(seats)

Measures of party system fractionalization in democracies are traditionally measured numerically as some combination of the number of parties in parliament and the number of seats each possesses. While there are many formulas, the most commonly used measure is the effective number of legislative parties based on their seats in parliament, ENLP (seats). The measure originally developed by Laakso and Taagepera (1979) ($\frac{1}{\sum s^2}$, where $s$ represents the proportion of seats a party holds in parliament) provides a single number that reflects both the number of parties represented in parliament and their size.[8]

For my cross-national statistical analysis, I apply Laakso and Taagepera's formula to an original dataset of the results of authoritarian parliamentary elections from 1970-2015. The advantage of this operationalization is that a single number captures both ruling party size and the fractionalization of other within-system parties. It is readily available – even the most repressive electoral authoritarian regime publishes the names of its members of parliament – and possible to objectively calculate. It does not represent the full range of political actors in a country, but does provide one way to measure those actors an electoral authoritarian regime has allowed to participate, and who have agreed to do so.

For the dataset, I gathered data from the International Parliamentary Union, international election observers, and the International Federation for Electoral Systems, among other sources (see the online Appendix at `https://sites.google.com/view/carolyncoberly/research` for detail on each country). This data relies solely on official sources for information on party affiliation during an election and does not take into consideration affiliations declared in parliament. One result is that the data may not reflect the affiliation of indepen-

[7] Of scholars and datasets examining the size of the ruling party, Svolik (2012) and the World Bank's Database of Political Institutions (Beck et al., 2001) draw the distinction between countries where the ruling party wins more than 75% of the vote for the executive or seats in parliament, while Howard and Roessler (2006) use the standard of 70%.

[8] Golosov (2010) correctly notes that this formula overestimates the number of parties in systems where the winning party accrues significantly more than 75% of the vote and proposes an alternate formula $\left(\Sigma \frac{1}{1+\frac{s_1^2}{s_i}-s_i}\right)$, which produces a smaller ENP for predominant party systems (for example, if a system consists of two parties, one of which receives 75% of seats and the second 25%, the Laasko-Taagepera formula produces an ENP of 1.6, while Golosov's measure says the ENP is 1.33) (see also Taagepera 1999). Since I am interested in the change in fractionalization, not a precise number of parties, however, I have chosen the more widely used and straightforward calculation. In calculating the ENLP, I count independent candidates each as their own individual party.

Table 2.1: Summary Statistics: Party System Fractionalization in Electoral Authoritarian Regimes

| Variable | Minimum | Maximum | Median | Mean | Std Error (Mean) | n |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ENLP | 1 | 105.2 | 2.33 | 4.78 | 0.517 | 418 |
| Number of parties | 1 | 105 | 5 | 7.5 | 0.392 | 418 |
| Largest party (% seats) | 0.027 | 1 | 0.576 | 0.585 | 0.011 | 418 |
| Second largest party (% seats) | 0 | 0.5 | 0.156 | 0.175 | 0.005 | 418 |
| Independents | 0 | 0.946 | 0 | 0.066 | 0.007 | 418 |
| DPI: Main opposition party (% seats) | 0 | 0.882 | 0.1199 | 0.144 | 0.004 | 1366 |
| VDEM: Largest party (% seats) | 0.027 | 1 | 0.622 | 0.608 | 0.011 | 431 |
| VDEM: Second largest party (% seats) | 0 | 0.536 | 0.156 | 0.174 | 0.006 | 424 |

NOTE: One reason for the variance in the number of observations is that my data and the VDEM data are both coded for election years only, while the World Bank's Database of Political Institutions (DPI) covers all years. There are 2136 country-year observations in the dataset total.

dent candidates – whether they are in fact opposition candidates who could not run under their party name (as with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt) or candidates who later chose to affiliate with the ruling party.

One challenge with the ENLP data is that countries with very different party representation in parliament can have the same fractionalization index. For example, in Congo (Brazzaville) in 2012, the ruling party won 64% of the seats in parliament, with 12 other parties gaining representation. In Cambodia in 1993, the largest party in parliament did not gain an absolute majority (it held 48% of seats) and only three other parties were represented. In both cases, their ENLP was 2.4, however. In addition, not all leaders of electoral authoritarian regimes choose to have a ruling party and representation in legislatures may therefore not represent the full nature of support for a leader. For example, in Algeria's 2014 presidential election, President Bouteflika won 82% of the vote, but his National Liberation Front (FLN) won only 26% of the vote (35% of the seats) in the 2017 parliamentary elections.

In order to ensure I examine genuine variation in opposition representation in parliament, I include two alternate operationalizations of my dependent variable. First, and simplest, I look at the percent of seats held by the second largest party in parliament. In addition to using the data from my original dataset, I check for robustness using the relevant variable included in Varieties of Democracy (*v2ellostss*) and the World Bank Database of Political Institutions (Beck et al 2001), which provides the percentage of seats won by the first four parties in a country based on size.

Table 2.2: Results: Principal Components Analysis

| | Comp1 | Comp2 | Comp3 | Comp4 | Comp5 | Comp6 | Comp7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Std. dev. | 0.2412 | 0.1511 | 0.0817 | 0.0405 | 0.0228 | 0.0142 | 0.0103 |
| Prop. of Variance | 0.6446 | 0.2531 | 0.0740 | 0.0181 | 0.0057 | 0.0022 | 0.0011 |
| Cum. Proportion | 0.6446 | 0.8977 | 0.9717 | 0.9898 | 0.9955 | 0.9978 | 0.9989 |

Based on data including 13 largest parties plus the percentage of independents for each election year in electoral authoritarian regimes, 1970-2015. Only first seven components are shown.

### 2.3.2 Categorical Variable

The second alternate operationalization is an original categorical variable describing type of authoritarian party system. In order to identify potential categories, I conducted principal component (PCA) and non-hierarchical cluster analysis of the party distribution data from my Authoritarian Party Dataset. PCA shows the number of dimensions to the variable (e.g. number of parties/size of parties) (Abdi and Williams 2010), while cluster analysis groups together similar types of data (Kaufman and Rousseeuw 2009). (See Appendix 2 for details on the methodologies involved.)

In this case, PCA demonstrated there are three latent dimensions that can describe the variation of party system fractionalization in authoritarian states. As shown in Table 2.2, three dimensions explain 97% of the variation (the cumulative proportion of variance) in the underlying data. The first component, or dimension, explains 64% of the variance, the second dimension explains 25% of variance, and the third explains 7% (see also Appendix 2 for detail on interpretation and graphs).

PCA cannot describe what those three dimensions (or latent variables in the data) represent, but cluster analysis provides some insight into the nature of the dimensions. Hierarchical cluster analysis does not measure dimensionality, but is a non-parametric way to identify the number of groups that may exist within a dataset. By calculating the distance between observations and groups of observations in a dissimilarity matrix, it allows the graphical representation of different potential numbers of clusters. Using a plot of a multidimensional scaling of the matrix, I was able to determine that four clusters exist in the underlying data, represented by the four colors in the dendrogram below (Figure 2.1; see also Appendix 2 for additional detail on the analysis and the online Appendix at `https://sites.google.com/view/carolyncoberly/research` for a legible version of the graph).

Analyzing the data associated with those grouped observations (see Table 2.3 and Figure 2.2), it becomes clear that these clusters represent four types of party systems:

1. Non-party systems (in blue). In these countries, independents dominate the parliament (on average, 70% of seats go to independents). These countries typically are monarchies

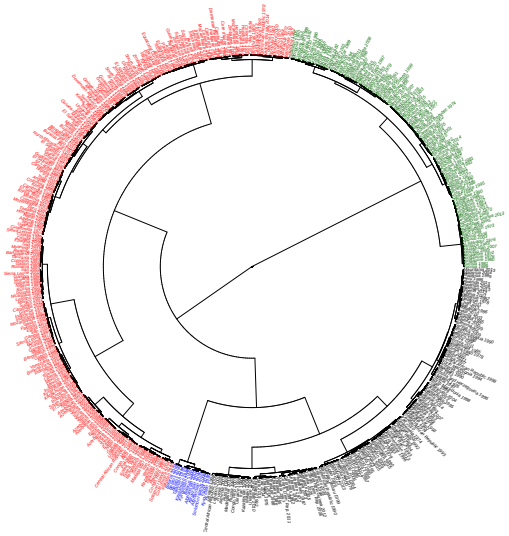


Figure 2.1: Dendrogram of Authoritarian Party System Data

or have presidential systems in which the head of state is elected by a super-majority, but do not rely on a ruling party to govern and allow wider representation in parliament to gain support from a wider range of elites.

2. Predominant party systems (in red). In these countries, the ruling party holds a majority in parliament (on average, winning 60% of seats) and a small number (on average, 5) of additional parties attain the remaining seats.

3. Dominant party systems (in green). In these countries, the ruling party holds 70% or more of the seats in parliament. While technically these states allow multiparty competition, it is almost entirely for show and plays little role in elite management.

4. Multi-party authoritarian systems (in black). In these countries, the largest party typically does not hold a majority in parliament and there are a large number (on average, 11-13) of additional parties that achieve seats in parliament.

This indicates that the three dimensions of party system fractionalization in electoral authoritarian states are the percent seats for the dominant party, the overall number of parties, and the percent seats for independents.

As a final step in the creation of this categorical variable, I developed cutoff for consistent application across the data (summary statistics available in Table 3):

1. Dominant party systems: Largest party has more than 70% of the seats in parliament.

2. Predominant party systems: Largest party has 50-70% of seats in parliament.

Table 2.3: Authoritarian party system type summary statistics

| | | Mean | Median | Min | Max | n |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dominant (blue) | ENLP | 1.437 | 1.454 | 1 | 1.989 | 137 |
| | Number of parties | 4.175 | 3 | 1 | 20 | |
| | % seats for largest party | 0.837 | 0.822 | 0.7 | 1 | |
| | % seats for second party | 0.098 | 0.089 | 0 | 0.285 | |
| | % independents | 0.21 | 0 | 0 | 0.025 | |
| Predominant (red) | ENLP | 2.401 | 2.312 | 1.778 | 3.499 | 133 |
| | Number of parties | 5.752 | 5 | 1 | 18 | |
| | % seats for largest party | 0.593 | 0.593 | 0.5 | 0.694 | |
| | % seats for second party | 0.225 | 0.22 | 0.012 | 0.5 | |
| | % independents | 0.005 | 0 | 0 | 0.044 | |
| Multiparty (green) | ENLP | 5.979 | 4.401 | 2.126 | 35.645 | 135 |
| | Number of parties | 12.481 | 10 | 1 | 105 | |
| | % seats for largest party | 0.365 | 0.387 | 0.011 | 0.498 | |
| | % seats for second party | 0.211 | 0.205 | 0 | 0.477 | |
| | % independents | 0.071 | 0.018 | 0 | 0.519 | |
| Non-party (black) | ENLP | 51.996 | 45.489 | 8.753 | 105.217 | 13 |
| | Number of parties | 8.923 | 7 | 2 | 24 | |
| | % seats for largest party | 0.114 | 0.08 | 0.027 | 0.331 | |
| | % seats for second party | 0.047 | 0.045 | 0.009 | 0.089 | |
| | % independents | 0.71 | 0.638 | 0.599 | 0.945 | |

3. Multi-party authoritarian systems: Largest party has less than 50% of seats in parliament.

4. Non-party systems: Independents hold more than 55% of seats in parliament.

Dominant party systems are best exemplified by Egypt from 1976-2012, where the ruling party (the National Democratic Party, or NDP) consistently won 70-85% of seats in parliament, with most of the remainder going to independents who later joined the NDP (Blaydes 2010). A handful of small parties would win seats, but rarely account for more than 5% of the representatives in the legislature.

Predominant party systems can be represented by Mexico from 1988-2000, where the ruling party (the Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI) would win 50-60% of the seats in parliament, with the remainder divided between two main parties, each of which garnered more than 10% of the representatives. The main distinction between dominant and predominent systems, then, is both the size of the ruling party and the presence of a viable second party in the legislature.

An example of a non-party system can be found in Belarus (after 1995), where the long-serving president has chosen not to incorporate a ruling party and independents supporting President Lukashenko receive 80-90% of seats in parliament. No party typically wins more

than 10% of seats in parliament.

Multi-party systems do not appear to represent one single "type" of political system. Rather, three types of polities fit in this category, including:

- Algeria since 1997, a super-presidential system where the consolidated ruling party (the National Liberation Front/FLN) has maintained control of the presidency but not sought a majority in parliament,
- Malaysia before 2018, where the ruling party represented the dominant ethnic group but formed a stable, long-standing coalition with other ethnic political parties (a national front), and
- Ukraine, a weak semi-presidential system where the president typically receives a pluralilty in parliament, but the fractionalized party system reflects the overall weakly consolidated nature of the politics in the country. Parties typically do not last beyond one term in office and turnover of representatives is high.

This system of cutoffs based on the size of the largest party is similar to existing standards used by Svolik (2012, 75%), Howard and Roessler (2006, 70%), and Levitsky and Way (2002, 70%). The main difference – and contribution – of this variable is the recognition that there are other significant cutoffs in party system type – countries where the largest party has less than 70% of the seats in parliament are not a homogenous group. Nor is this applicable to only a small group of country-years. Table 2.3 shows that three of these groups of party systems (predominant, dominant, and multi-party) are relatively equal in size. See Appendix 3 for the full list of party system classifications by country year.

As shown in Figure 2.2, this variable captures information not covered by other measures of democracy, but that does appear to capture variation in other outcomes. While the polyarchy score is slightly higher for multi-party authoritarian systems (driven by higher freedom of expression in these countries), with a mean of .35, these multiparty authoritarian systems do not come close to any standard of democracy.[9] The relationship with measures of economic performance and state capacity is less clear. Some indicators of rule of law and government effectiveness indicate predominant party systems have lower levels of state capacity than dominant and multi-party systems, while the tax ratio indicates that the key difference may be between dominant and other types of authoritarian party systems, indicating the potential for these categories to have explanatory value.

## 2.4 IV: State Capacity

State capacity can be conceptualized in a wide variety of ways: infrastructural power (Mann 1984, Soifer 2008), institutional routinization (Levitsky 2003), bureaucratic independence

[9]The purpose of this graph is to demonstrate that this measure of party systems adds value to analysis, not to demonstrate relationships between the variables (for that, see Chapter 4). Measures are scaled to fit on a single axis, including reversing the sign of the World Bank Governance Measure.

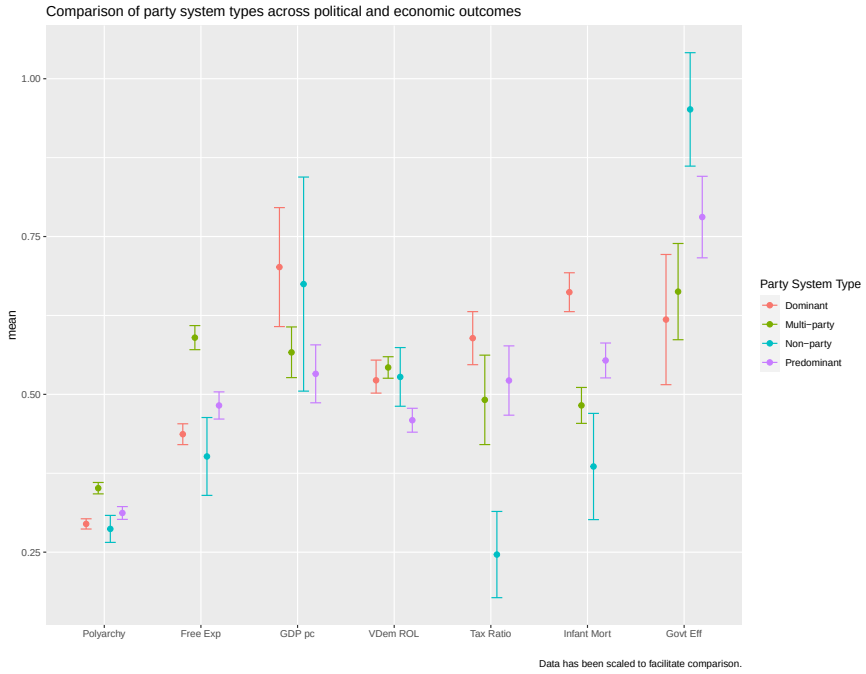



Figure 2.2: Comparison of party system types across political and economic outcomes

(Weber [1922] 2012), human capital, or even rule of law more broadly. In this paper, I follow the literature dividing state capacity into three dimensions – coercive power, extractive power, and administrative power – and focus on change in a state's administrative power. In my statistical analysis, I use Hanson and Sigman's (2021) measure of state capacity as my independent variable. In my qualitative analysis, I evaluate administrative capacity using measures drawn from the public administration literature, specifically the status of procedures used for policy development, bureaucratic training, and bureaucratic independence.

My conceptualization and operationalization of state capacity – more correctly described as state administrative capacity – is more focused on a state's bureaucracy than many definitions of state capacity. Comprehensive definitions of state capacity, such as Mann's description of infrastructural power, include a state-society relations and geographic reach as key elements – as indeed they are. Other definitions of state capacity focus on the stability of institutions (Levitsky and Murillo 2009). This is also a key dimension of capacity, one which I assume for the purposes of this study.[10]

I draw on recent literature conceptualizing state capacity along three dimensions: coercive, extractive, and administrative (Berliner et al 2015, Hanson 2018, Hanson and Sigman

[10]While this is a stronger assumption than the focus on elite relations under dictatorship implicit in my measurement of party fractionalization, it fits my study of the evolution of state capacity over time. This study evaluates transformations within long-established electoral authoritarian regimes. While individual institutions may come and go in these regimes, general institutional instability would express itself in additional ways (such as regime change or failure) that are captured elsewhere in my analysis.

2021).[11] Coercive capacity is a state's ability to maintain internal order and protect against external threats. Extractive capacity is a state's ability to collect revenue. And administrative capacity is a state's ability to develop and implement policies.

As an example of the distinction, consider the role of state capacity in managing elections (Seeberg 2014, Van Ham and Seim 2018). Coercive capacity determines a regime's ability to arrest political opponents and end post-election protests. Extractive capacity determines a regime's ability to buy votes - either directly or indirectly through local public goods. Administrative capacity determines a regime's ability to deploy election officials around the country and tally results. Administrative capacity in this case is value neutral - it can be deployed to implement international standards and reduce the possibility for fraud, to implement technical measures such as electronic voting, or to undermine the electoral process by efficiently manipulating vote counts.

The focus of my study is a state's ability to implement its policy goals. While a state's ability to maintain control within its borders (coercive capacity) and gather revenue (extractive capacity) are both vital to its functioning (even if they can be abused under dictatorship), my argument rests on the idea that the state can make policy implementation credible. As such, I am primarily interested in administrative capacity, defined by Hanson and Sigman (2021) as the organizational capacity to develop policy and produce public goods and defined by the United Nations Development Program as "the ability of individuals and organizations or organizational units to perform functions effectively, efficiently and sustainably" (Mata and Ziaja 2009: 2). This type of state capacity requires bureaucratic routinization, expertise, and independence (Evans and Rauch 1999, Cingolani et al 2015).

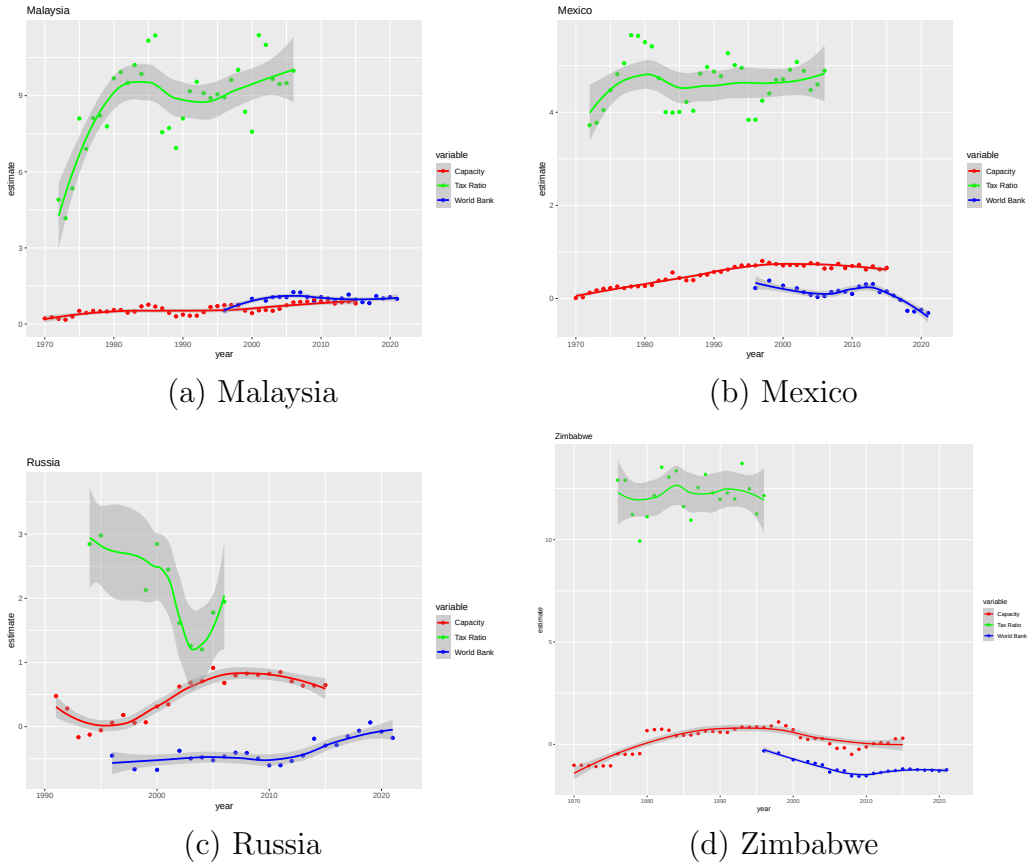
### 2.4.1 Quantitative Measures

Many authors have demonstrated that there is no good single quantitative measure of the concept of state capacity generally and administrative capacity in particular (see Soifer 2008, Hanson 2018, and Berwick and Christia 2018 for reviews). As Pepinsky et al (2017) note, the challenge is both that it is difficult to separate indicators of capacity from its effects and that bureaucratic capacity is endogenous to and correlated with other political and economic variables.

Most cross-national measures of administrative capacity, such as the World Bank Governance Indicators, are built on perception-based surveys rather than measures of a state's reach. These measures, however, often exhibit high year-on-year variance over the relatively short time period they cover.[12] The poor reliability of these perception-based measures has been noted elsewhere (Knack 2007, Donchev and Ujhelyi 2014, Qu et al 2019). Point estimates

[11] This differs slightly from Berwick and Christia's (2018) three dimensions of state capacity (extraction, coordination, and compliance) in the focus on administration over coordination, which they define as the interaction between a state bureaucracy and citizens. In this study, my focus is on elite, not public, interactions with the policy apparatus.

[12] The World Bank Governance Indicators begin in 1996 (Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi, 2011), while Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index and the Fragile State Index began in 1995.




(a) Malaysia (b) Mexico

(c) Russia (d) Zimbabwe

Figure 2.3: Comparison of selected state capacity measures for four authoritarian states
Note: Tax ratio data from Slater, Smith and Nair (2014), Government effectiveness from World Bank Governance Indicators, and Capacity data from Hanson and Sigman (2021).

can vary substantially – within and outside margins of error – and change in these scales does not appear related to reforms at the micro level.[13]

Other measures of state capacity rely on proxies, such as tax revenue (Besley and Persson 2011; Slater, Smith and Nair 2014), complex policy outcomes (such as reducing infant mortality (Dawson 2010)), or the production of comprehensive data (such as censuses, cadastrals, or statistical reports). Tax revenue and infant mortality suffer both from high correlation with covariates such as GDP and, for the purposes of this study, a disconnect with the concept I am seeking to evaluate.[14] Tax revenue is best thought of as a proxy for extractive capacity, and while it is true that reductions in infant mortality require a country-wide, functional health system, education system, and strong state-society relations, they can also be produced by foreign aid, bypassing the central government.

[13]Despite the inclusion of standard errors to avoid over-interpretation of small differences (as Kaufmann et al 2011 intended), the point estimates remain the sole value used in most current analysis.

[14]The data also suffer from issues of completeness and quality. For example, the World Bank provides no tax data before 1990. In addition, states with very low bureaucratic capacity are often unable to produce, and authoritarian states are often unwilling to release, accurate revenue data.

In order to have the most consistent and complete data, I use a combination of the state capacity index developed by Hanson and Sigman (2021), with the World Bank Governance Indicator for Government Effectiveness as a robustness check. Hanson and Sigman use latent variable analysis of 21 indicators of state capacity and represents the most consistent and comprehensive measure of state capacity available (1970-2015). For administrative capacity, this includes: the International Country Risk Guide Bureaucratic Quality rating, Adelman and Morris' measure of administrative efficiency, Evans and Rauch's (1999) Weberianness index, VDEM's measure of impartial public administration, a measure of census frequency, Brambor et al's measure of information capacity, and two ratings from the World Bank's Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA) index: Quality of Budgetary and Financial Management and Quality of Public Administration, a measury of census frequency, and a measure of the state's capacity to regulate the economy (Hanson and Sigman 2021, 1501). Not all of these data are available for all years, but at least one indicator is available for each year 1970-2015.

To check for the robustness of this variable, I use the World Bank Government Effectiveness indicator. This indicator, which measures perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service, its independence from political pressures, and the quality of policy implementation, both provides the closest analog to my conception of administrative capacity and, as seen in Figure 3, trends fairly closely to Hanson and Sigman (2021) for long-term change in key countries.[15]

### 2.4.2 Qualitative Measures

The field of public administration has also produced detailed definitions and qualitative measures of state capacity, which can be summarized as: do formal procedures exist, are they good, are they used, and are they resourced. Key procedural elements of administrative capacity include financial planning (Ricciuti et al 2019), meritocratic recruitment (SIGMA 2017, Dahlstrom et al 2012), transparent budgeting (Jreisat 2013), and investment in human resources (Jreisat 2013). The most comprehensive set of standards for public administration reform has been compiled by SIGMA, a joint initiative of the OECD and EU, which includes indicators of progress in strategic planning, use of government institutions for policy development, human resource management, transparency, service delivery, and financial management (SIGMA 2017). While some of these measures offer data for cross-national comparison, however, most of the public administration data is either regional or for a small number of years.[16] These definitions all derive from Weber's classic definition of an impersonal, rational-legal bureaucracy–one with task specialization, hierarchy, and written

[15]While the year to year World Bank indicators exhibit a high degree of variance, they do capture the long term trends I am interested in.

[16]For example, Ricciuti et al (2019) use a set of indicators of effective financial planning within a bureaucracy, including measures of whether expenditures were in line with approved budgets. These measures, drawn from data provided by the Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability program (`https://pefa.org/`) incorporate seven general criteria, including transparency of public finances, audits, and policy-based budgeting for 115 countries, but many with a single data point. A 2012 study using expert surveys from 52 primarily European and Eurasian countries found that meritocratic recruitment and "pro-

Table 2.4: Key indicators of administrative capacity

- Bureaucratic independence
  - Presence of a civil service law
  - Number of bureaucrats covered by the civil service law (or, the number of patronage-based positions in a bureaucracy)
  - Presence of codified, merit-based, competitive hiring procedures
  - Presence and enforcement of conflict of interest rules
- Policy formulation
  - Presence of formal internal, parliamentary, and public review of regulations
  - Impact and cost assessments completed
- Training
  - Number of trainings offered, evaluation results
  - Presence of job descriptions and an internal evaluation system
  - Merit-based promotion and bonuses

Source: SIGMA 2017

rules and regulations–that provides and promotes based on technical expertise (Weber [1922] 2012).

For my qualitative analysis, I select three indicators drawn from this group and defined by SIGMA (2017): bureaucratic independence, policy formulation, and training (see Table 4). These three measures all impact elite bargaining over policy and its implementation while not overlapping with related issues (such as funding policy plans) that might relate more to a country's GDP or tax collection than its bureaucratic capacity.

Bureaucratic independence is a combination of codified procedures and protection from outside influence. In practice, this means a civil service law that is codified and implemented, merit-based hiring and promotion, rules banning conflict of interests, and confidential procedures to report and remedy violations (see also Dahlstrom et al 2012). Combined, these measures can show the degree to which elite bargaining in authoritarian regimes is over policy or patronage. The absence of merit-based hiring procedures (or a large number of positions reserved for 'political appointees') mean patronage can be a significant element of elite bargaining. A more independent bureaucratic apparatus means debate is more likely to be over policy than the distribution of jobs to supporters. This does not mean a bureaucracy has

fessionalism" were the two most salient features of a bureaucracy that reduce corruption (Dahlstrom et al 2012).

no political appointees, but that their number is specified and specific procedures exist for them. Bureaucratic independence also needs to extend to decision-making. Rules limiting outside gifts and having officials declare outside financial interests can keep the regulatory process independent of illegal influence.

Procedures for policy development are (obviously) directly related to policy implementation. Formal rules requiring impact and budget assessments for policies as well as formal consultation processes for key stakeholders (including parliament and the public) mean that policies are more likely to be implemented effectively.

Finally, training for bureaucrats – in both the substance of their jobs and technical skills – allows them to better write supporting regulations and mediate among interested groups. I assess both the availability of training and the link between training and advancement in the bureaucracy. This requires formal job descriptions, training to meet those requirements, and evaluation and promotion based on those requirements.

In sum, these measures can provide a qualitative assessment of administrative capacity when detailed information on laws and regulations is available. While quantitative measures are necessary for broader cross-national analysis, these SIGMA indicators provide more depth, and key reforms to identify, for my cases studies. For each indicator, I identify and describe the relevant legislation, regulations, and documents produced for my countries of study.

# Appendix 1: Cases of Electoral Authoritarianism

I use the Varieties of Democracy measure of Electoral Autocracy (column 3 below) for the Principal Components Analysis and cluster analysis in Chapter 2, since I am interested in all party relationships under conditions of unfair elections in that analysis. For the statistical analysis in Chapter 3, however, I am interested in long-term causal relationships and I eliminate single year or short regime spells to better capture slow change in state capacity. These cases are reflected in column 2 "My cases." For comparison, I show alternate specifications of electoral authoritarianism, including the full Electoral Autocracy variable, the definition of Electoral Authoritarianism measured by Wahman et al (2012) and an early measure of electoral authoritarianism (Levitsky & Way 2010[17]).

| Country | My cases | Electoral Autocracy (V-DEM) | Wahman et al 2013 | Levitsky & Way 2010 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Afghanistan | 2004-2015 | 1973<br>2004-2015 | 2004-2010 | |
| Albania | 1991-2001 | 1991-2001<br>2004 | 1991-1992<br>1994-2001 | 1990-1995 |
| Algeria | 1995-2015 | 1995-2015 | 1997-2010 | |
| Angola | 2010-2015 | 1992<br>2010-2015 | 1995-1997<br>2008-2010 | |
| Argentina | n/a | 1973<br>1976<br>1983 | n/a | |
| Armenia | 1996-2015 | 1996-2015 | 1995-2010 | 1990-1995 |
| Azerbaijan | 1991-2015 | 1991-2015 | 1992-2010 | |
| Bangladesh | 1973-1991<br>2002-2015 | 1973-1974<br>1978-1982<br>1986-1991<br>2002-2008<br>2011-2015 | 1973-1974<br>1978-1981<br>1986-1990<br>1999-2010 | |
| Belarus | 1997-2015 | 1997-2015 | 1993-2010 | 1990-1995 |
| Benin | n/a | 1991 | n/a | 1990-1995 |
| Bhutan | n/a | 2008 | 2008-2010 | |
| Bolivia | n/a | 1978-1980 | n/a | |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | n/a | 1996 | 1996-2010 | |

[17]Levitsky and Way study the trajectories of 35 regimes from 1990 to 2008. Here I note the full 35 cases, which were classified as competitive authoritarian between 1990 and 1995.

| Country | My cases | Electoral Autocracy (V-DEM) | Wahman et al 2013 | Levitsky & Way 2010 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Botswana | n/a | n/a | n/a | 1990-1995 |
| Brazil | n/a | 1985-1986 | 1972-1984 | |
| Bulgaria | n/a | 1990 | n/a | |
| Burkina Faso | 1991-1999 | 1978-1980 | 1972-1973 | |
| | | 1991-1999 | 1991-2010 | |
| | | 2015 | | |
| Burundi | 2005-2015 | 1984-1987 | 1993-1995 | |
| | | 1993-1995 | 2005-2010 | |
| | | 2005-2015 | | |
| Cambodia | 1993-2015 | 1970-1972 | 1993-2010 | 1990-1995 |
| | | 1993-2015 | | |
| Cameroon | 1992-2015 | 1970-2015 | 1992-2010 | 1990-1995 |
| Cape Verde | n/a | 1975 | n/a | |
| | | 1980-1990 | | |
| Central African Republic | 1993-2015 | 1987-2015 | 1993-2002 | |
| | | | 2005-2010 | |
| Chad | 1997-2015 | 1970-1979 | 1996-2010 | |
| | | 1997-2015 | | |
| Chile | n/a | 1989 | n/a | |
| Colombia | 1970-1990 | 1970-1990 | 1995-1997 | |
| | | | 1999-2004 | |
| Comoros | 1989-2005 | 1976-1977 | 1990-1998 | |
| | | 1989-2005 | 2002-2005 | |
| | | 2015 | | |
| Congo, Dem. Rep. | 2006-2015 | 2006-2015 | 2006-2010 | |
| Congo, Rep. | 1992-1996 | 1992-1996 | 1993-1996 | |
| | 2002-2015 | 2002-2015 | 2002-2010 | |
| Cote d'Ivoire | 1990-2012 | 1985-2012 | 1990-1998 | |
| | | | 2000-2010 | |
| Croatia | 1992-1999 | 1992-1999 | 1991-1999 | 1990-1995 |
| Czech Republic | n/a | 1990 | n/a | |
| Djibouti | 1992-2015 | 1977-2015 | 1977-1981 | |
| | | | 1992-2010 | |
| Dominican Republic | 1970-1981 | 1970-1981 | 1972-1977 | 1990-1995 |
| | 1990-1995 | 1990-1995 | 1994-1995 | |
| Ecuador | n/a | 1970-1971 | n/a | |
| | | 1979 | | |
| Egypt | 1976-2015 | 1976-2012 | 1976-2010 | |
| | | 2014-2015 | | |

| Country | My cases | Electoral Autocracy (V-DEM) | Wahman et al 2013 | Levitsky & Way 2010 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| El Salvador | 1970-1979 | 1970-1979 | 1972-1978 | |
| | 1984-1998 | 1984-1998 | 1982-1984 | |
| | | | 1986-1987 | |
| | | | 1989-1990 | |
| Estonia | n/a | 1992 | n/a | |
| Ethiopia | 1994-2015 | 1994-2015 | 1995-2010 | |
| Equatorial Guinea | 1996-2015 | 1970-1978 | 1993-2010 | |
| | | 1996-2015 | | |
| Fiji | n/a | 1992 | 1992-1998 | |
| | | 2014-2015 | 2000-2005 | |
| Gabon | 1993-2015 | 1993-2015 | 1990-2010 | 1990-1995 |
| Gambia | 1970-2015 | 1970 | 1997-2010 | |
| | | 1972-1987 | | |
| | | 1990-1994 | | |
| | | 1996-2015 | | |
| Georgia | 1991-2003 | 1991-2003 | 1991-2003 | 1990-1995 |
| | | 2010 | 2007-2010 | |
| Ghana | n/a | 1970-1972 | 1992-2000 | 1990-1995 |
| | | 1979 | | |
| | | 1992-1993 | | |
| Greece | n/a | 1974 | n/a | |
| Guatemala | 1970-1999 | 1970-1999 | 1972-1981 | |
| | | | 1985-1995 | |
| | | | 2002-2005 | |
| | | | 2009-2010 | |
| Guinea | 1994-2015 | 1994-2015 | 1993-2007 | |
| Guinea-Bissau | 1994-2014 | 1994-2012 | 1994-2001 | |
| | | 2014 | 2004-2010 | |
| Guyana | 1970-1997 | 1970-1997 | 1972-1991 | 1990-1995 |
| Haiti | 1987-2015 | 1987-1988 | 1994-2003 | 1990-1995 |
| | | 1990-1991 | 2006-2010 | |
| | | 1995-2004 | | |
| | | 2006-2015 | | |
| Honduras | 1981-1989 | 1971-1972 | 1980-1981 | |
| | 2006-2015 | 1981-1989 | | |
| | | 2006 | | |
| | | 2008-2015 | | |
| Hungary | n/a | 1989 | n/a | |
| India | n/a | 1975-1976 | 1993-1994 | |
| Indonesia | 1971-1999 | 1971-1999 | 1972-2003 | |
| Iran | 1980-2015 | 1980-2015 | 1972-1974 | |

| Country | My cases | Electoral Autocracy (V-DEM) | Wahman et al 2013 | Levitsky & Way 2010 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Iraq | 1995-1999 | 1995-1999 | 2005-2010 | |
| | 2005-2015 | 2005-2015 | | |
| Jamaica | n/a | 1978 | n/a | |
| | | 1980-1983 | | |
| Kazakhstan | 1991-2015 | 1991-2015 | 1994-2010 | |
| Kenya | 1992-2015 | 1970-2015 | 1992-2002 | 1990-1995 |
| Korea, Rep. | 1970-1987 | 1970-1987 | 1973-1987 | |
| Kosovo | 2008-2012 | 2008 | n/a | |
| | | 2011-2012 | | |
| Kyrgyzstan | 1995-2015 | 1995-2015 | 1991-2010 | |
| Laos | n/a | 1970-1974 | n/a | |
| | | 1989-1990 | | |
| Lebanon | 1970-2013 | 1970-2009 | 1992-2010 | |
| | | 2013 | | |
| Lesotho | 1993-2002 | 1970 | 1994-2001 | |
| | | 1993-1994 | | |
| | | 1998 | | |
| | | 2002 | | |
| Liberia | 1985-1989 | 1985-1989 | 1985-1989 | |
| | 1997-2005 | 1997-2003 | 1997-2002 | |
| | | 2005 | 2005-2010 | |
| Libya | | 2012 | n/a | |
| Macedonia, N. | 1994-2001 | 1994-1998 | 1994-1997 | 1990-1995 |
| | | 2000-2001 | | |
| | | 2013-2015 | | |
| Madagascar | 1970-1993 | 1970-1971 | 1977-1991 | 1990-1995 |
| | 2001-2015 | 1975-1993 | 2009-2010 | |
| | | 2001-2009 | | |
| | | 2013-2015 | | |
| Malawi | 1999-2008 | 1970-1994 | 2001-2010 | 1990-1995 |
| | | 1999-2008 | | |
| Malaysia | 1974-2015 | 1974-2015 | 1974-2010 | 1990-1995 |
| Maldives | n/a | 2008 | 2005-2010 | |
| | | 2014-2015 | | |
| Mali | n/a | 1992 | n/a | 1990-1995 |
| | | 1998-2001 | | |
| Malta | n/a | n/a | 1981-1986 | |
| Mauritania | 1992-2015 | 1970-1974 | 1992-2004 | |
| | | 1992-2015 | 2009-2010 | |
| Mexico | 1970-1994 | 1970-1994 | 1972-1999 | 1990-1995 |

| Country | My cases | Electoral Autocracy (V-DEM) | Wahman et al 2013 | Levitsky & Way 2010 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Moldova | 2005-2009 | 1991 | 1991-1995 | 1990-1995 |
| | | 1993 | | |
| | | 2005 | | |
| | | 2007-2009 | | |
| Mongolia | n/a | 1990 | 1990-1991 | |
| Montenegro | 2008-2015 | 2008-2015 | n/a | |
| Morocco | n/a | n/a | 1977-2010 | |
| Mozambique | 1994-2004 | 1994-1996 | 1994-2006 | 1990-1995 |
| | 2009-2015 | 1998-2004 | 2009-2010 | |
| | | 2009-2015 | | |
| Myanmar | 2011-2015 | 2011-2015 | n/a | |
| Namibia | n/a | 1994 | n/a | |
| Nepal | 1991-2001 | 1991-2001 | 1993-2001 | |
| | | 2012-2013 | 2008-2010 | |
| Nicaragua | 1984-1989 | 1970-1973 | 1972-1978 | 1990-1995 |
| | 2007-2015 | 1984-1989 | 1984-1989 | |
| | | 2007-2015 | 1992-1995 | |
| Niger | 1997-2009 | 1989-1993 | 1994-2003 | |
| | | 1997-2009 | 2007-2009 | |
| Nigeria | 1979-1983 | 1979-1983 | 1999-2010 | |
| | 1999-2012 | 1993 | | |
| | | 1999-2012 | | |
| Pakistan | 1985-2015 | 1977 | 1972-1976 | |
| | | 1985-1998 | 1990-1998 | |
| | | 2002-2015 | 2002-2010 | |
| Panama | 1984-1990 | 1984-1990 | 1984-1989 | |
| Papua New Guinea | 2008-2015 | 2008-2015 | 2008-2010 | |
| Paraguay | 1970-1993 | 1970-1993 | 1972-1991 | |
| Peru | 1995-2000 | 1980 | 1991-1999 | 1990-1995 |
| | | 1995-2000 | | |
| Philippines | 1977-1987 | 1970-1971 | 1978-1986 | |
| | 2004-2009 | 1977-1987 | | |
| | | 2004-2009 | | |
| Poland | n/a | 1989 | n/a | |
| Romania | n/a | 1990 | 1990-1995 | 1990-1995 |
| Russia | 1991-2015 | 1991 | 1991-2010 | 1990-1995 |
| | | 1994-2015 | | |
| Rwanda | 2003-2015 | 1970-1973 | 1994-2010 | |
| | | 2003-2015 | | |
| Sao Tome and Principe | n/a | 1991 | n/a | |
| Senegal | 1978-1989 | 1970-1983 | 1978-1999 | 1990-1995 |
| | | 1988-1989 | | |

| Country | My cases | Electoral Autocracy (V-DEM) | Wahman et al 2013 | Levitsky & Way 2010 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Serbia | 1992-2000 | 1992-2000<br>2015 | 1992-2000 | 1990-1995 |
| Seychelles | 1992-2015 | 1976<br>1979-1986<br>1992-2015 | n/a | |
| Sierra Leone | 1973-1977<br>2012-2015 | 1973-1992<br>1996-1997<br>2002<br>2012<br>2014-2015 | 1972-1977<br>2002-2006 | |
| Singapore | 1970-2015 | 1970-2015 | 1972-2010 | |
| Slovakia | n/a | 1994 | n/a | 1990-1995 |
| Solomon Islands | 2000-2006 | 1978-1979<br>1989-1992<br>2000-2003<br>2005-2006 | 2000-2003 | |
| Somalia | n/a | 1980-1983 | n/a | |
| South Africa | 1970-1994 | 1970-1984<br>1994 | 1972-1993 | |
| Spain | n/a | 1975-1977 | n/a | |
| Sri Lanka | 2006-2014 | 1982<br>1986<br>1990-1992<br>2006-2014 | 1981-2002<br>2006-2010 | |
| Sudan | 1996-2015 | 1972-1973<br>1977-1984<br>1986-1989<br>1996-2015 | 1986-1988<br>2000-2010 | |
| Suriname | n/a | 1991 | 1991-1999 | |
| Syria | 1972-2012 | 1972-2012 | n/a | |
| Taiwan | 1986-1991 | n/a | 1986-1991 | 1990-1995 |
| Tajikistan | 1991-2015 | 1991-2015 | 1991-2010 | |
| Tanzania | 1995-2015 | 1970-1995<br>2001-2006<br>2013 | 1995-2010 | 1990-1995 |
| Thailand | 1980-1997<br>2008-2013 | 1975-1976<br>1980-1990<br>1992-1997<br>2008-2011<br>2013 | 1979-1990<br>2008-2010 | |
| Timor-Leste | n/a | 2002 | n/a | |

| Country | My cases | Electoral Autocracy (V-DEM) | Wahman et al 2013 | Levitsky & Way 2010 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Togo | 1994-2013 | 1979-2007 | 1994-2005 | |
| | | 2010-2013 | 2007-2010 | |
| Tunisia | 1981-2011 | 1970-1986 | 1994-2010 | |
| | | 1989-2011 | | |
| Turkey | 1983-1989 | 1983-1989 | 1983-1985 | |
| | 2014-2015 | 2014-2015 | 1993-2001 | |
| Turkmenistan | 2013-2015 | 2013-2015 | n/a | |
| Uganda | 1980-1984 | 1980-1984 | 1980-1984 | |
| | 2006-2015 | 1991-1993 | 2006-2010 | |
| | | 1996-2015 | | |
| Ukraine | 1991-2015 | 1991-1993 | 2000-2004 | 1990-1995 |
| | | 1998-2005 | | |
| | | 2012-2015 | | |
| Uruguay | n/a | 1984 | n/a | |
| | | 1984-1985 | | |
| Uzbekistan | 2000-2013 | 2000-2013 | 1991-1994 | |
| Vanuatu | n/a | 1988-2015 | n/a | |
| Venezuela | 2003-2015 | 2003-2015 | 1999-2010 | |
| Vietnam | n/a | 1970-1976 | n/a | |
| | | 2011-2015 | | |
| Vietnam, South | n/a | 1970-1975 | n/a | |
| Yemen | 1993-2015 | 1990-2015 | 1993-2010 | |
| Yemen, A.R. | n/a | 1988-1989 | n/a | |
| Yugoslavia | n/a | 1981-1990 | n/a | |
| Zambia | 1991-2005 | 1970-1999 | 1993-2007 | 1990-1995 |
| | | 2002-2005 | | |
| | | 2014-2015 | | |
| Zimbabwe | 1970-2015 | 1970-2015 | 1972-1978 | 1990-1995 |
| | | | 1980-2010 | |

# Appendix 2: Principal Components and Cluster Analysis

Principal Components Analysis (PCA) provides insight into the underlying dimensionality of a dataset – essentially whether the data can be represented by a single latent variable (or dimension) or group of variables (Abdi and Williams 2010). PCA derives the weights (components) for items that explain the variance of the latent variable and allow the analyst to determine how many latent variables exist. It is calculated by finding the eigenvalues of the covariance matrix of the dataset. The associated unit eigenvectors then represent the weights for each item (eigenvalue, or component) in the latent variable.

There is no single accepted standard for interpreting the results of PCA, but two common ones are to use as many dimensions as needed to explain 80% of the variance in the data or to draw a scree plot of the eigenvalues and cut the dimensions at the "elbow" of the plot. Table 5 provides the results of PCA on my Authoritarian Party Systems dataset.[18] It reveals that one latent variable would explain 64% of the variance in the underlying data, two would explain 90% of the data, and three would explain 97% of the data. In other words, there are at least two and possibly three underlying dimensions to the concept of party system fractionalization.

Graphing the results (Figure 2.4), shows the bend, or "elbow," of the graph is at the third component. I use these combined results to conclude that party system fractionalization would best be represented by three latent variables.

Hierarchical cluster analysis is an agglomorative (and non-parametric) method of evaluating the number of groups that can describe an underlying dataset (Kaufman and Rousseeuw 2009). It begins with the assumption that every observation is its own cluster, then calculates the distance between all individual observations, all clusters of observations, and between individual observations of clusters. It combines observations and clusters based on

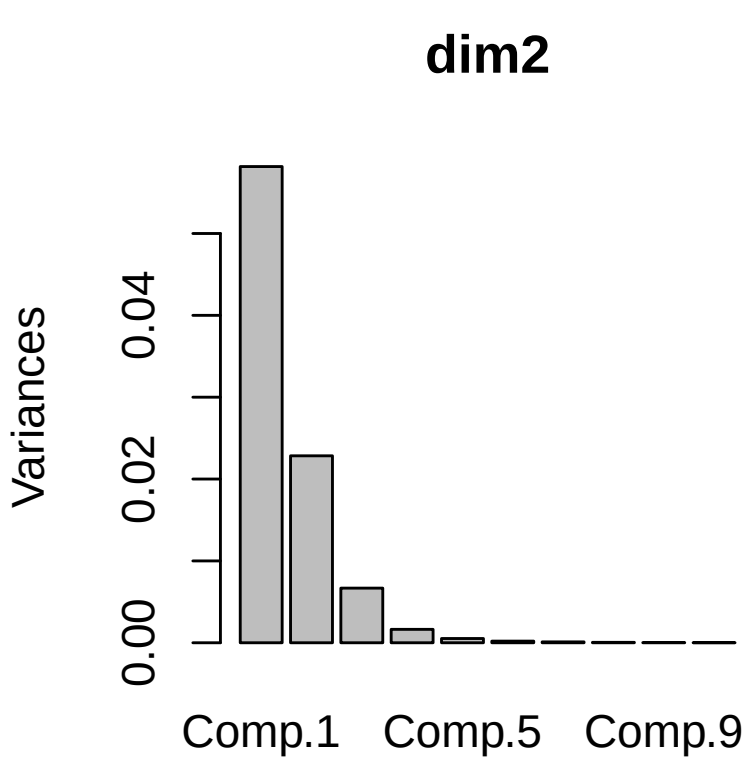
[18]This analysis was conducted on a modified version of my dataset. Since the data of interest here is party systems, not the factors that led to their development, I include the single-year cases excluded from the broader analysis in order to maximize the amount of data analyzed. To avoid duplicate data, I only include election years. The result is 473 observations of 107 countries, while the main dataset includes 418 observations of 93 countries.

Table 2.5: Results: Principal Components Analysis

| | Comp1 | Comp2 | Comp3 | Comp4 | Comp5 | Comp6 | Comp7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Std. dev. | 0.2412 | 0.1511 | 0.0817 | 0.0405 | 0.0228 | 0.0142 | 0.0103 |
| Prop. of Variance | 0.6446 | 0.2531 | 0.0740 | 0.0181 | 0.0057 | 0.0022 | 0.0011 |
| Cum. Proportion | 0.6446 | 0.8977 | 0.9717 | 0.9898 | 0.9955 | 0.9978 | 0.9989 |

Note: Based on data including 13 largest parties plus the percentage of independents for each election year in electoral authoritarian regimes, 1970-2015. Only first seven components are shown.

Figure 2.4: Screeplot of Principal Components Analysis Results



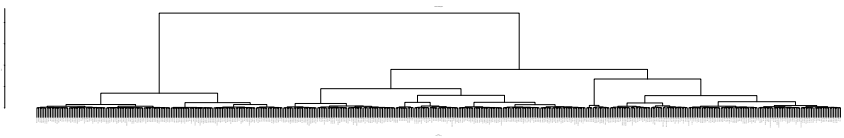


Figure 2.5: Dendrogram of Authoritarian Party System dataset

preset (or ranked) standards.

The standard way to interpret this data is through a dendrogram, which plots all observations and draws lines connecting the closest observations, then clusters of observations, in a series of stepped lines that resemble the roots of a tree. The dendrogram of the Authoritarian Party System dataset (Figure 2.5) is too large to include in this paper, but can be found in the online Appendix at `https://sites.google.com/view/carolyncoberly/research`. There is no standard for determining what the cutoff for the number of clusters should be (which ranked standard, as represented by the height – the y axis – on the dendrogram) is the appropriate one for the data. While the dendrogram shows three large clusters of observations, it is unclear whether additional value is gained by looking at finer distinctions – whether the cutoff should be at a lower height.

To make this determination, I use Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) to graph the dissimilarity matrix of the underlying data. Using colors to represent cutoffs at three (Figure 6), four (Figure 7), and five clusters (Figure 8), we can see that three groups connects two disparate groups (in the first and third quadrants of the graph), while five groups adds little to the distinction between the large number of observations in the fourth quadrant. I therefore conclude that four groups (represented by the colors in Figure 7) best represent the underlying data.

Examining the data associated with these groups (Table 6), we can see that they correspond to:

- (green) country-years where one party won more than 70% of the seats in parliament (on average, the dominant party holds 80% of seats)
- (red) country-years with a predominant party (on average, winning 60% of seats) and a small number (on average, 5) of additional parties
- (black) country-years where the largest party typically does not hold a majority in parliament and there are a large number (on average, 11-13) of additional parties
- (blue) country-years where independents dominate the parliament (on average, 70% of seats go to independents)

This indicates that the three dimensions of party system fractionalization in electoral authoritarian states are the percent seats for the dominant party, the total number of parties, and the percent seats for independents.

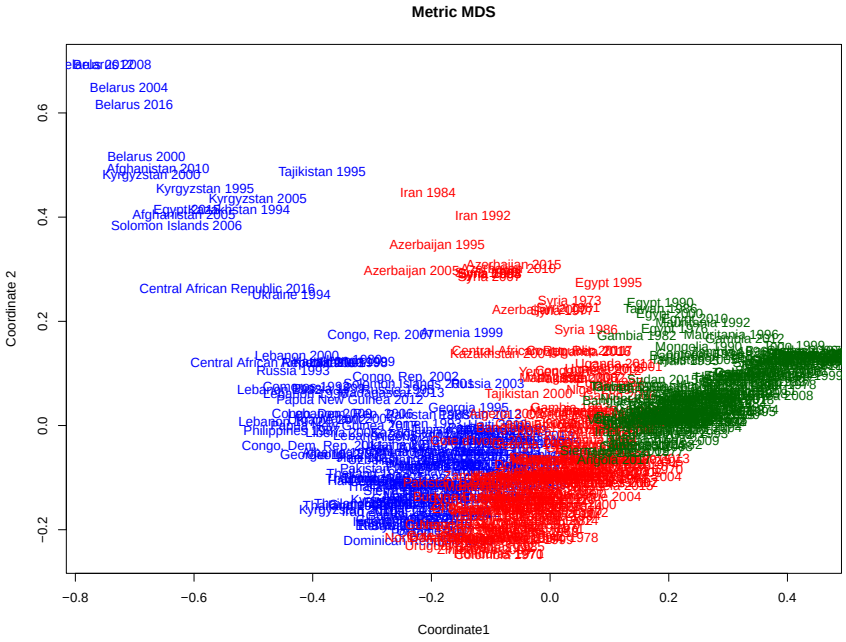



Figure 2.6: MDS plot of 3 groups

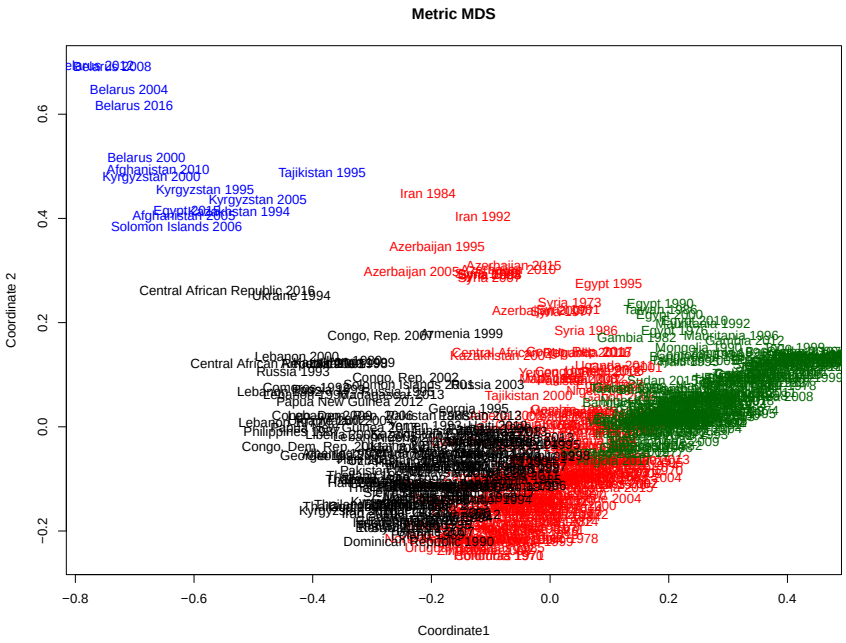



Figure 2.7: MDS plot of 4 groups

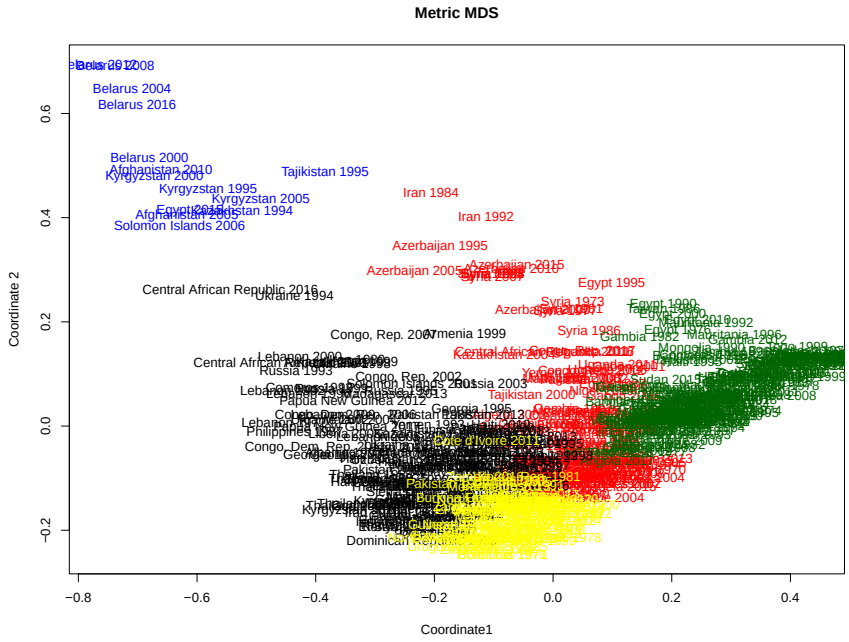



Figure 2.8: MDS plot of 5 groups

Table 2.6: Cluster summary statistics – party system characteristics

| | | Mean | Median | Min | Max | n |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cluster group 1 | ENLP | 53.138 | 51.911 | 8.753 | 105.217 | 14 |
| (blue) | Number of parties | 8.643 | 6.5 | 2 | 24 | |
| | % seats for largest party | 0.111 | 0.076 | 0.027 | 0.331 | |
| | % seats for second party | 0.045 | 0.042 | 0.009 | 0.089 | |
| | % independents | 0.72 | 0.666 | 0.599 | 0.946 | |
| Cluster group 2 | ENLP | 2.449 | 2.351 | 1.668 | 5.815 | 178 |
| (red) | Number of parties | 5.758 | 5 | 1 | 20 | |
| | % seats for largest party | 0.5789 | 0.576 | 0.408 | 0.73 | |
| | % seats for second party | 0.246 | 0.261 | 0.012 | 0.5 | |
| | % independents | 0.049 | 0 | 0 | 0.519 | |
| Cluster group 3 | ENLP | 1.426 | 1.438 | 1 | 2.07 | 145 |
| (green) | Number of parties | 4.055 | 3 | 1 | 20 | |
| | % seats for largest party | 0.841 | 0.824 | 0.669 | 1 | |
| | % seats for second party | 0.096 | 0.089 | 0 | 0.232 | |
| | % independents | 0.017 | 0 | 0 | 0.183 | |
| Cluster group 4 | ENLP | 6.326 | 4.492 | 2.721 | 35.645 | 136 |
| (black) | Number of parties | 13.772 | 11 | 3 | 105 | |
| | % seats for largest party | 0.357 | 0.372 | 0.111 | 0.558 | |
| | % seats for second party | 0.187 | 0.183 | 0.044 | 0.35 | |
| | % independents | 0.064 | 0.017 | 0 | 0.429 | |

# Appendix 3: Classification of Authoritarian Party Systems

Below are the country-years for each type of party system derived from PCA and cluster analysis in my dataset. Note that the coding of electoral authoritarianism used the VDEM criteria and only election years are listed.

| Country | Dominant Years | Predominant Years | Multiparty Years | Non-party Years |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Afghanistan | | | | 2005-2010 |
| Albania | 1996 | 1991-1992 | 1997 | |
| | | 2001 | | |
| Algeria | | 2002 | 1997 | |
| | | | 2007-2015 | |
| Angola | 2012 | 1992, 2017 | | |
| Armenia | | 2012-2015 | 1999-2007 | |
| Azerbaijan | | 2000 | 1995, 2005 | |
| | | 2010-2015 | | |
| Bangladesh | 1973-1979 | 1986, 1991 | | |
| | 1988, 2014 | 2008 | | |
| Belarus | | | | 2000-2015 |
| Bhutan | 2008 | | | |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | | | 1996 | |
| Brazil | | 1986 | | |
| Burkina Faso | 1992-1997 | | 1978, 2015 | |
| Burundi | 1993 | 2005 | | |
| | 2010-2015 | | | |
| Cambodia | 2008 | 1998-2003 | 1993 | |
| | | 2013 | | |
| Cameroon | 2002-2013 | 1997 | 1992 | |
| Central African Republic | | 2011 | 1993-2005 | |
| Chad | 2002 | 1997 | 2011 | |
| Colombia | | 1970-1990 | 1986 | |
| Comoros | 1996, 2004 | 1993 | 1992, 2015 | |
| Congo, Dem. Rep. | | | 2006-2011 | |
| Congo, Rep. | | 2012-2015 | 1992-1993 | |
| | | | 2002-2007 | |
| Cote d'Ivoire | 1990-1995 | | 2000, 2011 | |
| Croatia | | 1992-1995 | | |
| Czechoslovakia | | | 1990 | |
| Djibouti | 1997-2015 | | | |
| Dominican Republic | 1974 | 1970, 1978 | 1990-1994 | |
| Egypt | 1976-1984 | 1987 | 2011 | 2015 |
| | 1990-2010 | | | |

| Country | Dominant Years | Predominant Years | Multiparty Years | Non-party Years |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| El Salvador | 1972 | 1970, 1974 | 1991-1997 | |
| | 1976-1978 | 1985-1988 | | |
| Equatorial Guinea | 1999-2015 | 2004 | | |
| Ethiopia | 2010-2015 | 2005 | 1995-2000 | |
| Fiji | | 2014 | 1992 | |
| Gabon | 1996-2001 | 2006 | | |
| | 2011 | | | |
| Gambia | 1972-1987 | 1992 | | |
| | 1997-2015 | | | |
| Georgia | | 1999 | 1992-1995 | |
| | | | 2003 | |
| Ghana | 1992 | 1979 | | |
| Greece | 1974 | | | |
| Guatemala | | 1970 | 1974-1978 | |
| | | 1982-1985 | 1990-1994 | |
| | | 1995-1999 | | |
| Guinea | 2002 | 1995 | 2013 | |
| Guinea-Bissau | | 1994, 2008 | 1999-2004 | |
| | | 2014 | | |
| Guyana | | 1973 | 1992 | |
| | | 1980-1985 | | |
| Haiti | 1995-2000 | 2006-2015 | | |
| Honduras | | 1971 | 2013-2015 | |
| | | 1981-1989 | | |
| | | 2009 Indonesia | 1971-1997 | 1999 |
| Iran | 2000 | 1992 | 1980-1984 | |
| | 2004-2008 | 1996, 2012 | | |
| Iraq | | 1996, 2005 | 2010-2014 | |
| Jamaica | 1980-1983 | | | |
| Kazakhstan | 2007-2015 | 2004 | 1995-1999 | 1994 |
| Kenya | | 1992-2002 | 2007-2013 | |
| Korea, Rep. | | 1971-1985 | | |
| Kyrgyzstan | 2007 | 2010-2015 | 1995-2005 | |
| Lebanon | | | 1972 | |
| | | | 1992-2009 | |
| Lesotho | 1993-1998 | 1970, 2002 | | |
| Liberia | 1985, 1997 | | 2005 | |
| Madagascar | 1970-1989 | 2002 | 1993, 2013 | |
| Malawi | | | 1994-2004 | |
| Malaysia | | | 1974-2013 | |
| Mali | | 1992 | 2013 | |
| Mauritania | 1996-2001 | 2013 | | |
| Mexico | 1970-1985 | 1988-1994 | | |

| Country | Dominant Years | Predominant Years | Multiparty Years | Non-party Years |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Moldova | | 2005 | 2009 | |
| Mongolia | 1990 | | | |
| Montenegro | | 2009 | 2013 | |
| Mozambique | 2009 | 1994-2004 | | |
| | | 2014 | | |
| Myanmar | | 2015 | | |
| Nepal | | 1991, 1999 | 1994, 2013 | |
| Nicaragua | | 1972, 1984 | | |
| | | 2011 | | |
| Niger | 1996 | 2009 | 1993, 1999 | |
| Nigeria | 2007 | 1983 | 1979 | |
| | | 1999-2003 | | |
| | | 2011 | | |
| North Macedonia | | | 1994-1998 | |
| | | | 2014-2015 | |
| Pakistan | 1977 | 1997 | 1988-1993 | |
| | | | 2002-2013 | |
| Panama | | 1984 | | |
| Papua New Guinea | | | 2012-2015 | |
| Paraguay | | 1973-1989 | 1993 | |
| Peru | | 1980, 1995 | 2000 | |
| Philippines | 1978 | | 1987 | |
| | | | 2004-2007 | |
| Poland | | | 1989 | |
| Romania | | 1990 | | |
| Russia | 2007 | 2011 | 1993-2003 | |
| Rwanda | | 2003 | 2008-2013 | |
| Senegal | 1978-1988 | | | |
| Serbia | | 1992, 2016 | 1993-2000 | |
| Seychelles | 1993-1998 | 2002-2007 | | |
| | 2011 | | | |
| Sierra Leone | 1977 | 2002, 2012 | 1996 | |
| Singapore | 1972-2015 | | | |
| Soloman Islands | | | 2001 | 2006 |
| South Africa | 1970-1987 | 1989-1994 | | |
| Sri Lanka | | 2010 | | |
| Sudan | 2000-2015 | 1986 | | |
| Suriname | | 1991 | | |
| Syria | | 1973-2007 | | |
| Taiwan | 1986-1989 | | | |
| Tajikistan | 2005-2015 | 2000 | | 1995 |
| Tanzania | 1995-2005 | 2010-2015 | | |
| Thailand | | 2011 | 1975-1996 | |

| Country | Dominant Years | Predominant Years | Multiparty Years | Non-party Years |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Togo | 1999-2002 | 2007-2013 | 1994 | |
| Tunisia | 1981-2009 | | 2011 | |
| Turkey | | 1983-1987 | | |
| | | 2015 | | |
| Turkmenistan | | | 2013 | |
| Uganda | 2011 | 2006 | 1980 | |
| Ukraine | | | 1994-2014 | |
| Uruguay | | | 1984 | |
| Uzbekistan | | | 2004 | |
| Venezuela | 2005 | 2010-2015 | | |
| Yemen | 2003 | 1997 | 1993 | |
| Zambia | 1991-1996 | 2001 | | |
| Zimbabwe | 1990-1995 | 1980-1985 | 2008 | |
| | 2005-2013 | 2000 | | |

# Chapter 3

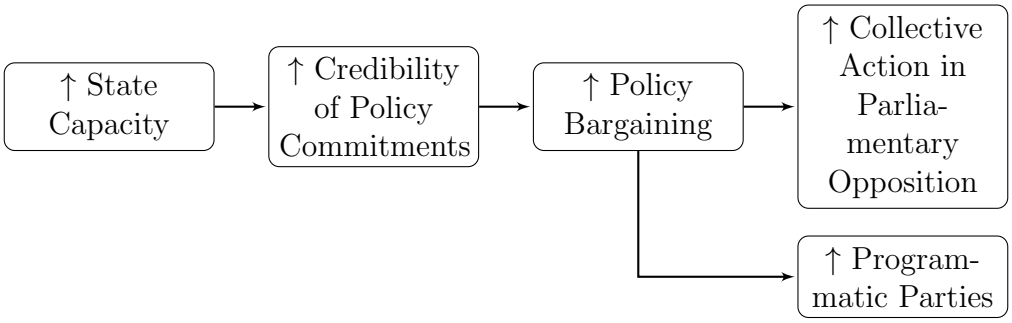
# Theory

My central argument is that state capacity influences elite perceptions of the credibility of policy implementation in their countries, which in turn shapes the opposition coalitions they may form. State capacity makes commitments to provide public goods credible because it ensures resources – both human and financial – are available to implement policy. It also signals the stability of these resources (in the form of bureaucratic institutions) over time. These changes make pursuing longer-term goals and bargaining over policy rational options for political elites.

At low levels of state administrative capacity – when states are unable to effectively implement policy because their bureaucracies are untrained and lack independence – politicians primarly have incentives to adopt rent-seeking behavior. They pursue patronage from an authoritarian leader in exchange for their support and participation in the political system. Because these benefits accrue to the individual, there are few incentives for politicians to work together to obtain them; instead politicians who seek influence through elections will build personal brands campaigning as individual candidates or heads of small parties, leading to a fractionalized party system. They form the classic vertical patronage networks associated with clientelism.

As a state bureaucracy's capacity for policy implementation increases, incentives for collective action among politicians rise. While a leader will still be able to coopt individual politicians through patronage, the probability of successfully influencing the government through legislation rises. Politicians interested in policy reform gain incentives to work together to negotiate for public goods. Parliamentary opposition parties begin to organize around these goals and coalesce into larger groups, reducing fractionalization. Where once opposition elites allowed personal conflict and competition to divide them, they now form pre- and post-election coalitions to gain leverage in advancing their policy goals. The result is more programmatic parties with representation in parliament and reduced fractionalization of the party system (see Figure 3.1).

Figure 1: Causal Chain between State Capacity and Opposition Fractionalization




State capacity is not the sole factor driving party system formation in authoritarian states. Social cleavages provide focal points for elite coordination and electoral laws exert a mechanical effect on how political parties are represented in a legislature. In addition, leader decisions about the degree and targets of repression play a strong role in determining who forms or joins a party. All things being equal, however, states with more independent and capable bureaucracies should have lower party system fractionalization because state capacity generates incentives for collective action among elites.

In this chapter, I trace the role of state capacity in authoritarian party system formation at three levels of analysis: individual, party, and party system. I theorize why politicians decide to join in-system opposition parties, how those politicians' choices shape the type of political parties competing in authoritarian elections, and what these choices mean for the party system: when parliamentary parties splinter and when they begin to unify.

I begin by describing the ways that state capacity shapes what leaders can offer when they seek to build support among the political elite in their countries. I then explain how individual elite responses to these leader strategies lead to different forms of collective action: individual rent-seeking in low-capacity environments and collective bargaining for public goods in higher-capacity environments. I trace the consequences of these divergent strategies at the party and party system levels, and end by outlining four hypotheses to test the observable implications of this theory at the individual, party, and party system levels.

## 3.1 State capacity and party systems

Academic research has identified three dimensions of state capacity that influence authoritarian rule: a state's repressive, extractive, and administrative capacity (Hanson 2018). A state's repressive and extractive capacities shape how a leader is able to manage the balance between carrots and sticks in maintaining his rule. Repressive capacity has the most direct effect. Command and control over the military and internal security services determine a regime's ability to manage protest and electoral outcomes (van Ham and Seim 2018). Repression also shapes the opposition in more subtle ways. For example, Lebas (2011) found that when African authoritarian states repressed organized labor, opposition parties lacked mobilizing structures that spanned constituencies and regions, making them more likely to

organize around personalized or otherwise limited networks.

A state's ability to generate revenue also shapes party systems. Extractive capacity determines a regime's resource constraint – how much it can deliver to a selectorate to maintain support (Bueno de Mesquita et al 2008, Seeberg 2018). This phenomenon is best understood in resource-rich states, many of which have developed extensive systems to distribute economic benefits to their supporters (Ross 2013). Greene (2007) similarly finds that successful dominant parties in authoritarian systems are not those that perform best economically, but those that are able to direct state resources to constituents through clientelism. A state's ability to effectively exploit its resources – whether in the form of rents or taxation – shapes it ability to provide benefits to its supporters.

I argue that a state's ability to implement policy through a professional bureaucracy – its administrative capacity – also influences party systems. When a state is able to effectively develop and implement policy, policy bargaining becomes a rational option for managing relations with the political elite. In short, building on the insights of scholars examining institutions as a means to create credible commitments in authoritarian regimes (Gandhi 2008, Svolik 2012), I argue that institutions alone do not make commitments credible. They must be backed by state power.

### 3.1.1 Credible commitments and policy bargaining

Three related elements influence the ability to make a credible commitment: observations of past behavior (reputation), expectations about future behavior, and resources. Combined, these factors determine how authoritarian institutions support a leader's rule. Each of them is in turn influenced by administrative capacity.

Reputations allow leaders to make credible commitments by providing information on past behavior and underlying preferences. Whether a reputation is for following through on promises of benefits (cooptation) or for punishing disloyalty (coercion), leaders must make their behavior observable to establish one. Allowing otherwise unobservable behavior to be monitored so that it can become common knowledge within a ruling coalition thus underlies many theories of authoritarian institutions (Gehlbach and Keefer 2011, Boix and Svolik 2013). When elites are able to see whether a leader expended resources on a promise or policy, promises of new actions consistent with existing reputations gain credibility.

Building administrative capacity can enhance a leader's reputation for implementing policy reform. Just as the existence of a parliament can allow elite monitoring of legislation, effective implementation of that legislation through a bureaucracy creates additional opportunities for monitoring. It allows a leader to demonstrate follow-through on policies enacted by other elites and permits monitoring of the implementation of executive decrees.

Leaders can also make commitments credible by shaping future expectations. Establishing a cost for breaking an agreement – tying hands – is the most commonly cited way to do this.

In democracies, the potential for removal from office for reneging on a commitment (the audience cost of the international relations literature) provides this penalty (Fearon 1997). The monitoring and information-sharing fostered by institutions can make reneging observable in autocracies (Boix and Svolik 2013) or creating a focal point around which elites could coordinate to remove a leader (for example, establishing a succession process within a party).

The institutional stability that comes with administrative capacity shapes elites' future expections for policy implementation. Enhancing the independence of a bureaucracy (by increasing its substantive competence, increasing the number of decisions that can be taken at lower levels of government, and decreasing political appointments) can tie a leader's hands. Elites can be more certain that a policy will not be changed on a leader's whim. In addition, weak state institutions are more likely to change or collapse and therefore do not incentivize trades over time. As Aldrich (1995) noted, institutions lengthen politicians' time horizons, allowing them to more easily accept deferred benefits and conduct trades over time. As elites gain certainty that a bureaucracy will consistently implement policies, they are more likely to seek change through the state.

Finally, for a commitment to be credible, a leader must have to resources to uphold it. Threats of punishment in a dictatorship require leader control of the security services and resources directed to the organizations that maintain their power. Similarly, credible offers of benefits must satisfy a budget constraint – rewards cannot exceed the government's (or a leader's personal) revenues (Bueno de Mesquita et al 2003). Without the funds necessary and people with the skills in place to enact a decision, that decision cannot be credible.

A capable bureaucracy demonstrates the availability of resources to enact policy. Even in countries where many functions of the state have been taken over by a ruling party, policy reform requires changes in laws and/or regulations, and the allocation of human and financial resources to implement it. Investments in state bureaucracy – training, professionalization, and delegation of authority – provide these resources. Elites can be more certain their desired policies will not be delayed due to bureaucratic incompetence. Bureaucratic reform also decreases the jobs in a bureaucracy available for distribution by patronage, limiting the success of clientelistic parties (Shefter 1994), and reducing the resources available for distribution through unofficial channels.

Elites in authoritarian systems should therefore see different types of commitments as having different levels of credibility, depending on a state's ability to act on those commitments. If a leader rules exclusively through decree and individual cooptation (for example, favorable access to a construction contract) rather than through the state, elites will perceive promises of these perks as credible. If a leader were to promise a policy reform or public good (such as deregulation of the construction industry), elites would not perceive those as credible because they do not have the resources in place to implement those reforms.[1]

By contrast, when a dictator chooses to invest in the state, providing training and resources

[1]Indeed, in this case, the leader more likely profits from allowing monopolies and preferential treatment.

to and implementing policy through the bureacracy, then he can credibly commit to take more than one type of action. He may still grant favorable benefits to certain individuals, but he can also make promises about public goods and policy. This variation in the credibility of policy commitments then impacts how other elites in the political system react to the leader and make decisions about political participation.

Policy commitments may, therefore, be made credible under dictatorship by establishing a reputation for implementing policy, creating stable institutions that can shape elites' future expectations, or dedicating resources to bureaucracy capacity. How then might elites respond to those credible commitments?

## 3.2 Elite incentives and strategies under dictatorship

### 3.2.1 Why join a party that will never take power?

Existing scholarship offers several compelling explanations for why individual politicians join political parties and how they choose which party to join in established democracies. Starting with the assumption that politicians are strategic actors that seek to maximize their ability to gain power and use it to benefit themselves and their constituents, scholars have found many benefits of party membership. Broadly speaking, the arguments divide into two categories: elites join parties to resolve collective action problems (either during elections or in the legislature) or to take advantage of a brand while campaigning.

In an election, political parties allow politicians to share human and financial resources and take advantage of these economies of scale to promote voter turnout, while in the legislature, they create an ex ante mechanism to form enduring coalitions and conduct trades across time, reducing the transaction costs of one-off agreements (Aldrich 1995). Party brands further serve as heuristics to shape reputations and guide voter behavior (Lupu 2016, Nielsen and Larsen 2014). Within the context of these motivations to join a generic party, elites choose which party to join in order to maximize their policy preferences, returns to office, and the likelihood of election (Strom 1990; Heller and Mershon 2005, 2008; Mershon and Shvetsova 2013). The relative importance of these factors depends on issues such as voter preferences (Hagopian et al 2009) and the level of economic development in a politician's district (Desposanto 2006).

In new and developing democracies, uncertainty in the form of incomplete information and unstable institutions disrupts the translation of politicians' motivations into party choice (Ferree et al 2014). Voters and elites lack experience on how rules will translate into election outcomes, often leading to a proliferation of parties (Moser and Scheiner 2012). When the full breakdown of democratic institutions is likely, elites focus on short-term calculations (Lupu and Riedl 2013). As institutions become more stable, time horizons extend and party choice may no longer solely reflect immediate electoral gains (Cox 1997).

By contrast, studies of authoritarianism almost exclusively emphasize personal benefits to

elites when joining a party. Institutions may be stable, but since elections are manipulated by the ruling party, they alone cannot incentivize political action. Instead, parties provide paths to professional advancement and the benefits that accompany it (Svolik 2012, Frantz and Kendall-Taylor 2014) and allow elites to enforce agreements to provide each other benefits (Magaloni 2008). Party membership is then used as a binary indicator of support for the leader (Gandhi 2008, Svolik 2012).

Elites in authoritarian systems may, however, be motivated by a variety of goals and preferences, and these preferences may be expressed in a variety of institutional forms. I assume that elite preferences are, in fact, the same across all types of political systems – that politicians in both dictatorships and democracies are motivated by a combination of policy and personal interests that they advance by gaining access to power. Policy motivations in authoritarian regimes may be broad (an overall preference for regime change, for example) or narrow (such as job creation in their region), but not all authoritarian elites are solely motivated by career concerns.[2] These varied preferences over policy and perks can take a variety of institutional forms: elites can choose to join a ruling party, form a separate party, or stay outside the formal political system. These decisions then shape the party system itself.

There are three types of decisions elites make when they decide to join a political party in an electoral authoritarian regime. First, whether or not to engage in formal politics. Entry is rarely modeled in authoritarian politics, but disengagement is a common phenomenon and at times is a goal of authoritarian political leaders. While existing research primarily focuses on public disengagement, elites in authoritarian countries do not always choose to become politically active. Second, elites choose whether or not to support the leader, or the degree to which they support the leader. This is commonly modeled in formal studies of authoritarianism, where potential members of a ruling coalition essentially have two choices: to support the leader or defect. I argue there is also a third choice: whether to join a party or not – whether to express their support for or opposition to the leader through an institution, and which institution (ruling party or loyal opposition party). These decisions are often made simultaneously, and are influenced by a combination of personal preferences, calculations about potential rewards for support, and the likelihood of penalty, but each aspect of the decision is influenced by the calculations in different ways. Some elites may also have common cause with the leader (are in same tribe, military; have same economic background) and their "costs" for support are lower.

In authoritarian systems, elites who are primarily motivated by policy require credible policy commitments to engage in politics; elites interested in access to power and benefits require credible commitments on those issues. Elites who seek individual benefits (such as contracts, market access, or jobs) will participate in parliamentary politics when this patronage is the most likely outcome. Elites who are driven by other preferences – in particular, policy im-

[2]Weghorst (2022) makes a similar argument in the case of Tanzania. He use biographic data and sequence analysis to argue that elites' early life experience in civil society shaped their later choices to join the formal political system.

plementation – have little to gain in this scenario from joining a parliamentary party that supports the regime but will not gain power. They may either disengage from politics or seek to gain power through other means, such as popular protest, financial influence, or membership in the ruling party (depending on their specific preferences).

At low levels of state capacity, elites who primarily seek patronage may join the ruling party to secure career advancement (Truex 2014), but parliamentary opposition parties also provide opportunities for returns to office. For example, Reuter and Robertson (2015) demonstrate the benefits accrued by the leadership of Russia's Communist Party for demobilizing their supporters during elections. When rent-seeking opportunities within the ruling party are relatively weak, members will defect to form their own parties (Reuter and Szakonyi 2019). Separately, Lust-Okar (2005) demonstrates how authoritarian leaders in the Middle East incentivized the opposition politicians closest to the regime on policy issues to run in separate political parties to divide the opposition. In Egypt under Mubarak, for example, cultivating a personal vote proved a successful path to influence in the ruling party (Blaydes 2011).

As capacity grows – when a leader works through a bureaucracy and provides resources to back up promises of state action – elites can expect bargaining over policy to produce results. Rent-seeking elites will continue to run for office, but a rise in state capacity should be accompanied by a diversification in the type of elite entering the formal political sphere. More elites perceive leader statements about policies as credible and will see a benefit to participating in elections. Politicians may know they will not gain power by running for office outside the ruling party, but they might now obtain some movement on their policy preferences in addition to traditional returns to office. Depending on their political views, in this case, some elites will seek reform within the system as a less risky path to achieving their goals than full regime change (Magaloni 2008). And these individual motivations may inspire politicians to form programmatic political parties.

## 3.3 Party formation under dictatorship

### 3.3.1 When do programmatic parties develop?

Political parties vary across degree of integration with the public, ideological coherence, internal organization, stability over time, and integration with the state and economy (Sartori 1976, Gunther and Diamond 2003). Of these dimensions, the development of programmatic parties – parties organized around party platforms rather than personalities – is considered a key element of democratic development, because it increases parties' ability to represent their constituents and pass legislation (Stokes 1999, Kitchelt et al 1999). Unconsolidated democracies and dictatorships more often feature personalist and patronage-based parties, however. When do elites begin to move from clientelistic relationships and personal branding to create and participate in programmatic parties?

Elites within parties can choose to invest in party organizations (either internal discipline or connections to voters) or party brands (by building ideological platforms or marketing)

to win elections (Hale 2005). Unless a party has a pre-existing local organization, branding strategies require fewer resources than organizational strategies for success. Developing organizations from scratch is time-consuming and personnel-heavy relative to purchasing radio or television time (Kitschelt et al 1999, Mainwaring 1999, Mainwaring and Zoco 2007). Branding also requires few long-term commitments and is therefore an ideal basis for a party when politicians are uncertain as to when elections may next be held.

What type of brand do party elites invest in under authoritarianism? It can depend on social cleavages or the constituent base of elites. Bolleyer and Ruth (2018) found that parties invest in ideologies in polarized systems. When there are clear cleavages in society, parties need to develop distinguishable positions on these issues. The presence of an activist base can also determine a party's platform, the membership of a party influences its type. In electoral authoritarian regimes, Buckles (2017) argues that the presence of a strong activist base within an opposition political party shapes its policy positions (in this case, it makes it more likely to gain regime concessions). As more policy-motivated activists enter formal politics, their preferences will shape the characteristics of the parties they form and lead to greater investment in the development of platforms and policy programs.

In low-capacity states, which primarily incentivize politicians interested in rent-seeking to participate in politics, I argue elites invest primarily in personal branding and clientelistic strategies for party development. As state capacity increases and it becomes rational to seek policy reforms through the formal political system, the activist base of a party changes. With more policy-oriented elites enter a system, they will increasingly choose to invest in policy programs for the parties they join and create. The combination of fewer patronage jobs and greater benefits from policy bargaining encourage politicians to devote more time to developing relevant policy positions within their parties.

We should therefore expect to see ideologically ill-defined, personalist parties form in low-capacity electoral authoritarian regimes absent a polarizing social division. Clear ideological positions can make parties a target for repression, while personalism is the easiest way to brand a campaign. The uncertainty inherent to the conditions surrounding authoritarian elections makes these strategies particularly attractive. But as state capacity rises in an authoritarian state, programmatic parties should begin to emerge. As resources for patronage decline, returns to policy bargaining rise, and more policy-motivated individuals choose to participate in politics, programmatic parties will grow in membership and influence.

## 3.4 Authoritarian Party System Formation

### 3.4.1 When do parliamentary parties splinter or unify?

Chapter 2 demonstrated the wide variety of party systems present in authoritarian systems, but what shapes whether a parliamentary opposition consists of a large number of small parties or a single party? I argue these patterns are influenced by three factors: social cleavages, the rules of the game (on both elections and political speech), and state capacity.

Social cleavages, electoral rules, and political repression are the underlying conditions that influence party platforms and links with citizens. State capacity determines the fractionalization of parties within these constraints and can provide a source of change in stagnant authoritarian systems. The change in individual incentives to join parties and subsequent party types that come with rising returns to policy bargaining generate greater incentives for collective action in higher capacity states.

The literature on democratic party systems emphasizes the interaction of social cleavages and electoral law in determining the shape of the party system in a country (Ordeshook and Shvetsova 1994, Neto and Cox 1997). In this line of reasoning, the constellation of parties elected to parliament reflects voter preferences as modified by their expectations of who will win (Cox 1997). When those preferences are stable, party systems are stable; systemic change happens when new preferences emerge (Lipset and Rokkan 1967, Rose 1974, Caramani 2004).

In authoritarian regimes, as in democratic regimes, parties can be grounded in socioeconomic cleavages (Golosov 2013, LaPorte 2015). For example, in Malaysia, ethnic ties have formed the basis of most political parties since independence. The ruling coalition consisted of an alliance of ethnic parties led by the dominant United Malays National Organization, and opposition parties also used ethnicity and religion as organizing principles. In some cases, authoritarian leaders attempt to repress these cleavages, as when ethnic or religious parties are banned. Others enhance them through the differential allocation of resources to different groups (Lebas 2011; Riedl 2014). Finally, regime type itself can serve as a political cleavage – elites and publics may organize around support for or opposition to the leader as their primary goal (including support for a founding revolution, Levitsky and Way 2012). For example, Ong (2022) found that opposition pre-election coalitions were shaped by perceptions of regime vulnerability – they only coalesce when elites and voters believe the dominant party could lose. Polarizing issues and pre-existing social organizations (such as networks of churches or mosques or ethnic organizations) will always serve as focal points for political organization. They are not, however, sufficient to explain all variation in authoritarian systems – when cross-cleavage alliances emerge, or when multiple parties form within a cleavage (such as multiple ethnic or religious parties).

As in democratic regimes, rules also exert mechanical effects on authoritarian party systems. Regime decisions on which parties and politicians are allowed to compete are the most obvious constraint in dictatorships. When leaders ban parties and arrest politicians based on their ideology or popularity, this limits the size and number of parties in the system and increases the cost of party cooperation (Bertoa and Bourne 2017). Electoral rules also exert a mechanical effect – systems that require politicians run on party lists have larger political parties, while systems that allow independents to run in single member districts have more fractionalized systems (Kortukov 2023). Leaders select these systems in order to manage their systems more effectively, while politicians learn the implications of different systems and adapt accordingly. For example, Mwonzora (2022) found that office-seeking motivations could disrupt opposition coalition formation in Zimbabwe when leaders selected electoral laws that increased contestation for the opposition's "safe seats." Since repression and electoral system choice are endogenous to leader survival strategies, however, they provide a poor ex-

planation for exogenous change in a party system – when opposition politicians choose to set their personal differences aside and work together rather than allow the leader to coopt them.

I argue that state capacity is a contributing factor that has been missing from extant analyses of party systems. My core assumption in this argument is that rent seeking strategies require lower levels of collective action than bargaining over public goods. While this has not been extensively studied in the context of political parties, support can be found in existing research on corporate rent-seeking in authoritarian and transitional states. Scholars have found that corporations in these cases form associations to lobby the government not to seek rents, but to reduce bureaucratic corruption (Duvanova 2007, Pyle 2011, Corduneaunu-Huci 2016). Yadav and Mukherjee (2015) further argue that business associations are most effective at reducing corruption in dictatorships where they can lobby loyal opposition parties in parliament. When the returns to rent-seeking are high, companies in Morocco and eastern Europe actively seek individual benefits, but when the transaction costs of bribes and access become too high compared to the returns, they form coalitions to seek a public good: anti-corruption legislation.[3]

I argue that a similar effect takes place in political parties. When the benefits of rent-seeking are high (in low-capacity states), politicians act individually and at most form small parties, leading to high party system fractionalization. As the benefits of office-seeking decline relative to policy-seeking, politicians need to act collectively to obtain the public good of policy reform. As state capacity rises, then, the fractionalization of a parliamentary opposition in an authoritarian state should decline. For example, in Venezuela under Chavez, Cannon (2014) notes that the opposition's decision to shift from protest actions to parliamentary tactics in the late 2000s was accompanied by increased collective action (the party that ran in elections was a coalition of 30 smaller groups) and increased programmatic work within the party.

At lower levels of state capacity, the only credible promises the dictator can make to win support from other elites – potential members of their ruling coalition – are about particularistic benefits (private goods or perks), whether they are financial benefits, preferential contracts, or jobs within the government or party. Perks are both tangible and short-term, making them a ready way to buy support when other options are few. Elites interested in receiving these benefits can seek them in three ways: by joining the leader's party, forming their own party, or remaining outside the formal political system (using personal connections to advance their interests). Elites pursue all three options, but since the benefits of perks are limited to a few individuals, there is no incentive for individual elites to coordinate to receive them. Coordination does not lead to additional benefit to themselves and might require compromise or sharing with their peers. Those elites who are more interested in policy changes either join the ruling party (to seek change via access to power) or remain in opposition outside of parliament. This means that at low levels of infrastructural power,

[3]This argument is similar to Gans-Morse (2017), who notes that firms seek legal avenues to secure property rights when the transaction costs and sanctions associated with illegal avenues rise, although he focuses on the collective action problem as a barrier to the development of property rights in the absence of state capacity to enforce them.

loyalist parties tend to be small and disorganized, and party systems are characterized by a dominant party accompanied by a large number of small parties.

At higher levels of state capacity, policy bargaining becomes a rational path for elites to pursue their goals. As countries increase in infrastructural power, the development of the bureaucracy makes policy changes by a dictator a more credible concession to other elites. The government has a greater power to implement policy and institutions in place that make the maintenance of that policy more likely. More elites choose to compete within the political system. More politicians who prioritize policy over perks take the option of seeking policy change through bargaining rather than remaining in opposition when that change is more likely to take place. At the same time, the number of parliamentary parties decreases. Politicians seeking policy changes by the regime can more effectively do so by forming larger parties and coalitions, leveraging their combined bargaining power to obtain more concessions and sharing the benefit across the group. The fractionalization of the party system therefore should decrease as state capacity increases (see Table 3.1).

Social structure and leader choice of electoral system and level of repression matter. Social structure determines the cleavages around which elites are most likely to organize, while electoral system and repression exert mechanical effects on party representation in the legislature. State capacity works within these constraints. When leaders choose to invest in their bureaucracies, it has unintended consequences. State capacity is not the sole determinant of party system fractionalization, but rather serves as a contributing factor that explains some observed variation and change within an authoritarian country over time.

Table 3.1: Summary of individual and party level outcomes

| | How do leaders coopt elites? | Who enters formal politics? | What strategies do elites adopt? | What type of party system emerges? |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Low-capacity states | Perks | Perk-oriented politicians | Rent-seeking | Dominant ruling party with divided opposition |
| | Access | (A few) policy-oriented politicians | Join ruling party | |
| Medium-capacity states | Perks | Perk-oriented politicians | Rent-seeking | Programmatic parties; splinters from ruling party |
| | Policy concessions | (More) policy-oriented politicians | Policy bargaining and collective action | |

The following chapters test the implications of this theory at the individual and system levels. At the system level, I expect that an increase in state administrative capacity to be associated

with a decrease in party system fractionalization, driven by an increase in the size and consolidation of opposition political parties in parliament. If my hypothesis is correct, then time series statistical analysis should show that opposition party system fractionalization will decrease following an increase in infrastructural power, holding socioeconomic and repression variables constant. This effect should be most visible in states with lower levels of repression, as the possibility of arrest or retribution will dominate elite decision-making in the most repressive cases.

H1: In an electoral authoritarian regime, as administrative capacity increases, the fractionalization of its parliamentary opposition decreases (the number of parties decreases and their size increases), conditional on state repression.

H1A: At low levels of freedom of expression, as state capacity increases, the effective number of legislative parties increases.

H1B: At high levels of freedom of expression, as state capacity increases, the effective number of legislative parties decreases.

In addition, individual politicians should respond to the changing institutional context. Using structured interviews and survey experiments in two post-Soviet countries that vary across state infrastructural power, I test the hypotheses that regime policy commitments are more credible and elites are more likely to bargain over policy in countries with higher infrastructural power. Individual interest in policy development, membership in policy-oriented parties, and bargaining with the ruling party should all increase as state capacity rises.

H2: Elite perception of the credibility of policy commitments will be higher in electoral authoritarian regimes with higher state capacity than in countries with lower capacity.

H2A : In an electoral authoritarian state, as state capacity increases, elite perception of the credibility of a dictator's policy commitments increases.

H3: Members of loyal opposition parties will be more interested in bargaining over policy in electoral authoritarian regimes with higher state capacity than in countries with lower state capacity.

H3A : In an electoral authoritarian state, as state capacity increases, members of loyal opposition parties will become more interested in policy bargaining.

H4: Elites in states with higher levels of adminstrative capacity will be more likely to join political parties based on policy motivations than in states with low levels of administrative capacity.

H4A : In an electoral authoritarian state, as state capacity increases, elites will be more likely to join political parties based on policy motivations.

If this theory is wrong, then rather than varying based on the basis for credible commitments from the dictator, party systems will vary based solely on regime repression, underlying social cleavages, or electoral laws. The number of parties would reflect the number and size

of groups in society, with no variation across state capacity. Party systems would be stable across all levels of infrastructural power, because they reflect enduring relationships. And the range of elites willing to participate in the political system will depend on the specific policies and nature of a regime rather than a state's ability to implement policy.

# Chapter 4

# The Cross-National Relationship between State Capacity and Party Systems

This chapter presents time series analysis of the relationship between state administrative capacity and opposition fractionalization.[1] Using an original dataset of authoritarian election results from 1970-2015, I evaluate my argument that party system fractionalization decreases as state capacity increases in electoral authoritarian regimes. In order to estimate change over time within countries, I use a time series linear model with case fixed effects . While this model is insufficient for causal identification (and the quality of data on state capacity would call any results into question), my goal in this chapter is to demonstrate new correlations between capacity and party system fractionalization and to provide external validity to my overall study.

The results support my hypothesis that increasing state capacity decreases party system fractionalization, conditional on state repression. At high levels of repression, increasing state capacity increases party system fractionalization, consistent with existing research on the role of coercive state capacity in electoral authoritarian regimes. At lower levels of state repression, however, increased capacity is associated with party system consolidation. Increasing state capacity does not have an immediate impact on party system fractionalization – I observe the strongest relationship five years after an increase in state capacity. When we take into account the time required for elites to observe and react to a state's ability to implement policy, we see results that are robust across alternate measures of party system fractionalization and control variables.

While I do see these broad relationships in the data, there are limits to the conclusions I can draw from this analysis. The results are not robust across alternate measures of state capacity – the quality of alternate measures may be insufficient to provide valid cross-

[1]I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Alex Blair-Turk, Caroline Daniel, Naomi Gaba, Sarah Genovese, Brooke Hagenbuch, Alex Hendel, Kyla King, Jaina Mehta, Meagan O'Rourke, Arya Royal, Varun Sharma, Lydia Smith, Sydney Stanley, and Caleb Tisdale in preparing the data and online appendices for this chapter. The research in this chapter was supported by the Jefferson Fellows Foundation.

national results at this time – and are not fully causally identified. I observe results only in cases of medium-to-high freedom of expression and after a five year lag. In sum, this chapter demonstrates a correlation between state capacity and subsequent party system fractionalization in a subset of electoral authoritarian states (stable regimes with moderate to low levels of repression). Evaluating case studies of two moderate-repression electoral authoritarian regimes with varying levels of capacity (Armenia and the Kyrgyz Republic) will allow me to examine causal mechanisms and draw additional conclusions.

## 4.1 Hypothesis

In this dissertation, I argue that state capacity influences parliamentary opposition unity in electoral authoritarian regimes. At low levels of administrative capacity, authoritarian leaders can manipulate party systems to divide and conquer oppositions. At higher levels of state capacity, parliamentary parties become an asset to the opposition in achieving a broad range of goals and elite pacting based on policy bargaining becomes possible.

Existing research on the relationship between state capacity and the durability of electoral authoritarian regimes has primarily focused on two types of cases: those where strong states enhance a party or leader's ability to exert control, either over economic resources (Seeberg 2018) or elections (van Ham and Seim 2018), and those where strong ruling parties substitute for weak states, providing an alternate basis for stable elite relations and public control (Morse 2018). I examine how state strength influences the decisions of other actors in the political system – opposition politicians' decisions to join parliamentary parties and coalitions.

Administrative capacity shapes the incentives a leader can offer to other elites for their support. At lower levels of state administrative capacity, the only credible commitments a leader can make are over particularistic benefits (money, contracts, or government jobs, for example). When the benefits of political activity accrue to the individual, elites either join the dictator's ruling party (should one exist) or form a large number of small parties, bidding for influence based on the individual support they can rally in an election. As a state's ability to implement policy rises, policy commitments by a dictator become a more credible concession to other elites. Elites who are interested in policy reform now have an incentive to enter formal politics because the benefits of seeking policy concessions through party formation rise. Parliamentary opposition parties are best able to bargain with the ruling party when they represent a larger number of elites, and so coalitions and mergers of opposition parties rise with state capacity.

This process takes time. Not only does state capacity change slowly, it takes time for new elites to recognize the opportunities afforded them by stronger states and act on them. Since I argue the decline in fractionalization is driven by the diversification of elites and parties entering politics, this process would take at least one election cycle (four or five years in most authoritarian regimes). This need for time for the effect of increasing capacity to be observed also implies the need for stable regimes and stable reform within those regimes.

State capacity is, of course, not the sole factor influencing party systems. Regime repression (Gandhi and Reuter 2013), socioeconomic cleavages (Ordeshook and Shevtsova 1994), the type of political system (presidential or parliamentary; Clark and Wittrock 2005, Bagashka 2012), and the mechanical effects of electoral laws (Neto and Cox 1997, Cox 1997, Taagepera and Shugart 1993) all play a role. I argue that regime repression and structural factors provide the framework for party systems in electoral authoritarian regimes – whether there are ethnic parties or not, the degree of political activity allowed – but that state capacity determines how these factors manifest – specifically, whether the party system is fragmented or consolidated.

Of these factors, in electoral authoritarian regimes, state repression is the most significant. By shaping the overall ability of opposition leaders (potential or real) to organize, state repression plays a defining role in influencing party systems in electoral authoritarian regimes. I therefore hypothesize that the impact of state capacity on party system fractionalization in electoral authoritarian regimes is conditional on the level of political freedoms in a country. Increasing state capacity should support party system consolidation – the creation of a small number of significant opposition parties to compete with a ruling party – but only in cases where there the opposition has some freedom of expression. When freedom of expression is low, increases in state capacity may simply reflect increases in a states' repressive or distributive capacity rather than its policy effectiveness (van Ham and Seim 2018, Seeberg 2018, Seeberg 2021). This would increase party fractionalization rather than support consolidation.

H1: In an electoral authoritarian regime, as administrative capacity increases, the fractionalization of its parliamentary opposition decreases (the number of parties decreases and their size increases), conditional on state repression.

## 4.2 New Data on Authoritarian Party Systems

### 4.2.1 Scope

The scope of this study is electoral authoritarian regimes, countries where abuse of power creates unfair elections. I examine both hegemonic and competitive (or electoral) authoritarian regimes – any regime that allows multiparty competition, but is not classified as a democracy, no matter the size of the margin of victory of the ruling party. As noted in chapter 2, I use the "Regimes of the World" category 2 – electoral autocracy – to define the scope of my study. This variable, part of the Varieties of Democracy datset, defines four regime types – Closed autocracy, Electoral autocracy, Electoral democracy, and Liberal democracy. An Electoral autocracy is a regime where multiparty elections for the chief executive and the legislature take place, but these elections are not free and fair – they do not meet a minimum polyarchy score (Coppedge et al 2023). It is distinguished from closed autocracy, where no multiparty elections take place, and electoral democracy, which have free and fair elections but limit some freedoms or rule of law. Specifically, electoral autocracies score above 1 on the VDEM multiparty elections indicator (v2elmulpar_osp_leg/_ex), but score

below a 2 on free and fair elections (v2elfrfair_osp) or below 0.5 on the Electoral Democracy Index (v2x_polyarchy). With minor modifications, the result is 109 spells of electoral authoritarianism in 94 countries between 1970 and 2015 (see Chapter 2, Appendix 1 for list of cases).[2]

### 4.2.2 Variables

**Dependent Variable: Party System Fractionalization**

To calculate my primary dependent variable, party system fractionalization, I have created an original dataset reflecting official parliamentary election results in all electoral authoritarian regimes from 1970-2015. Data for each country were gathered from the International Parliamentary Union, international election observation missions, and the International Federation for Electoral Systems, among other sources (see online Appendix for detail on each country). This data relies solely on official sources for information on party affiliation during an election and does not take into consideration affiliations declared in parliament.

The standard measure of party system fractionalization is the effective number of parties. In the case of authoritarian regimes, data is typically only available for the number of seats parties receive in parliament, making the effective number of legislative parties (ENLP) based on seats (rather than vote count) the only viable measure. To calculate the ENLP (seats), I use the measure originally developed by Laakso and Taagepera (1979) ($\frac{1}{\Sigma s^2}$, where $s$ represents the proportion of seats a party holds in parliament). The advantage of this operationalization is that a single number captures both ruling party size and the fractionalization of other within-system parties. It is readily available – even the most repressive electoral authoritarian regime publishes the names of its members of parliament – and possible to objectively calculate. It does not represent the full range of political actors in a country, but does provide one way to measure those actors an electoral authoritarian regime has allowed to participate, and who have agreed to do so.[3] In calculating the ENLP, I count independent candidates each as their own individual party, so that 15 independent candidates would be calculated as 15 parties.[4]

[2]This results in 1807 total observations, which is reduced to 1696 observations when parliaments were actually present in the electoral authoritarian regimes (VDEM calculates electoral authoritarianism based on presidential elections).

[3]Note that ENLP data is only available for election years. In order to consider change in other variables between elections, I fill election year data into subsequent years to reduce missingness.

[4]Scholars tend to adopt one of two strategies in dealing with independent candidates – either drop independents and small parties (see Wong, Chin, and Othman 2010 for example) or count independents as parties (Golosov and Kalinin 2017, for example). I opt for the second path (counting independents as separate parties) because encouraging independent candidacies to weaken political parties is a common tactic employed by leaders in electoral authoritarian regimes. In cases such as Russia in the 1990s (Seredina 2022, Bagashka 2012) and Egypt (Blaydes 2010) candidates run as independents to demonstrate their ability to gain popular support, but vote consistently with the leader. Tracking the future affiliation of independent candidates (to get a better measure of party size) was beyond the scope of this dissertation, however, since there is no consistent source of data on party switches in authoritarian regimes.

Since higher values of ENLP indicate higher party system fractionalization, I operationalize my hypothesis as:

H1a: At low levels of freedom of expression, as state capacity increases, the effective number of legislative parties increases.

H1b: At high levels of freedom of expression, as state capacity increases, the effective number of legislative parties decreases.

Since the country-year data for ENLP (seats) are highly skewed[5] and represent countries with very different party representation in parliament with the same fractionalization index (see discussion in Chapter 2), I also check for robustness against two different measures of party system fractionalization: a categorical variable representing party system type derived from cluster analysis of my Authoritarian Party Systems dataset and at the percent of seats held by the second largest party in parliament.[6]

**Independent Variable: State Capacity**

For the purposes of this study, I conceptualize state capacity as a state's ability to implement its policy goals. While a state's ability to maintain control within its borders (coercive capacity) and gather revenue (extractive capacity) are both vital to its functioning (even if they are abused under dictatorship), my argument rests on the idea that the state can make leader promises to implement policy reforms credible. As such, I am primarily interested in administrative capacity, defined by Hanson and Sigman (2021) as the ability to develop policy and produce and distribute public goods and services.

As numerous authors have noted, there is no good measure of weak or strong institutions or the concept of state capacity (see Soifer (2008) and Hanson (2018) for reviews). Several cross-national measures of good governance have been created, but they are based on perception-based surveys rather than measures of a state's reach and data are available only for limited years (see discussion of the World Bank indicators below). In order to have the most consistent and complete data, I use the state capacity index developed by Hanson and Sigman (2021). This index was uses latent variable analysis of 24 indicators of state capacity and represents the most consistent and comprehensive measure of state capacity

[5]A small number of countries with parliaments dominated by independent candidates generate extremely high fractionalization data (for example, Egypt's 2015 elections produced a parliament with 19 parties or lists represented and 379 independent candidates, yielding an ENLP of 37). The median ENLP is, however, 2.33 and 75% of the country-years have ENLPs below 3.84 (see summary statistics in Chapter 2, Table 1). In order to avoid having a small number of countries without party systems influencing the results, I also run the analysis with the full set of data and with a truncated dataset eliminating non-party systems identified in my principal components analysis (see Chapter 2).

[6]This is not the most common measure of opposition unity – scholars such as Gandhi and Reuter (2013) and Howard and Roessler (2006) code their own measures of opposition coalitions, but coding coalitions was beyond the scope of this study. The idea is that when oppositions unify, this often manifests in the growth of a single opposition party in parliament (for example, the Movement for Democratic Change in Zimbabwe), making an increase in the number of seats held by the second largest party an effective measure of a decline in opposition fractionalization.

available (1970-2015).[7] In order to account for the delay between a change in state capacity and the political response to this change, I lag the independent variable five years to ensure one election takes place between observed changes in capacity and the observation of party system fractionalization.[8]

Hanson and Sigman (2021), however, include coercive, extractive, and administrative capacity in their latent variable analysis, and so their data offer a weak measure of my dependent variable (administrative capacity). I therefore check for the robustness of results using the World Bank Governance Indicator for "Government Effectiveness," which measures perceptions of the quality of a country's public services, policy formulation and implementation, derived from aggregated survey data (Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi, 2011). This indicator offers a better match with my conceptualization of state capacity, but it is only available for 1996-2015 and is subject to the weaknesses of perception-based measures of corruption and capacity – perception does not always match reality and can vary based on characteristics of the observer rather than state (see Donchev and Ujhelyi 2014 and Qu et al 2019 for discussions of the problems with the World Bank Governance Indicators).

### Control variables

### State Repression

State repression is a difficult concept to measure, in part because of its direct relationship with the dependent variable: increasing repression decreases freedom of assembly. To avoid conflating repression with the party system itself, I distinguish between the organizational elements of the party system (the number and size of parties) and the speech elements (what type of parties are allowed to organize, what issues they are allowed to advocate for, etc.). While these two aspects are related – restrictions on which political parties can organize and which elites may participate are a key element of repression – they are distinct. Repression takes forms other than restrictions on parties, such as limits on speech, media, non-governmental organizations, or public meetings. Limits on free party formation influence the party system, but do not determine its final form. The number of parties in a country depends on how elites act within the given constraints – whether they decide to work together or build personal bases of support, seek power based on control of economic resources or mobilization of ethnic identities or other bases.

Operationalizing repression through freedom of expression captures the idea that within the institutional framework of legalized party competition, the freedom granted to elites and publics varies while minimizing its relationship with bans on political parties. I will use the Freedom of Expression and Alternate Sources of Information Index (*v2x_freexp_altinf*) in the Varieties of Democracy dataset (Coppedge et al 2023), which is compiled from expert assessments of media and academic freedom and individual freedom of discussion. This is not a

[7] The use of this dataset requires the exclusion of one electoral authoritarian regime (the Seychelles) from analysis, as it is not included in Hanson and Sigman (2021).

[8] The inclusion of the lag reduces the number of total observations in the study from 1804 to 1472, since it removes the first five years of a regime from analysis.

perfect measure of repression, but it does capture a key element that is distinct from freedom of assembly and is not correlated with ENLP (the correlation coefficient is -0.006). Highly repressive states can end up with high party system fractionalization when they encourage the formation of a large number of small parties to form an easily controlled opposition, but they can have low fractionalization when they discourage party formation generally. This makes free expression a reasonable proxy for repression.

**Social Cleavages**

To measure ethnolinguistic cleavages, I use the Historical Index of Ethnic Fractionalization (HIEF, Drazanova 2019). This index was developed based on information gathered by the Composition of Religious and Ethnic Groups Project at the University of Illinois on the percentage of principal ethnic groups in 162 countries annually for the period 1945-2013.[9] Ethnic fractionalization is a value between 0 and 1 calculated that represents the probability that two individuals in a country are part of the same ethnic group.[10] The main advantage of this dataset is that it calculates variation in fractionalization over time. This both accurately reflects demographic changes in each country and simplifies time series statistical analysis. I check for robustness with the measure of cultural fractionalization developed by Alesina et al (2003), which has the advantages of combining the number and polarization of ethnic groups for 190 countries and wide use within the discipline, although it is time invariant.

To capture economic cleavages, I use the Gini coefficient, the most commonly used measure of income distribution in a country, as provided by the UN's World Income Inequality Database (UNU-WIDER, 2017).[11]

**Electoral Institutions**

Finally, I control for the mechanical effects of political institutions in party systems. A wide literature has demonstrated that proportional electoral systems foster a larger number of parties, while majoritarian systems reduce the number of parties in democracies (Neto and Cox 1997, Cox 1997, Taagepera and Shugart 1993). In order to account for this effect, I include a variable for electoral system as a control. Specifically, I use a four-category measure of electoral system available in the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) dataset (*v2elparlel*, Lower Chamber Electoral System). This is a categorical measure with four levels: Majoritarian, Proportional, Mixed, or Other. For my cases, there are 917 majoritarian observations, 358 mixed system observations, 421 proportional system, and 23 others (representing country-

[9]Note the use of ethnic fractionalization as a control variable requires the exclusion of one electoral authoritarian regime (Montenegro), for which data are not available in either the HIEF or Alesina et al (2003).

[10]The equation used ($Fract_j = 1 - (\sum_{i=1}^{n} s_{ij}^2$, where $s_{ij}$ is the share of group $i$ in country$j$) is the same as used by Alesina et al (2003) and is the most commonly used measure of fractionalization.

[11]The HIEF and especially the inequality data have significant gaps. In order to avoid having missing data for control variable skew results, I adopted two strategies. For the HIEF, I included data from Alesina et al (2003) for five countries (Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Mozambique, Papua New Guinea, and Myanmar). For the inequality data, I use the UNU-WIDER database because it represents the most comprehesnive set of data available. I filled the data forward in order to reduce missing years.

years for Afghanistan, Madagascar, and Taiwan).[12]

In addition, while the effect of presidential versus parliamentary systems on party system fractionalization is not as clear cut as electoral systems, there are indications that presidentialism fosters fractionalization in authoritarian states.[13] To account for this effect, I use the Presidentialism index developed for the Varieties of Democracy data set (*v2xnp_pres*). This continuous variable measures on a scale of 0 to 1 the "systemic concentration of political power in the hands of one individual." (Coppedge et al 2023), where a 1 indicates a higher degree of presidentialism. The index is formed by combining indicators for executive respect for the constitution, legislative oversight of the executive, judicial constraints on the executive, and the autonomy of the electoral management body.

Summary statistics for all variables are available in Tables 4.1 and 4.2.[14]

Table 4.1: Summary Statistics for Electoral Authoritarian Regimes, 1970-2015

| | ENLP | 2nd party | Capacity | Gov. Eff. | Free exp. | Pres. | Eth. Frac. | Gini |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | 417 | 397 | 1781 | 932 | 1804 | 1804 | 1678 | 439 |
| Min | 1.00 | 0.00 | -1.83 | -2.27 | 0.02 | 0.01 | 0.00 | 15.16 |
| Max | 105.22 | 0.50 | 1.81 | 2.44 | 0.90 | 0.98 | 0.89 | 74.60 |
| Median | 2.33 | 0.16 | -0.13 | -0.78 | 0.53 | 0.54 | 0.54 | 41.24 |
| Mean | 4.76 | 0.17 | -0.09 | -0.70 | 0.50 | 0.49 | 0.49 | 43.83 |
| Std. dev. | 10.59 | 0.11 | 0.65 | 0.66 | 0.23 | 0.28 | 0.28 | 10.50 |

## 4.3 Bivariate Relationship

A simple examination of the bivariate relationship between state capacity, party system fractionalization, and regime repression demonstrates the prospects for this research. Figure 4.1 shows that there is a weak negative relationship between state capacity and party system fractionalization (ENLP) when all the data is considered together (as shown in the top graph). This relationship is almost entirely determined by electoral authoritarian states with

[12]As with the HIEF, VDEM was missing electoral system data for five cases. Since I coded electoral system data for the Authoritarian Party Systems dataset, I filled in missing data for El Salvador prior to 1974, Georgia 1991-1995, South Korea 1973-1978, Madagascar, and Serbia in 1993 based on my own research.

[13]Mainwaring (1993) notes the negative impact of combined presidentialism and multipartism for democracy, although he does not comment on the impact of presidentialism on the party system. This relationship has been most studied in the former communist world, where Clark and Wittrock (2005) and Bagashka (2012) find that the impact of electoral law on party systems is conditional on the strength of the executive.

[14]ENLP data is available for election years only. The number of observations for second parties is smaller because El Salvador (1976), Djibouti (2003, 2008), Lesotho (1993), Singapore (1972, 1976, and 1980) and Tunisia (1981 and 1989) held multiparty elections, but the ruling party gained all seats in parliament, accounting for 20 observations. Hanson and Sigman (2021) are missing data for Seychelles, accounting for 23 observations. Drazanova (2019) is missing data for Montenegro and Seychelles, as well as 2014 and 2015, accounting for 126 observations.

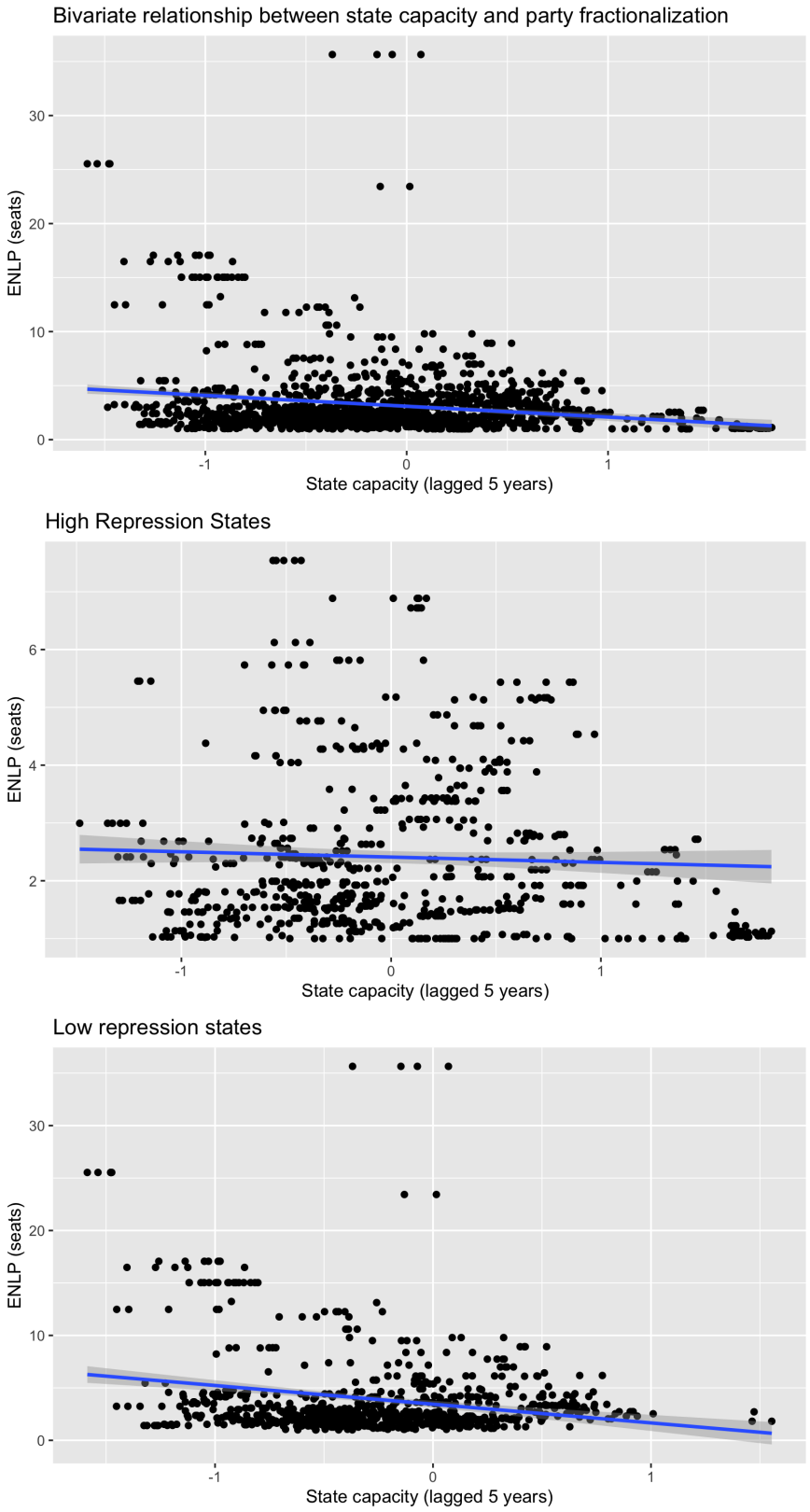

Bivariate relationship between state capacity and party fractionalization
ENLP (seats)
30
20
10
0
-1
0
1
State capacity (lagged 5 years)
High Repression States
ENLP (seats)
6
4
2
-1
0
1
State capacity (lagged 5 years)
Low repression states
ENLP (seats)
30
20
10
0
-1
0
1
State capacity (lagged 5 years)

Figure 4.1

Table 4.2: Value Distribution of Categorical Variables

| Variable | Value | Number |
|---|---|---|
| Electoral System | Majoritarian | 902 |
| | Proportional | 409 |
| | Mixed | 355 |
| | Other | 23 |
| Party System Type | Dominant | 599 |
| | Predominant | 503 |
| | Multiparty | 513 |
| | Non-party | 47 |

Table 4.3: Correlation between Capacity, ENLP, and Free Expression in Electoral Authoritarian States

| Level of Free Expression | Corr. Coeff. ENLP and Capacity | Mean Capacity | Mean ENLP | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| All | -0.175 | -0.09 | 4.76 | 1804 |
| <0.3 | 0.004 | -0.01 | 5.29 | 482 |
| 0.3-0.5 | -0.077 | 0.13 | 3.68 | 368 |
| 0.5-0.7 | -0.284 | -0.23 | 5.77 | 531 |
| >0.7 | -0.087 | -0.21 | 4.09 | 423 |

Note: This analysis excludes electoral authoritarian states with non-party systems.

lower levels of repression (where the VDEM freedom of expression score is higher than 0.5; the bottom graph).[15] Party system fractionalization in high repression states (the middle graph) appears unrelated to state capacity, and is more likely driven by leader decisions on how to manage elites and the level of repression itself.

Examining the correlation coefficients (Table 4.3), we see that a relationship between capacity and party system fractionalization can only be seen at moderately high levels of free expression (between 0.5 and 0.7). The correlation coefficient at that range of free expression (representing the largest group of electoral authoritarian states) is -0.284, while there is no correlation between capacity and party system fractionalization in other electoral authoritarian states (the correlation coefficients are all lower than |0.1|)

[15]The analysis in this section excludes the 47 country-years for non-party states in the dataset in order to make the relationships more clear. Non-party states tend to be both high repression and have high ENLPs, since they so restrict political freedoms to only allow independents to run for parliament. This results in a positive relationship between ENLP and capacity in the highest repression countries when all cases are considered, likely driven by the increase in coercive capacity. Specifically, the correlation coefficient for countries with freedom of expression values lower than 0.3 (all cases) is 0.224, while it is 0.004 when non-party systems are excluded.

Figure 4.2 demonstrates these relationship in key cases. In a high repression state (Egypt, where the freedom of expression index increased gradually from 0.2 to 0.4 between 1970 and 2012), we see little relationship between state capacity and ENLP (top graph). Rising state capacity in the mid-1980s and mid-2000s was followed by small increases in party system fractionalization. The 1984 parliamentary elections (the first under Mubarak) were a high point of opposition unity, with the conservative opposition Wafd Party and Muslim Brotherhood running in coalition and receiving 15% of the vote. Mubarak had chosen a proportional representation electoral system with a high (8%) threshold for entry into parliament to eliminate independent candidates and small parties, largely on the left (Blaydes 2010, 41-42). This system lasted only one election, however, with the Mubarak regime increasing the number of independents allowed to run in 1987 and returning to a single-member district system in 1990, increasing the number of independents and small parties each election. Similarly, as state capacity rose in the mid-2000s the state increased its legal ability to supervise elections, strengthening support for the ruling National Democratic Party (Blaydes 2010, 42). In each case, the state used its capacity to increase its control over elections, generating the outcome it desired: a super-majority for the ruling party accompanied by a large number of independents and small parties, rather than the emergence of coalitions between viable opposition parties.

By contrast, in Ukraine, a lower repression state where the freedom of expression index varied between 0.5 and 0.9 between 1991 and 2015 (lower graph), rising capacity since independence was accompanied by a decline in party system fractionalization.[16] Despite a lack of change in its mixed electoral system until 2006, the number of independents and small parties steadily decreased over time and the party system began to consolidate. The most significant consolidation of the party system took place in the 1998 elections, the first parliamentary elections after the most significant increase in state capacity (between 1993 and 1996), indicating that five years – the amount of time for one election cycle to take place – may be the most appropriate time frame for capacity to impact party system fractionalization. This was facilitated by the Orange Revolution in the winter of 2004, which increased political freedoms for a few years and was accompanied by a shift to a national list proportional representation system that further encouraged party development. This period of liberalization ended with the election of Viktor Yanukovich as president in 2010, who reinstated a mixed electoral system and encouraged a slight increase in party system fractionalization in addition to other autocratizing reforms.

We can draw two tentative conclusions from these correlations and examples. First, that state capacity may influence party system development in a specific range of electoral authoritarian regimes – those with moderate free expression. And second, that party system fractionalization typically changes faster than state capacity. While state capacity can decline quickly (with the emergence of a civil war, for example), it typically takes years to build, as legal reforms and training take effect and gradually enhance a state's ability to implement policy. Party system fractionalization, on the other hand, is shaped by factors

[16]Note that the freedom of expression and capacity variables have been multiplied by ten in order to make change in these variables visible on the same graph as ENLP.

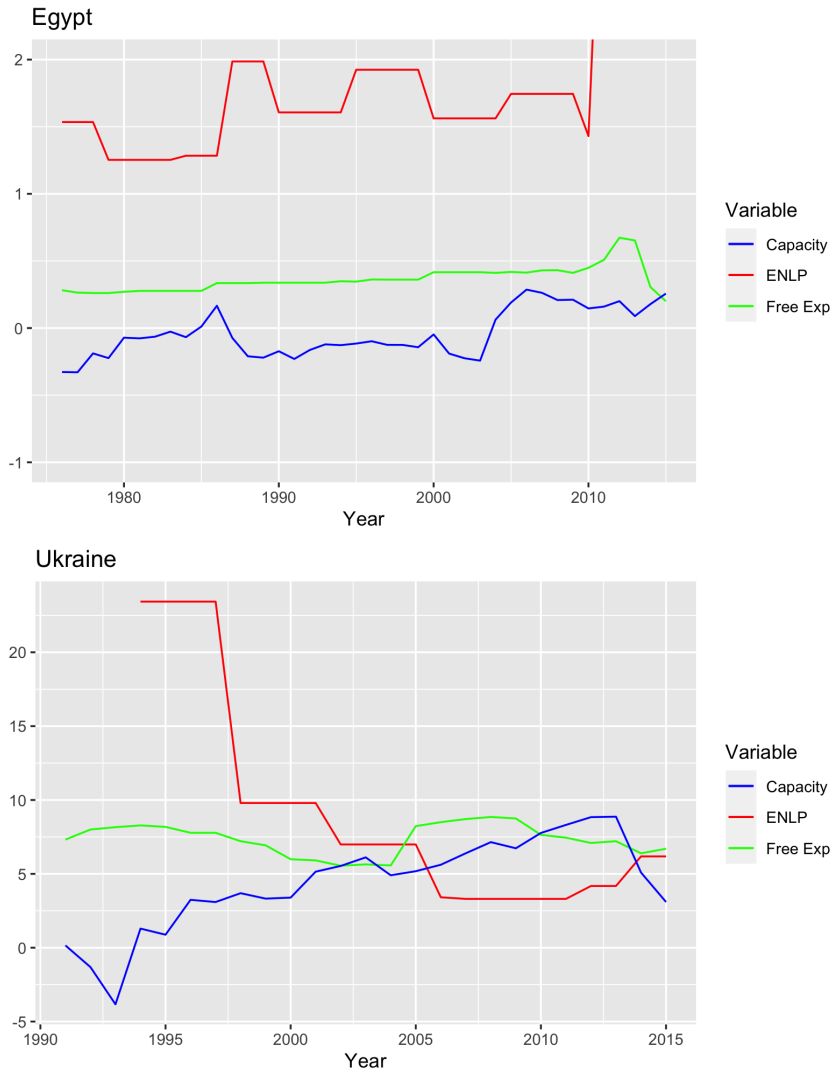



Figure 4.2: Relation between state capacity, free expression, and party system fractionalization over time in two indicative cases. Note that the y axis was truncated on this figure to make it easier to see changes in capacity and the percent seats for the second largest party. The number of parties in Egypt increased dramatically in 2012 after the Arab Spring.

both slow to change (like ethnic divisions) and fast (most notably, electoral law). Electoral authoritarian regimes and new democracies often change electoral laws for every election as elites learn how to best manipulate the rules of the game to enhance their power (Benoit and Hayden 2004). These electoral laws, while mere proxies for elite power-seeking strategies, have immediate impacts on the number of parties, leading to high fluctation in the number of political parties in a country.

## 4.4 Methodology

In order to further examine this relationship between state capacity and electoral authoritarian party systems, I conduct time series analysis in all electoral authoritarian regimes from 1970-2015.

In this analysis, I am not interested in knowing that a country with high repression has fewer parties than a country with more freedom or that an ethnically diverse country has more parties than a mono-ethnic nation, but rather in understanding how party systems in these countries change as their infrastructural power changes. For example, I am not interested in knowing that multiethnic Malaysia has a more fragmented party system than the more homogenous Mexico. Rather, I want to explain why Malaysia has pro-government ethnic parties and loyal opposition ethnic parties, why and when they form coalitions, and why Mexico's ruling party splintered in the 1990s. The fundamental question is what the impact of state capacity is within a country over time.

I therefore use a linear model with case (within country) fixed effects to capture unobserved country-specific variation in the dependent variable (DeBoef and Keele 2008, Box-Steffensmeier and Jones 2004). A case fixed effects model uses single-country dummy variables to control for unobserved case-specific variation, so long as that variation is remains constant over time within a case. This is appropriate due to my interest in change over time within countries, and allows me to account for the impact of difficult-to-measure variables such as elite cohesion and the varying historical starting points of each country's party system on fractionalization. This choice of model does, however, pose some challenges for causal identification. Fixed effects models remove case-specific time-invariant variation, allowing me to model more of the overall variation in the dependent variable. But they do not guarantee the model itself has been correctly specified.

To address observed variation in the dependent variable, I control for two confounding variables. Socio-economic cleavages have a well-established link to the number of parties, but may also shape capacity. I therefore control for ethno-linguistic fractionalization in a country and income inequality. In addition, while political institutions are not exogenous causes of the number of parties (they simply reflect elite decisions to adopt rules to enhance their political power), I still need to account for these decisions since they reflect an elite choice to promote a large or small number of political parties. I therefore control for electoral law (proportional vs majoritarian) and presidentialism.

There is also possible reverse causality. While I argue state capacity promotes party system consolidation, low fractionalization (most notably, de facto single party states) may cause low levels of state capacity. Where strong parties provide social services to the public (as is often the case in Africa and Southeast Asia), they may substitute for the state, weakening capacity. In order to address this potential endogeneity, I lag the independent variable five years. This both establishes temporal priority and accounts for the time lag between increased state capacity and the elite response to it. I select a lag of five years to ensure that at least one election cycle takes place between the observation of capacity and the observation of the number of parties. (In addition, statistical analysis of the observed effects at different lags of capacity shows the strongest effects at five years; see Appendix, Table 4.7)

Finally, in order to account for the high year to year correlation of the dependent variable (party systems only change in election years), I include a one year lag of the dependent variable as a control in my analysis (Beck and Katz 2011, Wilkins 2018). Finally, I estimate the conditional relationship by including state repression as an interaction term. The model I estimate is therefore:

$$PS_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 C_{it-5} + \beta_2 R_{it} + \beta_3 R_{it} C_{it-5} + \beta_4 F_{it} + \beta_5 I_{it} + \beta_6 E_{it} + \beta_7 Pr_{it} + \beta_8 PS_{t-1} + u_i + \varepsilon_{it}$$

where $PS_{it}$ is the effective number of legislative parties by country-year, $C_{it-5}$ is state capacity by country-year (lagged five years), $R_{it}$ repression by country-year, $F_{it}$ is ethnic fractionalization by country-year, $I_{it}$ the GINI coeffcient by country-year, $E_{it}$ represents the electoral system by country-year, $Pr_{it}$ represents presidentialism by country-year, $PS_{t-1}$ represents the effective number of legislative parties in the previous country-year, and $u_i$ represents country fixed effects.

The effect of state infrastructural power on the party system by country is then determined by taking the partial derivative with respect to state capacity:

$$\frac{\partial PS}{\partial C} = \beta_1 + \beta_3 R_{it}$$

## 4.5 Results

Statistical analysis across multiple specifications supports my hypothesis. At higher levels of freedom of expression, increasing state capacity decreases party system fractionalization and increases the size (percent seats) of the second largest party in parliament (consistent with my hypothesis). These results were most clear when state capacity is lagged five years, indicating the effect of state capacity on party systems in electoral authoritarian states takes one election cycle to have an impact.

Table 4.2 provides the regression results for the primary operationalization of my dependent variable: party system fractionalization, as calculated by the Effective Number of Legislative Parties (ENLP, seats). As shown in Figure 4.3, at low levels of freedom of expression,

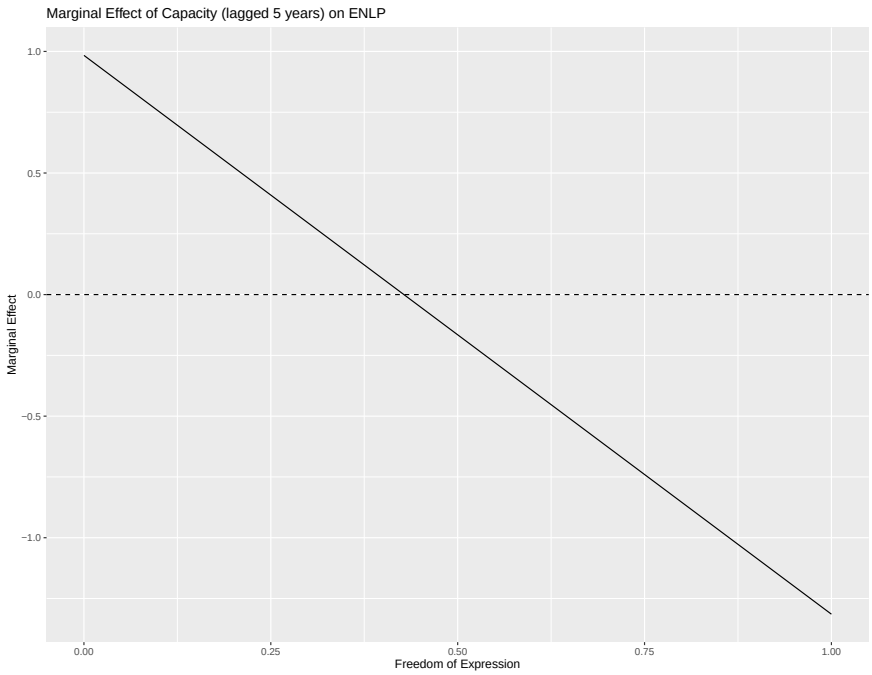



Figure 4.3: Marginal effect of state capacity on party system fractionalization over different levels of free expression

increasing state capacity increases party system fractionalization (the marginal effect is positive) while at high levels of freedom of expression, increasing state capacity decreases party system fractionalization (the marginal effect is negative). At a low level of free expression (0.3, the first quartile for that variable), a one unit increase in state capacity (five years prior) is associated with a 0.524 party increase in the ENLP, holding all other variables constant. At the mean free expression for electoral authoritarian regimes (0.5), a one unit increase in state capacity (lagged five years) is associated with a 0.165 party decrease in the ENLP, holding all other variables constant. And at a high level of free expression (0.7, the third quartile), a one unit increase in state capacity is associated with a 0.625 party decrease in the ENLP, holding all controls constant. These results are consistent with Hypotheses 1a and b and are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

These results are also substantively significant. Given that the mean ENLP in electoral authoritarian states is 4.76, a change of 0.625 marks a large change in the number of parties representing the general public. Ukraine in 2006, for example, had a level of free expression of 0.85. In the parliamentary elections that year, the effective number of parties decreased from 7 to 3.4, a marked consolidation of party dynamics.

In addition, these results show a negative, statistically significant relationship between proportional electoral systems and ENLP, consistent with existing research on the role of electoral law in weakly institutionalized party systems (Moser 1999, Moser and Scheiner 2004), and a strong, positive relationship between ethnic fractionalization and party system fractionalization, again consistent with expectations.

Table 4.4: Effect of state capacity on party system fractionalization (ENLP (seats))

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Capacity (lag 5 years) | −0.139 | 0.984 |
| | (0.292) | (0.592) |
| Free expression | −0.146 | −0.798 |
| | (0.977) | (1.020) |
| Capacity*Free expression | | −2.298* |
| | | (1.055) |
| Electoral system: PR | −1.709* | −1.695* |
| | (0.488) | (0.486) |
| Electoral system: Mixed | 0.215 | 0.230 |
| | (0.388) | (0.387) |
| Electoral system: Other | 0.203 | 0.586 |
| | (1.313) | (1.323) |
| Presidentialism | −1.070 | −1.166 |
| | (1.131) | (1.131) |
| Ethnic fractionalization | 14.066* | 14.534* |
| | (5.129) | (5.127) |
| Gini coefficient | −0.015 | −0.016 |
| | (0.023) | (0.023) |
| ENLP (lag 1 yr) | 0.783* | 0.782* |
| | (0.018) | (0.018) |
| N | 1472 | 1472 |

Results are linear regression coefficients with case fixed effects. Standard errors in parentheses. (* p<= 0.05). The base value for the categorical electoral system variable is majoritarian system.

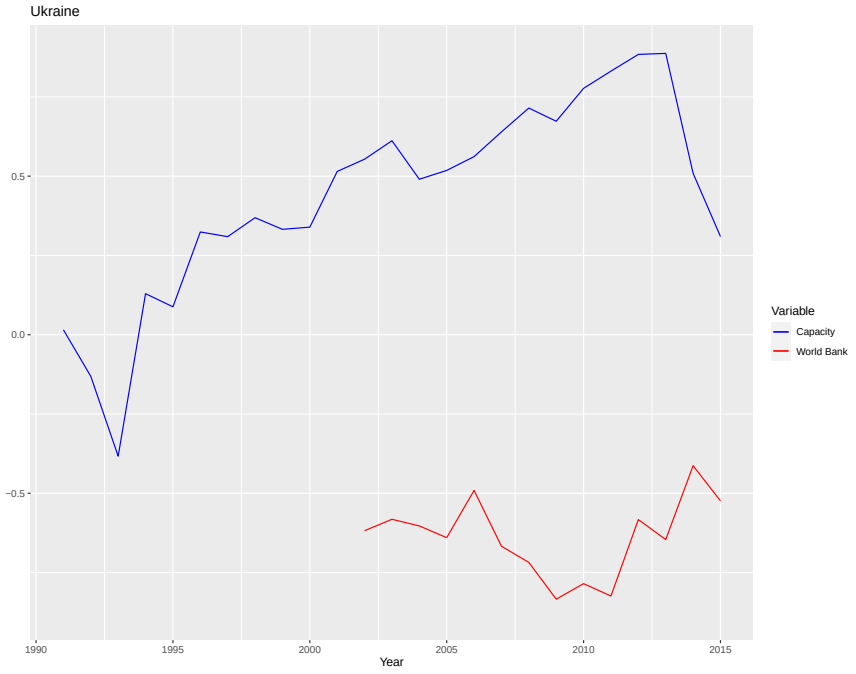



Figure 4.4: Comparison of Measures of State Capacity in Ukraine

Robustness checks across alternate specifications of the dependent variables confirm these findings. Higher levels of state capacity are associated with larger seat shares for a second party at higher levels of political freedom (lower levels of repression) in an electoral authoritarian regime (see Appendix, Table 4.9). Increasing state capacity is also weakly associated with a greater likelihood an electoral authoritarian regime will have a ruling party holding 50-70% of the seats in parliament (rather than more than 70%; see Appendix, Table 4.8).

My results are not, however, robust across alternate operationalizations of state capacity. Using the World Bank Government Effectiveness measure of administrative capacity (Appendix, Table 4.10), we see that increasing government effectiveness decreases the ENLP, but there is no interactive effect and it is not statistically significant. These results are not due to the limited scope of the World Bank variable. Limiting the analysis using the Capacity variable to the years World Bank data are available (1996-2015, Table 4.11) generates similar results to the base model. The different outcomes appear to result from the high variability of the perception-based measures on which the World Bank variable is based. In Figure 4.4, for example, we can see that the Capacity and Government Effectiveness variables often move in the opposite direction, with the Government Effectiveness variable sometimes moving in response to regime change (such as the Orange Revolution in early 2005) rather than reform of the state. The use of additional measures in the Capacity variable appears to produce more consistent results over time, although this will require more study.

The results are, however, robust across alternate specifications of (and the removal and addition of) control variables (see Appendix, Table 4.10) and the scope (Table 4.11). They

Table 4.5: Robustness of effects across alternate specifications

| Dependent variable | Capacity | Govt Eff. | Alt. Controls |
|---|---|---|---|
| ENLP | ✓ | x | ✓ |
| Party System Type | ✓ | x | ✓ |
| Size of second party | ✓ | x | ✓ |

are stronger when we remove non-party systems (those with high numbers of independents) from the analysis (see Table 4.11).

## 4.6 Analysis

Overall, these results demonstrate there is a relationship between state capacity and party system fractionalization in authoritarian regimes, but also show the nuanced and conditional nature of that relationship. Electoral authoritarian states include countries that exert high degrees of control over elections and those that have more free elections but high levels of corruption. The nature of the relationship between state capacity and political parties appears to vary in each type of system. Increasing capacity in high-repression states increases their control over the political system, which is often expressed through electoral systems designed to limit the formation of opposition parties. Increasing capacity in lower-repression states reduces corruption and increases policy implementation, which can encourage the formation of larger parties.

While this model accounts for the primary influences on party system fractionalization, it cannot be fully identified. Threats to its validity include:

- Construct validity: The data used for state capacity is either a weak fit for my conceptualization of capacity (Hanson and Sigman 2021 measure overall capacity rather than administrative capacity) or unreliable (the World Bank capacity data). I address these concerns by conducting a variety of robustness checks, and by using the data source (Hanson and Sigman 2021) with the highest reliability (the least variation over time within a country). The inclusion of extractive and coercive capacity in Hanson and Sigman's measure likely biases my coefficients downward. Since authoritarian states require high coercive power to maintain control, high capacity states likely emphasize coercive power over other forms of state capacity. These high-repression cases typically feature ruling parties that win more than 70% of seats in parliament and large numbers of independents, artificially inflating a country's ENLP.

- Internal validity: There may be additional confounding variables not addressed in the model that do not meet the identifying assumption of fixed effects models (that within case unobserved variation is time invariant). For example, elite cohesion is not formally modeled, and may vary over time as a function of other specified variables. In addition, as seen in Table 3, state capacity and free expression are weakly inversely correlated, with the largest negative effect at medium levels of repression (when free expression

levels are between 0.3 and 0.5, the mean capacity is 0.13, the only positive value). This might bias my coefficients upward, amplifying the effect of repression rather than isolating the effect of capacity at different levels of repression. I do not think this correlation is a significant concern, however, both because it is weaker in the range of cases of interest (those with levels of free expression higher than 0.5) and because the effect is inconsistent across levels of repression – free expression is actually positively correlated with capacity in the lowest-capacity states.

- External validity: Finally, the definition of electoral authoritarianism used to limit the scope of this study may be flawed. Indeed, the range of levels of repression found in these cases indicates the category likely includes weakly institutionalized democracies as well as electoral authoritarian cases. The inclusion of countries with high levels of freedom of expression may bias the results downward, as increasing opportunities for free expression usually results in a larger number of parties running in parliamentary elections. To check for bias introduced by the scope of my study, I ran robustness checks across alternate groups of cases.

The following results, therefore, can be seen as indicative rather than fully identified. They indicate relationships, but do not establish causality.

In addition, further research is needed into how increasing capacity interacts with increasing political freedoms to produce political outcomes. Not every authoritarian state chooses to manage its elections by encouraging a large number of small parties to compete with a ruling party. In those states (such as Mexico) that gradually allow a reduction in the parliamentary majority for the ruling party while increasing both political freedoms and state capacity, we can see that rising state capacity is associated with an increase in the number of parties. And high-repression states can also consolidate their party systems as state capacity rises, if they choose to consolidate a ruling party (as in Russia). Additional examination of a state's initial party system and legacy parties (a consolidated ruling party or not, for example) would provide additional insight into these overall relationships.

In sum, this statistical analysis demonstrates a positive relationship between state capacity and party system consolidation, but only in a subset of electoral authoritarian cases: those with medium to low levels of repression that had founding elections with high fractionalization. More detailed analysis of individual cases is necessary to understand the causal nature of the relationships involved. State capacity can facilitate party development when there are minimum political freedoms and time for political leaders to adapt to governmental reform. This requires not just certain types of electoral authoritarian regimes to be in place, but for them to be stable over time. In the next two chapters, I will examine two such model cases of party system consolidation (or the lack thereof) in lower-repression electoral authoritarian states: Armenia and Kyrgyzstan.

## 4.7 Appendix: Robustness Checks and Additional Results

### 4.7.1 Full results for ENLP

Table 4.6 compares different lags of the dependent variable. I compare no lag with a one-year lag (the typical value chosen) and a lag to the prior election year (the most recent year in which the DV could have changed). This table shows that similar, but weaker effects for the two alternate lags (none and election year). I chose the one year lag for my primary analysis both because it is the most commonly used and because it shows the clearest effect.

Table 4.6: Effect of state capacity on party system fractionalization (ENLP (seats) – Comparing Lagged DVs)

| | No Lag | | Lag ENLP (1 year) | | Lag ENLP (prior election) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Capacity | −1.511* | −0.826 | −0.555 | 0.578 | −2.023* | −0.561 |
| | (0.437) | (0.848) | (0.303) | (0.590) | (0.493) | (0.900) |
| Free expression | 1.188 | 0.837 | 0.173 | −0.369 | 1.123 | 0.604 |
| | (1.367) | (1.417) | (0.950) | (0.979) | (1.531) | (1.435) |
| Capacity*Free exp. | | −1.380 | | −2.263* | | −2.906 |
| | | (1.462) | | (1.011) | | (1.496) |
| Proportional system | −4.494* | −4.489* | −1.588* | −1.567* | −3.712* | −3.730* |
| | (0.655) | (0.655) | (0.461) | (0.460) | (0.729) | (0.728) |
| Mixed electoral system | 0.480 | 0.470 | 0.180 | 0.158 | 2.165* | 2.169* |
| | (0.537) | (0.537) | (0.378) | (0.377) | (0.627) | (0.626) |
| Other electoral system | 1.065 | 1.241 | 0.043 | 0.324 | 3.155 | 3.649* |
| | (1.947) | (1.959) | (1.299) | (1.303) | (1.842) | (1.858) |
| Presidentialism | −0.231 | −0.316 | −0.933 | −1.015 | 0.137 | 0.111 |
| | (1.604) | (1.606) | (1.107) | (1.107) | (1.692) | (1.665) |
| Ethnic fractionalization | 52.972* | 53.180* | 10.702* | 11.292* | 39.533* | 39.435* |
| | (6.287) | (6.291) | (4.941) | (4.941) | (6.799) | (6.791) |
| Gini coefficient | 0.024 | 0.024 | −0.013 | −0.013 | −0.022 | −0.021 |
| | (0.034) | (0.034) | (0.023) | (0.023) | (0.033) | (0.033) |
| ENLP (prior year) | | | 0.772* | 0.773* | | |
| | | | (0.018) | (0.018) | | |
| ENLP (prior election) | | | | | 0.136* | 0.134* |
| | | | | | (0.021) | (0.021) |
| N | 1633 | 1633 | 1531 | 1531 | 1349 | 1349 |

Results are linear regression coefficients with case (within country) fixed effects. Standard errors in parentheses. (* p<= 0.05). The base value for the categorical electoral system variable is majoritarian system.

Table 4.7 compares lagged independent variables. It shows that the results for the five-year lagged capacity variable appear when capacity is lagged five years.

Table 4.7: Effect of state capacity on party system fractionalization (ENLP (seats))

| | No IV Lag | | Lag IV 1 year | | Lag IV 5 years | | Lag IV 10 years | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Capacity | −0.555 | 0.578 | | | | | | |
| | (0.303) | (0.590) | | | | | | |
| Capacity-1 | | | −0.414 | 0.490 | | | | |
| | | | (0.301) | (0.595) | | | | |
| Capacity-5 | | | | | −0.139 | 0.984 | | |
| | | | | | (0.292) | (0.592) | | |
| Capacity-10 | | | | | | | 0.204 | 0.348 |
| | | | | | | | (0.306) | (0.640) |
| Free expression | 0.173 | −0.369 | 0.059 | −0.428 | −0.146 | −0.798 | −0.505 | −0.587 |
| | (0.950) | (0.979) | (0.946) | (0.985) | (0.977) | (1.020) | (1.057) | (1.105) |
| Cap.*Free exp. | | −2.263* | | −1.814 | | −2.298* | | −0.305 |
| | | (1.011) | | (1.029) | | (1.055) | | (1.192) |
| Prop. system | −1.588* | −1.567* | −1.606* | −1.589* | −1.709* | −1.695* | −1.061 | −1.051 |
| | (0.461) | (0.460) | (0.461) | (0.461) | (0.488) | (0.486) | (0.549) | (0.550) |
| Mixed el. system | 0.180 | 0.158 | 0.171 | 0.159 | 0.215 | 0.230 | 0.521 | 0.532 |
| | (0.378) | (0.377) | (0.378) | (0.378) | (0.388) | (0.387) | (0.447) | (0.449) |
| Other el. system | 0.043 | 0.324 | 0.010 | 0.249 | 0.203 | 0.586 | 0.485 | 0.535 |
| | (1.299) | (1.303) | (1.300) | (1.306) | (1.313) | (1.323) | (1.725) | (1.737) |
| Presidentialism | −0.933 | −1.015 | −0.918 | −1.005 | −1.070 | −1.166 | −1.550 | −1.555 |
| | (1.107) | (1.107) | (1.108) | (1.109) | (1.131) | (1.131) | (1.187) | (1.187) |
| Ethnic fract. | 10.702* | 11.292* | 10.989* | 11.466* | 14.066* | 14.534* | 9.809 | 9.651 |
| | (4.941) | (4.941) | (4.954) | (4.958) | (5.129) | (5.127) | (6.542) | (6.574) |
| Gini coefficient | −0.013 | −0.013 | −0.011 | −0.011 | −0.015 | −0.016 | −0.010 | −0.010 |
| | (0.023) | (0.023) | (0.023) | (0.023) | (0.023) | (0.023) | (0.025) | (0.025) |
| ENLP (lag 1 yr) | 0.772* | 0.773* | 0.772* | 0.772* | 0.783* | 0.782* | 0.781* | 0.781* |
| | (0.018) | (0.018) | (0.018) | (0.018) | (0.018) | (0.018) | (0.019) | (0.019) |
| N | 1633 | 1633 | 1531 | 1531 | 1472 | 1472 | 1329 | 1329 |

Results are linear regression coefficients with case (within country) fixed effects. Standard errors in parentheses. (* p<= 0.05). The base value for the categorical electoral system variable is majoritarian system.

### 4.7.2 Full results for Party System Type

Table 4.8 shows the full results for the base model (DV-1, Capacity-5) for party system type with Dominant party as the base value. This includes values for multi-party and non-party systems (compared to dominant party systems) excluded from the main analysis because they are not the primary comparisons of interest.

Here, we see a weaker relationship between state capacity and party system type, conditional on free expression.[17] The relationship between state capacity and the likelihood an electoral authoritarian regime will have a predominant (ruling party holds 50-70% of seats in parliament) rather than a dominant (ruling party holds more than 70% of seats) party system is conditional on freedom of expression, although only at longer lags of state capacity. Examining the impact of state capacity from five years prior, we see that at most levels of freedom of expression (0.2 and above), increasing state capacity increases the likelihood of a smaller ruling party – the likelihood of a predominant rather than dominant party system is positive. The conditional effect is, however, weak – there are few cases of low free expression, where increasing state capacity would lower the probability of a predominant system, and the effect is not statistically significant.

[17]Note that I was unable to run these models with fixed effects, as they do not compile in R.

Table 4.8: Effect of state capacity on likelihood of authoritarian party system type

| | Predominant | | Multi-party | | Non-party | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Capacity-5 | 0.198 | −0.126 | 0.299 | 0.019 | 1543.310* | 928.706* |
| | (0.266) | (0.602) | (0.314) | (0.705) | (0.002) | (0.294) |
| Free expression | 1.430 | 1.631 | 2.283* | 3.025* | −8498.830* | −2652.024* |
| | (0.843) | (0.914) | (1.002) | (1.048) | (0.001) | (0.202) |
| Capacity-5*Free exp. | | 0.786 | | 0.682 | | −1774.025* |
| | | (1.293) | | (1.419) | | (0.178) |
| Proportional system | 0.718* | 0.685 | 0.947* | 0.916* | −2804.146* | −540.255* |
| | (0.354) | (0.356) | (0.412) | (0.416) | (0.000) | (0.211) |
| Mixed el. system | 0.596 | 0.554 | 0.021 | 0.093 | −1931.559* | −415.852* |
| | (0.387) | (0.395) | (0.479) | (0.483) | (0.000) | (0.000) |
| Other el. system | −7950.287* | − | − | − | −679.633* | −1308.043* |
| | (0.000) | − | − | − | (0.000) | (0.140) |
| Presidentialism | −0.571 | −0.570 | −1.345 | −1.357 | −2360.013* | −3517.593* |
| | (0.898) | (0.901) | (1.024) | (1.024) | (0.000) | (0.243) |
| Ethnic fract. | −0.209 | −0.227 | −0.322 | −0.342 | −5719.933* | −188.228* |
| | (0.562) | (0.565) | (0.658) | (0.661) | (0.000) | (0.220) |
| Gini coefficient | −0.015 | −0.016 | −0.026 | −0.026 | 24.885* | −1.961 |
| | (0.014) | (0.015) | (0.018) | (0.018) | (0.084) | (14.521) |
| Predominant-1 | 6.097* | 6.101* | 3.475* | 3.482* | 2067.546* | 1145.136* |
| | (0.329) | (0.330) | (0.437) | (0.438) | (0.000) | (0.000) |
| Multiparty-1 | 4.976* | 4.988* | 8.275* | 8.291* | 4966.168* | 1396.489* |
| | (0.560) | (0.560) | (0.560) | (0.561) | (0.002) | (0.000) |
| Non-party-1 | 3.054* | 3.003* | −15839.056* | −2765.895* | 20983.521* | 3811.859* |
| | (1.482) | (1.480) | (0.000) | (1.419) | (0.000) | (0.178) |
| N | | | | | | |

Results are multinomial regression (GLM) coefficients. Standard errors are in parentheses. (* = p<0.05). The base value for the categorical dependent variable is Dominant party system (those where the ruling party holds more than 70% of the seats in parliament). The base value for the categorical electoral system variable is majoritarian system.

### 4.7.3 Full results for Second Largest party

Finally, when I operationalize the dependent variable as the percent seats for the second largest party in parliament (Table 4.9), we can see that, at lower levels of state repression, a five-year lag of state capacity is associated with a small increase in the size of the second largest party. At a low level of free expression (0.3), a one unit increase in state capacity (five years prior) is associated with a 0.5 percentage point decrease in the percent seats held in parliament by the second largest party, holding all other variables constant. At the mean free expression for electoral authoritarian regimes (0.5), a one unit increase in state capacity (lagged five years) is associated with a 0.2 percentage point increase in the percent seats held by the second largest party, holding all other variables constant. And at a high level of free expression (0.7), a one unit increase in state capacity is associated with a one percentage point increase in the percent seats held by the second largest party, holding all other variables constant. These results are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

Table 4.9: Effect of state capacity on size (% seats) of second largest party

| | No IV lag | | IV lag 1 yr | | IV lag 5 yrs | | IV lag 10 yrs | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Capacity | −0.014* | −0.029* | | | | | | |
| | (0.005) | (0.010) | | | | | | |
| Capacity-1 | | | −0.012* | −0.024* | | | | |
| | | | (0.005) | (0.010) | | | | |
| Capacity-5 | | | | | 0.002 | −0.016 | | |
| | | | | | (0.005) | (0.010) | | |
| Capacity-10 | | | | | | | 0.004 | −0.006 |
| | | | | | | | (0.005) | (0.011) |
| Free exp. | 0.038* | 0.045* | 0.035* | 0.042* | 0.028 | 0.038* | 0.034 | 0.040* |
| | (0.016) | (0.017) | (0.016) | (0.017) | (0.095) | (0.017) | (0.018) | (0.019) |
| Cap.*Free exp. | | 0.028 | | 0.024 | | 0.037* | | 0.020 |
| | | (0.017) | | (0.017) | | (0.018) | | (0.020) |
| Prop. system | 0.026* | 0.026* | 0.026* | 0.026* | 0.027* | 0.026* | 0.025* | 0.025* |
| | (0.008) | (0.008) | (0.008) | (0.008) | (0.008) | (0.008) | (0.010) | (0.010) |
| Mixed el. syst. | 0.003 | 0.003 | 0.002 | 0.002 | 0.003 | 0.003 | −0.001 | −0.002 |
| | (0.007) | (0.007) | (0.007) | (0.007) | (0.007) | (0.007) | (0.010) | (0.009) |
| Other el. syst. | 0.040 | 0.037 | 0.039 | 0.036 | 0.039 | 0.033 | 0.021 | 0.017 |
| | (0.022) | (0.022) | (0.022) | (0.002) | (0.022) | (0.022) | (0.029) | (0.029) |
| Pres. | −0.016 | −0.015 | −0.015 | −0.014 | −0.014 | −0.012 | 0.003 | 0.004 |
| | (0.019) | (0.019) | (0.019) | (0.019) | (0.019) | (0.019) | (0.021) | (0.021) |
| Ethnic fract. | 0.059 | 0.052 | 0.062 | 0.056 | 0.091 | 0.087 | 0.097 | 0.109 |
| | (0.081) | (0.177) | (0.081) | (0.081) | (0.084) | (0.084) | (0.109) | (0.110) |
| Gini coef. | −0.000 | −0.000 | −0.000 | −0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| | (0.017) | (0.017) | (0.000) | (0.000) | (0.000) | (0.000) | (0.000) | (0.000) |
| 2nd party | 0.784* | 0.781* | 0.785* | 0.783* | 0.785* | 0.792* | 0.799* | 0.798* |
| (lag 1 year) | (0.017) | (0.017) | (0.017) | (0.017) | (0.017) | (0.017) | (0.018) | (0.018) |
| N | 1454 | 1454 | 1454 | 1454 | 1397 | 1397 | 1262 | 1262 |

Results are linear regression coefficients with case (within country) fixed effects. Standard errors in parentheses. (* = p<0.05). The base value for the categorical electoral system variable is majoritarian system.

### 4.7.4 Alternate specifications of IV/control variables

Table 4.10 provides robustness checks on the independent variables, including the World Bank Governance Indicator for Government Effectiveness (Columns 4-5, discussed in the main chapter) and Alesina et al's measure of ethnic fractionalization (Column 8). For the latter model, I need to adjust my model to compensate for the fact that the measure does not change over time. In order to estimate a model with a time-invariant term, I use a random slope model. Random slope models interact case- or time-fixed variables with case- or time-dependent variables to estimate effects that vary over both case and time. I interact the country-fixed variable (ethnic fractionalization) with my independent variable (state capacity) in order to examine how the effect of state capacity varies over time (conditional on ethnic fractionalization). Simply using a country or two-way fixed effects model would not return a result with a variable that does not vary within a country. The model I estimate is:

$$P_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 C_{it-5} + \beta_3 R_{it} + \beta_4 R_{it} C_{it} + \beta_5 R_{it} C_{it} F_i + \beta_6 I_{it} + Pr_{it} + E_{it} + \beta_7 + P_{it-1} + u_i + \varepsilon_{it}$$

where $P_{it}$ is the effective number of legislative parties by country-year, $C_{it}$ is the state capacity by country-year, $F_i$ is ethnic fractionalization by country, $I_{it}$ the Gini coeffcient by country-year, $R_{it}$ repression by country-year, $E_{it}$ represents the electoral system by country-year, $Pr_{it}$ represents presidentialism by country-year, and $u_i$ represents country fixed effects. The effect of state infrastructural power on the party system by country is then determined by taking the partial derivative with respect to state capacity:

$$\frac{\partial P}{\partial C} = \beta_1 + \beta_4 R_{it} + \beta_5 R_{it} F_i$$

In addition, in order to address the potential correlation between state capacity and economic development, I include economic controls (GDP per capita and natural revenue as a percent of GDP, both found in the V-DEM extended dataset (Coppedge et al 2023)) in one model (Columns 6-7). The inclusion of these controls had no effect on the results.

Table 4.10: Effect of state capacity (lagged five years) on party system fractionalization (ENLP (seats), lagged)

| | Capacity | | Govt Eff | | Econ Controls | | Alt EF | No EF | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Capacity-5 | −0.139 | 0.984 | | | −0.238 | 0.975 | 2.634 | −0.232 | 0.823 |
| | (0.292) | (0.592) | | | (0.303) | (0.617) | (1.419) | (0.290) | (0.590) |
| Govt eff-5 | | | −0.376 | −0.041 | | | | | |
| | | | (0.792) | (1.663) | | | | | |
| Free exp. | −0.146 | −0.798 | −4.459 | −4.942 | −0.126 | −0.956 | −1.842 | 0.277 | −0.324 |
| | (0.977) | (1.020) | (2.916) | (3.603) | (0.988) | (1.053) | (1.722) | (0.965) | (1.007) |
| Cap.*FE | | −2.298* | | −0.605 | | −2.484* | −5.061* | | −2.164* |
| | | (1.055) | | (2.644) | | (1.103) | (2.327) | | (1.055) |
| Cap.*EF (Alesina) | | | | | | | −3.793 (2.582) | | |
| Free exp.*EF (Alesina) | | | | | | | 3.358 (2.965) | | |
| Cap.*FE*EF | | | | | | | 6.014 4.244 | | |
| Prop. system | −1.709* | −1.695* | −2.011 | −1.994 | −1.784* | −1.768* | −2.015* | −1.896* | −1.889* |
| | (0.488) | (0.486) | (1.142) | (1.145) | (0.484) | (0.483) | (0.503) | (0.483) | (0.483) |
| Mixed el. sys. | 0.215 | 0.230 | 0.399 | 0.391 | 0.220 | 0.231 | 0.109 | 0.130 | 0.142 |
| | (0.388) | (0.387) | (0.905) | (0.906) | (0.384) | (0.384) | (0.397) | (0.387) | (0.386) |
| Other el. sys. | 0.203 | 0.586 | | | 0.199 | 0.578 | −0.428 | −0.488 | −0.148 |
| | (1.313) | (1.323) | | | (1.298) | (1.307) | (1.367) | (1.290) | (1.299) |
| Pres. | −1.070 | −1.166 | −5.184 | −5.268 | −0.949 | −1.128 | −1.083 | −0.686 | −0.765 |
| | (1.131) | (1.131) | (2.875) | (2.901) | (1.134) | (1.135) | (1.221) | (1.124) | (1.123) |
| Ethnic fract. | 14.066* | 14.534* | 9.535 | 9.577 | 10.492* | 15.146* | | | |
| | (5.129) | (5.127) | (13.229) | (13.243) | (5.149) | (5.142) | | | |
| Gini coeff. | −0.015 | −0.016 | −0.044 | −0.044 | −0.016 | −0.020 | −0.018 | 0.017 | −0.018 |
| | (0.023) | (0.023) | (0.049) | (0.049) | (0.024) | (0.024) | (0.025) | (0.023) | (0.023) |
| GDP pc | | | | | 0.000 | 0.000 | | | |
| | | | | | (0.000) | (0.000) | | | |
| Nat. res. | | | | | 0.000 | 0.000 | | | |
| | | | | | (0.000) | (0.000) | | | |
| ENLP-1 | 0.783* | 0.782* | 0.739* | 0.740* | 0.782* | 0.781* | 0.793* | 0.795* | 0.794* |
| | (0.018) | (0.018) | (0.028) | (0.028) | (0.018) | (0.018) | (0.018) | (0.018) | (0.018) |
| N | 1472 | 1472 | 583 | 583 | 1441 | 1441 | 1410 | 1477 | 1477 |

Results are linear regression coefficients with case (within country) fixed effects. Standard errors in parentheses. (* p<= 0.05). The base value for the categorical electoral system variable is majoritarian system.

**Scope**

Finally, I ran several models to determine whether the inclusion or exclusion of certain years for analysis impacted my results. I ran models that excluded non-party systems (Table 4.11, column 2), non-election years (column 3), and years that were not covered by the World Bank governance data (column 4). The results demonstrate statistically significant effects only when long-term effects are examined – all relevant years, including or excluding non-party systems.

Table 4.11: Effect of state capacity (lagged five years) on party system fractionalization (ENLP (seats), lagged)

| | All years | | No non-party systems | | Election years only | | 1996-2015 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Capacity-5 | −0.139 | 0.984 | −0.478* | 0.252 | 0.019 | 3.715 | 0.722 | 2.639* |
| | (0.292) | (0.592) | (0.181) | (0.370) | (1.306) | (2.453) | (0.533) | (1.139) |
| Free expression | −0.146 | −0.798 | 1.079 | 0.679 | −0.342 | −1.905 | −0.152 | −1.030 |
| | (0.977) | (1.020) | (0.599) | (0.622) | (4.009) | (4.085) | (1.855) | (1.909) |
| Cap.*Free exp. | | −2.298* | | −1.527* | | −7.174 | | −3.751 |
| | | (1.055) | | (0.657) | | (4.040) | | (1.971) |
| Prop. system | −1.709* | −1.695* | −0.470 | −0.457 | −4.990* | −4.207* | −2.990* | −3.083* |
| | (0.488) | (0.486) | (0.305) | (0.305) | (1.922) | (1.963) | (0.765) | (0.765) |
| Mixed el. system | 0.215 | 0.230 | −0.142 | −0.106 | 0.183 | 0.923 | 0.494 | 0.424 |
| | (0.388) | (0.387) | (0.247) | (0.247) | (1.657) | (1.701) | (0.580) | (0.581) |
| Other el. system | 0.203 | 0.586 | −0.421 | −0.155 | 0.966 | 3.170 | | |
| | (1.313) | (1.323) | (0.792) | (0.799) | (5.608) | (5.716) | | |
| Presidentialism | −1.070 | −1.166 | −0.303 | −0.332 | −3.671 | −3.914 | −1.585 | −2.157 |
| | (1.131) | (1.131) | (0.691) | (0.690) | (4.691) | (4.669) | (2.043) | (2.062) |
| Ethnic fract. | 14.066* | 14.534* | 2.269 | 2.278 | 51.475* | 51.374* | 23.155* | 25.449* |
| | (5.129) | (5.127) | (3.381) | (3.375) | (17.103) | (17.018) | (7.982) | |
| Gini coefficient | −0.015 | −0.016 | −0.011 | −0.011 | −0.037 | −0.040 | −0.027 | −0.026 |
| | (0.023) | (0.023) | (0.014) | (0.014) | (0.099) | (0.098) | (0.034) | (0.034) |
| ENLP (lag 1 yr) | 0.783* | 0.782* | 0.641* | 0.637* | | | 0.760* | 0.758* |
| | (0.018) | (0.018) | (0.020) | (0.020) | | | (0.024) | (0.024) |
| ENLP (lag el yr) | | | | | 0.133 | 0.124 | | |
| | | | | | (0.078) | (0.078) | | |
| N | 1472 | 1472 | 1430 | 1430 | 306 | 306 | 970 | 970 |

Results are linear regression coefficients with case (within country) fixed effects. Standard errors in parentheses. (* p<= 0.05). The base value for the categorical electoral system variable is majoritarian system. Note that the lagged DV for election years only is lagged to the prior election (not the prior calendar year), although the lagged IV is lagged five calendar years.

# Chapter 5

# Armenia

Armenia in many ways represented an archetypal electoral authoritarian regime, albeit on a small scale, until its velvet revolution of April 2018.[1] After a violent transition from communism, a small political elite organized itself into a "party of power" that maintained control through management of elections and the economy. Early privatization of state-owned businesses concentrated economic power in the hands of a small group of businessmen who maintained connections with the political elite through networks established during the 1991-1994 war with Azerbaijan. These "oligarchs" held power directly in the 2000s, but the government began to rely more on technical expertise in the 2010s.

Bureaucratic reform in Armenia began in 2001 with the passage of its first law on civil service. While corruption remained a problem, particularly in ministries with opportunities for revenue generation, it began to decline in the 2010s when the government moved to reduce the influence of monopolies in the economy. This allowed the technical capacity of bureaucrats to increase, and by 2018, Armenia's bureaucracy was professional, but not independent. As one former member of parliament (MP) put it, "it is not a problem of skills, but of using them." (Interview 1024-2, November 19, 2018) The bureaucracy's ability to generate and implement policy when directed by the president did, however, make the state (rather than parliament or the private sector) the nexus of bargaining among elites on policy.

Armenia's party system also experienced gradual consolidation. After the early proliferation of pro- and anti-government "pocket" parties that formed a series of stable coalitions, Armenian elites organized themselves in the mid-2010s into a ruling party that sought to integrate itself with the state, a patronage-based party led by a prominent businessman, and a reform-oriented opposition coalition. While party organizations remained weak and personal corruption motivated some political activity, elites from civil society began to enter formal politics, develop policy programs, and bargain with the ruling party over issues

[1]I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Anna Aghlamazyan, Elena Angelo, Tatevik Azizyan, Gayane Harutyunyan, Heghine Manasyan, John McConnell, Lydia Smith, Ani Stepanyan, and Anush Tamazyan. The research in this chapter was supported by the Jefferson Fellows Foundation and the Albert Gallatin Graduate Research Fellowship and Quandt International Research Grant from the University of Virginia. Thank you also to Hamazasp Danielyan for sharing the original interview data from his 2012 study of the Armenian elite.

such as electoral law, pensions, and tax policy. When Armenia experienced a velvet revolution in April 2018, the public protests were led by the head of one of these opposition parties.

This chapter begins by providing a brief outline of political events in Armenia since independence in 1991 then details the reform of the bureaucracy and consolidation of the party system. Using interview and survey data gathered in Armenia November 2017-April 2018, I show that politicians in Armenia joined political parties for a variety of reasons, including social ties, ideological affiliation, and professional advancement. Those who joined programmatically-oriented parliamentary opposition parties were more likely to engage in policy bargaining with the ruling party, although this was not conditioned on their trust in the leader. Results support the mechanism of entry of new elites into the political system – through new, programmatic political parties – as a driver of change in the party system and for the use of the state as the nexus of policy bargaining with political elites, but not for the mechanism of leader credibility. Instead, the credibility of the state played a greater role in elite decisions over time.

## 5.1 A brief history of elite relations in Armenia

The transition between stages of Armenia's political development roughly correspended to the tenures of its three presidents (Iskandaryan et al 2016). Armenia's first president, Levon Ter-Petrosyan[2] of the Pan-Armenian National Movement (PANM),[3] was replaced by Robert Kocharyan in a "soft coup" in 1998. Kocharyan, who governed with the support of a variety of coalitions rather than his own political party, was replaced by the head of his leading coalition member, the Republican Party (HHK), in 2008. Serge Sargsyan and the HHK then gradually increased their dominance of the political system until their fall from power in 2018. Each president drew support from key business and military leaders, but the relative importance of different groups changed over time. Veterans of the war with Azerbaijan formed the most influential patronage networks in the 1990s, followed by the rise of local oligarchs in the 2000s, and then a move towards technocratic governance after 2008.

### 5.1.1 1988-1994 Independence and War

Armenian independence from the Soviet Union was inextricably linked with the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, a majority-Armenian territory located within Soviet Azerbaijan that sought unification with Armenia.[4] As in many Soviet republics, the independence move-

[2]A note on Armenian names: Western Armenian names (used in the United States) typically end with the patronymic -ian (as in Kardashian), while eastern Armenian names are typically transliterated with a -yan and no duplication of letters (Petrosyan rather than Petrossian), the process I follow here. Ter is an honorific indicating the individual is the descendent of a member of the Armenian clergy.

[3]PANM re-organized and re-branded itself as the Armenian National Congress (ANC) in 2008. See Appendix 1 for a full list of Armenian political parties.

[4]Inter-communal violence began in 1988 and escalated to full-scale war in 1991 (see DeWaal 2003 for a summary of the origins and events of the war). A ceasefire ended the worst fighting in 1994, but Armenia and Azerbaijan remain at war and conflict occasionally flares up, most notably in fall 2020, when an Azerbaijani offensive reclaimed most of the region. The Armenian-majority unrecognized state that covered the territory

ment began among intellectuals reasserting Armenian national identity. Unlike many other republics, however, it was only anti-communist to the extent that Soviet leadership opposed Armenia's claims to Nagorno-Karabakh and there was no firm break with the communist elite. The Communist Party declined in power through erosion and assimilation rather than electoral loss. Beginning immediately after the last elections held in Soviet Armenia (in 1990), Communist Party members began to adopt other party labels as they sought to maintain relevance during the transition. When Armenia declared independence in 1991, only 25 (of an original 136) official members of the Communist Party were left in parliament, and the party failed to put a candidate forward for that year's presidential elections.[5] Several of Armenia's main political parties – PANM, the HHK, and the modern version of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnaktsutsyun (ARF or Dashnak) – all formed as national movements at this time.[6]

### 5.1.2 1995-1999 Rise of the Veterans

The 1994 ceasefire with Azerbaijan brought with it the challenge of reintegrating combatants. Political and military leaders from Nagorno-Karabakh (NK), including militia leader Vazhgen Sargsyan, NK President Robert Kocharyan, and NK Self-Defense Forces head Serge Sargsyan,[7] all gained prominence and developed strong networks during the conflict. President Ter-Petrosyan coopted the most significant group, Vazhgen Sargsyan's network of war veterans (the Yekrapeh Volunteer Union) to ensure victory in the 1995-96 presidential elections and appointed veterans to key positions in law enforcement and the army (Vazghen Sargsyan became Minister of Defense and Robert Kocharyan became the Republic of Armenia Prime Minister in 1997).

At the same time, the privatization of state-owned businesses in the mid-1990s created opportunities to both provide jobs to veterans in newly privatized companies and build patron-client relations between businessmen and government bureaucrats (Mikaelyan 2016). In part due to the government's lack of revenue, these networks became the primary source

of the former Soviet autonomous region of Nagorno-Karabakh and portions of Azerbaijan referred to itself as the Republic of Artsakh. I use the name of the former Soviet autonomous region throughout.

[5]Calculation based on parliamentary fraction data available at `http://parliament.am/deputies.php?sel=factions\&GroupingID=43\&show\_session=100\&lang=eng`

[6]Armenia, which had briefly been an independent republic between the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and its absorption by the Soviet Union, also had a small group of diaspora parties that had their origins in the first republic. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation, which governed during the first republic, was the most prominent of the disapora parties, but the Liberal Democratic Party (Ramkavar-Azatakan) and Social Democratic Party (Hunchakian) also worked to establish themselves in Armenia in the 1990s. These parties achieved some initial success at the end of the Soviet period, when some former communists joined them as an alternate path to power, but were met with generally hostility by both PANM and the public, as they were perceived as interlopers that did not participate in the revolution – none had local party members or structures (Melkonian 2011).

[7]Sargsyan (son of Serge, also spelled Sarkissian) is a common last name in Armenia, held by many Armenian politicians, including former President Serge Sargsyan. None of these politicians are related to each other, with the exception of Vazhgen and Aram, who temporarily succeeded his brother as prime minister after Vazhgen's assassination.

of income and influence throughout Armenia.[8]

Disagreements between President Ter-Petrosyan and Vazhgen Sargsyan over resolution of the war in Nagorno-Karabakh, however, led to Ter-Petrosyan's resignation and the subsequent election of Robert Kocharyan as president of Armenia in 1998. Kocharyan filled his first cabinet with members of the "Karabakh clan" as well as prominent members of a splinter faction from PANM (ICG 2004b). Veterans began to decline in organized influence, however, after the assassination of Vazhgen Sargsyan, who had become prime minister, in an attack on parliament in 1999.[9] When Vazhgen's brother Aram took helm of the movement, veterans were folded into Kocharyan's network of support as one of many patron-client networks rather than first among equals (Iskandaryan et al 2016, 56). Yekrapeh leaders continued to take prominant roles in government (for example, Kocharyan's prime minister from 2000-2007 was a Yekrapeh board member who joined the Republican Party), but also in the opposition. Aram Sargsyan himself formed the Republic Party in 2001 with former members of the Republican Party and Yekrapeh, eventually joining the parliamentary opposition as a member of the Yelq Coalition in 2017.

### 5.1.3 2000-2009 Oligarchs at their peak

While Kocharyan was formally an independent, he maintained support in parliament with a coalition of three parties – the Republican Party, Dashnak, and Orinats Yerkir (Rule of Law). Beginning in 2000, he consolidated power with a new cabinet of loyalists, who increasingly represented business rather than military interests.[10]

Armenia's regional isolation[11] hindered economic development and drove business to manage competition through the state (Iskandaryan 2012). In exchange for budget support for military efforts and campaign finance (including bribes for voters), Armenian businessmen

[8]Armenia privatized most land and state-owned corporations by mid-1994 (Csaki 1995, Kaufmann and Siegelbaum 1996), during its war with Azerbaijan. The conflict meant little attention was devoted to the sales at the time, which occurred "before legions of advisors came," as Kaufmann and Siegelbaum (1996, 457) stated. The result was that, "having no transit income, no state-owned businesses and no income from sales of natural resources, the Armenian budget was comparable to the summary turnover of several major enterprises." (Iskandaryan et al 2016, 68)

[9]Speaker of parliament Karen Demirchyan, a former communist leader who led the second largest party in parliament, and six other prominent members of parliament were also killed in the attack. While the assassinations primarily benefited Kocharyan, the (ethnic Armenian) attackers' motives and any wider culpability for the attack were never established. The investigation of the attack was conducted in secret, the court proceedings were inconclusive, and three of the five attackers have died in prison (Ghaplanyan 2018, 48).

[10]These businessmen are usually referred to as oligarchs in Armenia, but as Iskandaryan et al (2016, 61) put it, "Given the small size of Armenia's economy, the threshold for being part of the economic elite and being considered an oligarch is relatively low. Someone who owns several restaurants or shops can qualify as an oligarch."

[11]Armenia's border with Azerbaijan is closed due to the ongoing war, as is its border with Turkey (in part due to Turkey's support for Azerbaijan in the war and in part due to Armenia's insistence on international recognition of the 1915-17 genocide of ethnic Armenians in the Ottoman Empire). Armenia has surface transit connections only with Georgia in the north and Iran to its south, and has been bypassed on the lucrative Belt and Road Initiative transit and pipeline projects through the Caucasus.

asked for favorable market access (Iskandaryan et al 2016, 67). Monopolies and oligopolies in transportation, construction, and food imports dominated Armenia's economy during the 2000s, to the extent that by 2013, 83% of Armenia's economy was controlled by monopolies or oligopolies (2-5 companies) (Nyman and Dolidze 2019). Increased market concentration was accompanied by the integration of economic and political power through family ties. For example, the companies controlling mobile phone and automobile imports were registered under the name of Sedrak Kocharyan, son of the president (Ghaplanyan 2018, 49). The sugar monopoly – a single company owned by Samvel Aleksanyan, an HHK MP from 2003-2018, that controlled 99% of the market in 2011 (Nranyan et al 2013, 65) – is the best known and most reviled example of this phenomenon.[12] Despite a highly cartelized economy and the extensive influence of individual businessmen in politics, oligarchs rarely colluded in advancing their goals: a 2012 International Crisis Group report assessed that their efforts to secure rents during this period were "ad hoc." (ICG 2012, 5)

The influence of oligarchs in politics peaked in the mid-2000s with the establishment of Prosperous Armenia (PA) by wealthy businessman Gagik Tsarukyan.[13] Founded in 2004, PA was first thought to be a party designed to support and keep Robert Kocharian in power past the 2008 presidential election (Manougian 2021, ICG 2012). Its membership consisted of the largest percentage of businessmen of any party, and remained remarkably stable over time for a personalist party. PA was the second largest party in parliament from its first election (in 2007) through 2020 and cycled through pro- and anti-government positions based on Tsarukyan's interests.

Armenia's high growth during this period,[14] driven by a booming construction sector, contributed to the windfall for oligarchs, but Armenia was hit hard by the 2008-09 global financial crisis – the economy shrank 14% in 2009 and only averaged 3% annual growth in the decade after. The collapse of the construction sector and emergence of the tourism, computer, and agribusiness sectors as drivers of growth (World Bank 2019, 17) created opportunities to both reduce the influence of oligarchs in government and allow the entry of new political actors.

Armenia faced a political crisis in addition to the economic crisis in 2008. The transfer of power from Kocharyan to Serge Sargsyan, who had been Ter-Petrosyan's Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior, then Kocharyan's chief of staff, national security advisor, Minister of Defense and Prime Minister, was marred by protests in which eight were killed and hundreds

[12] Aleksanyan also controls large stakes other food import markets and a large percentage of the retail supermarkets in Armenia. The sugar monopoly was technically "broken up" in 2017, but it was replaced by two companies owned by Aleksanyan and his family. The food industry contains many examples of monopolies and duopolies. Another former HHK MP (2017-2018), Mihran Pogyosyan, controlled 98% of banana imports through two companies in 2017 (Baghdasaryan 2017). Both monopolies remained in place in early 2018. As a (related?) sidenote, according to a 2015 Lancet study, Armenia had the least healthy diet pattern of any country in the world in 2010 (Micha et al 2015).

[13] A former arm wrestling champion, Tsarukyan is best known as the owner of the second-largest producer of brandy in Armenia. Through "Multi-group," he owns interests in a wide range of industries, including chemical processing and construction.

[14] Annual GDP growth never dipped below 10% between 2000 and 2008 (World Bank Open Data).

injured when police broke up them on March 1 (Bunce and Wolchik 2011, 195-6). "March 1" remained a rallying cry for the opposition over the next decade.

### 5.1.4 2010-2018 Move toward technocracy

Taking power after these "twin crises," Serge Sargsyan focused on stablizing Armenian politics. He increasingly integrated the state and ruling party, with mid-level state positions serving as a point of entry into the political class (Iskandaryan 2012). While Sargsyan and the HHK won elections based on their strong sub-national patronage networks, they focused on hiring technocrats at the highest levels of government. These rising politicians were young (in 2012, all the president's chief advisors were under 40),[15] educated abroad, and selected based as much on their competence as their connections (ICG 2012, 4).

Veterans and businessmen continued to play important roles in politics. In addition to individual examples such as the sugar magnate, the most prominent businessman who took a role in government was former Gazprom executive Karen Karapetyan, who became PM under Sargsyan.[16] The number of businessmen seeking office declined from its peak in 2003, however (see Figure 5.1), opening up space for professionalism in public administration.

While the Republican Party sought to create a stable, technocratic government in Yerevan supported by stable patron-client networks in Armenia's provinces, public disenchantment with the government led to the emergence of street protests as the most active form of opposition political participation. Citizens who felt that all forms of formal political participation – including non-governmental organizations – were coopted by a corrupt government instead joined issue-specific social movements (Ishkanian 2015, Paturyan and Bagiyan 2017).[17] Several veterans of these movements formed Armenia's new parliamentary opposition, including the Civil Contract and Bright Armenia parties, which formed a pre-election coalition with Aram Sargsyan's Republic Party ("Yelq" or "Way Out") for the 2017 parliamentary elections.

## 5.2 The evolution of Armenia's state bureaucracy

Armenia adopted Soviet bureaucratic structures and laws without revision upon independence. It first began to develop the legal framework for a professional bureaucracy in 2001

[15]For example, in 2012, PM Tigran Sargsyan's chief of staff, David Sargsyan, was 34. Armen Gevorgyan, 38, was deputy prime minister. The head of the presidential administration, Vigen Sargsyan, was 36.

[16]Karapetyan worked both for Russia's Gazprom and its Armenian affiliate. Other oligarchs of the 2000s did not fare so well. Mikhail Bagdasarov, who owned the national airline, went bankrupt in 2013 and 2016. Barsegh Beghlaryan, who controlled most of the gas stations in Armenia, was arrested in December 2018 for violent extortion.

[17]Some of the best known of these were protests against raising the fares for public transportation (in early 2013) and #ElectricYerevan, which protested a 17% hike in electricity rates in 2015. The transportation protests successfully kept metro fares at 100 drams (20 cents), but other protests did not have such clear results. Protests opposing the government's pension reforms ("Dem Em," in held in late 2013-early 2014) were the most influential, not because they succeeded, but because participants realized the need for different forms of political action.

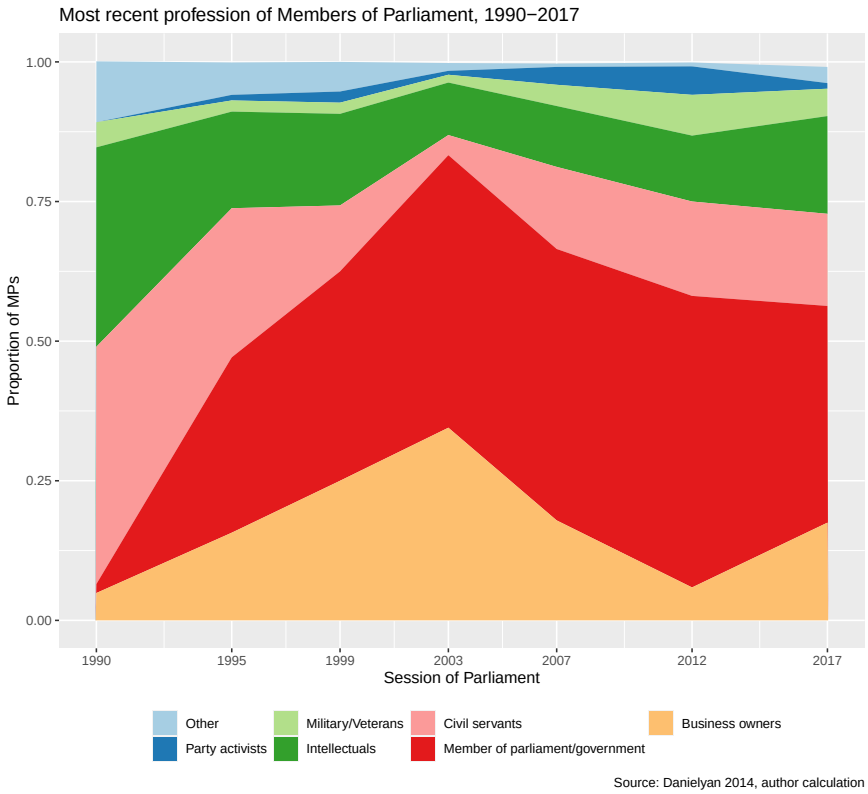



Figure 5.1

with the passage of legislation creating a civil service. Armenia experienced a gradual increase in administrative capacity over time (see Figure 5.2), driven by incremental reforms that increased professionalism in the bureaucracy and reduced outside economic influence, but left it subject to political influence. By 2015, Armenian bureaucrats were often highly skilled and trained, but were either unwilling or unable to take independent decisions, creating a process for policy implementation, but one that remained top-heavy and slow.

### 5.2.1 2000-2009: Legal and regulatory reform

Bureaucratic reform did not begin in Armenia until the Kocharyan administration (in 2001), when Armenia remained primarily under the influence of the oligarchs. According the Armenian government strategy for civil service reform (Republic of Armenia 2015), its first decade of reforms focused on the legal framework for the bureaucracy. A 2001 law "On Civil Service" established the principles of professional bureaucracy for the first time, creating an independent body (the Civil Service Council) to regularize and consolidate standards across a significant portion of the bureaucracy (SIGMA 2011). The law was followed by a series of laws and regulations that established salary standards for civil servants (in 2002), Armenia's first anti-corruption strategy (in 2003), requirements for asset declarations by high-ranking officials (in 2004), and Armenia's first external audit organization (in 2006). Position classifications for civil servants were created and disciplinary procedures established, and technical

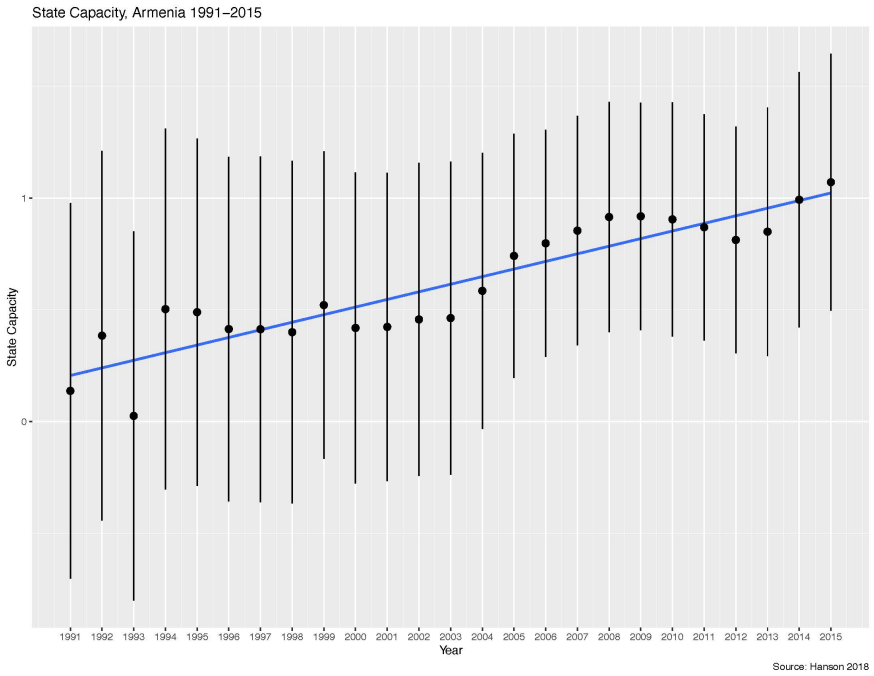



Figure 5.2: State Capacity in Armenia, 1991-2015

requirements for e-governance initiatives (such as the ability to accept electronic signatures) were put in place. Armenia joined international conventions against corruption (in 2007) and on public procurement (in 2011).

Despite these legal advances, Armenia's bureaucracy remained subject to high levels of corruption and political influence. The reforms were limited both in content and scope. The security forces, judiciary, and customs remained outside the purview of the Civil Service Council, while the Council itself was solely appointed by the President and subject to political influence. The anti-corruption strategy only addressed the business climate, not government corruption (OECD 2005). Tax collection remained low due to weak institutions and the large shadow economy (Davoodi and Grigorian 2007). Armenia continued to lack uniform conflict of interest regulations or a process to verify financial statements and punish violations – for example, the regulation requiring asset declarations did not require they be released outside the Ministry of Finance. In practice, the path to government employment remained primarily through patronage, not qualification. Some areas of the bureaucracy were more subject to influence than others – institutions associated with natural resources, the environment, energy, transportation, and construction, were seen as potential informal sources of income and therefore were crowded with patronage positions (Iskandaryan et al 2016). A 2004 International Crisis Group report documented the purchase of positions in the bureaucracy, noting that "people ... indebt themselves from the first day ... so bribes are needed to pay back the purchase price." (ICG 2004b, 16) These initial legal reforms were insufficient guarantors of state capacity (Borzel and van Hullen 2014).

Table 5.1: Summary of Armenian Civil Service Reform

| Reform | Year | Implementation |
|---|---|---|
| **Bureaucratic Independence** | | |
| Adoption of civil service law | 2001 | Law passed |
| | 2002 | Implementing regulations passed |
| | 2011 | Coverage of civil service law increased to all ministries |
| Merit-based hiring | 2011 | Number of political appointees reduced |
| | 2017 | Implementation variable: 85% of Social Security Office were civil servants, but only 2% of the tax office |
| Conflict of interest laws | 2004 | Law passed requiring asset declarations |
| | 2012 | Asset declarations published publicly |
| **Policy Formulation** | | |
| Regulatory review | 2016 | Online comment process implemented |
| Impact/cost assessments | 2006 | External audit organization created |
| **Training** | | |
| Amount, quality of training | 2016-17 | One quarter of civil servants received training |
| Job descriptions | 2006 | Position classifications created |
| Merit-based promotion | 2011 | Regulations creating promotion standards created |

### 5.2.2 2010-2018: Improving implementation

The next decade of public service reform under Republican Party rule in Armenia made gradual reforms to improve both the regulatory framework for the bureaucracy and its performance. In the bureaucracy itself, capacity increased, although only at the medium-to-low level within ministries (senior officials remained exempt from most regulations). The range of sectors where capacity increased also expanded. The cadastre, civic registration, social services, and agriculture ministries were all relatively high in capacity, while tax and customs, procurement, retail trade remained remained corrupt (Iskandaryan et al 2016, 87). While capacity increased, overall, Armenia's focus in anti-corruption reforms remained administrative, not political corruption (Interview with western diplomat, November 8, 2017).

A series of regulatory and legal reforms in the first half of the decade improved the formal basis for hiring procedures, evaluating conflicts of interest, and policy development. Key actions included the creation of a single legal framework for all parts of the bureaucracy (including the staff of the President and Prime Minister, Legislature, judiciary, and regional offices), reduction in the number of positions available to political appointees, and creation of performance assessment standards (all in 2011); the creation of the Ethics Commission

for High Ranking Officials (ECHRO), which published asset declarations for the first time in 2012; passage of a Law on Public Procurement in 2016, an on-line comment process for draft legislation the same year (see also Table 5.1).

An early 2018 EU-OECD review of Armenia's bureaucratic reforms concluded that government salaries were adequate to meet the cost of living in Armenia and that job classifications, evaluations, and training opportunities were all in place. While improvements could be made on these fronts – many job classifications were vague and the evaluation procedures were complex – they were consistently used across the bureaucracy (SIGMA 2019, 20). One quarter of civil servants participated in training at least once in 2016 and 2017. By the end of 2017, the proportion of civil servants among the total number of employees was high in key ministries (approximately 67% of the Ministry of Economic Development and Investments, 68% of the cadastre, 75% of the Audit Chamber was made up of civil servants, and 85% in the Social Security Service for example). Across all agencies, however, only 18% of government employees had civil servant status, with some agencies (like the State Revenue Commission) having no more than 2% of staff part of the formal civil service (SIGMA 2019).

There were clear procedures for policy review within the government – through the inclusion of items on the regular agenda of a government session (cabinet meeting) – and for the dissemination of the results of government decisions through the bureaucracy. Not all ministries followed these procedures, however. Of the four ministries sampled by the OECD, only three (Labor and Social Affairs, Agriculture, and Environment) had established roles and responsibilities for policy development that were followed consistently. The fourth – the Ministry of Economic Development – declined to provide information, pointing to ongoing problems (SIGMA 2019, 37). The procedures established for parliamentary oversight and public comment on draft legislation in 2016 were regularly used (and frequently cited by interviewees) and legislation and government decrees were both published online.

Despite these strengths – and the reduction of patronage positions and solicitation of bribes at the lower levels of the bureaucracy – corruption in the form of favorable contracting and lax business regulation remained a problem in Armenia (SIGMA 2019, 124). Little action was taken to prosecute officials for corruption or identify and prevent conflicts of interest. Prominent corruption cases targeted former administration officials or political competitors rather than the worst offenders. In 2010, President Sargsyan took some symbolic steps against senior officials: the prior administration's Minister of Agriculture, head of the Social Welfare Service, and two deputy Health Ministers were either dismissed or resigned under pressure after allegations of corruption. None were prosecuted, however, and none were in ministries essential to the patronage system. Larger and more sensitive cases also went unprosecuted. For example, in 2012, a U.S. federal court found HHK MP (and Minister of Environment under Kocharyan) Vartan Ayvazyan guilty of soliciting a USD 3 million bribe from a U.S.-based gold mining company in exchange for issuing a mining license. No charges were brought in Armenia (U.S. Department of State 2012).

Anti-corruption activities were also used to attack competing political parties prior to elections. For example, Vardan Oskanyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs under Kocharyan and later

an MP with Prosperous Armenia (2012-15) and a key member of an opposition alliance in the 2017 elections, was charged with money laundering through his Civilitas Foundation in late 2012. The case was dropped in July 2013 (after the February 2013 presidential elections) when Oskanyan agreed to pay taxes on the funds in question (Harutyunyan and Hoktanyan 2013).

In sum, by the end of 2017, Armenia had a robust, if imperfect, legal framework for a professional and effective bureaucracy. Armenia had relatively clear procedures for policy development and hiring within the bureaucracy. While these procedures were not consistently implemented, most policy was developed within the state, with formal input from outside actors, as coordinated by Republican Party officials. Despite progress in these areas, oversight of government procurement and prosecution of corruption remained weak.

## 5.3 Elite Motivations and Strategies

How did these bureaucratic reforms shape elite perceptions of leader credibility and motivations for forming parties and coalitions? My theory argues that I should be able to identify three observable implications of increases in state capacity in elite behavior and attitudes:

H2: Elite perception of the credibility of policy commitments will be higher in electoral authoritarian regimes with higher state capacity than in countries with lower capacity.

H2A : In an electoral authoritarian state, as state capacity increases, elite perception of the credibility of a dictator's policy commitments increases.

H3: Members of loyal opposition parties will be more interested in bargaining over policy in electoral authoritarian regimes with higher state capacity than in countries with lower state capacity.

H3A : In an electoral authoritarian state, as state capacity increases, members of loyal opposition parties will become more interested in policy bargaining.

H4: Elites in states with higher levels of adminstrative capacity will be more likely to join political parties based on policy motivations than in states with low levels of administrative capacity.

H4A : In an electoral authoritarian state, as state capacity increases, elites will be more likely to join political parties based on policy motivations.

In order to evaluate these hypotheses, I do two things in this chapter: first, I describe a case study of a medium-capacity authoritarian state in 2017-8 (for comparison to the Kyrgyz Republic, a low-capacity state, in the next chapter). I describe elite motivations for joining parties and forming coalitions through a combination of semi-structured interviews and surveys (a pilot survey conducted between November 2017 and April 2018 and an additional

survey in summer 2019)[18]. In addition, I use limited information from the summer 2019 survey and interview records from Danielyan 2014, a 2012 study of Armenia's political elite, to evaluate whether elite motivations changed as capacity grew within Armenia itself.

### 5.3.1 Who's an elite? Sampling Armenian politicians

#### Population

The population examined in this study is the Armenian political elite – specifically, Armenians who chose to participate in formal politics as candidates for parliament on a party list. This group (candidates for office) represents a broad cross-section the political elite. While the exact makeup of each list varies, parties typically choose a combination of party loyalists, local power brokers, prominant intellectuals, journalists, representatives of organized civil society, and business leaders as candidates (Iskandaryan 2012, Iskandaryan et al 2016). Since party membership is not required to join a party list (indeed, my survey of candidates found that one-quarter of respondents stated they did not belong to any party, see Tables 5.5 and 5.6), this group also captures some members of civil society who chose to engage with the regime.

The main source of political elites not covered by this sampling frame is social movement leaders – protest organizers who believed that any engagement with formal politics was illegitimate. A 2012 survey of 691 potential members of the political elite (Danielyan 2014, 2017) found that, of those not already members of political parties, student leaders and civil servants were the only groups who expressed significant interest in engaging in politics (see Table 5.2). Using party lists may therefore miss some civil servants who intend to shift to politics, but they do represent a reasonable proxy for the political elite.

Table 5.2: Do you plan to get involved in politics? (2012 Survey)

| Type of potential elite | Yes | No | Undecided | Already involved | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Civil servants | .252 | .435 | .196 | .117 | 230 |
| Political party members | .152 | .045 | .061 | .742 | 66 |
| NGO members | .22 | .512 | .195 | .073 | 41 |
| Local government officials | .142 | .494 | .247 | .117 | 162 |
| Student council members | .538 | .154 | .077 | .231 | 14 |
| Business owners | .174 | .609 | .217 | 0 | 24 |
| Academics, Athletes, and Artists | .154 | .692 | .077 | .077 | 155 |

Source: Danielyan 2014, 145

[18]The pilot survey was conducted April 5-19, 2018 by the Caucasus Research Resource Center (CRRC) - Armenia, a local NGO that also conducts the Caucasus Barometer in Armenia. It was designed as a pilot to calibrate questions and samples for a full survey, but also coincided with Armenia's velvet revolution (April 13-23, 2018). This made it my final source of data on Armenia's electoral authoritarian regime. The summer 2019 survey evaluated opinion six months after Armenia's first democratic elections (held in December 2018). I use some responses from this survey (from respondents who stated they joined a party before the revolution) to provide additional context on motivations for joining parties.

In addition to a relatively comprehensive measure of political elites, candidates for office are also a relatively consistent group over time. MP turnover has remained relatively consistent over time, with 40-50% of MPs re-elected each cycle since 1999 (see Table 5.3).

Table 5.3: Turnover of Armenian members of parliament, 1991-2017

| Election | Repeat candidates | Percent reelected |
|---|---|---|
| 1991 | | 29.3 |
| 1995 | | 32.2 |
| 1999 | | 45.3 |
| 2003 | | 46.1 |
| 2007 | | 49.2 |
| 2012 | | 48.3 |
| 2017 | 33.0 | 42.7 |

Source: Danielyan (2014, 105) and author calculation. Note that candidate lists are only publicly available for 2012 and 2017, making the calculation for candidate turnover only possible for 2017.

### Interview Sample

Based on this population, I then adopted a modified snowball sampling strategy for semi-structured interviews. With the goal of interviewing at least three members of each parliamentary party and one from key non-parliamentary parties, I obtained interviews with my initial targets and asked each interviewee to recommend additional subjects.[19] I was ultimately able to conduct 27 interviews of 26 individuals, one of whom was interviewed twice at different points in time (see Table 5.4 for full distribution).[20] All interviews were conducted either in English or in Armenian with the use of an interpreter.

### Survey Sample

For the survey, I used the party lists of candidates for parliament in the 2017 elections as the base for my sample of the elite.[21] The survey was designed as a pilot to test the validity of the sampling frame and question wording, and so was conducted on-line only – participants were contacted through email and Facebook. This skewed the sampling frame toward

[19] I identified key non-parliamentary parties based on background interviews with local subject-matter experts. They were parties who had participated in prior elections and intended to continue to do so. My initial target was to interview the secretary of the parliamentary faction, an "average" member of parliament, and a member of the party organization for parliamentary parties and the deputy head of party for non-parliamentary parties.

[20] Note that due to Armenia's small population, this is a relatively large interview sample. I interviewed 15% of all members of parliament at the time.

[21] These lists are publicly available through the Armenian Election Commission website `https://www.elections.am/parliamentary/`

Table 5.4: Interviews conducted in Armenia, November 2017-March 2018

| | | Leadership | MP/ Candidate | Staff | Former Member | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Parliamentary Parties | | | | | | |
| Republican Party of Armenia | | | | | | |
| | Nov. 2017 | 1 | | 2 | | 3 |
| | Feb.-Mar. 2018 | 2* | 2 | | | 4* |
| | Total | 2 | 2 | 2 | | 6 |
| Prosperous Armenia | | | | | | |
| | Nov. 2017 | 1 | | 1 | | 2 |
| | Feb.-Mar. 2018 | | 1 | | | 1 |
| | Total | 1 | 2 | | | 3 |
| Dashnak | | | | | | |
| | Nov. 2017 | | 1 | 1 | | 2 |
| | Feb.-Mar. 2018 | 3 | | 1 | | 4 |
| | Total | 3 | 1 | 2 | | 6 |
| Bright Armenia | | | | | | |
| | Nov. 2017 | 1 | | | | 1 |
| | Feb.-Mar. 2018 | | 1 | 1 | | 2 |
| | Total | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 3 |
| Civil Contract | | | | | | |
| | Feb.-Mar. 2018 | | 1 | | | 1 |
| | Total | | 1 | | | 1 |
| Non-Parliamentary Parties | | | | | | |
| Armenian National Congress | | | | | | |
| | Feb.-Mar 2108 | 1 | | | | 1 |
| | Total | 1 | | | | 1 |
| Heritage | | | | | | |
| | Nov. 2017 | | | | 1 | 1 |
| | Feb.-Mar 2108 | 1 | | | 1 | 2 |
| | Total | 1 | | | 2 | 3 |
| Orinats Yerkir (Rule of Law) | | | | | | |
| | Feb.-Mar 2108 | 1 | | | | 1 |
| | Total | 1 | | | | 1 |
| Free Democrats | | | | | | |
| | Nov. 2017 | 1 | | | 1 | 2 |
| | Total | 1 | | | 1 | 2 |

*=reinterview

younger, urban candidates who had internet access and used it regularly.[22] The sample was

[22]According to the World Bank, 68% of the population had Internet access in 2018. Facebook is the social media app of choice in Armenia. In September 2018, an estimate 1.2 million Armenians (42% of the

also skewed toward more organized opposition parties – those who were willing to share party member contact information and to send an email from the party leadership encouraging participation in the study (specifically, Dashnak, Bright Armenia, and Heritage).[23] See Table 5.5 for details on the response rate. Despite the flaws with the sample and its small size, it is the only source of data from a broader range of elites from this time period (before and during the revolution). I present the results below with caveats as noted.

Table 5.5: Sampling Bias, April 2018 Pilot Survey

| Political Party | Population | Sample | Responses |
|---|---|---|---|
| ANC | .055 | .08 | .073 |
| | (85) | (34) | (6) |
| ARF - Dashnak | .081 | .276 | .133 |
| | (124) | (96) | (11) |
| Bright Armenia | .023 | .043 | .108 |
| | (31) | (18) | (9) |
| Civil Contract | .04 | .056 | .084 |
| | (54) | (24) | (7) |
| Free Democrats | .052 | .059 | .072 |
| | (71) | (25) | (6) |
| Heritage | .019 | .043 | .06 |
| | (26) | (18) | (5) |
| Prosperous Armenia | .089 | .071 | .048 |
| | (121) | (30) | (4) |
| Rule of Law | .194 | .052 | .06 |
| | (299) | (22) | (5) |
| Republic | .02 | .017 | .012 |
| | (27) | (7) | (1) |
| Republican Party | .099 | .123 | .048 |
| | (134) | (52) | (4) |
| Other | .25 | .028 | .048 |
| | (339) | (12) | (4) |
| No Party | .167 | .158 | .253 |
| | (227) | (67) | (21) |
| N | 1358 | 405 (29.8%) | 83 (20.5%) |

Note: Number of individuals in each category in parentheses

I also conducted a more representative survey of the Armenia elite in June and July 2019, after Armenia's April 2018 velvet revolution and December 2018 elections. This survey drew

population) used Facebook; half of those users were age 25-44 (https://napoleoncat.com/stats/facebook-users-in-armenia/2018/09).

[23]The remainder of the sampling frame was gathered from publicly available sources – for example, the parliament website – and through civil society networks.

from the party lists for the 2018 parliamentary elections to serve as its population of interest, while the sampling frame was made of list members for whom a local NGO (CRRC) could identify contact information (34% of all list members; see Table 5.6). This survey, which consisted of in person interviews conducted by CRRC as well as an identical online survey (politicians contacted were given the choice of how they would prefer to complete the survey), had a relatively high response rate (60% of the frame). Of the 306 respondents to this survey, 135 indicated they joined their political party prior to 2018. I use these responses in select analyses (motivation for policy choice and ideological orientation) that should be relatively stable over time, with the caveat that politicians may have modified their reasoning after the revolution.

### 5.3.2 Measuring Preferences and Credibility

There are two main challenges in measuring elite preferences and motivations: first, distinguishing different types of strategic motivations, and second, evaluating the sincerity of responses. I do this through a combination of direct and indirect measures of motivations for joining parties and coalitions, trust in the president, and interest in policy bargaining. To observe change over time, where possible I also report interview data from prior studies and the media.

I divide elite preferences over parties into four categories: policy, patronage, votes, and social networks (see summary in Table 5.7 and sample coding in Appendix 2). Three of the categories of motivations I study incorporate some form of strategic calculation (the classic divide of vote-seeking, office-seeking (here: patronage), and policy-seeking behavior discussed in Chapter 3; Strom 1990), while the fourth relies on network effects rather than individual cost-benefit analysis.

I code responses about joining a party with friends or based on the quality of its party members as social network-related motivations.[24] Distinguishing between different strategic motivations is more difficult. An emphasis on policy is often clearly stated, but it may not be an individual's genuine motivation for political activity. Patronage motivations are the least likely to be expressed overtly and may be masked by statements of career interests or admiration for a party leader. The core challenge is distinguishing between joining a party because it has resources that can be directed to personal use or directed to winning elections. I code direct responses that focus on the likelihood of winning as an electoral calculation, personal advancement as a patronage motivation, and platform as policy motivation (Cox 1997, Tavits 2008).

I use these direct measures of politicians' policy preferences and motivations based on prior practice in elite surveys (Saeigh 2009, Laver 2014, Whitaker et al 2017). Since politicians may misrepresent their motivations, however, I also use indirect measures of preferences.

[24] In interviews, Armenian politicians were extremely upfront about personal ties as a motivation for joining a party (see Appendix 2 for sample statements). It was one of the most common responses - and often the first mentioned - in qualitative interviews, which led to its inclusion in the survey as well.

Table 5.6: Sampling Bias, Summer 2019 Survey

| Political Party | Population | Sample | Total Responses | Relevant Responses |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ARF - Dashnak | 0.086 | 0.098 | 0.095 | 0.215 |
| | (128) | (50) | (29) | (29) |
| Bright Armenia | 0.074 | 0.100 | 0.065 | 0.141 |
| | (109) | (51) | (20) | (19) |
| Christian Dem. Party | 0.039 | 0.039 | 0.003 | n/a |
| | (58) | (16) | (1) | |
| Citizen's Decision/SDP | 0.041 | 0.039 | 0.033 | n/a |
| | (61) | (20) | (10) | |
| Civil Contract/My Step | 0.084 | 0.228 | 0.092 | 0.148 |
| | (125) | (116) | (28) | (20) |
| Free Democrats | 0.029 | 0.057 | 0.049 | 0.104 |
| | (43) | (29) | (15) | (14) |
| Heritage Party | 0.001 | 0 | 0.007 | 0.007 |
| | (2) | (0) | (2) | (1) |
| National Progress Party | 0.056 | 0.028 | 0.039 | n/a |
| | (83) | (14) | (12) | |
| Prosperous Armenia | 0.095 | 0.102 | 0.049 | 0.104 |
| | (141) | (52) | (15) | (14) |
| Republic | 0.039 | 0.059 | 0.023 | (0.044) |
| | (58) | (30) | (7) | (6) |
| Republican Party | 0.06 | 0.100 | 0.075 | 0.133 |
| | (89) | (51) | (23) | (18) |
| Rule of Law | 0.089 | 0.029 | 0.029 | 0.067 |
| | (132) | (15) | (9) | (9) |
| Sasna Tsrer | 0.087 | 0.128 | 0.108 | n/a |
| | (129) | (65) | (33) | |
| Other | 0.021 | 0 | 0.023 | 0.037 |
| | (31) | (0) | (7) | (5) |
| No Party | 0.198 | 0 | 0.304 | n/a |
| | (293) | (0) | (93) | |
| N | 1482 | 509 (0.34) | 306 (0.60) | 135 |

Note: Number of individuals in each category in parentheses. "Relevant responses" means responses from members who stated they joined their political party prior to Armenia's 2018 velvet revolution.

Specifically, in interviews, I evaluate the validity of a politician's claim to be motivated by a party platform by asking that politician to describe the platform. More detailed descriptions of key elements of a platform lend credibility to a politician's statement that she is primarily interested in policy issues. Similarly, I evaluate interview evidence on electoral motivations by the depth of a candidate's understanding of the electoral law and knowledge of a con-

stituency.[25]

Measuring estimates of leader credibility is both more challenging and has fewer precedents. In interviews, I approached this by identifying a policy issue on which the respondent engaged – which was not always possible – then asking how negotiations with the government proceeded. In some cases, it was also possible to ask direct questions about reactions to leader commitments, as with Dashnak's satisfaction with Republican Party adherence to their coalition agreement. Finally, I asked about all interviewees' expectations for the planned April 2018 transition to a parliamentary system. On the pilot survey, I asked direct questions about trust in the president and executive.[26]

Finally, to measure interest in policy bargaining, I evaluated the overall number of interviewees who could discuss policy bargaining (and at what level of detail). I asked a direct question about policy implementation that included responses related to state capacity to see whether respondents would identify this as a problem.

In all cases, interviews were coded according to the length and category of response. If an interviewee offered more than one answer to a question (for example, they joined a party with friends but also found it to be the best ideological fit), each response was noted in priority order. See Appendix 2 for sample coding of questions and responses.

### 5.3.3 Methodological Challenges

While I have made several efforts to ensure the accuracy of these results, several challenges to the construct validity of this study remain. As noted, party members have incentives to hide personal motivations (such as professional advancement) behind policy or service-oriented statements, and so we should expect inflated estimates of programmatic motivations for party membership. Similarly, respondents may hesitate to criticize leaders for fear of political retaliation. Finally, I ask interviewees to reflect on their past – their decisions to join a party may have taken place as long as 30 years ago. Respondents may misremember their initial reasoning or have changed their views over time, making contemporary interviews an imperfect measure of decisions to join a party. This is a particular challenge for interviews and surveys conducted after the 2018 Velvet Revolution, which may have incentivized politi-

[25] I also included an experimental treatment on the survey designed to assess the overall (elite) population's likelihood of accepting a bribe as a measure of patronage-seeking. The list experiment included two versions of a question about the respondent's political activities – one version (the treatment) included accepting money in exchange for a political favor as an activity, and the other (the control) did not (see Appendix 3 for exact question wording and results). Respondents were not asked to state which activities they participated in, but how many they had done, allowing them plausible deniability if they indicated they had taken a bribe in the past year. This survey did not, however, have a large enough sample to provide measurable results for the experiment.

[26] I also included a list experiment to evaluate leader credibility. Respondents were asked how many statements about policy development in Armenia were true from a list (again, full text and results in Appendix 3). The treatment version of the question included the statement "I trust the president to implement the policies he has promised to enact." Like the bribery treatment, the sample was not large enough for statistically significant results.

Table 5.7: Direct and Indirect Measures of Elite Preferences

| | Surveys | Interviews |
|---|---|---|
| | Vote-seeking/Electoral calculation motivations | |
| Direct | Motivation for entering politics was representation | Statements about the likelihood of victory or representing a specific group |
| Indirect | | Degree of specificity they use to discuss their constituency |
| | Office/Patronage motivations | |
| Direct | Motivation for joining the party was "admiration for leader" or "desire to help career." | Interviewee statement that joined party for personal or professional advancement, or admiration for the leader. |
| Indirect | Average response to experimental treatment on acceptance of a bribe | |
| | Policy motivations | |
| Direct | "Party platform" as motivation for joining party. | Party platform or desire to represent a certain group as motivation for joining party. |
| Indirect | Difference between individual ideal points and party ideal points. | Level of detail in which interviewee is able to describe the platform. |
| | Social/Peer network motivations | |
| Direct | "Personal connection to party members" response to question on motivation for joining party. | Statement that joined the party with friends or learned about the party from friends. |
| | Leader Credibility | |
| Direct | Questions on trust in the president and trust in the executive | |
| Indirect | Treatment on policy obstacles | |
| | Interest in Policy Bargaining | |
| Direct | | Statements on policy formation and obstacles |
| Indirect | Treatment on policy formation | Level of detail used in discussion of legislative process |

cians to offer more democratically-oriented responses in order to conform with new political norms. I attempt to minimize this bias by examining interviews conducted in 2012 with politicians on similar topics (Danielyan 2014, 21, see below for further description). Three members were interviewed in both my sample and the 2012 sample, including one senior member of HHK and two members of Heritage. Comparing those interviews to each other reveals general consistency over time, with some hindsight bias. Politicians in 2019 were less likely to cite their support for a party leader as their reason for joining (and more likely to gloss over details of their party membership), but generally described the primary reason for

entry into politics consistently across the two time periods.[27]

More notably, this research design suffers from selection bias. While I identified and interviewed former party members, individuals who switched party affiliation over time, and members of parties no longer represented in parliament, "successful" parties remain over-represented in my sample. Parties that no longer exist, such as Shamiram (a party in the 1990s primarily consisting of the spouse of government ministers), are not represented in the analysis. This means that I may under-represent certain motivations and types of politicians in my analysis. It may be the case that certain ideological (or particularly non-ideological) motives may have only been represented in unsuccessful parties. Examining the parties that did not gain seats in more than one or two elections[28] shows they were either under-resourced or were formed solely to support the governing coalition. My results may therefore under-represent professional or personal motivations (those who formed parties solely to aid the government) or the policy motives to join a small party. Since both of these types of parties remain represented in my data, however, these views are considered in my analysis.

Finally, I attempt to make inferences over time while primarily gathering data at a single point in time. While examining motivations to join political parties, I use two methods to attempt to demonstrate their evolution over time. First, I separate responses based on the length of time a respondent has been a member of a party. While this does introduce recall bias, it provides a rough measure of distinctions between politicians who joined parties during the three stages of political development in Armenia (1990-2000, 2000-2010, and 2010-2018).

Second, I compare my interview results to those obtained in a 2012 study of Armenian politicians. This study consisted of interviews (and a separate survey) conducted between April and August 2012 (Danielyan 2014). 51 politicians agreed to interviews from a sampling frame of 70 elites selected for their positions in parliament and the executive branch. The sample consisted of 17 individuals from the Republican Party, six members of Heritage, three members of Prosperous Armenia, six members of ARF-Dashnak, three members of ANC, two members of the Democratic Party, two members of MIAK, and six members of small

[27]Specifically, the former member of Heritage party described his entry into the party in similar terms – he was hired to conduct research for a think tank affiliated with the party leader and eventually became a member of the party and a representative in parliament. In 2012, however, he placed more emphasis on his admiration for the party leader, who was preparing a run for president at the time, than he did in 2018 after he became disillusioned with the leader and left the party. The member of HHK described a similar origin story (fighting for Armenian independence in the last days of the Soviet Union) and explanation for his entry into politics, but elided his prior party membership in the 2018 interview. He had been a member of United Party before joining HHK in 1994, a few years after the Republican Party's initial formation, a detail provided in 2012, but not 2018. The current member of Heritage described his full political evolution (joining Dashnak before Heritage) the same way in both interviews, but like his former colleague expressed strong admiration for the former party leader in 2012 as the main reason for joining. In 2019, he also stated he joined because of his support for the leader, although with less admiration.

[28]Shamiram, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Union for National Self-Determination (UNSD), Christian Democratic Union (CDU), Right & Unity, Alliance, National Democratic Union (NDU), and the Communist Party of Armenia. See Appendix 1 for descriptions of each party. Two parties that may have endured (Unity Bloc and the People's Party) dissolved after their leadership were killed in the 1999 attack on parliament.

parties (CDU, CRU, NDU, SDP, UNSD, United Labor).[29] These interviews only covered biographic details and respondents' reasons for entry into politics, and so can only provide a frame of reference for those topics. As noted above, the broad consistency of the interviews of three overlapping respondents indicates they can provide a useful sense of change over time.

### 5.3.4 Why join a party?

H4A : In an electoral authoritarian state, as state capacity increases, elites will be more likely to join political parties based on policy motivations.

Elite motivations to join political parties in Armenia are influenced both by the evolution of social cleavages in Armenia and by the development of state capacity over time. Programmatic reasons for party choice can be described as a U-shaped curve – they peaked with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, when Armenian independence and war with Azerbaijan formed powerful motivations behind the creation of a range of new parties. As the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh evolved into stalemate, the polarization of Armenian politics declined and personalist and patronage-based motives became more common. After 2010, programmatic politics began to make a resurgence, with political parties focused on policy implementation becoming the most common type of new party.

A simple discussion of the evolution of individual motivations therefore only partly supports the hypothesis that more policy-driven politicians are likely to enter the political system as state capacity rises, instead supporting the counter-explanation that polarizing social cleavages drive party membership. When individual motivations are modified by the type of party formed, however, we see an evolution from catch-all parties in the 1990s to personalist parties in the 2000s to more programmatic parties in the 2010s. With the exception of the country's founding elections, policy-motivated politicians were more likely to form programmatic-oriented parties after a decade of administrative reform. Programmatic motives did not increase over time due to the polarization of politics in the immediate aftermath of conflit with Azerbaijan, but programmatic parties increased in number and influence over time and with the rise in state capacity.

In both interviews and the surveys, the most common stated reason for joining a political party was a policy issue. Ninety percent of pilot survey respondents cited a programmatic reason for joining their political party (see Table 5.8). Interviews confirmed these figures. Overall, 12 (of 27 interviewees) mentioned policy or ideology as the sole or first reason why they joined a political party. Policy motivations were often vague – a commitment to social justice or agreement about Armenia's orientation toward Europe – but pointed to the major cleavages in current political debates.

While on average, newer party members were just as likely as older members to state they joined a party because of its platform, more senior politicians were much more detailed in

[29]The remaining interviewees were not party members.

Table 5.8: Summary statistics, Stated motivation for party choice

| Type of response | 2012 interviews | 2018 survey | 2018 interviews | 2019 survey |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Policy | 0.4 | 0.9 | 0.42 | 3.73 |
| Leader | 0.111 | n/a | 0.092 | 2.80 |
| Office | 0.322 | 0.217 | 0.210 | 1.70 |
| Vote | 0.067 | n/a | 0.031 | 1.84 |
| Social | 0.111 | 0.517 | 0.191 | 1.95 |
| N | 45 | 60 | 31 | 133 |

Note: These averages are not directly comparable to each other, and are best compared across rank order. For the pilot survey, the number of responses is greater than number of respondents because each person could choose three answers. 2012, pilot, and interview responses reflect the proportion of respondents who selects the indicated reason. For the 2019 survey, respondents were asked to rate the importance of the indicated reason on a scale from 1 (not important) to 4 (very important); summary statistics reflect the mean response across all parties.

their policy goals. For example, a party youth leader said he joined "for ideological reasons. I wanted to do something for the greater good and I was attracted by the long-term goals of the organization and the flexibility and longevity of the party. They put society before self, and youth are the most important level in society." (Interview 1001, November 9, 2017) A non-parliamentary party leader of a new party in her 30s was similarly broad in her priorities: "I joined because it represents a liberal ideology for the public. ... Liberal values and ideology are important to me." (Interview 1005, November 16, 2017)

Members who joined their party under communism were more specific in their purpose. A ruling party MP stated,

> Our purpose was always an independent Armenia. [My party] stood at its roots for our nation and I was there at the beginning. During those times our goal was gaining independence. It began as a war for Karabakh and then moved to an independence movement. Our first charter had party, military, and political goals. (Interview 1017, February 27, 2018)

Similarly, a governing coalition MP stated,

> During the last years of the Soviet Union, [our party] started secretly - then openly - conducting activities. At that time, I decided to join because it was the strongest party in favor of an independent Armenia. The ideological platform on which [our party] is based is in favor of a national image, social justice, and democratic approaches. These are all very close to my heart - one can't exist without the other. (Interview 1019, March 1, 2018)

A 2012 study of the background and values of members of Armenia's political elite conducted by the AREG Scientific Cultural Youth Association found similar results (Danielyan 2014). Of those who joined parties in the 1990s, around half said they entered politics because of the Karabakh movement. While advocating for "independence" remains a broad motivation for party formation, interviewees who joined parties in the 1990s spent more time describing

what this goal meant to them and how they took action to achieve it. Younger party members rarely moved beyond broad descriptors of their ideology.

A more representative survey conducted in summer 2019 provides more detail on this matter. All Armenian elites indicated their parties' platforms were their most important reasons for joining their parties (see Table 5.8, column 5). Breaking down these results by the year a politician joined their party, we see a decline in programmatic motivations over time (Table 5.9, bottom row). Every elite who stated they joined their party in the 1990s (at independence or during the war with Azerbaijan)[30] said the party platform was a "very significant" reason for their membership, with more mixed results over the years. This is unsurprising, given the highly polarized nature of Armenian politics in the 1990s, and selection bias – those who stay in a party for years are likely to be more ideologically committed to its goals (or to have benefited the most from membership).

Looking at both time of entry and which party a politician joined, however, adds nuance to this analysis. While the survey results have a relatively even distribution of party entry over time (although the past five years are overrepresented[31]), the probability of joining a given party is not evenly distributed over time. Dashnak, a Marxist-style party with a strong internal organization, and Prosperous Armenia, a personalist party, both have the largest number of joiners at their foundation (Dashnak in the 1990s, Prosperous Armenia in the 2000s). We therefore see a strong correlation between when a politician entered politics and the party they joined – those who stated they were most motivated by ideology were both more likely to join politics in the 1990s and to join Dashnak, a highly ideological party.

Regression analysis confirms these distinctions (see Table 5.10; full results available in Appendix 3). Holding party and other motivations constant, we see that the only significant relationship with a higher programmatic motivation for party choice is joining that party in the 1990s. A politician who joined a party before the year 2000 was (on average) likely to indicate a 0.5 point higher value to the importance of programmatic motivations (on a five point scale) than someone who joined a party after 2013. When examining additional motivations, we can see that individuals who joined parties that formed in later years were more likely to cite other motivations. Holding all other variables constant, members of Bright Armenia (a programmatic party formed in 2015) were likely to state that election to office (0.8 points higher than Republican Party members) and connections to party members (1.3 points) were important reasons for joining their party. Members of the Free Democrats (a similar party founded earlier) similarly were more likely to state social connections as an

[30] A desire for Armenian independence was the polarizing issue under Soviet rule that served as a powerful mobilizer for anti-regime activity. While Nagorno-Karabakh remains an important issue in Armenian politics, it is no longer the sole issue, and the policy implications of newer social divisions are not as clear. For example, one current cleavage is a European vs. Russian orientation. But few in Armenia advocate for a full reduction of ties with Russia, which provides important military aid in Armenia's ongoing conflict with Azerbaijan. Instead, policy centers around issues such as withdrawal from the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union, which are not as central to voters as issues of Armenian identity.

[31] Likely due to a large number of members of Civil Contract, the post-revolution ruling party, indicating they joined during the 2018 revolution.

Table 5.9: Mean response, Programmatic Motivation for Party Choice (Summer 2019)

| | Year joined | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Party | 2013-2018 | 2009-2012 | 2000-2008 | <2000 | Total |
| ARF-Dashnak | 2.50 (2) | 3.00 (3) | 4.00 (4) | 4.00 (20) | 3.79 (29) |
| Bright Armenia | 3.42 (19) | | | | 3.42 (19) |
| Civil Contract | 3.90 (20) | | | | 3.90 (20) |
| Free Democrats | 4.00 (4) | 3.89 (10) | | | 3.92 (14) |
| Heritage | | 4.00 (1) | | | 4.00 (1) |
| Prosperous Armenia | 3.20 (5) | 3.33 (3) | 3.83 (6) | | 3.50 (14) |
| Republic | 3.00 (1) | | 3.60 (5) | | 3.5 (6) |
| Republican Party | 3.50 (2) | 3.88 (8) | 3.50 (7) | 4.00 (1) | 3.70 (18) |
| Rule of Law | 4.00 (1) | 4.00 (3) | 4.00 (2) | 4.00 (3) | 4.00 (9) |
| Other | 4.00 (1) | | | 4.00 (4) | 4.00 (5) |
| Total | 3.60 (55) | 3.73 (28) | 3.74 (24) | 4.00 (28) | |

Note: Survey conducted June-July 2019, respondents who indicated they joined their party before April 2018 only are listed. Respondents were asked to rank on a five-point scale (Not significant to Very significant) the role that the listed factors played in their decision to join their party. Data presented is the mean response by cohort for the question "We are interested in knowing your reasons for originally joining your party. Please indicate how important or unimportant each of the following reasons were to you when you became a member of your party on a scale from 1(Not important at all) to 4 (Very important): I believe in the party platform. Number of responses per category in parentheses.

important (1 point higher than Republican Party members).

Details from the interviews further support the need to consider both party and time when considering motivations for entry into politics. While programmatic politicians were not more likely to enter politics over time, they did form different types of parties over time. Parties formed during independence (HHK, ANC, Dashnak) organized members with policy motivations along a single cleavage into catch-all parties with similar programs. These parties formed in the 1990s and changed little over time after finding initial success. After it lost power, the ANC did not attract new members (indeed, it lost support over time due to its choice to campaign on reconciliation with Azerbaijan); only Dashnak brought in new members committed to its nationalist ideology through its youth programs.

The only example of a party that formed in the 1990s and evolved over time was the eventual ruling party – the Republican Party (HHK). While early members of the HHK joined based on its national/conservative ideology and connections formed during the war with Azerbaijan, it attracted new members not based on ideology, but based on its youth networks. Its scholarships and youth programs brought technocrats into the party and government at an early age. A senior HHK MP described the process:

> I was active as a student, but I was not partisan at that time. As a leader of the student movement, I wanted to continue this activity. ... I joined the party with

Table 5.10: Motivation for Party Choice, by party and year cohort (Summer 2019)

| | Programmatic | | | Electoral | | Leader | | Social | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | | | | | | |
| Joined 2009-2012 | 0.151 | | 0.185 | 0.277 | -0.066 | -0.351 | -0.011 | 1.031* | 0.608* |
| | (0.169) | | (0.244) | (0.309) | (0.213) | (0.408) | (0.284) | (0.393) | (0.288) |
| Joined 2000-2008 | 0.144 | | 0.401 | 0.109 | -0.156 | 0.298 | 0.510 | 0.597 | 0.126 |
| | 0.176 | | (0.243) | (0.310) | (0.223) | (0.409) | (0.294) | (0.402) | (0.306) |
| Joined < 2000 | 0.499* | | 0.707* | -0.076 | -0.578* | -0.660 | -0.598* | 0.707 | 0.079 |
| | (0.168) | | (0.272) | (0.354) | (0.212) | (0.462) | (0.286) | (0.458) | (0.300) |
| ARF | | 0.145 | -0.149 | -0.176 | | -0.584 | | -0.004 | |
| | | (0.225) | (0.261) | (0.331) | | (0.433) | | (0.432) | |
| Bright Armenia | | -0.376 | -0.097 | 0.791* | | -0.865 | | 1.310* | |
| | | (0.245) | (0.311) | (0.387) | | (0.513) | | (0.499) | |
| Civil Contract | | 0.215 | 0.478 | 0.081 | | -0.232 | | 0.513 | |
| | | (0.232) | (0.292) | (0.374) | | (0.493) | | (0.486) | |
| Free Democrats | | 0.205 | 0.344 | 0.087 | | -0.382 | | 1.042* | |
| | | (0.281) | (0.286) | (0.364) | | (0.478) | | (0.465) | |
| Heritage | | 0.309 | 0.360 | -0.512 | | 1.103 | | -1.116 | |
| | | (0.724) | (0.721) | (0.912) | | (1.200) | | (1.188) | |
| Prosperous Armenia | | -0.283 | -0.203 | 0.440 | | -0.232 | | 0.839 | |
| | | (0.260) | (0.265) | (0.334) | | (0.443) | | (0.432) | |
| Republic | | -0.133 | -0.191 | -0.013 | | -0.481 | | 0.432 | |
| | | (0.334) | (0.347) | (0.440) | | (0.579) | | (0.574) | |
| Rule of Law | | 0.342 | 0.183 | -0.154 | | 0.726 | | -0.398 | |
| | | (0.304) | (0.309) | (0.391) | | (0.512) | | 0.510 | |

Note: Ordinary least squares regression. The baseline for the "time in party" value is "Joined 2013-2018." The baseline party value is the Republican Party of Armenia. Standard errors are in parentheses. * = p <=0.05

> friends in 2001. Some senior members of the party asked us to join. We were also invited by another opposition party. We were invited to meet with that party leader, but he missed the meeting and so we got angry. We held off on the HHK invite – we wanted to get acquainted first – but after several months we decided to join because of the network and personal attention. (Interview 1028, March 21, 2018)

Parties that formed in the 2000s (Heritage, Prosperous Armenia, Orinats Yerkir) tended to attract a mix of people; motivations to join at this time focused on individual leaders and influence. Prosperous Armenia (formed in 2005) established an effective–and stable–patron-client network to attract party members and support. Just as the Republican Party used government scholarships to attract new members, party leader Gagik Tsarukyan established a foundation that provided university scholarships (ICG 2012). These scholarships and career opportunities were cited as the main reason why several party members joined Prosperous Armenia: A parliamentary staff member said, "[Party leader] paid my class fees and so I wanted to give back to the party. ... [T]he party needed an assistant, so I worked first for the party then got a job at parliament after the elections." (Interview 1010, November 21,

2017) An MP also cited career opportunities as her path to the party:

> I studied radio-physics at university, where I joined the party's youth council; I arranged events for them between 2006 and 2010. ... Upon graduation, they offered me a job working on publicity for the party. It is hard to find a job in Armenia in radio-physics, so taking the job seemed like a good idea. It was the right party at the right time and right place. No other party organized such big events, including youth exchanges within the CIS. They provided good opportunities for networking. They didn't force you to engage with them, but provided the right incentives and opportunities to network. (Interview 1013, February 19, 2018)

The other major parties of the decade, including Heritage (founded in 2002) and the Rule of Law Party (founded in 1998), also centered around charismatic leaders who drew in members (although in these cases, they did not have the funding to maintain those relationships over time). The current leader of Heritage described his entry into politics in 2003: "I had no friend or acquaintance in the party, but saw some information on the party at choir practices, phoned them up, and joined. I decided to join this party because [name] was the leader." (Interview 1018, February 28, 2018) The AREG study also found that for interviewees who joined parties during these years, "often, the decision to join a political party was conditioned upon their ability to exert maximum influence and not their ideological orientations or specific policy preferences." (Danielyan 2014, 57)

Members of political parties that developed after some bureaucratic reforms had taken place (after 2010; specifically, the Free Democrats, Civil Contract, Bright Armenia) were more policy-oriented. Members of the most recently formed parties articulated the most detailed policy positions, but their members described their motivations for forming their particular party as a mix of social network and policy motivations. A parliamentary opposition MP explained the formation of one of these parties:

> We were active in civil society movements which were oriented toward defending rights (for example, soldiers, women's rights). At that time, we said we would not discuss political issues, but they were political issues. So we decided to do this as professionals. We understood that we could not stay separate from political forces. When rights are violated and there is injustice, we could not turn aside. We met during demonstrations and made friends and decided to develop a party platform and ideology. (Interview 1023, March 16, 2018)

An MP from another parliamentary opposition party described a similar path:

> It started with the pension reform movement. We thought we could make a change, but the people were not ready yet. We saw that there were only political solutions to the problem. So we looked for people who shared this vision and we found each other. Around half of the party comes from this movement. I met [party leader] there. I saw that he has the same vision and views. We started [our party] and after a few months brought more people on board who share our views. (Interview 1025, March 16, 2018)

These two politicians describe a similar motivation for forming a party – a desire to move from informal to formal politics in order to change policy – but formed different parties based on their different initial networks (born from different specific social movements).

Vote-related motivations for joining a party – seeking to represent a certain group or to be elected – were rarely mentioned. Only one MP, a member of the ruling party who came from one of Armenia's ethnic minorities, cited a desired to represent a specific constituency as his primary reason for joining a party. Overall, the knowledge of constituents expressed during interviews was very vague. Only a few politicians understood the concept and most discussed the idea of the "electorate" in broad strokes – "people who use smart phones," educated city dwellers – that were accurate, but insufficient for mobilization.

In sum, immediately prior to its velvet revolution, elites in Armenia were motivated by a mix of interests in policy and career advancement. Party choice based on these motivations varied over time due to the specific social network – veterans, businessmen, education, or social movement – of individual members. As the political cleavage of independence (and war against Azerbaijan) declined as a reason to join a political party in the 2000s, so did overall policy motivations. The rise of new protest movements generated new programmatic parties after 2005, however, leading to a rise in programmatic motivations based not on social cleavages, but a desire to work with the government on policy implementation.

### 5.3.5 Perceptions of Credibility

H2A : In an electoral authoritarian state, as state capacity increases, elite perception of the credibility of a dictator's policy commitments increases.

My results provide little support for the mechanism of leader credibility driving political behavior. While state capacity did increase over time in Armenia, perception of leader credibility appears to have declined over time. The April 2018 pilot survey showed a dramatic decline in trust in the president among elites compared to a similar 2012 survey of 500 potential members of the Armenian elite. While half of elites surveyed in 2012 trusted or fully trusted the president (Danielyan 2014, 116-7), only one-quarter did so in 2018. While levels of trust were (predictably) greater within the ruling party and its coalition partner (See Table 5.11) and societal trust in the president dropped ten percentage points over the same period (CRRC 2019), the lack of a difference between trust in the president by the parliamentary and non-parliamentary oppositions indicates there is no relationship between leader credibility and participation in formal politics.

Similarly, few interviewees made specific reference to the president when discussing policy bargaining or party membership (see below, Section 5.3.6). Politicians who obtained formal policy commitments from the president did believe they would be fulfilled. For example, an MP in coalition with the government expressed continued confidence the president would fulfill the terms of his coalition agreement, citing sufficient progress on some goals (such as the movement to a parliamentary system) as compensating for those on which no action had been taken (like social justice). Asked about other areas where no action had been taken

Table 5.11: Mean response, Trust in Institutions

| | 2012 | 2018 Pilot Survey | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Survey | Ruling Party | Coalition Partners | Parliamentary Opposition | Non-parl. Opposition | 2018 Mean |
| President | .53 | 1 | .7 | .15 | .167 | .437 |
| Executive | | 1 | .5 | .158 | .167 | .432 |
| Parliament | | 1 | .2 | .2 | .146 | .475 |
| N | 692 | 4 | 11 | 20 | 27 | 82 |

Note: The 2018 mean includes all pilot respondents (party and non-party members).

(formal Armenian withdrawal from an agreement with Turkey), the MP was defensive and still expected action: "The president ... said he does not accept the Turkish preconditions. ... He will cancel them before he leaves office." (Interview 1014, February 21, 2018) Otherwise, the President was not cited as a significant influence in their interest in or ability to bargain over policy concerns.

This absence of results may be a function of the time the pilot survey and interviews were conducted, which was concurrent with President Sargsyan reneging on his commitment not to stand for prime minister and the public protests that led to his resignation – a time of unusually low trust in the leader. But it may also be the case that politicians looked to the state for policy implementation rather than the leader, as discussed in the next section.

### 5.3.6 Policy bargaining

H3A : In an electoral authoritarian state, as state capacity increases, members of loyal opposition parties will become more interested in policy bargaining with a ruling party.

While leader credibility did not increase over time, bargaining over policy did, with the state itself becoming the locus of debate on policy. Based on elite interviews, this was partly because the state was functional and partly because no politician drew a strong distinction between the state and the ruling party. Armenia moved from a system where negotiations took place solely within the ruling party, which was distrusted by other politicians, to a more routine legislative commenting process used by all in-system actors.

Prior to the rise in state administrative capacity, policy and legislation were decided through informal or party-based negotations. An HHK MP who had been active in the party since the 1980s described how he managed drafting one of Armenia's revisions to the electoral code in the early 2000s. The bargaining process took place as an informal process within the party organization, not the state or electoral commission. As he put it,

> I was head of the organizational committee for the party that ... runs the election process. At that time we were discussing the electoral code with parliament. I started drafting the law because I understood all the information. MPs from our party came and shared their views with me, and from other parties too. (Interview 1017, February 27, 2018)

Opposition MPs expressed little faith in this informal policy process. An Orinats Yerkir party leader did not see value in passing ambitious legislation when they were in parliament in the mid-2000s: "We understand the capacity of the state. If we adopted a law that is not possible to implement, it would cause social protest because people would not understand what is going on." (Interview 1027, March 17, 2018) This suspicion expressed by parties in the 2000s is confirmed in Danielyan (2014, 64)'s interviews. "We also attempted to determine whether these elites were ready to compromise with political opponents," he stated:

> Some [ruling party members] expressed willingness to compromise on issues that do not risk national and state interests. ... Oppositional party representatives [often expressed] willingness to compromise, but it was conditional. [They said] the political system grants the ruling party control over all state institutions so the ruling party has no incentive to compromise with other parties; the ruling party is able to impose its will.

As Heritage Party MP Zaruhi Postanjyan said in a 2011 interview, "Politics in the Soviet era was predictable, whereas today nothing is predictable [since] laws are not enforced. ... There are merely a few people who make decisions and implement them." (Ghaplanyan 2018, 69)

By the late 2010s, however, years of work on budgetary reporting mechanisms led to a more formal policy process, operating through committees based in a state ministry, run by an HHK-appointed official, and eliciting comments through a formal on-line procedure. For example, there was a two-year process to draft legislation governing Armenia's public audit chamber (passed in January 2018), including several ministries and the German development agency GTZ. According to a senior HHK MP, "Now, the government treats MPs differently. Before, we would always support legislation, but now with our preliminary steps, we discuss drafts very early on." (Interview 1017, February 27, 2018) These procedures were used by both ruling and opposition MPs. One non-parliamentary party leader (who had been a member of the 2016 parliament) described legislation they worked on while in parliament:

> In late 2016, we proposed legislation on tax advantages for IT companies. ... We collaborated with the Republican Party at the time. It was hard to introduce a bill on trade, but the IT bill went to government discussion. The economic department approved the bill then it went to parliament. The parliament was also interested in it and everyone worked in collaboration on it. (Interview 1005, November 16, 2017)

In addition to using state institutions for policy bargaining, many parliamentary opposition elites were able to point to specific legislation they had developed after negotiating with the Republican Party, passed, and implemented. They described a mix of tactics they employed when seeking policy changes, including negotiating with the ruling party, encouraging public protest, and drafting their own legislation. One parliamentary opposition MP described their policy development and bargaining process as follows:

> "We approach MPs directly – we say we want to discuss something and they are very open. We want to show that we are good at cooperating. We visit their offices, even if they just come for a few hours to parliament. Policy is

> often delayed, so we work to identify what are political versus what are technical issues. We think it is okay to cooperate with the government on non-political issues. Cooperating with the HHK is not always acceptable to society – they say we should always be against the government. Our mission is to change that." (Interview 1009, November 21, 2017)

Two parties that emerged from social movements – Bright Armenia from the pension movement and Civil Contract with a focus on media freedom – translated their private sector expertise into negotiating power with the government. As one BA leader stated, "I worked on the pension reform demonstration. ... I understood the issue fully and worked to organize the IT sector first. We made constitutional arguments and won." (Interview 1009, November 21, 2017)

This focus on policy while in office was not uniform across all parties and politicians. Some MPs focused on legislation as a means to advance a party brand (rather than the policy itself). A parliamentary opposition MP saw legislation as serving a symbolic role on their party's path to power: "Even when there is no hope of adopting a bill, we can be role models and lead with our speech. With these drafts we show society that justice is possible. And we will have the tools [to pass bills] when we are decision-makers." (Interview 1023, March 16, 2018) Another opposition MP was able to describe party initiatives in more detail, but described the process of policy bargaining as one of big gestures rather than detailed negotiations: "Our faction had initiatives on inflation and tax reform. These proposals were rejected by the government because it refused to make big reforms." (Interview 1013, February 19, 2018) Others were simply inattentive to policy: a parliamentary opposition faction leader, asked about legislation he had worked to pass, said that he personally had not worked on any, but supported bills as a team: "Our political party depends on the actions of the leader and the foundations in his name." (Interview 1007, November 21, 2017).

To conclude, while the policy bargaining process in Armenia in 2017-8 was by no means perfect or fully inclusive, it had been formalized and opposition MPs regularly engaged with the state on tax, information technology, and other policy matters. While in the 2000s, political debate only took place within the ruling party, by the mid-2010s, parliamentarians increasingly expressed confidence in the state's ability to enact policy and increasingly used formal procedures to influence it.

## 5.4 Armenia's party system moves towards consolidation

H1A: In an electoral authoritarian state, as administrative capacity increases, opposition fractionalization decreases.

These trends in elite behavior – a rising tendency to form more programmatic parties (if not underlying programmatic motivation) and interest in policy bargaining – then contributed to Armenia's party system consolidation. As with overall elite relations and bureaucratic

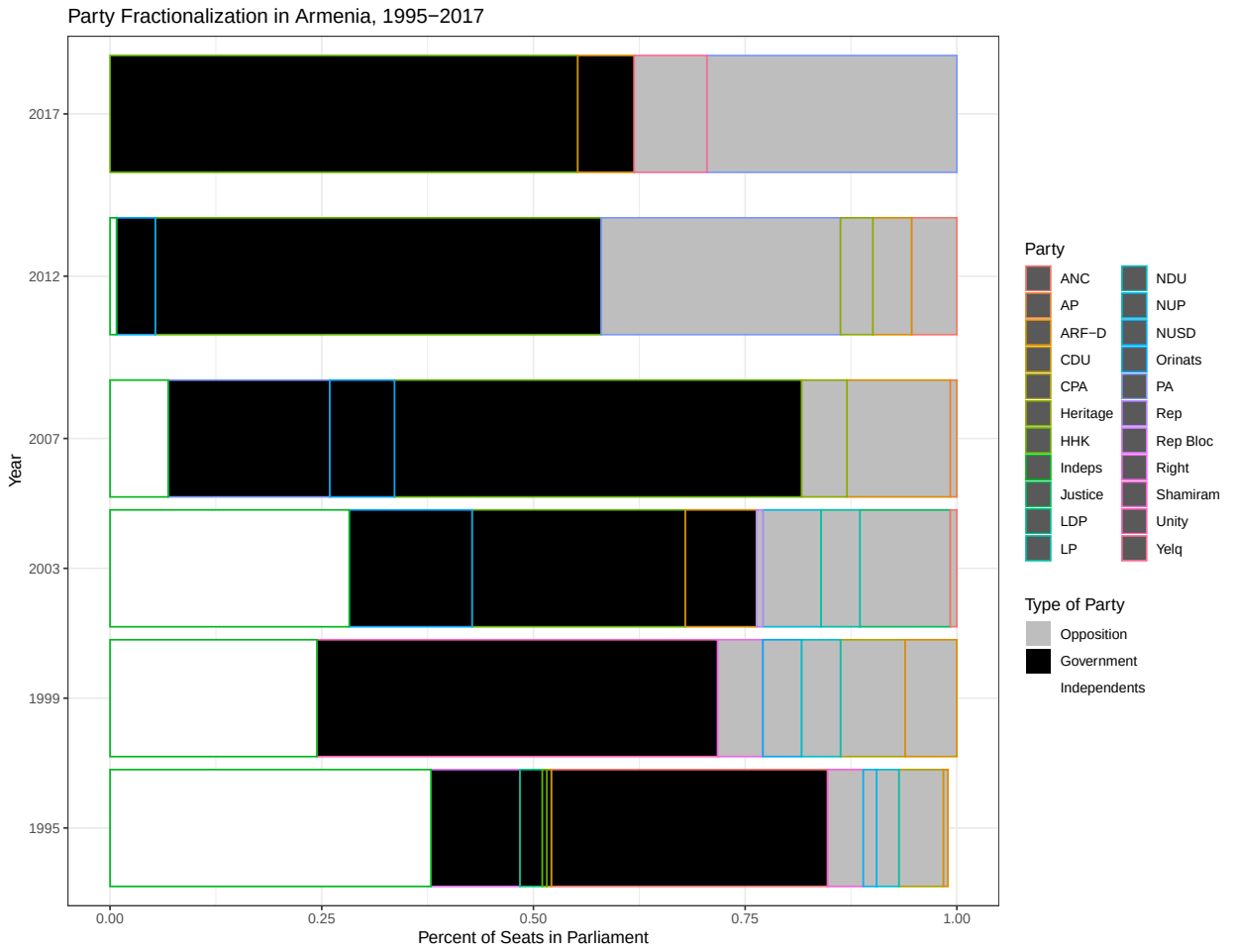



Figure 5.3
Note: Governing coalitions may form less than half of parliament since independents made up the remaining seats in a coalition.

reform, Armenia had three broad stages to the development of its party system: the first two – the Ter-Petrosyan (1991-98) and Kocharyan (1998-2008) governments – were marked by presidents using parliamentary coalitions to manage their elite support. Under Sargsyan (2008-2018), Armenia was governed by a consolidated party of power with smaller parties representing other elites gaining seats through managed elections. Armenia therefore went through a path of party system formation fairly typical of post-communist electoral authoritarian regimes (Golosov 2013, Roberts 2015) – pluralization after the fall of communism, followed by the reconsolidation of a ruling party and, in its final stage, the consolidation of a democratic (and policy-oriented) opposition.

As shown in Table 5.12 and Figure 5.3, overall party system fractionalization declined over time in Armenia. Independents dominated Armenia's first post-communist parliamentary election (1995) and few of the initial parties that formed lasted more than two elections, a pattern typical of a first post-transition election. Early governments consisted of coalitions of 3-7 parties plus independents, who were gradually incorporated into the Republican Party,

the largest of the early conservative governing parties. Party volatility also declined over time. By 2012, the parties with representation in parliament had (mostly) existed for a decade and would shape politics through Armenia's final authoritarian election and transition to democracy.

Table 5.12: Parliamentary Election Results, Armenia 1995-2017

| | 1995 | | | 1999 | | | 2003 | | | 2007 | | | 2012 | | | 2017 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | PR | seats SMD | % | PR | seats SMD | % | PR | seats SMD | % | PR | SMD | % | PR | SMD | % | PR % | |
| Total | 40 | 150 | 190 | 56 | 75 | 131 | 75 | 56 | 131 | 90 | 41 | 131 | 90 | 41 | 131 | 105 | 105 |
| Independents | 0 | 72 | 0.379 | 0 | 32 | 0.244 | 0 | 37 | 0.282 | 0 | 9 | 0.069 | 0 | 1 | 0.008 | - | - |
| PANM/ANC | - | 62 | .326 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 7 | 0 | 0.053 | - | - |
| Republic Bloc | 20 | - | .105 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| CPA | 6 | 4 | 0.053 | 8 | 2 | 0.076 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Shamiram | 8 | 0 | 0.042 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| NDU | 3 | 2 | 0.026 | 4 | 2 | 0.046 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| LDP | 0 | 4 | 0.021 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| NUSD | 3 | 0 | 0.016 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| ARF-Dashnak | 0 | 1 | 0.005 | 5 | 3 | 0.061 | 11 | 0 | 0.084 | 16 | 0 | 0.122 | 5 | 1 | 0.046 | 7 | 0.067 |
| CDU | - | 1 | 0.005 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| HHK | - | 1 | 0.005 | - | - | - | 23 | 10 | .0252 | 41 | 22 | 0.481 | 40 | 29 | 0.527 | 58 | 0.552 |
| Unity Bloc | - | - | - | 29 | 33 | 0.473 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Right and Unity | - | - | - | 6 | 1 | 0.053 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Orinats Yerkir | - | - | - | 4 | 2 | 0.046 | 12 | 7 | 0.145 | 8 | 2 | 0.076 | 5 | 1 | 0.046 | 0 | 0 |
| Justice Alliance | - | - | - | - | - | - | 14 | 0 | 0.107 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| National Unity Party | - | - | - | - | - | - | 9 | 0 | 0.069 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| United Labor Party | - | - | - | - | - | - | 6 | 0 | 0.046 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Republic Party | - | - | - | - | - | - | 0 | 1 | 0.008 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Pan-Armenian Worker's Party | - | - | - | - | - | - | 0 | 1 | 0.008 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Prosperous Armenia | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 18 | 7 | 0.191 | 28 | 9 | 0.282 | 31 | 0.295 |
| Heritage | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 7 | 0 | 0.053 | 5 | 0 | 0.038 | 0 | 0 |
| Alliance Party | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 0 | 1 | 0.008 | - | - | - | - | - |
| Yelq | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 9 | 0.086 |
| ENLP | | 7.962 | | | 4.124 | | | 8.924 | | | 3.426 | | | 2.734 | | | 2.475 |

All percentages are based on total number of seats (PR and SMD).

Opposition parties also declined in number and volatility, from 5-7 parties in the 1990s to two in 2017. This was not as a result of repression – opposition parties held, on average, 30-40% of seats in parliament beginning in the early 2000s. Instead they began to form coalitions based on ideological affiliation in order to complete more effectively for representation.

### 5.4.1 1995-2003: Fractionalization around leaders

Armenia's initial transition from communism involved presidential elections only – Ter-Petrosyan led the country through war with the support of the Soviet parliament elected in 1990. Armenia's first parliamentary elections were held in 1995 under legislation that shrank parliament to 190 seats, 150 of which (79%) were elected from single member districts (the remainder were chosen by closed list proportional representation (PR)). As was typical for this electoral system, the parliament that emerged had a large number of independent candidates (72, or 38%) and political parties – 11 parties gained seats (See Table 5.12 for full election results).

The main coalition formed at this time was the ruling coalition, the Republic Bloc. This was both a pre-election and post-election coalition. Parties ran separately in single member districts and on a joint list for the PR seats. After the elections, the Armenian National Congress (PANM), Republican Party (HHK), Christian Democratic Party, Democratic Liberal Party (distinct from the opposition Armenian Democratic Liberal Party - Ramkavar), and around half of the independent candidates formed a single parliamentary faction in support of the government (it held 117 MPs total, or 62% of parliament).[32] Further reliable government support came from the Shamiram party, which consisted of the spouses of government ministers and high-ranking party officials (8 seats).

Early opposition was "amorphous" (Wessenlink 1997) and primarily centered on the remnants of the Communist Party (10 MPs) and the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (Ramkavar), a splinter faction of PANM led by a prominent member of the Karabakh movement. When Ter-Petrosyan lost power, his opponents came not from parliament but from his own cabinet.

Armenia's second president Robert Kocharyan declined to join or organize a political party when he claimed the office in 1998, stating "my party is my people." (ICG 2004b, 9) The 1999 parliamentary elections brought to power the Unity Bloc, a pre-election coalition led by Vazhgen Sargsyan consisting of the HHK and the People's Party (led by the First Secretary of Armenia's Communist Party 1974-1988, Karen Demirchyan).[33] While Sargsyan and Demirchyan were seen as rivals to Kocharyan as much as supporters, the dynamics of these relationships never had a chance to play out, as Sargsyan and Demirchyan were killed in a domestic terrorist attack on parliament five months after the election. After the death

[32]National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia Official Website. `http://parliament.am/deputies.php?lang=eng&sel=factions&SubscribeEmail=&show_session=1`

[33]Armenia had a mixed majoritarian-proportional electoral system until 2017, but reduced the number of SMD seats each election from 1999-2007. In 1999, 75 of the 131 seats in parliament (57%) were elected from single member districts. This number decreased to 56 in 2003 (44%) and was 41 (31%) from 2007-2012.

of the leaders of the Unity Bloc and People's Party, Kocharyan drew support from a stable three-party coalition in parliament, made up of the Republican Party (HHK, which took over the Unity Bloc faction in Parliament), Orinats Yerkir (Rule of Law), and ARF-Dashnak.

The International Crisis Group reported deep divisions within the ruling coalition based on personal ambition and ideology, but that it remained intact due to uncertainty about the opposition (ICG 2004b, 11). A Dashnak leader interviewed about the coalition at that time argued they needed to be in coalition with the president in order to influence government policy: "there is no Western-style democracy in Armenia; thus, if you want to have an influence on policies, you have to be within the ruling power, not outside." (ICG 2004b, 11) Dashnak was not, however, able to turn its seat at the table into significant policy influence. Another senior party official stated, "We are being made responsible for areas of government with which we have absolutely no relation or contact." (ICG 2004b, 11)

As noted, the two main parties in parliament outside the governing coalition were the Communists (CPA) and Ramkavar. Neither party exerted influence over policy – indeed, a CPA MP who chose to work with the government on a policy matter was expelled from the party for doing so (Armenpress 2002). They neither supported significant legislation nor regained representation in parliament after the 1999 election.

For Armenia's first decade, then, party fractionalization was relatively high, and parliamentary opposition influence minimal. Major parties and their relationships to each other were emerging, but those who sought to influence government policy joined the government coalition. Opposition parties held little influence or coherence.

### 5.4.2 2007-2012: Ruling party consolidation, opposition personalist politics

In 2003, parliament hit peak fractionalization, which then began to decline as the Republican Party (HHK) began to bring smaller parties and independent candidates onto its party list. For example, in 2003 the National Unity and Constitutional Law parties ran separately for parliament; in 2007 they were folded into the Republican Party list along with most former independents. By 2012, the only independent in Parliament was an actual independent, Edmon Marukyan, who went on to form the Bright Armenia Party (part of the 2017 Yelq Coalition).

The People's Party and Republic Party, now led by the son and brother of the former leaders of the Unity Bloc, formed a pre-election coalition with seven other parties (the Justice Alliance) that was the main opposition to the ruling coalition in the 2003 parliamentary election. This coalition broke up at the end of 2005, however, when it was unable to come to agreement on a unified position on proposed amendments to the constitution. Unity was a low priority, as an opposition leader acknowledged to ICG: "the opposition does not have a united agenda, and one leader, because we are all very different. It would not be realistic to aim at one common candidate, or one united program – that's beside the point." (ICG

2004b, 13)

Kocharyan retained the support of his three-party coalition (formed in 1999) until 2006, when Orinats Yerkir and Dashnak left to compete separately in the 2007 parliamentary elections. The decision to leave the ruling coalition led to the partial breakup of Orinats Yerkir. Ten of the party's 20 MPs formed a new parliamentary faction and later joined the HHK or new party Prosperous Armenia (Danielyan 2017, 48).

After Sargsyan was elected president in 2008, a "quartet" formed - RPA, Prosperous Armenia, Orinats Yerkir, and Dashnak - as the ruling coalition, leaving the newly-formed Heritage Party as the only formal opposition party in parliament. A leader of Orinats Yerkir described their decision the join the quartet, like Dashnak's before, as driven by a desire to gain access to power to make progress on their platform:

> After the election, we saw that our platform had gotten votes and we could get it done if we were included in the government. If our platform were not included, then there would be no coalition. We left because they did not follow through enough. It became impossible and we chose to leave. They didn't want us to, but it was a one-time deal and we wanted to represent society. (Interview 1027, March 17, 2018)

The formation of Prosperous Armenia (PA) in 2004 to compete in the 2007 parliamentary elections was the most notable party development of the decade. PA, a personalist party built around the views of founder Gagik Tsarukyan, had no strong ideology and attracted a range of politicians (established business leaders and young social media stars, for example). Despite its weak organization, it was one of the largest and most enduring parties in Armenian politics through the 2018 revolution, increasing its seat share in parliament each election through 2017 (from 19% in 2007 to 27% in 2013 to 30% in 2017). While many speculated that Prosperous Armenia was a creation of then-President Robert Kocharyan, Prosperous Armenia MPs and staff interviewed in 2017-2018 made no reference to him. Tsarukyan's business interests instead appeared to dominate party organization and motivations. MPs had offices and held meetings in Tsarukyan's business headquarters and often mentioned financial incentives (such as scholarships and youth competitions) as a reason why they joined the party (Interview 1013, February 19, 2018, for example). Tsarukyan and Prosperous Armenia walked the line between support for and opposition to the government. PA endorsed Republican Party candidate Serge Sargsyan for president in 2012, but his party offices were searched and shut down in 2015 (Fuller and Giragosian 2015). Ultimately, as indicated by Tsarukyan's 2020 arrest for vote buying and bribery in the 2017 elections, PA's success appears to have been based on Tsarukyan's financial resources.

While PA was a personalist party that alternated between support and opposition for the government based on leader resources, Heritage was a personalist party that remained firmly in opposition based on its policy positions. Founded in 2002 by Raffi Hovannisian, Heritage Party won seats in the 2007 and 2012 parliamentary elections and served as Armenia's primary opposition at that time. The party had a developed platform, supported by a research center (Interview 1004, November 14, 2017), but was weakened by political infighting and

weak coalition building. Some members split with Hovannisian due to his 2008 endorsement of Sargsyan for president; others due to his refusal to accept electoral loss to Sargsyan in 2013. All (current and former) Heritage members interviewed discussed their views of Hovannisian as a main reason why they joined (and in some cases, left).[34] While policy-oriented, the party was primarily a vehicle for its leader.

In sum, party development in the 2000s was characterized by the beginnings of consolidation, but not on programmatic grounds. The Republican Party absorbed independents and smaller parties, while the new parties that emerged were best characterized as personalist (personalist and resource-based as with Prosperous Armenia or personalist and policy-based as with Heritage). Access to policy influence continued to flow through the ruling party and politicians who sought access either joined or formed a coalition with the Republican Party.

### 5.4.3 2012-2017: Consolidation of opposition coalitions

The 2012 and 2017 elections marked the continued consolidation of Armenia's party system. Opposition parties began to coordinate with each other, both before and after the elections, to increase their ability to gain office and to advance their policy goals. The new political parties that formed – the Free Democrats, Civil Contract, and Bright Armenia – were based on connections forged during social movements, but represented people who wanted a more effective way to engage with politics than street protest.

In the early 2010s, opposition coordination took the form of joint electoral lists and party coalitions. During the 2012 elections, rather than formal coalitions, party lists began to represent more than one political party. For example, members of the People's Party ran on the ANC list and the newly formed Free Democrats (FDP) party ran on Heritage's list. This consolidation of party lists appears to have been driven by an enhanced understanding of the electoral law and vote-seeking motivations. For example, a FDP leader said "We were driven by a similar belief, a similar approach ... The other reason we joined was not to lose the votes of people who believe similar beliefs." (Interview 1005, November 16, 2017)

In parliament in 2013, the four smallest parties (the ANC, Heritage, Dashnak and Orinats Yerkir) formed an opposition "quartet" – a legislative coalition of their parliamentary factions. While the governing quartet formed in 2008 was formed based on parties' desire to gain access to power, this opposition quartet was focused on a single issue: reform of the electoral law. As a Dashnak MP said, "the electoral law we have now was due to this coalition and cooperation with the Quartet. The move to full proportional representation was one reform, but so was publishing electoral lists in advance, enhancing transparency and raising confidence in our institutions." (Interview 1002, November 12, 2017)[35]

[34] A former MP now running a think tank described personal reasons for his departure from Heritage: "[Party deputy leader] had a bad reputation and would talk about me behind my back. In 2012, he focused the campaign on building alliances (with ARF, the Free Democrats), not on the substance/vision." (Interview 1004, November 14, 2017)

[35] The package of electoral reforms ultimately decided on involved transitioning Armenia to a parliamentary system with a proportional electoral law. These reforms were approved in a referendum in 2015 over

This coalition did not, however, prove durable, splitting over policy, personal, and electoral reasons. The Heritage Party sought to continue Armenia's presidential system, causing Dashnak to leave the Quartet because of its preference for a parliamentary system (Interview 1002, November 12, 2017). FDP left its coalition with Heritage before the 2017 elections (where they ran on own brand with a few prominent ANC members on their list) out of disagreement over time horizons: "Heritage was not driven by ideology, but with the goal of making a revolution in this country. The FDP believed we all should focus on ideology – short term goals were not enough for the party." (Interview 1005, November 16, 2017)

These initial efforts at opposition consolidation and coordination grew during the 2017 parliamentary elections, when coalitions – opposition and government – proliferated. Opposition parties held extensive negotiations on unity prior to the elections (the first to be held under a system of open-list PR for all seats). Four pre-election coalitions (ORO, Yelq, Armenian Renaissance, and a joint ANC-People's Party list) formed, while the Free Democrats ran on their own. These negotiations were initiated by the Heritage Party, which invited 21 other parties into talks in May 2016. The current leader of the Heritage party described a process by which he met with the heads of all opposition parties and proposed a coalition led by three former presidential candidates. While he blamed the collapse of those talks on "participants [that] formed shadow agreements with power parties," (Interview 1018, February 28, 2018) ultimately it was Heritage that formed a coalition with two former Republican Party ministers, abandoning the Heritage Party brand for a coalition based on an abbreviation of the names of its three leaders.[36] This was also a year of re-branding parties: Prosperous Armenia ran on a list with the Mission Party as the Tsarukyan Alliance. Orinats Yerkir formed a coalition with the Unified Armenians Party under the name "Armenian Renaissance."

The only successful coalition was Yelq ("Way Out" as in, there is a way out of this situation), a coalition of two new civic parties and Aram Sargsyan's Republic Party. Despite significant personal differences between leaders and tactical disagreements,[37] party leaders decided to focus on electoral goals. MPs from its constituent parties described this as a classic pre-election coalition designed to coordinate for votes with parties that had a similar approach.

opposition protest. Although the Venice Commission (a body of the Council of Europe that advises countries on democratic transitions) approved the reforms, opposition parties (including those that formed the Quartet to promote proportional representation) believed the transition to parliamentary government would simply serve as an excuse for Sargsyan to extend his term in office indefinitely and that some of the details of the electoral law would advantage the HHK.

[36] ORO, or Ohanyan-Raffi-Oskanyan, was named for its leaders: Seyran Ohanyan (HHK Minister of Defense 2008-2016), Raffi Hovannisian (leader of the Heritage Party), and Vartan Oskanyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs 1998-2008 and head of the new Unity Party. Oskanyan was also a former member of Prosperous Armenia.

[37] A journalist described the coalition as rising above personal differences: "The Yelq coalition has very different people – in fact they hate each other – but they made a deal." (Interview 1008, 11/14/17) The primary tactical differences were over the degree to which the coalition should rely on extra-parliamentary methods to achieve their goals - Nikol Pashinyan, the head of Civil Contract, argued in favor of street protests while Edmon Marukyan, the head of Bright Armenia, favored less confrontational techniques. While Pashinyan won these debates, becoming prime minister on the strength of his leadership of street protests in April 2018, Bright Armenia led the Yelq coalition on the basis of its stronger internal party organization.

A Bright Armenia MP stated:

> The Yelq coalition started with local elections in Yanazor [in 2016]. We knew we were strong there, but saw that liberals fought each other fiercely. The result was that we lost votes and were not above the threshold. For the April elections, we knew that separately, none of us would cross the threshold. So we put aside our differences and focused on our common values: fighting corruption, fighting vote buying, and developing a new generation of politicians. This allowed us to make an agreement. ... We made some compromises, but did so for the nation. We showed that we need a new generation of politicians. (Interview 1009, November 21, 2017)

A representative of Civil Contract similarly noted the value of cooperation:

> First, there was demand from society. This is always true before elections. Society requires opposition unity. We need to hear society's demands, but we also have our principles and cannot lose our identity. ... We found that we could sit and discuss and negotiate and find a common approach and we signed an agreement where we agreed that if our cooperation succeeded, we would later discuss forming a single party. (Interview 1023, March 16, 2018)

Both opposition parties recognized the need to gain power under the electoral rules to achieve their policy goals, but both saw value in an opposition coalition to do so, rather than uniting with the ruling party.

The Republican Party (HHK) also formed a legislative coalition with Dashnak (ARF) in 2016. Dashnak members described this as a process where ARF formulated a seven-point list of policy goals, which RPA accepted in 2016 and reaffirmed in 2017. As with its prior coalitions, Dashnak MPs described this as motivated by a desire to implement their ideological goals: "You need to cooperate to reach that goal. The first step is to work with the ruling party, but not for our whole life, not for forever. ... We have an agreement with seven points – an agreement on how we can achieve these. ... We will achieve a parliamentary system then raise our support." (Interview 1002, November 12, 2017) The HHK, by contrast, was more focused on building government legitimacy than specific policies as the reason for the coalition. As one HHK MP put it, "Some parts of our ideology are similar to Dashnak's. They are socialist, so it is a bit difficult, but thank God they have forgotten they are socialist. Our main goal is internal stability. We usually can form a government on our own, but we usually try to form a coalition because if we don't, other parties will go into opposition, which is not good for us." (Interview 1017, February 27, 2018)

By the late 2010s, therefore, around five years after key reforms implementing a more professional civil service in 2011, we see increased strategic behavior by the parliamentary opposition and a clear focus on technical policy details. They described working through formal comment processes and with state agencies to do so. Some opposition parties (like Dashnak) continued to seek influence through access to the ruling party, but more chose to form a separate coalition. Opposition politicians were able to negotiate on issues like taxes

and pensions with the government and bring those negotiations to a satisfactory conclusion. They also engaged in strategic behavior – parliamentary coalition formation – in order to maximize their ability to engage on those issues.

## 5.5 Addressing alternate explanations

The most common alternate explanations for party system formation do not provide satisfactory answers for the change in Armenia's party system over time. Polarization around social cleavages did play a role in motivating politicians and shaping party platforms, as discussed in section 3, but does not explain change over time. Finally, changes in Armenia's electoral laws did impact the party system, but consolidation began before the shift from a mixed to full proportional system. Rather than these traditional explanations, the more persuasive reason for party system – and particularly opposition coalition – consolidation is as a response to the expanded options for policy bargaining offered by a more effective state apparatus.

### 5.5.1 Social cleavages

Armenia is an ethnically and religiously homogenous state with moderate levels of inequality,[38] meaning that traditional bases of party formation have not played a significant role in the country. Instead, politics in Armenia are dominated by its conflict with Azerbaijan (and, to a lesser extent, Turkey) and views on whether the country should ally more closely with Russia or the European Union.

As noted in section 5.3, these issues provided strong motivation for Armenian politicians to join political parties, particularly in the 1990s. Interviews and surveys repeatedly show support for the Karabakh movement as a driving factor behind party formation in the 1990s – and it remains important to this day. A related division that emerged over time was that between a European and Russian orientation for Armenia. Liberal democratic opposition parties favored ties with the EU, while others favored improving ties with Russia (in part due to the security guarantees it offered to Nagorno-Karabakh). The nature of these policy divisions has not, however, changed significantly over the past thirty years (not, perhaps, until the 2020 resumption of war with Azerbaijan), and therefore cannot explain change over time for Armenia's party system.

### 5.5.2 Electoral law

Armenia's election laws, like social cleavages, did have a strong impact on political behavior, but also cannot fully explain changes in its party system fractionalization. While the 2015 change in election law (to a fully proportional system) encouraged coalition formation among opposition parties for the 2017 elections, consolidation of its party system began before the

[38] 98% of Armenia is ethnically Armenian and 93% is Orthodox Armenian (Britannica.com). Gini scores are only available since 1999, but vary from 36.2 that year to 33.6 in 2017 (World Bank).

shift to proportionality.

Armenia emerged from communism with a mixed electoral system favoring single member district representation (150 seats) over seats based on a national list chosen by proportional representation (PR, 40 seats). From 1995 to 2007, Armenia revised its election law three times to increase the number of seats based on PR (going from 56 in 1999 to 90 for the 2007 and 2012 elections). The increase in PR seats (and move to a full 105 seats based on PR in 2017) correlates with the declining fractionalization of Armenia's party system, but appears to be endogenous to consolidation (rather than its cause).

Reviewing the breakdown of seats allocated via single member districts (SMD, see Table 12 on page 32), we see the number of independents decrease over time as the number of SMD seats declined (with the exception of a small increase between 1999 to 2003, despite decrease in SMD seats), as would be expected and as is reflected in the declining fractionalization. The presence of SMD seats did not exclusively favor the ruling party, however. Resource-rich parties able to engage in bribery or pressure tactics to win votes (HHK and Prosperous Armenia) won the most single member districts, but opposition parties such as Orinats Yerkir and Republic were also able to take advantage of leader popularity or regional connections to win these positions.

Armenia's shift to PR (passed in 2015 for the 2017 elections) was not intended to weaken HHK rule or strengthen opposition coalitions. The two-tier system (national and regional lists) had four reserved seats for minorities and a 5/7% threshold for parties/coalitions and was criticized by opposition politicians for being designed to favor the HHK's rural areas of strength (Interviews 1002 and 1005-2 November 22, 2018, 1010-3 November 21, 2018, 1018-2 November 20, 2018, and 1030 November 27, 2018). Indeed, the Republican Party won an outright parliamentary majority in this election. While the law did aid opposition consolidation, its primary effect was to increase the parliamentary representation of the ruling party.

In sum, Armenia's evolving election law did have proximate effects on party strength in parliament and coalition formation. Bright Armenia and Civil Contract both explicitly cited it as motivation to form the 2017 Yelq Coalition (as did the Free Democrats in discussing their 2012 coalition with Heritage). But the election law alone does not explain Republican Party strength or its change over time. The ruling party designed the election law to maintain its power rather than encourage opposition coordination, and opposition politicians found competition under these rules unfair. It was a contributing factor to consolidation, but cannot be considered the sole influence on declining fractionalization.

## 5.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, Armenia shows the influence rising state capacity can have on opposition consolidation in an electoral authoritarian regime. After initiating bureaucratic reform in the early 2000s, Armenia took key steps to implement those reforms beginning in 2011. These reforms, including a reduction in the number of political appointees, some enforce-

ment of anti-corruption legislation, and the creation of formal mechanisms for procurement and drafting legislation, made the Armenian state apparatus a more attractive partner to opposition politicians interested in policy reforms. While legislation (like the election law) was drafted solely within the ruling party in the early 2000s, by the mid-2010s, opposition politicians described multiple ways to influence policy through parliament and the state. Opposition parties considered implementation of their legislation impossible in the 2000s, but described several successes implementing economic policy in the 2010s. Improvements made to the functioning of the bureaucracy in the intervening years helped opposition politicians influence policy using in-system tactics. And they formed new parties based on their social networks and coalitions (notably the Yelq coalition in 2017) in order to be more competitive in advancing their common policy goals.

Of the four hypotheses I tested, I found support for three. Armenian politicians did not express increased reliance on their leader's policy commitments over time (H2A), but did (with qualifications) increasingly join parties to advance policy goals (H4A) and did increase bargaining over policy (H3A). Rather than leader credibility, politicians described the credibility of the state apparatus itself as a venue for policy bargaining as the key. After the state reformed its procedures to make policy comments and drafting legislation more transparent, elites began to use these mechanisms to achieve their goals. These changes did not simply impact elite motivations, but their use of collective action to achieve their goals. Opposition elites began forming more programmatic parties and forming pre-election coalitions, reducing the overall fractionalization of the party system (H1A).

State capacity was, of course, not the sole influence on party and coalition formation in Armenia. In particular, Armenia shows the interaction of cleavages, capacity, and electoral law in shaping party systems. The anti-communist (and anti-Azerbaijani) political cleavage of the late 1990s dominated initial motivations to join parties, but did not form truly programmatic parties. Armenia's initial parties were either catch-all parties like the Armenian National Movement or parties focused on the prospects of individual politicians. Armenian nationalism remains a motivator for engagement in politics (particularly for those who join Dashnak), but additional motivations also arose. Social networks based on shared experience, rather than patronage, began to play a larger role in party membership – the HHK and Prosperous Armenia both recruited new members through scholarships and university groups, while Civil Contract and Bright Armenia formed out of social movements. The last parties to form under electoral authoritarianism in Armenia were focused on policy – the variety of parties that emerged from social movements, they were able to overcome personal disagreements to form a coalition to ensure they would be enter into parliament. Cleavages and electoral law shaped motivation and coalitions, but it was the rise in state capacity that allowed opposition programmatic parties to more effectively engage with the political system and shaped Armenia's politics moving into its velvet revolution.

Later events in Armenia indicate some of the potential implications of this change in Armenia's political system. After then-President Serge Sargsyan reneged on his promise not to stay in power after the country transitioned to a parliamentary system, Nikol Pashinyan, the leader of opposition party (and Yelq Coalition member) Civil Contract organized a cascading

political march to protest. Sargsyan was unable to muster a coordinated response from his police and security services in part due to widespread dissatisfaction with his decision and in part because the timing of the largest protests in Yerevan coincided with Remembrance Day for the Armenian Genocide – a national holiday and particularly poor time to order violence against the civilian population. The presence of an opposition coalition and two large parliamentaries aside from the ruling HHK in parliament then allowed Pashinyan to use Armenia's new parliamentary system to conduct a velvet revolution. Bright Armenia and ARF-Dashnak declared their support for Pashinyan as Prime Minister and 13 members of the Republican Party followed. On May 8, 2018, parliament elected Pashinyan prime minister in a 59-42 vote, a result of his skill at mobilization, but made possible by his presence in parliament as part of an organized opposition coalition. Armenia's transition to democracy has not been smooth – Pashinyan won a super-majority in parliament later that year (taking 70% of the seats in parliament), reinforcing his instinct to personalize politics and Civil Contract around himself. When he came to a peace agreement with Azerbaijan after it took the full territory of Nagorno-Karabakh in a short war in late 2020, violent protests objected to the ceasefire and Pashinyan called snap elections for 2021. He maintained his majority (winning 53% of the seats) and while personalism remains a strong factor in Armenian politics, Pashinyan has not used his position to modify election or other laws to his advantage. Armenia continues to reform and professionalize its bureaucracy and consolidate its political reforms.

# Appendix 1: Armenian Political Parties and Coalitions

- Armenian National Congress/Movement (ANC/ANM/PANM). First established in the 1860s, the ANM led Armenia's independent state in the 1920s. Reorganized in the 1990s, ANM leader Levon Ter-Petrosyan became Armenia's first post-communist president. After Ter-Petrosyan's electoral loss in 1998, the ANM reorganized and renamed itself the ANC. Both parties were catchall parties withe a broadly nationalist and centrist orientation, although the ANC is the only party that has consistently supported a negotiated settlement to the war with Azerbaijan. It held seats in the 2005 and 2012 parliaments, but has not been competitive since then.

- Armenian Renaissance. A coalition of Orinats Yerkir and the Unifed Armenians Party that formed to compete in the 2017 elections, but failed to win any seats.

- Armenian Revolutionary Federation - Dashnaktsutyun (abbreviated as ARF or Dashnak). A nationalist political party formed from a legacy party first established in the late 1800s, Dashnak favors reunification with "Western Armenia" (eastern Turkey) and a variety of socialist economic policies. Dashnak has the most formal political organization of all Armenia's parties, with an extensive set of regional and national committees that draft its program and make decisions. It competed and won seats in every Armenian election 1995-2107. ARF joined the governing coalition 1998-2006, 2008-09, and 2016-17 and joined an opposition coalition in 2012.

- Bright Armenia (BA). Formed in 2016 by independent MP Edmon Marukyan, BA recruited members of the pension reform social movement. A technocratic-oriented party focused on in-system reform, its platform was pro-business and human rights. BA led the 2017 Yelq Coalition that won nine seats in parliament.

- Christian Democratic Union (CDU). Founded in 1991, the CDU won one seat as part of the Republic Alliance in the 1995 parliamentary elections. This conservative party has been in an electoral alliance with the Republican Party of Armenia since 2012.

- Civil Contract (CC). Formed in 2016 by former journalist Nikol Pashinyan, CC was a member of the Yelq Coalition that won nine seats in the 2017 elections. Reflecting its membership of former journalists, CC was more focused on street protests and free speech issues than its coalition partner BA.

- Communist Party of Armenia (CPA). The ruling party under Soviet rule, the CPA won seats in the 1995 and 1999 parliamentary elections. While it continued to compete in elections through 2017, it ceased being a relevant political actor in the 2000s.

- Constitutional Right Union (CRU). The conservative CRU entered parliament in 1999 as part of the Rights and Unity Alliance (made up of CRU, NUP, and the Armenian Scientific-Industrial and Civic Union) and in 2003 as part of the Justice Alliance (made of the PPA, the Republic Party, DPA, NDU, and the CRU).

- Democratic Party of Armenia (DPA). Founded in 1991 by Aram Sargsyan, the last Secretary General of the Communist Party of Armenia. It gained one seat in parliament in 2003 as part of the Justice Alliance, but none since then.

- Free Democrats (FD). A liberal (politically and economically) party formed in 2011. It won a seat in parliament in 2012 in alliance with the Heritage Party. It remains an active party despite failing to achieve representation since then.

- Justice Alliance. A pre-election coalition for the 2003 elections, in which it won 14 seats. Led by the People's Party, it also included six civic-oriented small parties (such as the Democratic Party of Armenia and National Democratic Union).

- Heritage Party. Founded by Raffi Hovannisian in 2002, Heritage is a centrist party primarily associated with its leader. Heritage won seven seats in parliament in the 2007 elections and five seats in 2012. Hovannisian served as Foreign Minister under Levon Ter-Petrosyan and was Serge Sargsyan's primary opposition in the 2013 presidential elections.

- Liberal Democratic Party (Ramkavar). A legacy party from Armenia's independence in the inter-war period, it represented more conservative economic policies than the Social Democratic Party or Dashnak. While it remains an important diaspora organization, it fractured and reorganized multiple times in Armenia in the 1990s and 2000s.

- Mission Party. A small civic party founded in 2013, the Mission Party ran as part of the Tsarukyan Alliance in 2017 and later joined Civil Contract's My Step Alliance after the revolution.

- National Democratic Union (NDU). A splinter off the ANC (its leader Vazhgen Manukyan had been Lev Ter-Petrosyan's Prime Minister), the NDU won five seats in the 1995 elections.

- National Unity Party (NUP). A conservative, pro-Russia party that won nine seats in the 2003 parliamentary elections. It was founded and led by Artashes Geghamyan from 1997 until his death in 2024.

- Orinats Yerkir (Country of Legality/Rule of Law). A center-right party founded in 1998 by Artur Baghdasaryan. The party consistently participated and won seats in parliamentary elections, including six in 1999, 19 in 2003, nine in 2007, and six in 2012. The party changed its name to Armenian Renaissance for the 2017 elections and failed to win any seats. It has not participated in elections since then. Orinats Yerkir participated in the governing coalition in 1998-2006 and 2008-09 and joined an opposition coalition in 2012.

- ORO Alliance. ORO, or Ohanyan-Raffi-Oskanyan, was named for its leaders: Seyran Ohanyan (HHK Minister of Defense 2008-2016), Raffi Hovannisian (leader of the Heritage Party), and Vartan Oskanyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs 1998-2008 and head of the new Unity Party. Oskanyan was also a former member of Prosperous Armenia. It was a pre-election coalition for the 2017 parliamentary elections that won no seats.

- People's Party (PP). Founded by Karen Demirchyan in 1998 Armenian presidential election, the People's Party ran in alliance with the Republican Party (the "Unity Bloc") in the 1999 parliamentary elections and as the lead member of the Justic Bloc for the 2003 elections. It was led by Stepan Demirchyan (son of Karen Demirchyan) after the assassination of his father in 1999.

- Prosperous Armenia (PA). Founded in 2004 by businessman Gagik Tsarukyan, PA has a center-right, pro-Russian orientation. PA was been the second largest party in parliament since its first election 2007-2018 and has cycled through pro- and anti-government positions based on Tsarukyan's interests. It participated in the governing coalition in 2008-09. In 2017, it ran as the Tsarukyan Alliance.

- Republic Party. A small civic party led by Aram Sargsyan, brother of assassinated militia leader Vazhgen Sargsyan since 1999. The Republic Party ran in the 2003 elections as part of the Justice Bloc and won one seat (a SMD seat for Sargsyan). It also won a seat in the 2017 parliament as part of the Yelq Alliance.

- Republican Party of Armenia (HHK). Founded in 1990, this conservative party participated in the governing coalition through 1998, then led Armenia until the 2018 velvet revolution. Led by Serge Sargsyan, the HHK won the largest number of seats in parliament beginning in 1999 and an absolute majority in the 2017 elections.

- Right and Unity Alliance. A 1999 pre-election coalition of the Constitutional Rights Union (CRU), the National Unity Party (NUP), and the Armenian Scientific-Industrial and Civic Union that won seven seats.

- Shamiram. A party consisting primarily of the wives of government ministers, Shamiram won eight seats in the 1995 parliamentary elections.

- Social Democratic Party - Hunchakian (SDP-H). Primarily a legacy party in exile under communism.

- Union for National Self-Determination (UNSD). Led by Paruyr Hayrikyan. Opposition party that gained three seats in the 1995 elections.

- United Labor Party (ULP). A social democratic party founded in 2002, it won six seats in parliament in 2003. After attempting a coalition with Prosperous Armenia in 2012, it eventually settled on a post-revolution coalition with Civil Contract.

- United Liberal National Party (MIAK, based on its name in Armenian). A center-right party founded in 2007. It gained one seat in parliament in coalition with the Republican Party in 2012.

- Unity Bloc. A 1999 pre-election coalition consisting of the Republican Party, Demirchyan's People's Party, and Vazgen Sargsyan's Yerkrapah Union (a network of war veterans).

- Yelq Coalition. A 2017 pre-election coalition of Bright Armenia, Civil Contract, and the Republic Party that won nine seats in parliament.

# Appendix 2: Sample Interview Coding and Survey Question Text

## Interview Coding

1. Elites join parties based on social networks.
    (a) Interviewee states that they joined their political party in tandem with friends.
        i. Example 1: "I came from civil society and decided with one of my friends to form a party." (Interview 1009, Nov. 21, 2017)
        ii. Example 2: "We met during demonstrations and made friends and decided to develop a party platform and ideology." (Interview 1023, March 16, 2018)
        iii. Example 3: "I joined the party with friends in 2001. Some senior members of the party asked us to join. We were also invited by [another] party. We were invited to meet with the leader, but he missed the meeting and so we got angry." (Interview 1028, March 21, 2018)
        iv. Example 4: "I joined the Free Democrats although I knew they were inexperienced. I drafted their platform and was third on their list. Their campaign was a disaster. They had good people, but the party only put unknowns forward to speak – young and unknown candidates. You can't build a brand in one month, and their organizational work was a disaster. They only established a headquarters in my district on the last day of the campaign, they took a long time to print posters and leaflets. They tried to achieve all goals, not focus on the short-term. But I like Hrant [Bagratyan]."
    (b) Interviewee states they joined based on the quality of the people in the party.
2. Elites join parties based on their ability to advance professionally or seek patronage.
    (a) Interviewee states they joined their political party because it provides personal or professional advancement.
        i. Example 1: "I studied radio-physics at university, where I joined the party's youth council; I arranged events for them between 2006 and 2010. I don't know exactly when I made the decision – it was perhaps involuntary. Upon graduation, they offered me a job working on publicity for the party. It is hard to find a job in Armenia in radio-physics, so taking the job seemed like a good idea." (Interview 1013, Feb. 19, 2018)
        ii. Example 2: "In 2009 when I was in school, I had no political allegiance. [Party leader] paid my class fees (it was a surprise scholarship) and so I wanted to give back to the party." (Interview 1010, Nov. 21, 2017)
    (b) Interviewee states they joined the party based on admiration for the leader.
3. Elites join parties based on the information available about their likely success. (Vote-seeking)

   (a) "The Yelq coalition started with local elections in Yanazor. We knew we were strong there but saw that liberals fought each other fiercely there. The result was that we lost votes and were not above the threshold. For the April elections we know that separately, none of us would cross the threshold. So we put aside our differences and focused on our common values: fighting corruption, fighting vote buying, and developing a new generation of politicians. This allowed us to make an agreement." Interview 1009

   (b) "The other reason we joined was to not lose the votes of people who believe similar beliefs." Interview 1005

4. Interviewee expressed a desire to represent a particular constituency or social group.

   (a) Example 1: "There were already more than 20 parties, so why form a new one? Why not just join a current party or form a coalition? Because no one else represents the middle class, those people who want to build on their own accomplishments. The middle class, the IT industry are successful but people are not involved in the political process. I decided I wanted to represent them." (Interview 1009, Nov. 21, 2017)

5. Degree of specificity/knowledge of constituency; Response to question "Who is your party's electorate?"

   (a) High - Mention of group characteristics or geographic representation

   (b) Medium - Generic mention of a constituency

      - "We do not have a specific constituency – we seek support from the general population. In Armenia, NGOs represent specific interests, not parties." Interview 1001
      - "We always joke that the people who join us are the people who use smartphones. They are reasonable people who are able to make judgements." Interview 1005

   (c) Low - Does not express an understanding of a constituency

      - I have been in the field working with people. If a party member is an influential person – not mafia, but a businessman – and has employees that values them. I have met some people who say that they see that the most powerful people are from the RPA, so they vote for them. Self-identification is different. In the youth movement I was responsible for working with NGOs." Interview 1006

Elites join parties based on their programmatic preferences.

1. Interviewee states they joined a party or coalition because of its platform or ideology.

   (a) Example 1: "At that time, I decided to join because it was the strongest party in favor of an independent Armenia. The ideological platform on which [party

name] is based is in favor of a national image, social justice, and democratic approaches. These are all very close to my heart – one can't exist without the other." (Interview 1019, Mar. 1, 2018)

(b) Example 2: "I am a historian by training and my love of my party came with this profession. I also like the principles, organizational system, and national guidance." (Interview 1015, Feb. 22, 2018)

(c) "In 2016, the RPA started accepting our fundamental ideas. In 2012, we formulated our seven priorities and our relations with other parties have always been conditional on them accepting these principles. ... The RPA accepted them all, and in 2016 we signed an agreement. ... It is not important to [our party] whether we are in opposition or in a ruling coalition. For us, what is important is to solve our issues, no matter whether we are in the ruling party or opposition, our principles have not changed." Interview 1014

2. Interviewee is able to describe the policy plaform of their party.

(a) High - enumeration of more than one coherency ideological point; discussion of a piece of legislation

(b) Example 1: "The base of our ideology is a free, liberal democracy. Some say that freedom is the same as liberalism, but their policy and programs are for individual citizens, not crowds. Our ideology is for free speech, religion, ideology, and economic status. We do not believe Armenia's problems will be solved through the armed forces, but by creating the conditions for free economic development in Armenia. The key to solve this problem is equal conditions in the economic field, so that businesses have equal opportunities to realize their goals for the benefit of themselves and the country. ... [W]e proposed legislation on tax advantages for IT companies that was implemented yesterday. Now all start-ups are able to apply for certificates to operate VAT-free. It was very important that an opposition party introduced and passed this bill. In Armenia, the opposition has few representatives and the majority might have stood against the bill. But the benefit to start-ups was crucial." Interview 1005

(c) Medium - discussion of generic policy goals

- "Our main goal is to make the parliamentary system stronger. The move to a parliamentary system is set in the constitution, but it is always possible to change the constitution. We want to make it a strong system." Interview 1002
- "It is a conservative party, but usually we say that on economics, we are a liberal party. ... The charter of the party is very flexible. It changed one year ago, and focuses on the core values of a Christian society – family, nation, and an understanding that the modern world has changed and has new ideas. You could call us a Christian Democratic Party. We are not focused on liberalization politically – this is unrealistic at this time. Our number one priority is defense." Interview 1006

(d) Low - discussion of approach rather than policy; no discussion of specific policy

- "For the platform, we analyze the priorities in the country. We come up with two-year platforms – the central executive board meets every two years and changes each two-year session. They choose the platform at that meeting." (Interview 1001, November 2017)
- "We were driven by a similar belief, a similar approach as the Heritage Party." Interview 1005

## Survey Questions and Coding - Pilot

Note: this only includes the survey questions analyzed in this chapter.

Entry: "Why did you decide to become active in politics? Please choose up to THREE responses that BEST reflect your opinion:

- I wanted to work closely with my friends and colleagues. (Social)
- I wanted to improve conditions for the people of Armenia. (Policy-generic)
- I wanted to represent my nation and demonstrate my pride in my country. (Vote)
- I wanted to influence government decisions about issues I care about. (Office)
- I saw a problem in society and decided political action is the best way to solve it. (Policy-specific)"

Party choice: "Why did you decide to join your current political party (as opposed to another political party)? Please select the THREE responses that BEST reflect your opinion.

- I believe in the political program and ideology of the party. (Policy)
- I am interested in influencing government policy decisions. (Office)
- I have a personal connection to other party members. (Social Network)
- I believe this party has the most qualified representatives. (Social - Brand)
- This party is the most effective at accomplishing its goals. (Policy)
- This party has the best access to political and financial resources." (Office)

Coalition, version 1: "Please choose the ONE response that BEST reflects your opinion about why your party entered in this coalition.

- We share similar policy goals with the other parties in the coalition. (Policy-specific)
- We need to ally with other parties to reach the threshold for election into parliament. (Vote)
- We need to ally with other parties to pass legislation in parliament. (Policy-specific)

- Political parties should pool their resources in order to increase their influence. (Office)
- National unity is important for Armenia. (Policy-generic)
- A coalition provides our party greater leverage over other parties. (Office)
- The parties in our coalition are reliable partners. (Social)
- I did not support joining this coalition. (n/a)

Coalition, version 2:
"Please select the ONE response that BEST reflects your opinion about why your party is not in coalition.

- We disagree with other parties on policy and ideology. (Policy)
- We distrust the motives of other parties. (Social)
- Our party is large enough to compete on its own. (Vote)
- We should focus on the long-term development of our own party. (Vote)
- The public distrusts the other political parties in our system. (Social)
- It is difficult to form alliances when the government does not fairly administer elections. (n/a)

## Survey Questions and Coding - 2019 Survey

We are interested in knowing your reasons for originally joining your party. Please indicate how important or unimportant each of the following reasons were to you when you became a member of your party on a scale from 1(Not important at all) to 4 (Very important):

- I have a personal connection to other party members. (Social)
- I believe in the party platform. (Policy)
- I admire the party leader. (Office)
- I thought it would help my career. (Office)
- This party has the best chance of winning the election. (Vote)
- This party has the best access to resources. (Office)

## MP Biographic Coding

MPs were categorized by profession based on their last position before entering any elected office. Categories included:

- Business (including state-owned companies)
- Civil servant: state government employee, local council member (city or provincial; elected or appointed), mayor (including deputy), governor (including deputy), presidential (or prime minister's) aide, prime minister
- Intellectuals: Including academics, civil society activists, and media
- Member of Parliament/Government: MPs, Ministers (including deputy and equivalent positions such as Prosecutor General)
- Military/Veteran: Based on self-identification in bio
- Party activists: Staff, board, leader (including deputy)
- Other

# Appendix 3: Additional Results

Table 5.13: Mean response, Electoral Motivation for Party Choice (Summer 2019)

| | Year joined | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Party | 2013-2018 | 2009-2012 | 2000-2008 | <2000 | Total |
| ARF-Dashnak | 1.00 (2) | 1.00 (3) | 1.00 (4) | 1.35 (20) | 1.24 (29) |
| Bright Armenia | 2.16 (19) | | | | 2.16 (19) |
| Civil Contract | 1.90 (20) | | | | 1.90 (20) |
| Free Democrats | 1.67 (4) | 1.56 (10) | | | 1.58 (14) |
| Heritage | | 1.00 (1) | | | 1.00 (1) |
| Prosperous Armenia | 2.40 (5) | 2.67 (3) | 3.33 (6) | | 2.86 (14) |
| Republic | 1.00 (1) | | 2.40 (5) | | 2.17 (6) |
| Republican Party | 2.50 (2) | 2.38 (8) | 1.57 (7) | 1.00 (1) | 2.00 (18) |
| Rule of Law | 1.00 (1) | 2.50 (3) | 1.00 (2) | 2.00 (3) | 1.75 (9) |
| Other | 1.00 (1) | | | 1.00 (4) | 1.00 (5) |
| Total | 1.96 (55) | 1.92 (28) | 2.04 (24) | 1.36 (28) | |

Survey conducted June-July 2019, respondents who indicated they joined their party before April 2018 only are listed. Respondents were asked to rank on a five-point scale (Not significant to Very significant) the role that the listed factors played in their decision to join their party. Data presented is the mean response by cohort for the question .... Number of responses per category in parentheses.

Table 5.14: Mean response, Career Motivation for Party Choice (Summer 2019)

| | Year joined | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Party | 2013-2018 | 2009-2012 | 2000-2008 | <2000 | Total |
| ARF-Dashnak | 1.50 (2) | 1.00 (3) | 1.00 (4) | 1.05 (20) | 1.06 (29) |
| Bright Armenia | 1.37 (19) | | | | 1.37 (19) |
| Civil Contract | 1.55 (20) | | | | 1.55 (20) |
| Free Democrats | 1.50 (4) | 1.78 (10) | | | 1.69 (14) |
| Heritage | | 1.00 (1) | | | 1.00 (1) |
| Prosperous Armenia | 1.20 (5) | 1.00 (3) | 1.83 (6) | | 1.43 (14) |
| Republic | 1.00 (1) | | 2.20 (5) | | 2.00 (6) |
| Republican Party | 1.50 (2) | 1.75 (8) | 1.14 (7) | 1.00 (1) | 1.44 (18) |
| Rule of Law | 1.00 (1) | 2.50 (3) | 1.00 (2) | 2.00 (3) | 1.75 (9) |
| Other | 1.00 (1) | | | 1.00 (4) | 1.00 (5) |
| Total | 1.42 (55) | 1.62 (28) | 1.50 (24) | 1.14 (28) | |

Survey conducted June-July 2019, respondents who indicated they joined their party before April 2018 only are listed. Respondents were asked to rank on a five-point scale (Not significant to Very significant) the role that the listed factors played in their decision to join their party. Data presented is the mean response by cohort for the question .... Number of responses per category in parentheses.

Table 5.15: Mean response, Social Motivation for Party Choice (Summer 2019)

| | Year joined | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Party | 2013-2018 | 2009-2012 | 2000-2008 | <2000 | Total |
| ARF-Dashnak | 2.00 (2) | 1.33 (3) | 2.00 (4) | 1.65 (20) | 1.69 (29) |
| Bright Armenia | 2.21 (19) | | | | 2.21 (19) |
| Civil Contract | 1.55 (20) | | | | 1.55 (20) |
| Free Democrats | 2.00 (4) | 3.00 (10) | | | 2.69 (14) |
| Heritage | | 1.00 (1) | | | 1.00 (1) |
| Prosperous Armenia | 1.40 (5) | 3.67 (3) | 2.33 (6) | | 2.29 (14) |
| Republic | 2.00 (1) | | 2.00 (5) | | 2.00 (6) |
| Republican Party | 1.00 (2) | 1.88 (8) | 3.00 (7) | 1.00 (1) | 1.72 (18) |
| Rule of Law | 1.00 (1) | 2.50 (3) | 1.00 (2) | 1.00 (3) | 1.38 (9) |
| Other | 1.00 (1) | | | 3.50 (4) | 3.00 (5) |
| Total | 1.78 (55) | 2.42 (28) | 1.88 (24) | 1.89 (28) | |

Survey conducted June-July 2019, respondents who indicated they joined their party before April 2018 only are listed. Respondents were asked to rank on a five-point scale (Not significant to Very significant) the role that the listed factors played in their decision to join their party. Data presented is the mean response by cohort for the question .... Number of responses per category in parentheses.

Table 5.16: Mean response, Resource Motivation for Party Choice (Summer 2019)

| | Year joined | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Party | 2013-2018 | 2009-2012 | 2000-2008 | <2000 | Total |
| ARF-Dashnak | 1.00 (2) | 1.00 (3) | 1.00 (4) | 1.50 (20) | 1.34 (29) |
| Bright Armenia | 1.42 (19) | | | | 1.42 (19) |
| Civil Contract | 1.80 (20) | | | | 1.80 (20) |
| Free Democrats | 1.00 (4) | 1.11 (10) | | | 1.08 (14) |
| Heritage | | 1.00 (1) | | | 1.00 (1) |
| Prosperous Armenia | 3.00 (5) | 2.33 (3) | 3.00 (6) | | 2.86 (14) |
| Republic | 1.00 (1) | | 2.60 (5) | | 2.33 (6) |
| Republican Party | 2.50 (2) | 2.13 (8) | 1.71 (7) | 2.00 (1) | 2.00 (18) |
| Rule of Law | 1.00 (1) | 2.50 (3) | 1.00 (2) | 2.00 (3) | 1.75 (9) |
| Other | 1.00 (1) | | | 1.00 (4) | 1.00 (5) |
| Total | 1.67 (55) | 1.65 (28) | 2.04 (24) | 1.50 (28) | |

Survey conducted June-July 2019, respondents who indicated they joined their party before April 2018 only are listed. Respondents were asked to rank on a five-point scale (Not significant to Very significant) the role that the listed factors played in their decision to join their party. Data presented is the mean response by cohort for the question .... Number of responses per category in parentheses.

Table 5.17: Mean response, Leader Motivation for Party Choice (Summer 2019)

| | Year joined | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Party | 2013-2018 | 2009-2012 | 2000-2008 | <2000 | Total |
| ARF-Dashnak | 2.50 (2) | 1.33 (3) | 3.50 (4) | 2.05 (20) | 2.21 (29) |
| Bright Armenia | 2.37 (19) | | | | 2.37 (19) |
| Civil Contract | 3.10 (20) | | | | 3.10 (20) |
| Free Democrats | 2.50 (4) | 2.89 (10) | | | 2.77 (14) |
| Heritage | | 4.00 (1) | | | 4.00 (1) |
| Prosperous Armenia | 3.00 (5) | 2.33 (3) | 3.33 (6) | | 3.00 (14) |
| Republic | 2.00 (1) | | 3.40 (5) | | 3.17 (6) |
| Republican Party | 3.50 (2) | 3.25 (8) | 2.86 (7) | 2.00 (1) | 3.06 (18) |
| Rule of Law | 4.00 (1) | 4.00 (3) | 4.00 (2) | 3.67 (3) | 3.88 (9) |
| Other | 4.00 (1) | | | 2.50 (4) | 2.80 (5) |
| Total | 2.80 (55) | 2.88 (28) | 3.29 (24) | 2.29 (28) | |

Survey conducted June-July 2019, respondents who indicated they joined their party before April 2018 only are listed. Respondents were asked to rank on a five-point scale (Not significant to Very significant) the role that the listed factors played in their decision to join their party. Data presented is the mean response by cohort for the question .... Number of responses per category in parentheses.

Table 5.18: Motivation for Party Choice, by party and year cohort (Summer 2019)

| | Programmatic | | | Career | | Electoral | | Leader | | Resource | | Social | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Joined 2009-2012 | 0.151 | | 0.185 | 0.241 | 0.179 | 0.277 | -0.066 | -0.351 | -0.011 | -0.200 | -0.013 | 1.031* | 0.608* |
| | (0.169) | | (0.244) | (0.277) | (0.191) | (0.309) | (0.213) | (0.408) | (0.284) | (0.289) | (0.205) | (0.393) | (0.288) |
| Joined 2000-2008 | 0.144 | | 0.401 | 0.103 | -0.052 | 0.109 | -0.156 | 0.298 | 0.510 | -0.090 | 0.321 | 0.597 | 0.126 |
| | 0.176 | | (0.243) | (0.278) | (0.200) | (0.310) | (0.223) | (0.409) | (0.294) | (0.290) | (0.212) | (0.402) | (0.306) |
| Joined < 2000 | 0.499* | | 0.707* | 0.172 | -0.051 | -0.076 | -0.578* | -0.660 | -0.598* | 0.242 | 0.337 | 0.707 | 0.079 |
| | (0.168) | | (0.272) | (0.317) | (0.196) | (0.354) | (0.212) | (0.462) | (0.286) | (0.330) | (0.208) | (0.458) | (0.300) |
| ARF | | 0.145 | -0.149 | -0.010 | | -0.176 | | -0.584 | | -0.410 | | -0.004 | |
| | | (0.225) | (0.261) | (0.297) | | (0.331) | | (0.433) | | (0.307) | | (0.432) | |
| Bright Armenia | | -0.376 | -0.097 | 0.198 | | 0.791* | | -0.865 | | -0.869* | | 1.310* | |
| | | (0.245) | (0.311) | (0.353) | | (0.387) | | (0.513) | | (0.358) | | (0.499) | |
| Civil Contract | | 0.215 | 0.478 | 0.357 | | 0.081 | | -0.232 | | -0.250 | | 0.513 | |
| | | (0.232) | (0.292) | (0.334) | | (0.374) | | (0.493) | | (0.349) | | (0.486) | |
| Free Democrats | | 0.205 | 0.344 | 0.536 | | 0.087 | | -0.382 | | -0.739* | | 1.042* | |
| | | (0.281) | (0.286) | (0.322) | | (0.364) | | (0.478) | | (0.332) | | (0.465) | |
| Heritage | | 0.309 | 0.360 | -0.252 | | -0.512 | | 1.103 | | -0.179 | | -1.116 | |
| | | (0.724) | (0.721) | (0.818) | | (0.912) | | (1.200) | | (0.852) | | (1.188) | |
| Prosperous Armenia | | -0.283 | -0.203 | -0.259 | | 0.440 | | -0.232 | | 0.255 | | 0.839 | |
| | | (0.260) | (0.265) | (0.301) | | (0.334) | | (0.443) | | (0.313) | | (0.432) | |
| Republic | | -0.133 | -0.191 | 0.499 | | -0.013 | | -0.481 | | 0.031 | | 0.432 | |
| | | (0.334) | (0.347) | (0.392) | | (0.440) | | (0.579) | | (0.411) | | (0.574) | |
| Rule of Law | | 0.342 | 0.183 | 0.354 | | -0.154 | | 0.726 | | -0.234 | | -0.398 | |
| | | (0.304) | (0.309) | (0.350) | | (0.391) | | (0.512) | | (0.365) | | 0.510 | |
| Other party | | 0.288 | 0.002 | -0.059 | | -0.048 | | 0.008 | | -0.689 | | 1.392* | |
| | | (0.369) | (0.405) | (0.459) | | (0.512) | | (0.675) | | (0.473) | | (0.656) | |
| Electoral motive | 0.167* | 0.191* | 0.187* | 0.146 | 0.140 | 0.187* | -0.073 | -0.140 | 0.571* | 0.626* | -0.150 | -0.050 | |
| | (0.070) | (0.073) | (0.072) | (0.083) | (0.080) | (0.072) | (0.124) | (0.120) | (0.069) | (0.066) | (0.122) | (0.124) | |
| Resource motive | -0.139 | -0.114 | -0.124 | 0.170 | 0.140 | 0.656* | 0.680* | -0.023 | 0.056 | | | 0.101 | 0.006 |
| | (0.074) | (0.080) | (0.079) | (0.089) | (0.084) | (0.080) | (0.072) | (0.133) | (0.126) | | | (0.131) | (0.130) |
| Leader motive | 0.080 | 0.035 | 0.044 | 0.136* | 0.149* | -0.042 | -0.079 | | | -0.012 | 0.029 | 0.035 | -0.028 |
| | (0.054) | (0.056) | (0.056) | (0.063) | (0.059) | (0.071) | (0.068) | | | (0.067) | (0.065) | (0.093) | (0.093) |
| Career motive | -0.090 | -0.130 | -0.129 | | | 0.182 | 0.174 | 0.293* | 0.331* | 0.184 | 0.160 | 0.077 | 0.098 |
| | (0.080) | (0.083) | (0.082) | | | (0.104) | (0.100) | (0.136) | (0.131) | (0.096) | (0.096) | (0.137) | (0.138) |
| Social motive | 0.002 | 0.031 | 0.015 | 0.036 | 0.042 | -0.088 | -0.027 | 0.036 | -0.026 | 0.051 | 0.003 | | |
| | (0.052) | (0.056) | (0.057) | (0.065) | (0.059) | (0.072) | (0.066) | (0.095) | (0.088) | (0.067) | (0.063) | | |
| Programmatic motive | | | | -0.166 | -0.115 | 0.299* | 0.264* | 0.123 | 0.223 | -0.173 | -0.202 | 0.041 | 0.005 |
| | | | | (0.106) | (0.101) | (0.116) | (0.111) | (0.156) | (0.150) | (0.110) | (0.108) | (0.155) | (0.156) |

Note: Ordinary least squares regression. The baseline for the "time in party" value is "Joined 2013-2018." The baseline party value is the Republican Party of Armenia. Standard errors are in parentheses. * = p <=0.05

## Experimental Treatments

Two list experiments were included in the pilot survey; one was included in the summer 2019 survey.

### Pilot Survey - Trust in Leader

Question: How many of the following statements about policy obstacles in Armenia do you agree with? Please select the number that reflects HOW MANY statements you agree with:

- Economic conditions in Armenia make it difficult to implement any type of new policy.
- Armenia's position in the region and international relations constrain the type of policies it is appropriate to introduce in the country.
- There are no obstacles to policy reform or implementation in Armenia.
- I think powerful economic interests in Armenia will undermine any policy they do not support.
- **Treatment only:** I trust the president/prime minister to implement the policies he has promised to enact.

Control mean: 2.62 Treatment mean: 2.67 Difference of means: 0.05 (p=0.84, confidence interval = -0.41 to 0.51) n=80 (51 treatment, 29 control)

### Pilot Survey - Bribery

Question: In the past year, how many of the following activities have you participated in? Please select the NUMBER that reflects HOW MANY activities you participated in:

- I attended a political party meeting.
- I met with citizens to discuss a political issue.
- I received training on the political process.
- I wrote legislation to introduce in parliament.
- I called or met with a member of the government administration to ask about a policy.
- **Treatment only:** I accepted or paid money or other benefit in exchange for a political favor outside of official channels.

Control mean: 3.49 Treatment mean: 3.53 Difference of means: 0.04 (p=0.89, confidence interval = -0.54 to 0.62) n=77

**Summer 19 Survey - Bribery**

Question: In the past year, how many of the following activities have you participated in? Please select the NUMBER that reflects HOW MANY activities you participated in.

- I attended a political party meeting.
- I received training on the political process.
- I wrote legislation to introduce in parliament.
- I traveled outside Armenia.
- **Treatment only:** I accepted or paid money or other benefit in exchange for a political favor.

Control mean: 2.29 Treatment mean: 2.14 Difference of means: -0.15 (p=0.41, confidence interval = -0.52 to 0.21) n = 135

# Chapter 6

# Kyrgyz Republic

While Kyrgyzstan[1] was once seen as the "Switzerland of Central Asia" and a thriving, if transitional, democracy in an otherwise hostile region, this early optimism has been replaced by growing disappointment with authoritarian presidents, violent popular mobilization, and clientelistic politics.[2] Between 1991 and 2018, the Kyrgyz Republic had three distinct phases of post-communist politics, each associated with a presidential administration. Each began with reform followed by a consolidation of power around the president's personal networks and the removal (sometimes violent) of that leader from power.[3]

This weak democratic development has been matched by a lack of bureaucratic reform and the persistence of corruption and patronage throughout the political system. Administrative reform in Kyrgyzstan took place on paper, but a lack of execution of those laws led to little change in state capacity. The Kyrgyz Republic passed legislation to require competitive hiring and procurement, asset declarations, and other procedures to build the state's ability to design and implement policy, but these reforms were contradicted by nepotism and the creation of parallel decision-making systems in key ministries. Corruption and clientelism varied in intensity over the past thirty years, but remained the defining characteristics of Kyrgyzstani politics. The best description of the Kyrgyzstani state is one of an "investment market:" officials pay for their positions (often going into debt to do so) and expect a return on that investment in terms of kickbacks, bribes, and "fees" for performing public-facing jobs (Liebert 2014, Engvall 2016). Political candidates are elected based on their ability to use resources to mobilize votes, then senior officials bring their networks (based on kinship and other forms of loyalty) to government agencies, expecting regular informal payments in return (Engvall 2022).

In an environment where state capacity and policy implementation are low and policy choices

[1]The official name of the country changed from Krygyzstan to the Kyrgyz Republic in 1993; I use the two terms interchangeably.

[2]I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Elena Angelo and Aida Mamarazieva in the research for this chapter. The research in this chapter was supported by the Jefferson Fellows Foundation and the Albert Gallatin Graduate Research Fellowship and Quandt International Research Grant from the University of Virginia.

[3]Kyrgyzstan embarked on a fourth version of this cycle in 2020, with the removal of Sooronbay Jeenbekov through public protests and riots and the election of Sadyr Japarov to power.

are made by the highest bidder, access to power motivates much political activity. Bargaining primarily takes place over positions and access rather than policy or ideological concerns. Party membership and platforms are highly volatile and primarily used as branding tools rather than as a means to organize and express public opinion or facilitate collective action in the legislature. Those politicians interested in policy reform worked primarily within the ruling party to achieve their goals, rather than creating loyal opposition parties. Kyrgyzstan's parliament had parties with relatively large numbers of seats due to the mechanical effects of electoral law, but this masked their internal weakness and the increasing inefficacy of parliament over time. Parties rarely ran in more than one parliamentary election, and formed highly volatile coalitions after election day.

The Kyrgyz Republic thus serves as an example of the lack of party system development in a low-capacity, high-corruption environment. This chapter describes the political context and history of the Kyrgyz Republic and its attempts at bureaucratic reform, then presents the results of interview and survey data gathered in Bishkek in 2018. I show that Kyrgyz politicians are most likely to cite party leadership and the likelihood of being elected as reasons to join a party. Politicians interested in policy – who were solely located within the ruling party or a civic party supported by international NGOs – described a system where legislation goes unimplemented and takes years of revision to achieve their goals. None were able to or interested in forming independent coalitions to enhance their bargaining positions. Parties themselves were primarily vertical patronage networks that use access to bribes and government jobs in order to recruit members. Parties colluded with each other to advance short terms goals (such as the distribution of cabinet positions), but did not form stable coalitions.

This chapter describes Kyrgyzstan as a counter-example to Armenia. Both were medium-repression electoral authoritarian regimes, with the Kyrgyz Republic having low state capacity and Armenia developing moderate administrative capacity over time. I show how that difference impacted political behavior. Armenian politicians stated their interest in policy formulation and social networks as a catalyst for party formation more consistently than Kyrgzystani politicians. Instead, Kyrgyzstanis focused on personal connections to a party leader. Policy-oriented loyal opposition coalitions formed in Armenia, while the parties that formed in the Kyrgyz Republic maintained a focus on patronage over time. Armenia's development of policy implementation mechanisms within the government created a viable pathway for politicians to influence policy outside the ruling party, contributing to the development of opposition parties, but no similar process began in the Kyrgyz Republic.

## 6.1 A brief history of elite relations in the Kyrgyz Republic

Politics in Kyrgyzstan have been defined by clientelistic vertical networks and unstable coalitions since the mid-1990s. Rather than form stable political parties, Kyrgyz elites built informal connections, both by establishing financial relationships within the government and by investing in local communities they could mobilize for support (a process Scott Radnitz

(2010) calls "subversive clientelism"). These characteristics have kept corruption high in the Kyrgyz Republic, but have also prevented the emergence of stable dictatorship. Successive presidents grew more authoritarian over time and attempted to consolidate power within their families and personal networks. In each case, these efforts drew resistance from other elite coalitions that (temporarily) banded together to overthrow the leader (Hale 2015, 194). The result has been multiple changes in power, but only one (the 2017 presidential election) that occurred through constitutional means. The Kyrgyz Republic thus remained an electoral authoritarian state with low administrative capacity rather than evolving into a stable bureaucratic authoritarian state (or a more democratic polity).

### 6.1.1 The Soviet Legacy

The Soviet Union left both a post-communist and post-colonial legacy to Kyrgyzstan. Unlike Armenia and other post-communist states in eastern Europe, the Kyrgyz Republic had no history of statehood prior to independence in 1991. Imperial Russia incorporated its territory in the 1870s and governed Kyrgyzstan as a internal colony for most of its existence. Kyrgyzstan therefore initially shared more in common with post-colonial states in Africa than post-communist states in the Baltics or Caucasus (Beissinger and Young 2002). It inherited a fused party-state with full government ownership of economic assets as well as a state where 80% of Kyrgyzstan's Soviet-era budget consisted of transfers from the central government (ICG 2004a, 2) and a political elite primarily drawn from Russian migrants.[4] Exiting communism, Kyrgyzstan's economy was dominated by animal husbandry (sheep and cattle herding, which made up 40% of GDP in 1995, Anderson 1999, 66), with the potential for hydroelectric power development and extraction of natural resources (notably gold, coal, and some rare earth elements).

Concern about the potential for ethnic and regional conflict among the Kyrgyz Republic's two main ethnic groups (Kyrgyz, which make up 73% of the population, and Uzbeks, at 15%[5]) served as an undercurrent to all politics. The Kyrgyz Republic is largely mountainous with two main centers of agriculture and population – the northern plains including the capital Bishkek and, in the south, parts of the Fergana Valley (bordering Uzbekistan) including the main cities Jalal-Abad and Osh. This regional divide corresponds with ethnic divisions, as most Uzbeks live in the south. Ethnic violence broke out in the southern city of Osh in 1990 as the Soviet Union was dissolving and reemerged during Kyrgyzstan's second revolution in July 2010.

### 6.1.2 Akaev (1991-2005)

Like Armenia, the Kyrgyz Republic did not immediately hold new elections for its parliament. The prior republic's Supreme Soviet became the state's national parliament upon

[4]The Russian population of the Kyrgyz Republic has declined steadily over time as many families chose to migrate back to Russia. The percentage of ethnic Russians living in Kyrgyzstan dropped from 35% in 1979 to about 6% in 2018, while ethnic Kyrgyz increased from around 50% in 1979 to nearly 73% in 2018.

[5]Data from the Kyrgyz Republic's 2018 census, available (in Russian) at `http://www.stat.kg/ru/statistics/naselenie/`

independence. Askar Akaev, a physicist serving as the head of the Academy of Science, was elected as a compromise candidate within the Communist Party for president. Akaev (at least initially) was well-known for favoring economic liberalization and inclusive ethnic policies, earning Kyrgyzstan the reputation of being the most liberal country in Central Asia.

Kyrgyzstan began to privatize its state owned enterprises shortly after independence. These economic reforms contributed to overall income inequality, but also created a relatively broad oligarch class. As in Armenia, the privatization process was unfair,[6] but the small size of the economy meant that a range of individuals engaged in cross-border trade were able to buy into the elite class. By 1994, 85% of the 4,700 state-owned enterprises had been privatized (Radnitz 2010, 62).[7] The biggest stakes in the economy (most notably the Kumtor gold mine, dam building projects for hydroelectric power, and later rents for the U.S. use of Manas Airfield during the war in Afghanistan[8]), however, were fiercely contested and remain the source of corruption investigations and counter-investigations to this day.[9] As elites began to access these resources, they formed regional networks to acquire contracts and assets. These networks were strong vertically – connecting players in the capitol to the regions – but horizontal (cross-regional or inter-elite) linkages between these networks were limited and transactional.

After an initial period of liberalization, Akaev began to consolidate power within his family and their political network. Parliament had formed an initial counter-balance to Akaev, but after repeated investigations in 1994 into government corruption (including into the disappearance of 1.5 tons of state-owned gold – the Seabeco scandal – and corruption in the privatization process) relations between the president and parliament deteriorated. The Akaev adminstration was not sharing income from bribes and state contracts broadly within the political elite, leading to unrest (Anderson 1996, Huskey 1997). To resolve the problem,

[6]In 1997, the entire leadership of the state organization responsible for privatization was dismissed for fraud (Engvall 2016, 100).

[7]Privatization, while extensive, remains incomplete. The Kyrgyz Republic still has 136 state-owned enterprises, concentrated in the lucrative energy, mining, and telecommunications sectors (Shambetova et al 2023).

[8]In December 2001, the U.S. opened an airbase at Manas International Airport (outside Bishkek) to provide air support to military operations in Afghanistan. Rents (literal rent plus logistics and fuel supply contracts) from Manas Air Base then became a lucrative (and highly contested) source of income for the Akaev and Bakiev families until the base closed in 2014. Rent for use of the facilities increased from $2 million a year in 2002 to $17 million in 2006 and finally a $60 million annual payment beginning in 2009 (Engvall 2016, 99).

[9]Kumtor mine started operating in 1997 with a $450 million investment from Canadian company Cameco. The initial contract, signed early in the Akaev administration, had the Kyrgyz government hold a two-thirds stake in the joint company through Kyrgyzaltyn. In 2004, Akaev signed a degree transferring the Kyrgyzaltyn shares to Centerra Gold, a Canadian company established in 2002. Bakiev renegotiated the deal in 2009, increasing government ownership slightly. Kumtor was re-nationalized in 2022, although it is still operated by its Canadian partner under an advantageous tax arrangement. Note that the controversy around management of Kumtor is separate from the Seabeco scandle (also under Akaev). Boris Birshtein set up Seabeco in Canada and Switzerland and appears to have taken receipt of 1.5 tons of state-owned gold in 1993. This provoked protest and a parliamentary investigation that led to the resignation of Akaev's prime minister. His successor remained in office for five years but also resigned after a separate incident of selling state-owned gold.

Akaev began appointing Soviet-era MPs to positions within the administration (by September 1994, half of parliamentarians had joined the government, McGlinchey 2011, 85) and elections for a new parliament were held in 1995. Only 20 members of the Soviet parliament won re-election, and the new parliament was dominated by public officials and businessmen who had benefited from privatization (Engvall 2022, 7). This political crisis established the pattern for Kyrgyzstani politics – the use of the bureaucracy to dole out positions to supporters and filter funds – and created relative political stability between 1994 and 2000 (McGlinchey 2011).

This patronage-based system began to fail in 2000, when Akaev began focusing on enriching his family. While the conduct of the 2000 presidential and parliamentary elections[10] was competitive in comparison to Kyrygyzstan's neighbors, opposition leaders (including the main challenger to Akaev, Felix Kulov) were arrested or forced to leave the country (ICG 2004a, 28).[11] Akaev increasingly used force in the face of public unrest. As in 1994, elites began to feel excluded from the spoils system,[12] and combined with widespread fraud during the 2005 parliamentary elections, led to the "Tulip Revolution." On March 24, Akaev fled to Moscow, ending this relatively liberal period of Kyrgyzstani politics.

### 6.1.3 Bakiev (2005-2010)

The 2005 Tulip Revolution was not driven by spontaneous, grass-roots demonstrations. Instead, rather than negotiate with Akaev, politicians found it more effective to pay their local networks of supporters to take to the street (Radnitz 2010). The resulting regime change thus represented a shift in the elite networks in power, rather than liberalization. When Akaev fled, Kurmanbek Bakiev became the new president based on his ability to balance rival factions in the government (Huskey and Hill 2011).[13]

Early in Bakiev's term, parliament returned to being the primary venue for managing disputes among the elite, with the outcome being "an institutionalization of the dispersion of power along party lines" (Engvall 2022, 78-9). The parliament elected in 2005 remained in office for two years, until Bakiev promulgated a presidentialist constitution in 2007 and held snap elections. The new parliament was the first elected based on a system of full proportional representation. Bakiev quickly organized a party to support his presidency (Ak Jol), which won a super-majority in parliament (71 of the 90 seats). With full control of all branches of the government, Bakiev then quickly concentrated power in his family's hands.

[10] Elections were held the same year, but not at the same time, with the parliamentary elections held in February and presidential in October.

[11] Another candidate allegedly lost $10 million in business revenue due to state harassment after he announced he would run for president (ICG 2004a, 28).

[12] As one regional political figure told the International Crisis Group (ICG) just before the Tulip Revolution, "The mixture of loyalty and reciprocal benefits is becoming too one-sided and many in the elite are ready for change." (International Crisis Group 2004, 6)

[13] Parliament named Bakiev prime minister (and therefore interim president) after the March protests, which was confirmed that July with Bakiev winning 89.5% of the vote in new presidential elections.

Bakiev's rise was a shift in power from northern to southern networks (International Crisis Group 2015) and a shift from corruption to overt criminality. Bakiev allied with reputed criminal leaders to establish control in some parts of the country and those criminal networks became integrated with the state (Marat 2006, 2008). As MP Rashid Tagayev stated at the time, "Everyone – from state officials to criminals – moved beyond legal frameworks after the revolution" (Marat 2006, 88-9). The impact was seen at all levels of government. Surveys showed that requests for bribes increased dramatically in the country between 2006 and 2010 (for example, 25% of patients reported they needed to pay bribes to access the health care system in 2006, compared to 49% in 2010, World Bank 2016). Most notably, Bakiev's youngest son Maxim reorganized the bureaucracy to have all state financial agencies report to him, allowing him to direct the flow of funds to personal allies. As one government consultant noted in 2008, "They want to get very rich as fast as possible. Especially Maxim." (International Crisis Group 2010).

Political repression also became more severe. The president's former chief of staff, who had formed a competing political party, was killed in a suspicious car crash in 2009, a former speaker of parliament had heroin planted on him leading to an arrest in Poland, and independent journalists faced violent attacks (Marat 2008, International Crisis Group 2010).[14] As in 2005, accusations of fraud in the July 2009 presidential elections generated popular protest, which eventually became a second revolution in April 2010. In the end, the arc of the Bakiev administration closely resembled Akaev's, but on a compressed timeline.

### 6.1.4 SDPK rule: Atambaev and Jeenbekov (2010-2020)

The April (2010) Revolution, also known as the Melon Revolution, established an interim government led by Roza Otunbaeva, the head of the Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan (SDPK). While the interim government was democratically-oriented and initially held strong popular support, it quickly came under fire for poor management of ethnic violence that killed hundreds in southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010. Revolutionary leaders did poorly in the elections held later that year, which distributed power broadly and generated greater competition for resources among the elite.

The 2010 election results produced five parties in parliament with relatively equal numbers of seats and made Ata Jurt, an Uzbek-dominated party affiliated with members of the former Bakiev administration, as the largest party. Forming a coalition government took eight months, when a Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan (SDPK) leader, Almazbek

[14]For example, Edil Baisalov, at the time the leader of Kyrgyzstan's largest NGO and an initial supporter of Bakiev's ascent, was assaulted in April 2006 and sent to the hospital (McGlinchey 2011, 104). He fled the Kyrgyz Republic in 2007, gaining refugee status in Sweden, but returned in 2012 after reconciling with the SDP government. His politics changed in 2020, when he allied himself Sadyr Japarov and became Deputy Prime Minister. Baisalov now advocates for super-presidentialism in Kyrgyzstan, opposing his former colleagues in the non-governmental sector. For example, in ... he stated, "We don't care about the opinion of all 90 deputies now. We will not chase after each deputy, we will work with 45 or 50 deputies. They will pass our laws. The rest [of the deputies], I will say, even if they object and stamp their feet, it will not bother us [Cabinet]. You will not be able to distract us. We will not wait for your approval." (Almas 2021)

Atambaev, became prime minister as parties colluded to exclude Ata Jurt from power and return northern networks to political influence.[15] This coalition did not last long, however. The prime minister changed in 2011, 2012, and 2014, each new government offering a new opportunity for parties to share in the distribution of cabinet seats and reshuffle patronage networks in the administration. The corrupt practices of the prior administrations largely remained in place, although more was channeled through parliament. As one legislator said in 2015, "there was a lot of corruption under the previous regimes; nothing has changed today. But in place of family clans, today we have party clans" (International Crisis Group 2015, 5). While formally powerful, however, the instability of parliament and its leadership made it increasingly subordinate to the president.

The transition in power between Atambaev and Sooronbai Jeenbekov, another SDPK leader who was elected president in 2017, was the first in the Kyrgyz Republic to take place through constitutional means. Presidents could only serve one six-year term under the constitution, and Atambaev appears to have thought Jeenbekov would be a loyal follower, allowing Atambaev to exert influence behind the scenes (similar to Putin's role in Russia as Prime Minister when Medvedev was elected president). Once elected, however, Jeenbekov purged Atambaev loyalists from office, installing his own clientelistic network. Parliament stripped Atambaev of his immunity from prosecution in 2019, leading to his arrest later that year.[16]

In sum, in the Kyrgyz Republic, elite networks were both highly fluid and the most important determinant of political outcomes. Elections mattered: they were fiercely contested, but not as expression of voter or policy preferences. Instead, elections and parliament served as a marketplace for determining which clientelistic networks would manage the country. Privatization in the early 1990s under Akaev distributed resources among the elite, groups of which have alternated in power since then. Political change happened not due to grassroots popular protest, but because administrations over time began to restrict access to rents to narrower groups of allies, leading excluded elites to mobilize their networks to rebel. The shifts in power since the fall of communism have reflected these shifts in the networks of party and business leaders.

## 6.2 Bureaucratic reform fails to take hold

Kyrgyzstan never established practices and mechanisms for effective state performance; instead informal procedures established in the mid-1990s reinforced high levels of corruption and low state capacity. The combination of asset stripping by the Soviet nomenklatura and then-President Akaev's loose management style created a system where personal connections determined influence within government, and the system changed little since then. Corruption increased under Bakaev and stabilized under the SDPK, but the rules of the game remained the same.

[15] Atambaev was then elected president in October 2011.

[16] This rift between Atambaev and Jeenbekov ultimately led to the dissolution of the SDPK before the 2020 election, where its former MPs ran in two new parties – Birimdik (led by Jeenbekov's brother) and Mekenim Kyrgyzstan (led by a former customs official), which together won 75% of the seats.

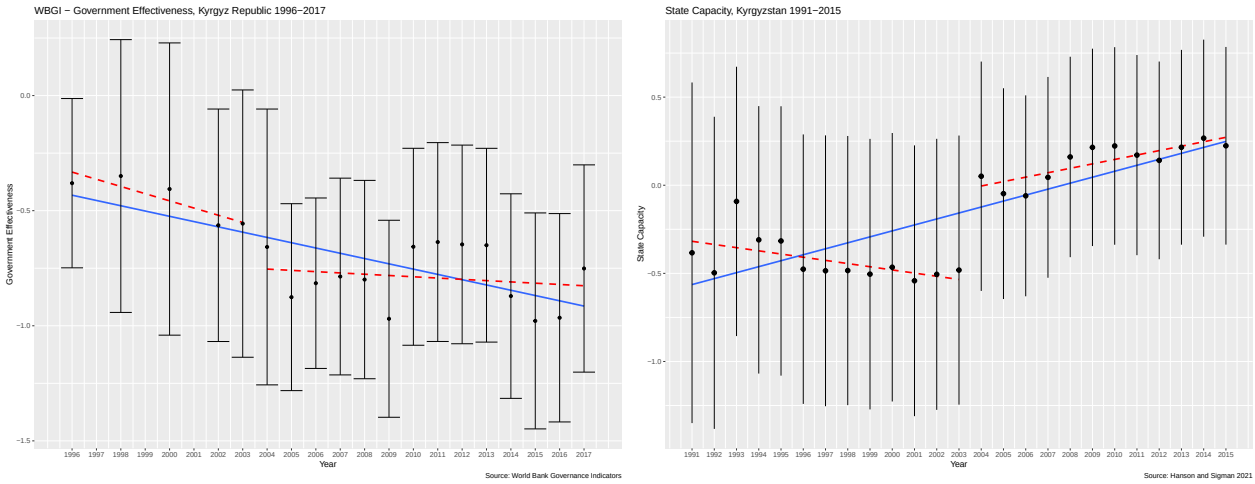



Figure 6.1: State Capacity Indicators for Kyrgyzstan, 1991-2017

Formal government institutions are not absent – indeed, influence over them is highly sought after since they controlled the ability to regulate economic monopolies. Reforms had success in limited areas, such as e-government, but overall the formal state was a source of systemic corruption. As shown in Figure 6.1, this weakness is shown in the lack of change in the World Bank's government effectiveness or Hanson and Sigman's (2021) state capacity index for Kyrgyzstan (compared to the steady, if slight, increase shown in Armenia's indicators in Chapter 5).[17]

### 6.2.1 Akaev (1991-2005)

The Kyrgyz Republic began legal reform to establish a modern bureaucracy earlier than Armenia. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Akaev administration passed a range of regulations and laws aimed at creating a legal basis for the state, including a civil code, tax code, and a full revision of the criminal code. These well-intentioned reforms, however, were often drafted by foreign experts with little consideration for local conditions. This led to weak implementation and confusion generated by multiple later revisions of the code (Engvall 2022, 40). For example, reforms to the Kyrgyz Republic's accounting regulations passed in 1998 and 2002 brought Kyrgyzstan in line with international standards and created an

[17] While neither the World Bank nor the Hanson and Sigman's (2021) state capacity index show an increase in capacity over the year outside the variance for the indicator, both show a possible change in capacity trends in 2003-2004. The change in the Hanson and Sigman indicator appears to be driven by an increase in tax revenue and military expenditures at this time. While this is similar to the change in Armenia's index (tax revenue and military expenditures also increased), Armenia also experienced improvement in its public administration indicators. In addition, and most significantly, Kyrgyzstan's increase in tax revenue did not increase its tax ratio as a percentage of GDP (unlike in Armenia, Asian Development Bank 2018) – and as described below, the revenue did not go to its intended purposes. Therefore, while my primary indicator (Hanson and Sigman 2021) trends upward, I interpret this as no change within the standard error of the indicator.

independent agency to supervise those professions. But these laws had been adopted from international guidelines without removing contradictions among them or having them conform with the constitution. Additional reforms passed in the early 2000s did not resolve these problems, and double book-keeping remained standard practice in both private and state-owned enterprises (Narasimham and Adhami 2008).

Rather than following up initial laws with additional reforms or implementing decrees, legislation was repeatedly fully re-drafted, re-introduced, and re-passed. According to a European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) survey in 1999, the Kyrgyz Republic had one of the least accessible legislation and comment processes in the former Soviet Union and had the biggest gap between laws passed and laws implemented (Anderson et al 2005, 15-16, 24).[18] A Kyrgyz policymaker stated at the time: "We started out drafting laws, saw them passed, and now we watch as they are not implemented." (Anderson et al 2005, 13)

These formal, unimplemented reforms were also accompanied by a decline in the Akaev administration's management practices. Officials were repeatedly hired and fired and lines of authority became unclear.[19] This mis-management created the opportunity for office-buying, which became common practice, as Akaev's family vetted (and sold) most positions in the government.[20] In 2001, the going rate for a governorship was around $250,000, with mayoral jobs costing $50,000 (International Crisis Group 2001, 5).[21] According to the ICG (2004, 6), by 2004, the practice of buying positions had become "systemic." Rather than civil service reform, "old structures remained or were given new names to create an impression of institutional reform." (Engvall 2016, 43)

### 6.2.2 Bakiev (2005-2010)

Under Bakiev, family ties became a more important avenue to power, prices for jobs started to rise, and corruption became even more associated with the ruling family. The requirements for appointment to a position deteriorated over time, as a former prosecutor noted in 2009: "Earlier, there were at least some prerequisites for being appointed, but under Bakiev the number of educated people in the police and other state agencies is worsening by the day." (Engvall 2016, 43) The sale of offices became more vertically integrated, with a high-level official controlling sales and income from subservient positions in his office.

[18] In this survey, Armenia had a higher rating on publishing legislation, but had a similar low rating on comments.

[19] For example, one former minister described the appointment process thus: "One official got an appointment. The president congratulates him, and he goes off to Kara-Balta, a two-hour drive away. He arrives, and he has already been dismissed. There's already a decree. But then in the morning he is appointed again." (International Crisis Group 2004, 5)

[20] A former official said in 2007, "All candidates to ministries ... were monitored and vetted by the president's wife and children. ... Those who wanted to resolve appointment issues had to resolve them with her. ... Professional skills did not matter; staffing was based on what they paid." (Engvall 2016, 45)

[21] Positions were for sale at all levels. A deputy chief in the tax service was reportedly worth $70,000, which a chief inspector $30,000 (Engvall 2016, 57). A police officer position could be bought for $100-$500 (Engvall 2016, 66).

Legal reforms were made to meet international standards under pressure from donors, but again either went un-implemented or had perverse effects. For example, judicial reform was first attempted in 2007. One reform was to shorten the tenure of judges. While this was intended to introduce a more educated cadre to the judiciary by installing younger judges, it instead encouraged them to aggressively pursue revenue soon after their appointment, since they did not how long they would be in office (Engvall 2016, 62-63).

In another example, the system for tax collection was reformed in 1996, 2006-9, and 2012-2016,[22] creating an electronic filing system and value added tax. These international reforms did have some degree of success – Kyrgyzstan's tax revenue as a percent of GDP has averaged around 20% since the 1990s (Barreto and Sinha 2014, Asian Development Bank 2018, 4), but a government minister confirmed in 2007 that, "collection is no longer the main problem. The real problem is how revenues are distributed. There is no transparency in the system, so it is impossible to know" how state funds were spent (Engvall 2016, 102). According to the International Budget Partnership, in the late 2000s, the Kyrgyz Republic had one of the lowest scores it provides on budget transparency (8 out of 100, International Budget Partnership 2010) and an estimated 30% of all government revenues were diverted to other accounts (Engvall 2016, 103).

The Bakiev administration was therefore characterized by the increasingly arbitrary use of bureaucratic and legal reform. As Transparency International noted, "laws and regulations governing public administration are controversial, ambiguous, and frequently changed without notice" (Martini 2013, 3-4). This lack of consistency in the enforcement of the law and high discretionary power of public officials further weakened the state and prevented implementation of those reforms that were enacted. Government employees had few options outside this system, as compensation was low.[23] While appointment to the civil service should have provided some job security, in practice each new administration would bring its own people into government, replacing even tenured employees (Liebert 2014, 15). Buying positions was also common in Armenia at this time, but while Armenia began to professionalize its bureaucracy in the 2010s, the Kyrgyz Republic continued and expanded position-buying over the next decade.

### 6.2.3 SDPK rule: Atambaev and Jeenbekov (2011-2020)

Under SDPK leadership, the Kyrgyz Republic moved away from extreme corruption, which became regularized and institutionalized as some standards emerged for the appointment of a client to a position. For example, standard fees (based on ability to pay) and terminology for purchasing judicial decisions at different levels were established (Engvall 2016, 116-118). In addition, education – as well as money – would determine who could be appointed to certain positions. Purchasing offices remained the norm, but it became embedded in quasi-meritocratic procedures.

[22]The tax code was again comprehensively reformed in 2022-3 (funded by the World Bank), leading to eight separate collection systems, according to the IMF (Benninger 2024).

[23]In 2011, the average monthly salary of a civil servant was $212, although they also received significant additional benefits (such as health care and a pension, Liebert 2014, 13).

Despite these "standards," the qualifications and competence of state employees remained low. Although regulations required goverment positions be advertised publicly, a person would already have been identified for the position before the job was announced. In a 2013 interview, one civil servant noted performance evaluation criteria remained arbitrary:

> Assessment of performance is very subjective. There is no job description, there is no criteria for measuring performance, so it all depends on the supervisor. There is no definition of "good" performance. An employee might receive a bonus for "good work" but in reality he might not have been doing anything but went to his supervisor's office on a regular basis to bring him papers/documents developed by someone else. (Liebert 2014)

Some training for employees was in place, but was relatively rare. For example, traffic police received training in their duties only every five years (Liebert 2014).

There were improvements to overall state capacity in the immediate aftermath of Kyrgyzstan's second revolution, but weak implementation of bureaucratic reforms remained the norm. For example, from 2005–2010, the number of asset declarations submitted by political appointees ranged from 988 to 1,511. In 2016, this number increased to 2276 declarations. The number of declarations from civil servants also increased from 12,225 to 29,067. However, the audit agency conducted no checks for accuracy of information during this period, since the legislation failed to include a verification requirement (Nasyrov 2022, 276-277). The SDPK began to enforce and verify declarations in 2018, but sanctions for noncompliance remained unclear and significant gaps in the law remained (for example, it did not require close relatives of officials to declare assets) (Shambetova et al 2023). Other improvements included a marginal improvement in budget transparency (from no transparency to limited) when budgets were released publicly, although the audit institution responsible for checking their accuracy remained underfunded (International Budget Partnership 2017).

To summarize, despite repeated laws and administrative reforms, state capacity improved only marginally, if at all, between 1992 and 2018. Success in passing legislation masked continued corruption in standard operating procedures, the use of revenue, and the institutionalized sale of positions in the civil service. Little policy implementation took place, as bureaucrats primarily focused on generating revenue for themselves and their superiors. This policy environment was created by Kyrgyzstani elites in the 1990s and persisted through the 2010s, shaping later elite motivations to engage in politics and join political parties.

## 6.3 Elite motivations and strategies

In contrast to the increased elite interest in policy bargaining in Armenia over time, elite behavior in the Kyrgyz Republic focused primarily on bargaining over access to power. As Johan Engvall (2016, 71) put it: "Elites seek direct access to the state in order to protect, or at least reduce, the vulnerability of their property and wealth from the ruler and/or

Table 6.1: Summary of Kyrgyzstani Civil Service Reform

| Reform | Year | Implementation |
|---|---|---|
| **Bureaucratic Independence** | | |
| Adoption of civil service law | 1996 | Law creating civil service passed |
| | 1999 | Law unifying civil service passed |
| | 2004 | New law on civil service passed |
| | 2016 | Law on civil service revised |
| Merit-based hiring | 2017 | Computerized personnel management system adopted across the government |
| Conflict of interest laws | 2001 | Ethics Commission created |
| | 2005 | Law requiring asset declarations passed |
| | 2016 | Number of declarations submitted increases, but none verified |
| | 2017 | New asset declaration law passed |
| | | Verification of asset declarations begins |
| **Policy Formulation** | | |
| Regulatory review | | n/a |
| Impact/cost assessments | 2004 | Audit Chamber created |
| **Training** | | |
| Amount, quality of training | 2016 | Law passed creating training programs for civil servants |
| Job descriptions | 2017 | Computerized personnel management system adopted across the government |
| Merit-based promotion | 2013 | Merit pay introduced by presidential decree |
| | 2017 | Computerized personnel management system adopted across the government |

other competitors." While my research identified Kyrgyzstani politicians committed to policy reform and democracy in their country, they did not generally pursue these interests by forming parliamentary opposition parties, but rather by joining the ruling party (or remaining outside government).

As with in Armenia, I evaluate three hypotheses:

H2: Elite perception of the credibility of policy commitments made by a dictator will be higher in electoral authoritarian regimes with higher state capacity than in countries with lower capacity.

H3: Members of loyal opposition parties will be more interested in bargaining over policy in electoral authoritarian regimes with higher state capacity than in countries with lower state capacity.

H4: Elites in states with higher levels of administrative capacity will be more likely to join political parties based on policy motivations than in states with low levels of administrative capacity.

In interviews and a 2018 elite survey, I found many Kyrgyzstani politicians focused on patronage and access to power when considering which party to join. They also expressed a more diverse set of motives for action than in Armenia, where politicians relatively consistently expressed interest in policy issues (even if these statements may not always have been honest). As in Armenia, no link could be found between policy bargaining and the credibility of the president, but Kyrgyzstani politicians were more likely to describe a disfunctional policy process – the repeated passage of legislation with no implementation and little effect. What policy bargaining did take place took place solely within the governing coalition, and politicians or parties interested in policy changes needed to join the government to succeed.

### 6.3.1 Who's an elite? Sampling Kyrgyz politicians

#### Population

The population examined in this study is the Kyrgyzstani political elite – specifically, as in Armenia, individuals who chose to participate in formal politics as candidates for parliament on a party list.[24] The Kyrgyz elite is often described as a group of individuals often purchase positions on party lists in an effort to secure a seat in parliament and the perks that come with it (Bugazov 2013, Engvall 2016, Engvall 2022).[25] Erica Marat (2012) concluded that there are three types of members of parliament: leaders who buy in to maintain or increase their personal finances, entrepreneurs representing local constituencies, and idealists who work on policy. Party lists therefore represent well the set of people interested in access to power in the Kyrgyz Republic (and willing to pay for the privilege), although not necessarily those interested in influencing the policy process.

The breakdown of members of parliament by profession is not available, but media and NGOs have conducted ad hoc studies concluding that parliament is primarily made up of businessmen and former government (state administration) officials, averaging between 60% and 75% of MPs.[26] Engvall (2022, 10) concluded, "the typical MP consists of a 50-year

[24]Kyrgyzstani party lists can be found on the Central Election Commission's website: `https://shailoo.gov.kg/ru/Kandidaty_Talapkerler/Spisok_kandidatovTalapkerlerdin_tizmesi/`

[25]In 2010, seats in parliament reportedly cost $100,000-$300,000 (Engvall 2016, 46). Party lists are also a weak indicator of who will enter parliament. Party leaders typically adjust list order during the time between the announcement of interim and final election results, forcing some list candidates to withdraw. This practice, while formally illegal, distorts the required gender makeup of each list and further indebts MPs (literally and figuratively) to party leaders (Interview 3009, 5/18/18, Huskey and Hill 2013, Doolotkeldieva and Wolters 2017). See discussion in section 6.4.3.

[26]In 1995, around 33% of parliament was former government officials and members of the intelligentsia, with around 50% businessmen. (Huskey 1997, 263-4) In 2000, 60% of MPs were high-ranking officials in the government and an additional 25% were businessmen (Engvall 2022, 47), while in 2010, an NGO study found that businessmen and state functionaries held 62% of seats in parliament. In 2015, this number was 73% (Engvall 2022, 90). Doolotkeldieva and Wolders (2017, 6) noted that in 2015, "Most new MPs were former state bureaucrats or entrepreneurs with questionable reputations. Professional politicians, with expertise in

old Kyrgyz man with a strong provincial attachment and a primary background in various business activities for whom party affiliation is an exchangeable political commodity."

The main group of political elites not covered by this sampling frame is members of civil society. NGO leaders, academics, and journalists influence politics on the margins and have played key roles at times (for example, helping shape the constitution after the 2010 revolution), but faced many obstacles to influencing policy since they were more vulnerable to arrest and government harassment.

### Interview Sample

Based on this population, I adopted a modified snowball sampling strategy for semi-structured interviews with members of parliament and party officials. With the goal of interviewing at least two members of each parliamentary party and one from key non-parliamentary parties, I obtained interviews with my initial targets and asked each interviewee to recommend additional subjects.[27] I was ultimately able to conduct 18 interviews, including 13 members of parliament, three party members, and one government official (see Table 6.2 for full distribution).[28] All interviews were conducted in Russian, Kyrgyz, or Uzbek with the use of an interpreter.

Table 6.2: Interviews conducted in the Kyrgyz Republic, April-June 2018

| | Leadership | MP | Staff | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Adilet (Democratic Party) | | | 1 | 1 |
| Ata Jurt | | 1 | | 1 |
| Ata Meken | 1 | 1 | | 2 |
| Bir Bol | | 1 | | 1 |
| Kyrgyzstan Party | | 2 | | 2 |
| Onuguu-Progress | | 2 | | 2 |
| Respublika | | 1 | | 1 |
| Respublika-Ata Jurt | | 2 | | 2 |
| Social Democratic Party | | 2 | | 2 |
| Zamandash | 1 | | | 1 |
| Non-party members | 1 | 1 | | 2 |
| Total | 3 | 13 | 1 | 17 |

legislation, or even remotely charismatic leaders with the ability to initiate debates, were largely absent from the party lists." The 2021 parliament was made up almost entirely of this group – 60% businessmen and 40% state officials.

[27]I identified key non-parliamentary parties based on background interviews with local subject-matter experts. They were parties who had participated in prior elections and intended to continue to do so. My initial target was to interview the secretary of the parliamentary faction, an "average" member of parliament, and a member of the party organization for parliamentary parties and the deputy head of party for non-parliamentary parties.

[28]While not as large as the Armenian sample, I interviewed 11% of members of parliament.

**Survey Sample**

To sample a wider range of the Kyrgyz elite, I also conducted a survey, which was was fielded June 17, 2019-July 15, 2019 by SIAR Research and Consulting, a local firm that also conducts the surveys for the International Republican Institute, OECD, and other international governmental and non-governmental organizations in the Kyrgyz Republic. To develop the sampling frame, I used the party lists of candidates for parliament in the 2015 elections as the base for my sample of the elite. While this was the most recent published list of party members and affiliates, it was a weak measure of the political elite in 2018. Several parties had dissolved and affiliation with the ruling party (the Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan SDPK) grew in the three years between the creation of these party lists and the deployment of the survey. In addition, many former party members declared themselves unaffiliated in 2018 in order to market themselves to new partners for the 2020 elections. SIAR was able to obtain contact information for 500 party list members. As evidenced by the even number, SIAR set a target for the sample and stopped collecting data once it was met.

The survey was available in Russian, Kyrgyz, and Uzbek, although 93% of responses were in Russian (the remaining seven were in Kyrgyz). It was conducted solely online, with SIAR making phone calls to encourage survey completion. Obtaining responses was challenging.[29] SIAR needed to make four rounds of phone calls to achieve a sufficient number of responses to analyze (100 responses). As seen in Table 3, the result is that responses are skewed to the two most established parties in parliament – the Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan (SPDK, the ruling party) and Ata Meken. The majority of respondents chose not to declare a party affiliation in the survey (twice as many as in the Armenian survey). See Appendix 3 for the full list of survey questions.

### 6.3.2 Methodological Challenges

The survey and interview data collected for this chapter faced similar methodological challenges as the data collected in Armenia (see Chapter 5, Section 5.3.3), including the questionable honesty of politicians' statements. My Kyrgyzstani data, however, faced additional weaknesses. As noted above, the volatile nature of party politics in the Kyrgyz Republic limited my ability to gather and analyze consistent data, including gathering a representative sampling frame. While I was surprised by the willingness of senior politicians in parties such as Bir Bol and Kyrgyzstan (made primarily of wealthy businessmen) to speak with me in interviews, politicians were uninterested in responding to a survey. SIAR was able to obtain 100 survey responses, but question response rates were often lower (as discussed below). As in Armenia, selection bias in the parties I chose to include in the study was a problem (as I only interviewed members of extant parties), although there were more "failed" parties in the Kyrgyz Republic as the same politicians often formed new parties or coaitions for each election.

[29]This is in line with past research on the efficacy of online elite surveys, which finds that they can generate representative samples, but have lower response rates (Fisher and Herrick 2012).

Table 6.3: Sampling Bias, June-July 2018 Survey

| Political Party | Population | Sample | Responses |
|---|---|---|---|
| Aalam | 134 (0.059) | | |
| Adilet (Democratic Party) | 133 (0.058) | 23 (0.046) | |
| Aikol El | | 3 (0.006) | |
| Al-Shumkar | | 3 (0.006) | |
| Ar Namys | 188 (0.082) | | |
| Ata Jurt | | | 1 (0.01) |
| Ata Meken | 187 (0.082) | 44 (0.088) | 13 (0.13) |
| Azattyk | 133 (0.058) | | |
| Bir Bol | 149 (0.065) | 10 (0.02) | 1 (0.01) |
| Communist Party | | 4 (0.008) | |
| Greens | | 3 (0.006) | |
| Kyrgyzstan Party | 173 (0.076) | 45 (0.09) | 5 (0.05) |
| Kongress | 153 (0.067) | | |
| My Homeland Kyrgyzstan | 126 (0.055) | 3 (0.006) | |
| Onuguu-Progress | 143 (0.063) | 41 (0.082) | 3 (0.03) |
| Respublika | | | 3 (0.03) |
| Respublika-Ata Jurt | 180 (0.079) | 67 (0.134) | |
| Social Democratic Party | 127 (0.056) | 148 (0.296) | 12 (0.12) |
| Strong Kyrgyzstan | | 2 (0.004) | |
| Uluu Kyrgyzstan | 153 (0.067) | | |
| United Kyrgyzstan | 161 (0.071) | 2 (0.004) | |
| Zamandash | 139 (0.061) | 4 (0.008) | |
| Other | | | 6 (0.06) |
| Non-party members | | 98 (0.196) | 56 (0.56) |
| N | 2279 | 500 | 100 |

Note: Proportion of each category in parentheses

### 6.3.3 Why join a party?

H4: Elites in states with higher levels of administrative capacity will be more likely to join political parties based on policy motivations than in states with low levels of administrative capacity.

Elites in Kyrgyzstan were most likely to cite their party's leader as their main motivation for joining a party (see first column, Table 6.4).[30] While most politicians also stated they believe in their party's platform (and more interview respondents cited policy over other motivations, as is the social norm), Kyrgyz politicians were much more likely to place value on other factors – including the quality and influence of other members of their party – than Armenian politicians. While Armenian politicians clearly prioritized policy motivations as

[30]For additional information on how I coded interview and survey responses, please see Chapter 5, Sections 5.3.2-3.

Table 6.4: Summary Statistics, Motive for Joining a Political Party

| | 2018 Survey | | | 2018 Interviews |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean | Std. Dev. | N | N |
| Personal ties | 2.41 | 1.00 | 36 | 1 |
| Platform | 3.37 | 0.69 | 35 | 6.5 |
| Leader | 3.43 | 0.80 | 37 | 4 |
| Advance career | 2.34 | .97 | 35 | 2.5 |
| Best people | 3.30 | 0.74 | 37 | 1.5 |
| Most influence | 3.00 | 0.74 | 34 | 0.5 |

Note: Survey responses are on a scale of 1-4, where 1 is equivalent to "Not important at all" and 4 is equivalent to "Very important" in response to the question "We are interested in knowing your reasons for originally joining your party. Please indicate how important or unimportant each of the following reasons were to you when you became a member of your party." Interview responses (n=16) are coded based on the topics raised in response to the question "Why did you join this party?" If a respondent offered more than one reason, partial points were coded (e.g., a response that indicated policy and leadership were both important to the decision would have a 0.5 in each category).

modified by their social network in joining parties, Kyrgyzstani politicians cited more diverse motives.

Regressions on survey results indicate that policy motivations did not significantly change over time (Table 6.5). Regressing party and year joined on the importance placed on a party's platform in their decision to join a party shows that politicians who joined a party in the early 2010s (after the Tulip Revolution that ushered in SDPK rule) were more likely to prioritize policy over those who joined before or after, with no significant differences across parties. This may be due to the relatively democratic nature of the 2010 Tulip Revolution, which may have encouraged policy-oriented elites to enter politics. However, the small sample (only 37 respondents answered questions about motivations and 26 identified themselves as having a party affiliation) and the small number of individuals in each party/year joined category (see Table 6.6) makes this statistical analysis indicative at best. Additional regression analysis showed no statistically significant difference between motivations or between parties or year joined for motivations (see Appendix 1 for full results). Again, while the lack of statistical significance may arise from small sample sizes, it also supports the conclusion that Kyrgyz politicians have weakly defined motivations, supporting Hypothesis 4 – politicians do not demonstrate a strong or rising interest in policy in this low-capacity state.

Interviews also demonstrated the shallowness of elites' stated ideological commitments. Interview 3010 (May 17, 2018) was typical. When asked why he joined his party, he stated it was because of the platform, but was unable to describe it:

> My party was formed by those who had previously worked in the executive and parliament. I am the author of its economic platform. My interest is in this platform – that is why I decided to participate with this party. *What is your party's platform?* I will give you a copy – I think this will rate more highly with

Table 6.5: Importance of party platform to decision to join party, by party and year joined

| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Party | | | |
| Bir Bol | -0.350 | | -0.455 |
| | (0.723) | | (0.774) |
| Kyrgyzstan | -0.350 | | -0.121 |
| | (0.489) | | (0.482) |
| Onuguu-Progress | -0.107 | | -0.455 |
| | (0.617) | | (0.569) |
| Respublika | -0.173 | | 0.212 |
| | (0.467) | | (0.482) |
| SDPK | -0.472 | | -0.155 |
| | (0.313) | | (0.324) |
| Other | 0.046 | | -0.055 |
| | (0.407) | | (0.399) |
| Year joined party | | | |
| 2015-16 | 1.153 | 0.938 | |
| | (0.575) | (0.470) | |
| 2010-14 | 1.621* | 1.357* | |
| | (0.654) | (0.503) | |
| 2009 and earlier | 0.659 | 0.600 | |
| | (0.636) | (0.486) | |

Note: Results are OLS regression of party and year joined on importance given to party platform in decision to join a party on the 2018 survey. The baseline party is Ata Jurt and baseline year of entry is 2017-18. $* = p \leq 0.5$.

Table 6.6: 2018 Survey of Kyrgyzstani Politicians: Number of observations by party and year joined

| | Year joined party | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | <2009 | 2010-2014 | 2015-16 | 2017-18 | |
| Ata Jurt | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Ata Meken | 7 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 13 |
| Bir Bol | 0 | 0 | 1 | 9 | 10 |
| Kyrgyzstan | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 5 |
| Onuguu-Progress | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Respublika | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3 |
| SDPK | 2 | 4 | 6 | 0 | 12 |
| Other | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 6 |
| No response | | | | | 56 |
| Total | 10 | 10 | 21 | 12 | |

Note: The choice of categorical divisions for the "Year joined party" variable were based on parliamentary election years – individuals typically joined parties in 2009 for the 2010 election, 2014 for the 2015 elections, etc.

> you. I will have my staff bring it from the secretariat because I have already distributed the copies I had here.[31]

More politicians valued their integration into patronage networks than the details of their platform: One MP described following a party leader from party to party as they formed, joined, and dissolved coalitions (Interview 3002, May 8, 2018). Similarly, Interview 3011 (May 21, 2018) stated, "I chose my party because of the leader," while Interview 3013 (May 25, 2018) stated, "[My party] was established by two politicians and it happened that they both were my close friends."

Other scholars' research describes elite motivations for political participation as primarily financial in nature. Discussing the founder of the Respublika party, Engvall (2022, 58) concluded, "For Babanov, often referred to as Kyrgyzstan's wealthiest individual, political influence has been part of his business strategy over the past two decades."[32] Seats in parliament offered the ability to influence government contracts, elicit bribes, and avoid prosecution.[33] As an advisor to a candidate for parliament said,

> Nowadays, when you are a civil servant you can be fired at any time, [but] this does not happen if you are a Member of Parliament. ... Parliament is also a place of confrontation between different lobbies and we need to be part of it to defend our economic interests. My candidate is also interested in the immunity given by his status as Member of Parliament in order to protect his private business. (Petric 2005, 324)

No politician I interviewed was so blunt, but members of the Kyrygzstan and Bir Bol parties described economic motivations for their choice. For example, one party member stated:

> My friends (fellow businessmen) and I decided to form a party together because ... we wanted to protect the rights of businessmen. Some say that we came to protect our own interests, but this is not true. ... There are many barriers to opening businesses, and those hindrances are well known to businessmen. You don't understand it if you are not in business, because you have never faced them. (Interview 3005, May 17, 2018)

Similarly, another MP described his desire to join the party that would best position him to be elected:

> I was on the SDP-K list, but I wasn't high enough on the list to become a member of parliament, so I decided to choose another party. ... I analyzed my options and looked at the other parties. ... When I saw the list for [my party], while

[31] I never got a copy of the platform.

[32] Omurbek Babanov was prime minister in 2012 and came in second in the 2017 presidential elections. After his 2017 loss, he fled the country to avoid retaliation through criminal prosecution (which newly-elected President Jeenbekov had promised during his campaign). He returned to Kyrgyzstan in 2020 after public protests ousted the SDPK President, but was arrested for corruption related to the Kumtor mine case in 2021. He was released from prison on medical grounds in 2023.

[33] Immunity was not a trivial concern, In 1995, almost one-third of new MPs were reportedly investigated by the State Prosecutor's Office for illegal financial activities. (Engvall 2022, 34)

> some people say it is a party of rich people, I say it is a party of self-made people. Many of us made our money abroad, which shows self-sufficiency and survival under difficult circumstances ... I had offers from three parties, but think I made the right choice because we have common interests in this party. (Interview 3001, April 26, 2018)

Many Kyrgyzstani politicians appeared motivated by personal or economic interests, but some were genuinely focused on policy goals.[34] One member of the then-ruling party SDP-K described her motivation as tied to:

> "SDP's attention to social factors. ... We want social equality and to get social equality we need to improve the economy and fight corruption. In fact, I am now working on several pieces of legislation on iodine deficiency, early marriage, and family violence." (Interview 3007, May 15, 2018)

Similarly, a member of Onuguu-Progress focused both on policy and constituent services:

> "[Our] platform is to develop the agricultural sector. We opened tractor stations that help provide equipment to farmers at rebated rates. We also work for the best interest of farmers, protecting their rights." (Interview 3008, May 15, 2018)

Interviews and surveys therefore show a range of stated motivations for joining political parties. While policy motivations are present, party leaders, access to power, and economic motives were more often cited in Kyrgyzstan than Armenia.

### 6.3.4 Perceptions of Credibility

H2: Elite perception of the credibility of policy commitments made by a dictator will be higher in electoral authoritarian regimes with higher state capacity than in countries with lower capacity.

As in Armenia, there was little evidence to indicate a president's credibility was the mechanism behind policy motives to join an in-system political party. While the survey showed the President was the most trusted political figure or institution among elites (see Table 6.7, a contrast with Armenia), no MP raised relations with the leader when discussing policy. Instead, the politicians who discussed policy in detail in interviews described difficulties with implementation. For example, legislation on iodine deficiency was passed in the parliament's fifth session, but did not increase the use of iodized salt and flour. An MP described the challenges as follows:

> First, the person who initiated the bill did not pass it in parliament. It did not pass at the beginning because she managed a pharmaceutical company and people thought she wanted to promote her business. At a later stage, ... the problem was that the law was not followed properly. This year we will pass a bill to prohibit the sale of un-iodized salt and will implement this. There will be fines for those who do not comply. (Interview 3007, May 15, 2018)

Table 6.7: Summary Statistics, Trust in Institutions

| | Mean | Std. Dev. | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Security Services | 2.05 | 1.17 | 60 |
| Court System | 1.68 | 0.81 | 60 |
| NGOs | 2.60 | 1.38 | 58 |
| Parliament | 2.10 | 1.19 | 61 |
| Executive (PM and Ministers) | 2.34 | 1.11 | 59 |
| President | 2.67 | 1.39 | 60 |
| Media | 2.75 | 1.27 | 59 |
| Local Government | 2.56 | 1.21 | 59 |

Note: Responses are on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is equivalent to "Fully distrust" and 5 is equivalent to "Fully trust" in response to the question "Below is a list of social and political institutions in the Kyrgyz Republic. Please assess your level of trust toward each of them on a 5-point scale."

Another MP described the relative meaninglessness of the passage of legislation:

> The distribution of welfare benefits ... currently requires a significant amount of paperwork, which leads to corruption. We are working on moving to a single payment to mothers from a child's birth to age 3. ... This legislation passed and was signed by the president, but was controversial because it was passed immediately before the presidential elections (it was seen as a government bribe). After the elections, the president returned the bill to parliament because there was no funding for it (actually, they just kept the money that was allocated for it). One month ago, in April, the bill was debated in parliament and they agreed to change the calculation of who benefits from the bill. ... [Implementation is set to begin] June 1, but there are systemic issues about documentation and the mechanism of payments that are still a problem. (Interview 3004, May 7, 2018 and May 26, 2018)

Rather than the personal credibility of the president specifically, the weakness of drafted legislation, suspicions about the intentions of all political players, and funding were all cited as obstacles to developing policy in the Kyrgyz Republic. A western NGO official confirmed this view, stating that parliamentarians are very eager to pass legislation – 90% of legislation originates in parliament – but few bills generate change. The reasons for the lack of implementation included a lack of communication between the central and local governments, a lack of public buy-in and understanding of legislation, and resources (Interview with western NGO official, April 24, 2018).

### 6.3.5 Policy bargaining

H3: Members of loyal opposition parties will be more interested in bargaining with a ruling party over policy in electoral authoritarian regimes with higher state capacity than in countries with lower state capacity.

[34]In interviews, programmatic motivations were strongly correlated with gender–female politicians were much more focused on legislation and policy outcomes.

The difficulty implementing laws also dominated discussion of policy bargaining. In interviews, those who discussed their legislative priorities did not describe a policy-making process. Legislation did not move unless their party was in the governing coalition. One MP expressed difficulties implementing VAT exemptions for agricultural equipment imports: "Our party initiated this idea. If we were in the ruling fraction the idea would have gone more smoothly than when we are in the opposition." (Interview 3006, May 15, 2018)

Even legislation that passed would not be implemented unless the MP took individual action. For example, one MP stated, "Since I entered parliament, I have initiated 26 bills. Two or three of them are completely new and the rest are amendments to existing legislation. Twenty-two were passed and signed, two were rejected, and two are now being considered." (Interview 3014, May 29, 2018) This large number of amendments was required because no funding was directed toward passed legislation. The parliamentarian stated two new pieces of legislation were not moved to committee because the MP's party shifted from the governing to the opposition coalition.

The need for MPs to be a part of the government in order to advance their agenda is also reflected in the makeup of MPs who were able to talk about policy. Only members of the SDPK and Onuguu-Progress (the agricultural party) brought up specific pieces of legislation, and only members of the SDPK were able to describe success passing legislation (although in those cases, implementation of a bill remained a challenge). In terms of Hypothesis 3, there were members of loyal opposition parties interested in policy bargaining in Kyrgyzstan (members of Onuguu-Progress), but they found themselves stymied in the attempt. Successful policy bargaining only took place among members of the ruling party (the SDPK) or among parties within the current ruling coalition. There were no opportunities to influence policy as a member of the loyal opposition.

## 6.4 Kyrgyz party system

In this environment of captured state institutions and patronage-focused elite motivations, Kyrgyz political parties – and the overall party system – failed to consolidate despite institutional incentives to do so. Parties and party membership were unstable and primarily determined by financial incentives (buying positions on lists and votes during elections), while coalitions among parties were frequent and opportunistic. Parties remained relevant, but primarily as brands rather than as organizations. Political parties do represent different "value systems," (Engvall 2022, 116) including liberal or communist in the 1990s and varying degrees of nationalism in later years. These values and the electoral marketing of candidates created brands (nationalist, business-oriented, etc.) that formed the primary distinction between parties, rather than ideology or program. Indeed, when asked to identify themselves and their parties on a left-right spectrum, almost all politicans defined themselves and their parties as centrist, with the only slight variation around the mean (see Table 6.8).

The party system itself has changed over time, but not consolidated. In the 1990s, it was marked by challenges common to all post-communist systems with single-member district

Table 6.8: Individual and party ideological ideal points, 2018 survey

| Party | Individual Mean | Party Mean | n |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ata Jurt | 3 | - | 1 |
| Ata Meken | 2.83 | 3.14 | 13 |
| Bir Bol | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Kyrgyzstan | 3.33 | 3.25 | 5 |
| Onuugu-Progress | 3 | 2.5 | 3 |
| Respublika | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| SDPK | 3.125 | 3.25 | 12 |
| Other | 3 | 2.75 | 6 |
| Overall | 3 (+/- 0.25) | 3.13 (+/- 0.29) | 44 |

Note: Responses are on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is equivalent to "Far Left," 3 is "Center," and 5 is equivalent to "Far Right" in response to the question "In political matters, people talk of the 'left' and the 'right.' Where would you place yourself/your political party on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means 'left' and 5 means 'right?'"

electoral laws: parties were small and focused on a handful of leaders, and politics largely divided along pro-government and oppositional lines. The Kyrgyzstani system was unique in the former Soviet world for its adoption of full party-list proportional representation (PR) in 2007. Rather than strengthening parties and encouraging coalitions, however, PR formalized the purchase of positions on party lists and cycling coalitions among political parties. The distribution of power in parliament does reflect the multipolar nature of Kyrgyz politics, but a lack of enforcement of electoral rules regarding party lists and corruption (in the form of seat- and vote-buying) have limited the role of parties beyond being an indicator of patronage network.

While national list PR did generate viable groups of parties in parliament (see Figure 6.2 and Table 6.9), new parties are typically formed for each election, with only a few players remaining consistent over time. Turnover in parliament and within parties was high. For example, in 2005, 75% of MPs were new to politics (Engvall 2022, 56). In 2015, 93 of the 120 MPs ran for re-election, but three-quarters of those ran with new parties (Engvall 2022, 86).[35] In sum, "parties primarily serve as temporary vehicles for particular political interests, not as channels for political representation." (Engvall 2022, 10)

[35]For example, only 4 of the 20 members of Respublika and 5 of the 21 MPs from Ata Jurt ran on the combined Respublika-Ata Jurt list. In 2021, 30% of MPs were reelected.

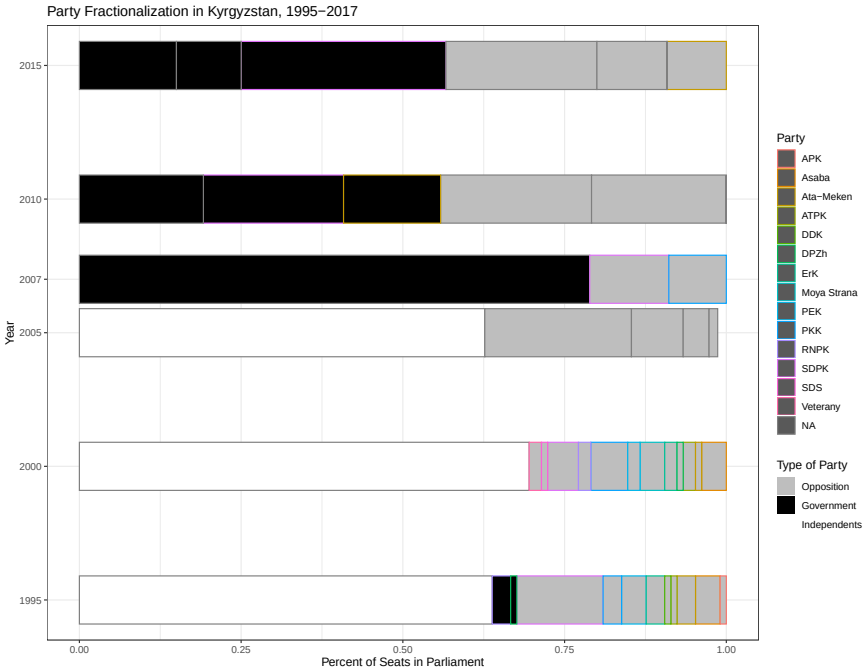

Party Fractionalization in Kyrgyzstan, 1995−2017
Year
2015
2010
2007
2005
2000
1995
0.00
0.25
0.50
0.75
1.00
Percent of Seats in Parliament
Party
APK
Asaba
Ata−Meken
ATPK
DDK
DPZh
ErK
Moya Strana
PEK
PKK
RNPK
SDPK
SDS
Veterany
NA
Type of Party
Opposition
Government
Independents

Figure 6.2

Table 6.9: Parliamentary Election Results, Kyrgyz Republic 1995-2015

| | 1995 | | | 2000 | | 2005 | | 2007 | | 2010 | | 2015 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | seats | | | seats | | seats | | seats | | | | | |
| | SMD | % | PR | SMD | % | SMD | % | PR | % | PR | % | PR | % |
| | 105 | | 15 | 90 | | 75 | | 90 | | 120 | | 120 | |
| Independents | 67 | 0.64 | | 73 | 0.70 | 47 | 0.63 | | | | | | |
| SDPK | 14 | 0.13 | 5 | 0 | 0.05 | 1 | 0.01 | 11 | 0.12 | 26 | 0.22 | 38 | 0.32 |
| United Party | 4 | 0.04 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| National Revival | 4 | 0.04 | 4 | 0 | 0.04 | | | | | | | | |
| Communist Party | 3 | 0.03 | 1 | 5 | 0.06 | 3 | 0.04 | 8 | 0.09 | | | | |
| Ata Meken | 3 | 0.03 | 1 | 0 | 0.01 | | | | | 18 | 0.15 | 11 | 0.9 |
| Free Kyrgyzstan | 3 | 0.03 | 2 | 0 | 0.02 | | | | | | | | |
| Republican People's Party | 3 | 0.03 | 0 | 2 | 0.02 | | | | | | | | |
| Democratic Women's Party | 1 | 0.01 | 0 | 1 | 0.01 | | | | | | | | |
| Agrarian Labor Party | 1 | 0.01 | 0 | 2 | 0.02 | | | | | | | | |
| Agrarian Party | 1 | 0.01 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Democratic Movement | 1 | 0.01 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| My Country | | | 0 | 4 | 0.04 | | | | | | | | |
| Afghan War Veterans | | | 0 | 2 | 0.02 | | | | | | | | |
| Unity Party | | | 2 | 0 | 0.02 | | | | | | | | |
| Union of Democratic Forces | | | 0 | 1 | 0.01 | | | | | | | | |
| Alga Kyrgyzstan | | | | | | 17 | 0.23 | | | | | | |
| Council for Unity | | | | | | 6 | 0.08 | | | | | | |
| Ak Jol | | | | | | | | 71 | 0.79 | | | | |
| Ata Jurt | | | | | | | | | | 28 | 0.23 | | |
| Ar Namys | | | | | | | | | | 25 | 0.21 | | |
| Respublika | | | | | | | | | | 23 | 0.19 | | |
| Respublika-Ata Jurt | | | | | | | | | | | | 28 | 0.23 |
| Kyrgyzstan | | | | | | | | | | | | 18 | 0.15 |
| Onuguu-Progress | | | | | | | | | | | | 13 | 0.11 |
| Bir Bol | | | | | | | | | | | | 12 | 0.1 |
| ENLP | 7.962 | | | 4.124 | | 8.924 | | 3.426 | | 2.734 | | 2.475 | |

All percentages are based on total number of seats (PR and SMD).

### 6.4.1 Akaev (1991-2005)

Dozens of political parties formed for the Kyrgyz Republic's first parliamentary elections, held under a single-member district electoral law in 1995. As in many transitional states, these parties were small, largely indistinguishable from each other outside of individual leaders, and had yet to develop voter mobilization strategies or platforms (Koldys 1997).[36] The first party to form was the Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan (DDK), a catch-all organization formed by members of the Soviet intelligentsia that emphasized Kyrgyz ethnic rights. It quickly dissolved into a variety of anti-communist parties that espoused nationalist positions, including Erkin (Freedom), Kyrgyzstan-Erk, and the Party of National Resurrection (Asaba). The Communist Party had the strongest party organization and membership base, although it drew heavily from the Russian minority in the country and won only one-third of the seats in the 1995 parliament. Vote-buying did take place, but it was organized by regional administrators rather than party candidates per se.[37] The primary legacy of the 1995 elections was the formation of two of the Kyrgyz Republic's more enduring parties. Ata Meken and the Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan (SDPK) both emerged as centrist, social democratic alternatives in 1993.

New parties and coalitions formed for the 2000 parliamentary elections. President Akaev's biggest rival (former National Security Minister Felix Kulov) formed Ar Namys, but after Kulov was arrested and the party banned from running, its viable candidates joined an opposition coalition, the Democratic Movement for Kyrgyzstan. The 73 independents (out of 105 seats total) elected to parliament largely coalesced into two coalitions – pro-goverment and opposition (called the People's Patriotic Movement). Both loyal and true opposition figures organized around personalities rather than platforms and had weak regional or local support.[38]

For the 2005 elections, held again under a single member district majoritarian electoral system, Akaev attempted to form a pro-presidential party for the 2005 elections (Alga Kyrgyzstan, led by his daughter) and opposition forces attempted to re-consolidate. Former PM Bakiev took the lead of the largest parliamentary bloc (the Popular Movement of Kyrgyzstan), while other prominent opposition members formed Ata Jurt, led by former Minister of Foreign Affairs Roza Otunbaeva, and Adilet, run by a deputy prime minister, formed as a second pro-Akaev party. The election resulted in high turnover in parliament (around 75%

[36] In an interview with the International Crisis Group, a member of the presidential office stated, "The party Erkendik is just seven people and society does not take any notice of them. The Republican Party – that's twenty people. And people don't know who these parties are. . . ." (International Crisis Group 2004, 20)

[37] One observer noted "campaign vodka flowed like a river" and drunk voters were common. (Huskey 1997, 261)

[38] "Less than twenty deputies in the Parliament belong to the opposition and they are not well-positioned to have a serious impact on politics. None of these parties, except the communists, have branches in more than three or four provinces. And where they do have such branches they are either not very active (and thus not very well known to the local population) or have gone underground. ... At this point, political parties largely remain engines for individual politicians and not broader social movements." (International Crisis Group 2001, 19)

of elected MPs were new) and the new MPs not already members of Alga Kyrgyzstan largely chose to affiliate with Akaev. While Akaev won these elections, protests against electoral fraud led to the Kyrgyz Republic's first revolution.

### 6.4.2 Bakiev (2005-2010)

The party system that followed the Tulip revolution was largely similar to the one that preceded it. The 2005 parliament remained in place through 2007, when Bakiev called early elections. These elections were preceded by a constitutional referendum that increased the power of the president (giving him the power to appoint governors, who had previously been elected, for example) and created a national list, fully proportional representation electoral system for parliamentary elections. The adoption of PR appears to have had the same motivation as the other reforms – to increase the power of Bakiev's patronage network (Juraev 2008). At the same time, Bakiev created a party of power, Ak Jol, which led by the president's son and younger brother. As with Akaev's Alga Kyrgyzstan, this was not a formally organized party, but instead consisted of several smaller political groups, including northern intellectuals, government officials, and wealthy entrepreneurs representing the north and south of Kyrgyzstan (Engvall 2022, 66-7).

Ak Jol received a super-majority of 71 seats in the 2007 elections. Opposition parties included Ar Namys, Ata Meken, and the SDPK, but only the SDPK and Communist Party were able to gain seats in the election – the PR system in this case effectively enhanced the vote share of the ruling party and minimized seats for other parties.[39] At the time, Kyrgyz politician Bakyt Beshimov described the opposition as "a group of politicians who exploit temporary alliances and associations, which at the same time continue to compete with each other to the detriment of common interests" (Engvall 2022, 62). Opposition parties remained quiet after the 2007 elections until its leaders, including Otunbaeva and Ata Meken's Tekebayev, were able to more effectively mobilize in opposition to fraud surrounding the 2009 presidential elections, leading to Kyrgyzstan's second revolution in April 2010.

### 6.4.3 SDPK (2010-2018)

The 2010 elections, held after the Melon Revolution, represented the beginning of dominance of a "money and vote" system for selecting members of party lists. While individuals were able to purchase positions on lists in the past, during these elections, the process was systematized across all political parties. Candidates for election needed to bring a certain amount of money to the party and votes in specific regions in order to receive (and maintain) a high enough position on a party list to ensure membership in parliament. MPs would use their track record of raising funds and securing votes to shop around for a more favorable list position from other parties in the next election.[40] List buying contributed to high volatility in

[39]The OSCE noted that the SDPK and PCK were only able to reach the 5% threshold for election into parliament after the inclusion of the final polling station in the results (votes for each party increased their share from 4 to 5% and 2 to 5% respectively), indicating significant fraud (OSCE 2008).

[40]One businessman in his 30s who was invited to join a party list for the 2010 elections described the process as follows: "Such things as a party membership or political views do not matter at all. I was asked

party membership. For example, wealthy businessmen Roman Shin joined the Communist Party, Alga Kyrgyzstan, Ak Zhol, and then Ak-Shumkar between 1990 and 2010 (Juraev 2015, 29).

The 2010 elections did not generate party system stability, but did mark the emergence of multiple competitive "power pyramids" in Kyrgyz politics, replacing the single party of power of previous years (Juraev 2015, 23). Five parties won representation with 18-28 seats each in parliament. Similarly, in 2015 six parties crossed the electoral threshold (7%) and the Social Democratic Party again successfully formed a coalition to select a prime minister. This European-style parliamentary representation did not generate stability either between or within parties, however. In 2015, only two parties that had run in prior elections retained seats in parliament.[41] While the SDP-K always maintained control, it formed rotating coalitions with different parties. Overall, there were 12 different governing coalitions in Kyrgyzstan between 2010 and 2020 (Blackwood 2024).

Coalitions among parties and party membership itself were similarly volatile. In 2015, Ata-Jurt formed a pre-election coalition with Respublika to attract voters across regions,[42] but the coalition fell apart shortly after the election. Even parties with strong regional bases (like Ata Jurt in the south and Respublika in the north) fragmented within those bases. Once an active opposition party that organized dozens of protests between 2011 and 2013, Ata Jurt disbanded as a parliamentary fraction and 16 out of 28 party deputies ran as candidates from other parties in 2015 (Doolotkeldieva and Wolters 2017, 17). Similarly, Respublika fragmented into the Kyrgyzstan, Onuguu-Progress, and Bir Bol parties based on business interests and regional affiliations, as each of the three deputy heads of the interim government joined or formed his own party.

On the 2018 survey, respondents most often cited policy and legislation as the reasons why their party joined a coalition (Table 6.10),[43] but in interviews Kyrgyzstani politicians empha-

to contribute to the party, and paid $1,000 to the party. No receipts at all. Then I spent around $5,000 campaigning in my home district. I actually had offers from two different parties to join, and chose the one that I thought had better chances of passing all thresholds and that offered a higher slot in the party's electoral list." (Juraev 2015, 29) While prices remained stable for the 2015 elections, efforts to enforce the system increased. Reports indicate Respublika-Ata Jurt went so far as to force its candidates to swear an oath on camera that they would withdraw from the list after the election if they did not gather sufficient votes from their region of responsibility. (Doolotkeldieva and Wolters 2017, 18)

[41] Seat buying also continued apace. In 2015, the price of a place on a list was reportedly $500,000 for a place high on a party list, which comes with prestige and a higher likelihood of entry into parliament, while lower positions cost $100,000. (Interview with western NGO official, April 24, 2018) A Kyrgyz official put the rate for a top position (the "golden list") at over $1 million. (Interview with Kyrgyz election official, May 2, 2018)

[42] A sitting Ata Jurt MP described the decision as: "We had a crisis – we did not know what to do because our leadership was destroyed. So we gathered to decide on how to move forward. We needed money and friends. Respublika and Babanov invited us to merge and so we ran as a party of reformers." (Interview 3013, May 25, 2018)

[43] While most respondents citing policy were from the Social Democratic Party (5 total), an opposition party described their decision to stay out of the government coalition as being based on policy. "As a classical party, we are an uncomfortable party to form a coalition with because we will insist on our program

Table 6.10: Survey responses on reasons for coalition entry

| | n |
|---|---|
| Policy agreement | 8 (0.3) |
| Election threshold | 1 (0.04) |
| Pass legislation | 6 (0.22) |
| Increase influence | 3 (0.11) |
| Reliability of partners | 3 (0.11) |
| Didn't support coalition | 6 (0.22) |
| Total | 27 |

Responses to the question, "Please choose the ONE response that BEST reflects your opinion about why your party entered in this coalition. 1) We share similar policy goals with the other parties in the coalition. 2 We need to ally with other parties to reach the threshold for election into parliament. 3) We need to ally with other parties to pass legislation in parliament. 4) Political parties should pool their resources in order to increase their influence. 5) The parties in our coalition are reliable partners. 6) I did not support joining this coalition. Proportion of total responses to the question are in parentheses.

sized the importance of ministerial positions in coalition formation. A member of a former coalition partner to the SDP-K stated that they joined the initial coalition to gain access to power, but left because they did not receive enough government positions. They were again invited to join the governing coalition, but declined because they saw it as an effort by the SDPK to "spread responsibility (blame) for their work. In the opposition, we can bring up vital issues." (Interview 3006, May 15, 2018) Similarly, a different coalition partner decided to stay with the SDP-K because they were satisfied with their allocation of positions. "We have the deputy PM, Minister of Education, Minister of Labor, and Speaker positions. We have maintained our interests." (Interview 3001, April 26, 2018)

Overall, the system was "a market," both for ministerial positions and for individual influence (Interview 2008, May 15, 2018). In addition to working within existing coalitions, popular individuals could form their own parties as "start ups" that demonstrated their personal popularity. The most successful were then "bought out" by the SDPK (Interview with Western NGO official, May 3, 2018). For example, Reforma was a youth-oriented political party organized by a dismissed Supreme Court justice that gained popularity for its tech-savvy messaging and reform-oriented policies. It joined the SDPK during the 2015 elections, with its leader gaining representation in parliament as part of their party list.[44]

Of the six parties present in parliament in 2018, only Unuguu-Progress had a clear constituency. Observers characterized this party as more focused on passing legislation in parliament than their peers, although they were rarely able to implement their policies (Interview with western NGO official, April 24, 2018; Interview with western NGO official 2, May 3, 2018). Ata Meken also had a strong policy focus, but remained in opposition throughout the 2015 parliament and were unable to enact legislation. The SDPK served

principles. The shareholder parties do what the ruling party wants." (Interview 3011, May 21, 2018)

[44]Reforma later split from the SDPK to run independently in the 2020 elections. Its leader Klara Sooronkulova was detained after Japarov came to power in 2021 (Rickleton 2020, Pannier 2024).

as a catchall party with a wide range of members, some focused on policy and others on access to power. Respublika-Ata Jurt had again fragmented into smaller coalitions and the remaining two parties (Kyrgyzstan and Bir Bol) represented different coalitions of business leaders and acted accordingly. Policy, access to patronage networks, and economic interests all served as focal points for party formation and membership, but policy did not dominate action in parliament or coalition formation.

While programmatic politics were weak in Kyrgyzstan, there has been some growth in the development of parties over time. Party leaders focused on differentiating their brand from others and were intensely focused on developing social media and other marketing techniques to attract voters. The emergence of Onuguu-Progress was also a sign of the potential for policy-oriented politics in Kyrgyzstan, although it has not fielded candidates in a national election since 2015. In addition, parties became increasingly interested in understanding the views of voters over time and marketing to them (Interview with Kyrgyz political analyst, May 3, 2018).

The development of some policy programs and a focus on constituents was not a boon for democracy, however – targeting voters primarily took the form of vote-buying rather than policy or even local public goods. While on paper, Kyrgystan appeared to have had 3-5 mid-size parties dominate politics, this was a function of politicians maximizing their power under its electoral system, not a coalescence of politics into groups based on ideology or constituency. The Kyrgyz Republic's party system remained volatile and fragmented through 2018.

## 6.5 Addressing alternate explanations

In this section, I address two factors – social cleavages and electoral law – where Kyrgyzstan and Armenia differed significantly and that did shape elite relations and party development. The Kyrgyz Republic drew different historical legacies from communism and had significant ethnic divisions. The Kyrgyzstani proportional electoral system was also unique in the region. Both factors shaped party formation in the Kyrgyz Republic, but ethnic divisions and electoral law both should have strengthened party formation in Kyrgyzstan, rather than leaving it weak. Ethnic cleavages can generate strong political parties by providing clear (nationalist) platforms and connections between leaders and voters, while the system of national-list proportional representation generated formally large parliamentary parties in Kyrgyzstan. These factors ended up playing countervailing roles in Kyrgyzstan, however. Fears of ethnic conflict led to the creation of rules to spread party support across regions and ethnic groups, and party lists were undermined by corrupt practices.

### 6.5.1 Social cleavages

Ethnic, regional, and linguistic divisions play an important role in Kyrgyz politics. The Kyrgyz Republic's Uzbek minority is large enough (15% of the population) and geographically concentrated enough to translate their votes into political influence. Many scholars have

noted this relationship: Pauline Jones Luong (2002) argued that regional political cleavages dominated in the choice of electoral system and other key political institutions in the 1990s, while Kathleen Collins (2004) gives primacy to clan and kinship relations. Similarly, Huskey and Hill (2013) find that regionalism (North vs. South) and ethnicity to be the best explanations for voter party preference in the 2010 elections. Regional, clan, kinship, and ethnic divisions are reinforcing – most ethnic Kyrgyz live in the north and ethnic Uzbeks in the south. These theories imply that ethnic cleavages should contribute to party and party system consolidation – ethnicity should be a significant factor in generating party unity, which should remain consistent over time.

My research found some support for this explanation. For example, one MP interviewed cited ethnic ties and nationalism as their reason for joining a political party: "In 2010, we had riots in Osh. ... Just a few people came to regulate the conflict. These patriots later established the party Ata Jurt. ... Because of my patriotic feelings, I decided to join Ata Jurt." (Interview 3009, May 18, 2018)

Aside from Ata Jurt, however, no explicitly ethnic parties have held political influence in Kyrgyzstan. A vaguely-defined idea of Kyrgyzstani nationalism is incorporated into many party platforms, but rarely devolves into explicit Kyrgyz ethno-nationalism. The primary reason for this appears to be concerns about ethnic violence. After the 2010 Osh riots, ethnic balance and the fear of civil war became a foundation of party and coalition formation. The only electoral law that has not been systematically violated is the need for regional balance on party lists. As part of a 2007 reform, the Bakiev regime passed legislation requiring parties receive at least 0.5% of the vote in each of Kyrgyzstan's nine electoral regions in order to receive representation in parliament. Similarly, 15% of the members of each party list must be ethnic minorities. This rule was created to deny seats to Ata Meken, an opposition party drawing support primarily from the north, but parties adapted quickly to the rules. These rules effectively eliminated the possibility of a minority ethnic party gaining influence,[45] since all parties need cross-regional support. Influential regional politicians then began to sell their supporters to different parties to increase their power, making ethnicity another bargaining chip in coalition politics. Ethnic cleavages can account for some party support, but they did not help create a stable political party or party system.

### 6.5.2 Electoral law

Kyrgyzstan's electoral law should also have generated more consolidated political parties. Prior to 2007, the Kyrgyzstani electoral system resembled its post-Soviet peers, beginning with a fully single-member district parliament and gradually adding party list/proportional representation seats. In 1999, the electoral code was revised to increase the number of seats in the lower house of parliament from 35 to 60 and have 25% of the seats (15 total) elected through proportional representation,[46] but in 2003 further revisions returned the electoral

[45]Note that it is likely the underlying concern about ethnic relations, rather than the rules themselves, that generated this result, since other elements of the electoral law were routinely flouted.

[46]The 1999 Law on Political Parties also made it easier to register a party and added a 25% quota for party members in the 2000 parliament.

system to fully majoritarian (100% of seats were single member districts). The resulting party system was predictably weak, with a large number of parties and independents dominating parliamentary representation.

In 2007, the constitution was amended to elect the lower house of parliament through full national list proportional representation with a 7% threshold for entry into parliament. These amendments were intended to strengthen the position of President Bakiev's newly established Ak Jol as the "party of power," which gained 80% of the seats in parliament. While Bakiev was removed from office in Kyrgyzstan's second revolution, his electoral system remained. The 2010 constitution created a semi-presidential system and reaffirmed the proportional electoral system, but capped the number of seats a party could win at 54% (65 of 120 seats in the lower house). It required quotas in the national lists for each party for ethnic minorities, women, and youth.[47]

These electoral reforms did have a significant impact on the formal party system. Rather than a parliament dominated by independents who coalesced into parliamentary fractions based on individual ideology or incentives from the executive branch (which characterized parliaments in the 1990s and early 2000s), five political parties were elected in 2010 and six in 2015. While individual MPs continued to shift fractional allegiance based on personal preferences and incentives, each party was large enough to negotiate for participation in the governing coalition, which each party joined at least once in the 2010s.

However, the relatively large parliamentary caucus of each party – and small overall number of parties represented – masked the weakness of parties overall. Kyrgyzstan's system of seat and vote buying significantly undermined the development of party organizations. In order to hold candidates accountable, ensure a return on their placement on a list, and meet the geographic distribution requirement for representation in parliament, party leaders made candidates responsible for generating votes from a geographic area for their party. If a party received few votes from a candidate's area, they would be pressured to withdraw from the party list.[48] This practice was so pervasive that it disrupted Kyrgyzstan's gender quota system for parliament. In 2020, only 20% of MPs elected were women, despite a quota for 30% representation on party lists. As one western NGO official noted (Interview, April 24, 2018), despite the electoral law, politicians do not feel they are elected as part of a party system – they see themselves as responsible to a regional constituency first, and not to parties per se.

Electoral laws formed the framework for political action – they encouraged politicians to work together to be elected – but did little to generate party organizations or platforms. Weak enforcement of the rules that might constrain seat and vote buying meant that Kyrgyzstan's electoral system – despite the mechanical effects on parliamentary representation – did little to consolidate the party system.

[47]This system remained in place until after Kyrgyzstan's third "revolution" in 2021. As part of a return to full presidentialism, Kyrgyzstan passed a referendum creating a mixed electoral system – 54 of 90 seats in parliament are chosen by national lists and 36 through SMD.

[48]For example, in 2010, 38 candidates (over 30% of the newly elected MPs) abruptly resigned, allowing people with lower positions on their lists to take their seats. (Juraev 2015, 30).

## 6.6 Conclusion

Kyrgyzstan is a case of stalled bureaucratic reform and continued instability in the party system. In this low-capacity state, politicians joined parties for access to power at least as often as they did for ideological reasons. When policy bargaining took place, it was exclusively within the ruling party and coalition. As such, it provides support for Hypotheses 1, 3, and 4 as a negative case. In the absence of an improvement in administrative capacity, politicians were not able to break out of existing patterns of clientelism and patronage – even when they had an interest in doing so. In comparison to Armenia, they made political decisions more often based on the patronage networks involved (joining a party based on the leader, for example). Those politicians interested in social reform joined the SDPK, and when they did not (as in the case of Onuguu-Progress MPs) they found achieving their policy goals impossible. The continued dominance of patronal politics then reflected itself in the Kyrgyz Republic's fractionalized party system. Outside the ruling SDPK, parties were transient – rarely lasting more than one election – and party affiliation temporary.

The presence and importance of patronage networks was not unique to the Kyrgyz Republic; they played a key role in Armenia and elsewhere in the former Soviet world. But Kyrgyzstan stands out for the simultaneous depth and instability of the influence of its networks in politics. Patronage networks permeate the civil service, judiciary, and police, and the extensive number of jobs available means vertical networks are stable and available for mobilization for in- and out-system action. The Kyrgyz Republic is not so much a weak state as a completely captured one. The key source of variation in state capacity is not the level of corruption, but the relative balance between "authorized" and "unauthorized" corruption (Engvall 2016, 102).

The weakness of party politics was also reflected in later political events in Kyrgyzstan. Its democratic accomplishment in the 2017 presidential elections – its first legal transfer of power – did not last. In 2019, SDPK President Jeenbekov had former SDPK President Atambaev arrested for corruption. The fallout split the SDPK into three new parties that competed in the 2020 parliamentary elections. The Central Election Commission nullified this election after violent public protests, during which Atambaev, his former chief of staff Sapar Isakov, and former MP and Bakiev ally Sadyr Japarov were all freed from house arrest by their supporters. Japarov, who had been arrested (in 2017) for an attempted coup in 2012, had the largest number of militant supporters and was appointed interim president by the old parliament.

After winning snap elections in 2021,[49] Japarov has followed a fairly standard playbook for democratic backsliding, holding a referendum to increase the power of the president and re-

[49]The parliament elected in 2021 featured a few returning parties (Ata Jurt, SDPK, who elected Atambaev as their sole candidate, Butun Kyrgyzstan), but the largest faction was made of up of independents (32) elected under a new mixed majoritarian-proportional electoral law. Several established parties ran and gained seats in the new parliament (notably the Uzbek-dominated Ata Jurt and Butun Kyrgyzstan, a Kyrgyz nationalist party that had run in the 2010 and 2015 elections but failed to meet the 7% threshold), but parliament again became dominated by independents who largely vote with the president.

move the previous single term limit. He passed a foreign agents bill to restrict international funding for civil society organizations and attempted to close the Kyrgyz language branch of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Unlike his predecessors, Japarov appears to be more successful in consolidating power, with few other business leaders emerging to challenge him so far (Rickleton 2024).

Kyrgyzstan has slid from an electoral authoritarian state into full authoritarianism, with less space for political debate than any time since the 1990s. 2018 – the final year of my study – represented the high point of its democracy scores and room for free expression.[50] Kyrgyzstan was never able to move beyond formal reforms and legislative changes to practices that would build state capacity to implement policy – and allow the politicians who sought reform to do so. When Kyrgyzstan's volatile system of party and coalition switching collapsed with the disintegration of its leading party, there were no formal structures to take its place beyond the patronage networks that dominated politics. As Engvall (2022, 12) concluded, "This suggests the somewhat disheartening conclusion that the state must first get its core functions in place, such as the provision of elementary law and order and basic economic and social security, before a truly viable form of government characterized by meaningful political competition is likely to take hold."

[50]Its Varieties of Democracy Electoral Democracy score fell from 0.47 in 2018 to 0.36 in 2023, and Freedom House now classifies Kyrgyzstan as "Not Free," although its Regimes of the World classification remains "electoral authoritarian."

# Appendix 1: Additional Statistical Results

Table 6.11: Regressions on Motive for Joining a Political Party

| | Motivation | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Platform | Personal Ties | Advance Career | Best People | Leader | Most Influence |
| **Party** | | | | | | |
| Bir Bol | -0.907 | -0.156 | -1.115 | 1.087 | -1.262 | -1.900 |
| | (0.977) | (1.376) | (1.018) | (0.804) | (1.029) | (1.197) |
| Kyrgyzstan | -0.467 | -0.160 | 0.005 | 0.519 | -0.997 | -1.493 |
| | (0.714) | (0.993) | (0.762) | (0.599) | (0.736) | (0.851) |
| Onuguu-Progress | 0.248 | 0.512 | 1.037 | -1.152 | -0.120 | -0.369 |
| | (0.847) | (1.160) | (0.856) | (0.659) | (0.911) | (1.087) |
| Respublika | 0.228 | 0.003 | 1.204 | -1.049 | 0.287 | 0.279 |
| | (0.661) | (0.911) | (0.630) | (0.496) | (0.709) | (0.849) |
| SDPK | -0.273 | -0.145 | 0.831 | -0.482 | -0.281 | -0.793 |
| | (0.551) | (0.707) | (0.501) | (0.154) | (0.549) | (0.632) |
| Other | 0.198 | 0.254 | 0.058 | -0.525 | -0.397 | -0.590 |
| | (0.588) | (0.808) | (0.621) | (0.482) | (0.626) | (0.743) |
| Year joined party | | | | | | |
| 2015-16 | 1.105 | 0.713 | -1.135 | 0.261 | -0.492 | 1.036 |
| | (0.744) | (1.075) | (0.785) | (0.668) | (0.842) | (0.985) |
| 2010-14 | 1.624 | -0.267 | -0.624 | -0.028 | 0.116 | 1.012 |
| | (0.798) | (1.227) | (0.929) | (0.758) | (0.960) | (1.121) |
| Before 2009 | 0.712 | 0.340 | -0.772 | 0.005 | -0.362 | 0.999 |
| | (0.776) | (1.090) | (0.815) | (0.674) | (0.850) | (0.859) |
| **Motive for joining** | | | | | | |
| Platform | | 0.016 | -0.049 | 0.210 | -0.013 | 0.012 |
| | | (0.343) | (0.243) | (0.204) | (0.268) | (0.234) |
| Personal ties | 0.008 | | 0.196 | -0.004 | 0.216 | -0.269 |
| | (0.182) | | (0.185) | (0.154) | (0.188) | (0.314) |
| Advance career | -0.045 | 0.333 | | 0.396* | -0.502* | 0.014 |
| | (0.237) | (0.315) | | (0.175) | (0.222) | (0.305) |
| Best people | 0.294 | -0.009 | 0.613* | | 0.404 | 0.368 |
| | (0.286) | (0.406) | (0.271) | | (0.301) | (0.268) |
| Leader | -0.012 | 0.353 | -0.483* | 0.251 | | 0.018 |
| | (0.233) | (0.307) | (0.213) | (0.187) | | (0.299) |
| Most influence | -0.163 | 0.013 | 0.009 | 0.160 | 0.013 | |
| | (0.190) | (0.267) | (0.205) | (0.160) | (0.209) | |

Results are ordinary least squares regression. The baseline party is Ata Jurt and baseline year joined party is 2017-18 (the most recent).

In addition to standard questions, I included one list experiment in the survey in an effort to elicit more honest answers about respondent acceptance or elicitation of bribes.

- In the past year, how many of the following activities have you participated in? Please select the NUMBER that reflects HOW MANY activities you participated in.
  - I attended a political party meeting.
  - I received training on the political process.
  - I wrote legislation to introduce in parliament.
  - I traveled outside the Kyrgyz Republic.
  - **Treatment only:** I accepted or paid money or other benefit in exchange for a political favor.

Control mean: 1.96
Treatment mean: 2.26

Difference of means: 0.3 (p=0.4, confidence interval = -0.30 to 0.74)
n=44 (19 treatment, 25 control)

While the treatment mean is higher than the control, indicating some acknowledgement of corruption, the results are not statistically significant. This is likely a result of the low sample size and hesitation to answer the treatment question (which had 3 no responses compared to 1 for the control).

# Appendix 2: Kyrgyzstani Political Parties

- Adilet (Justice). Founded by writer Chingiz Aitmatov in 1999, this civic party ran as a pro-Akaev party in the 2005 elections.
- Afghan War Veterans. Founded in 1994, this party advocates for the rights of Afghan War Veterans. It won one SMD seat in 2000 (and later in 2021) for its leader.
- Agrarian Labor Party. Socialist party that won 1 seat in the 1995 and 2 seats in the 2000 elections. Protests emerged in southern Kyrgyzstan in 2002 when party leader Usen Sydykov was banned from participating in a by-election.
- Agrarian Party. Socialist party that won 1 seat in the 1995 elections.
- Ak Jol. Founded in 2007 as a party of power for Bakiev, winning 80% of seats in parliament that year. Led by Bakiev's son and younger brother.
- Alga Kyrgyzstan. Led by President Akaev's daughter, this party formed as a pro-presidential "party of power" for the 2005 elections.
- Ar Namys (Dignity). Founded in 1999 and led by Felix Kulov (former vice president, security minister, and Bishkek mayor). Won 20% of seats in 2010.
- Ata Jurt (Fatherland). Founded by later-President Roza Otunbaeva, Ata Jurt won the largest number (23%) of parliamentary seats in the 2010 elections, but could not initially form a government coalition. It merged with Respublika for the 2015 elections to achieve regional balance.
- Ata Meken (Fatherland). A centrist, social democratic party formed in 1992 by current leader Omurbek Tekebayev, who has held positions such as Speaker of Parliament and Deputy Chairman of the Interim Government after the April Revolution. A nationalist party on economic issues, Ata Meken gained seats in parliament in the 1995, 2000, 2010, and 2015 elections.
- Bir Bol. Business-oriented party formed for the 2015 elections, won 10% of seats.
- Butun (United) Kyrgyzstan. Founded in 2010 by Adakhan Mamadurov.
- Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan. small number of seats (1-8) 1995-2007.
- Council for Unity. 6 seats 2005 - loose opposition coalition formed for the 2005 elections.
- Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan (DDK). Formed in ... and dissolved in..., this was a catch-all party formed by members of the Soviet intelligentsia in the wake of the dissolution of the USSR. Members of Ar Namys joined the coalition after their party's dissolution. Won 1 seat in 1995.
- Democratic Women's Party. 1 seat in 1995 and 2000
- Erkin (Freedom). A successor party to the DDK

- Free Kyrgyzstan. 3 seats 1995, 2 in 2000
- Kyrgyzstan. Business-oriented party formed for the 2015 elections, won 15% of seats.
- My Country. 4 seats in 2000
- National Revival. 4 seats 1995, 4 seats 2000
- Onuguu-Progress. Agricultural party 10% of seats in 2015 elections.
- Party of National Resurrection (Asaba). A successor party to the DDK
- People's Patriotic Movement. A pro-government post-election coalition of independents elected in the 2000 parliamentary campaign.
- Popular Movement of Kyrgyzstan. The largest bloc in parliament before the 2005 elections, this group was led by Bakiev.
- Reforma. A youth-oriented political party organized by a dismissed Supreme Court justice. It joined the SDPK during the 2015 elections, with its leader gaining representation in parliament as part of their party list. Reforma later split from the SDPK to run independently in the 2020 elections. Its leader Klara Sooronkulova was detained after Japarov came to power.
- Republican People's Party
- Respublika. Founded by Omurbek Babanov, "Kyrgyzstan's richest man," Respublika was primarily a personalist party. It won 20% of seats in 2010 and merged with Ata Jurt for the 2015 elections to achieve regional balance.
- Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan. A centrist, social democratic party formed in 1993, it held seats in parliament from 1995 through 2020, when the party split into two factions. It was the ruling party from 2010-2020.
- Union of Democratic Forces, later called Ak Shumar (White Falcon). Founded by former finance minister Temir Sariyev in 2005, Ak Shumar tried to market itself as a youth party.
- United Party. 4 seats 1995
- Unity Party. 2 seats 2000

# Appendix 3: Survey Questions

Survey conducted June 17, 2019-July 15, 2019 by SIAR Research and Consulting in the Kyrgyz Republic in Russian, Uzbek, and Kyrgyz languages. Responses were gathered online based on a sampling frame of party list members in the 2015 elections gathered by SIAR.

1. What do you consider to be the most important issues facing the Kyrgyz Republic today? Please choose up to THREE responses that BEST reflect your opinion.

    - Health care
    - Corruption
    - Fair elections
    - Human rights
    - Unemployment and poverty
    - Relations with neighboring countries
    - Relations with Russia
    - Political instability
    - Education
    - Rising prices / Inflation
    - Improving international investment
    - Emigration
    - Threat to national traditions
    - Islamic extremism

2. The following paragraph describes a hypothetical (fictional) situation about the policy process in the Kyrgyz Republic. The Jogorku Kenesh is considering legislation to require public education in the Kyrgyz Republic in three languages – Kyrgyz, Russian, and English. Some politicians have criticized this proposal for not including Uzbek instruction. Others have criticized it for being too expensive to implement. **Treatment: The president has stated that implementation of this policy is a high priority.** In this scenario (based on the description in the paragraph), how likely to do you think it is that the Kyrgyz Republic would implement three-language education?

    - Very unlikely
    - Somewhat unlikely
    - Somewhat likely
    - Very likely

3. Below is a list of social and political institutions in the Kyrgyz Republic. Please assess your level of trust toward each of them on a 5 point scale from "Fully Distrust" to "Fully Trust."

- Security services
- Court system
- NGOs
- Parliament
- Executive government (Prime minister and ministers)
- President
- Media
- Local government

4. Are you a member of a political party? / Have you ever belonged to another political party? / Have you ever belonged to a political party?

   - Yes
   - No

5. Which political party are you a member of?

   - Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan
   - Respublika
   - Ata Jurt
   - Kyrgyzstan Party
   - Onuguu-Progress
   - Bir Bol
   - Ata Meken
   - Ar Namys
   - Butun Kyrgyzstan
   - Zamandash
   - Other (Please write the party name)

6. What is your role in this political party? Choose the ONE response that BEST reflects your role.

   - Representative in parliament
   - Candidate on party list
   - Member of executive board or other internal organization
   - Member of party
   - Other (Please describe)

7. How long have you been a member of this political party?

- Less than 1 year
- Since 2015
- Since 2010
- More than 8 years

8. We are interested in knowing your reasons for originally joining your party. Please indicate how important or unimportant each of the following reasons were to you when you became a member of your party on a four-point scale from "Not important at all" to "Very important."

   - I have a personal connection to other party members.
   - I believe in the party platform.
   - I have a great appreciation of the party leader.
   - I thought it would help my career.
   - My party has the most qualified people.
   - My party has the most influence.

9. Why did you decide to leave that political party? Please select the ONE response that BEST reflects your opinion.

   - I had a personal disagreement with other members of the party.
   - I disagreed with the ideology or policies of the party.
   - I received a better offer from another party.
   - I faced pressure to change my party membership.
   - Other (Please specify)

10. Is your political party currently in a coalition with another party or group?

    - Yes
    - No

11. Please choose the ONE response that BEST reflects your opinion about why your party entered in this coalition.

    - We share similar policy goals with the other parties in the coalition.
    - We need to ally with other parties to reach the threshold for election into parliament.
    - We need to ally with other parties to pass legislation in parliament.
    - Political parties should pool their resources in order to increase their influence.
    - The parties in our coalition are reliable partners.
    - I did not support joining this coalition.

12. Please select the ONE response that BEST reflects your opinion about why your party is not in coalition.

    - We disagree with other parties on policy and ideology.
    - We distrust the motives of other parties.
    - Our party is large enough to compete on its own.
    - We should focus on the long-term development of our own party.
    - The public distrusts the other political parties in our system.
    - It is difficult to form alliances when the government does not fairly administer elections.

13. In political matters, people talk of the 'left' and the 'right.' Where would you place each of the following on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means 'left' and 10 means 'right'?

    - Yourself
    - Your political party
    - Your party's voters
    - Your coalition partner(s)

14. In the past year, how many of the following activities have you participated in? Please select the NUMBER that reflects HOW MANY activities you participated in.

    - I attended a political party meeting.
    - I received training on the political process.
    - I wrote legislation to introduce in parliament.
    - I traveled outside the Kyrgyz Republic.
    - Treatment only: I accepted or paid money or other benefit in exchange for a political favor.

15. Do you think you will be affiliated with your political party in the next election?

    - Yes
    - No
    - I don't know

16. What would you like to be doing ten years from now?

    - Member of Parliament
    - Member of the government administration
    - Private business
    - NGO/journalism/academia
    - Retired from public life

- Other (Please specify)

17. What is your gender?
    - Male
    - Female
18. What is your age?
    - 18-25
    - 26-35
    - 36-45
    - 46-55
    - 56-65
    - 65+
19. What is your ethnicity?
    - Kyrgyz
    - Uzbek
    - Russian
    - Other (Please specify)
20. Where do you currently live?
    - Bishkek
    - Osh
    - Jalalabad
    - Chuy
    - Batken
    - Issyk-kul
    - Naryn
    - Talas
    - Outside the Kyrgyz Republic

# Chapter 7

# Conclusion

This dissertation has focused on the relationship between state institutions and elite behavior in electoral authoritarian regimes. My central argument is that state capacity shapes how politicians bargain over policy with the government. In electoral authoritarian regimes with low administrative capacity, corruption and rent-seeking dominate political behavior. In these cases, politicians are more likely to be motivated by access to power and patronage – and those who are motivated by policy reform or ideology must secure access to power through the ruling party to do so. They have no incentives to join opposition coalitions. In electoral authoritarian regimes that begin the process of bureaucratic reform, new opportunities for political organization arise. When a government is able to implement policy passed by a legislature, it is possible for parliament to become a venue for policy debate. Politicians who seek legislative change no longer need to join the ruling party – they can form loyal opposition parties and coalitions to enact reform, reducing party system fractionalization.

I tested four hypotheses:

H1: In an electoral authoritarian regime, as administrative capacity increases, the fractionalization of its parliamentary opposition decreases (the number of parties decreases and their size increases), conditional on state repression.

H1A: At low levels of freedom of expression, as state capacity increases, the effective number of legislative parties increases.

H1B: At high levels of freedom of expression, as state capacity increases, the effective number of legislative parties decreases.

H2: Elite perception of the credibility of policy commitments will be higher in electoral authoritarian regimes with higher state capacity than in countries with lower capacity.

H2A : In an electoral authoritarian state, as state capacity increases, elite perception of the credibility of a dictator's policy commitments increases.

H3: Members of loyal opposition parties will be more interested in bargaining over policy in electoral authoritarian regimes with higher state capacity than in countries with lower state capacity.

H3A : In an electoral authoritarian state, as state capacity increases, members of loyal opposition parties will become more interested in policy bargaining.

H4: Elites in states with higher levels of adminstrative capacity will be more likely to join political parties based on policy motivations than in states with low levels of administrative capacity.

H4A : In an electoral authoritarian state, as state capacity increases, elites will be more likely to join political parties based on policy motivations.

I found support for three of these hypotheses. First, I provide cross-national statistical evidence that party system fractionalization decreases in electoral authoritarian regimes with lower levels of repression around five years after an improvement in state capacity (H1). Since party systems in most electoral authoritarian regimes are characterized by high fractionalization – a ruling party and a large number of small personalist parties or independents in parliament – this decline in fractionalization often represens a consolidation of opposition parties into larger coalitions more capable of negotiating with a ruling party.

In terms of the mechanisms by which increasing capacity can decrease fractionalization, I provide qualitative evidence of increasing policy bargaining in higher capacity states. In the Kyrgyz Republic, a low-capacity electoral authoritarian regime, politicians were most often motivated to join a party in order to access a patronage network. Those who prioritized public policy could only be found in the ruling party (or expressing frustration at their inability to work outside the ruling coalition). By contrast, in Armenia, an electoral authoritarian regime that had begun to reform its bureaucracy around five years before my field resaerch, politicians influencing policy could be found in the ruling party and in loyal opposition parties. These opposition parties had also coalesced into larger coalitions. While politicians primarily interested in patronage could still be found, policy-oriented politicians described their ability to negotiate with the administration on legislation – and effectively implement it. This supports Hypothesis 3 – more policy bargaining took place with opposition parties in Armenia after it began improving its state capacity, and in Armenia compared to the Kyrgyz Republic.

I did not find support for Hypothesis 2 – few politicians mentioned leader credibility as an influence on their decision-making, calling it into question as a mechanism for party development in authoritarian systems. Instead, in Armenia, the credibilty and utility of the state apparatus as a whole shaped opposition willingess to bargain over legislation with the regime. I also found qualified support for Hypothesis 4. While more Armenian politicians stated an interest in policy, compared to Kyrgyzstan, programmatic motivations for party formation did not increase with state capacity. Instead, what changed over time was the type of parties policy-motivated politicians chose to join. In the Kyrgyz Republic (and in Armenia in the 1990s and 2000s), politicians interested in developing policy joined the ruling party to succeed. In Armenia, politicians began to create new programmatic parties and coalitions after bureaucratic reform opened opportunities to implement their policies. In both cases, ruling parties were a path to technocratic success, but only in Armenia did civil

Table 7.1: Summary of Results

| Armenia 2017 | Kyrgyzstan 2017 |
|---|---|
| All politicians express policy interests; U-shaped formation of programmatic parties over time | Most politicians emphasized importance of party leader |
| Social networks important | Patronage networks important |
| Loyal opposition could advance policy | Only members of ruling party/coalition could impact policy |
| Medium party system volatility | High party system volatility |
| Able to obtain adequate responses to surveys | Unable to obtain reliable statistics |

society activists shift from protest to legislative action in order to achieve their goals.

There are important limits to my study. The scope of my research is electoral authoritarian regimes with only moderate levels of repression, and because the effect of improved state capacity can only be seen over time, my conclusions are best applied to stable regimes. There are also limits to the internal validity of my study – the weakness of available measures of state capacity and reliable statistics from Kyrgyzstan limit my conclusions, as does the lack of a full explanation for why Armenia chose to begin implementing bureaucratic reform in the early 2010s.

## 7.1 External Validity

My conclusion – that state capacity can contribute to the consolidation of loyal opposition coalitions – is limited to authoritarian regimes with moderate repression and a duration of at least five years. My conclusions cannot be extended to high repression dictatorships; in these cases, increased state capacity is more likely to lead to higher party fractionalization. Increasing a state's ability to extract revenue could allow it to better direct funds to official patronage networks, security services, or public goods, while increasing coercive capacity enhances a state's ability to repress political dissent (Seeberg 2014, van Ham and Seim 2018). Further study of the role of the state in cases such as Tajikistan or Azerbaijan is needed to determine whether increasing administrative capacity in these cases influences broader political behavior.

In addition, my conclusions best apply to regimes of longer duration. Institutions in unstable regimes (those interrupted by frequent coups or disputed elections) cannot shape political preferences effectively. Since they cannot guarantee the durability of any political institution or policy, elites are unlikely to make decisions based on those institutions. In addition, these regimes are unlikely to be able to initiate or implement significant bureaucratic reform or to last the five year period my statistical analysis indicates is required for rising state capacity to affect party systems.

Similarly, my conclusions cannot apply to democracies, even weak or corrupt democracies. A substantial literature has focused on the role that increased party competition has in promoting bureaucratic reform in democratic systems (Shefter 1994, O'Dwyer 2004, Gryzmala-Busse 2007, Bäck and Hadenius 2008, Ricciuti et al 2019). When political competition creates genuine constraints on political activity, it can encourage the professionalization of the bureaucracy, either to improve service delivery to constituents or the deny patronage opportunities to opponents who might take control. In these cases, the reverse causal relationship – that party system fractionalization causes state development, rather than increases in state capacity causing party system consolidation – is more likely. But the purpose of this study has been to examine cases where the lack of competition constrains political action – in electoral authoritarian regimes. In these cases, I have shown the reverse causal relationship – bureaucratic reform promoting competition – may take place.

While the universe of cases this research applies to is limited, it remains significant. Electoral authoritarian regimes represent the largest category of dictatorships. While not the only category of electoral authoritarian regimes, those where a ruling party has held power for more than ten years – such as Armenia – represent a significant universe of cases. Sixty-two of the 130 countries classified as electoral authoritarian between 1970 and 2015 also meet the criteria of "moderate repression" (a 0.3-0.7 score out of 1 for Variety of Democracy's Freedom of Expression Index) and a duration of at least five years. This study advances our understanding of the long-term effects of political reform in these cases. In these countries, reforming state institutions to improve policy implementation can credibly influence elite behavior and subsequent party formation.

## 7.2 Internal Validity

In addition to the limits to the external validity of my study, I must address weaknesses in its internal validity as well. As discusssed in Chapter 2, there are well-known limits to the quality of the sources of governance data used in political science. While Hanson and Sigman (2021) developed the most consistent and longest-duration data for state capacity available, they merge data on administrative, extractive, and coercive capacity into a single indicator. My cross-national statistical results were not robust across alternate specifications of administrative capacity. The alternate indicators often demonstrated weak links to events in-country and low reliability (as seen in Kyrgyzstan).

I was able to more consistently track qualitative measures of state capacity – reforms to meritocratic hiring procedures, conflict of interests laws, professional training for bureaucrats, and formal procedures for policy review – across cases, although the lack of implementation of repeated reforms in Kyrgyzstan complicated my use of these measures. The international organizations that tracked governance reform (the World Bank, IMF) often focused primarily on the passage of legislation in their assessments, rather than the implementation of that legislation, making Armenia and the Kyrgyz Republic similar in capacity on paper. That said, tracking differences in implementation was possible through secondary sources and in-

terviews. The relatively narrow scope of this theory and low reliability of capacity data mean qualitative case studies may be the most productive avenue for future research.

In addition, quality of survey data gathered from politicians, particularly in the Kyrgyz Republic, constrains my ability to draw strong conclusions based on these results. The honesty of all Armenian politicians' statements that they joined their party based on the platform is suspect, but in this case the contrast with the Kyrgyz Republic is what is relevant. In the lower capacity state, politicians often did not even pretend their primary motivation was public policy. The low response rate for the Kyrgyz survey did, however, demonstrate the limited utility of this format for reaching elites. While my Kyrgyz survey was conducted by the most reputable polling firm in country, they were unable to reach a large enough sample to produce valid statistics.

Second, additional work is needed on the causal mechanism by which policy capacity leads to changes in political behavior. I found little support for the proposed mechanism of leader credibility in influencing how politicians in Armenia approached policy bargaining, challenging the dominance of reputation or credibility-based theories of authoritarian politics discussed in Chapter 3. My research suggests the key factor may not be the leader himself, but the credibility of the state overall. In Armenia, politicians gave little value ot the word of the president himself, but still found it productive to engage with the bureaucracy and formal politics to achieve their goals on tax and pension reform.[1] When the state becomes a viable avenue to implement policy, it may supplant a leader's personal credibility as a guarantor of commitments.

Similarly, the role of elite motivations in party formation requires additional study. I identified politicians motivated by policy and ideology in both Armenia and Kyrygzstan and did not see significant changes in either group over time. What did change in Armenia was the type of policy motivation and the type of party elites chose to form. Armenian politicians were almost exclusively focused on independence and conflict with Azerbaijan during the initial formation of Armenia's party system. Politicians initially formed a series of catch-all parties organized around the general idea of Armenian nationalism. Over time, these parties fragmented into patronage networks, but by the late 2010s, elites had begun to form programmatic parties and coalitions around economic and social topics. Elite motivations mattered, but the significant change over time was the rise of collective action around policy topics, not the presence or absence of programmatic politicians. In Armenia, politicians could affect policy from the opposition and formed parties accordingly. In the Kyrgyz Republic, politicians were only able to influence the policy process from within the ruling party.

Finally, it is not possible to fully rule out endogenity in the relationship between state capacity and party system fractionalization. Reverse causality (party competition leading to bureaucratic reform) is unlikely, given the temporal delay in the effect seen both in my cross-national statistics and case study of Armenia – party system fractionalization declined after administrative capacity rose.

[1] See Lu et al (2020) for an example of this type of policy coalition-building in China.

There may, however be omitted variable bias. I was not able to identify a definitive cause of bureaucratic development in Armenia. In the Kyrgyz Republic, it is easy to argue that the absence of reform was a case of path dependency – once patterns of patronage and corruption were established in the mid-1990s, elites had little motivation to change them. The reason why Armenia did so remains unclear. Existing explanations focus on the need for economic reform after the 2008-09 global financial crisis. However, Kyrgyzstan faced similar economic challenges and received significantly more international aid for bureaucratic reform without implementing that change. Additional study is needed as to why Armenia's Republican Party chose to improve its policy delivery mechanisms while the Kyrgyz Republic chose to retain its spoils system.

In addition, the presence of notable differences between Armenia and Kyrgyzstan may have contributed to both the increase in state capacity and party system consolidation in one case but not the other. While Armenia and Kyrgyzstan are both lower-middle-income states, Armenia was notably more developed.[2] The Kyrgyz Republic's lower level of economic development and the communist legacy of dependence on Moscow may have limited the resources available for both state and party development.

In addition, while both Armenia and Kyrygzstan faced conflict, only Armenia participated in an international war. War with Azerbaijan may have generated greater unity among the Armenian elite, while social unrest in the Kyrgyz Republic contributed to divisions among the Kyrgyz elite.[3] This greater initial fractionalization of the Kyrgyz elite may have contributed to both later party system fractionalization and the difficulty in implementing bureaucratic reform, serving as an underlying cause of relationships observed.

## 7.3 Conclusion

I have not provided a full explanation of the causes of party system behavior under authoritarianism. Instead, this dissertation has highlighted one important–and under-discussed–factor that contributes to political reform in authoritarian states. State capacity is a contributing factor to party system fractionalization – the ability to successfully shape policy from the opposition in parliament influences elite decisions on whether to join that loyal opposition. It interacts with other well-established factors, such as state repression, social cleavages, and electoral laws, to structure the type of party elites join and the way they bargain with the government in authoritarian states.

[2]In 2018, its GDP per capity was more than twice that of the Kyrgyz Republic ($4392 compared to $1308).

[3]It is also well established that international war contributes more to state development than civil war (Tilly 1992, Thies 2005), although the most common mechanism associated with this theory – war driving improvements in tax collection – does not apply in these cases, both of which improved their tax collection over the time studied.

By highlighting the role this variable plays in authoritarian politics, I join authors who have begun to describe the microfoundations of elite behavior under authoritarian rule (see also Ong 2022 and Weghorst 2022). I reinforce the idea that politics under dictatorship is not binary – elites have options other than supporting or opposing a leader. And, in an environment where the reasons why one authoritarian election leads to liberalization when another does not are unclear (Edgell et al 2018), I shed light on one contextual variable that needs to be included in our analysis. Encouraging administrative reform in an authoritarian state will not automatically lead to the emergence of programmatic politics or democratization, but the unintended consequences of improvements to state capacity may be significant. At a minimum, in the absence of reforms to improve policy implementation in a state (as seen in the Kyrgyz Republic), elites will have little reason to challenge entrenched corruption and patronal politics.

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