

## Economic Performance and the Unraveling of Hegemonic Parties

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Hegemonic party regimes are non-democratic systems in which one political party remains in office uninterrupted while holding regular multiparty elections. Regime parties contribute to the stability of these political systems by preventing intra-elite divisions through patronage, policy concessions, and public displays of dominance in electoral contests. Yet elite coalitions organized under the aegis of a regime party are most vulnerable during elections, and in particular when electoral contests coincide with poor economic performance. Declining incomes provide both the motives and the opportunity for regime elites to depart from hegemonic parties. Poor performance may result in the loss of patronage and policy differences which motivate splits from the party. But most importantly, a declining economy provides elites with a platform around which they can mobilize support to challenge authoritarian incumbents in elections. As a result, the likelihood of defections from hegemonic parties should increase as income declines. We find evidence for this idea using an original dataset that includes 204 elections for the chief executive in hegemonic party dictatorships from 1946 to 2002. The evidence suggests a possible mechanism by which hegemonic parties disintegrate.

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## Introduction

In recent years, scholars of comparative politics have devoted increasing attention to variation in authoritarian regimes (Gandhi and Przeworski 2006, Schedler 2006, Geddes 1999a, Way 2005, Levitsky and Way 2002, Bratton and Van de Walle 1994). One important type of authoritarian regime is the hegemonic party regime. Hegemonic party regimes are those regimes in which dictators rule with the aid of one dominant party, while still holding regular multi-party elections. Prominent examples of hegemonic party regimes include Zimbabwe under Robert Mugabe and the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), Taiwan under the Kuomintang (KMT), Senegal under the *Parti Socialiste* (PS), and Paraguay under General Stroessner and the Colorado Party. The defining institutions of hegemonic party regimes (elections and a single dominant party) serve the regime in distributing patronage, gathering information, coopting elites, and binding supporters to the regime. The latter function of these institutions has led some scholars to note that hegemonic party regimes are particularly durable forms of authoritarian regimes, able to maintain their integrity even through calamities such as economic crises (Geddes 1999a, Slater 2003, Smith 2005, Brownlee 2004).<sup>1</sup> But the same institutions that provide benefits to the regime can also have unexpected, indeed undesirable, consequences for the incumbent authoritarians. These regimes do fall, and often they fall at election time, when their menu of manipulation fails to function effectively or when key actors cease to acquiesce to the regime. One quite simple and direct way that authoritarian elections can subvert the regime is when key members of the hegemonic party defect from the party ranks and challenge the regime in elections. Even when such defectors do not defeat the incumbent and initiate regime change, their defections can serve as defining moments in the unraveling of these party regimes, as the defector may signal the vulnerability of the regime and draw away substantial resources and support from the hegemonic party.

Consider the well-known example of Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas in Mexico. After a half-decade of economic stagnation and restructuring in the early and mid-1980s, a wing of the ruling *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) emerged advocating an end to IMF imposed austerity programs and a return to the PRI's statist and populist roots (Teichman 1992). This PRI faction, called *Corriente Democrática* (CD), united around the figure of Cárdenas, son of one of Mexico's most popular presidents, Lazaro Cárdenas, who was also one of the PRI's founding fathers. As the 1988 presidential elections approached, the CD and Cárdenas recognized the opportunity for challenging the regime that the economic crisis was creating. As Langston (2002) observes, "The CD quickly realized that it had support in both the regime and society because of the past seven years of crisis and their effects on the Mexican people" (76). Thus, in early 1988 prominent members of CD left the PRI and joined a coalition of parties, the National Democratic Front (FDN), which shortly thereafter nominated Cárdenas as its candidate in the 1988 elections. Magaloni (2006) notes that the reason the PRI in 1988 witnessed its first prominent defection since 1952 was that potential defectors sensed better electoral prospects outside the ruling party. As history has shown, they were correct in their estimation. Cárdenas secured 31 percent of the vote, more than any other opposition candidate in Mexican history, although most accounts agree that the PRI was forced to resort to massive electoral fraud in order to secure its own victory. Although the PRI would not lose office until 2000, the Cárdenas defection was clearly a turning point in the history of the PRI, demonstrating the vulnerability of the regime, emboldening opponents, and attenuating the support base of the PRI. It is also clear that Cárdenas' reckoning

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<sup>1</sup> Geddes (1999a, 1999b) and Smith (2005) both group together hegemonic party regimes with what we call single-party regimes. Nonetheless, they both argue that economic performance does not affect the survival rates of these regimes.

that he could achieve more by defecting and competing against the regime was predicated, in large part, on his observation of the economic crisis racking the country at that time.

Indeed, this is exactly what we argue in this paper. National economic performance should motivate potential defectors' decisions over whether to split from the regime party. Disgruntled party members may defect in times of economic crisis because their share of patronage is affected by the economic crisis; they may disagree with the policies that incumbents are implementing to deal with the economy; or, most interestingly, they may defect in order to capitalize upon popular and elite discontent with the regime in the hope of successfully challenging the regime in elections. Our main hypothesis is thus disarmingly simple: poor economic performance should encourage elites to defect from hegemonic parties and challenge the regime in elections. We test our hypothesis using an original dataset that includes 204 relevant elections in all hegemonic party regimes from 1946-2002. Our results are largely consistent with our hypotheses, even when including important control variables.

In this paper, we contribute to the broader literature in at least two ways. First, examining elite defection and its causes demonstrates why elections are important in authoritarian regimes. Even in situations when uncertainty over electoral outcomes is low, elections can produce unexpected results for dictators. This suggests that the very institutions that dictators use to maintain social control, distribute spoils, and maintain the integrity of elite coalitions also can contribute to the unraveling of the regime. In contrast to some previous research (Geddes 1999a, Smith 2005), we show that elite coalitions in hegemonic party regimes are vulnerable to disintegration during economic crises. Indeed, this vulnerability is most acute at electoral moments.

Second, and more generally, this paper contributes to the task of illuminating the mechanisms that link authoritarian breakdown and economic crisis. One of the most robust empirical findings in the literature on transitions is that authoritarian regimes are more likely to fail during economic hard times (Geddes 1999a, Przeworski et al. 2000, Boix and Stokes 2003). The mechanisms behind this correlation have yet to be systematically explored, however. In this paper, we demonstrate how economic crisis can contribute to the weakening of elite coalitions in a prominent type of authoritarian regime.

### **Hegemonic Party Regimes: Observable Characteristics and Some Examples**

Hegemonic party regimes are those authoritarian regimes in which a party, affiliated with the regime, consistently dominates multi-party elections.<sup>2</sup> Well-known examples of hegemonic party regimes include Mexico under the PRI (1929-2000), Malaysia under the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) (1969-present), Singapore under the People's Action Party (PAP) (1965-present), and Zimbabwe under Mugabe and ZANU-PF (1979-present). Within the domain of authoritarian regimes, these hegemonic party regimes are set apart from single-party regimes such as most of the world's former and current communist regimes (e.g., the Soviet Union, Cuba, Vietnam, China), for in these regimes the communist party owns a monopoly on political organization. Other examples of single party regimes that are excluded from our empirical definition of hegemonic party regime include Guinea under the Democratic Party of Guinea

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<sup>2</sup> More specifically and as discussed in greater detail later, a hegemonic party regime exists when the regime is authoritarian, multi-party elections are held, and the regime party holds more than 50 percent of seats in the primary legislative chamber. This definition follows closely with Magaloni (2006) who defines a hegemonic party regime as "a system in which one political party remains in office uninterruptedly under semi-authoritarian conditions while holding regular multiparty elections" (32).

(PDG) from 1958-1984 and Kenya under the Kenya African National Union (KANU) from 1969-1991.<sup>3</sup> Single party regimes may transform into hegemonic party regimes by permitting multi-party elections, as occurred in Kenya in 1992, when KANU competed in multi-party elections for the first time in decades. Alternatively, a hegemonic party regime may turn into a single party regime if the regime opts to ban other parties from competing as, for instance, Kenyatta and KANU did in 1968 when the regime cancelled multi-party elections and declared a one-party state (Widner 1992).

Hegemonic party regimes also can be distinguished from so-called “uncommon democracies,” or regimes in which one party has governed for a long period, but under democratic conditions (e.g., India under the Congress Party and Japan under the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP); see Pempel 1990). Of central importance in democracy is contestation in elections. Contestation in elections is said to exist when there is ex-ante uncertainty, ex post irreversibility, and repeatability (Przeworski et al 2000: 16). In hegemonic party states, there is no ex ante uncertainty since incumbents curtail opposition activities, exert control over the media, repress opponents, manipulate court rulings, and abuse access to state resources as a means of controlling contestation and maintaining power in the interests of remaining in power.<sup>4</sup> When these tactics fail, incumbents resort to fraud or the cancellation of election results to reverse the popular verdict against them. In short, incumbents can manufacture an uneven playing field that reduces ex ante uncertainty or take actions “after-the-fact” that demonstrate an unwillingness to relinquish power. In fact, the unwillingness to allow for alternation in power is what distinguishes a regime like the LDP in Japan from the PRI in Mexico. When the LDP in Japan finally lost elections in 1993, they stepped down. In contrast, most observers of the 1988 Mexican presidential race believe that the PRI stole the elections. Cárdenas would have been declared the winner had not the federal electoral commission’s computers not “gone down” the day of the election. The computers came back up days later to show that Salinas, the PRI’s candidate, had won with just over a majority of votes (Langston 2002: 78).

Consistent with this minimalist definition of democracy, we obtain a sample of 69 hegemonic parties existing at some time between 1946 and 2002. This represents 24.5 percent of all authoritarian country-years during this time span. These 69 hegemonic parties occur in 62 different countries. As the earlier examples show, hegemonic party regimes are not a phenomenon specific to particular geographic region. Moreover, they are not specific to any particular time period. As Figure 1 shows, hegemonic party regimes have consistently comprised approximately 20 to 25 percent of the world’s non-democratic regimes.

[Figure 1 about here]

This pattern was stable until the 1990s when that proportion shot up to over 35 percent. As of 2000, hegemonic party regimes represent nearly half of all the world’s authoritarian regimes. This number includes many established hegemonic parties such as the National Democratic Party (NDP) in Egypt, PAP in Singapore, and ZANU-PF in Zimbabwe, and the *Rassemblement*

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<sup>3</sup> In an oft-cited typology of authoritarian regimes, Geddes (1999a) identifies single-party regimes as those in which “access to political office and control over policy are dominated by one-party though other parties may legally exist and compete in elections” (5). This definition groups together what we call single parties which govern in the absence of contested multi-party elections, with hegemonic party regimes which permit opposition forces to contest elections.

<sup>4</sup> Authoritarian regimes that engage in this type of manipulation have commonly been referred to as “competitive” or “electoral” authoritarian regimes (Schedler 2006, Howard and Roessler 2006, Levitsky and Way 2002, 2006).

*Démocratique du Peuple Camerounaise* (RDPC) in Cameroon. But it also includes several new hegemonic parties such as the New Azerbaijan Party (YAP) in Azerbaijan, Fatherland (OTAN) in Kazakhstan, and the Cambodia People's Party (CPP) in Cambodia. Indeed, it appears that some of the world's most notable "emergent" authoritarian regimes are opting for a hegemonic party ruling strategy. In Russia, Vladimir Putin's regime has invested heavily in a pro-Kremlin political party, United Russia. In 2007, the Nigerian People's Democratic Party (PDP) facilitated the transfer of executive power from Olusegun Obasanjo to Umaru Musa Yar'Adua. Among the universe of authoritarian regimes, hegemonic party regimes appear to be increasingly common.

These facts are intriguing as we recall Huntington's (1970) original claim that party dictatorships are the only "modern" form of dictatorship. Indeed, a more recent strand of literature focuses on the benefits that hegemonic parties provide to authoritarian incumbents seeking to maintain their hold on power in an "age of democracy" (Slater 2003, Brownlee 2004). We turn now to a further discussion of this possibility as we consider the functions of hegemonic parties.

### **Elections and Party Institutions**

Hegemonic party regimes are distinguished from other authoritarian regimes by two characteristics: they hold multi-party elections and party politics is dominated by one party. The benefits that a hegemonic party confers are several. The party may serve as (1) a tool for coopting latent allies and binding current supporters to the regime, (2) a mechanism for routinizing patronage flows and the distribution of political appointments, (3) an information gathering device, and/or (4) an apparatus for controlling legislatures.

The first mentioned function of a hegemonic party is also the most oft-described in the literature. Hegemonic parties are said to promote regime stability by facilitating the inclusion of important social groups and providing the institutional bonds to coopt important elites and keep them loyal to the regime (Gandhi and Przeworski 2006, Geddes 1999b, Smith 2005, Brownlee 2004). Corporatist relationships with societal groups facilitate the exchange of support for material benefits and policy influence. With respect to elites, a similar logic of institutionalized cooptation applies. In exchange for linking their fates to the hegemonic party, elites are granted access to policy, rents, and office. An institutionalized hegemonic party institution provides elites with a guarantee that they will have continued access to these spoils in the future (Geddes 1999b, Brownlee 2004, Smith 2005). By reducing this uncertainty over the future distribution of spoils, elites have less reason to gamble on challenging the regime. In periods of executive succession, hegemonic parties facilitate regime continuity by clearly demonstrating the benefits of remaining in the ruling coalition, and they provide a ready-made support coalition for the regime's presidential contenders.

A second benefit that hegemonic parties provide is the routinization of political appointments and patronage flows. To the extent that the regime seeks loyal and capable appointments to political posts and the bureaucracy, the regime benefits from an institution that can effectively govern the distribution of these posts. Parties thus formalize a system of recruiting and retaining the most politically talented people, harnessing their abilities for the regime rather than for opposing forces.

Another function of hegemonic parties is their role in providing information to various actors. Information is important for authoritarian regimes in assessing the distribution of support and opposition within society. Regime parties may monitor citizens' behavior through cells that reach into neighborhoods, schools, and the workplace. For citizens, the act of joining/not joining the

party and voting/not voting provides information to the regime on who is willing to collaborate. Such information is useful for the regime in deciding which supporters to reward with patronage or target with repression. A similar logic applies to the process of gathering information on elite actors. In most cases, the hegemonic party constitutes a clear dividing line between regime supporters and opponents.<sup>5</sup> Leaving the hegemonic party constitutes defection from the regime. Leaders know whom to punish (or reward) and elites know what needs to be done in order to retain access to future spoils. In this way, the hegemonic party lowers information costs and establishes clear rules about the regime's accommodative arrangement.

When a legislature exists, a hegemonic party is an invaluable tool for reducing the transaction costs associated with controlling it. In semi-authoritarian regimes, the legislature is only marginalized if it is dominated by the executive's party. Rule by decree, even when the authoritarian leader has extensive formal decree powers, is often more limited than commonly believed.<sup>6</sup> In general, authoritarian executives with extensive formal and informal powers will still want to ensure the passage of preferred legislation in parliament rather than rule by fiat and edict alone. The authoritarian ruler may use coercion and repression on deputies in order to insure legislative compliance. Or, the authoritarian ruler could forge ad hoc coalitions with individual deputies and small factions, trading particularistic goods for legislative support. Such an arrangement, however, entails significant bargaining costs and uncertainty. Russia under Putin illustrates the point well. In the Third Duma (2000-2003) the Putin administration devoted only limited resources to the maintenance of a cohesive pro-presidential party; instead the Kremlin sought to buy off independent deputies and negotiate package deals with various factions (Smyth 2002, Remington 2006). In the Fourth Duma (2004-present), the Kremlin set out to ensure that it would not have to pay these side payments. The Kremlin made sure that loyal lawmakers joined United Russia and party whips exercised iron-clad discipline over party members in the Duma. By increasing the costs of defection from the ruling coalition, United Russia has provided President Putin with a dependable majority coalition in the Fourth Duma. Where parties are weak and undisciplined, deputies are prone to test the limits of the regime's patience. Moreover, the opposition is well-positioned to successfully lure away disgruntled regime supporters.

The second essential component of hegemonic party regimes is multi-party elections. Such elections may provide a variety of benefits to authoritarian rulers. By providing elites and societal actors with access to policy and rents, elections can relieve oppositional pressure. Such access, even if limited and controlled, gives actors an incentive to work within the system (Lust Okar 2005, Magaloni 2006). By giving opponents and latent allies a stake in the system, authoritarian rulers increase the costs of opposing the regime by violent or anti-systemic means. Multi-party elections thus become institutions of authoritarian cooptation and control. Moreover, elections allow dictators to exploit opposition coordination dilemmas and thereby facilitate divide and rule strategies.

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<sup>5</sup> There are certainly notable exceptions to this observation. In some instances, the most highly placed individuals in a regime are not explicitly members of the ruling party. Presidents and ministers are often not members of the hegemonic parties that support them, preferring instead to remain "above party politics." These easily identifiable exceptions, however, are just that: exceptions.

<sup>6</sup> In Russia, for instance, the decree making powers of the president are limited to the establishment of law when none exists and to correction of inconsistencies in existing law (Haspel, Remington, and Smith 2006). Moreover, decrees are less durable than laws, which require passage of another law to be overturned. Succeeding presidents or recalcitrant legislatures can easily replace a decree. Russian presidents that seek the implementation of lasting policy thus will prefer a law over a decree, and by extension will seek to control legislatures.

Like hegemonic parties, elections are also institutions that facilitate more efficient distribution of patronage and mobilization of support. Elections provide a means of rewarding and punishing elite supporters. Those supporters that are successful at mobilizing votes and quelling dissent are rewarded with office and spoils. Capable politicians thus have significant incentives to work diligently for the benefit of the regime.

A third function of elections in authoritarian regimes is informational. Elections are ideal tools for exposing the extent and distribution of popular support for the regime. Elections tell dictators not only if they are popular or not, but also if they are popular among farmers, in urban areas, or among certain ethnic groups. To the extent that support is encouraged through intimidation and coercion, electoral results can indicate the effectiveness of these tactics. Such information aids regime efforts to efficiently target patronage and repression. Moreover, elections can provide similar information about the strength of opponents.

Competitive elections also may provide regimes with an opportunity to put their dominance on display, deterring challengers from within the regime and from without. In an analysis of regime dynamics in Mexico, Magaloni (2006) writes, “By holding elections regularly, winning them by huge margins, painting the streets and towns all over the country in the party’s colors, and mobilizing voters in great numbers to party rallies and at the polls, the PRI sought to generate a public image of invincibility” (9). Thus, elections may serve as ways to disseminate information about the regime’s dominance.

Hegemonic party regimes are thus composed of two primary components: party dominance and multi-party elections. Note that investment in a dominant party is a desirable strategy for many authoritarian rulers that have decided to hold elections, as the party solves voter and elite coordination dilemmas and serves as an institutional tool for reducing uncertainty in the contestation of these elections. Instead of building a party, incumbents may try to secure electoral support by negotiating ad hoc deals with individual elites who control regional political machines, labor unions, societal groups, or tribal/ethnic groups. But such a strategy entails enormous transaction costs and the level of uncertainty implied by these ad hoc arrangements is costly to both the ruler and other elites.<sup>7</sup> A hegemonic party, on the other hand, eases transaction costs and reduces uncertainty in the contest to secure votes. A hegemonic party, like political parties in any regime, solves coordination dilemmas for candidates and voters (Aldrich 1995, Cox 1997). Coordination failures can lead to unexpected outcomes that are suboptimal for the ruler. A hegemonic party presents a clear and credible alternative to voters inclined to vote for the regime. For elites, a stable hegemonic party provides a focal point for coordinating in support of the regime. Hegemonic parties also help autocrats win elections by mobilizing voters. Local party organizations generate support for regime incumbents at election time and provide institutional channels for the provision of patronage goods to voters.

In sum, regime parties provide certain benefits to dictators whether they are holding elections or not, although the party provides some extra benefits if elections are held. In addition, elections provide certain benefits to dictators that rule with the aid of single, dominant party. The combination of these two ruling strategies makes for a hegemonic party regime.

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<sup>7</sup> It is not the case that all authoritarian regimes that hold multi-party elections also have hegemonic parties. Belarus under Alexander Lukashenko and Ukraine under Leonid Kuchma are two examples of regimes that held elections while eschewing the parallel investment in a hegemonic party.

## Defections, Economic Performance, and the Unraveling of Hegemonic Parties

While elections provide benefits, they also pose potential hazards to authoritarian incumbents. In order to insure that elections do not result in alternation, incumbents use a variety of methods to guarantee favorable results: manipulation of electoral rules, restrictions on the press, vote-buying, coercive tactics, violence, electoral fraud. And yet, sometimes, incumbents misjudge the effectiveness of these tools or the extent to which citizens are willing to acquiesce to their rule.<sup>8</sup> As a result, they lose.

The rarity of these cases, however, does not mean that elections in hegemonic party regimes are risk-free for incumbents. Even if loss of power is not likely, the party still faces the threat posed by internal discord. Elections can lay bare succession struggles as members vie to be the standard bearer of the regime. As Casteñeda's interviews with four former presidents of Mexico make clear, behind the appearance of orderly succession was a messy, divisive process in which party members jockeyed to be the possible successor. The incumbent president had the power to determine his successor, but the "unveiling" of his choice could not be premature. Otherwise, "...the nominee would be destroyed by his rivals and enemies before the time came to begin to hand power over to him" (Casteñeda 2000: xix).

Elections also present the most visible opportunity for members of the party to signal their dissatisfaction with the regime. Members may leave the hegemonic party to contest legislative or executive elections at the subnational or national levels. Successful competition in legislative elections requires a party apparatus to field candidates in different districts; rather than join extant opposition parties, defectors usually start their own. In Malaysia, for example, a dissident faction (which later came to be known as *Semangat 46*) broke away from the regime party and challenged UMNO in the general elections of April 1987. Similarly, in Senegal, former interior minister Djibo Ka formed the Union for Democratic Renewal (URD) in November 1997 to act as a reform group within the regime's PS. One month later, however, Ka and ten other dissidents were suspended from the PS for three months. In response, Ka launched an independent list of candidates for legislative elections in May 1998 (Galvan 2001).

Candidates for presidential races frequently organize their own parties as well, as Cárdenas did in Mexico, for example. A party can be used to marshal and deploy resources. In addition, with a platform, it may help mobilize voters by demonstrating that an individual's candidacy is more than just a personalist bid for power and can provide the basis for future electoral challenges. Very rarely do defectors run as independents. In Gabon, for example, Alexandre Sambat left the *Parti Democratique Gabonaise* (PDG) to mount an independent candidacy against the incumbent, El Hadji Omar Bongo, in 1993 presidential elections. Similarly, in Uganda, Yoweri's Museveni's personal physician, Kizza Besigye, left the National Resistance Movement (NRM) to legally run as an independent candidate in the 2001 presidential elections. When the requirements for registering parties are too onerous, defectors from the hegemonic party may choose to run as independents. As independents or partisan candidates, the members' departure clearly weakens the hegemonic party even if regime transition is not imminent.

What motivates the decision to defect on the part of party members? Personal reasons may motivate the actions of some party members. Hegemonic parties frequently have internal nomination procedures for political offices. A defeat in these internal contests often leads

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<sup>8</sup> For a nice analytical account of authoritarian incumbents overestimating their popular support, see Kamiński (1999).



members to reevaluate the benefits and costs of staying within the party. In Malaysia, for example, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah became a leader in forming the dissident *Semangat 46* in part as a response to Mahathir's constant frustration of his political ambitions: Mahathir was chosen over him to be deputy prime minister in 1976; Mahathir, as prime minister, supported another candidate over him for the post of deputy president in 1981 and 1984; finally, Mahathir demoted him in the cabinet from the powerful finance ministry to the less potent ministry of trade and industry (Singh 1991: 714).

Besides idiosyncratic personal motives, however, systematic reasons related to the state of the economy also might inspire splits from the ruling party. A declining economy surely results in a smaller pie of spoils for regime elites to divide amongst themselves. The loss of patronage that comes with poor economic performance might lead elites to reevaluate the value of remaining within the hegemonic party. In addition, hard times may lead to policy disagreements over how to halt the economic decline. Recall that the leaders of the *Corriente Democrática*, which launched Cárdenas' challenge, in Mexico were left wing members of the PRI who disagreed with President Miguel de la Madrid's attempts to liberalize trade and reduce state involvement in the economy as solutions to the economic downturn. Particularly if change is difficult to enact from within the party, the incentives to exit the party become stronger.

What sort of benefits can come out of defection? If disgruntlement with the regime is so high, then the possibility of spearheading the opposition and making alternation possible may be benefit enough. In Kenya, for example, two conditions seem to have been important in triggering a series of defections from the regime party, KANU. First, the dismal economy and increasing repression under Daniel Arap Moi along with the choice of Uhuru Kenyatta to succeed him led to extreme dissatisfaction among segments within the party. Second, once the opposition unified behind a single candidate for the presidency, Mwai Kibaki, enough members of KANU viewed the challenge as credible (Kasara 2005).

Even if alternation is a distant possibility, defectors may stand to gain if the party makes changes in response to their actions. In Malaysia, for example, some leaders of the dissident faction that later became *Semangat 46* were lured back to UMNO with cabinet posts and promises to reform. Datak Musa Hitam, who had broken with Mahathir over his autocratic style of leadership, supposedly had more incentive to rejoin UMNO after Mahathir's coronary bypass operation (Singh 1991: 718).

Yet in order for these benefits to accrue to potential defectors, they must compete successfully in elections. If incumbents are actually willing to step down, the likelihood of any one challenger winning office obviously increases with his vote share. In addition, the threat that a potential defector might pose to the regime is indicated by vote share. High vote shares for challengers indicate substantial support for the opposition in spite of regime attempts to manipulate the outcome.

A successful candidacy is especially important given the costs to potentially defecting from the hegemonic party. Since patronage features prominently as a function of regime parties, a decision to leave the party obviously results in loss of such spoils. The difference between being on the inside and the outside of such patronage networks may be considerable when the state's involvement in the economy is extensive through control of natural resources and public enterprises. In addition, corruption may contribute to the value of remaining within the party. When what can be obtained from political activity exceeds profits from market activity, the incentives to remain within the party are strong.

In addition, legal recognition of opposition parties does not guarantee freedom from state repression which includes the jailing of opposition leaders and supporters, the breaking up of party meetings and rallies, and the prevention of any favorable or even impartial media coverage. The systematic harassment of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), the leading opposition party in Zimbabwe, for example, continues in spite of universal condemnation of Mugabe and ZANU-PF's tactics. The use of repression not only suppresses voter support for challengers, but may threaten the physical integrity of potential defectors.

A strong showing in the election, however, demonstrates that challengers to the regime are not irrelevant to the incumbents and the party. For members of the regime party contemplating a defection, the potential to obtain high vote shares may counteract the costs of defecting. First, as discussed earlier, doing well in the election increases the likelihood that the benefits of defecting will materialize. These benefits may offset the costs. Second, a strong showing in the election may even mitigate some of the costs of defecting. With strong voter support, challengers to the regime garner nationwide and international attention, perhaps making it less likely that the regime will engage in post-electoral retributive actions against them.

But in order to make a strong showing in the elections, potential candidates must consider their position with voters. They must anticipate what issues might mobilize voters to care enough to express their discontent with incumbents and in turn, support potential defectors. Otherwise, their bids for election are likely to fail in that they will have incurred the costs of challenging the regime while reaping few of the benefits.

Economic performance is one issue around which challengers might mobilize support. One reason why the performance of the economy is important is because it determines the level of benefits that can be distributed to voters. Increasing growth of total output allows for the regime to spend more in buying votes. Indeed, evidence of political business cycles in non-democratic elections indicates that authoritarian incumbents do use fiscal and monetary tools to insure victory at the polls.<sup>9</sup> In Egypt, for example, NDP candidates offer cash and in-kind benefits to the urban poor while the government provides public sector bonuses, increases in pensions, and currency devaluations in an effort to buy votes (Blaydes 2006). Similarly, in Mexico, the PRI targeted anti-poverty funds to states in which their candidates faced close races (Magaloni 2006: chapter 4). During hard times, when the regime may have fewer resources at its disposal, the effectiveness of these tools for insuring electoral success may decline, creating an opening for possible challengers.

In addition, potential challengers may use the fact that economic performance influences voter evaluation of the regime's competency. On this point, the literature on economic voting in established democracies, especially the United States, is instructive. Analyses of survey data find that voters base their choices at the ballot box in part on the state of the economy, as indicated by rates of growth, inflation, and unemployment. Although the evidence is mixed on whether citizens engage in sociotropic or egotropic voting and whether they make retrospective or prospective judgments, studies at the individual level find some evidence of economic voting.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Block et al. (2003) find that African states, irregardless of regime type, exhibit political business cycles when they have multiparty rather than single-party elections. This literature on political business cycles in non-democratic states follows in the footsteps of the voluminous literature on economic manipulation in democratic elections (e.g., Lewis-Beck 1988, Remmer 1993, Mink and de Haan 2006).

<sup>10</sup> For a comprehensive and recent review of these debates in the literature on economic voting in the United States, see Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier (2000). Studies on other developed democracies include

Studies of economic voting in newer democracies are less common, but also provide some evidence that voters take into consideration economic performance when casting ballots. In a pooled sample of developing countries with a series of relatively uninterrupted elections, for example, Pacek and Radcliffe (1995: 752) find that a one percentage point decline in growth of per capita income costs incumbent governments 1.1 percent of the vote.<sup>11</sup> Such studies do not abound in dictatorships for obvious reasons, but there is no reason to believe that voters in non-democracies would not be as concerned with their material well-being as their democratic counterparts.

Indeed, the ability of regime parties to deliver good economic performance should occupy a prominent space in political debate since modernization (especially its economic facet) was a primary justification for their hegemonic status. Members of the regime party were expected to "... play an active entrepreneurial role in the formation of new ideas, in the establishment of a network of communication for those ideas, and in the linking of the public and the leadership in such a way that power is generated, mobilized, and directed" (Apter 1965:186; italics supplied). In order to carry out these functions, however, it was necessary for other parties to play, at most, an auxiliary role to the regime's own organization. If allowed to be truly autonomous, opposition parties would provide a means by which the "forces of backwardness" could impede the nationalist project of modernization. As a self-stated goal, then, improvement of the material well-being of their citizens can be expected to serve as a yardstick by which voters evaluate hegemonic parties.

Economic decline, then, can provide a motive for elites to defect from the regime: poor economic performance leads to the loss of patronage and the emergence of policy differences. But it also provides the opportunity by which elite can split from the party and not fade into irrelevance. Anticipating that voters care about the economy and are more likely to vote against incumbents when the economy is performing poorly, party members who are considering jumping ship will be more likely to defect during hard times. Therefore, the lower the growth of income, the more likely are members to leave the party and challenge authoritarian incumbents in elections.

### **Alternative Theories**

Two alternative theories lead to different predictions about the relationship between economic performance and defection from the hegemonic party. The first rests on modernization theory which asserts that with wealth comes exposure to social and demographic changes, such as greater urbanization and education, which creates citizens who are more likely to prefer democracy.<sup>12</sup> In our context, then, it may be that as citizens prosper, they attach intrinsic value to alternation in office, a change in political norms that members of the hegemonic party can anticipate.

In addition, as voters become increasingly wealthy, they may forgo the clientelism that characterizes their relations with the hegemonic party to make what Magaloni (2006) calls "ideological investments" in other parties. In other words, voters care about two things: material benefits and policy. As voters become wealthy, they have their own sources of material benefits

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Lewis-Beck (1988), Paldam (1991), Powell and Whitten (1993), Anderson (2000), and Duch and Stevenson (2005).

<sup>11</sup> Several regional studies also find evidence of economic voting (e.g., Remmer 1991, Tucker 2006).

<sup>12</sup> For the original formulation, see Lipset (1960). Recent empirical assessments include Przeworski and Limongi (1997) and Boix and Stokes (2003).

outside of the hegemonic party. The result is that they can afford to care more about their ideological preferences and turn to supporting those opposition parties who are closer to them in terms of their policy preferences.

Through the processes associated with modernization or the emergence of independent sources of wealth that end dependency on the hegemonic party's largesse, economic growth would lead citizens to be more likely to vote against incumbents. Party members, anticipating this behavior on the part of voters, then, would be more likely to defect from the regime party during periods of prosperity.

Second, there may not be any relationship between economic performance and defection. Note that the studies of economic voting in established democracies a vote against the incumbent is a vote for the opposition (resulting from the undue influence of the two-party U.S. case in this literature). But in non-democratic elections, parties may proliferate and voters may be forced to make choices under a high degree of uncertainty. Because these are regimes in which there has never been turnover in power, voters have never witnessed the opposition govern nor can they determine which parties might implement "leftist" or "rightist" policies. So the only informative cue that voters can utilize in this context is a pro- and anti-regime dimension.<sup>13</sup> Anti-regime parties have displayed consistent opposition to the regime perhaps by their contestation of successive elections or the degree to which they have been persecuted. If they come to power, they can be expected to enact policies that will differ from their predecessors.

In contrast, pro-regime parties include not only those groups that actively support the incumbents, but also those who may not be able to sufficiently distinguish themselves from the regime. For these parties, voters have less expectation that they will behave differently from the hegemonic party if they were to attain power. But if the economy is performing badly, then, anyone too closely associated with the ruling party will have difficulty in gaining support since voters will doubt his ability to perform more competently. In turn, if potential defectors think that voters will too closely identify them with the regime party in contrast to the anti-regime side, then they may not defect even in times of economic crisis for fear that as former members of the hegemonic party, they, too, will be blamed for the economy's poor performance. In this case, the likelihood of defection is not significantly different during times of good and bad economic performance.<sup>14</sup> Defection, when it occurs, happens for other, exogenous reasons (that may not co-vary with economic performance).

## **Data and Methods**

Any test of our argument requires a valid definition of defection. We define defection as a situation in which a member of the hegemonic party leaves the party to run as either an independent or a candidate for another party in elections that determine the chief executive. When the effective head of government is a directly-elected president, we look for defectors in presidential elections; when the effective head is either an indirectly-elected president or a prime minister, we look at legislative elections.

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<sup>13</sup> This idea is similar to Tucker's (2006) analysis of "new regime" and "old regime" parties in new democracies in Eastern Europe.

<sup>14</sup> Note, however, that this story assumes 1) the well-established presence of other opposition parties and 2) the inability of defectors to sufficiently distinguish themselves from the hegemonic party.

Defectors must have been members of the hegemonic party in order to be considered as such. Thus, elite actors who leave the cabinet, but who were not members of the hegemonic party are not considered defectors.<sup>15</sup> In some cases, we define parties loosely to include movements, as in the cases of Uganda under Museveni and Iran after the 1979 Revolution, where, even though parties are officially illegal, there is a clearly defined regime-supported “movement” that serves the regime in the same capacity as a hegemonic party.

Departure from the party must be voluntary. Expulsion from the party is not coded as a defection, because in such cases, the member no longer has a choice over leaving. We recognize that this coding rule may exclude instances in which a potential defector challenges the regime with the precise goal of being expelled. Such individuals may be the functional equivalents of defectors, for instead of voluntarily defecting, they may challenge the regime from within, disregarding the consequences. Some of these individuals may even subsequently run against the regime in elections. In spite of this, we choose not to code these cases as defection, for admitting such cases would also oblige us to include regime-initiated purges in which notable party members are simply expelled against their own will. Measurement error is unavoidable so we choose to err on the side of not counting expulsions as defections.

Departure from the party must occur between two elections or, in the country’s first multiparty election, after elections have been called or parties have been made legal. This latter rule is devised to address situations in which a single party dominated politics for so long that anyone involved in politics and competing in the first (or subsequent) elections had to have been a member of the single party at some time in the past. In these cases, prior membership in the party is not a sufficient criteria for discerning defection.<sup>16</sup> We assume that once a member leaves a party, he can not return. So if any member runs in more than one election, it is not possible for the individual to be a defector in all elections subsequent to the one for which he may be a defector.

Our dependent variable is thus a dichotomous measure of defection, coded 1 if there is a defection for a given election year and 0 if there is not. We collected data on defections for all relevant elections in hegemonic party regimes from 1946-2002. The resulting sample includes 204 elections. There are 40 instances of defections in these elections and 164 elections in which no defection occurred.

Our main independent variables of interest are indicators of economic growth. With these variables we seek to test our primary hypothesis that defection is more (less) likely in times of

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<sup>15</sup> There are arguments both for and against coding cabinet resignation as defection from the regime. In some cases, departures from the cabinet, even if the members belong to other parties, indicate a significant loss of support for the regime (e.g., Mohamed Djama Elabe in Djibouti 1993). After all, those individuals from other parties would not have gotten those cabinet positions if they were not important. Yet in other cases, it seems that entrance and exit from the cabinet by members of other parties is a standard feature to accommodate the opposition. In Senegal, for example, Abdoulaye Wade entered and left the cabinet several times over the course of multiple elections with seemingly little consequence for the regime. Similarly, in Chad, the entrance and departure of cabinet ministers reflected shifting alliances among rebel movements and the regime rather than any permanent show of support or opposition. In any case, we look only at exits from hegemonic parties in order to maintain consistency in coding.

<sup>16</sup> Note, however, that cases in which a party member defected from the party only to boycott the subsequent election are not included. This exclusion rule also precludes the rare case when a party member leaves the regime party, boycotts the subsequent election, and then contests the next election after that which is boycotted. Such an instance occurred in Azerbaijan when two members of Heydar Aliyev’s YAP government left in 1993 and 1995, respectively, only to boycott the 1998 elections and then register for the 2003 election.

economic crisis (growth). We employ several measures of economic performance. As a first cut, we employ the growth of per capita income in the year prior to the relevant election (*Lagged growth*). Annual growth rates, however, may not adequately characterize the path of per capita income over time. Development is a long-run process, and shifts in growth rates lead to distinct patterns within countries, characterized by Pritchett (2000) as “hills,” “plateaus,” “mountains,” and “plains.” Consistent with this idea, we include measures of average levels and volatility of growth. As an alternative to *Lagged growth*, we use the average annual growth rate of real GDP per capita for the period beginning with the year of the previous election and ending with the year prior to the election at hand (*Average growth*). For those cases in which there is no prior election, the period begins five years before the election at hand. We also employ the standard deviation of the annual growth rate of real GDP per capita for the period beginning with the year of the previous election and ending with the year prior to the election at hand (*Volatility of growth*).<sup>17</sup>

In addition to our primary variables of interest, we include a number of substantively important control variables to account for other factors that may encourage defection. First, we include a measure to capture the perceived electoral vulnerability of the regime. Presumably, potential elite defectors are less prone to defect when the chances of defeating the regime or even making a respectable showing at the polls are slim. Therefore, we control for the vote share of the regime candidate/party in the previous election to create a variable called *Previous vote*.<sup>18</sup>

Potential defectors need to consider not only the regime, but also the strategies of the extant opposition. As the literature on party and candidate entry in democracies has shown, the number and policy location of other challengers affects the entry decision of potential candidates (Cox 1997, Hug 2001). While we can not measure the spatial location of candidates and parties in authoritarian elections, we can determine the degree of fragmentation of the opposition which may affect a potential defector’s decision to enter the race.<sup>19</sup> Highly fractionalized oppositions may be more conducive to defector entry than are highly united opposition forces. We measure the fragmentation of the opposition by dividing the vote share of the first opposition party by the sum of the vote share of all opposition parties  $\frac{p_1}{\sum p_i}$  where  $p$  is the vote share received by the  $i$ th

opposition party. This measure returns a value of 1 when there is only one opposition party, indicating a united opposition. This variable is called *Opposition strength*.

Another control variable included is the age of the party. The capacity of hegemonic parties to deter defection may increase with the age of the party. A hegemonic party that has held office for 40 years may appear more invincible than a party that been in power for only 5. In addition, a party’s organizational and institutional capacity may grow with time. In other words, its ability to ensure elite loyalty through the efficient distribution of patronage and promises of future access to

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<sup>17</sup> In general, low rates of growth are correlated with high volatility, but for this sample, the correlation is around 0.3.

<sup>18</sup> If there is no prior presidential election then we first look to see if there is a prior legislative election and take the regime party’s vote total from that election. In the first elections after single party rule, *Previous vote* receives a value of 100. In the first elections after independence, we look to the hegemonic party’s vote share in elections for territorial or colonial assemblies that were often held in African countries in the years just prior to independence.

<sup>19</sup> In authoritarian regimes, arguably, policy differences among opposition parties hardly play a role in electoral campaigns since realistically these parties have little chance to implement their platforms. As Howard and Roessler (2006: 371) observe, opposition parties often form coalitions that are “temporary and convenient ‘negative’ partnerships that are based on their common antipathy to the ruling regime.” In these cases, policy preferences matter very little.

spoils may increase as the party grows older. On the other hand, long-lived hegemonic parties may elicit more defectors than young ones. Long-lived hegemonic parties may be more vulnerable to challenge as their long tenure in office precludes passing the buck for any given malady. It is possible that, *ceteris paribus*, voters view these parties as less dynamic and more corrupt than hegemonic parties that have only recently acquired power. In general, potential defectors may calculate that voters are ready for a change and see a window of opportunity in these ‘aged’ hegemonic party regimes. Given the absence of strong theory on this point, we are ambivalent on the expected sign of this control variable. Whatever the relationship, we include a continuous measure in years of the length of time that the hegemonic party has held office. This variable is called *Age of party*.<sup>20</sup>

We also control for the predilection of the regime to use repression. Potential defectors may be deterred by the threat of exile, incarceration, or violence. We therefore include a variable, *Purges*, that is the sum of instances of systematic elimination of political opponents by jailing or execution for the period beginning with the year of the previous election and ending with the year prior to the current election. If there is no prior election, the period begins five years before the election at hand.

We also control for the incumbency status of the regime candidate. Dictatorships, in general, are thought to be particularly vulnerable around the issue of succession since they usually lack regular, institutional mechanisms for the alternation of power. Howard and Roessler (2006), for example, find that when a newcomer rather than the incumbent, is the regime’s candidate in elections, a regime change (e.g., a more liberalized outcome) is likely. Therefore, it is plausible to assume that defectors will be emboldened to run when an incumbent leader steps down, leaving a new, untested designate to run as the regime’s candidate. The variable *Incumbency* is coded 1 if the incumbent leader is running in the election, 0 if the regime’s candidate is a new successor.

Other control variables include a dummy variable, *First elections*, indicating whether the election is the first multi-party election held under the hegemonic party.<sup>21</sup> Defections should be more likely when the opportunity to oppose the regime in elections emerges for the first time. We also control for the type of election (i.e., presidential or legislative) which determines the chief executive with a dichotomous variable called *Indirect elections*. This variable takes the value of 1 when legislative election results determine the identity of the chief executive (i.e., the prime minister) or when the legislature votes for the president, and 0 for direct presidential elections.

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for all the variables used in the analysis.<sup>22</sup>

[Table 1 about here]

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<sup>20</sup> Many hegemonic parties dominated political life in their respective country prior to independence. It is plausible to assume that the party builds institutional capacity during this period. Therefore, our variable, *Age of party*, begins counting the age of the party from the moment that the party wins 50 percent of seats in colonial or territorial assembly elections. Relatedly, if the hegemonic party previously existed as a single party we back-date the coding of the variable to begin when the single party took office. These rules bespeak our intention to measure the age of the party as an organizational entity, rather than the age of the regime per se.

<sup>21</sup> We do not include first multiparty elections immediately after independence since the idea is to capture the importance of opportunity in contesting elections after many years of none. Thus, for Kenya, for example, *First elections* is coded 1 in 1992, when the country held its first multi-party elections after years of single party rule, but 0 for the first elections after independence.

<sup>22</sup> The appendix provides information about sources for all variables.

Our sample includes 204 elections from 1946 to 2002. Sub-Saharan Africa is the source of forty percent of the observations while Latin America is the region with the next largest share at 26 percent. Consistent with the increasing number of hegemonic parties shown earlier in Figure 1, over half of all elections in the sample occurred post-1980.

Due to the dichotomous nature of the dependent variable, we use a probit model to determine the impact of these factors on the likelihood of defection.

## Results

The results from the probit models are broadly consistent with the expected effects of the variables as seen from Table 2. The first two columns of Table 2 show the results with *Lagged growth* while the third and fourth columns provide estimates from the models using *Average growth* and *Volatility of growth*. The different measures for growth are included with both the full battery of controls and with a more limited set of regressors.<sup>23</sup>

[Table 2 about here]

The results across all the models show that *First elections* and *Previous vote* have significant effects on the likelihood of defection that are consistent with expectations. In multiparty elections after a spell of single party rule or no elections, members of the regime party are more likely to seize the opportunity to split off and form their own parties to challenge incumbents. A strong showing by incumbents in the previous election, however, deters defection. A high share of votes in the previous election for the incumbents indicates the regime's ability to obtain votes whether through patronage, coercion, or fraud. Faced with a regime that has such effective tools of vote manipulation at its disposal, members of the hegemonic party likely realize that independent candidacies would be futile. *Party age* also has a statistically significant influence on defection. Older parties are more likely to experience defection indicating that the older the party, the more likely there are disgruntled members who are willing to break away. The age of the hegemonic party, then, does not appear to indicate the strength of the regime's ruling institution.

The other control variables, however, have no effects significantly different from zero. Whether elections to the chief executive position are direct or indirect does not influence the likelihood of defection. In addition, the possibility of splits in the ruling party appears not to be influenced by issues of succession. As indicated by the results on *Incumbency*, whether the regime candidate is the old incumbent or a new designee does not affect defection. The strategies of the opposition also do not influence possible defectors. Finally, repression, as indicated by *Purges*, has no deterrent effect on departures from the hegemonic party.

Of primary interest are the variables measuring the effect of growth. The results show that economic performance does have an impact on the likelihood of defection. As seen from columns 1 and 2 in Table 2, growth of per capita income in the year before the election has a strong negative effect on defection. Similarly, in columns 3 and 4, higher average growth for the period between the current and previous election leads to a lower likelihood of splits in the ruling bloc.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> In these models, *Indirect elections*, *Incumbency*, *Opposition strength*, and *Purges* were excluded on the basis of likelihood ratio tests.

<sup>24</sup> We also experimented with averages and standard deviations over longer periods: namely, the period beginning with the hegemonic party's first year in power and ending in the year before the relevant



When the economy performs well, members of the regime party considering defection observe that the state of the economy is no longer an issue around which they can rally the support of voters. Therefore, they choose not to leave the party and challenge authoritarian incumbents in elections. Interestingly, what influences possible defectors, perhaps anticipating voters' reaction, is the level of growth (whether the lag or the average) rather than changes in growth rates (e.g., volatility).<sup>25</sup>

A more substantive interpretation of the results is provided by the marginal changes in the likelihood of defection given changes in the independent variables. Table 3 provides the marginal effects from the pared-down model in column 4 of Table 2, holding all variables at their means.

[Table 3 about here]

*First elections* has the greatest impact, in terms of magnitude, on the likelihood of a split within the party. The predicted probability of a split is 0.319 higher in a first election simply because these elections present the first opportunity for members to carry out a defection.

Of the remaining variables, *Average growth* has the second largest effect. For an "average" hegemonic party that has dominated politics for 21 years, captured 75 percent of the vote in the previous election, is not undertaking a first election, and is experiencing volatility of growth around 5 percent, a one percentage increase in growth of per capita income for the election cycle period decreases the likelihood of a split by 0.018.

The impact of growth on the likelihood of defection also can be seen graphically in Figure 2.

[Figure 2 about here]

When growth is positive, the predicted probability of defection is very low with a small confidence interval. In cases of negative average growth, the probability of splits in the hegemonic party increases, but the confidence interval in this range widens considerably. It seems that the economic record of incumbents need not be stellar. As long as authoritarian incumbents do not preside over either economic catastrophes or long periods of decline, they need not worry about the departure of members.

The results indicate that economic growth has a modest, but consistent effect on the likelihood of regime elites to desert hegemonic parties. At this stage, we can not specify the more precise reasons for why poor economic performance may motivate elite defection. In hard times, departures from the regime party may be due to loss of patronage, policy disagreements over handling of the economy, blatant opportunism, or some combination of these factors. Whatever the underlying reason, however, a poorly performing economy gives defectors an opportunity to

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election. These measures end up being statistically insignificant, suggesting perhaps that defectors anticipate short-term memories on the part of voters.

<sup>25</sup> We do not have information about when in the election cycle regime party members considered or undertook a defection. So if a defection occurred soon after the previous election, reverse causality is possible in that the defection may cause political instability which may lead to poor economic performance. As a crude fix to this problem, we estimated the same models using the average and standard deviation of growth between Election  $t-2$  and Election  $t-1$ . Since for any given Election  $t$ , a departure from the regime party is considered as a defection only if it occurs between Election  $t-1$  and Election  $t$ , these measures of growth are by definition prior to any possible defection. With these measures, the volatility of growth is significant and positive (as expected) while average growth is negative, but not statistically significant.

make a credible challenge to authoritarian incumbents by appealing to voter's dissatisfaction over the regime's economic record.

Given these findings, it seems that when members of the hegemonic party defect, they are able to distinguish themselves from the regime in the eyes of voters. Had they not been able to do so, we expected that they would not have left the party and run in elections in the first place, believing that voters would attribute blame for the economy on anyone who had associations with the current regime. In addition, it seems that potential defectors do not anticipate that more prosperous voters will make "ideological investments" in the opposition. When growth of the economy is high, voters are likely to be content with the status quo. Observing this, members of the hegemonic party have few incentives to leave and challenge incumbents in elections.<sup>26</sup>

## Conclusion

Until the fall of the Soviet Union, single party dictatorships were thought to be invincible due to the cooptive and repressive capacities of the regime party. Hegemonic party regimes also share some of the characteristics of single party states, yet they differ in two key respects: the allowance of opposition parties and the holding of elections. While these institutions are likely designed to help authoritarian rulers stay in power, they also carry risks for incumbents. But the dangers stem not from extant opposition forces, but rather from elites within the regime party who weigh the costs and benefits of staying within the fold.

Two important components of elite calculations are voters and the economy. Regime elites know that they must maintain the acquiescence, if not active support, of citizens. When the economy performs poorly, this social compact is in danger. But even in economic hard times, mass uprising against the regime is unlikely. For one, citizens on their own face collective action problems. For two, the regime's ability to repress is likely to deter any political entrepreneurs from organizing the masses. But elites do have a way of reaching ordinary citizens and gathering their support; it is through elections rather than through militancy on the street.

When incomes decline, regime elites have the opportunity to defect from the hegemonic party and to challenge incumbents in elections. The economy provides an issue around which defectors can mobilize support that may cut across other social cleavages. Defectors anticipate that voters will want to punish incumbents at the polls for poor economic performance.

A declining economy may also signify the reason why regime elites became dissatisfied with the party in the first place. Low economic growth may result in a smaller pie that can be distributed through patronage. It also may lead to policy disagreements that remain unresolved within the party. On this point, however, we are more circumspect since it is possible that the initial impetus for dissatisfaction within the party may be due to personal rivalries and other factors unrelated to the economy. Nevertheless, along with motive is needed opportunity, and the electoral moment during economic decline presents such a chance to disgruntled regime elites.

Consistent with this idea, we find evidence that the growth of per capita income prior to elections has an impact on the likelihood of regime elites defecting from the hegemonic party. This effect remains even after the inclusion of a number of important control variables. Particularly when

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<sup>26</sup> We also examined this alternative hypothesis by including per capita income. The coefficient on income is never significantly different from zero while the effects of other variables remain substantively unchanged.

incomes increase, or even remain the same, the incentives for elites to depart from the regime party are low. In this case, patronage may be sufficient, policy differences may not surface, and most importantly, few opportunities for potential defectors to gain popular support emerge.

We, along with others, think that once party dictatorships begin to experience intra-elite conflict, they are likely to fall. While we do not actually analyze the sequence of events that leads to the “unraveling” of hegemonic parties, we have identified the first step in the process: the conditions under which elites reconsider their support for authoritarian incumbents and can seize the opportunity to challenge them. One avenue for future research entails development of a more complete model linking the state of the economy, the likelihood of defection, and the survival of the regime. Nevertheless, the analysis here constitutes a systematic test of ideas that have appeared in only anecdotal form and suggest that the demise of hegemonic parties lies not with the extant opposition which often is fragmented and marginalized, but rather with elites within the parties themselves.

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**Table 1: Descriptive statistics**

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum	N
<i>Defection</i>	0.196	0.398	0	1	204
<i>Lagged growth</i>	2.218	6.986	-26.914	39.928	182
<i>Average growth</i>	2.429	5.472	-25.789	47.805	176
<i>Volatility of growth</i>	4.642	4.887	0	41.137	176
<i>Age of party</i>	19.779	15.351	1	72	204
<i>First elections</i>	0.108	0.311	0	1	204
<i>Incumbency</i>	0.799	0.402	0	1	204
<i>Indirect elections</i>	0.294	0.457	0	1	204
<i>Opposition strength</i>	0.481	0.368	0	1	194
<i>Previous vote</i>	74.419	22.575	0	100	196
<i>Purges</i>	0.649	2.895	0	35	188



**Table 2: Effect of economic growth on defection from hegemonic parties**

Dependent variable: Defection

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Lagged growth</i>	-0.042* (0.021)	-0.039* (0.017)		
<i>Average growth</i>			-0.081* (0.035)	-0.068** (0.026)
<i>Volatility of growth</i>			-0.002 (0.031)	0.002 (0.029)
<i>Age of party</i>	0.021* (0.008)	0.026*** (0.008)	0.022* (0.009)	0.025** (0.008)
<i>First elections</i>	1.242** (0.406)	1.022** (0.343)	1.057** (0.415)	0.963** (0.365)
<i>Incumbency</i>	-0.169 (0.330)		-0.185 (0.338)	
<i>Indirect elections</i>	-0.203 (0.275)		-0.087 (0.294)	
<i>Opposition strength</i>	0.584 (0.395)		0.409 (0.402)	
<i>Previous vote</i>	-0.013 (0.007)	-0.013* (0.006)	-0.015* (0.007)	-0.016** (0.006)
<i>Purges</i>	-0.291 (0.231)		-0.322 (0.216)	
<i>Constant</i>	-0.473 (0.739)	-0.561 (0.434)	-0.163 (0.760)	-0.206 (0.510)
Pr > X <sup>2</sup>	0.0003	0.0001	0.0003	0.0004
N	165	175	163	172

Robust standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* signifies  $p \leq 0.001$ , \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$ , \*  $p \leq 0.05$

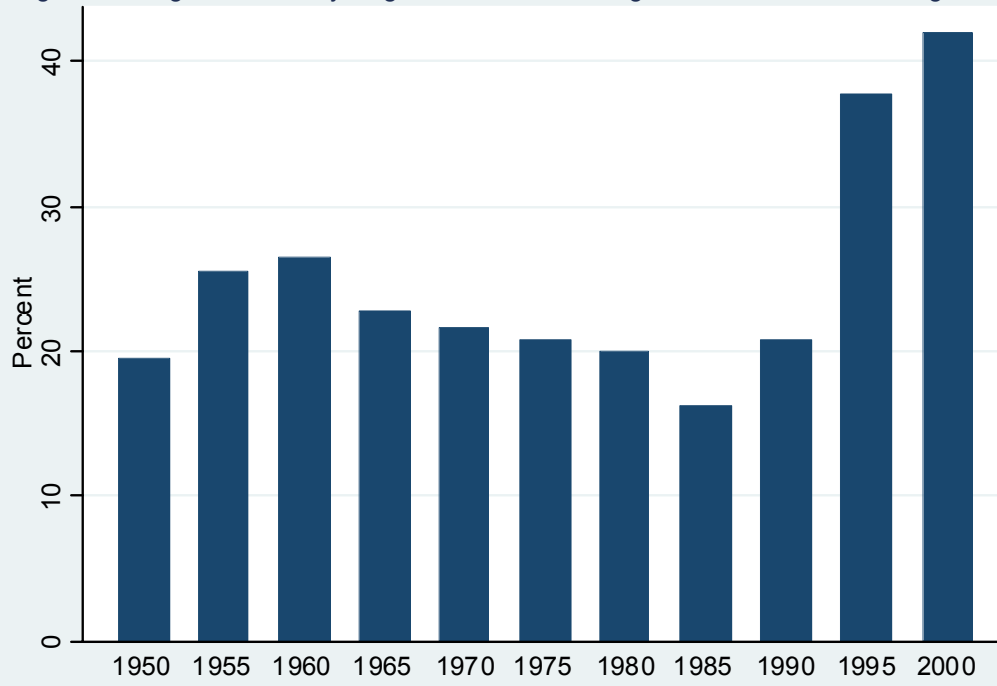
**Table 3: Marginal changes in likelihood of defection**

Variable	Change in Pr(defection)	Standard error	Means of variable
<i>Average growth</i>	-0.018**	0.007	2.482
<i>Volatility of growth</i>	0.0004	0.008	4.629
<i>Age of party</i>	0.006***	0.002	21.308
<i>First elections</i>	0.319*	0.137	0.116
<i>Previous vote</i>	-0.004**	0.002	74.682

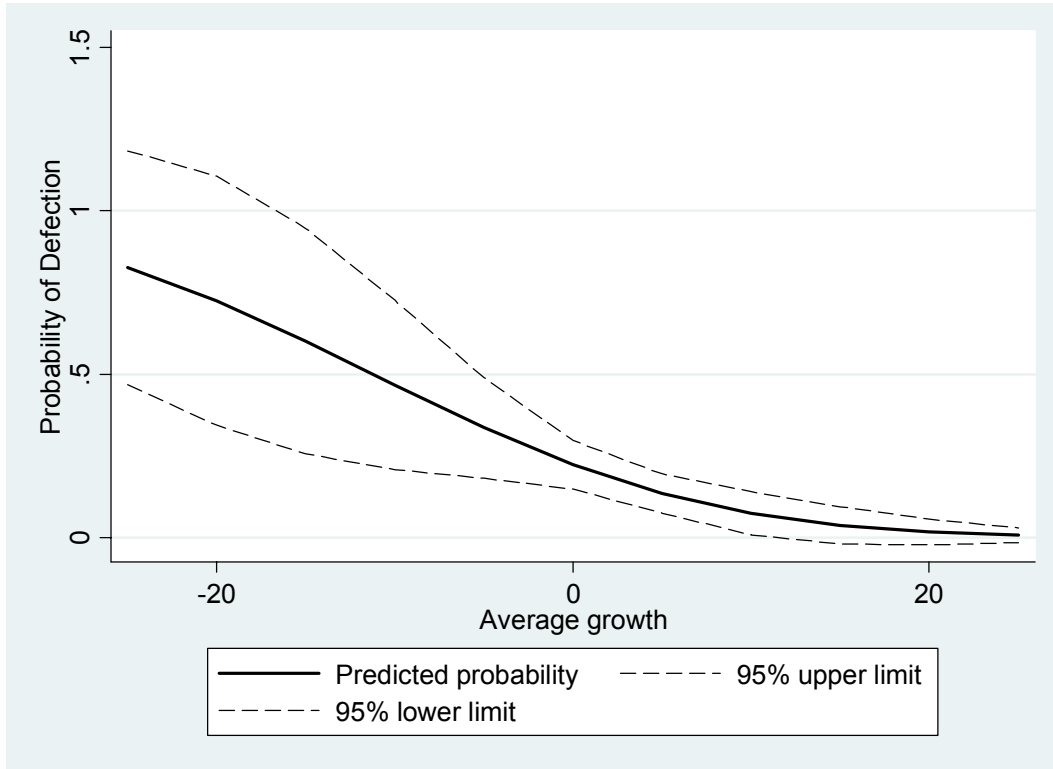
On the basis of one-unit change in independent variables

\*\*\* signifies  $p \leq 0.001$ , \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$ , \*  $p \leq 0.05$

Figure 1. Hegemonic Party Regimes as a Percentage of All Authoritarian Regimes



**Figure 2: Effect of growth on the predicted probability of defection**



## Data Appendix: Description of variables and data sources

Variable	Description	Source
<i>Defection</i>	Dummy variable coded 1 if one of the candidates in the election left the regime party, 0 otherwise	Constructed from Banks et al. (various years) and other historical sources
<i>Lagged growth</i>	Annual rate of growth of per capita income in the year before the election	Penn World Tables 6.2 with additions from World Bank (2004) for Guyana and the Seychelles
<i>Average growth</i>	Average rate of growth of per capita income for the period between elections	Constructed from <i>Lagged growth</i>
<i>Volatility of growth</i>	Standard deviation of growth of per capita income for the period between elections	Constructed from <i>Lagged growth</i>
<i>Age of party</i>	Age of hegemonic party in years	Banks et al. (various years) and other historical sources
<i>First elections</i>	First multiparty elections	Banks et al. (various years) and other historical sources
<i>Incumbency</i>	Dummy variable coded 1 if the regime candidate is the current incumbent, 0 otherwise	Constructed from Banks et al. (various years) and Lentz (1994)
<i>Indirect elections</i>	Dummy variable coded 1 if the elections for the chief executive are indirect, 0 otherwise	Beck et al. (2001) and Banks et al. (various years)
<i>Opposition strength</i>		Constructed from Nohlen et al. (1999, 2001, 2005), African Elections Database, Adam Carr's Election Archive, IFES, and other historical sources
<i>Previous vote</i>	Vote share of the incumbent in the previous election	Constructed from Nohlen et al. (1999, 2001, 2005), African Elections Database, Adam Carr's Election Archive, IFES, and other historical sources
<i>Purges</i>	Sum of purges for the period between elections	Banks