

Why do so-called personalist regime encounter so many difficulties during democratization processes? Which factors affect this process? Is transitional violence the main obstacle during transition? Or do personalist regimes fundamentally change the structures of state and society over time, making them predisposed to autocracy? In this dissertation, the author will compare transitions from personalist rule in Sub Saharan Africa after the Cold War and propose a model to analyze them.

The model focuses on these regimes' behavioral characteristics, like coup-proofing (protection against coup d'états), gatekeeping (or manipulation of their international environment), their use of repression, and hoarding (predatory economic policies). By using qualitative comparative analysis to test all hypotheses for 15 case studies, the author searches for existence of so-called vicious circles of personalism.

In the conclusion, the author groups all transitions into three categories (vicious circles of personalism, of authoritarianism, and democratic transitions) and explain their trajectories, identifying the factors which keep maintain such systems, as well as those that can break the mold of personalist vicious cycles.