Gabon
Rice

Gabon has been classified by Geddes as a single-party/personalist state from its independence in 1960 to the present day. Initially, after independence from France in 1960, there were two parties, but neither was able to gain a majority, and they eventually agreed to form a single-party list system. With this system, Leon M'ba, a member of the Gabonese Democratic Bloc (BDG), was elected President. The single-party system appeared to work effectively until 1963, when the members of the other party (the Gabonese Social Democratic Union, or UDSG) refused to agree to a permanent merger between the BDG and the UDSG. This led to elections, and when it appeared that M'ba was going to win again, the military toppled M'ba in a bloodless coup on February 18, 1964. The military then installed Jean-Hilaire Aubame, who was an opponent of M'ba but did not partake in the coup, as interim leader (Gardinier 1981, 32-33, 58-61; Gardinier 1981, 58-61; Barnes 1992 42-43). This case is tricky to code, because if Aubame was truly interim, we would not code a SOLS change (solschange30 to be precise) for Aubame. But if the coup leaders intended to rule through Aubame then this is a SOLS change (solchange30). Unfortunately, we don't know which is the case because within only a few days of the coup the French government sent in troops who restored M'ba's government. We code no SOLS change, because this is more conservative. It also seems that if the coup leaders intended to keep power they wouldn't have handed the government over to Aubame immediately.

In 1967, M'ba died, and was succeeded by his Vice-President, Albert Bongo (who in 1973 renamed himself Omar Bongo). The automatic succession process was written into the constitution in 1966, and is not a SOLS change.

In 1968, Bongo dissolved both the BDG and the UDSG and created a new party called the Gabonese Democratic Party (PDG), so his party affiliation changed accordingly. Bongo remained in power until his death in 2009, which is outside the year range for this study. Since 1960 to 2008 the country is coded as a Single-party-Personalist hybrid. According to Cahoon (2010), BDG and PDG are same party but BDG changed its name to PDG in March 1968 and remained the country's only legal party until 1990.

In 2009, President Albert-Bernard Bongo died at the age of 73 (Rice 2009). Senate President Rose Francine Rogombé was sworn in as interim leader until elections were held (VOA 2009). Bongo's son and former defense minister, Ali Ben Bongo Ondimba won the presidential election (Al Kazeera 2009). Gabon is a nondemocracy, so we use the predesignated sucessor rule to determine SOLS changes. Rogombé is considered an interim leader, so the transition from Bongo to Rogombé is not considered a SOLS change. We do not code a SOLS change for Ali Bongo because Ali Bongo was of same political party and was the former leader's son/presumed most likely successor.

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