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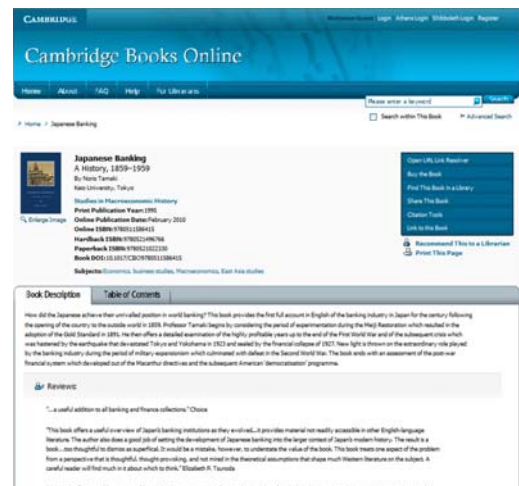
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Opposition Failure in a One-Party Dominant State

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pp 31-63

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By Ethan Scheiner

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The Importance of Party Competition and a Model of Party Competition Failure

A democracy predicated on the ability to "throw the rascals out" is far less convincing when it exists only in the abstract than when it is backed up by periodic examples of rascals actually flying through the doors.

T. J. Pempel (1990: 7)

This is a book about how party competition can fail.

The ability of opposition parties to challenge ruling regimes is integral to representative democracy. A viable opposition is important not just because competitive elections are a necessary condition of most definitions of democracy (e.g., Schumpeter 1942) but because opposition is in fact a critical check on a country's rulers. Writing in the Schumpeterian tradition, scholars such as Downs (1957) and Schlesinger (1991) tell us that in order to get elected, parties are drawn to reflect the public's will. In competing with each other for votes, parties are in fact vying to better represent the general public. Where one party is dominant, there is little competition, and, as a result, the dominant party need not be very responsive. Party competition forces political leadership to be more responsive to the public's needs and expectations.

