The Power of Elections

Democratic Participation,

Competition,

and

Legitimacy

in Africa

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**Preface**

This book is a study of the core institution of liberal democracy in the context of newly democratizing countries. It examines the relationship between elections and democracy building on a new data set of 5,568 observations on 232 elections. The analysis presented in this book provides evidence that elections in fact have a causal impact on improving the quality of democracy in Africa. Refuting a number of established hypotheses in the field, it shows no general negative trend either in the frequency or the quality of elections in Africa. Elections tend to be neither the end of a transition process towards democracy nor are they merely formal procedures. Rather the start of multiparty elections instigates liberalization, and can be shown to have a self-reinforcing power that fosters expanding democratic qualities. Complete breakdowns typically happen shortly after first elections and by the second or third elections regimes are highly likely to survive.

The book also shows a series of elections contributes not only to increasing democratic quality of the political regime but also has positive effects on broadening and deepening of de facto civil liberties in society. The impact of this “imported” institution is constant over diverse contexts in Africa. These findings open up a new understanding of the role of elections in democratization as a set of factors with causal effects: a main contribution of this book. The theory of a democratizing power of elections evidenced by robust empirical data is a new addition to the literature on comparative democratization.

Methodologically, the use of panel-group time-series analysis to the study of electoral practices and a new method of assessing the effects of repetitive elections on levels of democracy in society through a lagged time-series analysis is also value added by this book. In policy terms, the results supports the current focus on elections by the international community as an efficient means of positive change, and refutes pessimism about the export of institutions.

This project started in a way in 1997 when I was admitted to the PhD program at Department of Political Science, Lund University, Sweden. While I was then convinced this research would stay with broader categories such as forms of states and governance at the intersection of
international and comparative politics, subsequent developments had it otherwise. Finishing my doctoral degree was delayed by several interludes. I was enrolled to conduct a study of the Swedish preparations for the UN world conferences in the 1990s, from 1997 to 1998, which along with teaching responsibilities and starting the Department’s third world studies with a dynamic group of colleagues took up most of my time. The Department in general and several individuals in particular (no names; you all know) have been very supportive and I am grateful for the opportunity to study at Lund. Special mention goes to Kristina Margård and Mats Sjölin who read the entire manuscript, providing a wealth of useful comments and my supervisor Magnus Jerneck for constant and invaluable support all through these years. Early on in my studies at Lund, I first met and later worked with Göran Hyden who has been an enthusiastic critic and a constant source of encouragement since. I wish to extend my thanks not only to him but also to his wonderful wife and nowadays my Tanzanian mother, Mama Melania.

Another invaluable source of inspiration, a wealth of data, insights and outstanding stimuli were all the people I met and worked with in the Parliament of Ghana from 1999 to 2001 as a long-term consultant for Parliamentarians for Global Action’s West-African program. With an office in the heart of the legislature and working closely with staff, honorable Members of Parliament, and ministers I was afforded an invaluable political anthropologist’s view into one of Africa’s most successful emerging democracies. Besides the participant observation perspective that came with working on real projects and the daily workings of Parliament, so many of the honorable MPs were generous with interviews and participating in a survey on campaign funding and political patronage. The relationships developed with cleaners, drivers, watchmen, senior clerks, MPs, majority and minority leaders, ministers and the Speaker of Parliament, generated more returns on a professional and personal level than any statement of this nature can do justice. Each time I revisit it is with great pleasure. I am so grateful to many of you and feel hesitant to single out names in fear of not expressing my equal appreciation of others. Special thanks though go to my extraordinary Ghanaian parents: Honorable Alhaji A. Salifu and Honorable Theresa A. Tagoe from which so incredibly much has been received and learnt.
Numerous senior colleges have also fed this project, especially at conferences where early versions of some parts of this book were presented, among them African Studies Annual meetings, International Studies Association’s annual conferences, ECPR’s Joint Session of workshops in 2000, American Political Science Association’s meeting in Chicago in 2004, the conferences on democracy and democratization in Chile 2002 and Uppsala 2004 (thanks Axel Hadenius for bringing me), the conference of electoral authoritarian regimes in Mexico 2004 hosted by CIDE and National Endowment for Democracy, and organized by my friend Andreas Schedler. Thank you to all for your valuable comments and support.

A large number of excellent scholars outside the Department at Lund, have humbled me by reading the whole or parts of this manuscript and/or related articles. I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness and extend gratitude to (in no ranking order) Daniel Altman, Joel Barkan, Michael Bratton, Matthijs Boogaards, Patrick Chabal, Roger Charlton, Michael Chege, John F. Clark, Ruth B. Collier, Michael Coppedge, Steven Fish, Axel Hadenius, John Harbeson, Liisa Laakso, Ken Mease, Gerardo Munck, Andreas Schedler, Stephen Snook, Richard Snyder, Fredrik Uggla, Leonard Villalón, Nicholas van de Walle, and Lucan Way. In addition, K.C. Morrison has not only read the manuscript and offered valuable comments but also partnered with me on a new project on political clientelism, and given his valuable time so freely for which I am very thankful. Winifred Pankani has with excellence assisted me not only on that clientelism project but has been extremely dedicated in reading and re-reading this manuscript commenting on substantial argumentation, lapses, inconsistencies and flow far beyond what anyone could ever expect. You are my fiercest critic and greatest support. Thank you so much.

I wish also to express my gratitude to the Swedish International Development Agency/SAREC for releasing two major grants for the project; the Crafoord Foundation and Lund University’s pool of minor grants for providing financial support for conferences and related fieldwork trips. The permission to reproduce parts of the article published in the Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics 41(3) (http://www.tandf.co.uk) is deeply appreciated. Sections of chapters three, four, and five had their preliminary expression in that article.
On a personal note, I desire to extend my deep appreciation for David, Ruth, Dan and Jim Pankani, and Anders Svensson for becoming part of my life recently. My thoughts also go to my sisters Tove and Stina. Besides my Ghanaian and Tanzanian parents acknowledged above, I have an original and irreplaceable set in Sweden; Kajsa and my father, Jojos and my mother, any expressions of gratitude would belittle your deep unconditional love and constant support.

Kasha and Omma,
because you are the two most important, I have saved the last words for you: To you I dedicate the labor of this book for our future.

Staffan I. Lindberg
Lund, 20 October 2004
This book is about how and why political systems develop different qualities that typically become the basis for political science categorizations of different regimes as instances of democratic, semi-democratic, or authoritarian rule. Such differences in qualities of political systems have been an object of study at least since Aristotle formalized the difference between monarchy, oligarchy, and anarchy. There are many qualities of political regimes that would justify closer inspection, but this study examines a very precise set that is of special interest for its uniqueness in providing a greater amounts of freedom for the largest share of people in the world; democratic qualities.

To speak of democratic qualities implies we know what democracy is. While there are many different views on what democracy is – or ought to be – a common institutional denominator for modern democracy is elections. Partly, this is a consequence of the practical concerns recognized by Madison (1961/1789, 81-84), Jefferson (1935:83), and Mill (1958: 212-18) that larger democratic political systems require representative government (Seligson and Booth 1995: 6). But elections are also and more importantly an institutionalized attempt to actualize the essence of democracy: rule of the people by the people. Every modern definition of – representative – democracy includes participatory and contested elections perceived as the legitimate procedure for the translation of rule by the people into workable executive and legislative power. Elections alone are not sufficient to
make a democracy, yet no other institution precedes participatory, competitive, and legitimate elections in instrumental importance for self-government (c.f. Bratton and van de Walle 1997). By studying qualities in the electoral processes – the campaign, polling day and the immediate aftermath of announcing results, the acceptance and/or rejection of the outcome by various groups – we study the mechanism of translating people’s power to rule into government power in systems of representative government. The approach here induces a focus on three dependent variables in terms of democratic qualities of elections that are empirically observable in terms of actual behavior in electoral processes; de facto rather than expected regime qualities.

**Theoretical and Empirical Objectives**

The overall purpose of this book is to demonstrate significance of elections as the realization of rule by the people fostering democratization in Africa. Elections in newly democratizing countries do not signal the end of transitions to democracy but rather foster liberalization and have a self-reinforcing power that promotes increased democracy in Africa’s political regimes. Elections also facilitate the institution and deepening of de facto civil liberties in society operating as a causal variable in democratization. The empirical and theoretical findings contribute to the comparative study of democracy and democratization in several ways.

In order to translate this overall purpose into researchable constituent parts, a first and necessary objective was to create a comprehensive empirical dataset of all elections in Africa from 1989 to 2003. The second research objective is the testing of a set of empirical generalizations on the development of African politics over time that emanates from Bratton and van de Walle’s (1997) seminal contribution. An empirical chronicling of the elections and their democratic qualities over the period of study is therefore a central concern.

Research objective number three is to evaluate different methodological approaches to the study of elections and their relationship to democracy in order to show the limitations and fallacies inherent in some. The literature on transitions and elections in Africa also purport hypothesizes about the development of the democratic content of elections after first and so called “founding” elections has been held.
The fourth objective addresses this second set of hypotheses and tests an alternative generalization tied to the power of elections: their self-reinforcing and self-improving quality in terms of democratic qualities.

The final purpose is to develop a theoretical framework of causal mechanisms concerning the power of elections to further democratization in society. The theory of the democratizing power of elections corroborated by robust empirical data, is a new addition to the literature on comparative democratization. The study empirically tests the relationship and unambiguously corroborates its relevance using four alternative analyses. Lastly, it has been the intention to offer reflections on implications of the new evidence for the established theories of transitions to and consolidation of, democracy in the Third World.

**Why Elections and Democracy in Africa?**

There are several benefits in addressing these five interrelated issues in a single coherent study. One, it allows for inquiry into some of the core hypotheses in the field of democratization. Since O’Donnell and Schmitter’s seminal work: *Transition from Authoritarian Rule* (1986), it has been assumed that any country moving away from authoritarian rule can be considered as transitioning towards democracy. By the mid 1990s however, discussions of “hybrid regimes”, “electoral authoritarianism”, and “virtual democracy” had taken center stage, (e.g. Archer 1995, Collier and Levitsky 1995, Joseph 1997, Przeworski 1988) negating the transition paradigm (Carothers 2002a). The enthusiasm of transitions paradigm was replaced by pessimism that soon permeated policy from Europe to Washington. This study challenges such pessimism. The analysis in this book provides empirical evidence rather suggesting a moving from dictatorial rule to a competitive electoral regime tends to lead to further democratization and eventually, democracy.

The book calls into question another assumption: since Rustow’s famous article (1970) it has been largely accepted that regime transition unfolded in stages where “founding” elections in a country signifies the genesis of a new democratic phase. The empirical analysis in this book shows that first elections are not necessarily founding, but
most often a step in the transition process towards democracy. Democracy in Africa tends to follow a sequence of at least three electoral cycles. Importantly, the empirical evidence testifies that after third elections regime breakdowns do not occur except in very rare instances. This conclusion emphasizes the need for the international community to sustain support to transition countries over an extended period of typically 12-15 years.

Finally, the role of elections in democratization has been the subject of debate in recent years. A growing number of scholars (whose analysis tend to be based on a small number of cases or case studies) have argued against the importance of elections and criticized the current international emphasis. The analysis presented in this book provides evidence that elections in fact have a causal impact on improving the quality of democracy in Africa. The process of holding an uninterrupted series of de jure participatory, competitive, and legitimate elections contributes not only to increasing democratic quality of the political regime but also has positive effects on the spread and deepening of de facto civil liberties in society.

There are at least three more specific reasons to study the democratic qualities of elections in Africa. First, authoritarian regimes dominated the political landscape of Africa until the end of the 1980s. The political changes of the early 1990s created an air of demo-optimism among political science circles. Within a few years however, the political liberalization and optimism it created turned into demopessimism notably among authors like Joseph, who saw “virtual democracies” rather than true democratization (Joseph 1997, 1998). Other scholars predicted things would quickly return to the usual “big man”, neopatrimonial, clientelist, informalized and disordered politics that had characterize African politics (e.g. Ake 1996, Chabal and Daloz 1999, Chege 1996, Mbembe 1995, Villalón 1998).

Some dissenting voices like Wiseman (1999) have taken accounts such as these to task for being excessively pessimistic. Because of the discordant views, the field is fraught with contradictory hypotheses based on disparate approaches using various conceptualizations of democracy, likening the debate on democratization in Africa a “dialogue of the deaf”(Chabal 1998). In my view, the problem is political scientists working on Africa pay too little attention to careful
conceptualization of dependent variable(s), clear delimitation of hypotheses about the relationships between cause and effect and/or rigorous measurement and compilation of comparable data. The study of political change in Africa still suffers from inadequate theoretical specification, methodological rigor and perhaps most of all, insufficient collection of data suitable for comparative analysis. The outcome is that not enough cumulative work has been done.1

One strategy to address this state of affairs is to begin to conceptualize, and collect comparative data on partial regimes rather than the “bundled wholes” (Collier and Adcock 1999) of overarching concepts like democracy and neopatrimonialism. A growing number of scholars have already called for such disaggregated data to facilitate insights of the specific parts of politics in Africa. For example, Herbst (2001) stress the lack of adequate specification of multiple indicators that can be used to assess different implications of each theory. Chabal (1998), Gibson (2002), Mahmud (1996), and Wilson (1994) all apply for a more precise specification of a tractable dependent variable and more rigorous measurement. This book offers a step forward in this regard. Competitive elections constitute a partial regime in the unbundling of political regimes. An election is a phenomenon that can be conceptualized and measured in relatively unambiguous terms, with high validity indicators and data to formulate comparative indices. The present research provides not only one but three precised dependent variables measured using eleven indicators for a more nuanced analysis. In addition to increasing the robustness of the following analysis, this provides several more opportunities for other researchers to use each of the dependent variables and/or the eleven indicators on either side of the equation for their own purposes. For example, under what circumstances do opposition parties participate in electoral processes? Or, what factors facilitate and/or prevent alternations in power? What is the effect of electoral systems on competition in Africa? Does higher political competition cause increased political corruption and so on?

This study of the characteristics of African multiparty elections as a partial regime serves a necessary but extensive data gathering, variable-creating, and puzzle-solving function in our field. The strategy is not a

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1 For a good discussion on this point, see Gibson (2002). A similar situation seems to have developed regarding democratization in Eastern Europe and Latin America, see Munck (2001b).
panacea, but an attempt to contribute to understanding political development in general, and regime change and democratization in Africa in particular.

Second, many Africanists now turned “transitologists” propose models, analogies, ideal types, and actor oriented theories based on the new empirical material from the changing politics on the continent. These authors seem to have followed the general move from structural determinants of democratization towards actor-oriented analyses (c.f. Osaghae, 1995; Schmitter and Santiso 1998, 61). It is not argued here that this move has been inappropriate, only that it is unsatisfactory. Actors do have room to maneuver and their subjective interests, goals, and calculations matter for outcomes. Yet, not every course of action is possible for either old or new rulers and opposition groups in transitional states. Institutions generally have built-in incentives for actors occupying and using them. Repetitive electoral cycles create new path dependencies by providing new incentives for political actors. Their role in forging new behavioral patterns among dominant political actors and the masses in Africa is an understudied area. This book studies two ways in which electoral institutions affect actors’ behavior. First, chapter five analyzes how the repetition of electoral practices has a self-reinforcing power leading to consecutively more democratic elections in terms of how political actors (mis-) use the electoral institutions. Second, chapter six and seven reveals the positive impact of repetitive elections on democratic qualities in society rather than being – at best – merely a reflection of it.

Finally, the comparative study of elections and democratization in Africa is still dominated by the pioneering work of Bratton and colleagues (Bratton 1997, 1998, Bratton and Posner 1999, Bratton and van de Walle, 1996, 1997). This study seeks to extend the scope of their work, making evaluation of earlier research possible and furthering our understanding. The book builds on Bratton and colleagues’ data but a wide range of additional sources has been consulted in order to fill in the many missing values, double-check

\[1\] Recently many have argued for variations on the theme of structuration theory, following the lead of Giddens (1984, 1993). While both structures and actors obviously interact and play important roles in every form of social change (Szompréka, 1993), good thinking may also be produced by trying to separate the two and judge their distinct contributions at different points. This is, for example, often the main task of historians (Carr, 1990/61).
every data entry and correct errors. In addition, more recent elections are included in this study, which brings an additional 150 cases and presents results based on 232 observations. In an important methodological distinction, the present analysis also controls for free and fair elections in measuring the variables in an effort to eliminate distortions caused by election results that were partially manufactured, something not done in previous studies. Finally, the analysis introduces the use of a time-series panel-group comparison in studies of African elections in order to mitigate selection-bias. Thus, the results presented here should be less biased and offer more reliable conclusions about the frequency, democratic qualities, and trajectories of elections in Africa.

In comparing the 44 countries holding elections in Africa, the deliberate strategy has been to stick to disaggregated measures: the ten indicators of the three dependent variables and the additional control-variable for free and fairness. I believe this to be a strength on both methodological and empirical grounds. Methodologically, the specification of a model that combines three dimensions and eleven indicators into one index would be extremely complex. Any variety in the rules of aggregation and combination would eventually affect the indexing hence making the results extremely sensitive to the choices of the researcher (Munck 2003). With disaggregated measures these problems do not occur. Empirically, the detail of the analysis and wealth of data presented provides both for more sound and robust theoretical conclusions as well opportunities for other researchers to take up and use them as dependent or independent variables - which ever they find useful.

ON REGIMES

As a starting point, it is perhaps appropriate to provide a definition of political regimes, often referred to as the ‘rules of the game”. It is a set of rules that determine the distribution of political power. Regime is different from government in that a government is the person or group that exercises executive power, while a regime is the regulatory and institutional framework of their rule (cf. Fishman 1990). Nevertheless, regime transitions are, more often than not, the effects of new governments wielding power. Regimes are also different from
states in that states as the locus of power consists of a territorial extension, a set of fundamental institutions necessary to reproduce the existence of the state, and the idea of a state (Buzan 1991; c.f. Buzan et al. 1993; Hall 1986; Mann 1986; Tilly 1990, 1993). The state is what one rules, regimes are how one rules and government the group of individuals who rules. In short, regimes are the rules governing distribution of power and the relationships between agents of power in the polity.

Generally, the concept of political regimes is used to differentiate between democracies and non-democracies (e.g. Collier and Adcock 1999; Linz and Stephan 1996). It is also used to distinguish between different forms of democracy such as parliamentary versus presidential democracy (e.g. Cheibub and Limnogi 2002; Linz 1990; Mainwaring and Scully 1995, Stephan and Skach 1993), or liberal versus illiberal democracy (Diamond 1999; Karatnycky 1999). The concept is also typically used in making sub-typologies of authoritarian and democratic regimes (e.g. Collier and Levitsky 1997; Diamond 2002; Diamond, Linz and Lipset 1989; Schedler 2002a). But this is not a study of the political system as a whole. It is a study of a specific part of the political system. Since elections are thought to be both a necessary instrument of representative democracy and a part of the political system as a set of central institutions, it seems particularly relevant to study the extent to which elections are attributed with fundamental democratic qualities. In this sense, this is a study of a partial regime; a subset of the rules of the game.

Although the above points are widely recognized in democratization studies, most authors fail to recognize that a regime as a set of rules is both constitutive and regulatory. The former establish the distribution of power by constituting the actors and institutions conferred with rights and obligations. In political democracies, this translates into equal political rights of all citizens, rights of associations including political parties, and institutions such as electoral management bodies, presidential office, legislatures, and judicial bodies of abjuration. The rules also establish the areas of competence for actors or institutions both imposing constraints by delimitation of capacities and providing opportunities by assigning rights and means of power. For example, citizens may vote for parliament and president in a democracy but not
for the board of directors in a company. The latter is performed by another set of actors constituted to be known as shareholders where rights are not equal but relative to economic investment. A supreme court may be given the power to be the final arbitrator on electoral disputes but cannot issue electoral laws and regulations. These illustrations serves to highlight that what is sometimes referred to as "mere procedural" rules are in fact highly political issues of power distribution. By institutionalizing elections, new actors are created, distributing power in new ways. This partly explains the contentious nature of negotiating electoral rules in many places in Africa.

The regulatory rules delimit the processes actors and institutions have to follow, and how they resolve conflicts. Citizens cannot just vote anywhere, on anything or anyhow. The regulation of the political decision-making processes typically gives voters no right to veto decisions taken by the executive. The procedures regulate how citizens can and must exercise their political power. It is in these ways institutions, it has been argued, both constrain actors’ capabilities and scope of choice (e.g. Bates, 1989; Moe, 1990; North, 1990) and expand individual choice (e.g. Ostrom et al., 1993). Actors do have room to maneuver and their subjective interests, goals, and calculations matter for outcomes but within limits not of their own choosing. Regime change is about breaking old patterns and producing new ones, even if this change has to occur in the context of the old structure facing established patterns of behavior. Electoral processes are part of this change and insights gained in this field provide insights useful for other instances of institutional change.

**On Elections and Democracy**

The unit of analysis in this book is elections that *de jure* have allowed for equality of political participation and free competition making them formally legitimate elections. Needless to say, formal political rights of participation and competition are not necessarily the same as effectively enforced political rights and procedural legitimacy is not necessarily perceived as *de facto* legitimacy. The realization of these essential democratic qualities are not constants but variables. Equal participation, free competition, and legitimacy are democratic qualities that a political system may or may not have to different degrees. In
scientific jargon, the political system is the ontologically given object and democracy is an attribute in terms of qualities. The political system of any country may be endowed with these three qualities to degrees ranging from zero to a theoretical maximum. The focus in this book is the democratic qualities of elections for legislative and executive power as actualized or effectively enforced political rights. Their variation is the object of study here.

In order to include the full empirical variation we are required to include all units that potentially may have these qualities in different degrees. All cases that have some minimum prerequisite for a display of democratic qualities are therefore included. That is exactly why the minimum criterion is *de jure* participatory, contested, and legitimate elections. No claim is made to the effect that such elections constitute a democracy. That would be to fall in the trap of the electoral fallacy (Karl 1986, 9). Elections may coexist with systematic abuse of human rights and the disenfranchisement of parts of the population. Nevertheless, holding formally participatory and contested elections is a necessary condition for elections to realize these democratic characteristics in a representative democracy.

More specifically, the indicators include the existence of free, fair, and peaceful elections in which opposition parties participate, an outcome acceptable to all parties, and no anti-democrats contesting for power. Occasional turnovers, though not necessary in the short term, provide further indication of willingness by incumbents to adhere to the rules of democracy. Breakdowns indicate a complete repletion of legitimacy on behalf of crucial actors. Winning candidates and parties’ shares of votes and seats indicates the level of competition while voter turnout is another measure of popular participation. Chapter three provides a full discussion of these as indicators of the realization of participation, competition and legitimacy as democratic qualities. Bottom line of the argument being that election qualities in terms of outcomes and actors’ behavior perhaps provide the best test of how committed political actors are to the rules of the game because these events put the control of power at stake.
Africa is a continent with 53 countries out of which five belong to Northern Africa: Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria. These are normally excluded from analyses of Africa because of their distinctly different socio-cultural characteristics. The remaining 48 states in sub-Saharan Africa constitute the geographical setting for the empirical analysis in this book. The empirical reality of elections differs between these countries in many respects as will be discussed in more detail below after a few observations regarding the election history of these countries.

The literature of democratization in Africa is still relatively thin compared to that of southern Europe and Latin America. Yet, as has been pointed out elsewhere (Hyden, Leslie, and Ogundimu 2002), Africa had its first wave of democracy in the late 1950s, as countries engaged in a struggle for national independence. These first attempts were carried out under the auspices of the colonial powers. They initially suffered from restrictions like limited electoral rolls in the francophone countries, and the confinement of elections to local government in the Anglophone countries. From the perspective of the colonial powers, it was a form of “tutelary” democracy that Africans were expected to learn as a precondition for independence. The important thing to note for our purpose is that these initial elections were generally carried out in a peaceful manner; they were fairly free and fair; and the outcomes were never generally disputed. The first generation of African nationalists could claim the legitimacy of having been duly elected in competitive elections.

This first wave of electoral democracy was short-lived. Once in power, the leaders of the new nation-states approached the double tasks of national development and national integration by insisting on

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3 All these are states in the formal juridical sense of the term whereas several of them have recently, and/or still have significant problems of state implosion (Villalón and Hustable 1998), for example DRC, Liberia, and Somalia. The latter is presently de facto divided into three different states, Somalia, Somaliland and Puntland. Of these, elections were recently held in Somaliland but I have decided to classify them as regional elections, rather than national because of the unresolved sovereignty, and hence, issue of statehood.

4 Except for Botswana who inaugurated its democracy with independence in 1969. Another special case is Liberia who gained independence in 1847 but has been under autocratic rule and then civil war for most of its existence.
national uniformity. It set in motion a reversal towards autocracy across the continent that lasted for almost thirty years. Ogendo (1999) makes an interesting observation that even hard-line autocrats made an effort to use the country’s constitution to legitimize their take-over of power. The laws of the land were not completely irrelevant even though countries in Africa ended up with “constitutions without constitutionalism”. The view of the constitution was instrumental; there was no real commitment to respecting it as an end-in-itself. Most of what we know about African politics was produced during this authoritarian period with the branding of mainstream concepts like “clientelism” (Lemarchand 1972), “neopatrimonialism” (Medard 1982), “prebendalism” (Joseph 1987), and “rentier state” (Bates 1981). Despite this reversal of the first wave, there were variations in the way nationalist leaders approached the task of governance and there was some interesting experimentation during this period with the electoral system. More specifically, the issue of how political contestation could be combined with the need for national unity and the existence of a single party system.

It was no coincidence that Tanzania’s president, Julius Nyerere, took the lead in this effort. His ruling party, Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) had won all seats in the pre-independence election in 1960, rendering the first parliament with no official opposition. A constitutional review committee was appointed in 1964 to make recommendations to parliament for legalizing a one-party system and to organize competitive elections within its auspices based on the single-member district formula a year later. The first national election under this new formula in 1965 was generally met with a lot of excitement and satisfaction (Cliffe 1967).

enthusiastically proclaimed this as steps towards “political development”. Hayward (1987, 16) for example claimed that in countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone where many incumbents (MPs) were dislodged from their positions by disgruntled voters was due mainly to the semi-competitive nature of one-party elections. According to Hayward, they offered people a choice to rule. The most positive interpretation came from Naomi Chazan (1979), who referred to this type of democratic elections as an “African-derived formula for constructive popular representation”. It was, she argued, suitable for a situation where there is no opposition party, yet a need for minimum competition and accountability. Richard Sklar (1983) also espoused a similar optimism when he included the semi-competitive one-party elections as evidence that the continent was moving, albeit incrementally, toward more competitive political systems. However, on the other side authors as Ansprenger (1997) and Thibaut (1998) dismissed them because they never delivered the results their advocates promised. For instance, these elections never allowed voters a choice of who should rule or a chance to influence national policy directions.

Nevertheless, the prevalence of this trend toward semi-competitive elections cannot be dismissed as only an elite formula for staying in power because these were not merely “plebiscitary” events in which the elite reproduced itself. As Hyden and Leys (1972) noted in a comparative study of such elections in Kenya and Tanzania, they gave the local electorate an opportunity to oust those leaders who breached their trust or failed to deliver “pork barrel” to their constituents. In this specific respect, the formula worked to legitimize those in power, but equally importantly the system as a whole. Voters preferred to have some one who could represent them in the capital in a persuasive manner and by doing so secure benefits for the followers. It seems – at least to some extent – voting was meaningful to them.

**Contemporary Elections in Africa**

There are indications that this approach to the electoral act has not changed with the coming of multi-party elections in the 1990s. From the few studies available on voters’ motivations, the conclusion seems to be that people continue to vote based on their residence rather than
policy preferences. Barkan’s (1995) study shows the more agrarian the society, the higher the geographic concentration of the vote. Voters seem to continue to choose representatives based on how good they are as “patrons” of their respective community or constituency. A couple of empirical studies from the multi-party 1990s (e.g. Lindberg 2003, Wantchekon 2003, Wolf 2003) corroborate the persistence of patron-client relations in electoral politics in Africa. It is not clear how much this preference for patron over policy at the constituency level is an effect of national policy issues being increasingly shaped by governments in cooperation with the international finance institutions and the donor community or part of a “parochial” political culture in which dependency on some one with the right political connections is prevalent (Almond and Verba 1963), or something else.

Regardless of cause, it provides an electoral logic that differs from other places where elections are primarily about policy choices. The most notable effect is the proliferation of political parties and the problem of uniting the opposition in fighting the government party during elections. Each geographical area is treated as an independent base, where politicians compete for a (sometimes single) seat with little or no regard for what is happening in other constituencies or at the national level. Parties are often personalistic vehicles engaging in clientelistic and communal platforms (Monga 1995, 365; Wantchekon 2003). Taken together, this induces emphasis on person rather than party – hence the prevalence in African countries for many political parties to be one-person operations.

As Table 1 indicates, the number of parties is typically high in competitive elections in contemporary Africa. These numbers neither represent “effective number of parties” (Laakso and Tagipeera 1979), nor “relevant parties” (Sartori 1991) but merely reflect the number of parties registered to contest in elections. They do not give us any substantial information on competitiveness or the nature of the party system in these countries. Nevertheless, the figures provide some food for thought on the political conditions in Africa.

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5 This finding led Barkan to advocate that a proportional system of representation does not really make much difference in agrarian societies and that a single-member district plurality system is equally good in ensuring a distribution of seats in parliament that reflects the total vote.
The emphasis on person rather than party is also a probable explanation as to why so many autocrats have managed to stay in power as elected leaders in the 1990s. By 1997, as many as 20 of the old autocrats from pre-1990 Africa were still in executive office as a result of some kind of elections (Baker 1998). However, incumbents even if now elected, are not necessarily interested in transforming old structures since their rule – even as leaders of democratically elected governments – is dependent on old and often clientelist structures of governance. Thus, we have reasons to be skeptical about both the credentials and the function of competitive elections in the contemporary African context. We need to critically examine the empirical realities of these elections before we can accurately assess their democratic qualities and the value of holding them as part of a democratization process. We should do so within the established tradition of comparative politics. From that vantage point, the empirical analysis of elections in Africa in this book offers comparative politics as a field of study a set of new and interesting cases to bring to bear on the general wisdom of the field.

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Africa’s Contemporary Track Record

Out of the 48 African countries, 44 have held de jure contested elections over the period studied. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Eritrea, Rwanda, and Somalia are the four countries that lack any record of contested elections. The former Zaire degenerated to a predatory, extractive state (Clark 1998) under President Mobutu, collapsing into anarchy in around 1995 to 1996. Insurgent leader Laurent Kabila temporarily restored some degree of peace in the vast country, renaming it DRC. Its Eastern mineral-rich areas was then the site of Africa’s first “World War” involving at least 8 different nations and an unknown number of privatized military forces during the late 1990s and early 21st century. Eritrea seceded from Ethiopia in 1994 after successfully defeating the military might of Addis Ababa in a civil war. The young state represents one of the very few exceptions to the stability of borders in Africa since independence. The rule by the People’s Front for Democracy and Justice has so far been harsh, evidently non-liberal and elections of the sort investigated in this book have not been contemplated.

Rwanda was the scene for the horrific acts leading to genocide and almost inconceivable crimes against humanity in 1994. After a process involving long-term mediation by both unilateral and multilateral actors, the reconciliation process led to holding of contested elections shortly after the end of this study’s range, on September 25, 2003. Incumbent President Paul Kigame won a landslide with 95 percent of the votes in a process marred by irregularities according to the EU-team of observers. The main opposition candidate Faustin Twagiramungu’s petition to the Supreme Court was dismissed and the court later confirmed the official results. Somalia devastated by civil war, foreign occupation and ecological crises, has not been able to resurrect central, much less civilian, rule since the dramatic changes following the end of the Cold War that ended with a US-lead invasion, disaster and ensuing anarchy. The northern part of the country labeled Somali-land has proclaimed sovereignty, even as the international community has so far refused to recognize it as a sovereign state. Nevertheless, it is receiving numerous bilaterals’ assistance in rebuilding efforts including the holding of presidential and parliamentary polls on April 14, 2003. In those elections, the incumbent and self-declared President
Dahir Riyale Kahin was facing a strong opposition challenge. The main challengers were Ahmed Muhammad "Silaanyo" of the Kulmiye party and Faisal Ali "Warabe" of the Justice and Welfare party (UCID). The results were highly contested but the constitutional court of the self-declared republic later confirmed the incumbent president as the winner of the presidential election. For the purpose of unambiguous application of the selection criteria discussed in the methodology chapter, these elections have not been included in the present analysis. Another region in the eastern-northern part of what was once Somalia – Puntland - is claiming regional autonomy and the leadership seems to be in some kind of authoritative control. Contested elections are not on the agenda, however. Somalia proper, the southern part where the capital Mogadishu is located is still ruled by militias and warlord-factions of the four main clans. While there is some amount of order and authority at the local level, no central authority has been re-established despite several attempts supported by the international community.

An overview of the remaining 44 countries in Africa is presented in Table 2. Each country is placed in a category indicating how many uninterrupted successive elections have been held under the present electoral regime. It should be pointed out that this emphasis on an unbroken series of elections is central to the main arguments in this book pursued empirically by the analyses in chapters five and seven. Further, I apply a definition of first elections inspired by Bratton and van de Walle (1997: 196), in which the office of the head of government, and/or seats in the legislature, were openly contested following a period when contested and participatory politics had been denied. Ghana’s most recent executive and legislative elections were the third successive elections without a breakdown of the electoral cycle hence; she is placed in the “Three Elections” category. Countries where a coup, civil war or similar during the period studied, has interrupted a series of elections are indicated with a “*”. In five countries, the process has broken down after elections have been held and elections have not been taken up again during the period studied.

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4 In the literature first elections after a period of autocratic rule is often referred to as “founding”. This is one of the notions that the findings of the present study refute, hence, the adjective "first".
These states are therefore placed in a separate category. Table 2 serves only to introduce the empirical field and it should be pointed out, does not purport to provide evidence for the arguments in the following chapters.

Rather, as a backdrop it serves the triple purpose of further substantiating the relevance of the research questions the rest of the book answers, providing the reader with an introductory overview of the empirical field of study, and facilitating the outline of the contents of the remaining chapters.

**Outline of the Book**

First, it is evident from Table 2 that quite a few African countries – 33 of them – have held not only first, but also second elections and 20 of these have managed even third elections, while seven have even concluded a series of four successive elections. Reading contemporary literature on African politics in general and on democratization in

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7 This special treatment is restricted to Table 2. In the empirical analysis in chapter four and five all cases of elections are included. The latter part of chapter five presents a panel-group comparison necessarily restricted to a subset of elections in countries that have held two or more successive elections as of June 2003. In chapter seven, the same subset is used for the analysis for similar methodological reasons.
particular, it seems that these facts are not well known. Even among Africanists, ignorance about the spread and frequency of contested elections in Africa is common. The comparative literature on elections and democratization in Africa is also limited; hence, the need to provide an overview and some details about the basic facts of the empirical field. Table 2 above clearly is insufficient in this regard. The empirical analyses in chapters four, five, and seven deal further with this.

Chapter two deals with the issue of what democracy is and how we can identify democratic qualities that can be measured as present in elections to varying degrees. For present purposes, democracy is understood to mean self-government by a sovereign people. Though abstract, the definition of democracy allows for broad socio-cultural variation, which is necessary for applicability in a wide variety of settings. It is argued that at least three dimensions are necessary as instruments for the realization of self-government: equality of political participation, free political competition, and legitimacy of the idea of self-government. These dimensions constitute the three central democratic qualities that we look for in elections. It is not argued that these are the only important dimensions. The only argument made is that these dimensions are necessary instruments for the realization of self-government. Chapter three specifies the operationalization of the three democratic qualities in the context of elections. Elections are understood as periodic and de jure participatory, contested, and legitimate institutions used to select representatives to the executive or legislative branches of government. Periodic implies that elections are held within the constitutional rules of timing of elections and follow a certain predefined periodicity. The extents to which the three qualities are realized in practice in elections are the three dependent variables in chapters four and five. In chapter six, the dependent variable is the realization of the same democratic qualities but in society instead of in elections. Chapter three also provides details and discussions on a range of methodological issues involved from the ontological status the key analytical units involved, down to nitty-gritty details of data collection and processing.

Chapter four takes the initial steps in the empirical analysis from the perspective of developments over time, year by year. The chapter
refutes several existing hypotheses from the literature on the degeneration of elections and politics in Africa over the 1990s. First, contrary to what the literature on elections in Africa suggest, the number and frequency of elections in general, and free and fair elections in particular are on not on the decline. Secondly, the democratic qualities of the 232 elections have not varied substantially over different periods. Both popular and key actors’ participation have been relatively stable over the period studied and on higher levels than previously reported. The level of competition leaves room for more substantial improvements but remains stable. While legitimacy is the only dimension with signs of a statistically significant improvement over time, it is still fairly small changes, and lags far behind in indicating a more general acceptance of the rules of the game. In the end, the approach as such – comparisons over time disregarding whether elections are first or fifth in order – is questioned laying the ground for an alternative approach in the next chapter.

Chapter five explores the theoretically interesting question of the self-reinforcing power of electoral cycles. The chapter argues that an uninterrupted series of de jure participatory and competitive elections – no matter what their initial quality – has led to successively identifiably higher democratic qualities of elections in Africa. This finding is not trivial, particularly in light of the prevalent Afro-pessimism that tends to degrade the value of elections. The very nature of elections as a procedural regime with real effects on the distribution of power with a self-improving power makes them a worth-while exercise in and of themselves.

Even though there are general trends there are also differences between African countries. Some of the hypotheses in the literature on Africa politics are based on such differences. Chapter five tests these hypotheses by introducing a unique panel-group comparison. It shows that the “latecomers” among electoral regimes in Africa started from a less promising position, with their first elections generally less democratic than among “older” generations. However, the trend is similar for all groups towards a steady improvement of the democratic qualities of elections as they move along holding successive elections. The time-series panel-group comparison further corroborates the conclusion that the mere holding of de jure participatory and competitive elections
tend to be self-reinforcing and improve with greater experience. The socialization of actors into the rules of a new set of institutions seems to redirect and reformulate actors’ behavior making it more and more in accordance with democratic expectations over successive electoral cycles and the impact of these “imported” institutions in Africa is constant over very distinct contexts.

Another reflection one might have reading from Table 2 above, regards instances of civil war, military take-over or other serious instances that have caused the electoral cycle to break down completely. While the regime survival-indicator is used in reference to the legitimacy of competitive elections in this book, it is also a dependent variable in its own right with its own research tradition. The findings presented on breakdowns have important policy implications. A vast majority of complete breakdowns seem to have happened at an early stage of these transition processes. Almost all of them happened shortly after first elections had been held. When regimes survive two or three elections, they are highly unlikely to break down as far as it can be discerned from the track record so far.

In sum, chapter four and five address hypotheses in the existing literature where previous studies of competitive elections in Africa carried out by Bratton and colleagues have been pessimistic: Besides elections helping some new regimes to survive, little else merged from them and in fact the frequency and quality of elections is on the decline. Late “founding” elections (held after 1995) as well as second elections are generally worse than earlier attempts in terms of participation, competition, and legitimacy. Finally, fewer turnovers resulted from second elections and in this regard, African politics is said to be returning to the “normality” of dominant parties and personalities in the form of “big man” politics. The results of the analysis in this book challenge these findings on several accounts. There is no general negative trend either in the frequency, or in the democratic qualities of elections. Previous results were a consequence of these authors’ choice of periodicities and the limited number of years included in the analysis. Analyzing trends over first, second and third elections shows there is a significant improvement in democratic quality, in particular as countries hold third elections. While the cited authors noted that turnovers were uncommon in second elections, current evidence
shows that alternations in power have been as common among third elections as in first ones. Hence, the case for pessimism in this regard should be also reconsidered.  

Chapter six then goes into a largely unchartered terrain. Table 2 seems to suggest that there is a relationship between democracy writ large and greater experience with elections. Is there such a thing as democratization by elections, as our college Andreas Schedler (2002b, n.d. 2005) has suggested? For sure, there are inherent dangers of a certain amount of both tautology and collinearity in such claims. Elections are a key-defining characteristic of almost every theory of democracy and most measures of democracy and political freedom relies heavily on electoral indicators. These theoretical and methodological difficulties are discussed in chapter six reviewing the main theories of democratization. In vain of any elaborated theoretical contributions in the literature, the chapter outlines a theoretical framework of plausible causal links between the repetition of elections and improvement of democratic qualities in society outside of the political system. The causal links are summarized in a set of general hypotheses with unambiguous empirical implications suitable for evaluation.

Chapter seven uses four alternative tests to evaluate these hypotheses. In order to gauge the independent explanatory power of repetitive electoral cycles on democratization it constructs a new measure of the effects of elections for a time-lagged analysis of impact measured as improved civil liberties. The empirical tests demonstrate first, that an uninterrupted repetition of elections tend to be associated with an increase in real civil liberties in society such as at the time of second elections they are better than at the time of first elections, and so on. Second, the tests show that improvements in civil liberties in society tend to occur as effects of holding elections, rather than in periods before or between elections, and third, that there are no obvious intervening or other independent variables that can erase the

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It is important to note here that the measure of alternation in power is not influenced by constitutional limits on the number of presidential terms. An alternation of persons in power is only coded as a turnover if and when there is not only a change in person but also party affiliation of the president or majority in parliament. In other words, if a president steps down after the first or (more commonly) second term because of a constitutional requirement and his successor for the third term is the candidate from the very same party, it is not given the status of a turnover.
explanatory power of elections. The empirical results thus provide support both for the main hypothesis and the causal links suggested in the theoretical framework fitting no less than two-thirds of all countries in Africa. In periods before and between elections, changes in the level and spread of democracy writ large have been marginal and often even negative. However, in conjunction with elections substantial improvements in democratic qualities in society are recorded. These findings open up a new understanding of the role of elections in democratization as a set of factors with causal effects. Such a perspective has been ignored in democratization theories so far. Thus, this chapter represents the perhaps major theoretical contribution of this dissertation.

Finally, chapter eight sums up the main findings of the study in relation to the overall and specific purposes and then place the findings in the broader context of democratization studies. Liberalization does not occur first leading to pressures that result in elections in Africa. Rather, the decision by ruling elites to instigate elections resulted in a political opening and increased civil liberties and societal pressures. There is neither any evidence that a previously harsh regime is beneficial for the successful installation of democracy in Africa, nor that different kinds of hybrid regimes are becoming the institutionalized outcome on the continent. But the thought of the transition paradigm that protracted transition tend to be beneficial for democracy seems to get some support from empirical analysis. In addition, the methodology of mainstream consolidation studies is questioned and this book challenges the field to unbundle and disaggregate their dependent variable.

The findings of this study also have important policy implications discussed in the final chapter. If – as it is argued in this book – the democratic qualities of elections tend to improve if and when countries manage to make it to third or fourth elections, irrespectively of how they started, it provides a strong case for continued aid and support to be given to electoral processes in developing countries. It is important to note that almost no breakdowns occur after second elections have been held. Once the electoral cycle is establish, it seems that a critical mass of actor tend to get their interests vested in preservation of electoral politics. Renewed authoritarian rule is no
longer attractive in terms of cost and benefits. This is further evidenced by the observation that all coups and similar incidents in Africa during the 1990s have been followed by an immediate concession by the new ruler(s) to hold elections. If then successive repetition of elections not only improve on their own democratic qualities in terms of actors behavior during the elections but also contribute to the spread of democracy in society the case is even stronger for support that keep the electoral process going at any cost. The perspective puts elections on center stage not only as a necessary component or indicator of democracy, but also as a cause to democratization. In a nutshell, and elections will – more often than not – be the way to democracy.
CHAPTER 2
ON DEMOCRATIC QUALITIES

The objective of this investigation to study trends in democratic qualities of elections in Africa relieves us from making awkward decisions about the point at which an election becomes democratic or democracy in a particular country is attained. Nevertheless, the study of the democratic qualities of elections in newly democratizing countries requires a few conceptual clarifications. “Qualities” as a scientific term simply denotes characteristics. Adding the adjective “democratic” is a precision of content, which by logical necessity requires a specification of the defining value of democracy. Based on the identification of this core value, the essential attributes we call “democratic qualities” can be deduced. Only then can we empirically proceed to analyze the existence of such attributes in elections. Hence, the purpose of this chapter is to identify the core value of democracy; and then proceed to deducing its core instrumental qualities. Anticipating the argument, the core value is understood to be self-government and the three necessary attributes are equality of political participation, free political competition, and legitimacy. Yet the specificities of these three dimensions are studied empirically only with respect to elections and the operationalization is undertaken in chapter three. Accordingly, the conceptual discussion of democracy in this chapter can be completed on a fairly abstract level without theoretical specification of empirical implications.

Finally, a caveat is necessary to all those with a greater interest in philosophical issues; this is not an attempt at developing yet another
theory of democracy. The objective of this book is to study elections, not to attempt a comprehensive philosophical discussion. This scope is justified by theoretical concerns of the research objectives and the empirical reach. Addressing issues of descriptive chronicling and analysis of elections with a view of engaging comparative theories of democratization, call for extensive data gathering and empirical analysis rather than elaborate normative reasoning. It is also the case that the real-world referent of our puzzle here is a relatively limited representative liberal democracy rather than its direct or participatory versions. This is the standard newly democratizing countries strive for and it would unfair to measure them by some other ideal(s).

This chapter is divided into five sections. It first offers a brief reflection on concept formation and then dwells on four analytically distinct meditations on our way towards an understanding of the core value of democracy and the three necessary dimensions for its realization. Although it might seem unnecessarily tedious, it has its own justification. Following the classic rules of mutually exclusive definitions, specifying what democracy is necessarily involves clarifying also what it is not. Is democracy an instance or an attribute? In other words, is it an object in itself or a characteristic of something else? These are mutually exclusive views. I argue that it makes more sense to view democracy as an attribute of the political system, rather than as an object in itself. Second, is democracy a dichotomous or a graded concept? These are again, mutually exclusive ideas. The argument here is that a degree approach is preferable, rather than to view it as a dichotomy between democracy and non-democracy. Third, since every empirical definition of democracy necessarily must be based on a normative justification, a few reflections on that baseline may be necessary. The baseline here is a deliberately “thin” understanding of representative, liberal democracy that can travel across socio-cultural contexts. The fourth and final, stage involves identification of a definition of democracy, which lends itself towards attribution and graduation. For current purposes, the definition can be a fairly abstract and etymological understanding of democracy as self-government. From that definition those qualities that are democratic – equal political participation, free competition, and legitimacy – are deduced.
**A Prelude on Concept Formation**

In justifying the limitations and scope of this chapter, it is imperative to separate the conceptual meaning of democracy from its empirical analysis. In reference to the semantic triangle, there is no necessary linkage between a particular term like “democracy”, the conceptual construct of the beholder, and the empirical phenomenon it refers to. Present day post-positivists of various inclinations build much of their critique against approaches like the present one on this realization. Yet, this is not a recent innovation on their part. These relationships were recognized and discussed at length by scholars like Pierce (1931-58), Ogden and Richards (1923) and de Saussure (1915/1974), who distinguished between the term, concept and referential phenomena. Even if critics often fail to recognize it, few modern positivists persist in assuming any kind of objective relationship between a term like democracy, the complex concept we have in mind and the often even more complex phenomena we try to measure. Rather, as argued effectively by Sanders (2002, 54-63), modern positivists have found ways to adapt while retaining the strengths of the positivist tradition. For example, while our conceptualizations always condition our observations — such as if we define “swans” as white birds we will miss the black Asian variants of swans — the consequence is that we need more precise and explicit specifications of concepts, not less. Hence, the indeterminate relationship between terminology, concepts and reality, and the "softness" of certain phenomena that we wish to study does not translate into making a social scientific endeavor impossible, nor does it equate it with literature. As a source of

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* The terminologies they use are slightly different. Pierce referred to these concepts as sign, object, and interpretant; Ogden and Richards talked about symbol, referent, and reference; while de Saussure worked with signifier, signified and referent.

* In fact, this recognition has led to efforts at simplifying the conceptual constructs in order to facilitate more valid measurement and analysis. This is particular true with complex, often multidimensional phenomena just like democracy (e.g. Bollen 1990, Coppedge 2003, Munck and Verkuilen 2003). But this is a separate discussion that will have to wait to chapter three.
knowledge, the use of concepts in building theory and creating observations strives towards ever-increasing specification and precision, and increasing explicit clarification of assumptions.

Second, if theory is always colored by observation – and I believe it is – there is some critical relationship between theory and observation. Not every observation can support a theory and accordingly, not all theories are equally good. But any causal or descriptive theory must have empirical referents so that we can make observations. Theory should always be evaluated on its own terms but without empirical implications it is simply no theory; it is an assumption at best, and a metaphysical belief at worst – except if it concerns theories in political philosophy). Good research must rely on observation – preferably systematic and comprehensive – if we wish to make valid causal inferences that speak to the empirical implications of the theory (c.f. King, Keohane and Verba 1994). In this sense, it is a stance informed by Popper’s proposition that empirically falsifiable theories are the evidence of robust scholarship (Popper 1999/1953, S7ff). Thus, the definition of democracy we use and its theoretical specification must lend itself towards empirical evaluation. With these observations in mind, let us turn to the key concept here: democracy.

**ATTRIBUTE OR OBJECT?**

The electoral way is one of many options of choosing leadership and disposing old governments in a political system. As a core institution of representative democracy, elections are supposedly the only means to decide who holds legislative and executive power respectively. Yet, elections take place in less than democracies too and elections, pæ the political system writ large, can be characterized by varying degrees of democratic features ranging from zero to a theoretical maximum. This reasoning translates into viewing democracy as an attribute of the political system, the latter being the object of study.

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12 No claim is made here that science is the only source of knowledge about the world. The only point made here is that scientific knowledge production in the social sciences should be characterized by striving to attain certain requirements.

13 Even if a political system would reach the theoretical maximum on all specified indicators of democratic attributes, it would not make democracy the object. Objectification is a matter of conceptual analysis, not empirical conclusion. If we study water and its qualities for
An essentially different view is to approach democracy as an object in itself. For example, identification of a specific regime type conceptualized as democracy is done using characteristics that are defining of, hence exclusive for, that particular regime. That implies democracy to “be” something with object-like characteristics in need of definition. Such is the logic of classical concept formation (Collier and Mahon 1993; Coppedge n.d. 2005; Munck 2001b; Sartori 1984; Schedler 2001a). If a certain attribute – or its value – is not exclusive for a particular concept, it cannot be used as a defining characteristic and should therefore not be included in the definition. For instance, it makes little sense in this approach to say that democracies are defined by political competition since competition in a broad sense is a characteristic of most political systems. The frequency of coups, insurgencies and toppling of governments is clearly indicative of the fierce competition in many authoritarian contexts. The form of political competition that could be said to be a defining feature of democracy would need a more precise and unambiguous specification. If we by political competition mean the fierce struggle for the highest executive and/or legislative office, it is in a democracy channeled through a specific kind of electoral processes. Those processes are constituted by a particular set of rules governing candidate, party and voter eligibility criteria, political rights of speech, association and information, electoral management bodies, electoral system, district boundaries, campaign contributions, voting requirements, rules for complaints and abjuration, and so on.

It can also be argued that democracy is partly characterized by political participation of a particular kind. Political participation in democracies – as different from non-democracies – is based on the notion of citizens’ political equality. Individuals, who so wish, should be able to form a political party and contest in elections on the same conditions as everyone else. All citizens – of age and mental sanity – should be able to cast their vote based on the principle one person, one vote. In social scientific jargon: the sovereignty of the people should be distributed equally. In the same way as unspecified competition is not defining for democracy, political participation in a general sense exists
in most systems of rule only that it is characterized by patron-client relationships, exclusion, or other non-equal relationships. Conversely, when it comes to defining authoritarian regimes, the use of coercive power is probably not a good indicator because it is an aspect of most democracies as well. Unfortunately, this fundamental and simple logic of concept formation and empirical classification is all too often violated. There are many examples of inadequate specifications of "democracy" as well as "authoritarianism" in the literature on democratization (c.f. Munck 1994, 2001b). Nevertheless, approaching democracy as an object, a "thing", requires a clear and unambiguous specification of the defining attributes. However, we must guard against overstating the degree to which these attributes cohere to define democracy as this leads to reification.\footnote{There are other dangers associated with this approach. One of them is the importance ascribed to the cut-off point. If the distribution of cases is U-shaped the share of classification error is reduced as most cases are distributed towards the ends of a thought continuum. The effect of a particular cut-off point of one particular rather than another are relatively small since there are few "grey-zone" cases. But with a distribution that is normal or even \(\cap\)-shaped, the selection of cut-off point naturally plays a greater role in producing the results. Even a small change in classificatory criteria will then result in a large number of cases being rearranged. Elkins (1999) and Coppedge (1997) for example, have demonstrated that significantly different results emerge depending on which cut-off point is used to classify countries as either democracies or non-democracies.}

There is a principal difference between approaching democracy as an object in itself – with risks of reification and hence methodologically induced results – and conceptualizing democracy as qualities that a system of rule potentially has, and if so will be found to various degrees. The approach here is to treat democracy ontologically as an attribute of the political system where self-government translates into a set of qualities – equal political participation, free political competition and legitimacy – any system of rule has to varying degrees. Awaiting further specification in chapter three, elections are preliminary conceptualized as an institutional component of the political system.\footnote{The presence of de jure participatory, competitive and legitimate elections is also used as criterion of selection of political systems to include, as discussed in the introduction.} In sum, elections are the object of study and the democratic qualities will be variable attributes.
Dichotomy or Degrees?

Definitional discussions in comparative literature are frequently framed by the controversy between those who view democracy as a matter of difference in kind or degree. Whether democracy and non-democracy are best conceptualized as a dichotomy or as two ends on a continuum (cf. Collier and Adcock 1999). It should be recognized that this debate is a false one on one level. Any study has to make a distinction between phenomena that are objects of analysis and others that are not. Hence, the researcher always has to make a decision on differences in kind such as decide what is a regime that can potentially be a democracy, and what is not and therefore excluded from the analysis. Within that class of objects defined as units for analysis, however, further choices can be either of the kind-type or the degree variant. In the discussion of empirical democracy, scholars like Alvarez et al. (1996), Huntington (1991, 11-2), Geddes (1999), Linz (1975, 184-5), and Cheibub et al. (1986) rather vigorously argue in favor of a dichotomous approach. Speaking about democracy as a matter of degree is, in Sartori’s words, a “stultifying” exercise in “degreeism” (1987, 184). Scholars like Sartori are concerned with conceptual stretching antagonizing against the so-called democracy professed by leaders of authoritarian systems of rule, and therefore favor a clear demarcation between democratic and non-democratic systems. Fearing the dilute of democracy by ascription of democratic characteristics to non-democratic regimes, their suggestion is to rigidly demarcate what “democracy is, and is not”. For those who feel the meaning of democracy is at stake the need for clear and unambiguous demarcation of the outer boundaries of democracy is a matter of great importance.

While these concerns are certainly valid, they do not necessarily translate into a rigid dichotomous approach. Consider for example, the metaphor of pregnancy Sartori invoked to illustrate the point: a woman cannot be half-pregnant. She is either pregnant or not. However, is not the woman “half-pregnant” after conception but before the embryo has attached to the uterus? Similarly, at a certain point during delivery one could again think of her as half-pregnant. Is the question then of dichotomous versus graded conceptions of democracy an ontological and therefore a fundamental issue? Or is it merely a methodological choice to be made in relation to a specific research
focus? I certainly would argue for the latter like Levitsky and Adcock (1999) in their call for methodological – rather than philosophical – justifications. It is quite possible, and I would argue preferable, to work with a graded measure of democracy and use that graduation to establish and argue for a particular cut-off point between two or more regime types. When the distribution of cases along such a continuum is known, the sensitivity to errors by certain cut-off points can be assessed, if one starts out with only a dichotomy there is no way such a test can be performed and we will never know how great a role the classification criteria played in producing the results. In addition, scholars can certainly agree on basic defining characteristics of democracy, excluding purely authoritarian systems without necessarily agreeing on the theoretically or empirically valid cut-off points.

Alvarez et al. (1996) go even further than Sartori to argue there are no borderline cases or intermediate categories. Their argument is that given a theoretically grounded definition of democracy, precise operational rules, and the necessary empirical information the classification of regimes as democratic or non-democratic is unambiguous. In other words, technical difficulties in classifying empirical examples such as Mexico do not validate the theoretical conclusion that democracy is a continuous phenomenon. That is certainly true but what Alvarez et al. fail to recognize is that the same argument negates their own justification for a dichotomous approach. Just because all regimes can be unambiguously classified as either democracy or non-democracy on basis of systematically generated empirical observations, does not validate the theoretical argument for a binominal classification. Concepts can never be verified. While deductions are validated by their logical consistency and inductions are validated by their empirical applicability over a large number of cases, the validity of the specification of a concept and its internal characteristics lies in its ability to address the research question. Thus, what is important is the ability of a dichotomous or a graded concept of democracy to engage in the

16 This reasoning partly avoids the more technical discussion of random and systematic errors. Alvarez et al. (1996) argue – correctly – that the bulk of errors resulting from classification of so-called borderline cases are systematic and their effect can therefore be measured and corrected for. They also argue that polychotomous scales generate smaller but more errors, while dichotomous scales generate larger but fewer of them. The latter, however, is dependent on the distribution of cases as discussed above which cannot be known unless a graded measure is used first.
kind of analysis the researcher sets. The real test of the usefulness of a conceptual construction is its ability to be operational in empirical analysis. In any case, when democracy is viewed as one of two possible outcomes, the defining characteristics are necessarily minimum criteria. Such attributes must be present in full as specified by theory for a political system to be classified as a democracy. If one or more characteristics are missing, the system is simply not democratic.

Other scholars like Dahl in his formulation of polyarchy (1971, 2, 8; 1989, 316-7), and later Bollen and Jackman (1989, 612-8), Coppedge and Reinicke (1990), and Diamond (1996, 53), posit democracy is always a matter of degree with most countries along a continuum between full democracy and complete non-democracy. There are two main variants of this argument. The first ranks countries along an indexed continuum while the other situates them based on subordinate categories from partial to total democracies, conceptually referred to sometimes as "diminished subtypes". The two are similar in at least one respect. Democracy is not an either-or subject but a question of extent.

The literature of democratization in the Third World is rich with variation on the theme of diminished subtypes although too few of those who issue these labels recognize that their methodology is in fact treating these cases as differences in degrees. Scholars are constantly issuing new more or less helpful labels of democratically sub-optimal systems of rule. Collier and Levitsky (1995) reportedly stopped counting at 550 different when reviewing the literature in the 1990s. Examples range from "limited democracy" (Archer 1995, 166), to "restricted democracy" (Waisman 1989, 69), "protected democracy" (Loveman 1994), and "tutelary democracy" (Przeworski 1988, 60-61). Some scholars have argued that some labels are misleading since they are negations of democracy, for example Joseph’s (1997, 367-8) "virtual democracy". Collier and Levitsky (1997) like Schedler (1998) place diminished subtypes on the classical conception classification scheme based on a dichotomous approach and organize them on the ladder of generality. I disagree on this point and posit that subtypes

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17 Sartori (1984, 1991) refers to it as the ladder of abstraction. I agree, however, with Collier and Mahon (1993, 853, f.n.5) that the term "abstraction" is misleading since abstract is
such as these\textsuperscript{18} are a matter of degree. They simply have less of one defining attribute and are therefore neither full democracies nor fully authoritarian. Hence, they are somewhere along the continuum between democracy and non-democracy. Diamond’s (2002) recent typology ranging from closed authoritarian to full democracy with four intermediate categories, is an instance of this kind of degreeism that we associate with ordinal variables: we know that there is a difference between the categories and that there is a range from lowest/worst to most/best\textsuperscript{19}. What we do not know is the exact distance between these categories.

The other kind of degreeism works not with categorizations but with continuous indices. Scholars like Bollen (1979), Coppedge and Reinecke (1990), Freedom House (2004), Marshall and Jaggers (2002), Hadenius (1992), and Vanhanen (1997) represent variants of this vein. Each democratic attribute is measured and quantified according to predefined thresholds, then combined according to some formula, usually additive and more rarely multiplicative\textsuperscript{20}. There are several options in this regard, however, depending on if democracy is conceptualized as one, two or multidimensional and the consequences far ranging. Take the widely debated issue of equality of political participation. Perfect equality would require equal opportunities for all individuals. That in turn would have to take into account known and unknown personal abilities and psychological orientations concerning factors like education, work, place of residence, parents’ backgrounds commonly understood as the opposite to real, or concrete. Hence, I prefer Collier and Mahon’s suggestion of renaming it ladder of generality.

\textsuperscript{18} This discussion applies to various forms of less-than-full subtypes that Collier and Levitsky (1997) labels diminished as well as to full-but-suboptimal subtypes such as O’Donnell’s (1994) “delegative democracy”. However, it does not apply to the classical subtypes of democracy such as the division into presidential and parliamentary democracies (e.g. Lijphart 1977), or different kinds of electoral systems (e.g. Powell 1982; Sartori 1991) since these are not graduations in terms of more or less democracy.

\textsuperscript{19} Whereas with nominal variables there is only a difference between categories with no ranking involved.

\textsuperscript{20} The difference between these two is methodologically and conceptually important, however. A multiplicative scale implies that all characteristics are necessary conditions: if one scores zero the total will also be nil. An additive scale involves no such logic with the implication that none of the characteristics are necessary. For example, such an index if it includes full suffrage could end up classifying countries with no suffrage as a democracy if it scores high enough on other indicators. It goes without saying that this is a highly questionable strategy. (c.f. Munck and Verkuilen 2002)
– which are known to affect participation – not to mention race, class, gender, and age. Yet, we know this to be impossible. Opportunities of political participation are not equal in the established democracies in the West yet they are still considered democracies. A dichotomous conceptualization of equality of political participation that does not acknowledge these limitations is a useless tool of analysis, as no country in the world would be considered a democracy, which is not a very interesting result. Rather, equality of political participation is typically conceptualized as equal formal rights and popular participation operationalized in terms of degrees and voter turnout used to indicate the level of actual participation under the assumption that everyone would vote if they had the same possibilities. Even though there are other options, the choice must be justified by its ability to yield relevant results. In this study for example, the level of political participation is measured by three indicators: voter turnout (popular participation), share of opposition parties contesting elections (opposition participation), and if old authoritarian leaders participate in the contest (known anti-democratic leaders participation).

In sum, for those favoring a dichotomous view regimes cannot be half-democratic; while those in degree-camp find democratic attributes to be variables with shades of gray that also non-democratic regimes may have a measure of. The debate seems to coincide in part with one in political theory between those who argue democracy to be the established democratic regimes \( \text{de facto} \), and those who view democracy as an ideal model of decision-making never implemented in full but attained only in degrees (Allison 1994, 9). Yet, it seems to me that the main difference is methodological, rather than theoretical. Both approaches necessarily need to specify the defining characteristics of democracy. A study of democracy where the researcher does not know what democracy is supposed to be amounts to mindless empiricism\(^{21}\). Methodologically, the dichotomous approach is one that set the minimum standard of how much of these characteristics must be present for it to be a democracy. If \( x_1, x_2, \) and \( x_3 \) are present the political system in question, then it is classified as a democracy. These

\(^{21}\) Naturally, this does not apply if the study is on how about ordinary people think of democracy for example. But given that the study is concerned with finding out if democracy is present or not, perhaps also raising issues of causes and effects, it is necessary to define democracy first.
are minimum requirements whether the operational definition of democracy is a minimal or more extensive one.

The degree approach tends to specify the range from zero to full of each defining characteristic without specifying a particular cut-off point. Nevertheless, a cut-off point is always possible to identify and many do it even while keeping their graded measures (e.g. Coppedge and Reinecke 1990, Hadenius 1992, cf. Coppedge 2003). These are methodological choices, however. I prefer the graded approach because it preserves more information to bear on theory than the dichotomous approach. It is also more sensitive to the shades of grey that always exist in the real world of empirical data. Finally, democratization – which is what the present study relates to – is a process whereby a regime becomes increasingly democratic. The study of such a process requires a graded measure that can capture not only the divide between democracies and non-democracies but more importantly differences in degrees of democratic qualities among less-than-full democratic political systems. Following the logic of the previous sections, it also lends itself better to treating democracy as a variable attribute of the political system. The research questions guiding this inquiry direct interest to what degree the elections in Africa have acquired democratic qualities, not whether they can be classified as fully democratic or not. The even more general question if the political system as such can be classified as democratic or not, is outside of this scope and intent.

22 Leaving aside here the difficult and unresolved issue of how to combine such measures into a single index of democracy. While Coppedge and Reinecke (1990) claim to have evidenced that democracy, understood as polyarchy, is uni-dimensional, Dahl himself (1971, 1989) and Bollen and Jackman (1989), Hadenius (1992), Vanhanen (1997) amongst others find democracy to consist of two or more dimensions. The methodological implications are many and complex. Most importantly, perhaps, is the fact that if democracy has two or more dimensions, the formula for combining these has to be established if indeed we search for a single scale. For example, do we use simple addition or multiplication of indicators? In metaphorical terms, are we measuring using meters or square meters; is democracy a long line or an area? If three or more dimensions are involved the possible geometric formulas increase to include a range of geometric figures. For excellent discussion of this and other intricate problems of measuring democracy, see Coppedge (2003), and Munck (2001a, 2001b).

23 Needless to say, this is a conceptual point and should not be mistaken for a tautological empirical theory.
TWO FURTHER REFLECTIONS

Following the argument made above, the definition of democracy in this study should lend itself towards attribution and graduation. At this point, we need to consider a few normative issues as part of the definitional discussion. In studies of elections, democratization and transition, political scientists tend to avoid debating normative democratic theory. Even a cursory reading of the comparative literature seems to confirm that many follow Sklar’s (1996, 26) suggestion that: “Political science is not moral philosophy; it does not prescribe the ends of political action; it is concerned with finding adequate means for achieving politically defined ends”. The normative question of which model of democracy is preferred in terms of direct or representative, elitist or participatory, neoliberal or social-democratic, thick or thin, is generally not addressed (cf. Merkel 1998, 33). One prominent exception in the debate on democratization in Africa is the late Ake who engaged in extensive normative discussions as a point of departure for his empirical work (e.g. Ake 2000). Most studies instead take a stance on liberal elitist democracy without further philosophical discussion. Yet, it seems fair to assume that an act of pragmatic reasoning rather than the Sklarian stance above, informs the fact that a majority of political scientists in this field quickly settle that Dahl, rather than Rousseau, Mills rather than Habermas, supply the most appropriate theoretical point of departure. There are at least three such pragmatic reasons.

There are simply no direct democracies – save the frequent referendums in Switzerland – or variants of discursive or participatory democracy. To the extent that there are democracies in the world, these are – to a greater or lesser degree – elitist liberal democracies. The democratizing countries generally strive towards becoming what the established democracies are and it would seem unfair to assess any efforts to implement elitist liberal democratic practices against benchmarks of say discursive ideals. Second, political theory is a sophisticated sub-discipline that requires specialized skills to be pursued. Few of us in comparative politics can master political philosophy. Finally, most of our efforts are directed to descriptive and causal theory that rarely begs the question of ideals in long-term ideological goals. It is no accident that it is in discussions of how established democracies can be deepened or broadened that normative theory has played a more...
active role. The more prevalent and pressing problem in democratizing countries – epitomized perhaps in Africa – is not how to perfect democracy but how to establish something that at least comes close to be a minimal democracy. This book is accordingly limited in philosophical ambition: to explicate the normative basis for the empirical analysis. In essence, what we are concerned with here is the empirical existence of democratic qualities in political systems in general, and in these systems’ electoral institutional expression in particular. Hence, a representative liberal, rather than a model of direct or a participatory democracy is the most relevant frame of reference. Even if an essentially empirical argument, this has implications for the normative foundation of the definition of democracy to be used. These are discussed in further details below.

Second, a less orthodox, but normative position is that the definition ought to be applicable over a wide range of socio-cultural and economic contexts. The definition of democracy should allow for functional as well as iconic variations between contexts. The justification for this position is to counter the risk of ethnocentrism – implicit or otherwise – especially with regards to politics in Africa. Like Bratton and van de Walle (1997) and Chege (1996), I believe concepts, models, and theories developed in the West, by westerners and/or based on the study of Western countries can and should be applied to politics in Africa. There is no reason to assume a priori that theories and concepts developed elsewhere cannot be used to understand African politics. Likewise, theories and concepts that are of African “origin” might also prove useful in the study of the West or Asia. For example, Hyden’s theory of the economy of affection (Hyden, 1983) developed to grapple with African realities is proving applicable to societies outside of Africa (Hyden, n.d 2005). The empirical applicability of a concept or a theory is ultimately an empirical question.

Third, even in the West democracies cannot be captured with one model that purports to fulfill exactly the same functions and provide the same meaning across societies. A few examples suffice to clarify

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24 It is more often than not unclear which one of these fundamentally different criteria the critics build their arguments on.
this point\textsuperscript{25}. The vision of representative justice and governing ability in proportional and majoritarian electoral systems respectively (e.g. Lijphart 1984; Lijphart and Waisman 1996), is one example of how democracy may live and serve different emphases. The general differences between how presidential and parliamentary democratic systems function and which one is better for democratic survival, is another (e.g. Bernhard 1999, Cheibub and Limnogi 2002; Easter 1997, Linz 1990; Linz and Stephan 1996; Mainwaring 1993). In terms of concrete examples, whereas democracy in the US is widely accepted as the solution to the problem of tyranny, it is integrated with a much broader social agenda and popular empowerment in countries like Sweden and the Netherlands. In the US, a voter turnout of 50 percent is adequate and with a registration quota of 50 percent, the president is typically elected by less than 15 percent of the eligible population. In Sweden, such a prospect would amount to a national political emergency. It is enough to consider these and other equally significant variations in the way democracy is perceived and how it functions in countries like the US, Sweden, France, Italy, Britain, and so on, to see that any empirical definition must be fairly “thin” or abstract.

In sum, approaching democracy as a variable attribute of the political system should include an empirically oriented definition of representative liberal democracy that is general enough to apply to a variety of contexts but specific enough to discriminate against clearly non-democratic political systems and for facilitating an unambiguous operationalization.

**What Democracy Is**

We have arrived at the fourth and final meditation of this chapter: what then is the core of liberal representative democracy and which are the principle democratic attributes necessary for its’ realization? There are two principally different approaches to identifying core democratic qualities. One approach probably preferred by political philosophers would be to discuss the most common values normally

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\textsuperscript{25} The following examples are a severe simplification of this point. Taking the ten most common and basic features of existing modern democracies and make a crude distinction of bi-nominal categories we get $2^{10}=1,024$ possible configurations (Rothstein 1998, 135; c.f. Schmitter and Karl 1991; Lijphart 1984).
ascribed to the central tenant of liberal representative democracy, thrust elections in there as a necessary institution of representative democracy, and then argue why some values rather than others are more relevant to elections. That might possibly be more satisfying to a deliberation on competing values typical of normative reasoning and moral philosophy but seems to be unnecessarily deliberative for the present purposes. The most fundamental value of representative, liberal democracy is arguably self-government. It seems to me that there is no substantial debate on this matter in political theory. This is not to deny that there are other democratic values as well. The only point is to say that self-government as the freedom of individual citizens to rule over themselves through a concerted collective process, is logically the most fundamental of them all. Democracy, after all, means rule by the people. In translating self-government into observables, the question then becomes what key instrumental dimensions are necessary to its realization.

The right to self-government, as Dahl reminds us, is neither a trivial nor merely a procedural right (Dahl 1989, Ch.12). It constitutes a substantive ordeal of power sharing and autonomy ultimate for the realization of freedom of both the individual citizen and the collective people. In this sense, I agree with Dahl that even the narrowest procedural definition of democracy entails integral substantive rights and freedoms. The whole idea of self-government is that the people should be free to rule over themselves. The procedures of liberal democracy of which elections are central, is therefore about creating freedom both for the individual and the collective of citizens. By implication of this argument, the distinction between procedural and substantive definitions of democracy collapses. Yet, an approach that sets out to measure the democratic quality of elections at the minimum must specify how such democratic qualities are defined. Accordingly, let us turn to the specific justification for the focus on political participation, free competition, and legitimacy.

In a democracy, the people should rule over itself, the people are sovereign. This sovereignty must be distributed equally – pace the sovereignty of states (e.g. Buzan et al. 1993) – since unequal distribution of sovereignty implies in fact that some segments of the people are not sovereign. This is what Locke referred to as all men are, or
ought to be considered equal as political beings \[26\] (Locke 1689-90/1970, 322) and what Dahl calls the "idea of intrinsic equality" \[26\] (1989, 85). Leaving aside the definition of the people \[27\] it follows logically that rule by the people requires equality of political participation. As Ake \[2000\] notes, it is the equal access to be part of the decision-making process \[28\] rather than the liking of the substantial decision to everyone, which satisfy the right to self-government \[29\]. Equality of participation is a core dimension of democracy since it is a necessary requisite of self-government as the expression of the sovereignty of the people. For a political system to have the potential to be democratic, it has to provide legal provisions for political participation based on equal distribution of sovereignty: to provide equal shares of legal political freedoms for citizens. Equal legal opportunities for participation in terms of suffrage, organization of political parties, and their right to participate as contestants in elections are therefore criteria for inclusion of elections as having the potential of democratic qualities. The realization of this equal distribution of political participation can then be measured. That is what the following empirical analysis will do. In principle this entails two aspects: the participation of the people as individuals and as organized political groups. Participation in elections in transitional political systems such as the ones studied in this book also adds one aspect to this: the participation of previous authoritarian rulers. Specifying exactly what equal opportunity of political participation entails with regards to elections is a task of the next chapter.

As Sartori \[1987: 30\] reminds us, the etymological understanding of democracy leaves out the other side of the coin. Rule of the people is

\[26\] At the time, of course, men meant just free men excluding the vast majority of the population. Without any intention of downplaying its significance, the difference is a matter of citizenship and not democratic principle, hence, is not central to the discussion here.

\[27\] Not within the scope here to go into depth with each of these related concepts. For a good discussion of the notion of how the "people" can be conceived, see Dahl 1989, Ch. 9.

\[28\] Political participation in the decision-making process may indeed take many forms in a democracy, ranging from localized and indulgent deliberations among friends to national and cross-national advocacy, and the selection of representatives for the execution of power. But in terms of democracy as a political system of national self-rule, it is the latter that is a necessary component and hence the focus here.

\[29\] That is the conceptual point. In empirical terms, the realization of equal participation may naturally vary. And as an empirical realization we tend to appreciate participation in terms of "the more, the better". A further discussion waits in chapter three.
exercised over the very same people. This is no easy equation; several formats for translation of rule by the people into a rule over the people have been envisaged. However, in order to be workable any modern form of national democracy must be representative. This understanding of democracy induces a particular kind of vertical accountability (Schedler 1999). In ancient Greece, direct democracy by the “people” – male and affluent - hence sovereign citizens meant direct participation in decision-making with immediate effect. With modern notions of democracy in larger more complex political systems, accountability has taken on a different and paramount significance. With modern democracy, marrying liberal rights with republican obligations and responsible leadership, representation became grafted upon democracy. (Hindess 2000) As formulas for solving the problem of representation, there are many variants of electoral systems as well as the function distinctions between presidential and parliamentary systems and unitary versus federal states. There are also numerous variations on judicial, administrative, and consultative laws and regulations.

Nevertheless, a core issue in the translation of rule by the people into rule by representatives over the people regards free competition. While it can be argued on theoretical grounds that the necessary political competition can be achieved in de jure one-party systems (Macpherson 1968:37) this has not been the case in the real world. A minimum requirement in order for people to have a choice is that there are at least two alternatives. While choice in a two-party system is a limited, as long as the legal provisions do not prevent more parties from engaging, and as long as other restrictions or practices such as threats or intimidation do not seriously undermine the process, there are de facto no constraints on the potential for choice. But as a necessary condition, legal provisions must allow for political competition under a representative formula. While more competition is not always better – in terms of fragmented party systems and ungovernable polities –

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30 Even “participatory” democracy as a formula for decision-making translates into a representative form as only the few can in practice lead, speak and contribute to mass meetings – or the meetings would be endless – whilst the many are confined to listen, evaluate and vote just as in a representative democracy proper (e.g. Dahl 1989, 277). There are indeed other venues for participatory approaches of inclusion that can feed into a policy process before the decision-point but that renders participatory approaches a supplement, as opposed to alternative, to representative democracy.
too little competition indicates that the potential for this democratic quality to contribute to the realization of self-government has not been fulfilled.

In sum, in order to rule the people must have some procedures for making decisions that are mutually binding on members of the polity. This requires some form of government, which in a complex modern democratic polity entails representation of the people. This representation cannot be limited by geographical, socio-ethnic, or other forms of functional representation in one-party systems. Individuals or groups aspiring to represent the people and assume the function of government – or legislature – must be subjected to competition. Thus, the fundamental value of self-government as individual and collective freedom translates to not only into equality of political participation, but also free political competition without which there is no choice. This choice allows the people to exercise its sovereign discretion to indirectly rule via representation31.

Again, since this study is not concerned with classification into democracies and non-democracies, there is no need to establish a cut-off point for exactly how much political participation and competition is needed. A general rule of thumb is the more political participation is better and there should be at least two competitors32. The legal existence of political competition under regulations of de jure multi-party politics only makes an eligibility criterion for making a valid observation: a criterion for the unit of analysis as having the potential for this democratic quality. Similarly, the legal provisions for equal political participation are a qualifying criterion for inclusion in the

31 It is quite possible to make the argument that the level of competition in any political system is also dependent on the character of political parties, not only their sheer existence. Political parties based on ethnic or class, or other functional differentiation that applies more or less by automation makes for less competition than programmatic parties. One cannot chose which ethnic group, family, or class one is born into, and social mobility is typically highly constrained. If parties and voting is based on such belongingness rather than policy options, few voters can or will switch their votes between elections. Competition is thereby reduced.

32 Similarly to participation, it is also considered that the more competition the better in terms of democratic freedom of choice. However, one should recognize the possibility of too much competition. Too many parties in the legislature, for example, make a fragmented party system (Sartori 1968) detrimental to governability and thus effective representation. In this sense, one should recognize that in certain respects, there is such a thing as too much democratic quality (c.f. Coppedge 2003).
analysis. The variations in political participation and competition can then be operationalized and measured but that will have to await further specification in chapter three.

Thus, the understanding of democracy envisaged in this study descends from Schumpeter’s (1947, 269) basic definition, which has been refined by scholars such as Riker (1986, 25) and Huntington (1991, 29). The most widely accepted extension of Schumpeter’s definition is that of Dahl (1971, 1-7; 1991, 72ff) in his concept of “polyarchy”. Most of the contemporary comparative work on democratization is conducted in reference to Dahl. Scholars like Bratton and van de Walle (1997), Diamond, Linz and Lipset (1989), and Reilly (2001) for example, build on Dahl’s definition. The meaning of democracy for the purposes of this book has been conceptualized along the same lines. Democracy understood as self-government requires not only equality of political participation and but also free political competition. What needs to be added is a third dimension concerned with legitimacy.

Legitimacy, contested over millennia from Plato’s discussions on justice to Aristotle’s distinction between monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, remains a subject of great debate. Weber’s (1958) frequently cited ideal-type construction of traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal legitimacy is concerned primarily with the causes of legitimacy, which is not our subject here. The same debate frames the discussion of Lipset’s (1959) distinction between procedural legitimacy and legitimacy produced by government effectiveness, and their mutual relationship. For present purposes, legitimacy is analyzed as an attribute of self-government and not the reason for its existence. The very essence of rule of the people is that it is somehow exercised by the people. There are many other potential kinds of legitimacy, yet this particular substantive understanding is peculiar to democracy, hence democratic legitimacy. When the people manifest their desire to rule over itself by established procedures, self-government is legitimate. If the people of any one country do not support the idea of self-government through representation modern liberal democracy cannot

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11 Weber’s (1958) rational-legal legitimacy is closest to democratic legitimacy. Bobbio (1989:83-86) discussed six different kinds of legitimacy where one if dependent on the will of the people.
thrive since there is little prospect of coercing a people to rule over itself. This means that as an attribute of democracy, legitimacy is a subjective phenomenon in the eyes of the beholders; dependent on the views of the people, the political parties, and power-elites rather than on the judgment of the observer. This kind of legitimacy may also be referred to as real as opposed to formal legitimacy. In this sense, I side with Linz (1988) and Diamond (e.g. 1990) even if my conceptual argument is slightly different than theirs.

The principally different notion of objective, or formal, legitimacy such as Nagel’s (1991, 35) is based on the judgment of the observer that the people have “no grounds for complaints”. Hence, it is not the people’s views but the supposedly distant observers’ assessment of formal procedures and processes that is being evaluated. It is a most unsavory approach. Cast in Nagel’s terms, the communist system in USSR at the time was fully legitimate since Russian researchers and leaders alike would concur the people had no grounds for complaint. It makes legitimacy detached from the sentiments of others than the supposedly distant observer. This seems counter-intuitive to the general understanding of legitimacy. More importantly, as an attribute of democracy it is morally disputable and logically inconsistent. The objectivist view is authoritarian and fails to recognize the sovereignty of the people. No matter what the majority of the people experience the supposedly objective observer can judge if they should feel happy or not about the current state of affairs. It seriously undermines the notion of self-government and can be used to justify morally unacceptable systems of rule.

One of the most prominent contemporary thinkers in this area launched the idea of contextual understanding of legitimacy. Beetham’s (1991, 16) argument is about the use of power more in general, and not about legitimating a particular regime. Yet, his tripartite definition – the exercise of power is legitimate if it is in accordance with existing rules; if these rules can be justified by shared beliefs and if there is evidenced consent to the arrangement – is arguably in every practical sense also subjective. The first requirement is one of lawfulness, which is beside the point here. When it comes to systems of rule, constitutions are made to reflect what the actors considered a legitimate regime, hence, cannot be used to evaluate whether the same system is
The second part effectively depends on the third requirement of consent. If there is no consent, there must be a lack of shared beliefs about how power should be distributed and exercised. In essence, Beetham’s definition depends primarily on the subjective evaluation of the people.

In sum, at the core of the democratic self-government system is the principle that the people select representatives who govern and are held accountable for their actions. The two prerequisites — equality of political participation and free political competition — must be present if the process is to be legitimate. Yet, the first two central democratic qualities are not enough because their existence builds on a fundamental assumption of legitimacy. In order for the people to rule over itself, the people must consider peaceful solution of conflicts by self-government to be appropriate. Hence, peaceful acceptance of decision, elections, and their outcome by the people as organized in grouping is at the core of political democracy. There is hardly any way to coerce people to rule in any meaningful way without their buy in. Self-government in modern forms further involves the practice of indirect rule via representatives.

The voluntary principal-agent relationship between the people and its representatives cannot be established, or upheld, unless both parties conceive of it as legitimate; hence, the third necessary dimension in this study. In electoral terms, legitimacy means that the procedure for representation and sanctioning is conceived of as just, fair, and a good procedure in principle. That is exactly why observers worry to see low political participation and disengagement from political competition in the established democracies. It is feared that it signals a reduction in the belief and support for democracy. In new democracies, and democracies-to-be, there are usually more radical expressions of disbelief in the idea of self-government such as refusal to stand for elections, organized political violence and violent overthrow of governments but more on that in the next chapter.
Three Qualities of Democracy

Democracy is understood to mean self-government by a sovereign people. While the discussion may not have covered some possible areas such as identification of the people, possible socio-economic ramification of the exercise of people’s rights, and so on, it has argued that three core dimensions are necessary instruments for the realization of self-government: equality of political participation, free political competition and legitimacy of the idea of self-government. What has been argued is these are the important qualities necessary and fundamental for legitimate self-government. It is not necessary – or indeed possible – to analyze all possible aspects of political democracy but it seems to me that these three are fundamental providing the potential for the realization of self-government as individual and collective freedom.

The discussion has been kept intentionally abstract for distinct purposes: The definition allows for wide socio-cultural variation: elected officials may range from chiefs, priests or other “traditional” authorities; constituencies may be different ethno-linguistic groups; there may be no women political representatives or women may be positively discriminated; there may be special consensus-rules of decision-making or not; elections may be more or less frequent; it might be a unitary or a federal system, presidential or parliamentary, proportional or majoritarian; and so on. Finally, the book is not primarily about democracy writ large but a study of elections. The frequency of elections and trajectories of democratic qualities in terms of political participation, competition and legitimacy of elections constitute a set of valid concerns to the realization of self-government. The next step is to specify these three democratic qualities in operational terms in the electoral context. How do we know them when we see them in electoral processes?
We turn now to the question of elections as a partial regime. The more democratic traits different parts of the political system has, the more democratic the country. The only way of knowing how democratic a country is by thoroughly analyzing the partial regimes that constitute that entire political system. Nevertheless, by analyzing elections as the central institution of representative democracy for the realization of its core value: rule by the people over the people, we may actually get to know a lot about the system as a whole. However, a claim that the level of democracy writ large has a strong and positive relationship to the quality of elections has too be substantiated by empirical analysis; the subject of chapters six and seven. For now, elections will be studied in isolation as a necessary but partial regime of democracy. The ensuing discussion first presents a precise definition of elections and the justification for the exclusive focus on elections as the unit of analysis in this study. The discussion is then followed by an operationalization of the democratic qualities of contested elections. For the purposes of examination and possible replication, technical clarifications and specifications of the unit of analysis, data collection and processing, sample characteristics and data documentation are also discussed in some detail allowing the reader to inspect the foundation on which the analysis is built. Finally, the chapter offers a methodological discussion reviewing issues of the use of time in comparative analysis and the role of interpretation in quantitative analysis.
Contested and Participatory Elections

What constitutes the unit of analysis in this study is relatively straightforward. Elections are concrete occurrences with institutional expressions, rules, and regulations. They are well documented, can be observed directly and are tangible in the form of indelible ink, ballot papers, boxes, election officials, voters, and so on. Ontologically speaking, they are relatively undisputable. Chapter two argued existing forms of democracy are representative and entail the use of periodic elections as a mechanism to select individuals and groups – political parties and their candidates – who will enjoy legislative or executive power for a limited period. Thus, a necessary component for all aspiring democratic systems are institutional guarantees for holding periodic and contested elections to the executive and legislative branches of government by which the people through participating can rule indirectly over itself. Periodic implies elections are held within the constitutional rules of timing and follow a predefined periodicity. In this sense, democracy is pro tempore (c.f. Linz 1998; Schedler and Santiso 1998). Following the argument in chapter two, such electoral institutions must de jure guarantee equality of participation and free competition. Ultimately, participatory and contested electoral provisions should make periodic elections by virtue of its procedures produce democratic legitimacy among voters and participants. In short, the unit of analysis in this study is de jure participatory, contested, and legitimate periodic elections. The realization of these three democratic qualities in terms of the level of actual participation, contestation, and legitimacy are the dependent variables.

The Democratic Qualities of Elections

Having defined the object of study, and determined in the previous chapter the three qualities of democracy necessary for the realization of self-government, we can now operationalize participatory, contested, and legitimate elections. Each of the three dimensions has three or more aspects to be measured using their own empirical indicators. Participation, for example, means more than just popular participation.

34 There is one exception to this. In the last of the four empirical tests in chapter seven, the unit is changed to country for reasons of double-check on the validity of the findings.
measured by voter turnout. In new electoral regimes, the issue of opposition participation is equally relevant since electoral participation by all political parties cannot be taken for granted. Sometimes incumbent regimes violate the rules of the game to the extent of making participation meaningless and the opposition parties respond with boycott. Then there are times when opposition parties (mis-)use the exit option in order to discredit a fair election they stand no chance of winning. Each three or four aspects of these three qualities have a separate indicator with a theoretical range from zero to full - the variations this book is primarily concerned with.

**Free and Fairness of Elections**

A fundamental issue in new electoral regimes is the extent to which the election process is free and fair according to domestic and international observers. This variable creates an important distinction between democratically acceptable and unacceptable processes. It also conditions other variables since manipulation of election results through coercion or fraud invalidates indicators like voter turnout, the winner’s share of votes and legislative seats, and alternation in power. The distinction between free and fair processes, and flawed ones is therefore crucial from a methodological stance. One could argue that this variable should have been included as an indicator of competition since it might seem contra-intuitive that unfair elections can be competitive at all; but they can. There are a few instances in Africa where genuinely unfair elections have nevertheless effectuated an opposition win. For example, the presidential and parliamentary elections in Ivory Coast on 22 October and 10 December 2000; the executive elections of Madagascar on 16 December 2001; the parliamentary elections in Malawi on 15 June 1999; and the constituent assembly-cum-legislative elections in Namibia on 11 November 1989 are cases where electoral irregularities affected the results but there was still an alternation in power, or as in the Namibian case, a highly insecure environment for the transitional election. Even though the “menu of manipulation” is wide (Schedler 2002a), trying to cheat is one thing, doing it successfully is sometimes quite another, even if serious irregularities do not usually coincide with turnovers. Following the discussion in the last chapter we can still capitalize on the option of keeping these relationships open to empirical analysis rather than
theoretical assumptions. It is also quite possible that manipulated or outright fake elections can be a good sign of high levels of competition, just because competition is not allowed to play out in election results does not necessarily mean it does not exist. In Zimbabwe for example, there has been an inverse relationship between the level of real competition and the trustworthiness of official results. The more competitive the political struggle for power in Zimbabwe, the more unfair and violent means President Mugabe and his regime applied. In such cases we cannot take election results as indicative of the level of competition hence, for the purposes of this study we must leave them aside when it comes to interpretation of the outcomes, but keeping in mind unfair elections might indicate high levels of actual competition in the political system.

Second, irregularities, manipulation, and fraud are not only sins of incumbents. Opposition parties in Africa are notorious for their tit-for-tat strategies and on many occasions manipulations on either side might well cancel each other out. There is no well-documented method of how to gauge such claims on comparative basis for large-N analysis. While there is no such thing as an entirely clean election due to human and technical errors, flaws must not alter or predetermine the outcome. We are therefore well advised to treat free and fairness of elections i) as indicating if the electoral process was acceptable or not; ii) as a control-variable when measuring indicators such as turnout, share of votes and seats since their values will be affected by whether elections were free and fair or not; and iii) as an aspect of the empirical puzzle of Africa’s recent election history. Although it may seem a given that the free and fairness of elections is not independent of some of the indicators, from turnout and opposition participation to peacefulness and losers’ acceptance of results, the exact relationships remains an empirical question. For example, do opposition parties always contest free and fair elections or do they sometimes act undemocratically crying foul to discredit the winner? Are breakdown of regimes more likely after unfair elections?

In sum, the differentiation between free and fair and flawed elections is a necessary component of the analysis with both substantial and methodological implications. Therefore the free and fairness of elections is both analytically and methodologically prior to the three
main dimensions of this study. The free and fair denominations are coded in four categories of “No, not at all” when elections were wholly unfair and obviously a charade, “No, not really” when there were numerous irregularities that affected the result, “Yes, somewhat” when there were deficiencies but they did not affect the outcome of the election, and “Yes, entirely” when elections were free and fair although there might have been fewer number of human errors and logistical restrictions on operations. When distinguishing between flawed processes and essentially acceptable electoral ones in a binominal fashion, the first two categories are collapsed into “flawed” while the later two indicate “free and fair”.

**Quality I: Political Participation**

Political participation is a sine qua non of any kind of democracy. Rule by the people requires participation, which has several aspects in elections. First, in a representative system, popular political participation is primarily exercised through voting. Equality of political participation in elections implies there is universal suffrage guaranteed by law. Suffrage may be limited by citizenship, age, and mental sanity. To be included in the analysis, an election must take place under regulated circumstances that in principle, guarantee universal and equal suffrage. The percentage of electorates who actually participate in electoral processes is used as an indicator of the realization of equal popular participation. Second, participatory elections also imply individuals and political parties have equal rights to exist and field candidates to contest elections. Empirically, the question is whether opposition parties and presidential candidates run for office and thus realize equality of participation. Finally, participation can take on a negative value if known anti-democrats join and contest elections, either as individuals or as parties. Three indicators are used to assess these aspects:

1. **Voter turnout.** This classical indicator of popular participation is generally understood to be an important dimension of the quality of democracy (for a recent example, see Altman and Pérez-Linan 2002). It has also been used as an indirect measure of popular legitimacy in many classical studies of established democracies (c.f. Lijphart 1999). Although context is likely to make a difference, a higher turnout is
preferable from the vantage point of democratic quality as the realization of equal political participation. The people is supposed to rule over itself through selection of leaders in elections, hence, the larger the share of voters actually turning up for the polls, the more popular power is actualized (given there are no mandatory voting requirements in Africa). As a measure, the share of registered voters is used in preference to share of voting age population. Population figures are often more inaccurate than voter registries in Africa. In the few cases official turnout figures are radically inflated, for example Mauritania’s executive election December 12, 1997 observers’ reported estimates were used as proxies.

2. Opposition participation. Participation by all political parties is only a given in established democracies. Whether opposition parties participation is total or they effectuate a partial or total boycott, is used as indicator of the realization of political parties’ equality of participation. It is assumed that – ceterus paribus – full participation of parties translates into higher democratic quality than if some or all parties boycott. Yet, we should not assume that participation covariate perfectly with the general democratic qualities and freedom and fairness of elections. On the one hand, opposition parties may participate even when elections stand no chance of being even remotely free and fair or legitimate. On the other hand, boycotts are occasionally staged in elections of relatively high democratic quality with the aim of discrediting the ruling regime when opposition parties stand no chance of winning. Such behavior nonetheless degrades democratic quality. I take full opposition participation to indicate presence of democratic quality in terms of realization of this aspect of equal participation. Opposition participation is measured here with three values: “No” for total boycotts, “Some” for partial boycotts, and “Yes, all” for elections where all major political parties participate. The indicator records primarily the pre-election period but also extends over election day itself.

3. Autocratic Guard Gone? Positive indicators of the democratic quality of elections are not enough in the context of new electoral regimes. The transformation of previously highly authoritarian rulers into born again democrats is a particularly troubling issue. One does not have to be a skeptic to wonder if the proverbial leopard could ever change its
spots. Baker (1998) notes that as of 1997 there were 20 former authoritarian rulers still in office under the guise of democracy. It seems reasonable to assume those who fought to prevent political liberalization will not willingly further it. (Carothers 1998)\(^\text{15}\) If current leaders of political parties previously assumed leading positions in an authoritarian regime I take it to endanger the democratic quality of the electoral process. Cases in this category are coded: “No” for elections where the presidential candidates or the leadership of one main party were previous authoritarian rulers, “Some” when a candidate or the leadership of one main party are former close associates (ministers or similar) of a former authoritarian regime, and “Yes” when none of the main contenders had ties to a former authoritarian regime.

**Quality II: Competition**

A decent level of competition is central to the realization of self-government, which in a representative democracy builds on accountability and responsiveness of elected representatives. To be included in the analysis, elections must \emph{de jure} allow for formation and contestation of alternatives, the choice of rulers and have provisions for alternations in power.\(^\text{36}\) \emph{De facto} electoral competition is likely to be low or non-existent and alternations in power virtually absent in non-democratic countries with elections (Dahl 1989; Diamond 2002; Schedler 2002; van de Walle 2002). To measure the variation in this dimension, four supplementary indicators are used.

4. **Winner’s Share of the Votes.** This variable taps the level of competition in executive elections. In a slight departure from Bratton and van de Walle’s (1997) and Bratton’s (1998) measure, I take figures from the first round of elections rather than the run-off. The modification is

\(^{15}\) See also Diamond’s (1999, 60) discussion of behavioral requirements of political actors in consolidated democracies.

\(^{36}\) The final operationalization in this way allows for inclusion of a borderline case: Uganda. While political parties have been allowed to exist, they have not until very recently been allowed to officially support and campaign for candidates. In practice the difference has not been all that dramatic though since candidates’ party and policy affiliation has generally been known to voters. This is further evidence by the fact that it has even been able to calculate seat shares in the legislature despite the official no party, movement policy. It is clear that Uganda’s electoral processes have been endowed with a substantial share of democratic qualities and much more of such than several other countries on the continent who officially operate multiparty systems, e.g. Togo and Zimbabwe.
motivated by a concern with validity. Many presidential elections in Africa demand an absolute majority in two round systems. Since the run-off is typically between the two most successful candidates from the first round, winning shares tend to be inflated while the figures from the first round are more representative of the actual level of competition. This choice also makes figures comparable to executive elections in countries such as Kenya using simple majority. One could perhaps question if the closeness of the outcome is a valid measure of the level of competition of the electoral campaign, since the former has been found in the established democracies to be mediated by the choice of electoral system. This objection does not apply to presidential races in Africa and there are only five parliamentary systems\footnote{Botswana, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Mauritius, and South Africa} among the 48 states in Africa. Second, an indicator can never fully represent and measure actual competition. Nevertheless, the closeness of the outcome, which is one of the most widely used indicators of the level of competition, arguably comes quite close. The indicator measures the winning candidate’s share of votes (first round) as percentage of total valid votes.

5. Winning Party’s Share of the Seats. This is a supplementary variable to number four covering legislative elections. This indicator measures the largest party’s share of total seats in parliament. The main alternative – share of votes – has not been used for two reasons. First, the figures for share of votes are missing for more elections than for share of seats and are more likely to be less reliable due to problems with voters’ registries, counting and collation procedures, including irregularities. Second, the situation in parliament is of particular importance as an indicator of competition. A two-thirds majority in parliament typically gives the ruling party free reign to introduce changes in the constitution unilaterally. No agreement on the rules of the game is needed and incumbents in Africa have proven likely to exploit this. Although the well-known phenomenon of democratic dominant-party systems exists in Africa (e.g. Botswana, South Africa), in general a low level of competition is taken as a sign of low democratic quality. As mentioned above, electoral systems are designed to mediate the proportionality between votes and seats. The most important effect is that proportional representation (PR) system tends to produce multiparty as opposed to
two-party systems and decrease the winner’s relative share of votes and seats. This effect is most prominent in PR systems with medium to large multi-member constituencies (MMCs) (e.g. Bogdanor and Butler 1983; Downs 1957; Duverger 1954; Lijphart 1984, 1994, 1999; Lindberg 2004c; Mair 1990; Powell 1982, 2000; Rae 1971; Sartori 1968, 1986, 1997). Nevertheless, in all but one country in Africa that use PR-systems with medium to large MMCs or pure PR38, historical cleavages predispose the electorate to support two main parties, nullifying the presumed effect of PR. Hence, the distortion of results by electoral systems should be insignificant. On the other hand, we expect the disproportionality of the two-round absolute majority- and plurality electoral systems to produce inflated legislative majorities, displaying lower than real levels of competition. We have good reasons to expect this indicator to underestimate rather than overestimate the level of competition. At the same time, it provides information on the de facto competitiveness in African parliaments with the advantage of facilitating further discussions on legislative majorities and minorities.

6. Second Party’s Share of the Seats. This is an alternative indicator of competition in legislative elections. The isolated measure of the relative seat share of the winning party has been criticized for not showing the strength of the opposition in cases where the opposition is split between a number of parties. This indicator measures the second largest party’s share of total seats in parliament.

7. Turnover of Power. This is perhaps the ultimate indicator of competition. If a de jure competitive electoral regime is truly competitive, de facto it is likely to result in alternations in power at some point, as the saying goes, the voters will sooner or later throw the rascals out. Manifested alternations in power are not necessarily a condition for democracy or democratic qualities. Elections can be truly competitive without turnovers and in some cases one party can rule over several electoral cycles. Yet, it is only when a peaceful turnover occurs that we have unambiguous evidence that it would be accepted by the losing incumbent. As

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38 South Africa, Angola, Namibia, Mozambique, Liberia, Burundi, and Sierra Leone. An additional six countries operate PR systems in small multi-member constituencies. These systems have a strong majoritarian effect wherefore the reasoning about the effects of PR-systems does not apply.
the empirical realities in Africa attest, alternations in power (whether executive or legislative) may occur even in fraudulent elections. Electoral manipulation may often, but not always, be sufficient to alter the outcome but alternation in power manifesting institutionalized uncertainty39 (Przeworski 1986, 57-61), remains an important indicator of the democratic quality of elections. In Huntington’s classical formulation, the “two-turnover-test” has been used to infer consolidation of democracy after the first and founding election has been held. Both for that purpose and for the purpose of indicating competition as a democratic quality, whether the criterion is a single or two turnovers it is problematic if used in isolation from other indicators, because it is not sensitive to differences in electoral or party systems (Günther, Diamandouros, and Puhle 1995, 13; Schedler 2001a). Here it is used in combination with other indicators of competitive quality and this problematic aspect should therefore be less significant. When alternations occur in a peaceful manner, it remains a sign of the distributive authority of the people inherent in the expression “rule by the people”. Elections are coded as “No” if there is no turnover, “Half” if there is an alternation in power and the new president is an immediate successor to the former president of the same party, or, in legislative elections if there is a partly new coalition forming a majority in parliament, and “Yes” if there is a new president from a different party, or, there is a new party/coalition of new parties with a legislative majority.

Quality III: Legitimacy

Legitimacy is perhaps the most obvious cut-off point between elections in democracies, non-democracies, and hybrid-regimes. Elections are not legitimate just because certain procedures have been used fairly but when actors involved consent and testify to its legitimacy. Although legitimacy is often framed in terms of attitudes and sentiments, behavior is arguably the best indicator. If incumbents say they support democratic elections and will respect the rules of the game that is great, but the real test comes with losing an election. If they, for example, immediately accept the outcome, concede defeat,

39 For a variant of the argument with an emphasis on a bounded uncertainty, see Schmitter and Karl (1991).
and honor a peaceful alternation in power I take it to testify the legitimacy of the election. Opposition parties may appear democratic enough by their statements and programs but if they refuse to accept the outcome of free and fair elections, the legitimacy of democratic elections is still inadequately established. Similarly, if the opposition resorts to violent incursions, legitimacy has no bearing among these elites. Ideally, we would wish to measure both political elites and popular legitimacy of elections but this has not been possible. We lack reliable indicators of voters’ acceptance of the electoral process and its results since that would required a kind of voter survey data40 or some behavioral test that does not exist in Africa - yet. Therefore, we are restricted to measuring elites behavior. Generally, parties as representatives of their voters and as organizations that seek to increase their vote share in coming elections can be used as indicators of general acceptance of elections41. Crucial behavioral testimonies of elites’ degree of acceptance of elections as the legitimate method of self-government regard acceptance of the outcome, the frequency of alternations in power and regime survival. Three indicators are used to measure the different aspects of this third quality:

8. Losers’ Acceptance. Whether the losers accept the results indicates the extent to which political elites view elections as legitimate. In “normal” free and fair elections, we expect democratic-minded elites to accept defeat graciously – even if grudgingly – and to assume the position of a constructive opposition. Yet, in new electoral regimes losing parties may initially challenge the results in order to gain political advantage, e.g. from the international community. This can also be a strategy for “bad losers” seeking to undermine the political rule of their rivals. Such posturing is likely to happen in places like Africa undergoing transition when things are still in flux. Therefore, a challenge to the official results cannot be taken at face value as substantiating allegations of irregularities. Opposition parties may also accept defeat and the results even under circumstances of less than free and fair elections. This is more likely when opposition parties acknowledge

40 The Afro-Barometer fills a very important function in this regard. The first survey was completed in 1999, however, and it’s scope covers only ten countries at the moment, however, wherefore it is of limited use in the present study.

41 There are reasons to assume parties to dispute election results to a higher degree than their voters or society in general.
that they would probably have lost even if the elections had been free and fair, that is, when the incumbent engaged in “unnecessary” fraud.

It is also a possible strategy of opposition parties with a long-term perspective and expectations that are more moderate. If an electoral process is generally accepted as a substantial improvement on the past and there is a perceived prospect of future advancements, opposition parties may well accept defeat in the interest of peace and stability. Hence, the relationship between freedom and fairness in elections and the losing parties’ acceptance of defeat remains an empirically open question. Nevertheless, losers’ peaceful acceptance is a critical test of the system’s legitimacy. It is only when an election is free and fair and the losers accept the results that we can speak of manifested legitimate elections. Losers’ acceptance is measured using three values: “No” when none of the main losing parties accept the outcome, “Not at first/some” when either some or all losing parties reject the results at first but within three months accept it, or, if some losing parties do not accept the results, and “Yes, immediately” when all losing parties concede defeat immediately after the results are pronounced.

9. Peaceful. This brings us to the question of politically related violence and when it occurs. Does it occur during the campaign and/or on election day? Relative peacefulness during the campaign and polling measures the legitimacy of the electoral contest as a peaceful means of allocating political power. Use of violence is a core symptom of failed institutionalization (Schedler 2001, 70-71; Elster et al. 1998, 27). Assassination of political opponents, voter intimidation, attacks against the liberty and property of political adversaries, violence against elected officials and/or electoral administrators, riots, and ethnic or other forms of “social” cleansing are examples of serious politically motivated violence that proves major actors do not see elections as legitimate. This indicator also has three values: “No” when there is systematic and/or widespread politically related violence during the campaign, on election day and/or during the post-election period, “Isolated events” when there are non-systematic and isolated incidents of violence, or geographically very limited outbreaks, “Yes, peaceful” for cases of entirely peaceful elections. The latter means that none of my reporting sources have testified to instances of serious politically
motivated violence during the election campaign period ahead of polling day, during voting and in the immediate aftermath.

10. Electoral Regime Survival. A necessary element in an assessment of democratic quality is that electoral cycles are not aborted, hence this negative indicator of legitimacy. Coups or civil wars following elections as in Sierra Leone and RoC, is proof that the cycle of holding regular elections has broken down\(^{42}\) and key elite groups do not consider the democratic process of rule legitimate.

Data Collection and Processing

Information on the ten indicators of these three democratic qualities in addition to the free and fairness of elections was sought from a number of sources and used in coding each of the 232 cases. The philosophy being the more sources, the better, the main concern in this regard has been reliability. In this kind of research, there are two principal threats to reliability: biases in the sources consulted and subjectivity in the coder’s scoring.

Regarding the “noise” and contamination induced from sources it is not always easy, as discussed above to determine for example, if political if violence was widespread or just isolated instances. When information is incomplete or the events surrounding election day are dramatic and chaotic, it can be a time-consuming task just verifying a simple thing as whether all opposition parties participated or not. In such cases, standard academic sources are also more likely to lack definitive information. Reports from news agencies like BBC, IRIN News and from local newspapers accessed via AllAfrica.com have been very helpful in supplementing information and in filling in those gaps. In such situations, it is always better to have several independent sources to rely on. If they all agree, it is likelier the information is correct. If one or more sources disagree, the researcher will have to try to judge which side is more reliable. This is a process similar to interrogation of one’s interview or historical data in qualitative work: One questions the general character and reliability of the source, its reputation, and known, if any, liabilities. Here, academic sources and independent institutes (such as IPU, IFES and Carter foundation) are of

\(^{42}\) The data set also provides the date of the breakdowns.
higher value than information from diplomatic sources, or multilateral organizations where the country is itself a member. In addition, one question possible biases from interests in the specific case, which is often the case when neighboring countries send election observation missions.

Finally, the independence of each source must be evaluated. Naturally, even if ten “sources” report a particular piece of information but they all have it from a single source - such as the corrupt minister of justice, or the bitter and power-seeking opposition leader - we have in reality only one source. In any case, as researchers we try to establish what the most probable and reasonable interpretation is. In some cases, it becomes necessary to seek more sources to make a judgment. In other cases – though very few in the present data set – one must give up and code the value as missing for particular indicators. Again, there is nothing in principle that distinguishes this practice from a standard qualitative approach. For less than five percent of the 5,568 values entered in the data set of the 232 cases, there have been only one or two sources. The majority of scores have been corroborated by at least five sources hence; a certain kind of reliability test is included already at the stage of data collection.

The use of multiple sources and crosschecking information minimizes the net effect of filtering and contamination by bias in sources\(^{43}\), even though these measures do not mitigate subjectivity or incoherent scoring by coder. In order to counter-act possible non-systematic or systematic errors from coder’s scoring, all data was collated in 48 country files, one for each country. In addition to general political history, each country file contains a section on each election with a coding scheme and extracts from all sources used, full references to each source for each piece of information. The country files consist about six to twenty or so pages, containing in all more than 400 pages of compressed country-specific information on elections and related events.

The procedure was to compile all the data in these country files, and then code all the cases of elections within, as much as possible, a

\(^{43}\) For specific information on exactly which sources have been used to code these indicators the reader will have to refer to Appendix I.
relatively short period of time\textsuperscript{44}. The data was collected over a three-year period (2000-2002). While I got some data on 82 initial cases from Bratton and van de Walle (1996) and Bratton (1998), I decided to double-check each coding from the original and additional sources to ensure accuracy and consistency. The initial data also had a larger number of missing values. For each of the 232 elections in the complete data set, information has been collected on the eleven indicators of democratic qualities and an additional 13 background variables such as electoral system, share of women in the legislature, year and date, making the 5,568 observations. The author did all data collection as well as coding, each election was coded according to the coder’s translation book. That has advantages and disadvantages. The main advantage being \textit{ceteris paribus}, a single coder is arguably more likely to apply scoring criteria in a more coherent manner than several coders. On the other hand double-blind coding procedures for example can be used both to crosscheck reliability of scores and for inconsistencies in the scoring. No such inter-coder reliability tests have been performed. While it had obviously been desirable, there were simply no funds available. The data set itself, the file information document including a coder’s translation, and the 48 background data-files are freely available from the author’s website [http://www.svet.lu.se/Staff/Personal_pages/Staffan_lindberg/Staffan_lindberg.html](http://www.svet.lu.se/Staff/Personal_pages/Staffan_lindberg/Staffan_lindberg.html) and preparations are underway to make the materials available from Inter-University Consortium for Political Research.

The Sample

There are 232 elections in the data set of which 97 are presidential and 135 are parliamentary polls. Each poll has been given the status of a case even if polling took place on the same day. This is due to several reasons, one of which is to avoid introduction of bias in the data set by those countries that hold executive and legislative elections on separate

\textsuperscript{44} Cases were coded in two major batches. All cases until 31 December 2001 were coded in one sweep in February-March 2002. This initial set of cases were analyzed and used in Lindberg (2004a). The remaining cases dating from 1 January 2002 to 30 June 2003 were coded in October 2003. During that process, the initial data set was reviewed to check for consistency of coding and in the process, a small number of errors were found and corrected. The final set has been used for three publications (Lindberg 2004b, 2004c, and n.d. 2005) in addition to the present book.
occasions that would otherwise acquire double weight in the sample. It is also the case that values sometimes differ on, for example, voter turnout and turnover of power, even if the two elections are held on the same day.

Furthermore, presidential elections often involve a second round of voting at a later date, which might also cause the values of the different variables to fluctuate. The separate coding of presidential and parliamentary elections does not mean two elections on the same day are coded as first and second elections; rather, sequential numbers are assigned to polls within each category of presidential and legislative elections.

**The Distribution**

Most of the indicators in the data set are ordinal or interval measures and there are few missing values. The highest number of missing values (nine) is found in the indicator for voter turnout. The percentage of seats won by the second largest party in parliament is missing five values, while the indicator for percentage of seats won by the largest party have four missing values. The indicators for the percentage of votes won by the winning candidate in presidential polls, the level of politically motivated violence, and acceptance by the opposition of the outcome of the elections have two missing values each. All other indicators have no missing values. The highest number of missing values and/or an indicator represents 3.88 percent of the total sample. These few missing values are randomly distributed and induce no bias in the sample.

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<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free&amp;Fair %</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>119</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The indicators are also different in the amount of information required to achieve reliable coding. The percentage of votes won by the first and second candidate in a presidential race, for example, are relatively “thin” and uncomplicated indicators. For sure, there can be disagreements between sources, falsified results, and contradicting claims of who actually won. Nevertheless, such disagreements between sources belong to that category of fact finding and were relatively uncommon. There is very little interpretation and quantification involved from the researcher at the coding stage on these indicators. Other indicators are more complex in nature and require much more of researchers interpretative skills at the coding stage. For these indicators, the information gathered is essentially qualitative in nature and has been quantified by the coding process.

An effort has been made to mitigate adjuration problems by the use of specified and unambiguous coding criteria for each of the values in the indicators. The extent to which the coding is dependent on the coding choices of researcher should not be over-emphasized; in a vast majority of cases coding has been rather straightforward. Even so, a certain amount of interpretation is involved in judging for example if political violence – by far the most difficult indicator to code – was systematic and widespread, or merely isolated instances even if more than a few. Although politically motivated violence during the campaign, polling, or post-election process is typically something both academic sources, observation missions and news reports cover, it is sometimes difficult to establish the extent and nature of its occurrences. When violence was reported, I have considered it non-systematic unless proven otherwise. That should prevent over-emphasizing the extent of violence. At the same time, the use of a middle category prevents creating too rosy a picture of peaceful elections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 4A. Distribution of Ratio Indicators.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Missing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voter Turnout %</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>17.65</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>97.0</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winning Candidate’s % Votes</td>
<td>60.4</td>
<td>19.30</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>99.0</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winning Party’s % of Seats</td>
<td>67.0</td>
<td>20.62</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>99.0</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Party’s % of Seats</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>12.44</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**TABLE 4B.** Distribution of Cases: Interval Indicators.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Value Label</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Free &amp; Fair</strong></td>
<td>No, not at all</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Irregularities affected the result</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>38.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Irregularities not significant for result</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>52.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, entirely</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>232</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opposition Participation</strong></td>
<td>Boycott</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partial Boycott</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>70.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>232</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>&quot;Old Guard&quot; Participation</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>64.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Associates</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>232</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Turnover of Power</strong></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>71.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Half</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>232</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Losers Acceptance</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some/Later</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>32.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>31.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>230</td>
<td>99.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Missing</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>232</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peaceful</strong></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incidents</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>60.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>230</td>
<td>99.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Missing</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>232</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regime Survival</strong></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>84.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>232</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Special mention needs to be drawn to how elections were coded as free and fair or not. While the initial coding was done using the four categories outlined above, in much of the following analysis the significant distinction is taken to be between elections considered acceptably free and fair or not according to the specification above. The most important documentation for such judgments has been mission statements and reports from international and domestic (if present) election observation teams. The main methodological problem with assessing these documents was the changing and somewhat fluid standards over time for what observers have covered and what irregularities count as more serious than others making elections less than free and fair (e.g. Eklit and Svensson 1997, Lehoucq 2003, Schedler 2002a). To some extent control for such inconsistencies have been accounted for by the use of multiple other sources such as Election...
Watch, Keesing’s Record of World Events, and assessments of other academics that specializes in a particular country or region. In some countries, local think tanks and institutes also provide additional information. Another problem was the more politicized observation missions such as those from the Organization of African Unity (OAU), then African Union (AU). These reports are often less reliable than others. Finally, elections held before 1990 were never monitored by independent observation missions and information has been sourced from the alternative sources mentioned above.

All processing was done in SPSS 11.0.2 for Macintosh using standard techniques. In the calculation of means, the geometric mean is used instead of the arithmetic mean. The reason being the geometric mean is not as sensitive to outliers and skewness as its arithmetic cousin is (Blume 1974; Datton et al. 1998).

Quantitative Analysis and Interpretation

The role of interpretation in the analysis of quantitative data is central to this book and, a more thorough discussion is in place. The use of time is another core methodological concern in the following comparative analyses. A clarification of exactly how it is used in the various parts of the analysis is deemed necessary. The following discussion deals with these two broad methodological issues.

In order to avoid association with any ill-informed, straw man characterization of quantitative analysis, it serves the purpose to clarify my stance. The qualitative and quantitative divide in the social sciences is sometimes described as one between ontological foundationalists and anti-foundationalists (c.f. Marsh and Stoker 2002). Such an argument seems to be an exaggeration at best, and more likely built on a fundamental misconception. It builds on the idea that the world of social science is allocated in two camps. One of which believes all social phenomena are “hard”, object-like and exists independently of the observer while the other camp posit that all social facts are rather socially constructed, dependent entirely on the eyes of the beholder(s). I seriously doubt that these extreme positions are held by any significant number of social scientists. The more reasonable position seems to be that the objects of study in the world of social sciences are solid and “real-like” to varying degrees. Some phenomena are less complex
and more object-like facts like for example, voter turnout figures, actual prices paid for goods and services, unemployment rates, constitutional requirements and so on. Relatively unambiguous or objective knowledge about these can be gathered even if making sense of them is always a matter of interpretation. Other, equally important and valid, study objects defy such unquestionable descriptive characteristics. Among these, we find both actor-centered objects such as intentions, perceptions, and motivations, informal institutions such as norms guiding behavior, and structures such as patriarchy or modernity – if they exist – as well as illusive processes such as globalization and modernization. In short, the objects we study are solid to varying degrees. It is the prerogative of the researcher to identify and justify the choice of the study object.

When it comes to making sense of collected data, interpretation is always at the heart of our activity regardless of the kind of data and the kind of techniques used for processing. One example, discussed already at some length, will suffice to illustrate the point: voter turnout. It consists of relatively undisputable figures expressed as decimals or percentages with high reliability in most cases. It seems also to have a high validity when used to measure the restricted sense of citizen participation in elections. However, the interpretation of the meaning is another. First, is the issue of which measure to use: percentage of votes as share of registered voters, or eligible voting age population? Second, what is a “good” level of participation and at what level can we speak of “low” or “unacceptable” participation? This is mostly a question, as always, about interpretation. The data, no matter how solid or objective, never speaks or tells a story. The meaning – or the evidence – is always provided by the researcher, and possibly the reader. In sum, there is nothing in principle that distinguishes quantitative from qualitative methods even in this regard.

It is true to an extent that the way we chose to frame and define our study object in a sense predetermines data collection and processing. Concepts and theories as the essence of the terminology we use ultimately only exist in the abstract. For example, “elections” is a term that can be used to refer to concepts that in turn refer to a mass of empirical phenomena “out there” in the world of human beings, rocks and stones, relationships and sensations. If we are to believe cognitive
psychology (e.g. Dawes 1995, 81-3; Høyrup 1995, 9-12; Piaget 1972; Rosenberg 1995, 123), our concepts are formed in a perpetual reflexive process of encounters with empirical phenomena and our own reactions to these phenomena. The more encounters we have had with a particular type of phenomena – election-related for example – the more are percepts structured by our pre-defined expectations. It is with regard to this that post-positivist thinkers have a strong point: the study of human beings and society is ultimately conditioned by the contextual interpretations of the same humans and society, constructed by the same humans, as well as by the researcher (Garfinkel 1984; Giddens 1982; cf. Flyvbjerg 1993, 64-5). In other words, our concepts contribute to the construction and recording of even as “purely” empirical phenomena as elections.

As modern positivists, we do acknowledge also this point but we also strive to construct as “true” theories and as valid and objective observations as possible. The remedy against the dangers of relativism is clear and precise specification of concepts and theories followed by empirically sound, relevant, and preferably (if possible) systematic data collection. By specification of concepts, we lay open the prerequisites of our study, and by demarcation and operationalization of our theory, we clarify the descriptive or causal claims as well as what would falsify our statements. Transparency of data gathering, processing, and analyzes makes inspection and in the best of worlds replication possible. By systematic data collection and analysis, we make evaluation of theories our basic concern. At the end of the day, we are concerned with making as much information as possible available on all aspects of the research. To produce good quality research we must facilitate peer review of our work and stimulate open discussion about concepts, theories, methods, and analysis. That is the only way we can mitigate against fraud and irregularities in our own discipline and premier the good work others do. Evaluation criteria will necessarily be another issue to fight over in debates but at least, the fullest possible transparency in getting our results makes such discussions possible.

Second, there is in principle nothing inherently quantitative or qualitative in the choice of different objects of study. While our imagination or available information may reduce the available options, any
technique for data collection and processing could be used regardless of study object, in principle. For example, there is nothing to prevent quantification of interpretative, subjective data gathered through in-depth interviews, reading of signs or even participant observations on identities and localities in politics. Conversely, it is quite possible to do research using the hermeneutic circle of (re-)interpretation on trade relations and statistics between the EU and Africa. In short, there is no necessary relation between the research area of interest and methods applied to generate results.

Yet, it is not difficult to sympathize with calls for country-specific and contextual analyzes. Taking a birds-view on politics necessarily limits the amount of information on each country one can digest and analyze. Clearly, some of the African electoral regimes are more repressive and closed than others. Furthermore, some have completed several electoral cycles while others have broken down and a new regime has just seen the light of day. The various regimes also differ with regard to how much of political competition and participation they allow at present. Country case studies have many important functions to fill in our quest to understand African politics better, but the proper testing of hypotheses and theories is not one of them.45

It is sometimes argued – at least by Americans – that American politics is the most advanced of our sub-disciplines in political science. This might be right or wrong but it remains that there is more information on American politics than on any other country. We can only wish that we would have the same amount of leverage on countries in Africa. Yet, there is still a need to understand what can be generalized about African politics. This is not the place to dwell on all the fortunes of qualitative case methodology and findings. The fact remains that we need to know more about the complexities of individual nations in Africa and for this we need large-\(N\) analysis too. Comparative politics in general and large-\(N\) analyses in particular, has an important role to play. Only with a broad scope can something be said about what

45 Only one kind of theory or hypothesis can be tested in an \(N=1\) study. That kind of theory claims to i) have identified a truly determinate rather than probabilistic causal relationship, ii) be complete in the sense of including all variables relevant to explain all variation, and iii) that the full information on all variables is available and can be measured without error including noise possibly induced by interpretation by the researcher. Like Munck and Verkuilen (Munck2004, Munck and Verkuilen 2004) I do not think there is such a theory.
applies as hypothesized descriptions, general causes, and effects. Perhaps most importantly, systematic comparison across a larger number of cases is the only possible strategy to prove that some ideas are wrong. Some hypotheses that emanates from case studies or small-N comparisons are generalizable while others are not. The only way to find out is to test them on a large or entire set of cases. No large-N study can do everything of course due both to methodological as well as to practical reasons. And the more complex theories or concepts we try to test, often the less valid our quantitative indicators become. So, while we often wish to have a go on the big puzzles like a finite answer to what creates a sustainable democracy, it seems neither practical nor possible. The strategy here has been to look at a very specific partial regime but compare across many countries. In short, a study like the present one of electoral regimes seeks to solve a little piece in the big puzzle. But it addresses theoretical puzzles and empirical hypotheses that are of a general concern to the comparative politics of elections and democratization.

**On Time in Comparative Studies**

The hypotheses examined in this book are all related to time in different ways. The analysis performed in this book is simultaneously cross-national and diachronic. The diachronic comparisons are moreover both within-case and between-cases and conducted using various conceptualizations of time. Comparisons are made modeling time as both an external scale and as a tool of periodization in chapter four, and as a characteristic of the study object itself in chapter five. In chapter six and seven, time attributes are modeled as part of the operationalization. These variations on using time in comparative analysis have different implications. For these reasons, a more detailed clarification is appropriate at this point.

Synchronic analysis is generally assumed not to be concerned with time since the selected units of comparison are measured at a particular point in time. Time is factored only when causal inferences are being made. (cf. Kritzer 1996). But time may also be introduced as a chronological frame of reference in diachronic studies. This has been its most common use in research on political attitudes, voter alignments, and ideological orientation characterizing the behavioralist
strand. This is also the way time is used in evaluating the first set of hypotheses in chapter four of this book. Time as a way to classify events in their chronological order is external to the events and supposedly carries no analytical meaning. The founding of the USA with the adoption of the constitution in 1776 would not be interpreted differently only because we chose another scale and suddenly referred to it as the year 108 (starting to count from the year of the inauguration of Lund University in 1668). However, a short horizon tends to result in a focus on more transient phenomena and the constants of which are rapidly transformed into variables when the horizon is widened. On the other hand, very far-reaching scales risk loosing all the peculiarities of the processes we study.

The catch is the use of scales rests on different philosophies of history (Gellner 1988; Hall 1986) that stipulate constructions of causality, introducing particular analytical meaning(s). The classical linear evolutionism tends to see historical processes as irreversible, where time and historical processes run parallel. Time influences what happens in the future by human learning and accumulation of experience. Both the early modernization theory and the later interdependence approach build on this philosophy. The principle assumption regarding democratization is that lessons can be learnt from other more developed states. When Diamond (1997), for example, assumes that with time democratization in Africa will take a stronger hold and deepen, this inference builds on such a philosophy of history. Part of Carother’s criticism of the “transition paradigm” (2002a+b) as based on the teleology inherent in viewing history as necessary and one-directional. Indeed, lots of the work on democratization has assumed that any move from dictatorial rule is a process of democratization. As a methodological point, Carothers is right. Our measurements should always allow for alternative outcomes in our analyses. On the other hand, if as in this study, it seems the empirical evidence at hand speaks of a general trend in one direction we cannot refrain from reporting it even if it means that we risk the kind of criticism Carothers and others articulate.
Time as a Unit Attribute

There is another way that time frequently enters comparative accounts: as an attribute of the units of study and/or variables used. This is the way time is used in the comparative analyses in chapters five and seven. The sequential structure in terms of stages or phases defines the unit of analysis. Time in this sense, as a defining attribute of the unit is perhaps both the most common and the least acknowledged. It applies for example to the discussion of various pathways and outcomes of transitions. According to some accounts, transition to democracy generally starts with the liberalization of civil rights, followed free and fair elections in due time as a result of mounting pressure for democratization. If elections are held first and political rights are not given to the people until after the elections – this is considered a pseudo-transition at best.

Thus, sequence in this instance matters for the definition as well as the empirical classification. Transitions are short, more or less frequent, demands political timing; consolidation takes a longer time, its tempo is more erratic and different political systems have different political schedules and time budgets, and so on. Furthermore, in consolidology the cycles of elections have been used as indicators of consolidation (e.g. Schmitter and Santiso 1998, 83-4) even if Dahl (1989) has suggested that empirical findings indicates that it takes at least 20 years to consolidate a democracy.

Dahl (1989) and O’Donnell and Schmitter (1986) held that widening and deepening of political participation early in the process is damaging for the prospects of successful transitions to stable democracies. Similarly, Linz (1994; 1998, 21-4) argued that differences in sequential structures of democracy, as well as their duration, (as of for example electoral cycles, deadlines for proposing new laws and regulations, the difference between presidential systems set time limit, and parliamentary governments maximum length in office) have effects on the political decisions taken. Elections must not only be free and fair in a democracy; they must also be periodic and regular. Tenancy in office must be pre-determined, within the maximum range with variables dates of termination (parliamentarian systems) or at pre-established dates of termination (presidentialism) (Bateson 1972, 315). One occasional election does not make a democracy, hence, the
cyclical time frame of elections is part of the definition, and the end of such a cyclical process is one of the essential indicators of democratic decline.

In the present study, time as first, second, third and subsequent elections enter the analysis by way of defining attributes of the unit of study. This perspective is used in chapter five and the set of hypotheses examined there. It is also a highly important issue making it possible to identify the main theoretical contribution of this volume: democratization by elections outlined in chapter six and evaluated in the empirical analysis in chapter seven.

**Time as a Social Entity**

The classical sociological literature relies on Durkheim’s conception of time not as an *a priori*, but as a social category. Scholars like Goffman (1969), Hägerstrand (1973), and Zerubavel (1979) have elaborated on specialized analytical tools whereby different perceptions, allocations and “colonization” of time can be measured and compared, in order to show how it plays a significant part in the social organization modern, as well as pre-modern, life46. (c.f. Giddens 1993, 105-10)

There is an important issue here to consider. Democracy and elections place particular demands on the conception of time. As Linz (1998) has forwarded in his pioneering research on time in democratization, democracy is government *pro tempore*. Hence, both the elite’s and the people's thinking about political time and time-components in the regime (like duration in office, respect for necessary time-boundaries in democratic procedures) must change during the course of democratic transition and consolidation. This might be one of the most essential parts of what is alleged to constitute democratic consolidation. In the present study of elections in Africa, the concept of increasing experience rests on this understanding of time. Actors come to accept, adapt to, and reproduce certain conceptions of time rules and by doing so institutionalize electoral cycles and procedures. This is

46 Time in this sense is not necessarily implying change, however. Sociologists like Sztompka (1993, 41) and Sorokin (1937, 156) have correctly noted that time – as temporal variance – cannot be conceived of apart from concepts like change, process, motion, and becoming. Continuity and “being”, however, they argue, are not related to time. This is senseless of course. Giddens (1979, 199) knows it is, and I agree with him that there is hardly any sensible way to speak of continuity other than over time.
the way we can make theoretical sense of the effects of electoral institutions and their relative democratic qualities in chapter five. Changing social constructions of time is also a concurrent theme in several of the causal links suggested in chapter six to be evaluated in chapter seven. By increasing exposure and experience, actors adopt new conceptions of electoral time rules and regulations making them become social entities whereby actors modify their behavior.

**THREE MAIN AREAS OF STUDY**

To reiterate, democracy understood as self-government requires three qualities: equality of political participation, free political competition, and legitimacy of the idea of self-government. *De jure* participatory, competitive and legitimate elections constitute the criteria for inclusion as a case in this book. The extents to which these three qualities are realized in practice are the three dependent variables measured by ten separate indicators of the electoral process in addition to judgments of the free and fairness of elections. Taken together, these indicators encompass the pre-election campaign period through the post-election situation.

The ensuing empirical chapters use these indicators to probe a number of established hypotheses in the field. Chapter four refutes the purported decline in frequency and qualities of elections in Africa. Chapter five details and analyses developments over first, second, and subsequent elections, addressing the issue of socialization, or experienced-based learning processes resulting form institutionalization of electoral practices. The analysis evidences a strong tendency for the self-reinforcing power of repetitive *de jure* participatory, competitive, and legitimate elections to improve in democratic qualities *de facto*. Finally, chapters six and seven provides a theoretical framework of causal links and empirical evidence that the mere repetition of *de jure* participatory, competitive and legitimate elections – regardless of their *de facto* qualities – contribute to democratization by leading to positive changes towards higher levels of civil liberties in society.
Political liberalization in Africa has been interpreted in many ways over the last fifteen years since the world entered the post-Cold War era. Typically, scholarly accounts from the early 1990s triumphantly proclaimed a new era of democracy in Africa. Given the many significant changes after almost 30 years of gloom and stagnation a certain euphoria was understandable. Save Botswana, Gambia, Mauritius, and Zimbabwe and to some extent Senegal, the countries in Africa had been ruled by civilian or military non-democratic regimes from much of the 1960s. Economic failure illustrated by an always-low GDP per capita slumped further over the 1980s (van de Walle 2001). Corruption and embezzlement became rife over the years. In response, society disengaged from the state and the public realm and deepened its ties the informal and personal, reviving social networks and extended family systems (e.g. Chabal and Daloz, 1999), leaving a rentier African state suspended in mid air (Hyden 1980, 2000; Young, 1982). Ethnic fragmentation, fanned by identity politics entrepreneurs ensued (Mamdani 1996) contributing to the implosion of states like Rwanda, Liberia Sierra Leone and later Somalia, DRC and to a lesser extent Comoros and the RoC. The dramatic events in many countries during the first years of the 1990s, gave ample reasons to celebrate an end to a particularly depressing period following the collapse of the Berlin Wall. Over a couple of years, political liberalization was introduced in more than half of the African states. The rapid displacement of authoritarian regimes in countries like Benin and Zambia as early as 1991 was heralded as a “second liberation” and a complete political
renewal (e.g. Ayitted 1992; Hyden and Bratton 1992; Joseph 1992; c.f. Bratton and van de Walle 1997). Within a few years half of the continent had held multiparty elections giving credence to Huntington’s assertion (1991, 174) “elections are not only the life of democracy, they are also the death of dictatorship.” This was the age of widespread Afro-optimism.

Several developments soon turned the tide. Disputed elections in regionally important countries as Kenya and Ghana in 1992, halted processes in Togo and Cameroon and events in Nigeria became sources of concern to many. The failure to even initiate political transformations in Chad and DRC for example fed these growing concerns in the early- to mid-1990s. Zambia’s second election on 18 November 1996 was disappointing contrast to its “best-in-class” first election in 1991. Outright breakdowns of the democratization process in several countries, including Nigeria in 1993, Angola in 1992, and Gambia in 1994 only served to deepen this pervasive feeling that Africa was once again backtracking. Gambia’s 1994 military coup was a special case in point. A relatively stable and prosperous democracy since 1982 the military overthrow by General Jammah was a particularly unexpected and devastating blow to the one of the continent’s most stable democracies. While scholars like Bratton (1998) argued Africa had returned to neopatrimonial politics others saw a continuation of disorder and destructive politics (Chabal and Daloz 1999), no change at all (Akinrinade 1998), political closure (Joseph 1998), semi-authoritarianism (Carothers 1997), or elections without democracy (van de Walle 2002).

Several students of comparative African politics sought to moderate the debate “between the extremes” (Chege 1996) and provide accounts of the mixed events that seemed to be taking African states in several directions simultaneously (Mbembe 1995). Cowen and Laakso’s study of 17 country case studies is a recent addition in this vein (Cowen and Laakso 2001). The single most important comparative contribution, Bratton and van de Walle’s study (1997) was also an effort to provide

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67 Gambia inaugurated its long-lasting democracy with independence in 1965. It was interrupted briefly by a coup in late July 1980, however. Gambia had no military forces at the time and called on neighboring Senegal who intervened and restored the regime in early August the same year. A confederation announced on August 21, 1980 by the two countries took effect on February 1, 1982 and lasted until September 1989.
an account of the multi-faceted political developments in Africa while at the same time providing empirical generalizations. Their findings that African regimes had entered highly divergent paths of political development (1997, 98) still dominate the field of African politics. I have sought to investigate the robustness of their claims in a few preliminary analyses (Lindberg 2002, 2004a). It remains imperative to revisit what is believed to be true about political developments in Africa still relies on Bratton and van de Walle’s analysis of events in the five-year period from 1990 to 1994. With a 13-year time frame from 1990 to 2003 against the relief of events up to 1989 in selected countries, more definitive and robust conclusions can be drawn.

This chapter makes several contributions. First, it extends on Bratton and colleagues’ empirical research chronicling elections and their democratic qualities in Africa. The study of politics in Africa is still suffering from a disastrous lack of empirical data even though contested elections are admittedly not the worst. Yet, a lot still remains to be done with data gathering and knowledge based on comparative studies about African politics and its basic institutions is still very limited. This book is a step forward in that regard. Second, this chapter refutes several of the empirical generalizations from Bratton and van de Walle’s (1997) study that has become orthodoxy of the field. Generally speaking, their story was one of change whereas this chapter speaks of continuity. This chapter also shows that these differences in part stem from earlier failures to control for free and fairness of elections to the effect of distorting results. Third, the analysis in this chapter uses time as a chronological referent in much the same way as most accounts, but in the end, the usefulness of time as a scale is questioned. In sum, this chapter sifts through a number of false hypotheses thereby laying the foundation for a more refined analysis in the following chapters. For the sake of clarity, the reader should also note that unless specific sources are given for the empirical illustrations.

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from various countries in the following chapters the data comes from the country files collated in this project.50

**Frequency and Number of Elections**

The comparative study of elections and democracy in general, and in Africa in particular, should rest on a sound empirical basis. The continued citation of some of the results from Bratton and colleagues by demo-pessimists merits correction. The first step in this empirical analysis of elections in Africa is to look at the distribution of cases over time. This is also necessary to address an influential hypothesis in the literature on Africa politics. Bratton (1997, 13-4), Bratton and Posner (1999, 377) and Bratton and van de Walle (1997, 5) maintained that African elections peaked in 1993 and then started to descend. Figure 1 below, shows disaggregated figures for elections and countries holding elections on annual basis. This might seem a redundancy but besides offering a graphic orientation for the reader, the total number of elections in each year over the 13-year period refutes the generalization of a declining trend in the frequency of elections.

While more elections is not always better, as a general rule the general political development is arguably served by more elections on a continent where there have for long been too few, rather than too many. However, too many elections within one and the same country can be a sign of instability and fragility in nascent electoral regimes. Politicking leading to unstable parliamentary coalitions, floor-crossing, legislative-executive deadlocks and presidential or parliamentary powers can result in the need for new elections, or ultimately coups, followed by new first elections. All the same, constitutional but premature elections (early elections called by the dissolution of the legislature by the executive) are relatively scarce in Africa. Only a few governments have decided to opt for this among them Comoros in 1993, Republic of Congo in 1993, and Niger in 1995, and these premature elections have indeed been signifiers of instability. All of them were soon followed by military take-over.

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50 See chapter three. The detailed sources on each illustration based on the country files are not given in the following text for practical reasons. Most of the empirical events referred to are uncontroversial but the sources in the country files are multiple and would only result in tiring listings impairing readability.
As Figure 1 shows, there is no general decline in the frequency of elections in Africa. There are fluctuations but not a significant trend. The regression lines even suggest a slight increase in the number of annual electoral practices. The decline suggested by Bratton and colleges was simply produced by the limited time frame available to the authors at that time. The graph shows low electoral activity in 1994 and 1995; the two last years of Bratton and van de Walle’s (1997) study. Thereafter the frequencies picks up again. A pattern seems to have been established with one peak year followed by two years of low activity, then another peak year and so on. Many transitional elections in Africa occurred for a few years in the early 1990, crowding elections together and creating these waves. Since African

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51 The reader should observe that both elections before 1990 and those held in 2003 have been excluded from Figure 1. The reason is obvious. Figure 1 reports on N rather than relative sizes, hence, the category or pre-1990 elections, as well as the half-year only 2003, would distort the trend if included.
countries in Africa operate with different constitutional regulations of electoral cycles, this pattern is likely to be readjusted over time.

A similar observation can be made regarding the annual number of countries holding elections over this period. It may seem natural and it is given a normal distribution of elections over countries. As such, it does not only strengthen the observation based on elections but also serves as an illustration of the relatively normal and equal distribution in the sample. The important thing to note here is that there is no decline in the number of elections, or the countries holding these elections. Rather than a decline, we see a slight increase over this period. This speaks to the argument for a case for measured optimism, rather than pessimism for the future in Africa.

Fig. 2: Frequency of Free and Fair Elections

Skeptics rightly argue quantity is not the same as quality. Figure 2 shows the share of free and fair elections is relatively constant as the annual fluctuations collate. When the number of elections have increased slightly, the net result is that increasing numbers of people in Africa have gotten to know what a relatively free and fair elections

12 Subsequently I will show how this entire comparative strategy using chronological time is questionable and using a more justifiable method the free and fairness of elections improve.
are, even though the effect should not be overstated. The figures above only give room for a measured optimism. What is of importance here is that the two dominant hypotheses in the field – that of a general decline in the frequency and a decline of overall free and fairness of elections – have been refuted using exactly the same indicators and comparative method that produced the original hypotheses. There are simply no indications of a return to the neopatrimonial, politically closed pre-1990 politics in Africa.

**ON AVERAGE**

If the frequency by which elections are held in Africa, and the number of countries involved did not decrease as was formerly believed, one still wonders at the democratic qualities of the 232 elections that have taken place. It is commonly believed that the quality of elections in Africa is relatively poor and getting worse (Bratton 1997, 1998; Bratton and Posner 1999; Bratton and van de Walle 1997, 203ff). Even so, the comparative results reported by these (and other authors) do not include control for free and fairness of elections. This theoretically implies that whether elections are flawed or not has no significant effects on the other indicators. The flaw of that assumption was dealt with in chapter three in the discussion of the indicators and the hypothesis of a decline in the qualities of elections is falsified in the following analysis.

The results based on the total universe of cases in the present data set are presented in Table 5. On average, more than half — 56 percent — of the elections in Africa have been judged free and fair. This overall figure tallies with earlier reports (e.g. Bratton 1997, 21). It seems to me that if we are to take freedom and fairness seriously, this figure alone presents a difficult case for afro-pessimists to argue. At the very least, it represents a huge advance in democratic quality in comparison to the closed political climate prior to 1990. The second overall conclusion is that the difference between free and fair and flawed elections is significant on all indicators except one (electoral regime survival). This is a very important observation that undermines the validity of much of earlier findings on Africa elections. The failure to control for free and fairness has distorted those results.
Looking at the other indicators, the overall level of participation in Africa is rather impressive. Given the extremely low levels of education, high levels of poverty, poor infrastructure, and other mitigating factors it seems encouraging that on average 63 percent of voters go to cast their ballot in free and fair polls. Voters in Africa also seem to know a fake election as evidenced by the noticeably lower turnout. Given – in addition to the factors mentioned above – the relatively high levels of violence and limited chance for the opposition to win in many countries, it is equally encouraging that opposition parties have participated in over 90 percent of all fair elections. The reader should note that these figures represent only those cases when all major opposition groups participate. Hence, partial boycotts are treated as boycotts.

Some students of African politics (e.g. van de Walle 2002) and democratization (e.g. Schedler 2002b) have raised the spectacle of unfair boycotts; the dubious strategy of parties that stand no chance of winning to boycott fair elections in order to cast doubt on the legitimacy of the winner. This is a tactic that has been used in Africa over the past 13 years – albeit sparingly. Partial boycotts of fair elections have occurred in nine instances but a total boycott only

<table>
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<th>TABLE 5. Democratic Qualities of Elections in Africa.</th>
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<td><strong>Dimension</strong></td>
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<td>Participation</td>
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happened once: Ghana’s first parliamentary election on December 29, 1992. After the contested executive election on November 3 the same year, the opposition parties decided to boycott the legislative elections. The old incumbent Jerry J. Rawling’s ruling party NDC and its close associates took all seats in a free and fair parliamentary election marked by a turnout of only 29 percent. So while opposition parties tend to participate in all free and fair elections with only a few deviating cases, they also participate in many obviously flawed elections. This might seem irrational to some while it has been shown (Lindberg n.d. 2005) that participating rather than boycotting flawed elections has been a successful strategy in the longer run. By providing experience, organizational strength and campaign attention, as well as a parliamentary basis for oppositional politics and furthering of future democratic procedural gains, contesting elections are better than mere exit in protest. Participation in flawed elections has tended to lead to better democratic qualities in future elections than boycotts.

Figures in Table 4 reporting the number of elections where the “Autocratic Guard” is gone represent only cases when previous authoritarian rulers and their close associates are no longer participating in the contest. Hence, cases where, for example, a previous minister under the authoritarian regime vies for the presidency, are not included. That old authoritarian rulers still compete for power in more than five out of six fair elections and in nine out of ten flawed elections is telling. This is indeed a possible negative feature of political participation in Africa. Given that so many elections have old authoritarians contesting and even winning, wonders how many of these have really become democrats and how many are only being forced by the incentive structures of institutions and international factors to behave a particular way.

The overall level of competition in African elections seems to convey slightly less impressive indications of democratic quality than does participation. Legislative majorities are generally overwhelming, with an average of 60 percent of the seats even after free and fair elections, while the main opposition parties typically acquire only a fraction of the seats. We also note executive elections are on average much more competitive than legislative elections. A vast majority – 39 out of the 44 countries holding elections in this period – operates presidential
systems. It is encouraging with higher competition in the executive elections since in presidential systems much greater powers are vested in the executive office. The picture would seem gloomier if a higher level of competition was allowed in the less significant legislative elections. Finally, for parliamentary elections a vast majority of countries operate majoritarian-, mixed-, or, PR electoral systems with small constituencies. These systems induce by design a relatively severe disproportionality between votes and seats in favor of a few larger parties. Hence, in comparison to executive elections it should come as no surprise that a lower degree of competition is recorded in the indicator for legislative elections. For these reasons, presidential elections provide a more valid measure of political competition in Africa.

The fourth indicator of competition in Table 5 is alternations in power referring to electoral turnover of the chief political executive in presidential elections and a changed legislative majority in parliamentary elections. In systems with proportional representation and shifting coalition partners, a turnover is sometimes “half” in the sense that one or more parties leave the majority and new parties replace them. Such cases are not included in the figures in Table 5 or in any of the other following tables. The rationale is to rather err on being too strict in accepting any positive signs than risk positing possibly questionable results. Therefore, only unambiguous cases of turnovers are taken as signs of increasing competition. Looking at Table 5, alternations in power is a reasonably recurrent phenomenon in Africa’s free and fair elections, with a third of them resulting in turnovers. The difference to flawed elections is stark: only in a few cases – five percent – have the opposition managed to wield power under conditions of electoral fraud and mismanagement.

Yet, these few instances highlight a reasoning from chapter two. The de facto existence of political rights is not merely a “procedural” condition but in effect a distribution of political power and opportunities and a springboard for exercising other political rights. This is illustrated by Madagascar’s fifth executive election in December 2001. The old authoritarian ruler Ratsiraka had been re-installed by the ballot
in the 1996-1997\textsuperscript{53} elections after a period of opposition rule. President Ratsiraka then engineered an extensive constitutional reform greatly enhancing the power of the president, which was confirmed in a referendum March 15, 1998 with 51 percent of the votes. When President Ratsiraka was losing the fifth presidential election in December 2001 to new opposition challenger Marc Ravalomanana, he instigated a series of irregular activities first during the polling, then collation, announcement and lastly in the procedures for abjuration of electoral disputes – the High Constitutional Court – but in each instance these efforts ultimately failed. The irregularities during the polling and counting of votes were reported by local and international observers and parallel counts contradicted official tallies as well as collation, the official announcements of the results were contested and undermined also by representatives of the bureaucracy and the Supreme Court invalidated the President’s attempts to manipulate with abjuration. Finally, when the rightful winner Ravalomanana and his supporters took to the streets, the military refused to transgress their constitutional limits and left the protesters and Ravalomanana not only to protest, but also assume office against the will of the outgoing incumbent Ratsiraka. The power of the institutions and the people’s habituation, or learning, was too strong for that old authoritarian ruler to fight\textsuperscript{54}. Even if the whole idea of cheating is to win, doing it successfully is another. While it is certainly true that opposition parties also attempt to tip the balance in their favor (e.g. Hartlyn 2004), so far fraud has tended to reinstall incumbents. This point underscores the significance of efforts by the domestic civil societies and the international community to make elections increasingly free and fair, and more acceptable to international standards.

The indicators of legitimacy in Table 5 are closer to the afro-pessimist view. Even among free and fair elections, the parties immediately accepted the results in only 57 percent of cases. Looser acceptance is

\textsuperscript{53} The first round of Madagascar’s 4\textsuperscript{th} presidential election took place on November 3, 1996 while the second round – which Ratsiraka won by a narrow margin over the impeached former opposition leader Albert Zafy – was held on January 2, 1997.

\textsuperscript{54} Ratsiraka did take up arms with the support of some loyal forces and engaged during 9 months from mainly one of the provinces but the dangerous process was resolved with international mediation and premature legislative elections on December 15, 2002 in which Ravalomanana’s party scored a landslide winning 64 percent of the seats in parliament.
established when none of the major players challenges the results in court or offers no other serious charges following the polls. This is a stricter application than Bratton (1998) used, since even cases where the opposition initially protested but then later recanted, accepting parliamentary seats are not included in the positive results here. Again, the concern here is to avoid inducing excessively optimistic findings on shaky ground. Nevertheless, 43 percent is a high number of free and fair elections after which losing parties disputed the results. One of the more famous cases was Angola’s election in 1992. With international support and certification, a voter turnout of 91 percent and twelve candidates for the highest office of the president, there was no doubt that the results reflected the will of the people even if there were certainly some minor irregularities. Yet, UNITA refused to accept the results and went back to war, which continued until its leader Jonas Malheiro Savimbi was killed in 2002. Niger’s first elections in 1993 that took place after massive international pressure on incumbent President Tanja were also judged free and fair. Opposition candidate Mahamane Ousmane won in the second round, the losing parties refused to accept the results and the new government was overthrown in January 1996 by a military coup. Playing according to the democratic rules of the game implies to accept defeat when you lose a fair combat and the behavior of the losing parties in Africa’s elections is far from satisfactorily in this respect. More comforting is perhaps that in only one instance – Chad’s second parliamentary election on April 21, 2002 – has the opposition parties accepted a flawed result immediately.

Roughly, only 20 percent of all election processes qualify for the epithet “peaceful”. The reader should note, however, that the criterion for peacefulness is very strict once again to rather err on being too moderate than the reverse in recording positive changes. Even cases with only a few reports of non-systematic election-related violence were not coded as peaceful but rather placed in the intermediate category of low intensity violence. Finally, an interesting observation is that incidences of complete breakdowns (about 15 percent of all cases) are totally unrelated to the freedom and fairness of elections. One would perhaps have expected that breakdowns should follow more often after fake elections leading to frustration with parties reconsidering violent overthrows and to the contrary, that free and fair
elections would pave the way for stability. This does not seem to be the case and there are obviously other factors at play. In sum, the hypothesis of a decline over time in the frequency of elections in Africa has been refuted and the general outlook seems to support a moderate optimism about the democratic qualities of elections in Africa, rather than a doomsday scenario.

Two lessons are of special importance here. First, the failure of earlier studies to differentiate between free and fair and flawed elections has distorted the results on which so much of the contemporary comparative literature of African politics builds. Whether it is an direct effect of Bratton and van de Walle’s (1997) examples, several scholars have followed in their footsteps in this regard. Mozaffar et al.’s (2003) analysis of ethnicity, electoral rules and voting, for example, is completely invalidated by mixing free and fair elections with almost equally many flawed ones. It has been shown (Lindberg 2004b) that Yoon’s (2001) analysis of women’s legislative representation in Africa suffers from the same problem.

Second and somewhat more surprisingly, the survival rate of new electoral regimes is completely unrelated to the flawlessness of elections. It does not matter for survival of regimes whether the elections are free and fair. It seems that in this regard, the standard recommendations issued at times are out of place. Concurring that elections should and must be perfect and clean from the very beginning in order to create and uphold credibility for democratic elections and thus preempt backlashes that has been the creed of the last decade, is equally misguided. It maybe that survival is a highly context-dependent phenomena. It is also possible that there is something else to be said once the analysis is taken further. At this point, therefore, the case is rested with the reflection in mind that free and fair elections do not mitigate breakdowns and flawed elections do not spell breakdown.

**Democratic Qualities of Elections over Time**

With this overview above in mind, we turn to another set of hypotheses influential in the literature on African elections and politics. The Afro-pessimistic accounts referred to in the beginning of this chapter, are rooted in the findings of Bratton and colleges. Bratton and van de Walle (1997, 202), Bratton (1997, 21) found about half of
the early elections to be free and fair. Bratton (1998) reports that later elections in general, and second elections in particular, were of lower democratic quality than those in the early 1990s. The later in time the election, the poorer the quality, and the lower the likelihood an incumbent would be ousted. A similar result was reported also in Diamond and Plattner (1999) and echoed later in the new influential comparative work of Cowen and Laakso (2002, 14). The latter builds on a limited set of cases, yet, the claims are stated in general terms. The empirical analysis in this chapter challenges these accounts.

Following is a detailed analysis of participation, competition, and legitimacy in Africa from 1990 to June 2003, sub divided into three periods. The periodization is driven by a few concerns. The generalizations have been made about elections in the “early” period of transitions after 1989. Usually this period is said to have lasted until 1992 or 1993 (e.g. Bratton and van de Walle 1997; Sandbrook 1996; Wiseman 1992), whereas from 1994 or 1995 elections and transitions taking place have been labeled “late” (e.g. Bratton 1998; Joseph 1998). The later period ended for observers as Bratton (1998) in 1997 more out of publication constrains than of theoretical rationales. In the following analysis, I have tried to make a periodization as much as possible in accordance with earlier studies in order to enhance comparability as we also use the same indicators. But timelines have been also adjusted slightly to achieve uniformity of length and number of cases. The data end-point – June 2003 – is in my case a matter of practicality as much as it has been for others before me.

An addition in the present analysis is that elections in countries holding de jure participatory, competitive elections before 1990 are also included as a separate category with which to compare the more recent elections. As shown in Table 6, out of the total number of cases, 26 elections in the sample were held in the period pre-dating 1990. These are elections in the “old” democracies in Africa that are usually excluded from the analysis of contemporary democratization in Africa. Another 59 elections were held in the four-year period from 1990 to 1993, which are considered the “early” or “first” period of transitions after the events in 1989. The next five years from 1994 to 1998 is the period of “latecomers” or “second” period of elections an democratization. It contains 74 cases of elections. The story of large-N compar-
ative work on the quality of elections stops here, except for my own preliminary studies and a couple of other contributions. The following four and a half years from 1999 to 30 June 2003, is referred to as the "third" period in the data set and consists of 73 elections. This seems to be the periodization that sits best with how earlier studies have divided the years into periods, hence, results should be comparable and knowledge accumulated in this specific respect. In addition, this periodization divides the total number of years into relatively equal sub-periods, displaying roughly equal sample sizes that enhance the prospects for a sound statistical analysis.

Using this periodization, Table 6 presents the share of free and fair elections for each sub-period. It is clear that Bratton and colleges were both right and wrong. Elections in the second period 1994 to 1998 were indeed slightly worse; more of them were flawed. On the other hand, free and fair elections were rare in the pre-1990 period and the rate picks up again in the latest period to hit a record of 63 percent. Looking at this particular aspect from a chronologically spectacle, there is an S-shaped curve with a slight average improvement over time. The changes are not dramatic and it is not unreasonable to suggest that

56 There are a few other contributions on specific aspects such as ethnicity and voting (Mozaffar et al. 2003), electoral management bodies (Mozaffar 2002), party systems and dominant parties (Bogaards 2000, 2003, 2004), and women’s legislative representation (Yoon 2001).
what we see is in fact stability rather than a negative change. The
differences are not significant although they point – if anything –
towards a slight improvement rather than backlash.

The periodized figures in Table 7, 8 and 9 below depict participation,
competition, and legitimacy in these sub-periods. Those tables also
suggest that the most striking feature is continuity over time. From the
perspective of chronological developments in Africa, the relative levels
of participation, political competition, and legitimacy seem to be
reproduced in an increasing number of countries although the average
level of democratic qualities is not improving. Anticipating a point
from the next chapter, there are two separate trends behind these
figures. On the one hand, as Bratton (1998) noted, more “bad apples”
started to hold multiparty elections later in this period. Countries like
Chad, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Sudan held first elections later than
1995, decreased the general level of democratic qualities. At the same
time, the early birds form the dawn of political liberalization in the
early 1990s had moved on improved the democratic qualities of their
elections and gained experience learning how to operate within the
new rules of the game. Benin, Ghana, Sao Tome, and Namibia are
examples of this positive trend. Presenting evidence for such a trend
requires the type of analysis be pursued in chapter five, first some
details of continuity over time.

Puzzling Participation

The voter turnout figures in table 7 are a little puzzling. Turnout was
higher on average in the elections preceding 1990. It has since more
or less stabilized at a lower level throughout the 1990s. Why this
when the tide of democratization finally reached Africa in the early
1990s? Perhaps we can find a partial answer looking at the type of
countries these data relate to. It has already been mentioned that
increasing numbers of previously repressive regimes held multiparty
elections in the 1990s, than in the period when countries like
Botswana, Mauritius, and Senegal were the only ones to hold such
elections. The average voter had a reason to feel more reluctant about
participation in elections in the 1990s, knowing that such behavior
might be punished retroactively if the tide turned again.
Second, with greater international involvement in electoral administration it has become harder for incumbents to manipulate turnout figures. The strategy of inflating the voters’ register and then having supporters of the incumbent regime vote twice or more, or simply stuffing ballot boxes, are practices that seems to have decreased in the 1990s (Schedler 2002b, van de Walle 2002). I believe this to be a large part of the explanation, as in countries like Kenya, Ghana, Senegal, and Cape Verde for example; this seems to be the case. Opposition participation in free and fair elections over the sub-periods is also relatively constant.

There is a slight decrease in participation from 1990 to 1998 but the almost complete participation is restored in the following period and these differences are not statistically significant. Table 7 also presents an increase in the 1990s in the share of flawed elections that opposition parties chose to participate in. At this point, the reasons for this can only be speculated. It might be suggested that opposition

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<tr>
<td>Voter Turnout</td>
<td>Free &amp; Fair</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>1.483</td>
<td>7.209</td>
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<td></td>
<td>st.d.</td>
<td>(.201)</td>
<td>(.209)</td>
<td>(.162)</td>
<td>(.179)</td>
<td>(.175)</td>
<td>(.223)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>128</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flawed</td>
<td>Free &amp; Fair</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>3.105</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>95</td>
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<td>100%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>.536</td>
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<td>N</td>
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<td>37</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>119</td>
<td></td>
<td>(.501)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flawed</td>
<td></td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>- .070</td>
<td>(.452)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autocratic Guard Gone</td>
<td>Free &amp; Fair</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>.166</td>
<td>.230</td>
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<tr>
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<td>N</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td>(.060)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flawed</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>(.511)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
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*For ordinal variables Spearman’s Correlation values and significance, for the means analyses ANOVA F-values and significance.

**TABLE 7. Participation Over Time.**

| N Free & Fair (N Countries) | 11 (4) | 34 (20) | 38 (24) | 46 (28) | 129 (39) |          |
| N Flawed (N Countries)      | 15 (4) | 25 (17) | 35 (21) | 27 (17) | 103 (29) |          |
| N Total (N Countries)        | 26 (7) | 59 (31) | 74 (41) | 73 (40) | 232 (44) |          |
parties are slowly learning that in many instances they have more to gain by participating than boycotting. Ghana is one clear example where I know from my own interviews (Lindberg 2003) that the former opposition party NPP regretted their decision to boycott the first parliamentary elections in 1992 for this very reason. It seems that the stories of Mali, Guinea, Senegal, and others present the same evidence. Thrown out as a hypothesis here, it is something to be probed in more detail in the next chapter.

The prevalence of old autocratic rulers or their close associates as presidential candidates as indicated in Table 7 remains noteworthy. There is only a slight increase of elections held in absence of an “autocratic guard” from 12 to 17 percent even among free and fair elections and it is not a statistically significant change. The old authoritarian leaders have proven to be anti-democratic and willing to govern by force and in violation of fundamental human rights. Even in Ghana, the much-cherished new President John A. Kufour who defeated former authoritarian ruler Jerry J. Rawlings’ chosen successor, Dr. John Atta-Mills, in the December 2000 elections, was once a minister in then Chairman Jerry J. Rawlings’ military-cum-civilian regime.

In Kenya, the situation is also similar with the new President Emilio M. Kibaki heading the National Rainbow Coalition of parties, used to be vice-president under Daniel Arap Moi’s single-party autocratic regime. In Togo, President G. Eyadema continues to rule the country and in Nigeria an old military ruler, General O. Obasanjo is now president. He was recently re-elected in the 2003 executive elections facing two other old military rulers as the main contestants. It might be that Nigerians do not perceive of Obasanjo primarily as a former authoritarian ruler but he is a military man who came into power first with his gun.

The list of turncoat authoritarian elites as recycled democrats is long. It takes time for a new generation to emerge and the presence of authoritarian-minded individuals in political leaderships remains troublesome in Africa. There are only a few countries where the old guard is completely gone. Even so, in many cases it seems that former authoritarian leaders are learning to play by democratic rules of the game – at least to some extent. We should also be open to the possibility that some of these leaders, like President Kufour in Ghana, never
were authoritarian-minded but took part in authoritarian rule. Although impressionistic evidence, I personally know several individuals from both the inner circles of Jerry J. Rawlings’ PNDC in Ghana and of Joachim Chissano’s FRELIMO in Mozambique who were never keen on authoritarian ways but participated in the rule because they believed it was necessary for a period of time and that they could do something good for their country. The presence of an old guard is an intricate matter to interpret. Nevertheless, when proven autocrats and dictators cling to power via elections, it is an indication the “democraticness” of elections can still be improved.

Decent and Stable Competition

As Table 8 shows, the level of competition in Africa’s free and fair elections has been relatively stable over this period. Flawed executive elections have been less competitive and more volatile than the free and fair ones, as measured by the indicator for winner’s share of the votes. Partly, this is an effect of opposition boycotts since winning shares increase when one or several major opposition parties boycott the poll, yet, legislative majorities were overwhelmingly stable over the period.

Nevertheless, the ultimate test of competitiveness – alternation in power – varies greatly from a mere one in five elections leading to a turnover before 1990 to almost half of all free and fair elections during the first years in the 1990s. Then the level dropped in the mid-1990s to regain momentum in the later years again. To explain this development we have to fall back on the analysis in the next chapter. Many of the polls in the early 1990s were first elections and voters were eager to change to new leaders after years of authoritarian rule.
In the following years, many of these countries moved on to second elections. The electorates then more often than not decided to retain new incumbent leaders. Then with many third and later elections in 1999 to 2003 things started to normalize with a turnover rate at around 30 percent. While there is some variation, there is no evidence of a declining trend as the literature suggested. If anything, we see encouraging signs in the data analyzed here.

**Improved Legitimacy**

Table 9 shows that although there is a slight improvement of the peacefulness of campaign periods and the process of post-election settlements, it is not a significant change. Losers’ acceptance of the
election results remains unchanged on average throughout the periods. Interestingly, one of the indicators – the increasing rate of survival of the electoral regimes among free and fair elections – is the only with a statistically significant relationship with the periodization. Starting at a rate of 68 percent in the early 1990s, it reaches almost 100 percent in the early 21st century. Once more, it is anticipated that this has to do with the increasing number of countries that moved on to second and third and later elections. As chapter five discusses, breakdowns of electoral regimes is a phenomenon almost exclusively belonging to the time just after a first election has been held.

TABLE 9. Legitimacy Over Time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Losers Accept</td>
<td>Free &amp; Fair</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flawed</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peaceful Process</td>
<td>Free &amp; Fair</td>
<td></td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flawed</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regime Survival</td>
<td>Free &amp; Fair</td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flawed</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N Free and Fair (N Countries) | 11 (4) | 34 (20) | 38 (24) | 46 (28) | 129 (36) | .130 (471) |
N Flawed (N Countries)         | 15 (4) | 25 (17) | 36 (21) | 27 (17) | 103 (29) | (.029)     |
N Total (N Countries)          | 26 (7) | 69 (31) | 74 (41) | 73 (40) | 232 (44) | (.029)     |

* Spearman’s Correlation values and significance.

In the late 1990s and early 21st century, only three elections have been followed by a complete breakdown. In the Central African Republic (CAR) President Felix Patassé was re-elected with 51.6 percent of the votes against 19.3 percent for the former authoritarian ruler and general André-Dieudonné Kolingba in what appears to have been an acceptable election. This did not prevent that Kolingba to attempt two coups d’état in 2001, which President Patassé survived with the help
of Libyan troops sent from Tripoli in trade of mineral concessions in CAR. An insurgency then started and despite foreign support troops, the rebel troops had seized the capital by 15 March, 2003. The Libyan forces that protected Patassé had left in December 2002. The constitution was suspended, parliament dissolved and General Francois Bozize installed himself as ruler. Former President A-F Patassé took refuge in Cameroon.

The second case is Ivory Coast who held first elections again in 2000 after the breakdown in 1999. But the conflict escalated and in 2002, a real civil war broke out and the new electoral regime broke down. The final case was the elections in the notoriously unstable federal island-state Comoros who for the third time after a coup tried with elections. The regime broke down in 2003 before it even got really started. At the same time, all the other first – and other – elections in this late period have so far led to surviving regimes, indicating that the players agree to play by the basic rules in this regard at least.

**Conclusions**

Specific hypotheses exist in the literature about the development of elections in Africa over time. These have been refuted by present evidence. There is no decline in the number or frequency of elections. The common wisdom of the field in this regard has simply been wrong. The frequency and number of elections held annually varies but at a more or less regular interval averaging out over time. There is, if anything, a slight increase in numbers. The same goes for the number of countries conducting *de jure* participatory and competitive elections.

More than half 56 percent of all elections in Africa have been free and fair. The overall trend is stability or even slightly positive contrary to what has been believed in reference to earlier studies. There are significant differences between the free and fair elections and flawed elections on almost all indicators. The failure of earlier studies to recognize these differences undermines the credibility of their results. In one respect, there is no such relationship with survival of electoral regimes. Free and fair elections or not, simply does not matter to regime survival in Africa at least not over this relatively short time.
The democratic qualities of the 232 elections in total have not varied substantially over different periods. There are some marked differences between pre-1990 elections and the present ones, although these have been downplayed in the analysis above. From 1990 and until 2003 the lens of time portrays a picture of remarkable continuity. Participation has been more decent than one might have thought while the level of competition leaves room for more substantial improvements especially in legislative elections. While legitimacy is the only dimension with signs of a statistically significant improvement over time, it is still fairly constant and lags far behind in indicating a more general acceptance of the rules of the game.

Time is a complex and ambiguous defining variable in comparative politics. As exemplified in this chapter time as chronological order mix phenomena of potentially different kinds into the same basket simply because they occurred in the same period. In the second section for example, Botswana’s sixth successive election on 15 October 1994 came to belong to the same category of events as Malawi’s third election on 17 May and Guinea Bissau’s first election on 7 August the same year. These are arguably rather different kinds of events and one could legitimately ask what sense such an approach makes. The next chapter presents a methodologically more valid account: an analysis based on elections grouped by their characteristic as first, second, third and so on, elections to better explain this approach.
This chapter test established hypotheses about the development of
democratic qualities of elections in Africa after so called “founding”
one; and develop and test a new hypothesis about the self-reinforcing
power of elections. While the last chapter discussed the chronological
time-based hypotheses, this chapter hence uses time as the sequential
structure that defines the object of study; first, second third, fourth
and subsequent elections. If the previous chapter was an argument for
continuity, the perspective offered here is one of change. Do the
democratic qualities of African elections indeed improve with
experience accumulating over several electoral cycles? The analysis
suggests they do in two important ways. The data shows that once
regimes hold their second elections they tend to survive. Regime
breakdown almost only follows first elections.

Second, it is demonstrated the electoral cycle is a virtuous spiral of self-
reinforcing power leading to increasingly democratic elections. Third
elections mark a cut-off point of change where the democratic
qualities improved radically. It seems that playing within the rules of
the electoral game develops because the constitutive and regulatory
distribution of power of institutionalized electoral procedures serve as
incentives for upholding the rules. Political actors either adapt or learn
both about the rules as such and about the incentive structure. The
implications of these findings are important in that regardless of the
qualities of first and even second elections chances are good things
improve. This translates into increasingly democratic elections in Africa, preventing coups and civil wars that are associated with breakdowns. The professed power of elected incumbent autocrats to sustain facade democracy and domination seems to be outweighed by this self-reinforcing power of elections.

Going from Bad to Worse

Many studies on politics in contemporary Africa relegate discussions of elections to background information or as means of chronological ordering of events. Even though taking elections seriously, Bratton (1997) and Bratton and van de Walle’s (1997) seminal volume only reports on so called “founding” elections. Bratton’s (1998) often-cited article concludes that second elections were of significantly worse quality in comparison to first elections: Only 30 percent of second elections were free and fair and participation was poorer with an average of a 56 percent turnout compared to 64 percent of first elections. Opposition boycotts increased from 25 to over 30 percent. Even competition decreased with second elections according to Bratton: turnovers were almost absent and winning candidates’ and parties’ shares of votes and seats respectively increased. Overall, while second elections helped some regimes to survive, the quality of elections in Africa was declining. In the final judgment, Africa was returning to “an institutional legacy of ‘big man’ rule, and the electoral alternation of leaders are again becoming abnormal” by all indications. (Bratton 1998, 64-5)

Bratton’s argument is echoed by scholars like Diamond and Plattner (1999, 19, 32, 169) who also argue second elections were merely “transitions without change”. Similarly, Cowen and Laakso (2002, 145, 23) conclude ruling parties tended to stay in power making it difficult for opposition parties to win second and successive elections. They also argue that the “massive voter apathy” spreading across the continent was undermining the meaningfulness and legitimacy of elections in Africa. All this stand in contrast to what Bratton and van de Walle’s (1997, 187) empirical conclusion that the higher the number of elections before 1990 – no matter how uncompetitive – the greater the likelihood of a transition in 1990s ending with fair elections with results accepted even by the losing parties. Their theory is that
The results of the empirical analysis displayed tables 10 to 14 below are based on an analysis of elections over a longer period, increasing the number of cases significantly compared to previous studies. The conclusions run contrary to earlier findings in several important respects. Democratic qualities of elections improves significantly after first elections, in particular with third and fourth elections. With free and fair third or fourth elections the different aspects of participation are almost fulfilled, competition is fiercer and the legitimacy of self-government increasingly unquestioned. Second, control for different categories of countries – panel groups – the final analysis shows this is indeed a general trend across the continent and not only regarding a few countries as previously thought.

On a methodological point, this chapter shows that using years and periods as the means of identifying the unit of analysis as in the preceding analysis of this book can be highly misleading. It is not time as “one damn thing after another” – chronological time – that matters in institutionalization as Diamond (1997, 5) posits for Africa. Rather, experiences gained over several successive electoral cycles allow actors to get habituated with electoral institutions, probably both in terms of learning and adaptation. Even flawed elections generate important experiential lessons (van de Walle 2002, 75) and it seems clear from the analysis below that this development is not dependent on actors being democrats. Finally, rather than indicating the arrival of a democratic regime elections are also part of the transitional period. There have been many instances in Africa where even free and fair elections have been part and parcel of protracted transitions (Barkan 2000, 235). Altogether, there seems to be a certain empirical foundation for a cautious Afro-optimism. Even the bad apples will get better if the cycle of de jure participatory and competitive elections continue. Whether this in turn leads to improvement of democratic qualities in society or not, is taken up in chapter six and seven.
**First, Second, Third, Fourth and Later Elections.**

Of Africa’s 48 states, 44 have conducted so-called “founding” elections, out of which 38 moved on to their second elections and as many as 21 countries have completed three uninterrupted electoral cycles as of June 2003. A select group of seven countries have managed at least four polls in a row (see Table 2). There are indeed some dismal cases among these many electoral regimes with Chad under President Idriss Déby in power since 1990 barely keeping an electoral façade. Togo’s Étienne Eyadema, currently the longest serving African head of state has been in power since 1967 running a brutal authoritarian regime. His reign has survived almost a dozen coup-attempts including the one in 1986 allegedly sponsored by then Chairman of the PNDC-regime in neighboring Ghana, Jerry J. Rawlings. One-party elections have been held in Togo since 1972 and the shift to multipartyism spurred by heavy international pressure during the early 1990s have so far yielded little democratic advancement.

Sudan’s former guerilla leader turned democrat, Omar Hassan al-Bashir, seized power in a French-backed coup in 1990 and promised democracy at the outset but his rule has been another disappointing case. Flawed executive elections were held both in 1996 and in 2001 with similar legislative elections the following years. He has repressed the opposition and curtailed several political and civil rights. Nevertheless, a qualified majority of countries in Africa has been governed by civilian regimes over the 13-year period of the study; that in itself represents an important watershed in the political history of Africa.

**Freedom and Fairness of Elections**

Looking first at the occurrence of free and fair elections only, the picture is somewhat encouraging. The share of free elections has increased from roughly half of all first and second elections to reach 64 percent in the case of third elections. The trend continues to fourth and later elections where 86 percent of these have met this basic criterion.
Zimbabwe’s degeneration since the early 1990s into near-total political collapse accounts for why the percentage for free and fair elections dropped to 86% among this group. The number of countries holding free and fair elections is also encouraging: the more countries holding at least one free and fair election, the more people, opposition parties, media and political elites are exposed to the phenomenon. The percentage of countries holding free and fair elections is generally higher than the share of free and fair elections. This simply means that several countries have held elections that were free and fair as well as flawed ones.

**Increasing Participation**

With the new data on a greater number of cases, there is no sign of a general trend of declining participation in second elections. To the contrary, Table 11 shows that participation is generally improving. Voter turnout seems to be slightly decreasing after second elections but changes are not statistically significant. Among free and fair elections opposition party participation increases from an average of 88 percent in first elections to 94 to 100 percent in all the following elections. Interestingly, opposition parties increasingly chose to participate even in flawed elections. This begs the question why opposition participation is increasing even in flawed elections. It is likely to be a rational calculation in response to competition; by participating rather than boycotting, the opposition not only builds good will and organizational strength, but also plays within the rules of the game as they wait their turn. In addition, countries with records of a series of bad elections like Chad, Togo, and Kenya before 2002 attest to this. Even in repressive regimes like Zimbabwe with repeated opposition inti-
otation and flawed elections, the opposition still chooses to contest rather than boycott. This is an important observation: The mere fact of holding uninterrupted, repetitive elections creates incentives for the political elites to participate even when it is obvious they cannot win a particular election. It seems that their calculation says they are better off in the long run participating than choosing to exit.

Since elections tend to become free and fair with third and later elections, this calculation should be right. Previous experiences then give them the advantage of an established platform, practice with campaigning in urban as well as rural settings, and organizational set-up in place and whatever past media coverage campaigning might have yielded. In all, they obviously stand a better chance of winning than if they had boycotted previous electoral races.

Table 11 also shows that the old authoritarian guard starts to take a bow off the political stage with second and later elections. This trend is the same for all elections, even though more pronounced in free and fair elections. It seems that it is a question of slowly phasing-out and

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Table 11. Participation in First, Second, Third and Later Elections.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Free and Fair N</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>Countries N</td>
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* Spearman’s Correlation values and significance for ordinal variables, and ANOVA F-values and significance for the interval variable.
leaving room for a new generation to grow and mature to leaders, as for example in Zambia, Kenya, Ghana, Guinea, and Madagascar. On the other hand, there are also examples of cases where the old guard has been thrown out almost immediately. The first African president to be voted out of office in recent times was Cape Verde’s authoritarian ruler Aristides Pereira, leader of Partido Africano da Independencia de Cabo Verde (PAICV), who lost to opposition candidate Antonio M. Monteiro in the February elections in 1991. Benin is perhaps the most well known example where Nicephore Soglo ousted the incumbent Mathieu Kérékou in the first presidential elections in March 1991. In sum, on these indicators the general trend has been an increase in the levels of participation irrespectively of the free and fairness of elections.

**Competition Grows Stronger**

The second dimension of the democratic quality of elections – competition – also improves significantly in some respects with third elections. In chapter three the relationship between free and fairness of elections and their competitiveness was deferred as an empirical question but with an expectation of less competition in flawed ones. It is worth noting in Table 12 that the differences between free and fair and flawed elections are significant and in the expected direction. Competition is reduced to almost none in flawed elections, which is the point of cheating seeing it from the view of incumbents. Legislative majorities are often far beyond the two-thirds majority that in many African countries is enough for the majority to make constitutional changes without consulting the opposition. The main opposition party often acquires less than ten percent of the legislative seats and alternations in power almost never occur. The few turnovers we see all – save one – happened during first elections when the attempted manipulation by incumbents was not enough to prevent opposition from taking power in Ivory Coast, Madagascar, and Nigeria. The relative smaller margins of victory for flawed executive elections probably reflects what Schedler (2002a) posits as the effects of international attention which has made it harder to cheat too openly and too much. Credibility is better off if you win with 51 percent than by a margin of 20 or 30 percent.
The relative competitiveness of executive elections is partly also an effect of measuring the first round in two-round executive elections. Incumbents bent on winning typically allow more fairness in the first round than in the second. Yet, using figures from second rounds would completely distort the picture of competition since only two candidates remain and winning candidates’ shares of votes are then inflated. For the validity reasons mentioned above, only figures from free and fair elections are taken as reliable in this regard. In free and fair elections the winning presidential candidate’s share of votes decreased from an average of 51 percent in first, to over 60 percent in second, to 48 percent third, and 44 percent in the fourth and

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<th>Significance*</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Second</td>
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<td>Winner’s Share of Votes</td>
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</table>

* Spearman’s Correlation except for means where ANOVA F-values are used.
following elections. These changes are highly statistically significant and indicate the increasingly fierce nature of political competition in Africa’s executive elections.

The trend of increasing competition is not reflected in the corresponding measures for legislative elections. The wide discrepancy between presidential votes shares and winning party’s share of seats is partly reflective of that many of the countries operate various forms of majoritarian electoral codes. The extension of the law-like consequences of electoral systems first developed by Duverger (1954) and Downs (1957) have been evinced by the work of scholars like Bogdanor and Butler (1983), Lijphart (1984, 1994, 1999), Lijphart and Waisman (1996), Mair (1990), Nohlen (1996: 44), Powell (1982, 2000), Rae (1971), Reynolds and Sisk (1998), and Sartori (1968, 1986, 2001). The imperative of the majoritarian vision is the creation of stable legislative majorities through highly disproportional translation of votes to seats, typically in winner-takes-all single-member constituencies. Thus, it has a strong reductive effect on both the number of parties competing for legislative seats and the number of parties in parliament. In effect, it often manufactures large winning majorities in parliament reflected in the figures of Table 12. In short, competition in legislative elections is probably more pronounced than the figures seems to say. Yet, Sandbrook’s (1996) assertion that institutionalization of parties in Africa will entail institutionalization of dominant party systems, risk becoming warranted. A preliminary analysis by Bogaards (2004) points in the same direction.

However, it is also true that the opposition remains split in many countries reflected in the relatively low average seat share for the second largest party in parliament. Generally, only when the opposition is able to unite in electoral or post-electoral coalitions they manage to assume power. Kenya is perhaps the archetypical example of this. Although President Moi used various tactics including intimidation and a number of irregularities to win the elections in 1992 and 1997, a unified opposition would have prevented both victories. The international community pressured President Moi to hold first elections in 1992, and widespread ethnic violence reportedly instigated by Moi and numerous irregularities taunted the elections. Despite this, the official tally for all the disunited opposition candidates
in the presidential race amounted to 60 percent of the votes. The same scenario was repeated in 1997 when both local international election observers complained about poor organization, widespread violence, and fraud. Yet again, Daniel Arap Moi and his ruling party only collected 40 percent of the votes in the executive poll. But ahead of Kenya’s third general election on December 27, 2002, almost all opposition parties succeeded to unite in the “National Rainbow Coalition” (NARC) launching Emilio M. Kibaki as presidential candidate. He swept 62 percent of the votes while NARC got close to 60 percent of the seats in parliament.

The problems of uniting opposition forces in Africa, point to a collective action problem. It took ten years of experiential learning and adaptation by the opposition to come to the rational calculation leading them to unite in fighting Moi’s KANU party. The smaller parties played out the dilemma of collective action of the individual versus collective optimal outcomes (March and Olsen 1989). If they choose joining and being submerged in a grand but winning coalition the collective good for opposition groups would be achieved. The cost incurred would be losing visibility and possibly even risk their continued existence as small parties threatened by the dominance of the bigger parties, especially the one capturing the office of the president. The temptation of free riding is strong for smaller parties in such a situation as it might provide the small party with an optimal pay-off. Should a major opposition coalition win the presidency but not majority in parliament, independent small parties could get the best of both worlds. They would enjoy an opposition take-over and leverage to trade votes for constituency benefits. This tactic backfired the Kenyan elections of 1997, causing opposition fragmentation and continued KANU-rule. Learning is an essential ingredient in reaching collectively optimal outcomes that satisfy individual calculations. The behavior of opposition parties in many African countries in the 1990s exemplifies such problems. But examples such as the one in Kenya also suggest these hurdles can be overcome.

Turnovers are rare in second elections in Africa as observed by Bratton (1998), even though his overall conclusions cannot be corroborated. Table 12 shows that while over 40 percent of the first elections led to alternations in power less than 10 percent of second elections had the
same effect. The frequency of turnovers picks up again in third elections, however, to 33 percent. In total 43 elections, out of which 5 were flawed resulted in alternations in executive or legislative power. It means almost one in three free and fair election. Hence, also Clapham’s (1998) gloomy but influential conclusion that few states in Africa offer prospects of regular turnovers as a result of reasonably free and fair elections has been proven wrong.

The conclusion on turnovers is not a result of electoral term limits since the measure of turnovers accounts for that (see chapter three). The data rather seems to reflect two main developments that converged with the holding of third elections: In countries where the opposition gained power in the first elections, as in Cape Verde, Malawi, Mali, Sao Tome and South Africa, voters tended to offer the ruling party a second term, seemingly afraid to let go of the new beginning. This also in part explains the higher shares of votes by winning presidential candidates in second as compared to first elections. Voters have then been more willing to change leaders by third elections. In the other main group, incumbent authoritarian rulers managed to stay in power under the new democratic dispensation. With time and a more experienced opposition as well as more international pressure, many of these rulers have been forced to accept a more leveled playing field leading the way to an opposition take over in the third race.

That is also often the point when the incumbent ruler is constitutionally obliged to relinquish power and the designated successors tends to lack the charisma and force of the old “big man”. Ghana’s charismatic and still popular Jerry J. Rawlings is one such example. When he seized power in his second coup in 1981, the country was in shatters. His regime, the Provincial National Defense Committee (PNDC), was originally socialist and closely associated with the regimes in the Eastern block. Soon convinced liberals such as former Supreme Court Judge and later Speaker of Parliament, Justice D. F. Annan were enrolled to the leadership of the regime and economic realities forced Ghana to seek support from the World Bank and IMF. Over almost a

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57 A qualification of this statement might be in place. Naturally, Rawlings and the PNDC could have opted for a different line of action if they had wanted to. They could have rejected the cooperation with the international financial institutions (IFIs). It would no doubt
decade, (then) Chairman Rawlings’ PNDC accomplished significant improvements for Ghana. He did probably not need any irregularities in the first two general elections in 1992 and 1996 to stay in power. When he was required to step down after serving his maximum term his party lost to the opposition NPP in the third elections. Daniel Arap Moi of Kenya recently chose to follow suit after the elections in December 2002. He was constitutionally required to step down and his selected successor lost the race, an outcome that Moi accepted immediately. To accept competition is only the first step. Accepting the consequences of competition is quite another but bearing the burden of defeat is perhaps becoming a new trend in African politics.

Despite these positive signs, turnovers have always been tricky and often a violent transition period in Africa. In twenty countries elections led to opposition triumphs and complete turnovers. In another five countries alternations in power was not complete in the sense that either the new president had been serving in the old authoritarian regime – Central African Republic, Djibouti, Kenya, and Malawi – or the new parliamentary majority-coalition partly consisted of old ruling coalition partners – which for example has happened four times in Mauritius parliamentary system. Almost half of all the turnovers have not had happy conclusions. The alternation in power was quickly followed by a breakdown of the political process in Burundi, Comoros, Sierra Leone, and RoC. In Zambia, the new regime adopted autocratic behavior leading to significant erosion of their infant democracy. So far, only one country has clearly passed Huntington’s (in)famous “two-turnover-of-the-executive-test”: Madagascar. That country actually even passed a ‘three-turnover-test’ with the last and controversial executive election on December 16, 2001 that led to a political stalemate and later (in 2002) a serious political crisis. This

have shattered the economy again but some African rulers have completed devastation of national economies quite successfully. It seems clear, however, that Rawlings and the PNDC honestly cared for Ghana and the future of her peoples. In that sense, they had few options than to seek collaboration with the IFIs once the Eastern block had made it clear they had no financial support to offer.

crisis has been resolved and Madagascar is back on track again (Marcus 2002).

Cape Verde has experienced two alternations in power but the first one was at the time of the first election, which according to Huntington’s criteria does not count. In Benin, there have also been two alternations in power, following the executive elections of 1991 and 1996 respectively. The first alternation came with first elections and Nicephere Soglo who took over after these elections had been the Prime Minister in incumbent President Mathieu Kérékou’s – whom Soglo beat – authoritarian government. The next and first ‘real’ alternation in power was from President Soglo back to the old autocrat Mathieu Kérékou. Such semi-turnovers are not exactly what Huntington had in mind\textsuperscript{59}. Malawi and Sao Tome are countries that have similar experiences. Mauritius as mentioned above, is somewhat a special case in that its parliamentary system has produced several ruling coalitions over the years but there has never been any clear-cut alternation in power. Nevertheless, few would question that Mauritius for long has been a consolidated democracy.

In sum, there are few signs of a decreasing trend in the democratic quality of competition in African elections over sequences of elections. Contrary to dominant assumptions, the level of competition has indeed increased on the two most important indicators: Winner’s share of the voters in executive elections and alternations in power. Yet, while it was pointed out in chapter two that there is also a risk for too much competition, such a risk seems so far remote in the African context. The level of competition still leaves room for improvement but has reached much more decent levels as countries hold third and fourth elections respectively, in particular if these were free and fair.

**Slowly Better Legitimacy**

As Table 13 demonstrates, the legitimacy of elections in Africa is on the rise. It seems again that third elections represent the crucial break with the past. The average legitimacy of elections increases

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\textsuperscript{59} Although, as pointed out to me by Lisa Laakso, the re-instatement of Kérékou was proceeded by amazingly open and democratic public and parliamentary debate on the economic policy of the government.
substantially with losers accepting defeat in over 70 percent of these elections. Even though incidence of violence is not reducing at the same rate, the share of peaceful elections still grows from 17 to 50 percent. The overall argument of this chapter – that the democratic qualities tend to improve with repetition of de jure participatory, competitive, and legitimate electoral cycles – is reinforced by these measures of legitimacy.

## TABLE 13.
Legitimacy in First, Second, Third and Later Elections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Type of Election</th>
<th>No. of the Poll</th>
<th>Significance*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Losers Accept</td>
<td>Free &amp; Fair N</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flawed N</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peaceful Process</td>
<td>Free &amp; Fair N</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flawed N</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regime Survival</td>
<td>Free &amp; Fair N</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flawed N</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countries N</td>
<td></td>
<td>58</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Spearman’s Correlation.

The indicator for regime survival substantiates this trend further. New electoral regimes are at a greatest risk of regime breakdown between first and second elections. Breakdown of the electoral cycle followed 39 elections and out of these 70 percent occurred after first elections. In most cases, those states in which the first elections were followed by a breakdown tried again with a "second first" election. Five countries have experienced more than one coup or the outbreak of a civil war following two attempts with first elections during the period: Central African Republic, Comoros, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, and Niger. The latter holds a less than flattering record with three first elections
during the 1990s but seems to have stabilized after that. Lesotho has also had two breakdowns in August 1994 and in September 1998 respectively, but these were not caused by violent overthrows although a lot of unrest unfolded in and around these events and eventually South Africa and Botswana intervened with military forces to restore peace during the September 1998 crisis. For the “third first” elections in May 2002 a new electoral system was adopted since the first-past-the-post system had been blamed for much of the chaos after the May 1998 election. The legislature now combines 80 seats elected in single-member constituencies by absolute majority, with 40 deputies elected by PR and national party lists.

Only eight cases of breakdowns (22 percent) in six countries occurred after second elections had been held. Out of these eight, three came after premature elections. Comoros’ premature second elections on December 26, 1993, were followed by a coup in September 1995. It has since experienced two coups d’etat and one serious coup-attempt, the latter in December 2001. Similarly, first elections were held on July 21, 1992 in RoC and premature second elections held on October 6, 1993 after President Pascal Lissouba lost a vote of censure followed by the dissolution of parliament. Civil war later resumed and ended with a victory by the old authoritarian ruler President Denis Sassou-Nguesso in 1997. Later (2002) President Sassou-Nguesso staged a new facade “second founding” election in RoC. Niger also managed to squeeze in a second but short-lived legislative election after the premature dissolution of Parliament in 1995 before the electoral regime was terminated by a coup. Thus, there are only five cases of breakdowns after the genuine conclusion of a full first electoral cycle and ensuing full-term second elections. This represents a mere seven percent of all 71 second elections, occurring in eight percent of the countries. In conclusion, complete breakdowns are rare already after one full electoral cycle has been completed – no matter what the quality of elections.

The few regimes that have not survived after that point broke down before 1995. Only in Central African Republic has a second election after that year been followed by a breakdown. All the remaining second elections held after 1995 survived even if a couple are rather discouraging cases. Equatorial Guinea’s second legislative elections
held on March 7, 1999 amidst widespread violence and intimidation were neither free nor fair, or resulted in a turnover. The old authoritarian ruler President Teodoro O. Nguema and his once single party PDGE are still in power and continue to play the game in much the same way as before the introduction of multiparty elections. Likewise, the old authoritarian incumbent in Guinea, President Lasana Conté who came to power in a coup in 1984, won both the first and second ballot – the latter on December 14, 1998 – under very controversial circumstances. The second legislative elections, scheduled for 2001, were postponed. These are clearly cases of “electoral authoritarianism” Schedler (2002b). Gambia is the only country where a coup unseated a civilian government after third elections. The July 1994 elections sparked protests within the rank and file of the military over back pay for service in the peacekeeping operations in Liberia, led Lt. Yaya Jammeh to power. President Jammeh has since won two successive elections. In the controversial 1996 first-again elections, no parties were allowed to campaign but three opposition candidates stood against Lt. Jammeh. The second-again presidential elections in November 2001 were of a less dubious quality; nevertheless, widespread violence tainted the campaign, although the Commonwealth Observation Mission declared the elections satisfactorily conducted. The electoral process has gradually resumed along similar lines in another ten of the 14 countries where the process had broken down: Angola, CAR, Ivory Coast, Guinea Bissau, Lesotho, Niger, Nigeria, RoC, Sao Tome, and Sierra Leone. In sum, violent breakdowns are far the most likely after first elections. Since 1995, only one second election has been followed by a breakdown. With only one exception, all countries that have managed to muddle through to third elections have stayed on track.

Valid Conclusions?

Overall, it seems from the empirical analysis of developments over several cycles of elections in Africa, that a learning-by-doing experience is taking place. The democratic qualities of elections tend to improve steadily with practice. Third elections represent a break-off point with the past as the average quality of the elections increase

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60 This is also the reason for what might appear as an inconsistency in Table 2.
significantly. Many more of third, fourth, and later elections are free and fair than was first and second elections. Electoral participation and competition increases significantly and the old authoritarian rulers leave the scene. Slowly, but noticeably, the signs of democratic legitimacy are gaining ground. Can observers start to relax then with the conclusion of third elections?

Unfortunately, the answer is “no”. The most discouraging examples are the two black sheep of third and fourth-plus elections: Zambia and Zimbabwe. Zambia’s best in class’ first election of 1991 was followed by a sharp decline in the quality of the second elections in November 1996. The third elections, held on December 27, 2001 conveyed no substantial improvement, despite the fact that incumbent President Frederick Chiluba in the end decided to adhere to the constitutional limit of two terms and stepped down. The current situation is still viewed cautiously by most observers. Zimbabwe’s fifth parliamentary election in June 2000 was marked by irregularities, violence, and opposition outcry at the results. The campaign for the third executive elections in March 2002 turned into a sham, littered with censure, violence, intimidation, presumed vote rigging, and refusal to accept international observers. These are the deviant cases, however.

More common are countries such as Ghana and Mauritania. Ghana’s 1992 first elections were partly flawed and hotly contested. All opposition parties boycotted the legislative election and refused to accept the results. Turnout was only 29 percent. Second elections in 1996 had deficiencies but not to the extent of affecting the outcome. All parties participated bringing the turnout up to 77 percent, and all major actors eventually accepted the outcome. The third consecutive elections – held in 2000 – took place under a new inter-party agreement with party agents present at each polling station. They were essentially free and fair, monitored primarily by 15,000 domestic election observers, and all parties accepted the outcome immediately. Among these, the old authoritarian ruler President J. J. Rawlings, who stepped down form the highest office and conceded that his successor in the National Democratic Congress (NDC), Dr. J. A. Mills had been defeated by an opposition that united behind NPP’s J. A. Kufour in the second round.
In Mauritania Colonel O. S. M. Taya who assumed power in a bloodless coup in 1984, also agreed to hold first multiparty elections in 1992. As in Ghana, the incumbent ruler won the first elections by some amount of unfair means. Opposition parties boycotted the parliamentary poll, and voter turnout was only 38 percent. None of the opposition groups accepted the results. A similar scenario was repeated in the legislative elections of 1996 and in a presidential poll in 1997, both plagued with political violence, arbitrary arrests, and frequent irregularities. The third parliamentary election held in 2001 was significantly different, however. All parties contested this election and the irregularities that still occurred did not seem to alter the outcome. Although the incumbent dominant party in parliament reclaimed a majority of the seats, all the other contesting parties immediately accepted the results and assumed the role of a peaceful opposition. These examples illustrate what seems to be happening increasingly in Africa today: starting to hold multiparty elections even if these are miserable, once the electoral cycle is repeated it develops into a force changing actors’ behavior that in turn reinforce and improve the democratic qualities of subsequent elections. Thus, it is not necessary that elections are perfect from the beginning rather electoral democratic maturity comes with practice.

However, we need to test the robustness of these findings. There is a potentially significant selection bias in the way the sample has been analyzed so far. First election-cases are a mix of virtually all countries. The analysis of subsequent elections includes a “natural” selection of cases included by virtue of having conducted such elections. Countries that have only held first and second elections, for example, do not record in the other categories. The question is if we can generalize about all countries on the basis of elections held in a fewer countries – those that have had the time and stamina to conclude three or four electoral cycles. Naturally, we should be careful to do so. On the one hand, there are advantages to analyzing all elections ensemble in these categories. We do not have to select among the universe of cases opening up for other kinds of selection bias, we get higher numbers that often voucher for more reliable conclusions an so on. Yet, we run the risk of a “natural” selection bias and therefore, this chapter proceeds doing a panel-group comparison.
A Panel-Group Comparison

The analysis of all elections ensemble above suggested that there is a trend of positive socialization, or perhaps habituation, taking place across Africa. A panel-group analysis offers a way to assess the validity of such a cross-continental claim. The single most important methodological choice for this analysis is the choice of differentiating criterion of the panels since that determines how countries will be grouped together. I have chosen to use the number of successive elections held as of June 2003 as defining for each panel group. The rationale is simple. The argument above resounds something like the proverbial “practice makes perfect”: the more experience a country acquires by holding more elections, the more and the better democratic qualities their elections display. We can be relatively sure that this is true for the more experienced countries. It is these countries’ elections we find in the category of fourth+ elections. We already know that on average these elections had better democratic qualities than first and second elections. How do countries with only two or three subsequent elections compare? Is the general trend described above a result of selection bias and thus invalid, or not?

In other words, we need to control for country-type. This is done by presenting three panels of countries. The first panel consists of the group of countries that as of June 2003 had concluded two successive elections and are due for third elections. Many of the countries in this first panel-group are the relatively ‘bad’ latecomers or have experienced breakdowns: Central African Republic, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Malawi, Nigeria, Sudan, and Swaziland. A few are more begin cases yet to become more experienced, such as South Africa, Mozambique Tanzania, and Uganda.

The second panel-group consists of countries due to hold their fourth or later, election. In other words, these countries have successfully held at least three multiparty elections in an unbroken series. Many are cases displaying a positive trend: Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Djibouti, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritania, Namibia, Sao Tome & Principe, Seychelles,

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61 The reader who wishes can return to Table 2 in chapter one. The countries grouped together in the three categories to the right in that table are the panel-groups referred to here.
and Zambia. But this group also has a few bad apples: Cameroon, Gabon, and Togo. Finally, the third panel-group consists of the most experienced countries. They have held four or more successive elections without a breakdown. Africa’s few long-standing electoral regimes are found in this group: Botswana (since 1969), Madagascar (since 1982), Mauritius (since 1976), Senegal (since 1978), and Zimbabwe (since 1980). But we also find two newcomers that have now qualified to be counted as “experienced” electoral regimes: Benin and Mali. I use within-panel-group comparisons to generalize about each group. The between-panel-group comparison will tell us if and how the groups are similar or different from each other and therefore if the analysis above is valid for all countries or not.

**Even the Bad Apples Get Better**

Looking at the results in Table 14, two general observations are particularly striking. First, the group with a longest record has always been the better class. Their first three elections had more of the democratic qualities than the two other less experienced groups’ corresponding elections. In rank order, the middle group of countries occupies the middle position in terms of electoral democratic qualities, while the least experienced group has least developed democratic qualities. The second observation is that the trend towards a steady improvement is similar for all three panels. While the groups have started off differently – latecomers have indeed been less benign cases – the self-reinforcing power of electoral regimes evidently is a general phenomenon.

The frequency of free and fair elections among the latecomers – the first panel-group – is generally lower than in the two other groups, but it improves according to the same pattern. While only 36 percent of the first elections in the first panel were free and fair, the corresponding figure for the other two panels were 50 and 58 percent. The N is lower than in the previous analyzes and we should therefore be a little more careful with judging the magnitude of these differences but the direction of the trajectory is clear. Over second and third to fourth elections, all groups improve and signs are that the late-comers will continue to follow that trend to eventually catch up with the others.
TABLE 14.
A Panel Group Comparison: Based on the Number of Successive Elections as of July 1, 2003.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>2 ELECTIONS</th>
<th>3 ELECTIONS</th>
<th>4+ ELECTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of Poll</td>
<td>First Second Third All</td>
<td>First Second Third All</td>
<td>First Second Third All Fourth+ All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Current Total</td>
<td>Current Total</td>
<td>Current Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Voter Turnout (%)</td>
<td>66% 72% 69%</td>
<td>58% 62% 62% 61%</td>
<td>52% 52% 55% 59% 55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(150) (139) (149)</td>
<td>(194) (128) (113) (95)</td>
<td>(227) (246) (169) (148)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposition</td>
<td></td>
<td>52% 78% 65%</td>
<td>68% 67% 84% 72%</td>
<td>50% 75% 75% 91% 75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitor</td>
<td></td>
<td>16 21 39</td>
<td>19 18 16 53</td>
<td>6 9 9 19 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian</td>
<td></td>
<td>3% 0% 2%</td>
<td>0% 15% 16% 10%</td>
<td>33% 33% 33% 52% 40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>- 4 3 7</td>
<td>- 4 3 7</td>
<td>4 4 4 11 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>Winner's Share of Votes (%)</td>
<td>58% 63% 60%</td>
<td>62% 69% 48% 62%</td>
<td>61% 67% 48% 48% 55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(16.7) (15.2) (15.5)</td>
<td>(19.7) (16.7) (12.0) (18.6)</td>
<td>(21.9) (25.5) (16.2) (9.6) (20.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Largest Party's</td>
<td>Share of Seats (%)</td>
<td>59% 68% 63%</td>
<td>67% 72% 65% 68%</td>
<td>56% 68% 65% 68% 64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(16.3) (21.2) (15.9)</td>
<td>(18.2) (18.3) (17.6) (17.8)</td>
<td>(23.3) (25.9) (27.1) (19.1) (22.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Party's Share of Seats (%)</td>
<td>15 14 30</td>
<td>14 14 13 41</td>
<td>14 14 13 41</td>
<td>14 6 7 17 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnover of Power (%)</td>
<td>10% 0% 5%</td>
<td>21% 7% 21% 16%</td>
<td>25% 0% 25% 24% 19%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 3 3 6 12</td>
<td>3 3 3 5 11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimacy</td>
<td>Losers Accept (%)</td>
<td>13% 11% 15%</td>
<td>38% 37% 47% 39%</td>
<td>60% 67% 42% 62% 47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peacemaker</td>
<td>Outcome (%)</td>
<td>4 3 9</td>
<td>10 10 9 29</td>
<td>6 2 5 13 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electoral Regime</td>
<td>Survival (%)</td>
<td>7% 22% 13%</td>
<td>15% 37% 42% 31%</td>
<td>25% 25% 25% 43% 33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free and Fair</td>
<td>Elections (%)</td>
<td>36% 44% 42%</td>
<td>50% 48% 68% 54%</td>
<td>58% 50% 50% 86% 65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elections Total N</td>
<td></td>
<td>31 27 60</td>
<td>20 27 19 74</td>
<td>12 12 12 21 54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With regard to participation, two out of three indicators show very similar trends over the three panel-groups: voter turnout and opposition participation. Turnout levels are actually better among the late-comers in the first panel than in the other two more experienced groups. By the time of the third to fourth election, it reaches 60 percent or over in all groups. Opposition participation is very similar across groups as well, reaching full participation in two-thirds or more of all elections already by the second electoral cycle. Only the disposal of old authoritarians in leading positions seems to improve less in the first panel-group of late-comers.

Three out of four indicators for the second democratic quality of elections – competition – also show a similar pattern across the three panel-groups. The winner’s share of votes in executive elections swing around 60 percent in the first elections, climb on average five to seven percentage points in second elections but decrease by almost 20 percentage points in third elections making these elections a highly competitive affair. It seems that the two trends of old incumbents that stay for two terms in some countries and voters being patient with new leaders in other countries discussed above, is indeed a general development across different groups of countries in Africa. Largest parliamentary parties’ share of seats follows the same pattern although – for the reasons discussed in the foregoing analysis – the share of seats tend to indicate less competition in these elections. The largest opposition party’s relative weakness is also general across Africa. The main opposition party tends to gain significantly less than 20 percent of seats in parliament. The African voter does not like losers perhaps, and the electoral system in many countries allocate seats highly disproportionately. These three indicators show a wave-like pattern: the competitiveness of first elections is reasonable, only to decrease with second elections and improve again appreciably with third elections.

A worrying sign about the latecomers in the first panel-group is the rate of turnovers. Alternations in power happened in only ten percent of their first elections while the corresponding figure for the other two groups were 21 and 25 percent respectively. The decrease in turnovers with the second election is similar however, and it picks up again by third elections. If we can assume that the latecomers will continue to
follow the same pattern on this indicator as with the others, rates will pick up and the democratic quality will improve also in this respect. As in some of the other instances, the latecomers start off somewhat worse but develop similarly so that in the end, they improve much as the other two panel-groups of countries.

On legitimacy, we find the only really significant deviation of the latecomers. Losing parties and candidates acceptance of the results is on average much lower than in the other two panel-groups and does not increase in second elections. Looking more closely at the figures for the other two panels, we might not expect an increase until third elections, however. In the second panel-group, first and second elections display almost exactly the same level of losers’ acceptance in first and second elections at 36 and 37 percent respectively. For the last panel-group, the average rate of acceptance hit 60 percent among first elections, dropped to a mere 17 percent in second elections and slowly climbed up again with 47 percent among third, and 62 percent among fourth and later elections. Apparently, on this indicator there is no general trend over the different countries in Africa. Losers’ acceptance is a contentious issue with significant ramifications.

Yet, the peacefulness and survival rates show highly similar levels and trend across the panels. It is regrettable that even by third and fourth elections, not even half of the elections are entirely peaceful. The trend is positive, however, towards more and more elections being peaceful. The latecomers start off worse than the others but improve as well as the other panels do. Slowly, at great pains, elections are becoming more and more peaceful in Africa. This is still an area where much work will have to be done though, in order to actualize the necessary democratic quality of legitimacy. Survival rates are better and seem to indicate as discussed at some length above, that already after second elections have been held, the survival of the regime is relatively safe.

Zambia’s political development over the 1990s is a good case in point showing how hard it is to revert these new forces of pluralism and pro-democratic incentives. After the first elections in 1991 that overturned the old incumbent Kenneth Kaunda, opposition leader Fredrick Chiluba took over trying to turn politics back to a new authoritarian regime. By 1993, there was mass exodus from Chiluba’s MMD-party, as leaders, MPs, and ministers who now had a stake in
appearing as democrats left the old stage. If Chiluba would have been allowed to recreate authoritarian rule these individuals’ power and careers would have been at the mercy of the leader. With the more democratic dispensation, they had their own power bases. In the ensuing struggle, the 1996 elections were widely discredited. Chiluba’s successor in MMD, President Levy Mwanawasa managed to win the elections in 2001 by a small margin only after many concessions to other players. To respect and reinforce the rules of the game was suddenly in the interest of a number of powerful actors who now built their future political careers on an electoral foundation. They put high pressures on President Mwanawasa meanwhile Chiluba has since been charged with corruption and misuse of power and under heavy pressure from many sources with pro-democratic incentives Zambia has regained much of its lost democratic qualities.

This exemplifies how de jure participatory, competitive, and legitimate elections provide an arena for political struggles that gives even dubious actors incentives to act for rather than against further democratization. It also instigates new actors and remold old configurations that can serve to strengthen, deepen and broaden a democratization process. Even within old authoritarian parties, individuals who achieve strong electoral support assert their own new power base. Such individuals are important because they reduce the need for incumbent parties to engage with potentially costly fraudulent practices. Even non-democratic MPs develop vested interests in the continuation of electoral cycles as long as they stand chance of winning since this constitutes their new power base. When these individuals gain power within incumbent and authoritarian parties they change the way the game tilts as they promote democratic rules of the game that increase their own political leverage and further their personal ambitions. Thus by annexing and reworking old rules these actors become the forces of change and transformation as they adapt to democratic institutions.

In the first panel-group queued to hold third elections next, we find that a majority of cases that are likely to follow in the footsteps of the more electorally advanced countries. Although Jammeh in Gambia came to power with the power of the gun, he seems to be willing to step down when the time comes. In Mozambique, Malawi, and Uganda the prospects of peaceful and legitimate alternations in power
via the ballot box in the upcoming third elections are also good. In
South Africa and Tanzania, it seems unlikely that the opposition would
win but it seems equally unlikely that the democratic qualities of
elections should deteriorate. Only the tiny island of Zanzibar is a cause
of any concern. In sum, more than half — seven out of thirteen — of the
countries in this panel-group seems to have relatively good prospects.
Guinea and Ethiopia are less encouraging cases in this group but
should not be ruled out from those that could improve their elections
considerably. With enough pressure from South Africa Swaziland
could also leave the power of King Mswati III behind. Chad, Equatorial
Guinea, and Sudan look to be the hardest nuts to crack.

Finally, a few words are appropriate on the countries that were
excluded from the panel-group comparison because they are in the
pipeline to hold first or second elections. What is the situation in these
countries? It would be excessive in length to go into any details on
these nations but it is still useful to reflect on their present status. In
some of them, the situation is not promising. The island nation
Comoros, since recently a federal state, has been plagued by internal
conflicts between the heads of the various “national” governments of
the three units of the federation. In her past, Comoros has also experi-
enced several coups in which mercenaries have been involved. Its
distant location and relative unimportance to the international com-
unity does not augur well. Similarly, the RoC is devoid of clear pro-
democratic leaders and haunted by different mercenaries, guerillas,
and factions within the so-called national army. The last election — its
“second” first election in the 1990s — was pulled off by President
Denis Sassou-Nguesso in 2002 as a façade to cover his authoritarian
rule. It also remains doubtful if the many political actors involved in
Burundi’s politics will stick to the recent peace and reconciliation
accord and a return to multiparty politics.

In Guinea-Bissau, a second first election in November 1999 brought
Kumba Yalla into power after General Mane had ousted the old
incumbent President Joao B. Vieira who won the first elections held in
1994. President Yalla was however overthrown by another coup
shortly after the end of the period studied here, in September 2003.
The present situation is unclear but one would have to be clearly
ignorant to say it looks optimistic. More hopeful is the situation in
Angola after the guerilla-cum-opposition leader Jonas Savimbi’s death. Liberia experienced another civil war in which the old authoritarian ruler Charles Taylor was defeated and departed to Nigeria. The present situation is relatively stable but the future of elections and their quality unclear. In Sierra Leone, the process of holding elections is back on track with heavy support from the UN and bilateral donors. A lot of efforts have been done with transferring best practices from countries such as South Africa on reconciliation and Ghana on election management. So far, these have paid off and we might come to see a better future in this country too. Niger’s third first election in the 1990s, held in October 1999 after the coup in April the same year, ushered Mamadou Tandja of the National Movement for a Developing Society (MNSD) into power. Niger is also trying a new semi-presidential system with a revised PR-formula that reduced the number of parties in parliament to five (from what would have been nine if the electoral system had not been revised). In sum, at least half of these countries excluded from the panel-group comparison have reasonable prospects based on what the situation seems to be at present.

**Conclusions**

Taken together, the two types of analysis pursued in this chapter corroborate the hypothesis about the self-reinforcing power of repetitive elections, and at the same time, qualify it. It seems that across the panel-groups of more benign and malign cases, a development is taking place whereby the democratic qualities of elections improve with experience and increasing institutionalization. And more importantly for our purposes, even at a very early age of electoral regimes an uninterrupted series of de jure participatory and competitive elections has led to identifiably higher levels of democratic qualities in Africa. Elections constitute a core characteristic of modern representative democracy, hence, democratization in this regard seems to be both reinforced and improved simply by the holding of a series of elections.

One possible causal mechanism is that the iteration of a game under a stable set of rules – elections – forges distinct rational calculations by actors that is different from the calculation if it was a one-shot occasion. In future research, a rational actor institutionalist approach should perhaps be formally developed and tested. Repetitive elections
in newly democratizing countries may be similar to the classic “Prisoner’s Dilemma” game in which actors have incentives to engage in non-cooperative behavior for short term gains but adopt cooperative strategies when the game is repeated or prolonged indefinitely. The literature on game theory here highlights the rationale for “tit-for-tat” cooperative strategies as the best possible norm of behavior (Axelrod 1984, Taylor 1987, Tsebelis 1990). The point being the logic of action changes when the game is repeated. Recurring elections can perhaps be interpreted in this light. Actors learn the rules through experience and their calculations change once they realize the process is continuous stability of the rules of the game – perceived or real – causes the behavior of the actors to change because their rational calculations look different than if it is a one-shot game. To investigate the applicability of such models to what is happening in contemporary Africa one would need close inspection of such processes and collect a wealth of on individuals’ responses and reasoning to changing conditions of politics; a very difficult but not impossible task.

Such a view of transitional processes as iterative games that come with seeing that the transition period involves several elections implies a theoretical departure from the dominant theories of democratization (e.g. Collier 1999, Diamond 1999, Linz and Stephan 1996, O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986; c.f. Munck 2001b, 126). Following such an approach, it should be recognized that constitutive rules are crucial because they condition the vested interests of those involved. Chess as we know it changes if the constitutive rules defining the board and the set of chessmen with their roles are changed. Players then are left with two options, either to play as constituted or abort the game. If they reach a mutual understanding, certain rules can be relaxed, as is done in teaching new players, while experienced players often add constraints like time. Chess players are made by playing and practicing the game frequently. The rules of the electoral game are tested, strained, and sometimes broken. By testing the rules, and indeed breaking them, actors learn about these rules and decide whether to agree and play by them in the future or not. In this sense, the findings here also corroborate Rustow’s (1970, 345) hypothesis that democrats

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62 Although determined autocrats are likely to circumvent official rules and regulations, constitutive or not, in order to hold on to power.
can be fostered by establishing institutions of democracy. It might even be possible to trick, lure, or cajole non-democrats into democratic behavior. The outcome of these processes is what is – incompletely for sure – recorded in the data presented here. The implication would be that elites do not necessarily have to be convinced democrats at the beginning of a democratization process. Institutions can create pro-democratic behavior, which in time may turn into democratic beliefs.

This could perhaps explain the metamorphosis of many previous African autocrats into proponents of democratic elections. Creating institutions is to reconstitute actors and some of their basic preferences. For example, when party leaders in an autocratic regime become elected members of Parliament (MPs) in competitive elections they gain new interests and stakes. Power distribution within a party or ruling group is typically based on new kinds of resources. In the new institutional setting of competitive elections – even if these are not free and fair – an MP with a strong electoral base builds his or her own basis for higher statuses within the party. Strong electoral support decreases the incumbent party’s need to subvert electoral processes to stay in power. For the incumbent MP, the incentives are now to retain the electoral game even if tinted by some amount of irregularities to secure the seat. Another example is that when independent electoral commissions are initiated the staff gradually find their future careers and status becoming linked intrinsically to preserving and upholding the rules of the game. To the extent that such bodies do in fact have some autonomy in these countries, it induces pro-democratic behavior. The same could be said about Supreme Court members who have to adjudicate on electoral disputes. These are examples that seem plausible, but the analysis pursued in this book can only be indicative of such processes at best. More suitable evidence acquired by process-tracing techniques is required in future research.

The finding evidenced here of the self-reinforcing power of elections is not trivial, particularly in light of the prevalent Afro-pessimistic arguments that tend to degrade the value of elections. Such arguments typically build on a belief that authoritarian rulers who orchestrate fake competitive elections successfully subvert the drive towards democracy by making donors and intellectuals mistake them for real democracies.
This might undoubtedly be true in a few cases. But it is much more common that such rulers fail in achieving these aims, if indeed they have them. The typical scenario is that the repetition of electoral cycles takes on a self-reinforcing route that more often than not leads to a further demise of authoritarian traits. If indeed elections lead to better performance of essential institutional functions, it seems that elections in and of themselves, are a worthwhile exercise.

On the other hand, there are obvious differences among the African countries. The panel-group comparison confirms that the younger generation of electoral regimes in Africa started off from a much less promising position. First elections in this group were generally less democratic than such elections among the “older” generations. The same is true for second elections. Even if the new beginners replicate the trend towards better quality, it is less pronounced and has yet to produce the same degree of improvements in democratic qualities. But regardless of starting point, the trend is towards elections that are more democratic. The teleology in this conclusion is not theoretical or methodological, but only empirical.
The within-subsystem-analysis of elections as a partial regime in the previous two chapters largely ignored democracy in its broader sense. The approach was appropriate given the research objectives, the existing hypotheses in the field, and the democratic qualities of elections as an important, legitimate and interesting subject in itself. Chapter five reaffirming Dahl’s (1989) assertion that electoral rights cannot be reduced to “mere procedures” also argued the repetitive exercise of formal procedures and practices of electoral cycles fashion the realization of political rights; increased political participation, competition, and deepening legitimacy for the idea of self-government.

One is left wondering if repetitive elections spur democratic gains outside of the electoral context. This begs the question if repetitive elections facilitate, or even generate democratic qualities in society as well? Or, if elections are at best reflections of democracy as the bulk of the literature on transitions would have it? This chapter evaluates the effects of elections in society; it probes the ability of elections to institute, broaden and deepen democracy within society. The overall hypothesis tested here is that the longer an uninterrupted series of elections a country has, the more society is imbued democratic qualities. It is also hypothesized that increases in democratic qualities are the effects of holding elections. As a general idea to be precised in this chapter, societal democratic qualities are indicated when people act to,
and expect and respect democratic behavior from their fellow citizens and from social actors and institutions.

The chapter is divided into three main sections. While the first is concerned with defining and operationalizing the dependent variable, the second revisits the scant literature on democratization drawing links in terms of the causal effects of elections on the level of democracy. The third section deductively develops a seven causal link framework detailing how the holding and repetition of elections can cause increased democratic qualities in society. While the links drawn cannot all be tested because of lack of data and inadequate model precision, five contradicting hypotheses are formulated. The chapter argues testing these is a relatively efficient way to find out if the thrust of the causal links is corroborated. The actual testing by way of four alternative appraisals is carried out in chapter seven.

**Democratic Qualities in Society**

An analysis of the impact of elections on societal democratization calls for the construction of a reasonably valid measure for degrees of democracy as firstly, an attribute of society, and secondly, as sufficiently independent of electoral procedures in order to avoid meaningless tautology. Since democracy as discussed in chapter two is more than just elections, this makes it possible to conceptualize democratization as increasing democratic qualities outside of the political system. Chapter two argued equality of political participation was based on a legal equal distribution of sovereign freedoms for citizens translated into voting rights and freedom to form political parties, the ability to contest elections and to compete for power. To ensure and facilitate citizens’ active participation in self-government outside of electoral processes there must be freedom of assembly and demonstration, open public discussion, as well as the right to form and join civic organizations including trade unions and professional organizations. The more these civil liberties are realized the greater the democratic quality of participation in and within society.

Chapter two also argued the importance of the right to choice among alternatives in a competitive electoral arena. For free competition to be realized in the social sphere there must be personal autonomy and economic rights that provide the foundations for independent alterna-
tives. These include freedom from indoctrination and excessive dependence on the state to guarantee the autonomy of the social sphere; protection of private property rights, the autonomy of organizations and individuals, legal gender equality, educational and professional opportunities to make competition and alternatives available and fairer. In addition, basic institutions of the rule of law are needed to ensure personal autonomy and economic rights, an independent judiciary, equality under the law, and protection of the citizenry from terror, and torture. The legitimacy of self-government is manifested within society by actual inter-societal acceptance in associational life by various organizations through genuine free public and private dialogues, peaceful but active civil society co-existence and alternation as advocates, and the absence of insurgencies. The indicators of democratic qualities in society are thus a set that may be summarized as:

• Participation: Rights of assembly, form and join civil society organizations. Open public discussion.

• Competition: Personal autonomy and economic rights, freedom from excessive dependence. Gender, educational, professional equality. Rule of law.

• Legitimacy: Inter-social acceptance and peaceful co-existence of organizations. Absence of insurgencies.

By focusing on elections alone, we tend to deemphasize these aspects of civil liberties and democratic qualities outside the formal political system. This is often the case because the social sphere is largely independent of electoral procedures and formal political rights. In this instance, however, that is an advantage to capitalize on in evaluating the relationship we are interested in. Although there are no perfect indicators, Freedom House’s index of civil liberties (CL) has been ranking the levels of civil liberties enjoyed globally from 1972 to present. Preferred by most, Freedom House’s classification system is based on 14 criteria including all the civil liberties mentioned above as dimensions of democratic qualities in society. The Freedom House index is also suitable for the current purpose because it measures the realization of actual liberties “on the ground” rather than just their

63 For a description of these 14 criteria and a brief note of the methodology employed to rank countries, see Appendix III.
legal existence. Regrettably for our purposes, Freedom House does not provide the score for each indicator but only a composite measure with just one value. One would have wanted three (or as in the preceding chapters, several more) independent indicators; one for each democratic quality. This is not possible restricting the sophistication of the assessment of the main hypothesis and the causal links. Their methodology also makes determination of how indicators combine into single values difficult. The Freedom House use of panels of experts risk subjective ratings and makes assessment impossible since checklist responses are not available. The non-availability of the raw data from Freedom House and absence of both formal coding and aggregation rules are the most severe liabilities of the index. Yet, this is the index most widely accepted among the alternatives as matching empirical realities. It is also the only index with annual scores over the period studied that relatively independently measures the sphere outside of electoral practices. This is a crucial, even though there are several measures of democracy in the literature, Freedom House’s CL-measure does the best job for our purposes of capturing a dimension of democracy distinct from election-related phenomena.

The alternatives also have their own methodological limitations. The Polity IV (Marshall and Jaggers 2002) indicator of democracy builds on four indicators tapping only political competition and constraints on the chief executive. This indicator does not provide information on distinctly non-election related aspects; and even if it did, the index is rather crude, meant for long-term, major-shifts in the nature of polities around the world and cannot be used for finer graduations of democracy. The Polity IV index provides dimensional data but does not present data on the empirical bases for the values assigned to the dimensions (cf. McHenry 2000, 169; Munck and Verkuilen 2002). Much the same applies to Vanhanen’s (1997) composite measure based on two simple indicators: voter turnout and the smaller parties’ share of the votes, which is too narrow to provide a good reflection of the empirical differentiation in the field (cf. Moore 1995) and more suitable for identifying the “big picture” over a long period (1850-1993). Vanhanen does not provide a theoretical justification of his

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64 One recent analysis (Gleditsch and Ward 1997) indicates that only one of the components is a valid measure of democracy; the others simply add noise.
inferences from the objective measures into a scale. There are several other measures proving data only for a year (e.g. Arat 1988, Bollen 1979, Coppedge and Reinicke 1990, Hadenius 1992). All of these measures focus on political democracy understood as one version or the other of polyarchy and are in effect too closely tied to electoral procedures, their character, and results to be suitable for the present purpose; the distinction between independent and dependent variables would collapse. In short, the ranking of countries on annual basis by the Freedom House CI index is the best available indicator even with its drawbacks. It will therefore be used as the indicator of the dependent variable: the level of democratic qualities in society.

IN THE DARKNESS

Hypothesizing a relationship between independent and dependent factors ought to be framed by a theory of causal links to avoid unabashed empiricism. It is impossible to conceive of representative democracy without elections (Clark 2000; Zakaria 1997). Karatnycky (1999, 116) also notes that, “the emergence of electoral democracies has been the best indicator of subsequent progress in the areas of civil liberties and human rights”. The main hypothesis discussed here may be displayed in this way:

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The different measures have also been charged among other things that comparisons based on qualitative data mismatch with the indexing and the possibility of inter-subjective assessment of the rationale for country ratings are severely restricted (McHenry 2000). There is also an over dependence on subjective judgment in assignment of values on indicators (Bollen 1993) and inadequate data sources (Bollen 1990, 17; Shin 1994, 147).

Causality, as it were, is always an analytical construction and cannot be evidenced as such regardless if it is referred to as causal chain, link, or mechanism. It is not an empirical
Revisiting the central tenants of democratization theories we find elections as a causal factor is largely ignored in the third wave of democratization literature. O’Donnell and Schmitter’s (1986) Transitions from Authoritarian Rule quickly became the most referenced work on transitions to democracy. Defined by the Latin American experience, their approach was for a long time orthodoxy, positing “founding” elections as the hallmark of a successfully completed process of disposing an old authoritarian regime and installing a new democratic dispensation.

In the ensuing theoretical and empirical work, aspects like number of elections, voter turnout, competitiveness and turnovers have been used in analyzing the degree or process of democratization (e.g. Barkan 2000, Herbst 2001; van de Walle 2001), and the level or quality of democracy (e.g. Altman and Linán 2002; Foweraker and Landman 2002; Vanhanen 1997), or the consolidation of democracy (e.g. Fomunyoh 2001; Diamond 1999; Huntington 1991). Elections viewed in these ways have little to do with transition processes except as an indicator of its successful completion. This kind of approach was also adopted by scholars like Diamond (1996), Diamond and Plattner (1993, 1999), Günther et al. (1995), and Valenzuela (1992). The influential volume of Linz and Stephan (1996) even use the date of the first election as the day when the transition process ended. Bratton and van de Walle (1997, 195) imported this to their analysis of African politics. The “democratic experiments” in Africa were deemed successful once a new regime was installed through free and fair elections in which the opposition participated and accepted the results. Even though these criteria make theoretical sense, it focuses exclusively on first or so-called “founding” elections and makes no causal argument about election effects.

Assuming then that a democratic regime had been installed, scholars proceeded to the issue of regime survival or consolidation of these fragile new regimes. With this came the sub discipline of “consolidology”, and the upsurge of democratic consolidation concepts in com-
parative politics (Munck 2001b). Originally identified by O’Donnell (1992) as an erosion or slow death of democracy that eventually led to a democradura \(^{67}\), this discourse is largely accepted as providing answers to the vital issue of the moment new democracies could be said to have survived the threats of democratic breakdown. Or as Di Palma (1999, 141) put it “at what point … can democrats relax?” By and large, consolidation is generally depicted as the “only game in town” focusing on attitudes and behavior in Linz’s (1990) classic formulation. Yet, arguments about the effects of electoral cycles on these processes are conspicuously absent.

With increased popularity, little care was taken to conserve the integrity of the concept. The original analytical meaning of regime stabilization has been stretched and redefined to cover a panoply of problems straddling young democracies in the “third wave”. Schedler (1998, 96-101) argues that conceptual confusion can be avoided by clarifying different usages of the same term \(^{68}\). Yet, in none of the five uses of the term that he identifies in the literature, do elections play a part other than to signify the genesis or completion of consolidation.

A recurrent methodological problem with consolidation studies is the presumption that factors generating democratic stability are also causal factors in reproducing stability. This assumption of constant and linear causal effects cannot be taken for granted. Secondly, making predictive inferences necessitates a set of rules – the causal assumptions – that enables extrapolating from the past and present to the future (King, Keohane and Verba 1994; Munck and Verkuilen 2002; Schedler 2001). The strategy in consolidation studies is typically to define consolidation as expected regime endurance, then deductively intro-

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\(^{67}\) Students of democratic consolidation have now improved their knowledge about the different routes that “slow deaths” of democracies might take. For example, reassertion of military supremacy by a progressive diminution of existing spaces for civilian control; state weakness may subvert the rule of law; rise of hegemonic parties may suffocate electoral competition; decay of electoral institutions may affect the fairness of voting; incumbents’ use of state resource and media may violate civil and political rights; introduction of exclusionary citizenship laws may circumvent democratic inclusion (Schedler 1998:98).

\(^{68}\) Schedler provides an excellent overview and analysis of the manifold meanings of democratic consolidation, depending on the empirical contexts and normative goals. Yet, I disagree with him and subscribe to Sartori’s claim that collective semantic confusion among scholars should be avoided. Phenomena that are different in kind ought to be identified by different terms (Sartori 1984, 1991, 243-57).
duce causal assumptions about which factors cause and sustain democratic stability. Citizens’ attitudes and beliefs and/or an active civil society are typically presented as the main causal factor(s). However, since consolidation as an argument based on prospective reasoning cannot be measured directly, high values on the posited causal factors are typically used as indicators of consolidation.\(^69\) Rather than debate the soundness of these approaches, we note that consolidation studies have not modeled elections as a factor endowed with causal effects or even facilitating qualities. At best, elections are indicators of consolidation as in Huntington’s (1991) use of two alternations in power after successful completion of first elections – the “two-turnover-test”.

Nevertheless, an important contribution of consolidation studies is awareness about the blurring of boundaries between transition and the supposed consolidation that is a transition towards democracy is not necessarily over with the “founding” election (e.g. Schedler 2001b). Among Africanists, Bratton (1998) for example, indicated that transition processes in Africa were often not over even with second elections. Young (1999) and van de Walle (2002) have also contributed in this regard. Unfortunately, rather than stimulating an interest for the role of elections in democratization it has led many (e.g. Herbst’s 2000a, 253f) to assert that elections have no role in democratization and are no good indicators of a country’s process of democratization. A few contributors should be noted, however. Schedler’s (2002b) work on electoral routes to democracy is concerned with the “nested two-level games” involving strategic dilemmas of actors in the context of structural ambivalence during transitions. That is an ambitious agenda leading into a complex, multi-dimensional,

\(^{69}\) Consolidation can occur and be measured as stability without necessarily making any predictive inferences about the future. It remains quite possible to say that so far as certain institutions are in place and the major actors seems to accept to play by the rules and accept the outcomes of the democratic game over an extended period of time, at least at this point in light of past behavior, there is an amount of stability of the democratic regime. As long as those conditions prevail, democracy remains stable. If the conditions change, democracy may de-stabilize again. Such an approach does not make unnecessary predicative judgments and inferences as a form of “qualified guessing” on shaky grounds. Another advantage of this approach is that consolidation becomes an empirically observable phenomenon. The dependent variable is no longer a phenomenon given ontological status by inference relying on prospective reasoning and inter-subjective judgments of future developments, as Schedler (2001a:67) has correctly noted that many consolidation studies does.
ELECTIONS, DEMOCRACY AND SOCIETY

and interactive causal nexus. The strategy here is slightly different with a focus on the ability of repetitive elections to cause an increase in the level of democracy in society. This is a hypothesis about a one-directional relationship and it will be theorized as such even if we may suspect reality to be much more messy than that. The whole point is to find out just how much the power of elections mean.

One of the few analyses specifying a causal association between present elections and democratization is Seligson and Booth’s (1995, 269-71) study of six nations in Central America. Their inductive inquiry posits more elections promoted democracy in a couple of ways. By opening up the political space for citizens to associate more freely, people are able to mobilize and pursue their interests, petition government and local authorities, obtain and exchange information and in effect expand civil liberties. In addition, over a few electoral cycles the initial mistrust between actors diminished among elites in the six countries. While the first is clearly relevant and will be used to inform the framework below, Seligson and Booth’s latter causal mechanism of an intra-elite argument that does not suggest a direct causal effect on the democratic qualities in society. Similarly, Eisenstadt’s (2004) detailed study of the protracted Mexican transition over its 27-year-period provides an argument about indirect, rather than direct effects of repetitive elections. Nevertheless, the implication of one of the main findings is crucial for the present study. In the Mexican incremental transition under an electoral authoritarian regime, election periods provided the main locus for further democratization. The repetition of elections made further gains possible by motioning actors to use electoral processes as the main platform available for challenging the ruling regime. Actors from both political and civil society worked to increase civil liberties in Mexican society. This causal link possibly has a more general application and that is developed further in the next section.

Bratton and van de Walle (1997, 222-4) use the significance of holding elections in the past to explain developments in the early 1990s in Africa. Their focus on democratic traditions in terms of previous experiences open the discussion up for the possibility of elections playing a role in the transition period. But they did not develop a hypothesis that current elections are playing such a role;
only that exposure to electoral institutions in the past somehow would predispose for a better democratic experience in the 1990s. That is an interesting subject but distinct from investigating if and how societal democratization is furthered directly as an effect of holding elections. Another long-time student of African politics has noted that current elections can contribute to democratization. Barkan (1998, 39) suggest that Kenya’s second elections in 1997 reinvigorated civil society as a result of the struggle for constitutional reform. A coalition of churches and human rights NGOs together with opposition parties assumed a “decisive role in advancing democratization during, and especially following, the elections”. (Barkan 1998, 41) Nevertheless, it is also obvious from the Kenyan case that the pre-election period can be used by incumbents to clamp down on opposition, the media, and civil society thereby reducing the levels and degree of in society. Yet, looking at six African nations, Barkan (2000) concludes that the preparations for and holding of elections often give rise to increased room to maneuver for actors even when elections are flawed. The space for civil society and the media increases and one gain made in the political arena is often used to increase more freedom in the social sphere. This is certainly one possible linkage meriting further elaboration in the next section.

In conclusion, neither the dominant theories of democratization, nor those depicting consolidation of democracy have furthered elections as a causal factor in the democratization process. Although the importance of elections in furthering democratization seems to have a powerful grip on the international community, there are only a few theoretical fragments in the literature to build on. This makes theory building more difficult because the terrain is relatively unknown but also less demanding in terms of sophistication.

**Hypotheses and Causal Links**

These conclusions suggest turning to an institutionalist framework in making an argument about plausible causal links from elections to increased democratic qualities in society. Elections and electoral practices are after all political institutions in the traditional sense defined succinctly by Levi (1990, 405) as: “formal arrangements for aggregating individuals and regulating their behavior through use of
explicit rules and decision processes enforced by an actor or a set of actors formally recognized as possessing such power”. Contemporary institutionalism in comparative politics underpinned by a rational actor-perspective can be traced back to a few seminal works. Arrow (1951) and Downs’ (1957) early studies contributed by explicating assumptions as structuring individual choice that can be thought of in terms of institutions, and by provoking a critique that spurred further work on the importance of the institutional context. Olsen’s (1965) influential study on the problems of collective action in face of a constant tendency for individuals to become free riders directly pointed to the need for institutions. With the right incentives provided by rules and regulations shaping the expectations among individuals with regard to other’s behavior, preferred collective outcomes can be achieved.

More recently, understanding the outcome of games or processes given certain set of institutions has been developed by scholars such as Neumann and Morgenstern (1994), North (1990) and March and Olsen (1989) (c.f. Munch 2001c). From deductive models and games such as the famous “Prisoners Dilemma” (Axelrod 1984), to empirical process tracing and historical analyses, it has been shown how institutions in important ways constrain actors’ capabilities and choices (e.g. Bates 1989, Moe 1990). While actors can be thought of as self-reflexive individuals in a social context with abilities to discern and decide on their own preferred actions, choice is always conditioned. Institutional theory has revolved around the ways and means by which a set of formal or informal rules structures such choices.

There is a long tradition in comparative politics of studying the origin and shape of institutions such as electoral systems, constitutional design, and agenda control. One strain has focused on the role of institutions in aggregating preferences. Another venue has been to study the role of institutions in coordinating behavior that in turn generate patterns of political behavior that are self-reinforcing. (Carey 2000, 736-39) This structuring of choice is done both by defining actors (e.g. as MPs, voters or independent news media) and providing incentives for some actions rather than others (e.g. to contest elections rather than to pick up an AK47); the constitutive and regulatory aspects of institutions. Cox’s (1997) book on strategic electoral
behavior and party system realignments as tipping equilibria, Order-shook’s (1992) and Weingast’s (1997) work on constitutions as expectations among political actors, and Vanberg’s (1998) study of how constitutional courts constitute and coordinate citizens’ beliefs exemplify how institutions are self-reinforcing while having multiple equilibria and bumpy roads (Carey 2000, 745-46). These and other studies in the genre, also show how key political institutions both contribute to constituting actors and to structuring their incentives, beliefs, and expectations.

For the study of effects of electoral processes on increasing democratic qualities in society, it seems particularly relevant with the focus on both constraining and enabling incentives for actors’ calculations of choice in terms of their behavior. In this respect, it seems plausible that the institutionalized uncertainty tends to constrain ruling elites to the effect of enabling actors in civil society to more effectively demand and use their civil liberties. This is not to suggest a return to crude functionalism in the sense of Ridley’s (1975) suggestion that designing a house is to determine who will inhabit that house and what they might do in there. But there is certainly a lot of suggestive evidence in the institutionalist literature that the initial conditions in terms of constitutive and regulative rules envisaged by institutions constrain and enable the choice of behavior among particular individuals. The game theoretical institutionalist literature has shown how the strategies of individuals are mutually dependent on expectations of how other individuals will behave in ways that lead to self-fulfilling expectations. When the number of individuals is large and relations are impersonal institutions play a greater role in structuring and making such expectations plausible. Elections are such institutions par excellence, structuring expectations and choices for entire nations of eligible citizens. It is not

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70 This study, like many in the rational choice vein, does not explain why and how institutions emerge. This setback should be insignificant since the study is not concerned with how or why states institute elections, but with what happens with their introduction. Yet, some rational actor theorists would certainly object to be labeled institutionalists on the claim that they work from methodological individualism. I cannot see, however, how the game theoretical approach can be conceived of other than as an institutional framework where the incentives in the form of rules, to a large extent produce the outcome. For a good discussion of explanations of how and why institutions emerge, see for example Pierson (2000).
unlikely that such structuring can also have effects on the existence and improvement of civil liberties.

How then can such causal links be visualized with the mere repetition of elections positively affecting the actual realization of democratic qualities in society? The theoretical framework below outlines seven broad categories of possible causal linkages. Within each of these assemblages, there are variants of specific causal chains with distinct empirical implications. Naturally, it is not possible in the present work to investigate and test all these possible linkages. Some of them demand their own kind of data collection such as views and reasons, calculations and preferences of individual actors in concerted action, mass attitudinal data and so on. All of the suggested causal links are however related to the level of civil liberties in society in different ways spelt out below making it reasonable for the overall hypothesis to either corroborate or disconfirm the relevance of the causal links.

Consider first the voter as citizen. The fundamental feature of equal sovereignty in elections translating to one man, one vote, the right to chose between candidates and parties, freedom of opinion and voice, and the right to form and lead associations are all rules of the electoral regime that also constitute the citizen as such. These are rights and freedoms that the citizen is likely to encounter first as a voter during a transition in conjunction with first elections. Many citizens are likely to be targeted by voter education campaigns and messages conveyed by officials, activists, radio, newspapers and in urban areas at least, TV. These activities are part of constituting the citizen as an equal sovereign – although the distribution of sovereignty will never be perfect – endowed with rights to participate and chose between alternatives under legitimate procedures. Once the election is over, the citizen does not necessarily lose the recognition and understanding acquired. The cognitive and experiential steps taken cannot be undone. Some citizens will become agents that translate political participation to civil activities in society and make more people be willing to insist on gender equality for example, using their right to demonstrate to protest violence against women. Similarly, trade unions, other professional and civil organizations are likely to watch developments during election campaigns and even copy political parties in using the freed space for advocacy, spread of information and opinions created
by the electoral processes to push for liberties such as professional equality and personal autonomy.

A second area of linkages is provided by those individuals and groups who learn to identify with the values inherent in democratic electoral practices. Once self-perceived as a protagonist of democratic participation, competition and legitimate governing, and recognized as such among friends, family and perhaps even enemies, these individuals have vested interest in voicing their concerns in the social sphere. Such lock-in mechanisms may even be active with individuals who are not committed democrats but their social status, role, or influence become associated with a perceived active pro-democratic stance creating a particular incentive structure. It seems plausible that as electoral cycles are repeated, a growing number of citizens will insist on the recognition of rights and freedoms in the social sphere. In dealing with local state authorities, school, civic, football and local development associations, and formal and informal political institutions such as village, town, or ward assemblies, some citizens empowered by electoral socialization will expect adaptation from actors and institutions on freedom from excessive dependence and principles of the rule of law.

The empirical implications of such linkages can be formulated in terms of specific hypotheses although each cannot be evaluated here. For example, a citizen subjected to unjustified imprisonment is more likely to have the case brought to the public by family and friends or civic organizations in an electoral regime with such lock-in effects at work than a citizen in a non-electoral regime is. The same seems plausible for citizens affected by gender discrimination, denial of a fair trial, invasion of personal autonomy, infringement of religious or associational rights, and so on. In short, citizens in electoral regimes are empowered with formal electoral rights in terms of participation, competition, and legitimacy that when exercised also become weapons in the fight for expanded democratic qualities in society. As and when citizens do take up the fight, and meet resistance at some points some are also likely to assert themselves by organizing in local development or pressure groups for women, traders, youth, the community or other suitable categories. Alternatively, they may choose to use existing village or associations to champion their cause. In short, the formal and real empowerment of the citizen as a voter is one potential
source of diffusion to the empowerment of the citizen writ large. With growing pressures for participation, increased associational participation, and competition, and demands for legitimate governing of social affairs, civil liberties are likely to expand and improve. With more groups in society the scope of alternatives and thereby the competition increases for the better.

A third set of linkages regards the role of self-fulfilling expectations, sometimes referred to as discounts of the future. At a certain point, pro-democratic behavior is likely to come not only for entrepreneurs, altruistic believers, and those with vested interests because of their organizational or other affiliation. When a critical mass of individual citizens have reason to believe that other citizens and the most important elites expect democratic rules to stay in place in the foreseeable future and electoral politics to prevail, this is likely to work as a self-fulfilling prophecy. Similar to Coleman’s (1990) and Elster’s (1982) arguments about other social phenomena, elections spread democratic qualities to society in what we may call a self-fulfilling diffusion process as and when citizens have reasons to believe that crucial elites – from the military to political leaders – and a majority of citizens will accept and play by the new rules. At some point, even risk-aversive and perhaps even non-democratic citizens are likely to bandwagon to demand and enact democratic principles in society. The optimistic tone in this possible causal link should not be confused with an unqualified idealism of assuming equality among citizens. Even with an increased spread and deepening of democratic participation and competition in society as outlined above, it will most certainly still be unequal. Already more well equipped individuals – in terms of education, financial resources, power, status ambitions, and social capabilities and positions – are more likely to patronize on new possibilities in the creation of new elites. The point is not that democratization in society leads to perfect equality but rather that it contributes to greater freedom in self-government for citizens.

A fourth possible causal link is provided by associations already in existence or those spawned with the coming of elections that play an active role in the electoral activities. Civil society actors participating as election observers for example, or in voters’ education campaigns learn about electoral rules and procedures, issues of transparency,
eligibility criteria, how to detect and mitigate fraud, political rights and civil liberties, procedures for complaint and adjudication, and so on. It seems plausible that such organizations learn about and build civic capacities and organizational experience during the massive mobilization and excitement typically surrounding elections in transitional regimes. As organizations engage in activism an aura of pro-democratism is developed by which future engagements are likely to be judged. Electoral activities may thus create lock-in effects for organizations as well as for individuals in particular on inter-social acceptance and peaceful co-existence or organizations. The future status and recognition of the organizations involved are conditioned on being pro-democratic. If donor contributions are involved the financial rewards related to pro-democratic activities of civil society organizations are likely to further strengthen such constraints on the behavior and agenda of these civil society organizations. At the same time, it enables individuals working in organizations to not only acquire individual skills and capabilities but their careers also become geared towards advancing rights of participation in social affairs, competition of ideas and agendas in society, and legitimate procedures for governing.

Fifth, individuals engaged, even temporarily, by these civil organizations may be either enticed or disillusioned by electoral campaigns. They are also likely to find new causes and actions worthwhile once the elections are over, probably bringing new local capacities and new awareness. When the elections are over and these individuals return to their normal lives possibly including activism on non-election issues, these newly acquired skills are transferred into new areas. It seems indeed likely that some become norm entrepreneurs transferring their skills to others in the social sphere. In personal interactions, local development and village organizations will probably show they have gained new skills and concepts for rights of equal participation and legitimate competition in societal affairs. Then local authorities, village and ward community leaders, leaders of local associations and media would register a new pressure for implementation of democratic qualities in the local society too on issues such as the right to open public discussion. This is another possible area of linkages with several distinct empirical implications that should be investigated in more detail in future research.
The sixth area of possible linkage is in relation to the judicial system. With the coming of electoral rules and regulations, law adjudication and enforcement authorities are also given a formal role in the protection of political rights. It becomes possible for military, police, and security agencies as well as courts to advance their status, individual careers, and prominence on pro-democratic actions. There is then a pay-off structure with costs and benefits where being anti-democratic is no longer necessarily the default option. Allowing and defending democratic rights of the people to participate in political processes by other means than voting such as demonstrating, petitioning authorities, filing complaints and calling on the police for protection during electoral practices is likely to spill over into other social affairs. The defense of competition of ideas and organizations and property rights as well as legitimate procedures for hearing and adjudication in the social sphere are possible venues for asserting a new standard. Once these democratic qualities are instituted, it seems plausible that the protection of the same rights is likely to be furthered. Factors like a parochial political culture, the degree of political corruption in the system and beliefs of hierarchies are likely to condition these effects. Even though these factors cannot be estimated here they should definitely be kept in mind.

The media provide a seventh set of potential causal links. The rights of voice and opinion, freedom of information and association constitute the media as an independent actor to the extent they are realized in practice. Elections are the time when media entrepreneurs are likely to test, stretch, and redefine the boundaries of both political rights and civil liberties and by doing so advancing the democratic qualities by being the public forum for society. Media is also one of the main channels of pressure on elected politicians and candidates to improve the rights and liberties of the people. The more media becomes the transmitter for the pro-democratic calls and complaints of individuals, organizations, think tanks, state actors, and other bodies, the more it enhances the democratic participation and competition of ideas in governing of society by ensuring open public discussion. However, if an autocratic ruler retains a tight grip on financial and succeed in

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71 This is actually a point already substantiated empirically by Bratton and van de Walle (1997). In their study, they found that the military in Africa intervened on behalf of sustaining or reinstating democratic processes more often than in order to subvert it.
upholding a great degree of centralized authority, the media can naturally be used to increase and reproduce tight monitoring and reduce information rather than be a means for the spread of democratic qualities. Yet, with the procedural and substantive political rights introduced with repetitive elections such a posturing is less likely to be possible to uphold.

These are a collection of suggested areas of causal links of how electoral practices translate into what we can summarize as the positive effects on democratic qualities in society of the exercise and repetition of de jure participatory, contested, and legitimate elections. The list of areas and empirical implications is not exhaustive and these hypothesized effects are severely simplified. It is, however, the first attempt of a more comprehensive theoretical framework in this field to be evaluated empirically in a large-N study. The linkages discussed above are also deficient in that on their own, they do not explain why the effects of electoral practices should occur in conjunction with elections as suggested by the main hypothesis and not at just any time during or between elections.

The key to this question lies in the logic of elections as a struggle for political power. It is during election campaigns and their immediate aftermath that the most individuals, political and civil organizations peak in activism and consequently when pressures are highest. Being the largest peacetime mobilization of political activism, elections provide a time for change and challenges. For example in Ghana where the first and second elections increased pressure on the incumbent regime to improve civil liberties during and following elections. Civil organizations and intellectual think tanks such as the Center for Democratic Development (CDD), the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), independent journalists and privately owned newspapers surveyed the operations of the armed forces, criticized issues of gender (in)equality, the girl-child, criminal libel laws, and freedom of the press to mention a few. Constituted by procedural regulations and armed with rights and liberties necessitated by the holding of elections, these different actors encouraged debates addressing further realization of associational, civil, and religious freedom. All these actors took advantage of election times in much the same way as Eisenstadt (2004) described for Mexico. The civil liberties ranking for
Ghana increased from a low of six in the pre-election period to a good standing of three by the third elections.

Second, the logic of competition for executive and legislative power in and around elections provides the means for citizens and organizations to demand and get concessions from politicians and state authorities more often than in non-election times. To the extent that there is some degree of competitiveness of the election race the logic of throwing the rascals out also induce pressure for responsiveness of incumbents. The promise of improved democratic liberties in society of people provides an obvious ticket for opposition parties. In such circumstances, it seems plausible that these combined forces can lead to a competition of who can improve the democratic qualities and freedom in society. Finally, election time is typically when scrutiny of the international community is on a newly democratizing regime and international news media will give more attention to the country. Watchdog organizations such as Election Watch, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch capitalize on these occasions lending weight to the pressures for reforms and improvements in civil liberties. That said, the link between elections and democratic qualities in society is not theoretically tied to freedom and fairness of elections. Disappointments during a particularly bad experience with electoral practices – inflated voters’ registries, political violence during the campaign and polling day, outright fraudulent voting and collation of votes and intimidation of voters and political opponents – naturally may stimulate activism in society even more than free elections.

Causal Model, Alternative Hypotheses, and Doing the Possible

As suggested above, the possible causal links between elections and increased democratic qualities in society are multiple, but they are not necessarily additive and independent of each other. They are probably interactive links and processes that possibly add, multiply, and divide according to a complex set of formulas making it very difficult even to think in terms of a formal model of combined linked effects to be estimated. There is also an information problem in that we do not have the comparative data necessary for large-N analysis on all the empirical implications of the causal links above. Some of the implied effects also do not lend themselves to statistical analysis but would
require the closer inspection of qualitative techniques that can capture things such as the perceptions and reasoning of individuals in civil society organizations for example. Partly because of the complexity of the modeling problem and partly because of the somewhat rudimentary status of both existing theory and available data, the following testing is based on the direct relationship between the holding of repetitive elections and democratic qualities in society as indicated by the CL index. Hence, we must caution that even if we find a positive correlation and can show a probable causal relationship, the probability that the seven causal links are at work is corroborated but the existence and explanatory power of the individual causal links are not evidenced.

Taking this crude but applicable approach, we can now proceed to investigate if improvements of democratic qualities in society are an effect of electoral activities. It should be noted that the hypothesized relationship is uni-directional. This is not to say that in reality there are no feedback mechanisms or interactive relationships only that this inquiry is limited to one direction. Yet, the causal model is neither linear nor assume a constant effect and the effect is not necessarily proportional so that the change from zero elections to one may render great effects; first elections may have greater effects on democratic qualities than second or third elections. The assessment of this hypothesis is best done in two steps and the empirical analysis structured accordingly. First, we test for correlation between the two variables: Is there a general association between increased democratic qualities in society as measured by Freedom House index of civil liberties (CL), and first, second, and subsequent elections? If the skeptics of the transition paradigm and the importance of elections are right, we should see no relationship - the null hypothesis. The main hypothesis that democratic qualities in society improve with subsequent elections is evidenced if the average CL ranking for all second elections to be better than for first elections. In the same way we expect the average ranking of all third elections be better than all second elections, and so on. This part is addressed by comparing crude CL rankings from Freedom House at the year of each election over first, second, and subsequent elections in Africa. We can also strengthen the robustness of the results if the same relationship is found when we use countries instead of elections as the unit of analysis.
This leads to the second part of the assessment: That improvement in democratic qualities in society tends to occur not only in conjunction with but as a causal effect of electoral activities. This uni-directional relationship is one possibility. Another possibility is that an increase in democratic qualities in society spurs the likelihood of successive elections. A third possibility is that both of these relationships exist and that they are mutually reinforcing. Finally, increases in democratic qualities in society as indicated by CL may be caused by another set of factors, such as elite’s behavior and decision, class, or ethnic struggles and the similar. The following empirical analysis has to be designed to evaluate these contradicting possibilities. In a simplified manner, the possibilities are:

| H0: RE (-) DQ | H4: RE (---) DQ |
| H1: RE -> DQ |
| H2: RE <- DQ |
| H3: RE <-> DQ |
| H5: RE -> DQ |

Note: RE=Repetitive Elections, DQ=Democratic Qualities, i=intervening variable, and ii= other independent variables.

If the main hypothesized causal relationship (H1) exists, we expect to see improvements in CL rankings to occur in conjunction with elections while periods before and between elections are associated with no or even negative changes. H4 and H5 can in theory also give rise to a similar outcome but is less likely to. Moreover, intervening and spurious relationship can be controlled for in the empirical analysis even if there is always a risk of omitted variable bias in the estimation. Hence, if H1 gets support from the empirical analysis we need to go further and control for other known causal factors to eliminate H4 and H5. If it is rather one of the other hypotheses above that is right, improvements in CL rankings will either occur i) preceding and in between elections in particular if the causality runs the opposite direction as in H2; or ii) in all phases for example if the
causal relationship is reciprocal and nonrecursive as in $H_3$; or iv) unrelated to electoral cycles as in $H_0$. Many scholars emphasizing civil society or the rule of law for example, have it civil liberties are the cause of the improvements of elections and stability of electoral regimes. In that case, improvements of civil liberties should precede elections. Other students of democratization emphasizing the role of elites, or class struggles, or similar have it that civil liberty improvements are a product of a set of other factors. In this case, improvements of civil liberties rankings will be unrelated to electoral cycles. In sum, there are mutually exclusive hypotheses with distinct empirical implications in both these parts of the general hypothesis that elections cause democratization. These are subjected to empirical evaluation in the next chapter.
Using four alternative tests, this chapter provides empirical results showing that repetitive elections seem to be a causal factor in democratization rather than, as too often assumed, merely reflecting democracy. Controlling for some of the standard factors in democratization the analysis also indicates that the democratizing power of elections is authentic, refuting parts of Carothers (2002a) negative assessment of the transition paradigm. The prevailing focus in the international community on elections is neither misplaced nor overemphasized. The main hypothesis formulated in chapter six suggests a relationship between independent and dependent variables that evolve over a sequence of elections. Let us first take a look at all the countries in Africa. Table 15 presents the state of elections and democratic qualities in society in Africa as of June 2003 as measured by Freedom House CL.72

Countries that have held more elections tend to have a better rating on CL. We cannot credit the holding of first elections to the power of elections within that same country. But first elections can be diffused or have ripple effects on electoral processes in neighboring or other strategic countries. It might also be that transitions are a direct result of external pressures from the international donor and financial community for the holding of elections (e.g. Lindberg 2002; Pridham

72 This table is designed to resemble Table 2 in chapter one, used as an introduction to the empirical analysis of chapters four and five.
154 T H E  P O W E R  O F  E L E C T I O N S

With the inception of elections however, it seems possible that even first elections start to have effects creating and affecting institutions, actors and processes of change.

Table 15 does not provide a real test, however. The hypothesis and the precise direction of causality can only be tested on countries that have an uninterrupted sequence of elections on their record. Hence, the following analysis builds on the set of countries and elections that were also used for the panel-group analysis in chapter five: those current regimes that as of June 2003 had completed at least two elections in a row. That reduces the sample to 184 elections in 33 countries – in effect the countries in the three last columns to the right in Table 15.

**Elections are Associated with Civil Liberties**

Addressing first the correlation between increasing number of elections and increasing level of civil liberties of the hypothesis spelled out in the preceding chapter, Table 16 below shows the average ranking of CL for all first, second, third, and fourth and later elections. It also presents differences between free and fair, and flawed elections. The relationship between increasing number of elections held and higher levels of democratic qualities in society is substantial and highly
significant \((p=.002)\). The enhancement of civil liberties with increased exposure and experience with the core representative democratic institution corroborates the first of my hypotheses. Average CL improves, although the effect is concentrated during the first three electoral cycles. The magnitude of the overall change from an average of 4.3 to 3.3 might not seem to be that dramatic to some observers. Yet, the real change is from 5.3 to 3.3 as can be seen from Table 17 (page 161 below) where the original state before the first elections were held is also included. Table 16 only indicates the state at the point of the first election. Second, the FH scale is not an interval measure and the distances between the ratings are not necessarily equal across the range of the scale. FH and most analysts typically draw a line between a rating of four and three as a crucial cut-off point between partly free/partly democratic and free/democratic.\(^{73}\) And changes of this magnitude on average are considered substantial (e.g. Karatnycky 2001).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Election</th>
<th>No. of Poll</th>
<th>Significance*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civil Liberties</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free &amp; Fair</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flawed</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(mean)</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{73}\) These categorizations often combines the CL rating with the PR rating of which the average should be 2.5, or 3 on one indicator and 2 on the other.

The results also confirm the expectation that free and fair elections are associated with improved civil liberties. Free and fair elections have an average rating typically 1.5 full points above flawed elections. The difference is highly significant \((p=.000)\). But over sequences of electoral cycles, the trend is the same for the two categories. Interestingly these improvements are even most pronounced in flawed elections. This might seem counter-intuitive since authoritarian regimes running flawed elections are not usually associated with
improvements in the rule of law, religious and associational freedoms, and absence of economic exploitation and/or protection from unjustified imprisonment. Even as flawed elections involve manipulation, rigging, and violence, as suggested by the discussion of causal links negative electoral experiences can be efficient in provoking actors to work harder to increase civil liberties in society. Taken together, Tables 15 and 16 provides a positive result and sufficient empirical basis to justify a more detailed examination of the relationship between elections and democratization as indication of the causal mechanisms spelled out in chapter six.

**The Causal Effect of Elections**

The simple compare means analysis above offers little insight to the direction of possible causal relationship between CL and electoral cycles. Similarly, a correlation analysis between the number of the election and the rating of CL at the beginning of an election year confirms a relationship and its statistical strength (Pearson’s -0.292, \( p = 0.000 \)), but tells us nothing about cause and effect. The only thing these approaches establish is a positive relationship between number of elections held in an uninterrupted sequence, and levels of civil liberties. What remains to be analyzed is the direction and dynamic of this positive relationship leading to the issue of when in civil liberties changes occur.

The following analysis does not differentiate between free and fair, and flawed elections. We know from Table 16 that free and fair elections tend to be associated with higher levels of CL. But we also established that the direction of change is similar regardless of the free and fairness of elections. Since our concern here is relative changes in civil liberties over a series of electoral cycles and not the exact levels, there is no methodological reason to distinguish between the free and fair, and flawed elections in the following analysis. Nor is there a theoretical requirement to disaggregate the analysis accordingly. To the contrary, the stated hypothesis assumes that all *de jure* participatory, competitive, and legitimate elections proceeding in a sequential and constitutional manner have similar effects on civil liberties. For these reasons, the following analysis can be based on all of the cases with a
record of at least two elections as discussed in the beginning of this chapter.

First and “founding” elections are particularly interesting in this analysis given their role ascribed by many theories of democratization. The rationale for labeling first elections as “founding” is built on the premise that a democratic regime is manifestly installed by the conclusion of first elections. The empirical implication of that transition argument is improvements in civil liberties will come independently and well ahead of first elections. The implication of my hypothesis is to the contrary, that the immediate preparations for and holding of first – as well as subsequent – elections result in general improvements in democracy. Time enters the following analysis in two distinct ways; as (chronological) time-lagged effects and as (sequential/attributive) time-dependent units of analysis – the sequence of elections.

**Operationalization**

To test the hypothesis we need to analyze the relationship between the independent and dependent variables over time. Electoral improvements are operationalized as increasing numbers of successive elections, meaning moving from, for example, first to second elections. Improvements in democratic qualities in society are measured as improvements in CL on the scale provided by Freedom House. The scale of CL rankings starts at 7 for worst cases with a maximum score of 1 for best cases. Second, a crucial point in establishing causality is tied to chronological time since cause necessarily has to precede effect. This is a general guidance in assessing hypotheses H0 to H5. Yet, using the chronicle of events may oversimplify the cause and effect relationship to an extent that undermines the analysis. If actors anticipate an event they may adjust their strategies and behavior accordingly, thus, an event may have effects before it actually occurs. Such is the nature of the social world that makes our job to analyze it both more difficult and more interesting. Elections are typical in this regard. The very concept of participatory, competitive, and legitimate elections introduces this kind of reasoning. In anticipation of polling day, political parties and other actors educate voters, train domestic election observers and polling officials, debate issues and democratic procedures, disgrace opponents and do other things all in an effort to
sway the vote. Civil society organizations may demand and take more freedom in the course of their actions; the media might expand its openness and critical views ahead of polling day as part of the electoral process. Therefore, we expect that if elections have positive effects on civil liberties, these effects start occurring ahead of polling day.

It seems reasonable to calculate these effects as occurring as much as a year in advance. At the same time, elections are not over until votes are counted, collated, possibly transported, reported, and translated into winning candidates and legislative seats, and victorious candidates have assumed office. Disputes may arise and need to be settled and the often-contentious issue of interpreting the meaning of the elections can take months to settle. Elections therefore are likely to have effects also up to six months after polling day. When operationalizing the measure of effects of elections on civil liberties, this must be taken into consideration. Empirically therefore, we look at the changes in CL at points in time before, during, and after first, second, third, and fourth and later elections. In order to account for the period before the start of elections, we measure changes in CL independent of elections ahead of the first election from \(t(-4)\) to \(t(-2)\). This is the differences up till one full year before the election year \(t\). That should be sufficient to insulate the recorded changes that might occur as a result of preparations for elections that typically take no more than one year. In cases of “second” first elections after a coup or similar, the year of the previous election is taken into account as well so that an election year is not part of the measure of the pre-election period.

To gauge the change occurring as a result of an election, we measure changes in CL from \(t_i(-2)\) to \(t_i\); changes that occur during the year ahead of the election and the election year. It seems reasonable that most changes effected by the procedures of elections such as campaigning, voters’ registrations and educations, demonstrations, going to the polls and the post-polling process, will occur during the year ahead of the election and shortly afterwards. This is to some extent moderated by the timing of the election during the election year. Some countries like Kenya and Ghana have their general elections in the last quarter in every election year. In those cases, the measure of eventual change in CL is adjusted so a year less in advance of the elections is recorded. At the same time, the following years’ score is taken into
account on the rare occasions in changes. In countries such as Cape Verde and Senegal who tend to hold their elections early in the election year, only one full year ahead of the elections is recorded as change resulting from the elections while nine or more months following the poll are recorded. This seems to be the most reasonable way to account for variations using the Freedom House score. Rankings are provided for every annum and there is no way to disaggregate or account for when significant changes occurred. This is simply the best we can do and it seems that we do not lose too much information and do not introduce any serious bias in the sample by the procedure followed here. It leaves a one-year interval between the two measures. That is the year after the election, which is ambiguous and hard to classify into these two periods, hence, it is left out of the analysis.

After the first election our measure must be modified slightly in order to (i) capture changes in CL in the periods between elections while at the same time make this measure as independent of changes in conjunction with elections as possible; and (ii) to make the measurements as similar as possible in a context defined by a range of electoral cycles of different lengths, premature elections and the like. First, we want to measure the change from after the first election operationalized as $t_1(+1)$, to the second year ahead of the election, or $t_2(-2)$. Second, this operationalization means that the length of the period measured vary with the length of the electoral cycle. A few countries have 4-year electoral cycles and in that case, we measure changes from one year to the next. It is a little short but there seems to be little alternatives since the effects of elections are likely to start showing already at $t_1(-1)$. Other countries have five-year electoral cycles. That means to measure changes over two full years. A few countries have six- or seven-year electoral cycles. In those cases, the period from $t_1(+1)$ to $t_2(-2)$ is longer. It is a not a completely satisfactory situation but reality seldom is fully cooperative. We just have to live with the fact that the constitutions in these countries give more room for change between elections than others do.

An alternative would be to measure changes over two years regardless of the length of electoral cycles for example from $t_2(-4)$ to $t_2(-2)$. That would not only compromises validity in the case of four-year electoral cycles but also longer cycles; since several years of possible changes
would then be left unregistered. One issue complicates this measure a little more. A few countries in Africa run presidential and parliamentary election on different intervals. In Burkina Faso, for example, there is seven years between presidential elections while there is only five years between parliamentary elections. In these circumstances, the period of measurement has been adjusted to capture years unaffected by elections as per the specification below. However, the CL ranking was in effect changed only in a small number of cases74. Finally, in order to clarify a point here, the analysis builds on a probabilistic conception of causal relationships and a few deviating cases do not refute the theory but makes an interesting observation. Once a general tendency is established, understanding and explaining the odd one(s) out is an equally interesting exercise.

**The Power of Elections**

Launching a new independent variable in what might seem like a field crowded with existing alternatives is always difficult and skeptics are likely to make themselves known. Therefore, four alternative tests are performed with the idea to check the robustness of the evidence and maximize leverage on theory. By shifting not only measurements and alternative indicators of the independent variable but even switching unit of analysis, the following demonstrate that the main findings are not sensitive to choice of indicators and methods. The first analysis showing mean changes in CL from the pre-election period before first election to fourth and later elections are presented in Table 17. The mean measures overall direction of changes as effects of election activities as well as periods independent of elections. The differences between the effects of first, second and third elections, and adjacent non-election related periods are stark. The pre-first election period is perhaps the most surprising. The theories of democratization building on small-N comparative and case studies have posited a significant expansion of civil liberties precede first elections. The traditional view of “founding” elections as the end of a transition period stems from that same premise. Generally, the lower the ranking on CL the more room there is for improvement and the easier to accomplish improvements.

74 For a list of such adjustments, see Appendix II.
On the other hand, once a country attains higher levels of democratic qualities the room for significant positive changes decreases. The pre-election period display a low level of CL at an average of 5.3 on the seven-point graded Freedom House scale. In this light, the increase in civil democratic qualities ahead of first elections in Africa seems particular disappointing. The data from Africa suggests only smaller positive changes tend to occur before first elections. The average positive change of .19 units in CL ranking does not communicate a radical change in the democratic quality of these political systems, even though change is always relative. Positive changes as effects of electioneering and exercise of the practices of electoral management are much more impressive. The average change of .84 reveals the difference to the relatively small changes in the pre-election period.

It also corroborates that improvements in democratic qualities beyond the narrow sphere of elections appear as an effect of holding elections. Elections are not primarily facilitated by increased civil liberties but it is rather opposite that repetitive elections have indirect or direct causal effects on democratic qualities in society. The picture is further strengthened by the data for the successive changes independent of elections and those occurring as effects of election periods. The difference between non-election effects and election-related changes is continued over second and third elections even if the recorded changes decrease in magnitude, which is in accordance with the reasoning above. When significant improvements have already been accomplished, the room for additional positive changes decreases.

Comparing means has its limitations, as it does not show the total extent of changes. A graphic presentation of the total balance in unit-changes is an alternative test in this respect. In Figure 3, the total

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean change</th>
<th>1st Period</th>
<th>2nd Period</th>
<th>3rd Period</th>
<th>4th+ Periods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Election</td>
<td>-.19</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Election</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election Effects</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean ranking</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 17.
Civil Liberties Development over Electoral Periods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st Period</th>
<th>2nd Period</th>
<th>3rd Period</th>
<th>4th+ Periods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Election</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Election</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election Effects</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean ranking</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total N: 70 70 60 61 30 30 21 21
number of negative changes in CL has been deducted from the total number of positive changes in CL at each interval-period. According to that simple rule, the result for each interval has been calculated to assess the magnitude of total change in each period. The resulting total unit change balance produces the wave-like line in Figure 3 that further strengthens the results based on the means comparison above.

Looking at the first wave of change, the magnitude increase in civil democratic qualities was almost six times greater as elections took off than in the period immediately preceding them. In other words, first elections tend to be the cause of a huge improvement in civil liberties, rather than following after such a positive development. Benin and Malawi gained as many as four points in this first period while Nigeria went up by three points in CL. These were the best performers in this regard, the majority of countries made gains of two scores in CL, among them Zambia, Mali, and Gabon, while other countries made a modest gain of one point. After first elections and before second

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25 This means that for each sub-period all recorded changes in CL have been added. For example, the 1st election period in one country result in a changed rating from 6 to 4 that equals a +2 unit change, but in another country the change was from 4 to 5 that equals a -1 unit change, the net result is a total gain of +1 (2-1).
elections in the period with no election-related activities taking place, the development is stalled and even reverted as indicated by balance of changes in CL falling below zero. In most countries, this is a period of relative stagnation. It supports the reasoning in the last chapter that both supply of momentum and political openness is likely to decrease in this period as well as the receptiveness of political leaders and higher staff of key institutions to accept and support expansion and deepening of civil liberties.

In four countries, the period after the first election was associated with clear reversal of gains already made. This happened in Mauritania, Zambia, Nigeria, and Uganda, while Chad also declined one point on the CL ranking even though no gains had been made during the first election in that country. Following the electoral campaigning, voter education, political meetings, and demonstrations, public debates and the exercise of political rights and democratic procedures during second elections, civil liberties expand again in many countries. Another wave of significant changes has occurred as a result of second elections in countries such as Tanzania, Seychelles, Madagascar, Zambia, and Ethiopia. Second elections are particularly interesting in this regard. Bratton (1998) noted that second elections in general, and late second elections in particular, were of lower democratic quality than first elections. Chapter five corroborated that finding although the difference now appears less pronounced than what had been believed.

Yet, even when the democratic qualities of elections decreased, they still result in improved quality of civil liberties in society by the very repetition of democratic procedures. This is a very important conclusion that lends support also to the parts of the reasoning about causal links that posited that negative electoral experiences can spur increased efforts among individual and collective actors for improvements of civil liberties in society. It also speaks to the relative independence of the democratic qualities of elections (not their mere existence and repetition) and the spread and deepening of civil liberties as discussed in the operationalization.

Even though recorded changes in CL scores in Africa during and following third elections were modest, the relative lower magnitude of change is expected given the significant gains in CL resulting form the first and second elections. Changes are still positive and different from
the periods before and after the third elections: zero net change. Overall, the distinct waves of changes with culminations of change associated with the elections point to the need for a reconceptualization of elections in the democratization process. Elections are not primarily a result of democratization but an important causal factor. There is power in elections. That power propels democratization in the sense of improving the democratic qualities of participation, competition, and legitimacy in society outside of the electoral sphere.

For the sake of a comprehensive outlook and as a way to crosscheck the robustness of these findings, a third alternative analysis is presented in Figure 4. Instead of the means in Table 17 and the net balance of unit changes in Figure 3, Figure 4 look at the share of elections in each sub-period leading to positive and negative changes respectively. Both the first analysis of means and the second calculating unit balance scores are the kind that can be skewed by extreme values in a smaller number of cases. Therefore, we change indicator completely looking at the number and share of elections associated with changes in civil liberties rather than the aggregated magnitude of such changes.

The full line represents the share of elections with gains in CL. Slightly more than 25 percent of all first elections were associated with changes occurring in the pre-election period. Thus only about a quarter of all first elections in Africa have followed expectations from the transitions-literature with a general liberalization preceding first elections installing of an elected regime. Rather, improvements of civil liberties occurred in almost half of all elections as a consequence of first elections. Expressed in a different way, no less than two-thirds of all positive changes in civil liberties in conjunction with the first electoral cycle occurred as effects of elections. The pattern is repeated with second and third elections.
In conclusion, the findings from the above section based on Table 17 and Figure 3 and 4 appear to tell a story of very robust evidence. Three different methods to assess the direction and magnitude of the causal relationship between elections and further democratization produce essentially the same conclusion. The emphasis in the transition literature of the liberalization during the pre-first election period and marshalling of first elections and "founding" does not apply to Africa. Rather, the transition period is extended often over several electoral cycles before enough gains have been made in terms of civil liberties for the regime to become more or less democratic. Only a few cases corroborate expectations of the mainstream democratization literature but the bulk of countries democratize through the power of elections rather than anything else. The alternative tests speak strongly in favor of the main hypothesis (H_1) while ruling out both the null hypothesis (H_0), the reversed causation hypothesis (H_2), and the hypothesis about reciprocal, nonrecursive causation (H_3) respectively.
THE POWER OF ELECTIONS

DEMOCRATIZATION BY ELECTIONS IN TWO-THIRDS OF COUNTRIES

The evidence above is based on elections as the unit of analysis necessary both to assess the relevance of elections for democratization and to probe the direction and strength of the relationship. A fourth test of the robustness of these findings is to change the unit of analysis from elections to countries; to analyze individual countries’ series of elections to find out how many of them fit the hypothesis. At the same time, it also provides an opportunity to introduce control for some of the standard structural explanatory variables in democratization thereby addressing hypotheses about intervening variables (H4) and spurious relationships (H5).

A country-based analysis of the data is presented in Table 18. First of all, it shows no less than 67 percent of the countries (22 out of the 33 countries76 with at least two successive elections and surviving electoral regime as of June 2003) fits the hypothesis having followed the wave-like pattern above. Only 18 percent of the countries (N=6) contradict it while another 15 percent (N=5) of the countries have inconclusive (in the sense of providing neither evidence for or against the hypothesis) records of accomplishments. With this fourth kind of analysis the hypothesis about a democratizing power of elections is strengthened further; it shows not only in overall mean changes in CL, unit balance scores and the share of elections associated with improvements, it also fits to explain the development in no less than two-thirds of all countries.

What impact do some of the other well-known causal factors of democratization have? Looking first at more general factors (not included in Table 18) there seems to be no regional effects since North and South, East and West in Africa are represented among states that corroborate the hypothesis. Neither does type of representative system

76 The details about each of these countries surviving regimes are located in Table 20 in Appendix II. Sao Tome and Principe is a special case. First and second elections were held in 1991 and 1994, followed by a brief breakdown in 1995 due to a coup that lasted only for a few days. This results in a coding of the elections in 1996 as (second) first elections. Freedom House’s score for Sao Tome and Principe did not record the brief coup. At that point, Sao Tome had already made gains to score two in CL ranking. Hence, in my data set of surviving regimes Sao Tome and Principe register as a case without changes in CL. But when the elections in 1991 and 1994 are factored in Sao Tome and Principe also fit the hypothesis.
There are both island states such as Cape Verde and the Seychelles as well as land-locked countries such as Equatorial Guinea and Swaziland and political success stories like Ghana, Kenya, and Benin among the two-thirds fitting this hypothesis. Unstable societies like Nigeria are mixed with countries that have enjoyed peace and stability for quite some time, including the two longest living democracies on the continent Botswana and Mauritius.

Table 18 provides an analysis controlling for some factors that are generally thought to be associated with democracy and democrati-
zation. Whenever possible, figures have been taken from the late 1980s or early 1990s in order to allow for possible causal effects to play out. Generally, it seems that the countries fitting \( H_1 \) are not decisively particular as compared to the others, hence, these factors cannot have generated a spurious relationship and \( H_5 \) seems not to be corroborated. None of the relationships are statistically significant and the standard deviations are typically very high rendering the mean differences we observe (even using the geometric mean) less than convincing. Nevertheless, there is a pattern of similarities and differences that could point to interaction between repetitive elections and other variables. The democratization-by-elections countries have on average a higher level of economic development, achieve better economic growth over the period and their levels of literacy are a little better as well as the average Human Development Index-ranking. They are also less ethnically diverse countries as compared to the countries that did not fit the hypothesis. As noted above, none of the differences show as statistically significant however, and it is difficult to say how important they are but we should be cautious to rule out the possibility of intervening/interactive variables (\( H_4 \)) entirely.

Admittedly, it would have been unique if we had found that elections were completely unrelated to modernization and other variables and that these would not have any bearing on the development of civil liberties in society. But the divergence does not seem to be of the magnitude that would make us believe they can explain the influence of elections on the spread of democratic qualities to society in general. Among the countries that fit the hypothesis is the richest nation of them all South Africa with a current adjusted GDP per capita of USD11,290 as well as the poorest nation Sierra Leone with a corresponding per capita of USD470 (both figures from 2001). Represented in the large group of countries corroborating the hypothesis is Niger, the country with the lowest current level of literacy rates (15 percent), this same group has the country with the highest literacy-rate Zimbabwe (87 percent: both figures from 1998). Muslim shares of the total population in the group of cases that fit the main hypothesis also range from negligible in countries like Madagascar and Zambia to constituting almost the entire population in others such as Mauritania and Gambia even if the average is lower than in the other two groups. When almost two-thirds of the countries in
Africa corroborate the hypothesis, we should perhaps not be surprised that such a wide variety is included. Levels of corruption are more or less similar across the three groups. The same goes for size with small states like Gambia (10,000km²) and huge ones like Mali (1,220,000km²) found in that group. It is also interesting that a proxy indicator of the importance of the military such as the one used here, seems completely unrelated. And in order to check that not an uneven spread of internal conflicts creates a spurious relationship, it is checked and found to have no influence on the result.

The differences we observe do not wipe out the effects of elections. These factors seem to have a more marginal impact on the strength of the power of repetitive elections to improve on the level of democracy. There are no significant differences between the countries corroborating the main hypothesis and the others on any of the above mentioned factors or the other factors in Table 18. The switch form elections to countries as the unit of analysis strengthen the conclusion further. Independently of structural characteristics of people, land, and culture often forwarded as causal factors of democratization, the power of elections is still at work.

Conclusions

Over the last decade, the view on elections has changed to pervasive skepticism in many academic quarters. There is a growing and slightly patronizing attitude that elections at best are harmless and mere procedures of little value to democratization and the quality of democracy. Recently Carothers (2002a) purported the dominant “transition paradigm” of democratization as built on five erroneous assumptions. Surprisingly, one of these is clearly misleading the way Carothers (2002a, 8) puts it. He argued that it has been assumed that elections will be “not just a foundation stone but a key generator over time of further democratic reforms”. Even a cursory reading of the dominant literature of the transition paradigm shows this is not the case. It might be a commonly held belief in advocacy and policy circles but not an assumption or hypothesis in scholarly work.

Rather, dominant theories of democratization purport elections in one of three ways: “Founding” elections as indications of the end of the transition period, electoral characteristics as indicators of democracy,
or repeated alternations in power as indicator of consolidation of
democracy. All the most frequently used indices of democracy build
on electoral qualities such as competitiveness of the executive, voter
turnout figures, liberty of political parties and political campaign
activities. While many students of democratization working compara-
tively or on case study-basis advocate qualitative evaluations far
beyond electoral qualities assuming elections irrelevant, large-N
analysis relies heavily on electoral characteristics as reflective of demo-
cracy. None of the existing theories has explicitly modeled repetitive de
jure participatory, competitive, and legitimate elections as causal factors
in democratisation.

By measuring positive and negative changes in democracy beyond
elections – as indicated by rankings of CL – as effects of elections and
non-election periods respectively, this chapter provides a first step in
this regard. Elections have a strong positive effect on the expansion of
civil liberties. Positive developments of democratic qualities in society
typically come in waves related to election periods. During and shortly
after the elections civil liberties expand and deepen. When negative
changes occur they tend to take place in periods before or between
elections independent of them. Political liberalization does not occur
first where after civil society and other actors make use of their new
rights to press for elections. Rather, a decision on holding elections
comes first and that causes further liberalization; for each successive
electoral cycle the democratic rights and liberties tend to be
strengthened. In short, elections seem to have the power to expand
and improve democracy writ large. But improvements in civil liberties
have little effect on the prospects of holding more elections. In other
word, the causal effect seems to go from elections to democracy writ
large and not the other way around.
A distinguishing feature of this book is that it analyzes a core institution of representative democracy without presupposing it actually works as an instrument of democracy. Sklar (1987) noted most political systems combine both democratic and undemocratic features; along the same lines Dahl (1971) also argued “polyarchy” was a matter of degree. This book in the same vein is concerned with the comparative study of the “democraticness” of elections in African regimes; from clearly authoritarian Chad, Sudan and Swaziland, to hybrid regimes like Kenya before 2002, Benin, Mali and Tanzania, and the electoral and liberal democracies of Botswana, Mauritius and Ghana after 2000. By focusing on electorally specific and theoretically motivated key democratic qualities, we are able to study the complete universe of African cases in one single study. As a device of democracy, elections are thought to have certain democratic features. Accordingly, the extent to which elections are instruments of democracy depends on their democratic qualities. It is now time to reiterate the main findings and to reflect on what these mean for existing theories of democratization, directions of future research, and policy implications.

While it is certainly not a difficult task to find evidence of stagnation, politically as well as economically in Africa, disentangling and weighting setbacks and gains in her recent political history is not easy. The Afro-pessimist view, fuelled by evidence of decay and disillusion
abounds in the numerous political and economic blunders of African states, has gained currency and deserves qualification. Even though the data presented here shows the difficulties of political transformation and the varied determination with which democracy is being pursued, the detailed information shows commonalities making generalizations possible.

**The Transition Paradigm**

While showing the diversity of electoral experiences in Africa, this study conveys measured optimism in several ways. It might be that some African countries may never become complete liberal democracies or even electoral democracies, but it is important to note that at the time of writing 47 out of 48 African states are in various stages of planning or holding de jure participatory, competitive and legitimate elections. For now, it is important to note that all African states save Eritrea have either held elections or are in the process. Moreover, even though there have been numerous breakdowns over the period studied, in every single case the new leaders are promising and more often than not, holding elections soon after. While some countries have completed six or seven electoral cycles and appear to be stable democracies, others like Niger struggled through three military coup-plagued first elections and countries like DRC and RoC are back on square one. For some countries the electoral experiences have resulted in a regression in democratic qualities but the majority is slowly and steadily moving forward.

The main argument of this book is that elections do not only signify democracy. The self-reinforcing, self-improving quality of repetitive elections promotes and breeds democratic qualities. Though this might seem teleological, I suggest it is the evidence and not the theoretical argument that is teleological. To put the essence of this book in a single proposition for new electoral regimes: the more successive elections, the more democratic the regime. It is now time to reflect upon what these regional-specific findings mean for the field of comparative democratization in general. Allowing for a measure of speculation under the assumption that the findings presented in this book are robust and also are valid outside of the continent, how does
the bigger picture look like? What are the implications for central tenants of democratization theory?

On Transitions

Mainstream literature on the third wave of democratic transitions in the third world is sometimes referred to as the “transition paradigm”. The experience of democratization in Southern Europe and Latin America has been singularly important in this genre. Studies from Eastern Europe and Africa remain peripheral to those who draw data from what has become the ‘heartland’ of democratization. In addition, most of what we know about the factors that promote or hinder democratization stems from small-N comparisons (e.g. Linz and Stephan 1978; O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986). In this context, this book speaks to some of the dominant ideas in the field of democratization. The empirical analysis questions one of the core assumptions by showing that first elections are not necessarily founding but more often a step in the transition process, which corroborates Carothers’ (2002a) critique on this point. Bratton and van de Walle (1997, 277) for example, argued that liberalization was a necessary prerequisite for free and fair elections. In the standard-typical fashion of the transition literature, political liberalization was operationalized as regularization of political associations. Since elections per definition are not free and fair if parties are not legal, the conclusion that transitions in Africa occurred in stages of first liberalization then democratization is a tautology. The evidence presented here avoids that flaw and this mainstream proposition is corrected. Elections are not the outcome of liberalization and/or indicator of democratization but more of a causal factor to both. While my study cannot contribute to the puzzle of why first elections are decided on, it has shown that liberalization does generally not precede such decisions but rather follow from them.

At the same time, the pervading pessimism built around concepts of hybrid, or electoral authoritarian regimes since the mid 1990s, is challenged by this study. Using relatively short periods of study, skeptics have posited hybrid regimes as evidence that many countries are not moving towards democracy although they are moving away from harsher authoritarian rule. The analysis in this book suggests that moving from authoritarian rule to a competitive electoral regime tends
to lead to further democratization. No matter what the emerging regimes of Africa are to some academic observers – hybrid, electoral authoritarian, patrimonial regimes or democratures (Diamond 2002; Karl 1995; Luckham 1995) – successive uninterrupted cycles of elections tend to lead to greater “democraticness” of both the electoral regime and in society. This is certainly not a justification for building teleological frameworks. To the contrary, such empirical conclusions can only be drawn once the framework is open to alternative outcomes. The time frame of the present study is limited and caution against too determinate statements in this regard but at the same time, the period used here is the longest on African elections so far available.

Another recurrent theme stemming from O’Donnell and Schmitter’s (1986) original work is that a harsh previous authoritarian regime is beneficial to democratization because of its deterrent effect on the population. This hypothesis is also questioned by the African experience. The countries with the present history of the longest continuous series of elections were certainly not the harshest authoritarian regimes. Benin, Ghana, Madagascar, Mali, and Senegal are examples that speak to this. The regimes in Togo, former Zaire, Gabon, and Ethiopia are examples that harsh previous regimes have not led to noticeably better records.

**Economic Development and Elites**

Taking an even wider perspective, what are the possible implications for classical explanations of democracy such as economic development and the agency of elites? After more than half a century of heated debate, few seem to contest the notion that economic development has a positive relationship to democracy. While the original formulations of Cutwright (1963) and Lipset (1959) for example, have been reformulated (e.g. Cheibub et al. 1996, Gasiorowski and Power 1998, Hadenius 1992, Londregan and Poole 1996), the central tenant remains. The analysis in this book adds a dimension to this debate. While economic development obviously has an impact, the effects of electoral institutions seem to be constant over a vast diversity of economic contexts. This stands in contrast to the standard line of

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77 It seems that economic development, or level of economic development, does not impact so much on whether democracy come into existence as on its sustainability over time.
thought that economic development makes for stability since people are less likely to revolt and protest once their conditions of life improve. Thus, we would expect countries in Africa with more dire economic conditions and underdevelopment to be more prone to electoral regime breakdown. The analysis shows regime survival in Africa has little to do with the level or rate of economic development. Otherwise, with more breakdowns we should have witnessed poorer countries or countries with negative economic development to have only short sequences of elections, first and maybe second elections. Yet, we see no such patterns.

On the other hand, Fosu (2002) has shown that military coups d’état adversely affected the transformation of economic growth into human development in Africa. Demonstrating the self-reinforcing power of elections prevents such coups this study seems to suggest that repetitive elections indirectly further human development. In a recent study, Haan and Sturm (2003) present strong evidence that increases in political freedoms causes increases in economic freedom and not the other way around. This finding leads to another meditation on the possible significance of elections in Africa. Since elections seem to be an important mover of increases in political freedoms, it may also indirectly be an important factor of increases in economic freedom. The catch in policy terms is that experience says that economic development is a hard nut to crack in most African countries. Elections on the other hand, can easily be supported and influenced in the short-term. But the nature of these relationships must be investigated further in future research. Similarly, Dreher (2003) recently showed countries with democratic elections are much less likely to interrupt IMF programs than those with elections of lesser quality. This also seems to suggest that the moving towards better quality elections as countries in Africa hold in particular third and later elections, have several positive effects.

There is also close to a consensus in comparative democratization on the importance of elites (Bunce 2000). Political, economic, social, and cultural-traditional elites are seen as among the prime movers of transitions. This focus on elites perhaps reflects the predominance of case studies and small-N comparisons. The close inspection and detailed knowledge of persons and processes involved may make
actors take a prominent position in explanations. This study does not necessarily take issue with that island of consensus in the field but certainly qualify it. We need to ask why the elites in so many diverse countries have tended to act similarly. The response given here is that the repetition of the electoral processes impact on the rational calculations of the political actors through adaptation and learning as to create similar outcomes. The framework of causal links suggests that elites of various kinds across Africa seems to adjust their behavior and strategies along similar lines with increasing experiences with elections. Seligson and Booth (1995, 269-71) suggest elections furthered democratization in Central America through learning and adaptation processes. Similar learning processes arguably took place in post-World War II Japan and Germany where imposed democracy settled as elites adapted to the new rules and learnt to explore the possibilities. This process is now taking root in Africa. Fear and mistrust among former combatants on the ends of a political left-right scale and political rivals in places like South Africa, Mozambique, and Namibia, is slowly replaced by mutual co-existence, acceptance, and peaceful competition.

A related hypothesis in the literature is that protracted transitions are more likely to be successful because incremental processes favor accommodation and adaptation by political elites (e.g. Huntington 1991, ch4-5). Many transitional processes in Africa have been protracted and even free and fair elections have taken place as part of protracted transitions (Barkan 2000, 235; Lindberg 2004a). Africanists have tended to exaggerate the rates at which change is occurring. Bratton and van de Walle (1997) argued the transitions in Africa were very short in a comparative perspective but that short is beautiful. The evidence presented in this book suggests that a majority of these processes rather have been long processes. Madagascar from 1982 is a case in point. Twenty years and five successive presidential and parliamentary elections later, Madagascar testifies transitions may take time if they are ever to morph into fully-fledged electoral democracies. Many reform processes are still incomplete, many areas still need to be

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78 Partly, this is a consequence of the use of data. Bratton and van de Walle refer to Madagascar as a relatively long period of transition by African standards totaling only 22 months starting in the early 1990s. Scrutinizing the background on Madagascar we find that the process actually started already in 1982 to 1983 when a partial liberalization took place as a consequence of the decision to hold the first competitive elections with several parties.
improved, and accountability and responsiveness still need to be estab-
lished and/or strengthened. A fair number of regimes are still
electoral authoritarian while a few are even only patchy façade
electoral regimes. Yet, the power of elections in Africa to spread
democracy has proven to be significantly stronger than most academic
observers had believed it could be.

Even the historically engineered ethnic rivalries that constituted major
divides in places like Ghana, Kenya, and Senegal seem to be losing
their appeal. The contentious relationships between Muslims and
Christians in Nigeria, and northern and southern Sudan among others
have created difficulties, casting doubts on the viability of electoral
politics. Yet, in countries with longer electoral history such divides
have tended to become less politicized. This is an important lesson
contradicting claims voiced by African leaders like Daniel A. Moi in
Kenya, Jerry J. Rawlings in Ghana, and Joseph Museveni in Uganda,
that multiparty politics would destroy the social fabric of African
societies. Evidence from Africa so far seems to suggest that over a few
electoral cycles mistrust between groups are moderated rather than
exacerbated. At least if we can judge by the regime survival rates,
acceptance of electoral results and increasing collaboration between
opposition parties. It is quite likely that by participating in an ordered
or relatively ordered framework for political competition and partici-
pation, political actors as well as large portions of the populations
learn to replace fear and mistrust with a growing but somewhat
cautious acceptance and co-existence. The choices and actions of elites
are certainly important in many cases at critical junctures. Yet, over a
longer period the incentive structures of electoral institutions tend to
pull them together rather than scatter them all over the place. In short,
many elites in different countries and contexts have made similar
choices and that should prompt us to qualify the actor-centered
explanations.

Opposition Parties and Party Systems

Over three decades ago, Dahl (1971) suggested the level of political
competition to a large degree determines how democratic a regime is.
In a recent contribution, van de Walle (2002) similarly suggested that
in Africa the quality of competition and the power of the opposition
could go a long way to explain the levels of democracy. Thus, opposition behavior should be particularly important in electoral regimes where the attainment of democracy is often still an open question. This study has reaffirmed that the role of opposition parties is crucial. Even flawed elections can further the long-term goal of democracy if opposition parties are willing to retreat and fight another day. Opposition participation is also far more likely when at least minimal requirements for free and fairness of elections and relative peacefulness of the campaigns are instituted (Lindberg n.d. 2005). This finding clearly calls for more involvement by both domestic and international actors in policing the rules of the game. The presence or absence of old authoritarian “big men” and their associates seem not so important in first elections rather, efforts should be made to encourage opposition participation and support the conditions for free and fair and peaceful elections are in place.

At the same time, the literature on democratization seems to assume elites in the form of opposition groups and parties are pro-democratic actors. This reification of political opposition needs to be corrected. The behavior of the opposition in Africa’s presidential elections is illustrative. Even among free and fair elections, losing parties endorsed the results immediately in only 40 percent of the cases. In an additional 44 percent of cases it took up till three months for parties that lost elections to accept the result, a figure that is not encouraging. Losing parties use the means of disputing elections results and thereby questioning the legitimacy of the process and the winning candidate’s access to executive office, all too often. Efforts to discredit a legitimate and democratic process is per definition undemocratic behavior. In this light, many opposition parties in Africa do not come across as genuinely pro-democratic actors. There is nothing to suggest that African opposition groups and parties should be a special case in the world. We see this evidently in Eastern Europe with post-communist parties, in Latin American countries such as Bolivia, Chile, and Honduras. Once more, the empirical realities point to the need for institutions that work not thanks to, but despite particular actors. This gives credence to Dahl’s (1971, 1989) plea for polyarchy. It is not so much the quality of opposition parties and leaders that matters but the institutional incentives (guarantees) that constitute the actors and structure their actions along more democratic principles. But more
research is needed on the interaction in newly democratizing countries between constitutions and regulations, and individuals within political parties in general and opposition parties in particular. We know too little on how individuals reason and react to new electoral institutions and rules and how their thinking as individuals translates into behavior in new settings. That requires qualitative data of a different kind from what this study generates and it would be a very valuable contribution.

Civil Society

The transition paradigm in general and the literature on Africa in particular, has also posited the centrality of civil society in democratization processes. But it is telling that the more comprehensive reviews of the field such as Bunce (2000) do not mention any big or bounded generalizations on which a consensus has been formed with regards to civil society’s role and functions. There are certainly many scholars working in extension of Almond and Verba’s (1963) pioneering work on attitudinal orientations and how organizations influence political processes (e.g. Diamond 1993; c.f. Pye 2000). This study does not negate the argument that once activated and empowered with formal rights, liberties and a democratization agenda, civil society actors can be catalyst for furthering political development. Yet, Diamond, Linz, and Lipset (1990) for example, argued for the importance of a pluralistic, autonomous, and organized associational life as instigator of democratization. Bratton and van de Walle also charged that political mass protests were instrumental in triggering political transformation in many countries in the early 1990s. As shown elsewhere (Lindberg 2002, 126), protests were in fact as frequent in African countries that did not democratized questioning the relevance of protests. Africanists pleading for the importance of civil society also frequently ignores the fact that protests were as common in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, long before these transitions started (Bayart 1991; Wiseman 1990). This book rather supports the theory that a strong and active civil society is the outcome of liberalization and electoral practice and not their cause.

As Joseph notes (1999, 454), gains made in freedom and reallocation of power – the dispersion of power through granting of procedural rights (cf. Dahl 1989) – in Africa should not be underestimated. It represents a historic change that empowered civil society legally and
procedurally to organize and assert themselves more openly than at any time before since independence. Students, professional organizations, workers and peasant groups, religious and ethnic associations, local development groups, and political parties have benefited from both positive and negative experiences with elections and ensuing raise in civil liberties. Electoral activities have tended to stretch boundaries of freedoms making them more elastic. Civil society actors have probably been active in transferring rights, procedures, and liberties to the societal sphere. Detailed research on the perceptions among actors in civil society of such changes in the formal distribution of power is another under-researched area. Hopefully, the coming years will bring us exciting new research on processes of diffusion of awareness, knowledge, and capabilities translating experiences of national electoral rules and processes to other spheres.

This is probably also relevant to local politics as suggested in one of the causal links. One of the few attempts so far to probe this area corroborates these extensions of the main thrust of this book. Finkel’s (2003) study shows significant effects of civic education programs in the Dominican Republic, Poland, and South Africa, on political participation and competence in local politics and in civil life. The effects of voter education programs, training of election functionaries and administrators might have similar effects as chapter six suggested and the empirical analysis hinted. Further research on the translation of engineered new capabilities to localized efforts is needed. In particular, such research should focus on the transplacement from national electoral politics of new ways of thinking and behaving in political processes governed both by local government structures and by local traditional authorities and councils.

Research efforts are already being made on women’s local empowerment but it would be interesting to include in such studies to what extent new political procedures are linked to national level electoral processes. My hunch is that the more continuous experience with competitive and participatory elections on a national level, the greater the ideas of political equality and choice for both men and women are spread in praxis at both the local level and in the social as well as private spheres.
Democratization and Corruption

A pressing issue regarding governance in many Third World countries is corruption. Even if it is easy to show a negative global correlation between democracy and/or freedom – however measured – and corruption indicators, the exact nature and direction of the relationship is still an unresolved issue. There are two main and contradictory hypotheses in the literature. The first posits democratization will lead to a decrease in levels of corruption, while the second argues corruption will undermine and perhaps reverse democratization. These build on mutually exclusive theories and sorting out which one is a true remains an important puzzle. Africa seems to be an excellent drawing board for renewed research-efforts in this area. While this book cannot provide anything more than indirect and suggestive evidence, the findings in chapter seven rather seems to support the first hypothesis. The correlation between civil liberties and incidence of corruption in Africa is strong and negative (from Spearman’s - .648 to - .822, p=.000, depending on the year of measure). If elections improve on civil liberties it seems that at the very least, possibilities for actors to contravene corrupt practices should increase.

This would support the idea that corruption is the result of ‘unrestrained’ state power purported by the World Bank, bilateral donors, and some scholars. Unrestrained power in this interpretation, is rule with few or no constraints in terms of horizontal and vertical accountability (Schedler, Diamond and Plattner 1999), and weak pressures for transparency. Therefore, combating corruption needs democratization because the horizontal controls of modern democratic institutions limit discretionary actions of individuals in official positions. In addition, vertical accountability also presumably plays a role since voters do not want to return corrupt leaders to office. The latter seems supported by the fact that anti-corruption slogans have been prominent in many winning party’s’ campaigns during recent elections in countries like South Africa, Ghana, Kenya, and Zambia. Thus, for two reasons democracy could be a recipe for limiting, if not eliminating corruption. This also seems to be the orthodoxy of the day in the international community. Democracy is promoted not only as a

79 It does not matter much whether it is measured with Transparency International’s Corruption Perception’s Index, or the World Bank’s Control of Corruption measure.
positive in itself but also as a means to control corruption. The argument certainly carries some weight and if correct, more elections of the highest democratic quality possible, are one important part of an effective anti-corruption strategy.

The second hypothesis that if political corruption is systemic and endemic, it makes choices for voters – intimidated by vote buying and similar things – useless. The political competition induces higher pressure on political patronage and clientelism feeding into corruption, petty and grand. Corruption further undermines the rule of law if courts and judges are involved, and makes the entire system work inefficiently with poor delivery of public goods of safety, human rights, public health, schooling and so on, and de-legitimatize leaders (e.g. Diamond, Linz and Lipset 1990). In such a situation and if voters only have corrupt leaders to choose between, democracy as an idea for a good self-government is endangered.

The well-known “big man” syndrome coincides with high degrees of continuity among elites in Africa. The numerous new opposition figures also tend to be dependent on patronage networks and elections may spur political clientelism similar to America’s “Chicago politics”. A recent research in Ghana on political clientelism (Lindberg 2003) suggests that even in a good case of democratization the dynamics of political patronage and corruption plays a significant, increasing, and possibly detrimental role. Similarly, Wantchekron’s (2003) study in neighboring Benin also corroborates the second and more pessimistic of the hypotheses. Yet, these are based on single country case studies. Large-N studies seem to lend more support to the first and more positive hypothesis. This remains an contradiction to be resolved. As far as the analysis in this book show, if elections improve the civil liberties – including the rule of law, transparency, and civic associational life – repetitive elections could be building a bulk-walk against corruption. At the very least, the institutions of electoral regimes do provide means to be employed for those who wish to fight corruption. Who chooses to make use of such means and under which circumstances remains to be clarified in future research.
Stateness and Social Citizenship

The notion of “stateness” has been (re-)introduced into democratization studies recently. It is a widely shared belief that a fair measure of empirical as opposed to judicial statehood\(^8\) is constituted by a feeling of unity; a belief in that “we” are a “people” belonging to a state (Buzan 1991, Rustow 1970). And an emerging consensus in comparative democratization seems to reaffirm Rustow’s (1970) argument that successful democratization requires the issues of the nation and the state to be settled. The present analysis questions that proposition.

Historically nation-building and state creation in the West was construed by war-making and taxation (Hall 1986, Hall 1998; Herbst 1989, 1990; Mann 1986) where increasing democratic qualities seems to have been a side effect of a protracted bargaining process rather than a causal factor (e.g. North 1990; Tilly 1990). Once in place, however, the greater say in government that evolved with representative government contributed to building the notion of citizenship and societal loyalty. In effect, this is Rustow’s claim turned on its head: representative government epitomized in electoral processes contributed to “stateness” by forging citizenship. This begs the question if contemporary democratization can induce a sense of belonging to a state and a community of citizens; could it counter-act the disengagement and alienation from the state?

In Africa, the question of stateness is closely tied to the issue of social citizenship. It has been claimed that with the failure of the African state from the 1960s onwards resulted in the uncaptured peasantry (Hyden 1980) and a disengagement from the state by the citizens (Azraya and Chazan 1987; Chazan 1988). The resulting two publics (Ekeh 1975) weakened the state even further making it irrelevant to many of its citizens. There are varied descriptive and causal theories of “predatory states” with little or no positive contribution to peoples’ lives in Africa. In response, the informal sphere and affective personalistic networks of support and communication deepened as people sought to

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\(^8\) The distinction between empirical and judicial statehood (Clapham 1996) is echoed in similar notions such as positive and negative (Jackson 1990), internal and external (Herbst 1989) and functional and constitutive (Thompson 1995).
safeguard and secure livelihoods and other kinds of securities. It seems this "economy of affection" (Hyden 1983, 2000) is thriving even under the new democratic era and does not go away with increasing education. A recent study provides evidence that even relatively modern, urban, and highly educated Ghanaians are actively reproducing these personalized networks that serve to strengthen the informal as opposed the formal state arena (Pankani 2004). What needs to be investigated further is how electoral politics and an improvement and promotion of rights and freedoms interact with such trends. We need to find out if electoral institutions and the new rights and freedoms will help "bring people back in" to feel and be concerned, legitimate citizens. Will electoral processes with the effects on party collaboration across divides and social organization in civil societies discussed above, contribute to increased stateness by the strengthening of the social citizenship?

Given the perceived obstacle development practitioners perceive economies of affection to be, this is a pressing research issue. The limited contribution of the present study based on the data indicating a reduction in violence, electoral disputes, increasing voter participation and regime survival. This suggests electoral practices might contribute to bringing people closer in shared beliefs of citizenship with rights, obligations and benefits of collective action in both the political and societal spheres. Perhaps the symbolism of things such as people united by the vote experience, as one person making a collective decision on who shall govern should not be underestimated. The effects of symbolic actions such as when leaders of antagonistic factions converge in peaceful talks and sometimes coalitions probably have real-life effects on how people act in general.

It would admittedly be demanding to collect hard evidence on such factors and processes but the argument that the symbolism of electoral processes is as important as its concrete workings could certainly be made. Further research on the implications of electoral politics on notions of citizenship and identity is warranted. Narrative life-histories and politico-anthropological mapping of such outcomes will be invaluable in future research on African politics. An approach such as the present one can only do so much and these micro-level processes must be investigated by other means. We need them not only for their
inherent value but also to build a foundation for more general theories. At the same time, the ongoing efforts to create large-N data sets of truly comparative nature such as the Afrobarometer, must be applauded. We need more data on all front, not less.

**Lessons on Consolidation**

Transition to and consolidation of democracy are typically considered as two analytically distinct phases with specific characteristic and causes. Although primarily concerned with elections, this study suggests two things to students of consolidation: to focus on empirical referents of stabilization of regimes, and to disaggregate their dependent variable. The projection in the mainstream literature of consolidation as expected regime stability – e.g. O'Donnell (1996) and Valenzuela (1992) – makes consolidation an inference rather than empirically observable phenomenon (Sartori 1984, 24; Schedler 2001a, 67-8). The operationalization of such a dependent variable is inherently difficult and fraught with epistemological problems begging the question how a dependent variable that is no longer an object but an argument is measured?

Methodologically, the analysis in this book suggests a focus on evidenced records to indicate stability of a regime. In Africa, electoral regimes tend not to break down after at least two or preferably three electoral cycles. The fact that many of these cannot be labeled liberal democracies, and some not even electoral democracies (c.f. Lindberg n.d. 2005) testifies that stabilization of “bundled wholes” such as democracy is not necessarily one coherent process. Different parts – partial regimes – may be stabilized through distinct processes with different start and endings in time. This is a contribution this book wants to make. The electoral partial regime may be consolidated – stabilized – at a much earlier stage than say the democratic control and accountability of the military. Stabilization of such distinct parts of democracy may also have different causes and effects. People’s attitudes, civil society’s strength, the level of economic development, and so on, may be the reason for stabilization in some but not other partial regimes. In short, this study calls for “consolidologists” both to study *de facto* rather than expected regime stability, and to disaggregate their inherently complex and multi-facetted dependent variable. It
should be investigated as a set of variables each with its own theoretical specification and existing empirical referents rather than being treated as an ontologically coherent inference, which has arguably never existed. More research on the consolidation pace stabilization of constituent parts of regimes is an agenda worth pursuing. It would also open up for the possibility to ask empirical questions about possible causal relationships between the stabilization of different partial regimes rather than just assuming that they make one coherent whole.

**Policy Implications**

While the findings of this study relates to several important theoretical discussion in academia, it is also worth noting a few policy implications. Social science should in all serve when it can as guidance for practical action and political policies. Some 30 years ago Dahl (1971, 213-4) stated aid should not be used in an effort to establish polyarchy in other parts of the world because we know too little about the complex processes of political development. After the end of the Cold War democracy promotion has become a core goal of not only US but also most other Western countries’ foreign policy (e.g. Burgess 2001). The key question remains exactly how much we know today about the complex processes of political development? This book provides an answer strictly limited to a small slice of the broader agenda of political development, yet, an answer that has important policy implications. Elections are not merely reflections of the level of democracy. The power of elections is self-reinforcing and self-improving, and it causes democratic qualities in society to expand and deepen.

This provides a strong case for continued aid and support to be given to electoral processes in developing countries. At least in Africa, international support to elections has facilitated a move towards better and more stable polyarchies as it were, contributing to the experience of greater freedoms for a greater number of people. It is not support to activities in already democratized countries for inferred “consolidation” that is mostly needed. Rather, countries that have not yet made it to democracy should be in focus. Countries where different forces still fight over the rules of the game, where elections are contested, sometimes flawed, where opposition groups operate under less than
free and fair conditions and the media is constrained, where authoritarian tendencies are still strong but elections are being held, are the countries where support to elections is mostly needed. The analysis also emphasizes the need for the international community to sustain support to transition countries over an extended period of typically 12-15 years. The case is strong for support that keeps the electoral process going over at least three consecutive cycles.

Empirical evidence also refutes pessimists to the export of institutions, such as Moss (1995, 208) arguing that exporting western institutions and values are likely to fail, and that predictions that elected regimes will be stable and pro-American are ungrounded. The export and import of electoral institutions have most often turned out well and quite a few electoral regimes in Africa have remained stable over a decade or more. Foreign aid and foreign policy pressure in adequate measures to bring about an electoral regime is an important external intervention for the spread of democracy and freedom. Once started, efforts should be directed at securing it against breakdown over the first two to three electoral cycles. If countries come thus far, the level of freedom will generally have increased significantly and the habituation or socialization into the new institutional incentives for pro-democratic behavior have gone far enough to – in most cases – take on their own self-reinforcing power.

The international focus in the 1990s on support to elections and election-related activities of civil society, the media and opposition groups has therefore not been misguided. Calls to reduce such support in favor of other activities build on a shaky empirical ground. At the same time, the international community’s support to so-called civil society organizations in Africa should rather be carefully calibrated. We know that many of these presumably independent organizations are far from independent. Many have been initiated by individuals in, or in close association with, political parties and leadership. It risks undermining the assumed function of civil society in Africa as counter-balancing power and independent agenda setter in furthering democratization. The international community also risks creating artificial civil society associations. (Boussard 2003) When funds for the support of organizations are announced, societal entrepreneurs are generally quick to take the queue and see the potential for profits and a
good source of income. Briefcase NGOs and small profit-making firms in the civil society mix are well-known features to practitioners in Africa. Too much financial and programmatic dependence on international aid, diplomatic missions and international NGOs, can also be a source of discomfort for well-meaning civil society organizations.

In the same vein as aid has been seen to undermine accountability and autonomy of governments (e.g. Brautigham 1992, 11; Friedman 1958; Karl 1997, 57, 190; Moore 1998; Tilly 1990), dependence risks undermining the autonomy and source of legitimacy for civil society organizations both in the eyes of the people and in relation to government. US foreign policy is clearly intent of using the leverage over civil society organizations to further their foreign policy agenda on a number of issues from anti-abortion to support for military interventions and war. This creates a dilemma. On the one hand, everyone who has worked in Africa knows that many organizations are in dire straits for organizational, programmatic, strategic, and financial support. Foreign countries also have a legitimate right to further their interests and goals to a certain extent. There is no reason, for example, for Swedish, US, or UK taxpayers to support anti-democratic organizations or think tanks, or media supporting violations of the rights of women. On the other hand, too much tied aid and conditionalities risks undermining authentic civil society organizations and create an artificial substitute that may not perform the expected functions.

The results presented here have some implications for the behavior of local pro-democratic actors. Person x or organization y seeking to further democratization in their country should support the continuation of electoral cycles and refrain from behavior that may hinder the process. This is certainly not to say that opposition groups and concerned citizens should stop voicing protests or refrain from filing complaints about electoral or other political flaws. Media should not be silent and incumbents not left alone to go about things their way. The message here is that all these actions and countless others are a necessary part of the process. Yet, actions that are lawless and seriously discredit the value of electoral procedures or result in intrigues leading to boycotts and violent protests do not seem to be an efficient way to

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81 For a good discussion of this dilemma and other problems with aid, see Knack (2004).
increasing the democratic characteristics of elections nor society in general.

Countries with a turbulent present and where the outcome seems still unpredictable need de jure participatory, competitive, and legitimate elections providing a possible means and mechanism for democratization. Elections provide more than just an arena for political contest. The institutional ramifications of elections usher new (semi-) independent bodies within the state that can provide the basis for individuals and groups to pursue their own goals. The process of holding competitive elections can make actors to adapt and change their strategies, as well as to transfer democratic norms to other parts of society. Yet, one must not forget that this is no auto-piloted journey. Democratization has always been a struggle over political power. The struggle concerns fundamental rules of the game and such struggles sometimes involve the life and death of combatants. Nevertheless, the message of the analysis is just because things start off bad there is no reason to believe that the struggle is lost.

**Struggles of Power and the Power of Elections**

The outlook presented in this book may seem excessively optimistic if read the wrong way. My argument is certainly not an attempt to apply lower standards of assessment and analysis of democratic qualities in Africa – a démocratie tropicalisée, or tropicalized version of democratic practices. While refraining from idealizing what democracy is and can be in terms of using ideal types that no country has ever and will ever attain, I also do not see any point in measuring African politics by different standards than the rest of the world. Some of the indicators used are specifically interesting for new rather than established democracies – such as participation of opposition parties – but that is not to say that partial boycotts or just below widespread violence is acceptable.

It should be obvious that the basic underlying assumption of this book is that liberal democracy is a desirable state for countries in Africa as well as in the rest of the world. I have not – and will not at this late stage – argue that point. What should be equally obvious is that I deem this to be a possible outcome for countries in Africa just as well as for other countries in the world. I do not share the culturalist view
that liberal democracy is inherently misguided because peculiarities in society and culture granted that Africa is in many ways different. African electoral regimes and democracies are and will continue to be different from Western, Japanese and Indian democracies in certain ways. But Africa is not only distinguishable from other parts of the world; the diversity of culture, historical experience, and societal institutions within Africa is as compelling. African democracies and electoral regimes will therefore also continue to be different among themselves. It is no different from the great divide that exists between the way democracy functions and is perceived of in the universalistic welfare states in Scandinavia and the Anglo-Saxon counterparts, not to speak of countries such as Italy, Greece, and heterogeneous Switzerland. The United States is itself a unique system, that in Sartori’s words (1987) – works in complex ways no thanks to but in spite of its constitution. If the world of established democracies can span so different countries and contexts, why should it be impossible or undesirable in the diversity of Africa?

At the same time, this study has not deduced factors lacking in Africa or characteristics that are unhelpful from the experiences of other parts of the world; it is based exclusively on Africa’s own experiences with electoral procedures and practices. When scholars posit that the growth of an urban middle class, formation of pactic transitions, or establishment of parliamentary rather than presidential systems for example, further democratic development, such advise is based on assumptions of causal equivalence and spatially constant effects. It is assumed that Europe and Latin America experiences would be the same for Africa in the 21st century. This might or might not be true. The same applies to the main theoretical contribution of this study: the democratizing power of elections. It might be a factor we have simply missed to study in democratization processes in general – and it should be possible to go back and test for Europe as well as for Latin America and countries like Japan – or it might be a unique feature of African transitions in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

Dahl (1971) concluded his study with positing that countries with unfavorable conditions – which most African nations epitomize – are unlikely to transform into stable polyarchies in the near future. This prediction has been bourn out for more than 30 years now. At the
same time, the present study has surveyed a blind spot in Dahl’s and many others’ reasoning. Exercising and improving democratic procedures in the partial regime of elections tends to have positive effects on democratic qualities in society in any country. These freedoms and rights are undoubtedly of fundamental value in and of themselves. If all humans are born equal, we either have equal rights to participate in the self-government by the people, or equally no right to rule at all. I prefer the former. Repetitive elections is the mechanism we know to work best to translate self-government into effective government in a modern state. It is by no means a perfect but it is the best we have. It furthers a level of freedom and a set of rights and liberties few people throughout history have experienced. What this book shows is that elections in and of themselves further the spread and depth of such fundamental freedoms. It seems that it is no small or insignificant thing to note.
TABLE 19.
Annual Overview of Elections in Africa 1989-2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>49</th>
<th>90</th>
<th>91</th>
<th>92</th>
<th>93</th>
<th>94</th>
<th>95</th>
<th>96</th>
<th>97</th>
<th>98</th>
<th>99</th>
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<th>01</th>
<th>02</th>
<th>03</th>
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<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>97</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>135</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free and Fair</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>56%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>119</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Voter Turnout</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>59%</td>
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<td>60%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>57%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opposition</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>77%</td>
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<td>87%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>70%</td>
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<td>Participate</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>163</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Authoritarian</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guard Gone</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Winner's Share</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>47%</td>
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Sources:

All data are compiled in 48 country files. The specification of the source for each data entry in the data set is found in these country files. The

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These figures combine what I have labeled ‘Half’ and ‘Full’ turnovers respectively, see Chapter 3. ‘Half’ turnovers make 35% (N=23) of the total, while ‘Full’ turnovers constitute a majority of cases, or 65% (N=43).
country files can be obtained from the author upon request. The sources used are:

**Academic Sources:**


**Agencies and Reports:**

Adam Carr’s Election Archive, Agora Election Data; AllAfrica.com various dates; BBC News Online; various dates; BBC World News; various dates. CNN Election Watch, various dates; Daily Graphic; Freedom House Country Reports, various countries, Elections Around the World; Election Watch, 1-13 (Journal of Democracy); Electionsworld.org; IFES Elections Statistics; Independent Election Commission; various countries; IPU Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections, 25-33; IPU Parline; International IDEA, News and Voter turnout Project; Keesing’s Record of World Events; Mampilly mimeo, 2001; News from Nordic Africa Institute, various issues; NDI Elections Observation Reports, various issues; Pan African News Agency various dates; The East African Standard, various dates; UN IRIN News Reports; US Department of State Background Notes, various countries and issues.
APPENDIX II.

In chapter seven two figures are presented. The conclusive outcome matrix from the empirical analysis with respect to the results displayed in those figures, are presented below. The first matrix is based on an analysis of how many units of change of CL each set of elections, and independent periods between them are associated with. Thus, in the latter case, if ten first elections resulted in a positive change (more/better civil liberties) of two units on the CL scale each, that makes a total positive change of 20. If among first elections there were also five other elections that each resulted in a negative unit change (less/worse civil liberties) of one, that makes a total negative change of five. The balance (20-5) would accordingly be a total of +15.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Table 20.</th>
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The second matrix is based on an analysis of how many of the elections (expressed as shares) in each electoral cycle are associated with changes in CL scores, either independently of the elections, or dependent on them.
For the real data behind each matrix, consult my personal home page for how to download it as an SPSS-file:

http://www.svet.lu.se/Staff/Personal_pages/Staffan_lindberg/Staffan_lindbeg.html

The two tables above have been generated from the same data set used for all analyses in this book. The table below gives the unit changes in CL scores for each country’s elections over the four electoral cycles. Selection of cases is the same as for entire chapter seven. The countries have been coded as either “Yes” indicating it was judged to fully corroborate the main hypothesis in chapter six; or “(Yes)” when there was a slight deviation but the country’s track record overall corroborate the hypothesis; or “−” when the evidence is inconclusive; or finally “No” when the country’s track record speaks against the hypothesis. Two countries (Gabon and Namibia) has been coded as “No/Yes” since their presidential elections speaks against the hypothesis while their parliamentary elections corroborate it.

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On the Measurement of Changes in Civil Liberties

Changes in civil liberties occurring as a result of the election are measured as changes in civil liberties according to the operationalization in chapter seven. A few deviations have been necessary, however. This has different reasons. A few countries in Africa run presidential and parliamentary election on different intervals. In these circumstances, the period of measurement has been adjusted in the data set to capture years unaffected by elections as per the specification of election-related changes above. In some instances, coups and premature legislative have made the equation impossible. The full list of such adjustments when it had consequences for the coding is presented below.

**Burkina Faso** 2\(^{nd}\) Presidential election 1998  

**Chad** 2\(^{nd}\) Presidential election 2001  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Period Adjusted</th>
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<td>Year</td>
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<td>-------------------------------</td>
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<td>1983</td>
<td>1979-181 equation impossible due to election in 1982.</td>
<td>Coded as &quot;missing&quot;.</td>
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<td>1985-1987 equation impossible due to missing values.</td>
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Appendix II

Freedom House’s Civil Liberties

Freedom House’s annual survey provides an evaluation of the freedom in the world’s countries since 1972. The institute provides ratings for each country on two main scales, one on political rights and one on civil liberties. The latter includes freedom to develop opinions, institutions, and personal autonomy without interference from the state. This is crucial in distinguishing it from state-provided aspects of democracy such as elections, although the provision of civil liberties naturally is also dependent on a state and regime that facilitates their existence.

The survey does not rate governments but says to evaluate real-world rights and freedoms enjoyed by individuals as a result of both state and nongovernmental actors. The methodology has changed a little over the years but data should be comparable. From 1972 to 1988, the survey was conducted by Raymond Gastil but from 1989 a larger team of analysts was created. The team reportedly uses a broad range of sources, including foreign and domestic news reports, nongovernmental organization publications, think tank and academic analyses, individual professional contacts, and visits to each region. Country ratings are reviewed on comparative basis involving over 30 analysts and consultants. Each country is evaluated on fifteen indicators of four dimensions (see list below). For each indicator the country is awarded from zero (lowest) to four (highest) raw points, which are then added. The highest possible score for civil liberties thus is 60 raw points. Neither the raw points score in total nor on each indicator are made public by Freedom House. However, the correspondence between raw points and the rating is:

<table>
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<th>Total Raw Scores</th>
<th>CL Rating</th>
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<td>25-17</td>
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<tr>
<td>16-8</td>
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<td>0-7</td>
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</table>
Dimensions and Indicators on Civil Liberties

A. Freedom of Expression and Belief
1. Are there free and independent media and other forms of cultural expression? (In cases where the media are state-controlled but offer pluralistic points of view, the survey gives the system credit.)
2. Are there free religious institutions, and is there free private and public religious expression?
3. Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free of extensive political indoctrination?
4. Is there open and free private discussion?

B. Associational and Organizational Rights
1. Is there freedom of assembly, demonstration, and open public discussion?
2. Is there freedom of political or quasi-political organization? (Note: this includes political parties, civic organizations, ad hoc issue groups, etc.)
3. Are there free trade unions and peasant organizations or equivalents, and is there effective collective bargaining? Are there free professional and other private organizations?

C. Rule of Law
1. Is there an independent judiciary?
2. Does the rule of law prevail in civil and criminal matters? Are police under direct civilian control?
3. Is there protection from police terror, unjustified imprisonment, exile, or torture, whether by groups that support or oppose the system? Is there freedom from war and insurgencies?
4. Is the population treated equally under the law?

D. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights
1. Is there personal autonomy? Does the state control travel, choice of residence, or choice of employment? Is there freedom from indoctrination and excessive dependency on the state?
2. Do citizens have the right to own property and establish private businesses? Is private business activity unduly influenced by government officials, the security forces, or organized crime?
3. Are there personal social freedoms, including gender equality, choice of marriage partners, and size of family?
4. Is there equality of opportunity and the absence of economic exploitation?
References


REFERENCES


REFERENCES


Polity IV Data set. Available from: [http://weber.ucsd.edu/~kgledits/Polity.html](http://weber.ucsd.edu/~kgledits/Polity.html)


REFERENCES


