

When Do Opposition Parties Boycott Elections?

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Political liberalization in Africa has been depicted in two ways over the past 15 years or so. Scholarly accounts from the early 1990s herald a revival of Afro-optimism – an understandable euphoria given the political repression of the previous 20 years. For most of the 1960s, with the exception of Botswana, Gambia, Mauritius, and to some extent Zimbabwe and Senegal, the countries in Africa had been ruled by civilian or military authoritarian regimes. The rapid displacement of authoritarian regimes in countries such as Benin and Zambia by the 1990s was championed as harbingers of a “second liberation” and touted as a complete political renewal (e.g. Joseph 1992; Hyden and Bratton 1992, Ayitted 1992, c.f. Bratton and van de Walle 1997). Within a few years half of the countries had held multiparty elections – giving credence to Huntington’s (1991, 174) “elections are not only the life of democracy, they are also the death of dictatorship.”

Several developments soon turned optimism into pessimism. Disputed elections in regionally important countries like in Kenya and Ghana in 1992, and halted processes in countries such as Togo and Cameroon became a concern to many. Zambia’s second election on the 18 of or on 18 November 1996 was a dismay, in sharp contrast to its “best-in-class” founding election in 1991. Breakdowns of the democratization process in several countries, including Nigeria in 1993, Angola in 1992, and Gambia in 1994 contributed perhaps even more to the feeling a downward spiral. Critics’s were soon to predict a return to “neopatrimonial” politics (Bratton 1998), “continuation of disorder and destructive” politics (Chabal and Daloz 1999), “a no change at all” (Akinrinade 1998), “political closure” (Joseph 1998), or “semi-authoritarianism” (Carothers 1997)¹. Other scholars argued that things were returning to normal “big man”, neopatrimonial, clientelist, informalized and disordered politics of the continent (e.g. Ake 1996, Chabal and Daloz 1999, Chege 1996, Mbembe 1995, Villalón 1998). A review of literature on democratization from this period reveals the fascination scholars had the various themes of diminished subtypes². These labels have been in turn critiqued as misleading since they are negations of democracy, for example Joseph’s (1997, 367-8) “virtual democracy”.

¹ Some students of African politics sought to moderate the debate and to provide accounts of mixed records “between the extremes” (Chege 1995) that takes African states in several directions simultaneously (Mbembe 1995; van de Walle 2002). Another recent addition is the volume edited by Cowen and Laakso (2002) *Multi-Party Elections in Africa* that includes 17 country case studies. In this vein, the single most important comparative contribution, Bratton and van de Walle’s study from 1997, placed it self. Their findings still dominate the field of African politics. In a few preliminary analyses, I have challenged the robustness of their findings (Lindberg 2002, 2003b)

² Collier and Levitsky (1995) stopped counting at 550 different when reviewing the literature in the 1990s.

Collier and Levitsky (1997), like Schedler (2001) using a ladder of generality³ have argued that diminished subtypes are based on a dichotomous approach, the classical conception classification scheme, organize them on the ladder I suggest such subtypes are a matter of degree in that they have less of one defining attribute making them neither full democracies nor fully authoritarian. Hence, they are somewhere along the continuum between democracy and non-democracy. In short, they have democracy to some degree⁵. Diamond's (2002) recent typology ranging from closed authoritarian to full democracy with 4 intermediate categories, is in the same vein. The typology is an instance of degree of the kind we associate with ordinal variables: we know there is a difference between categories, we also know which ones is better or more – i.e. the more democratic or the less authoritarian – but we do not know the exact distance between the categories. This falls in line with scholars like Dahl in his formulation of polyarchy (1971, 2, 8) 1989, 316-7), later Coppedge and Reinicke (1990), and Bollman and Jackson (1989, 612-8) arguing that democracy is always a matter of degree. This paper is concerned with one such intermediate category; electoral autocracies. These are neither politically closed authoritarian systems neither are they electoral or fully liberal democracies respectively. Electoral authoritarian regimes are particularly important to study since they are the ones with greatest potential to develop into democracies. In particular, this paper takes a closer look at the role of opposition parties in elections in electoral autocracies. It explores the question if opposition participation contribute to legitimatimising, hence institutionalizing, democratic elections? Even more importantly, does the participation of the opposition help electoral authoritarian regimes survive and become democracies? If so, what are the conditions or under what context will opposition parties in electoral autocracies chose to contest rather than exit? By implication, this paper thus addresses the question how benevolent opposition behavior can be supported so as to increase the likelihood of electoral autocracies to become democracies?

³ 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' might be misleading since abstract if commonly understood as the opposite to real, or solid, concrete and existing *de facto*. Hence, I prefer Collier and Mahon's suggestion of renaming it ladder of generality.

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⁵ Speaking about democracy as a matter of degree is, in Sartori's words, a "stultifying" exercise in "degreeism" (1987, 184, c.f. Linz 1975, 184-5; Huntington 1991, 11-2; Geddes 1999; and Przeworski et al. 1996. Sartori and many others favoring a clear demarcation between democratic and non-democratic systems, are concerned with conceptual stretching. When democracy is viewed as one of two possible state of affairs, defining characteristics are necessarily minimum criteria.

Many have recently called for disaggregated data providing insights of the specific parts of politics in Africa (e.g. Chabal 1998; Gibbson 2002; Herbst 2001; Mahmud 1996; Wilson 1994). The comparative study of elections and democratization in Africa is also a subject where the pioneering work was done in the 1990s by Michael Bratton and colleagues (Bratton 1998, Bratton and Posner 1999, Bratton and van de Walle, 1997). Yet, the study of elections and opposition in African electoral autocracies still leaves a lot to be desired in terms of data collection and analysis. This paper *forms part of such a* data gathering, variable-creating, and puzzle-solving enterprise. I have used the larger data set⁶ for studying the democratic qualities of elections in Africa (Lindberg 2003b), women's legislative empowerment (Lindberg 2004a) and the effects of electoral systems (Lindberg 2004b)⁷. The specificities of opposition participation under electoral authoritarianism have not been dealt with in those publications.

Parties in Africa

At this point a few words on the electoral landscape in Africa in which opposition parties operate is appropriate. 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 (1995) suggested that the more agrarian the society, the higher the geographic concentration of the vote in Africa.⁸ Representatives are elected based on how good they are as "patrons" of their respective community or constituency (Chabal 1986; Monga 1995, 365). Elected politicians typically spend around half of their campaign funds on personalized networks buying loyalty and electoral support (Lindberg 2003a, Wantchekron 2003).

The persistence of such patron-client relations in electoral politics in Africa is confirmed in a recent field research carried out on close to 700 voters in Ghana by Lindberg and Morrison (*n.d.* 2005). It induces emphasis on person rather than party providing an electoral logic that differs from other places where elections are primarily fought over choices of policy.

⁶ The present paper builds on Bratton and colleagues' data and additional sources have been consulted in order to fill in missing values, correct errors and in order to include elections that are more recent.

⁷ There are a couple of other contributions using other data sets and focusing on specific aspects such as ethnicity and voting (Mozaffar 2003), electoral management bodies (Mozaffar 1998), party systems (Bogaards 2004), and women's legislative representation (Yoon 2001).

⁸ 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.

TABLE 1.
Number of Parties Participating in Parliamentary Elections.

Country	Last Election	Country	Last Election	Country	Last Election
Angola	18 (1992)	Gabon	36 (2001)	Niger	19 (1999)
Benin	35 (2003)	Gambia	6 (2002)	Nigeria	30 (2003)
Botswana	7 (1999)	Ghana	7 (2000)	Sao Tome & Pr.	9 (2003)
Burkina Faso	30 (2001)	Guinea	18 (2002)	Senegal	61 (2001)
Burundi	6 (1993)	Guinea-Biss.	11 (1999)	Seychelles	4 (2002)
Cameroon	42 (2002)	Kenya	40 (2002)	Sierra Leone	10 (2002)
Cape Verde	5 (2001)	Lesotho	19 (2002)	South Africa	16 (1999)
CAR	29 (1998)	Liberia	16 (1997)	Sudan	8 (2000)
Chad	42 (2002)	Madagascar	41 (2001)	Swaziland	N/A (1998)
Comoros	10 (1996)	Malawi	11 (1999)	Tanzania	13 (2000)
RoC	100 (2002)	Mali	12 (2002)	Togo	25 (2002)
Ivory Coast	10 (2000)	Mauritania	16 (2001)	Uganda	N/A (2001)
Djibouti	8 (2003)	Mauritius	20 (2000)	Zambia	15 (2001)
Eq. Guinea	13 (1999)	Mozambique	15 (1999)	Zimbabwe	7 (2000)
Ethiopia	50 (2000)	Namibia	8 (1999)		

NOTE: "Participating" is taken here to mean both parties that contest the elections and parties that participate by officially announcing a boycott. This is done in order not to induce noise from political conditions. The assumption is that boycotting parties would have participated if conditions in general were satisfactorily.

The most notable effects are the proliferation of political parties and the problem of uniting the opposition. As Table 1 indicates, the number of parties is typically very high in competitive elections in contemporary Africa. These numbers does not represent "effective number of parties" (Laakso and Taguepera 1979), or "relevant parties" (Sartori 2001) but merely reflects the number of parties registered to contest the elections. And even though they give little substantial information on the competitiveness or the nature of the party system in these countries, they nevertheless provides some food for thought on the political conditions in Africa.

Classification of Regimes in Africa

The unit of analysis in this paper is political regimes. On the most general level, the concept of political regimes is used differentiate between democracies and non-democracies. Equally often, the concept is used to distinguish between different forms of democracy – such as parliamentary versus presidential democracy (e.g. Sartori 1987), or liberal versus illiberal democracy (e.g. Karatchnycky 1999). In transition studies, it is typically used in making typologies of authoritarian and democratic regimes (e.g. Diamond 2002, Diamond, Linz and Lipset 1989). Typically, political regime is understood to be the rules framing political processes. Using a slightly modified version of Diamond's (2002) and Schedler's

(2002) proposals, liberal democracies are defined here as those regimes scoring a maximum average of 2.0 in political rights and civil liberties according to the Freedom House scale. I will not be using the year of the election as measurement point for political rights and civil liberties, because elections typically start some time before polling day. Parties prepare for their campaigns, issues are debated and spread via media, potential voters start to ponder their decision and voters' registries and other procedures are usually taking off at least a year in advance of election day. Measuring the regime's score at the year of the election therefore risks taking stock too late in the process. Therefore, values are measured at a point one year before the election ($t-1$). Electoral democracies are defined as those regimes which at $t-1$ score an average of political rights and civil liberties larger than 2.0 but 3.5 at the highest. In addition, the election has to be judged free and fair by both local and international observers (or leave no doubt about that in case of missing reports). Free and fair elections create a fundamental distinction between democratically acceptable and unacceptable electoral processes. While there is no such thing as an entirely clean election due to human and technical errors (cf. Schedler & Mozaffar 2002), flaws must not alter or predetermine the outcome. Even though it might seem contra-intuitive that unfair elections can be competitive at all, they can. There are a couple of instances in Africa where genuinely unfair elections have effectuated an opposition win against a long-term incumbent and previous authoritarian ruler. For example the 22 October 2000 presidential elections in Ivory Coast and parliamentary elections of 10 December the same year, Madagascar's the presidential elections on 16 December 2001, the parliamentary elections in Malawi on 15 June 1999 and the constituent assembly-cum-parliamentary elections in Namibia 11 November 1989 are good examples. Even though the 'menu of manipulation' is wide, (Schedler 2002) trying to cheat is one thing, and doing it with success is sometimes quite another. The normal pattern, of course, is that serious irregularities do not coincide with turnovers.

All other cases of regimes that have held *de jure* competitive and participatory elections are considered electoral authoritarian regimes. The initiation of a new regime is defined as holding of founding *de jure* competitive and participatory elections. Breakdown is defined as the abortion of electoral cycles as prescribed by the constitution. Regimes with no elections naturally do not constitute electoral regimes rather they are considered closed

authoritarian. The empirical analysis in this paper includes only regimes that were classified as electoral authoritarian at some point during the period studied⁹.

The period studied is mainly 1989 to June 2003. However, since we assess opposition behavior in elections of regimes, there is one important exception to this rule. Regimes that were already present at the inception of 1989 have been tracked backwards to include their founding, second and subsequent elections. Based on these considerations Table 2 offers a comprehensive classification of regimes in Africa. In order to enhance the reading, Table 2 is organized such that within each category regimes are grouped according to how many elections have been held as per June 2003. Further, within the category of regimes that became democracies they are group after how many elections it took them to leave electoral authoritarianism behind. The classification builds on elections to the executive, i.e. to the office of president in presidential systems and to parliament in parliamentary systems. Two regimes have been democratic from the start: Botswana and Sao Tome and Principe² and are therefore excluded from the analysis. Out of the total universe of 53 cases 14 progressed to become electoral and liberal democracies¹⁰ with the eventual break down of two. While 19 have stayed electoral autocracies over more than one electoral cycle, five are pending a second election. A total of 15 electoral autocracies have broken down, notably 14 of these after the founding election. Only in Ivory Coast did an electoral autocracy ever break down after second elections had been held. In short, electoral authoritarian regimes in Africa seem to survive if they make it to second elections. But when do they become electoral or liberal democracies? Does opposition behavior play a significant role in facilitating such a development?

⁹ The reasons are simple. First, the object of study is electoral authoritarian regimes, hence, the exclusion of continuously democratic or closed authoritarian regimes. Second, if we were to include only those regimes that were classified as electoral authoritarian at the entry point, that is the founding election for each regime, we would exclude cases that initially were democratic but regressed to be electoral authoritarian (even if it is only one case – Zimbabwe). Similarly, if we were to include only cases that were electoral authoritarian throughout the period, we would exclude cases that “graduated” from electoral authoritarian to some kind of democracies. Regardless, selection bias would be introduced in the sample.

¹⁰ One case – Benin – oscillated between electoral authoritarian and democratic but given the benign political development in the country it has been judged to be better classified as having ‘graduated’ rather than stayed electoral authoritarian for the purposes of the following statistical analysis.

TABLE 2.
Classification of Electoral Regimes in Africa

	Country	Year Start	First Election	Second Election	Third Election	Fourth+ Elections	Break-down	
Democracies	Sao Tome & Pr. 2	1996	Liberal	Liberal	-	-	-	
	Botswana	1969	(Electoral)	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	-	
Electoral	C.A.R 2	1993	EA	Electoral	-	-	2003	
Autocracy	Malawi	1994	EA	Electoral	-	-	-	
->	Mozambique	1994	EA	Electoral	-	-	-	
Democracies	South Africa	1994	EA	Liberal	-	-	-	
	Cape Verde	1991	EA	Liberal	Liberal	-	-	
	Namibia	1989	EA	Electoral	Electoral	-	-	
	Mali	1992	EA	Liberal	Electoral	-	-	
	Seychelles	1993	EA	Electoral	Electoral	-	-	
	Mauritius	1976	EA	Electoral	Liberal	Liberal	-	
	Gambia 1	1982	EA	EA	Liberal	-	1994	
	Ghana	1992	EA	EA	Electoral	-	-	
	Madagascar	1982	EA	EA	EA	Electoral	-	
	Senegal	1978	EA	EA	EA	Electoral	-	
	Oscillating	Benin	1991	EA	Liberal	EA	-	-
	Electoral	Angola	1992	EA	-	-	-	1993
	Autocracies	Burundi	1993	EA	-	-	-	1996
		C.A.R 1	1992	EA	-	-	-	1992
Comoros 1		1990	EA	-	-	-	1995	
Comoros 2		1996	EA	-	-	-	1999	
Comoros 3		2002	EA	-	-	-	-	
Cote d'Ivoire 2		2002	EA	-	-	-	2002	
Guinea-Bissau 1		1994	EA	-	-	-	1998	
Guinea-Bissau 2		1999	EA	-	-	-	-	
Liberia		1997	EA	-	-	-	2003	
Niger 1		1993	EA	-	-	-	1996	
Niger 2		1996	EA	-	-	-	1999	
Niger 3		1999	EA	-	-	-	-	
Nigeria 1		1993	EA	-	-	-	1993	
RoC 1		1992	EA	-	-	-	1997	
RoC 2		2002	EA	-	-	-	-	
Sao Tome & Pr. 1		1991	EA	-	-	-	1995	
Sierra Leone 1		1996	EA	-	-	-	1997	
Sierra Leone 2		2002	EA	-	-	-	-	
Burkina Faso		1991	EA	EA	-	-	-	
Cameroon		1992	EA	EA	-	-	-	
Chad		1996	EA	EA	-	-	-	
Cote d'Ivoire 1		1990	EA	EA	-	-	1999	
Djibouti		1993	EA	EA	-	-	-	
Eq. Guinea		1996	EA	EA	-	-	-	
Ethiopia		1995	EA	EA	-	-	-	
Gabon		1993	EA	EA	-	-	-	
Gambia 2		1996	EA	EA	-	-	-	
Guinea		1993	EA	EA	-	-	-	
Mauritania		1992	EA	EA	-	-	-	
Nigeria 2		1999	EA	EA	-	-	-	
Sudan		1996	EA	EA	-	-	-	
Swaziland		1993	EA	EA	-	-	-	
Tanzania	1995	EA	EA	-	-	-		
Uganda	1996	EA	EA	-	-	-		
Kenya	1992	EA	EA	EA	-	-		
Togo	1993	EA	EA	EA	-	-		
Zambia	1991	EA	EA	EA	-	-		
Zimbabwe	1980	Electoral	EA	EA	EA	-		

NOTE: The classification builds on presidential elections except for parliamentary systems.

The Significance of Opposition Participation.

Opposition participation in elections in authoritarian regimes is an important issue to study for at least two inter-related reasons. The first one has to do with its importance from a democratic theory point of view and the second has to do with understanding opposition parties behavior under electoral authoritarianism and their role in moving such regimes towards a full – even if minimal – democracy.

Under the premise that a transformation to at least a minimum level of democracy is the desirable outcome of electoral autocracies, the importance of a political opposition should be uncontroversial. Self-government is democracy's fundamental value, hence, the sovereignty of the people to rule over itself (cf. Sartori 1987, 30). It should perhaps go without saying, that any form of political organization that makes binding decisions for all members, requires some form of government. In a democracy, that entails representation of the people. Competitive and participatory elections are the institutionalized attempt to actualize the essence of democracy in its modern representative form. Hence, the fundamental value of self-government translates into not only equal opportunity of political participation, but also political competition as the two core dimensions of democracy, or polyarchy as Dahl (1971, 1989) labeled it. In order for the people to be able to exercise its sovereignty in elections there has to be choice. Without political opposition, there is no choice and when there is no choice the people cannot exercise its discretion to indirectly rule via representation. Thus, the existence of opposition parties contesting elections is a prerequisite of political competition, which itself is instrumental to the realization of self-government.

Yet, elections alone are not sufficient to make a democracy, as indeed the work on electoral authoritarianism to date has shown (REFs). Elections may be flawed, irregular, wholly orchestrated, or dominated by the incumbent party to the extent of making the outcome a foregone conclusion. Old authoritarian rulers may participate and violence may mar the electoral campaign to a greater or lesser extent. Electoral rules may be devised to disfavor the opposition's chances of winning. Elections may even be more or less free and fair while periods between them are characterized by denial of political rights and civil liberties, and autocratic behavior on part of the incumbent regime. These are traits of electoral autocracies. (Schedler 2002) We need to know more about opposition behavior in such contexts. In operational terms, this paper takes interest in the behavior of opposition parties in two central respects: When do they choose to participate in, or boycott elections in

electoral autocracies, and second, when do opposition parties accept or reject elections results. Empirically, this translates into two dependent variables:

A. Opposition Participation. Opposition parties may participate even when elections stand no chance of being even remotely free and fair or legitimate. Occasionally, boycotts are staged even in elections of relatively high democratic quality with the aim of discrediting the ruling regime when opposition parties stand no chance of winning the race. Opposition participation is measured with three values: ‘total boycotts’ when one of the real opposition parties contest elections, ‘partial boycotts’ when some but not all opposition parties contest, and ‘all contest’ when all major political parties participate. The indicator records primarily the pre-election period but extends over election day itself.

The distribution of cases as shown in Table 3 is telling in several ways. First, all major opposition parties have chosen to contest in around two-thirds of all polls, presidential as well as parliamentary. In other words, boycotts of various kinds are not that common in Africa over the period. Second, the well-known problem of opposition (dis-)unity shows in the figures on participation too: partial boycotts are five to fifteen times more common than total boycotts. One would otherwise assume that it is easier for opposition groups to come together in protest and *against* an incumbent, than to unite around a program of action or a common electoral platform. It appears that even when it comes to protesting via the exit option, opposition forces in Africa cannot unite. Most often, some but not all opposition parties boycott. Third, there is a stark and statistically highly significant difference between on the one hand flawed elections and on the other hand free and fair ones, when it comes to opposition behavior. Whereas all opposition parties participated in only 40-45 percent of the flawed elections, the equivalent rate hits around 90 percent in elections that were free and fair. This is presumably for good reasons yet it provides hard facts on what we have suspected: free and fair elections are a crucial factor in making all actors wanting to play along. That begs the question: does it matter if they do?. How significant is the effect of opposition participation in elections in electoral autocracies on regime transitions to democracy? That is a question that we will deal with in a moment. First, we need to establish the other indicator of opposition behavior: acceptance by the losing parties of the electoral results.

TABLE 3.
Opposition Behavior Variables and Distribution

		Opposition Participation				Losers' Acceptance				
		Total Boycott	Partial Boycott	All Contest	Total	Not at All	Later/ Some	All At Once	Total	
Presidential Elections	Flawed	%	11	45	45	101	74	26	0	100
		N	5	21	21	47	34	12	-	46
	Free & Fair	%	0	12	88	100	17	44	40	101
		N	-	6	42	48	8	21	19	48
	All	%	5	28	66	100	45	35	20	100
		N	5	27	63	95	42	33	19	94
Parliamentary Elections	Flawed	%	4	55	41	100	55	44	2	101
		N	2	31	23	56	30	24	1	55
	Free & Fair	%	1	4	94	99	9	26	65	100
		N	1	3	65	69	6	18	45	69
	All	%	2	27	70	99	29	34	37	100
		N	3	34	88	125	36	42	46	124

NOTE: Presidential Elections: Free & Fair – Opposition Participation .462 $p=.000$, Free&Fair – Losers' Acceptance . 631 $p=.000$;
Parliamentary Elections: Free & Fair – Opposition Participation .569 $p=.000$, Free&Fair – Losers' Acceptance . 675 $p=.000$.

B. Losers' acceptance. When do opposition parties accept the results? 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’ that seek to undermine the political rule of their rivals. Such posturing is more likely to happen in countries undergoing transition when things are still in flux, as in Africa, than in established democracies. In other words, a challenge to the official results cannot be taken on face value as substantiating allegations of irregularities. Rather, the relationship between freedom and fairness in elections and the losing parties’ acceptance of defeat remains an empirically open question. Losers acceptance is measured on the basis of three values: ‘No’ when none of the main losing parties accepted the outcome, ‘Not at first/some’ when either some or all losing parties rejected the results at first but within three months accepted it, or, if some but not all, losing parties did not accept the results, and ‘Yes, all immediately’ when all losing parties conceded defeat immediately after the results were pronounced.

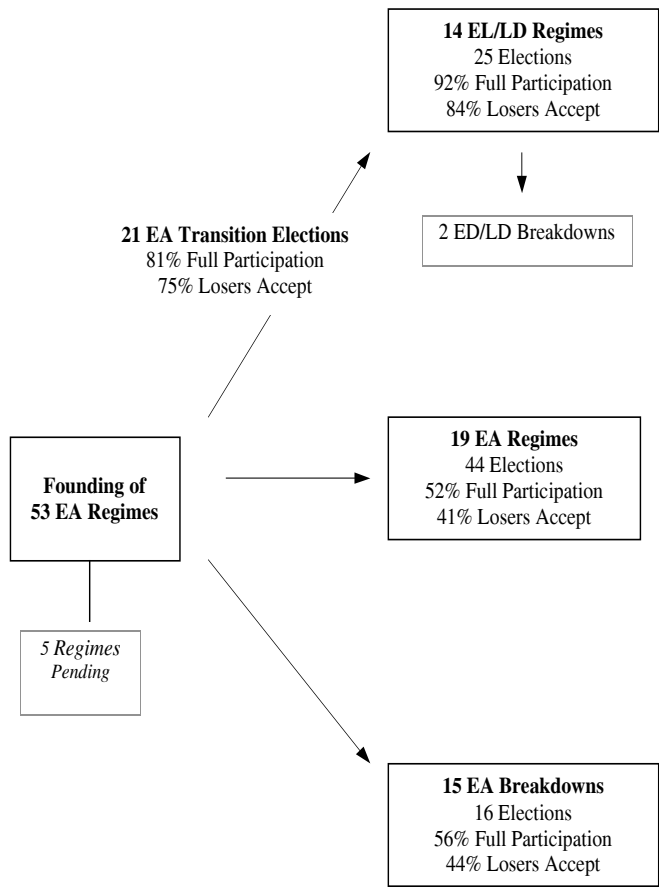
The distribution of the cases on this variable is similar to the first between free and fairness of elections and the outcome even if the differences are more pronounced. Table 3 shows that the behavior of the opposition is also very similar in presidential and parliamentary elections. Yet, there is a worrying sign in these figures. Even among free and fair elections the losing parties accepted the results immediately in only 40 percent of the cases of presidential elections (but 65 percent in parliamentary elections). While in another 44 percent of cases the losing parties consented to the outcome within 3 months, this is not good enough. It indicates that the weapon of disputing results to cast doubt on the legitimacy of the process and the winning candidate’s access to executive office, is used far more frequently than is desirable. Efforts to discredit a legitimate and democratic process – free and fair elections – must be regarded as undemocratic behavior. In this light,

opposition parties in Africa do not come across as generally pro-democratic actors. This is a point we will have reasons to return to when we look at the context of opposition behavior of this article. For now, we note that we have reasons to be skeptical about the democratic credentials of opposition parties and leaders on the continent.

Opposition Behavior: Democratization by Elections?

With a view to both empirical and normative democratic theory, participation by opposition groups in the central processes of democratic governance is not only a desirable good but also a necessary requirement. Yet, under electoral authoritarianism does opposition behavior contribute to democratization or does it only lend legitimacy to autocrats in electoral disguise? If we couple the classification of regimes as in Table 2, with the data on opposition behavior from Table 3, we can display a chart of electoral autocracies as in Figure 1. In total 53 electoral authoritarian regimes have held founding elections over the period studied. As per June 2003, a smaller number (five) of these had just recently taken off and we know nothing about their future prospects. These are therefore left as “pending” in Figure 1. However, 15 of the electoral autocracies have broken down suffering from a coup, a civil war, or similar. In the elections preceding these breakdowns all opposition parties participated in nearly half and accepted the outcome in 44 percent of the cases. In other words, opposition participation and acceptance of results does not seem to safeguard against breakdown. This is corroborated by the fact that the level of opposition participation and acceptance has been almost exactly the same for the 19 electoral autocracies that have (so far) reproduced themselves holding two or more elections. Not much, differentiate these two outcomes. In short, electoral authoritarianism can be reproduced even when the opposition parties and candidates chose to participate fully and even accept the outcome of sometimes dubious elections. Yet, nothing in the behavior of the opposition in this regard seems to mitigate against a total breakdown of the process.

FIGURE 1: OUTCOME OF ELECTORAL AUTOCRACIES, PER 2003



A very different situation prevails for both transitional elections – elections held in electoral autocracies before they transform into democratic regimes. Here opposition participation hits 80 to 90 percent and losers’ acceptance exceeds three-quarters of the elections. The same is true for elections held in these formerly electoral authoritarian regimes once they have become electoral (ED) or liberal democracies (LD) respectively. In short, opposition participation, and acceptance of the outcome, is clearly associated with the transformation of electoral autocracies to democracies over a sequence of multiparty elections. There are as of 2003 a number of regimes where the opposition has participated so far in vain, although there are fewer cases where opposition boycotts and rejections of results have lead to transformations into democracies. In sum, although opposition parties and

candidates presence and abidance by the rules of electoral contest does not seem to automate a process leading to democracy they are necessary conditions of such a desirable outcome.

Effects of Opposition Participation

The simple tabulation above seems to indicate the effect of participatory behavior on the part of opposition on the likelihood that electoral autocracies develop to democratic regimes. There is another way to assess the contribution of opposition participation. Polyarchy as it were, consists of both popular participation and competition, with respected and legitimate rules. It seems to follow from the very nature of elections that increased participation of opposition parties and candidates would lead to higher levels of popular participation by inducing choice and competition, resulting in more frequent alternations in power. Yet, there is still a need for an empirical foundation for such claims. More importantly, does opposition participation also further institutionalization of competitive elections? In other words, does opposition participation contribute to acceptance of the rules to the extent that the outcome is accepted? We would like to hope so. Finally, for electoral autocracies to be able to develop into democratic regimes they need to survive. In this vein, does opposition behavior influence regime survival to any extent? To analyze these issues a set of indicators has been selected.

Voter Turnout. In a representative system, popular participation is primarily exercised through voting in elections. Voter turnout is generally understood to be an important dimension of the quality of democracy (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 1997). We would expect popular participation to become higher as a consequence of full opposition participation, than when some or all parties and/or candidates boycott the polls. If so, the participation of opposition parties also has indirect effects on the quality of the regime via popular participation. As a measure, the share of registered voters is used in preference to share of voting age population since such figures tend to be highly unreliable in Africa¹¹. Population figures are often more incorrect than voter registries in these states.

¹¹ In a few cases where official figures are obviously inflated, such as, for example, the official turnout at Mauritania's presidential election December 12, 1997, observers' reported estimates are used as proxies.

Winner's Share of the Votes. This variable taps the level of competition in presidential elections¹². A decent level of the competitiveness of an election is central to the democratic value of self-government. *De facto*, competition is also likely to be low, or non-existent in electoral autocracies (Dahl 1989; Diamond (2002); Schedler 2001, van de Walle 2002). It goes without saying that participation increases competition. Yet, some (e.g. Boogards 2004) have suggested that the dominant party system is still widely practiced in Africa, Big Man-politics have returned (e.g. Bratton 1998) effectively reducing the value of opposition participation. One is left wondering the extent opposition participation tends to induce so much competition that electoral autocracies are undermined? The indicator measures the winning candidate's share of votes (first round) as percentage of total valid votes.

Winning Party's Share of the Seats. This variable taps into competition in parliamentary elections measuring the largest party's share of total seats in parliament. A two-thirds majority in parliament typically gives the ruling party a free hand to introduce changes in the constitution unilaterally. 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 continued electoral authoritarianism. The measure of share of seats have been found to be mediated by the choice of electoral system in the established democracies. The most important effect in this regard is that proportional representation (PR) systems tend to produce multiparty systems, as opposed to two-party systems, and tend to decrease the winner's relative share of votes and seats (see, for example, Bogdanor and Butler (1983); Downs (1957); Duverger (1954); Lijphart (1984, 1996, 1999); Mair (1990); Powell (1982, 2000); Rae (1971); Sartori 1968, 1997). Yet, in Africa there are only few PR system with large MMCs or pure PR and those tend to coexist with two-party systems due to historical reasons¹³. Hence, the distortion of results by electoral systems should be insignificant. On the other hand, we expect the disproportionality of the other electoral systems to produce inflated legislative majorities and therefore display lower than real levels of competition.

Turnover of Power. 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. It has been criticized because it is not sensitive to differences in electoral or party systems

¹² In an important departure from Bratton's (1998) measure, I take figures from the first round of elections rather than from the run-off. Since the run-off is typically between the two most successful candidates, winning shares tend to be inflated while the figures from the first round are more representative of the actual level of competition.

¹³ In this set of regimes: Angola, Burundi, Mozambique, Namibia, and South Africa.

(e.g. Günther, Diamandouros, and Puhle (1995, 13); Schedler (2001). Yet, alternation in power, as the manifest outcome of institutionalized uncertainty¹⁴ (Przeworski 1986, 57-61), remains an important indicator of elections that help transform electoral autocracies to democracies. 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 but the new president is an immediate successor to the former president of the same party, or, in parliamentary 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.

Losers’ Acceptance. The indicator on losers’ acceptance (discussed above) is used to indicate the legitimacy of procedures and the rules of the game.

Regime Survival. An important question regards the survival of regimes. In order for electoral autocracies to transform to democracies, they must persist over time. Does opposition participation in elections facilitate such a goal, and, do boycotts indicate a propensity of breakdowns? Even more interesting, does acceptance of results by the opposition forces – even if these are flawed – increase the likelihood of regime survival? Outright coups, or civil wars following elections, as in Sierra Leone and Congo-Brazzaville, are all proof that the cycle of holding regular elections has broken down.

Opposition Makes Democracies But Not Survival

The results of the empirical analysis of the effects of opposition participation are shown in Table 4. The relationship between voter turnout and winning candidates’/party’s share of votes/seats show the expected direction. Voter turnout goes up and winning shares decrease with opposition participation. In other words, the intrinsic dimensions of democracy (or, polyarchy) are to some extent determined by opposition behavior. One would expect these variables to be weighted heavily by the free and fairness of elections, in particular the latter of the two. However, this is not the case. There are no significant differences between voter turnout and winning shares in free and fair and flawed elections respectively, within the categories of opposition participation. In short, opposition participation seems to determine

¹⁴ For a variant of the argument with an emphasis on a bounded uncertainty, see Schmitter and Karl (1991).

the level of competition and popular participation to a much greater extent than do free and fairness of elections.

Whether the opposition participates in elections or not, also has a strong and highly significant effect on alternations in power and acceptance by losers of the results. Both indicators are central to regimes becoming more democratic and both are naturally influenced by the degree of free and fairness of elections. Yet, even when we apply control for free and fairness of elections, full as opposed to partial opposition participation in these elections has a significant effect on the likelihood of a turnover as well as on the likelihood that the outcome will be accepted. Thus alternations in power and losers' acceptance of defeat are crucial for regime consolidation and legitimacy as discussed in the literature, and for electoral regimes to become democratic, much of this responsibility lies in the hands of the opposition.

TABLE 4.
Effects of Opposition Behavior in African Electoral Autocracies

			Mean Turnout	Mean Winner's Share	% Turnovers	% Results Losers Accept	% Elections Regime Survive	N
Opposition Participation	Presidential Elections	Boycott	48.9	96.1	0	0	100	5
		Partial Boycott	58.7	66.4	15	35	74	27
		No Boycott	64.3	51.7	37	68	77	63
		All	62.0	57.3	28	55	78	95
	<i>p</i> ¹⁵		1.701 (.188)	21.710 (.000)	.259 (.011)	.388 (.000)	-.023 (.821)	
	Parliamentary Elections	Boycott	24.5	90.8	0	0	33	3
		Partial	56.2	73.9	9	49	82	34
		No Boycott	65.8	62.1	39	82	82	88
		All	62.6	65.6	30	71	81	125
	<i>p</i>		7.955 (.001)	5.693 (.004)	.307 (.001)	.387 (.000)	.057 (.525)	

Finally, how can an electoral autocratic regime develop into a democracy if it breaks down? Well, the answer is they can. Sao Tome and Principe experienced a coup in 1995 but it was soon aborted by intervention and a regime renewed was installed that has been democratic from its inception to present, a trend that has not be repeated successfully any where. Rather regime breakdowns among Africa's electoral autocracies have typically led to

¹⁵ For ordinal variables Spearman's Correlation values (except for Electoral systems where Chi2 value is used), for the means analyses ANOVA F-values.

further deterioration of political conditions and increased difficulties at installing a viable electoral regime. And it seems that the behavior of the opposition in and around elections is completely irrelevant to the explanation of such variation. Regardless if we control for free and fairness of elections or not, there is simply no relationship whatsoever. In sum, the conclusion from the simple comparison in figure 1 above is corroborated by the inferences from the above statistical analysis. Opposition behavior in the form of participation in elections has significantly contributed to improving the democratic qualities of elections in electoral authoritarian regimes in Africa. In other words, opposition behavior seems to be an important determinant of democratization by elections in the foggy zone (Schedler 2002) of electoral authoritarianism.

The Context of Opposition Behavior

If opposition participation is conducive to a positive development from electoral authoritarianism to electoral or liberal democracy, when do opposition parties contest elections in electoral autocracies? How can opposition participation best be furthered? Schedler (2002) in his review of the literature suggested a range of factors that might influence opposition groups in deciding whether to play or exit the game. Among these suggested factors, the following are singled out as particularly interesting to probe further.

:Authoritarian 'Guard' Gone?: In Africa, the apparent transformation of previously highly authoritarian rulers into 'democrats' is common. Schedler suggested that old authoritarian rulers are particularly inclined to use strategic interventions to prevent further democratic development, in particular trying to prevent threatening opposition from participating (2002, 42). In an important article, Baker noted that in 20 states former authoritarian rulers were still in office as of 1997 (Baker 1998). Until proven otherwise it seems reasonable to assume that those who fought to prevent political liberalization will not willingly further it. Hence, we hypothesize that the presence of old authoritarian rulers or their close associates will decrease the willingness and/or ability of opposition parties and candidates to contest elections. Cases are coded according to the following rule: 'No' for elections where at least one of the presidential candidates or the leadership of one main party are former authoritarian rulers, 'Some' when at least one candidate or 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 are related to a former authoritarian regime in this way.

Violence. Does politically related violence occur during the campaign and/or on election day? Use of violence is a core symptom of electoral authoritarianism. Assassination of political opponents, voter intimidation, attacks against the liberty and property of political adversaries, violence against elected officials and/or electoral administrators, politically motivated riots, and ethnic or other forms of “social” cleansing are examples of serious politically motivated violence (Schedler 2001, 70-71; Elster *et al.* 1998, 27). Do opposition parties contest even such elections in electoral autocracies or do incumbents succeed in intimidating adversaries? In other words, what is the effect of violence on the likelihood that opposition parties will accept the outcome of the election? These are questions to be addressed using this variable. The hypothesis is that more violence will lead to less opposition participation. The indicator has three values: ‘Yes, significantly’ 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, ‘No, peaceful’ for cases of entirely peaceful elections.

Electoral System. Electoral rules define, among other things, the electoral formula, district magnitudes, district boundaries, assembly size, suffrage rights, rules of representation, electoral calendar, voter, party and candidate eligibility and registration, election observation, resource endowments of parties and candidates, methods of counting, tabulating and reporting of votes, election management bodies and dispute settlement authorities (cf. Mozaffar and Schedler 2002, Sartori 1997). What is usually referred to as “electoral systems” encompasses the rules concerning both voting method and rules used in translation of votes into seats in the representative body (Sartori 2001:99). The extension of the law-like consequences of electoral systems first developed by Duverger (1954) and Downs (1957) have been testified by the work of scholars like Bogdanor and Butler (1983), Lijphart 1984, 1994, 1999), Lijphart and Waisman 1996), Mair (1990), Powell (1982, 2000), Rae (1971), Reynolds and Sisk (1998), and Sartori (1968, 1986, 1997). The imperative of the majoritarian vision – governing capacity – with a translation of votes-to-seats being highly disproportional leads electoral competition to focus on the median voter, to the exclusion of peripheral voting populations and lower incentives for participation. It is the essence what is often referred to as adversarial, as opposed to consensual politics. The imperative of representative justice in PR systems typically gives minorities a better representation, reducing the incentives for anti-democratic behavior, i.e. to stay away from the polls. (Weaver 2002). Some authors (e.g. Weaver 2002) ascribe particular alternatives such as the Alternative Vote (AV) used in the Australian House of Representatives, and the Single

Transferable Vote (STV) as mixed electoral systems. I generally prefer Sartori's (2001:99) proposal to use the label exclusively for electoral systems where both the voting method and the allocation of seats are in part majoritarian and in part proportional. Such systems, it has been argued, offers the best solution to satisfy the two main, though contrary imperatives of representative justice and governing capacity (Dunleavy and Margetts 1995). Students of democratization tend to agree that consolidation of democracy involves central political institutions alongside elite behavior and mass attitudes (e.g. Diamond 1999; Günther et al 1995; Linz and Stephan 1996; O'Donnell 1996; Schedler 1998, 2001; Valenzuela 1992). Yet, few seem to ask does it matter, what *types* of institutions are put in place? In this context, this paper also asks if majoritarian, mixed or proportional electoral representations more conducive to opposition participation? The hypothesis being that majoritarian systems are less conducive to opposition participation. The variable used distinguishes between 4 types: majority in two-rounds systems, plurality systems, mixed and PR systems.

Electoral Management Body. A central question in new democracies regards the role of management and oversight institutions. Independent electoral authorities have become almost a *sine qua non* of multiparty elections in new democracies today while they are markedly absent in many established democracies. It has been claimed that opposition groups in particular, "place a high premium on effective electoral governance" while authoritarian incumbents would prefer not to hold elections at all (Mozaffar 2002, 88). While the latter should be obvious, the former may not be true. Table 2 above indicated that opposition parties should not be assumed to be wholly trustworthy as pro-democratic actors. The re-appearance of many old ministers from old authoritarian regimes in new "oppositions" disguises – what? in Africa today, should point toward the same. Regardless, the context of elections consists of, among other things, the institution that organizes the poll. This body is responsible for many of the activities that are supposed to provide the procedural certainty that guarantee the "institutionalized uncertainty" (Przeworski 1991) of democratic elections. Hence, electoral management bodies are institutions that are supposed to create and maintain the procedural legitimacy of competitive elections that make them democratic. The relative autonomy of electoral management bodies (EMBs) in Africa has been indexed by Mozaffar (2002) and used as dependent variable. To the best of my knowledge, however, the explanatory power of EMBs on opposition participation has not been tested even though Mozaffar's argument implies a hypothesis about the relationship: Opposition parties favor autonomous EMBs for the benefit of electoral governance while incumbents prefer flawed elections, hence controlled EMBs, in place of no elections at all. This means we should expect to see opposition parties participate more often the more

autonomous the EMBs are. Similarly, we expect more autonomous EMBs to be associated with a higher share of accepted outcomes than less autonomous ones.

The Key to Opposition Participation: Free and Fair, and Peaceful Elections

The empirical analysis of the context of opposition behavior in African electoral autocracies shows a mixed picture. As we noted in Table 3 above, opposition candidates for presidency and opposition parties contest free and fair much more often than they do flawed ones. Of all elections that were essentially free and fair – that is the existing irregularities did not alter the outcome – opposition candidates and parties participated in close to all of them. That is indeed a healthy sign of opposition behavior. Apparently, opposition groups rarely use the weapon of boycotting to discredit democratic elections. On the other hand, the results of democratic elections are rejected or contested far too often. Opposition parties do play along with the rules of the game but to some extent only when it suits their interests. One should remember, however, from Table 3 that among free and fair elections almost all outcomes were accepted at last. The figures here represent only cases when the opposition accepted the outcome immediately. Yet, this is the behavior signaling a democratic stance among losers. Trying to contest the outcome at first and then grudgingly accepting it only when it becomes clear one has more to lose from totally rejecting it than from playing along seems to indicate an instrumental rather than intrinsic evaluation of democratic procedures. Therefore, we focus on those outcomes when the results have been accepted immediately by all major political actors in Table 5.

The presence of old authoritarian rulers and/or their close associates, however, have no influence on opposition behavior, either in terms of the choice to contest elections or not, or in terms of accepting the outcome of the elections. It might be that particularly disgraceful old authoritarian rulers and their associates have a tendency to make use of the “menu of manipulation” (Schedler 2002a) but it seems not to be a general trend. While the analysis here does not suggest that authoritarian leopards can and do change their spots, their very presence in elections seems to have no negative effects on opposition behavior.

TABLE 5.
The Context of Opposition Behavior in African Electoral Autocracies.

Variables	Values	All Opposition Candidates/Parties Participate						All Accept Results Immediately					
		Presidential Elections			Parliamentary Elections			Presidential Elections			Parliamentary Elections		
		Percent	N	<i>p</i> ¹⁶	Percent	N	<i>p</i>	Percent	N	<i>P</i>	Percent	N	<i>p</i>
Free & Fair Elections	Not at all	33	6	.752	29	7	.572	0	6	.634	0	7	.685
	Irregularities Affected Results	46	41	(.000)	43	49	(.000)	0	40	(.000)	2	48	(.000)
	Irregularities Did Not Affect	87	47		94	67		40	47		64	67	
	Free & Fair	100	1		100	2		0	1		100	2	
Authoritarian Guard Gone	No/Associates Contest	69	86	-.154	70	111	.013	58	85	-.144	69	110	.116
	Yes	44	9	(.137)	71	14	(.883)	33	9	(.166)	86	14	(.200)
Peaceful Process	No	42	19	.250	56	18	.130	32	19	.240	56	18	.140
	Only Few Incidents/Yes	73	75	(.015)	74	106	(.151)	61	75	(.020)	74	106	(.121)
Electoral System	Majority	N/A			46	22	13.39	N/A			46	22	10.883
	Plurality				67	48	4				71	49	(.012)
	Mixed				71	14	(.037)				93	14	
	PR				88	41					77	39	
Electoral Management Body	Not Autonomous	50	16	.254	60	20	.216	56	16	.143	75	20	.087
	Semi-Autonomous	62	34	(.015)	65	37	(.019)	42	33	(.178)	64	36	(.353)
	Autonomous	81	41		83	50		66	41		78	60	

It also often assumed in the literature that the use of violence and intimidation is something associated with old incumbents against opposition parties, and that it presumably denounces opposition participation and the legitimacy of electoral procedures. The systematic use of violence definitely constitutes a denial of democratic values and rights, and it clearly influences opposition behavior to some extent even if the differences we find are statistically significant (.05-level) only for presidential elections. The significance of violence in presidential elections in particular should perhaps come as no surprise. A vast majority of African regimes are presidential systems and elections to the highest office is a far more important contest than its legislative counterpart. Boycotts (partial or total) characterized almost 60 percent of presidential elections where politically motivated violence was systematic and/or widespread.

Among elections where the use of political violence was only sporadic with a few incidents or entirely absent, boycotts was reduced to less than half, or 27 percent of cases. A similar pattern shows for losers' acceptance of the results. In both presidential and parliamentary elections where the use of violence was wide spread, boycotts are much more prevalent than in peaceful elections. Once again the differences are statistically significant only for presidential elections. Overall, it seems that the hypothesized relationship between use of manipulation of elections by violent means and the behavior of opposition groups (e.g. Diamond 2002, Schedler 2002) is corroborated by the empirical analysis of African

¹⁶ For ordinal variables Spearman's Correlation values (except for Electoral systems where Chi² value is used).

regimes. The implication is clear. International assistance that can help to reduce the use of violence as a political means does have an effect on behavior, and presumably socialization, of new political groups in these regimes. It is telling that in Figure 1 above, this was shown to be important for electoral regimes to “graduate” into democracies. Without a field of opposition parties that not only participate but also accept the outcome of the contest, electoral autocracies are more unlikely to develop to democracies.

The well-established hypothesis about the effects of electoral systems seems at first to be born out by the analysis. Majoritarian systems are associated with lower levels of opposition participation and acceptance of the outcome, however, the conclusion must be qualified. Table 5 does not distinguish between free, fair, and flawed elections. A simple check shows that 75 percent of all flawed elections occurred in one of the two kinds of majoritarian electoral systems. While only 25 percent of elections in electoral autocracies in Africa, operating PR systems were flawed 60 percent of majoritarian elections deserved this derogative epithet and the relationship is strong and highly significant (Chi^2 13.758 $p=.001$). A two-level cross tabulation shows that the relationship between opposition participation and losers’ acceptance and electoral system is similar across the various electoral systems when controlling for free and fairness. In short, there seems to be no effect of electoral systems design on opposition behavior among African electoral autocracies¹⁷.

A similar observation can be made with regard to management and oversight institutions such as EMBs. Apparently, their degree of autonomy has an effect only on opposition parties’ choice to participate and none on their tendency to accept or reject the outcome. In other words, when it comes to playing by the rules the judge’s character is important but when it comes to upholding a ruling, the judge’s decision is not. Other factors are then clearly at play. Yet, with regard to the acceptance of the judge one is left to wonder if it is another effect of unequal distribution of free and fairness of elections? a dicey question. On the one hand, one could perhaps suspect that non-autonomous EMBs are more easily controlled and manipulated hence those should be associated with higher levels of flawed elections. On the other hand, it remains quite possible that the judgment as to if an election was free and fair by international and domestic observers is influenced by the location of electoral management responsibilities. Given the last decade’s fashion among bi- and multilaterals alike to demand independent EMBs their judgments on elections is quite

¹⁷ Yet, one could legitimately ask why in particular two-round majority systems display so many unfair elections in Africa (c.f. Lindberg 2004b), but that is a very different issue than the one we are concerned with in this paper.

likely to influenced to favor autonomous at the expense of non-autonomous EMBs. There is indeed a statistically significant relationship between EMBs location and the share of free and fair elections (χ^2 8.178 $p=.017$) in favor of autonomous EMBs (75 percent free and fair elections) and the two other categories (around 45 percent free and fair elections). In Table 5 above, it is also between autonomous EMBs and the two other categories that we find a difference. And again, a two-level cross tabulation confirms that when controlling for free and fairness of elections, there is simply no association between EMBs and opposition behavior. In short, the choice of location of electoral governance might influence the free and fairness of elections, or be a reflection of the strongest player(s) commitment to instigate such elections, but it does not influence opposition behavior.

TABLE 6.
Free and Fairness and Peacefulness of Elections

		Was election campaign/day peaceful?			Total
		No, violence widespread /systematic	Yes, only isolated incidents	Yes, entirely	
Elections judged free and fair?	Not at all	50% 3	50% 3		100.0% 6
	Irregularities affected the results	22% 9	65% 26	13% 5	100.0% 40
	Irregularities not significant for result	15% 7	62% 29	23% 11	100.0% 47
	Yes			100.0% 1	100.0% 1
	Total	20% 19	62% 58	18% 17	100.0% 94

Spearman Correlation .250, $p=.008$.

In sum, the context of elections is clearly important as the literature suggests. However, only two factors have any generalizable effects on opposition behavior: the extent to which elections are free and fair, and if political violence is used during the campaign and polling day. These two factors are in turn highly related to each other. The presence of systematic violence is one of the criteria against which election processes are evaluated. Table 6 also attests to this point Yet, the distinction between the crucial two middle categories of elections is not that clear. Political violence occurs to almost the same extent as an isolated or less than systematic characteristic to an almost identical degree in both categories. And peaceful elections do occur even among flawed elections. Mirroring this but far more worrying is the fact that there is a substantial number of elections where systematic or widespread violence has been the order of the day but nonetheless the elections have been judged essentially free and fair. This comes across as inconsistent at first yet; all kinds of

cheating might fail even so the political violence kind. An incumbent might try to make use of widespread violence in order to intimidate the opposition but fail to substantially alter the outcome of the election. In such a case, international observers often let elections pass as legitimately reflecting the will of the people regardless of the violence. Nonetheless, it seems that the level of politically motivated violence is not unequivocally related to the judgment of if the elections were free and fair or not. Hence, it seems reasonable to conclude that both these factors do have direct effects on opposition behavior even if they are also not totally independent of each other.

Conclusion

Africa's electoral authoritarian regimes differ amongst themselves in many important and significant ways. Just as democracies are "bundled wholes" (Collier and Adcock 1999) so are electoral autocracies. Sklar (1987) noted many years ago that most political systems combine democratic and undemocratic features. Clearly, some of the African 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 differ also with regard to how much of political competition and participation they allow at present. It is not difficult to sympathize with calls for country-specific and contextual analyzes. Yet, there is also a need to understand what can be generalized.. One strategy is to look at a very specific partial regime but compare across countries. a sstudy? like this of the dynamics of opposition behavior in electoral authoritarian regimes seeks to solve a little piece in the big puzzle.

More than three decades ago Robert Dahl (1971) suggested that the extent of political competition in part determines how democratic a regime is. In a recent contribution, van de Walle (2002) suggested that in Africa the quality of competition and the power of the opposition could go a long way to explain the level of democracy that has developed in these countries. Thus, the behavior of opposition groups should be particularly important to study in electoral autocracies where the attainment of democracy is still an open question. We need to better understand the dynamics of opposition groups' behavior and role in protracted transitions where elections are not the end of the process but steps on the way to attain a minimal democracy. This begs two questions: what kind of behavior by opposition parties further a transformation of electoral autocracies to democracies, and, what conditions such benevolent behavior?

This study has shown how the behavior of opposition parties plays a crucial role in transforming electoral autocracies into democracies. By choosing to contest elections and accept the outcome of that contest, opposition groups greatly enhance the probability of the regimes to become democratic. Even when the elections do not fulfill the minimal requirements for free and fairness, it might further the long-term goal of democracy to rest the case, for another election shall come and things are likely to improve. Yet, opposition participation in elections is far more likely to occur when conditions acquire at least minimal requirements for free and fairness of elections and relative peacefulness of the campaigns. Here both domestic and international actors have a major role to play. There is no need to worry too much about the institutional context of elections, nor the presence or absence of old authoritarian “big men” and their associates. In order to best further a democratic opposition that can facilitate a transformation by elections of electoral regimes to become democracies, the focus should be of making sure the conditions for free and fair and peaceful elections are in place.

Indeed, in many cases in Africa even free and fair elections have taken place as part of protracted transitions (Barkan 2000, 235; Lindberg 2003b). Rather than being the end of a transitional period, indicating the arrival of a democratic regime, elections can be part of the transitional period. Even flawed elections generate important experiential lessons (c.f. van de Walle 2002, 75). Electoral cycles expose populations, local and national leaders, media representatives, officials, and politicians – crooks and democratic alike – to workings of political parties, dueling with words to win voters, coalition building and fierce competition, judicial interventions, electoral management bodies’ decisions, civil organizations’ voice and lobbying, electoral practices and at times the peaceful change of rulers. Electoral rules are tested, strained, and sometimes broken. By allowing actors find out what these rules are and decide whether to agree and play by them in the future or not. In this sense, it is not time as “one damn thing after another” that matters in institutionalization as for example Diamond (1997, 5) purported with specific reference to Africa. Rather, it is experiences gained over several successive electoral cycles that provide room for opposition groups to make a difference. In short, as long as the electoral “bandwagoning” goes on there seems to be a certain empirical foundation for a cautious Afro-optimism.

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APPENDIX I. Data Collection and Processing

The unit of analysis in this study is electoral regimes as defined above. The objective is to inquire into the behavior of opposition parties in and around elections, and its possible effects. Thus, the relevant point of measurement is elections for each regime. There are 210 elections in the data set; 95 presidential and 125 parliamentary polls. The data was compiled over two years starting from 2001. All background information was collated into country files, one for each country. These 44 country files contain narrative as well as quantitative information with full references to each individual source on each piece of information (six to twenty or so pages per country) totaling more than 400 pages of compressed country-specific information on elections. Information was sought from a number of sources to bring to bear on the coding of each case on all the indicators used. The philosophy of the data collection enterprise was ‘the more sources, the better’. The main concern here 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 to determine whether for example political violence was widespread or just isolated instances. Likewise, when information is incomplete or the events surrounding election day are dramatic and chaotic, it can be a time-consuming task to sort out even such a simple thing as whether all opposition parties participated or not. In such situations, it is always better to have several independent sources to rely on. This is a process similar to interrogation of interviewees: 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 generally speaking of higher value than information from diplomatic sources, or multilateral organizations where the country is itself a member. In addition, possible biases from interests in the specific case, which is often the case when neighboring countries send election observation missions, was assessed.

Finally, the independence of each source was evaluated. Naturally, if ten ‘sources’ report a particular piece of information but they all have it from one single source - such as the corrupt minister of justice, or the bitter and power-seeking opposition leader - we have in reality only one source, and perhaps not a very reliable one either. For less than five percent of the values entered in the data set on the 232 cases, there have been only one or two sources. The majority of scores are backed up by at least five sources hence, a certain kind of reliability test is included already at the stage of data collection.

In the end, the use of multiple sources and cross-checking of information seems to have minimized the net effect of filtering through sources and contamination by bias in sources. When the compilation was completed, each instance of an election was coded according to the coder's translation book¹⁸. The data set, coder's translation, technical description of the data set and its indicators as well as the data set itself, and background data are freely available from the author¹⁹. Such measures, however, does not mitigate against subjectivity or incoherent scoring by coder. All coding was done by the author. That has advantages and disadvantages. *Ceteris paribus* single coder is arguably more likely to apply scoring criteria in a more coherent manner than several coders. That is the main advantage. On the other hand, double-blind coding procedures, for example, can be used both to cross-check reliability of scores and for inconsistencies in the scoring. None such inter-coder reliability tests have been performed. While it had obviously been desirable, there have simply not been any funds available for such procedures.

The indicators used are also different in the amount of information required to make a reliable coding. Some are more qualitative and complex in nature and require a much more of an researchers interpretative skills already at the coding stage. For these indicators, the information gathered is essentially qualitative in nature and it has been quantified by the coding process. An effort has been made to mitigate such problems by the use of specified and unambiguous coding criteria for each of the values of the indicators. The extent to which the coding is dependent on the researcher and the coding criteria should not be over-emphasized, however. In a vast majority of cases, and with regards to almost all indicators, the coding has been rather straightforward and uncomplicated. Missing values are very few. The highest number of missing values is found in the indicator for voter turnout, in all nine of them. The indicator for percentage of seats won by the largest party have 4 missing values. The indicators for percentage of votes won by the winning candidate in presidential polls, round one, acceptance by the opposition of the outcome of the elections, and the level of politically motivated violence, have two missing values each. The others have no missing values. In sum, the highest number of missing values and an indicator represents 3.88 percent of the total sample, for the others with missing values they represent 2 percent or less, negligible figures by any measure. More importantly, the few missing values that exist are as far as discernable, randomly distributed and induce no bias in the sample. All

¹⁸ Unfortunately, due lack of resources the author did all of the coding; needless to say, no inter-coder reliability test has been performed.

¹⁹ http://www.svet.lu.se/Staff/Personal_pages/Staffan_lindberg/Staffan_lindberg.html

processing was done in SPSS 11.0.2 for Macintosh using standard and basic techniques such as cross-tabulation and univariate means analysis. In the calculation of means, the geometric mean is used instead of the arithmetic mean. The reason being that the geometric mean is not as sensitive to outliers and skewness as it's arithmetic cousin is (Blume 1974, Datton *et al.* 1998).