

## **Opposition Parties and Democratisation in Sub-Saharan Africa**

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Many accounts of democratisation in Africa from the early 1990s were infused with revived Afro-optimism at the outbreak of competitive elections in country after country on the continent. As noted by Huntington (1991:174) multiparty elections mean the demise of dictatorships and in many states the first years of the 1990s were heralded as the beginning of a complete political renewal (Ayittey 1992; Hyden and Bratton 1992; Joseph 1992). However, soon thereafter disputed elections in key states such as Kenya and Ghana in 1992, aborted processes in Togo and Cameroon, Zambia's disappointing second elections in 1996, and breakdowns of the democratisation process in countries including Nigeria (1993), Angola (1992), and Gambia (1994) led to a host of pessimistic predictions: 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 a return to 'big man', neopatrimonial, clientelist, informalised and disordered politics of the continent (Ake 1996; Bratton 1998; Chabal and Daloz 1999; Mbembe 1995; Villalón 1998).<sup>1</sup>

While a number of states have become either electoral or fully liberal democracies, many countries in Africa are still run by electoral authoritarian regimes. This article analyses the role of opposition parties' behaviour in institutionalising democratic elections in electoral autocracies, and the effects of opposition choices on transformation of electoral authoritarian regimes to democracies. Specifically, the choices of opposition parties either to contest or boycott elections, and either accept or reject the outcome of the polls, are addressed in the analysis. The question is what type of opposition behaviour increases the likelihood of electoral autocracies becoming democracies and increasing participation, competition, and legitimacy?

Political parties' behaviour varies in important ways and that variation is taken as given in this article. One could legitimately also ask why opposition parties chose to act differently depending for example on the structural cleavages they represent (Lipset and Rokkan 1967), incentives of electoral systems they face (Sartori 1976; Lijphart 1984), the preferences of voters they seek to catch (Downs 1957), or because they are office-, voter-, or policy-seeking parties (Strøm 1990). Seeking to explain the behaviour of opposition parties in Africa's emerging democracies would be an interesting subject, but the focus on the con-

sequences of such behaviour is equally important. Given the relative freedom of action for political elites typical of transition processes when many things are in flux, it is important to ask if the choices opposition parties' leaders make have consequences for the outcome of the process of democratisation. It seems reasonable to assume that such choices as either to boycott or contest an election, and then either to accept or reject the outcome, are significant events with real world consequences. This article therefore investigates which effects follow from one or the other decision by opposition parties.

Without political opposition, there is no choice and when there is no choice the people cannot exercise their right to rule (Dahl 1971, 1989). Yet, elections during transitions may be flawed, irregular, 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 an extent; electoral rules may be devised to disfavour the opposition's chances of winning; elections may even be more or less free and fair while periods between them are characterised by denial of political rights and civil liberties with autocratic behaviour on the part of the incumbent regime, and so on. To understand processes of democratic transition better, it is therefore important to study the effects of various opposition strategies in such contexts.

In addition, many have recently called for topic specific disaggregated data on African politics (Chabal 1998; Gibson 2002; Herbst 2001). Even with the pioneering work of Bratton and colleagues (Bratton 1998; Bratton and Posner 1999; Bratton and Van de Walle 1997) the study of elections, data collection and analysis is still inadequate. By investigating the consequences of opposition behaviour during electoral regimes' transition to democracy, this study contributes to such an exercise in bringing new data to bear on empirical analysis.<sup>2</sup>

This article proceeds by first presenting a comprehensive classification of the regimes in Africa followed by a descriptive analysis of opposition parties' behaviour and thirdly, analyses the effects of that behaviour on democratisation, participation, competition, legitimacy, and regime survival.

## **A Classification of Regimes in Africa**

The concept of political regime as the rules defining the political process is often used to differentiate democracies from non-democracies or the different forms of democracy, for example, parliamentary versus presidential democracy (Sartori 1997), or liberal versus illiberal democracy (Karatchnycky 1999). The concept is also employed in typologies of authoritarian and democratic regimes (Diamond 2002; Diamond, Linz and Lipset 1989). For the purposes of this article, the first task is to distinguish between electoral and non-electoral regimes since we cannot analyse election-related opposition behaviour when there are no elections.

Diamond's (2002) classification is suggestive but applying a slightly stricter set of criteria in this article, an electoral regime is considered to come into existence

once there is a formal decision by the executive to hold de jure competitive and participatory executive and/or legislative elections.<sup>3</sup> Other than that, regimes are considered closed authoritarian and are not included in the analysis. Stable democratic regimes are also excluded from the analysis because this is a study of democratisation. However, cases initially democratic that later regress (even if it is only the single case of Zimbabwe in this study) are included as an important reminder that transition processes can run both ways.

Within the overarching category of electoral regimes we find liberal democracies as well as the more limited electoral democracies, and finally electoral authoritarian regimes. Liberal democracies (LD) are regimes that score an average of 2.0 or less at on the Freedom House scale of political rights and civil liberties and also hold free and fair elections. The time of measurement used for the Freedom House scores is not the election year since elections typically start long before polling day. Parties start campaigns, candidates are fielded, primaries sometimes held, policy, personal qualities of leaders, and illicit practices such as vote-buying start long before polling day and up to a year or more beyond that point. Therefore the average ranking of Freedom House's political rights and civil liberties is taken a year before the election (t-1).

Electoral democracies (ED) are defined by the same two criteria. To be classified as an electoral democracy, elections must be free and fair as judged by both local and international observers. Free and fair elections are fundamental to democratically acceptable electoral processes,<sup>4</sup> and even if no electoral process can be perfect in all details due to human and technical errors (Mozaffar and Schedler 2002), such flaws must be minor, non-systematic and not alter the outcome. This criterion is the same for electoral as for liberal democracies. But electoral democracies fall short of providing the full extent of political rights and civil liberties, operationalised in this study as an average score of political rights and civil liberties higher than 2.0 but lower than 3.5 on Freedom House's scale.

Finally, countries that hold elections but do not live up to the minimum criteria for either electoral or liberal democracies are classified as electoral autocracies (EA). Generally, these are characterised by an average of 3.5 or higher on the Freedom House combined political rights and civil liberties scale and hold flawed elections.

**Table 1: A Classification of Regimes in Sub-Saharan Africa**

	Country	Year Started	First Election	Second Election	Third Election	Fourth + Elections	Break-down
<u>Democracies</u>	SãoTomé & Pr.2	1996	Liberal	Liberal	–	–	–
	Botswana	1969	(Electoral)	Liberal	Liberal	Liberal	–
<u>Electoral</u>	C.A.R.2	1993	EA	Electoral	–	–	2003
<u>Autocracies</u>	Malawi	1994	EA	Electoral	–	–	–
	Mozambique	1994	EA	Electoral	–	–	–
<u>Democracies</u>	South Africa	1994	EA	Liberal	–	–	–
	Cape Verde	1991	EA	Liberal	Liberal	–	–
	Namibia	1989	EA	Electoral	Electoral	–	–
	Mali	1989	EA	Liberal	Electoral	–	–
	Seychelles	1993	EA	Electoral	Electoral	–	–
	Mauritius	1976	EA	Electoral	Liberal	Liberal	–
	Gambia	1982	EA	EA	Liberal	–	1994
	Ghana	1992	EA	EA	Electoral	–	–
	Madagascar	1982	EA	EA	EA	Electoral	–
	Senegal	1978	EA	EA	EA	Electoral	–
<u>Oscillating</u>	Benin	1991	EA	Liberal	EA	–	–
<u>Electoral</u>	Angola	1992	EA	–	–	–	1993
<u>Autocracies</u>	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	–	–	–	–
	Côte d'Ivoire 2	2002	EA	–	–	–	2002
	Guinea-Bissau 1	1994	EA	–	–	–	1998
	Guinea-Bissau2	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	–	–	–	–
	São Tomé & 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	–	–	–
	Côte 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	–

The trajectory of each regime in sub-Saharan Africa during the period is shown in **Table 1**. In addition, electoral regimes already in existence in 1989 have been tracked back to include their founding and subsequent elections so the table offers a comprehensive classification of regimes and transitions. It is organised by grouping countries according to outcome. The first group of two countries (Botswana and São Tomé and Príncipe<sup>2</sup>) have been stable democracies since inception precluding the possibility of us having to study a change from electoral authoritarianism and they are therefore excluded from the following analysis. The second grouping are electoral authoritarian regimes that transitioned into either electoral or fully liberal democracies, and the final group consists of the regimes that never moved beyond electoral autocracy. Within each of these groups, regimes are listed according to the number of elections held. Out of 53 cases of initially electoral authoritarian regimes (at the time of their first election) 14 progressed to become electoral and liberal democracies<sup>5</sup> with the eventual breakdown of two. While 19 of the remaining 39 electoral autocracies survived more than one electoral cycle, second elections are pending in five and 15 electoral autocracies have broken down. Significantly, 14 of the breakdowns occurred after founding elections and only in Côte d'Ivoire did an electoral autocracy ever break down after second elections. But when do electoral autocracy authoritarian regimes become electoral or liberal democracies and what is the role of opposition behaviour in facilitating such a development?

### *Data Collection and Processing*

Following from the above classification, this article builds on a data set consisting of 210 elections, 95 presidential and 125 parliamentary polls. All background information was collated for a larger project on elections and democracy in Africa.<sup>6</sup> Information was sought from a number of sources in the coding of each case on all the indicators used. When information is incomplete or the events surrounding election day are dramatic and chaotic, it is always better to have several independent sources to rely on to clarify if, for example, all opposition parties actually participated in the elections. There have been less than three sources for fewer than 5 per cent of the values entered in the data set on the 210 cases. The majority of scores are backed up by at least five sources, building some degree of reliability. 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 author. In the majority of cases, coding has been rather straightforward and uncomplicated and the few missing values that exist are, as far as discernable, randomly distributed and induce no bias in the sample. All processing was done in SPSS 11.0.2. In the calculation of means, the geometric mean is used instead of the arithmetic mean in order to reduce sensitivity to outliers and skewness (Blume 1974; Datton *et al* 1998).

## Opposition Behaviour

The behaviour of opposition parties is analysed in two respects. When does the opposition choose to participate in, or alternatively boycott elections, and secondly, when do opposition parties accept or reject elections results. Empirically, this translates into two variables:

### *Opposition Participation*

The participation by opposition parties in free and fair elections may seem a given, just as a boycott may be expected when a ruling regime sets up an orchestrated façade of elections. But opposition parties may participate even when elections stand no chance of being free and fair or legitimate in order to press authoritarian rulers for further concessions and can also stage boycotts in legitimate elections in hopes of discrediting a ruling regime when they stand no chance of winning. Opposition participation is measured with three values: 'near total boycotts' when one of the main opposition parties contest elections, 'partial boycotts' when some contest, and 'all contest' when all major political parties participate.

### *Losers' Acceptance*

Given that opposition parties participate, when do they accept election results? Losing parties may initially challenge the results in order to gain political advantage, for example from the international community, which can be a strategy for sore losers seeking to undermine their rivals. Challenging official results can therefore not be taken at face value as substantiating allegations of irregularities; rather, the relationship between free and fair 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 initially/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 cases on participation and boycotts shown in **Table 2** is telling. First, major opposition parties have chosen to participate in about two-thirds of all elections, presidential as well as parliamentary, while boycotts of any kind are not common. Second, the well-known problem of opposition (dis-)unity shows in the figures on participation; partial boycotts are five to 15 times more likely than total boycotts. It appears that even when it comes to protesting *against* an incumbent (as opposed to uniting *for* a common platform in electoral alliance), opposition forces cannot unite. Thirdly, there is a statistically highly significant difference between free and fair, and flawed elections. While opposition parties participated in just 40-45 per cent of the flawed elections, they took part in 90 per cent of free and fair elections. This begs the question if it matters if they par-

ticipate or not. How significant is the effect of opposition participation in elections on regime transitions?

**Table 2: Opposition Behaviour 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

Significance test (Spearman's Correlation): 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.

The pattern of acceptance of outcomes is similar to participation of opposition parties and the differences are even more pronounced, but there is a worrying sign in these figures. Even among free and fair elections losing parties accepted results immediately in only 40 per cent of presidential elections (65 per cent in parliamentary elections). While in another 44 per cent the losing parties consented to the outcome within three months, this 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 too frequently. Efforts at discrediting a legitimate and democratic process – free and fair elections – must be regarded as undemocratic behaviour and 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 as we look at the context of opposition behaviour.

If we couple the classification of regimes as in **Table 1**, with the data on opposition behaviour from **Table 2**, we get a panel-group comparison of electoral regimes and the results are shown in **Table 3**. Of the total 53 electoral authoritarian regimes, five have recently held first elections and we know nothing about their future prospects leaving them labelled as “pending” in **Table 3**. Another 15 of the electoral autocracies broke down suffering from a coup, a civil war, or similar. In the elections preceding these breakdowns among these electoral autocracy

regimes, all opposition parties participated in nearly half and accepted the outcome in 44 per cent 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 frequency of opposition participation and acceptance was almost the same for the 19 electoral autocracies that have held two or more elections and survived. In short, electoral authoritarianism can be reproduced even when the opposition parties and candidates choose to participate fully and even accept the outcome of dubious elections. Yet, nothing in the behaviour of the opposition in this regard seems to prevent a total breakdown of the process.

**Table 3: A Panel Group Comparison**

Panel Groups	Elections	% Opposition Participation			% Loser Acceptance		
		Flawed	Free & Fair	Total	Flawed	Free & Fair	Total
14 Electoral Democracies	25 Regular	100%	92%	92%	0%	46%	44%
		<i>1</i>	22	23	–	11	11
	21 Transition	<b>60%</b>	100%	81%	0%	<b>82%</b>	45%
		<b>6</b>	<i>11</i>	<i>17</i>	–	<b>9</b>	9
19 Stable EA Regimes	44	<b>42%</b>	82%	52%	0%	<b>36%</b>	9%
		<b>14</b>	9	23	–	<b>4</b>	4
15 Collapsed EA Regimes	16	<b>18%</b>	80%	56%	0%	<b>20%</b>	12%
		<b>1</b>	8	9	–	<b>2</b>	2
5 Pending EA Regimes	5	0%	100%	60%	0%	67%	40%
		–	3	3	–	2	2
	Total	42%	90%	68%	0%	48%	26%
		22	53	75	–	28	28

Transitional elections – elections held in electoral autocracies before they transform into democratic regimes – are associated with a different pattern. Opposition parties participate in almost all these elections and the losing parties accept the outcome of the elections immediately in more than 75 per cent of the cases. The frequencies are almost the same in transitional elections as in elections held in these countries once they become democratic. It therefore seems that opposition participation and acceptance of the outcome are part of the answer to how and why electoral autocracies develop into democracies. There are only a few cases where the opposite kind of behaviour, opposition boycotts and rejection of results, have led to transformations into democracies. In sum, although opposition parties and candidates' presence and abidance by the rules of electoral contest do not seem to automate a process leading to democracy they are perhaps necessary conditions for such a desirable outcome.



## **Other Effects of Opposition Participation**

The tabulations above seem to indicate that participatory behaviour of the opposition in autocracies furthers a development towards a democratic regime. One way to explore this relationship in more detail is to look at the relationship between opposition behaviour and constituent parts of democracy, that is, popular participation, political competition and legitimacy of democratic outcomes. In other words, does opposition participation also increase voter turnout (participation), while decreasing the winning candidates' and party's share of votes and/or seats (competitiveness), and contribute to acceptance of the outcome by losers (legitimacy)? Finally, for electoral autocracies to be able to develop into democratic regimes they need to survive. In this vein, does opposition behaviour influence regime survival to any extent? To analyse 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 (Altman and Pérez-Linan 2002). It has also been used as an indirect measure of popular legitimacy in many classical studies of established democracies (Lijphart 1999). This gives us a lead as to why protest, boycott and refusals to accept outcomes of elections paradoxically do not further democratisation. We hypothesise that the first way opposition parties' "complaisance" facilitates democratisation is to raise the level of popular participation. If so, the participation of opposition parties has indirect effects on the quality of the regime via increasing 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 Africa.<sup>7</sup>

### **Winner's Share of the Votes**

This variable taps the level of competition in presidential elections. A certain level of competitiveness is central to the democratic value of self-government but is likely to be low, or non-existent, in electoral autocracies (Dahl 1989; Diamond 2002; Schedler 2001; Van de Walle 2002). Bogaards (2004) has suggested that dominant party systems with low levels of competition are becoming common in Africa's emerging democracies, and others have argued that "big man" politics is returning (Bratton 1998). The hypothesis here is that the second way participation, rather than boycott of elections, by opposition parties in authoritarian regimes has the counter-intuitive effect of furthering democratisation, is through increasing the level of competition. To what extent does opposition participation induce competition that undermines electoral

autocracies? The indicator measures the winning candidate's share of votes (first round) as a percentage of total valid votes.

#### Turnover of Power

In a classical formulation of the "two-turnover-test", Huntington used alternations in power to infer consolidation of democracy after first and founding elections. The issue here is not consolidation, yet alternation in the manifestation of power (Przeworski 1986:57–61) remains an important indicator. When alternations occur in a peaceful manner, it is a sign both of a de facto effective competition and an indication that the political elites regard democratic elections as the legitimate means of acquiring power. We expect participation of opposition parties and losers' acceptance of the outcome to be associated with turnovers, thus facilitating a democratic development. 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.

#### Regime Survival

Finally, an important question regards the survival of regimes. In order for electoral autocracies to transform into democracies they must persist over time. Does opposition participation in elections facilitate such a goal, and do boycotts indicate a propensity for 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.

### **The Importance of Collaborative Opposition Strategies**

The results of the empirical analysis of the effects of opposition participation are shown in **Table 4**. The relationships between opposition behaviour and participation, competition, and legitimacy as measured by voter turnout, winning candidates' share of votes, and alternations in power show significant associations in the expected directions. At the same time as voter turnout goes up and the frequency of turnovers increase, winning shares decrease when the opposition parties contest elections in authoritarian regimes. In other words, the intrinsic dimensions of democracy – popular participation and political competitiveness – are to some degree determined by opposition behaviour. One would expect these variables to be weighted heavily by the free and fairness of elections, in particular the latter of the two, but this is not the case. There are no significant differences

between voter turnout and winning shares in free and fair or flawed elections within the categories of opposition participation in these electoral autocracies. Rather, opposition participation seems to determine the level of competition and popular participation to a greater extent than do free and fair elections.

**Table 4: Effects of Opposition Behaviour in African Electoral Autocracies**

			Mean Turnout	Mean Winner's Share	% Turn- overs	% Results Losers Accept	% Elec- tions Regime Survive	N
Opposition participa- tion	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
		*	1.701	21.710	.259	.388	-.023	
		<i>p.</i>	(.188)	(.000)	(.011)	(.000)	(.821)	
Parliament- ary elec- tions		Boycott	24.5	90.8	0	0	33	3
		Partial boycott	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
		*	7.955	5.693	.307	.387	.057	
		<i>p.</i>	(.001)	(.004)	(.001)	(.000)	(.525)	

\* Anova-F values for means and Spearman's Correlation for ordinal variables.

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. However, there is an obvious suspicion that both are influenced by the degree of free and fair elections, however. This is true to some extent but even when control for free and fair elections is applied, total as opposed to partial opposition to participation in elections in electoral authoritarian regimes has a significant effect on increasing the likelihood of a turnover and whether the outcome will be accepted.

Finally, how can an electoral autocratic regime develop into a democracy if it breaks down? The answer is that it can in exceptional circumstances. São Tomé and Príncipe experienced a coup in 1995 but it was aborted within days and a

new electoral regime was installed that has been democratic from its inception to present. That is an exception, though, and regime breakdowns among Africa's electoral autocracies have typically led to further deterioration of political conditions and increased difficulties in installing a viable electoral regime. In addition, it seems that the behaviour of the opposition in and around elections is completely irrelevant to the explanation of such variation. Regardless of controlling for free and fair elections, there is simply no relationship. In sum, the conclusion from the analysis of **Table 3** is corroborated by the inferences from the further statistical analysis reported in **Table 4**. Opposition behaviour in the form of participation in elections has significantly contributed to improving the democratic qualities of elections in electoral regimes in Africa leading to a decline of authoritarianism. In other words, opposition behaviour seems to be an important determinant of democratisation by elections in the foggy zone (Schedler 2002b) of electoral authoritarianism.

## **Conclusion**

While the limited duration of electoral regimes in contemporary Africa necessarily imposes restrictions on the confidence with which we can speak of the results, some observations on developments on the continent are warranted. If there ever was one Africa beyond the geographical sense, it is no longer so in political development terms. There are at least four Africas: the group of long-standing democracies now joined by a few countries such as Benin, Ghana, Mali, Namibia and South Africa; a second and the largest group of electoral autocracies, some of which have seen their electoral regime break down one or more times over the past dozen or so years; and finally a smaller group of closed authoritarian and/or dysfunctional states. Rather than being the end of a transitional period, indicating the arrival of a democratic regime, elections can be part of the transitional period (Barkan 2000; Lindberg 2006). We need to understand better the dynamics of opposition behaviour and its role in protracted transitions where elections are not the end of the process but steps to attaining democracy. This article shows that the behaviour of opposition parties plays a role in making democracies out of electoral autocracies. Perhaps counter-intuitively, it is found that by choosing to contest elections and accepting the outcome in electoral autocracies, opposition groups enhance the probability of a regime becoming democratic.

In this context, country-specific and contextual process-tracing analyses are certainly called for. Yet, there is also a need to understand what can be generalised. One strategy is to look at a very specific partial regime but compare across countries. Just as democracies are "bundled wholes" (Collier and Adcock 1999) so are electoral autocracies, and, as Sklar (1987) noted, most political systems combine democratic and undemocratic features. A study such as the present one of the dynamics of opposition behaviour in electoral authoritarian regimes seeks to solve a little piece in the big puzzle: how less-than-democratic states evolve to become democratic even if at a minimum level.

## Notes

1. There are also scholars who see mixed records taking African states in several directions simultaneously (Chege 1996). In this vein, Bratton and Van de Walle's seminal study from 1997 placed itself. Their findings still dominate the field of African politics, although the robustness of their findings has been challenged (Lindberg 2002).
2. The data set has been used for studying the democratic qualities of elections in Africa (Lindberg 2004a), women's legislative empowerment (Lindberg 2004b), the effects of electoral systems (Lindberg 2005), and the self-reinforcing power of elections (Lindberg 2006).
3. Diamond (2002) introduces subjective, non-replicable data to bear on his categorisation in dividing electoral non-democratic regimes into ambiguous, competitive authoritarian, hegemonic authoritarian and closed authoritarian systems. Yet, in all these categories we find regimes operating de jure multiparty elections and the conceptual and empirical basis for the classification of countries in one box or the other is unclear.
4. True, there are a few instances when fundamentally flawed elections have nevertheless been competitive and have effected an opposition win against a long-term incumbent and previous authoritarian ruler. For example, the Ivorian October 22, 2000 presidential and December 10 2000 parliamentary elections, Madagascar's presidential elections on December 16, 2001, the parliamentary elections in Malawi on June 15, 1999, and the constituent assembly-cum-parliamentary elections in Namibia on November 11, 1989 are good examples. Even though the "menu of manipulation" is wide (Schedler 2002a) trying to cheat is one thing, and doing it with success is often quite another. The normal pattern is that serious irregularities do not coincide with turnovers.
5. 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.
6. See Lindberg (2006).
7. In a few cases where official figures are obviously inflated, such as, for example, the official turnout at Mauritania's presidential election on December 12, 1997, observers' reported estimates are used as proxies.

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