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THE SURPRISING SIGNIFICANCE OF AFRICAN ELECTIONS

Staffan I. Lindberg

Staffan I. Lindberg, assistant professor of transnational and comparative politics at Kent State University in Ohio, received the 2005 Juan Linz Prize for Best Dissertation in the Comparative Study of Democracy. This article is based on his book *Democracy and Elections in Africa* (2006).

Since the onset of the “third wave” of democratization in the mid-1970s, many have hailed elections as the hallmark of democracy. Expectations for what elections can accomplish have been especially high among democracy-promotion agencies, many of which focus on supporting elections. Among scholars, however, there is skepticism regarding the true value of elections for democratization. In 2002, Thomas Carothers argued in the pages of this journal that “greatly reduced expectations are in order as to what elections can accomplish as generators of deep-reaching democratic change.”¹ In declaring “the end of the transition paradigm,” he argued that elections are in and of themselves largely insignificant to democratization.

This begs the question: Is there a value inherent in the *holding* of elections, or is the holding of elections merely an *indicator* of democratization? I believe that the former is the case. My analysis of more than two hundred third-wave elections in Africa shows that an uninterrupted series of competitive elections imbues society with certain democratic qualities. Repeated elections—regardless of their relative freeness or fairness—appear to have a positive impact on human freedom and democratic values. With a few exceptions,² most theories of democratization and democratic consolidation have failed to recognize this causal relationship.³ To gauge the strength of this relationship, we need a consistent measure of democratization. In order to avoid tautology, such a measure needs to be sufficiently independent of electoral processes. One way of assessing the extent of democratization in a country, without consulting election data, is by looking beyond the arena of contesta-

tion over office in order to examine the extent to which a regime respects its citizens' civil liberties.

While it is impossible to measure exactly the presence of civil liberties in a democratizing society, Freedom House's civil-liberties index is the best available indicator of on-the-ground conditions and the only source that provides annual scores each year during the period on which this analysis is founded.⁴ Freedom House evaluates the level of civil liberties based on 14 criteria, and assigns each country a score on a seven-point scale (with 1 and 7 representing the most and least free, respectively).

The level of civil liberties in a society relates to three key democratic qualities: participation, competition, and legitimacy. First, citizen *participation* requires freedom of assembly and open public debate, as well as the right to form and join civic organizations (including trade unions). The greater the prevalence of these liberties, the greater the democratic quality of participation in society. Second, *competition* (beyond elections) requires personal autonomy and economic rights in order to allow for independent alternatives within the social sphere. Such rights include freedom from indoctrination and excessive dependence on the state as well as the right to private property. For competition to be possible and somewhat fair, there also needs to be basic gender equality as well as educational and professional opportunities. Third, the *legitimacy* of a democratic government is indicated by such factors as the peaceful coexistence of various social organizations, genuinely free public discourse, and its ability to control violence and provide physical security to peaceful citizens.

Elections and Civil Liberties in Africa

By June 2003, 44 of Sub-Saharan Africa's 48 states had conducted what are often referred to as "founding" elections, typically marking a transition from a long period of authoritarian rule to fledgling democratic government. Thirty-three of these countries had gone through a second election cycle, twenty had completed three uninterrupted cycles, and seven had held four or more consecutive elections (see Table 1). Although some countries included in these numbers are cases of regression, unchanging electoral authoritarian regimes, such as Chad under President Idriss Déby (1990–) and Togo under Gnassingbé Eyadema (1967–2005), the majority have become increasingly democratic with every successive election. Even though most of the 44 countries that have held at least one election are not full democracies, many of them have in recent years been governed by civilian regimes, which in itself represents an important turning point in the political history of Africa.

The question here, however, is whether first, second, and subsequent elections in these countries have had a *causal effect* on the increase in

TABLE 1—SUCCESSIVE ELECTIONS AND FREEDOM HOUSE CIVIL LIBERTIES RATINGS¹

BREAKDOWN ² AND CL RATING	ONE ELECTION AND CL RATING	TWO ELECTIONS AND CL RATING	THREE ELECTIONS AND CL RATING	FOUR OR MORE ELECTIONS AND CL RATING
Angola 5	Comoros 4	Chad 5	Burkina Faso 4	Benin 2
Central Afr. Rep. 5	DRC 4	Eq. Guinea 6	Cameroon 6	Botswana 2
Ivory Coast 6	Guinea Biss 5	Ethiopia 5	Cape Verde 2	Madagascar 4
Burundi 5	Lesotho 3	Gambia 4	Djibouti 5	Mali 3
Liberia 6	Niger 4	Guinea 5	Gabon 4	Mauritius 2
	Sierra Leone 4	Malawi 4	Ghana 3	Senegal 3
		Mozambique 4	Kenya 4	Zimbabwe 6
		Nigeria 5	Mauritania 5	
		South Africa 2	Namibia 3	
		Sudan 7	São Tomé 2	
		Swaziland 5	Seychelles 3	
		Tanzania 3	Togo 5	
		Uganda 4	Zambia 4	
Mean Rating 5.4	4.0	4.5	3.8	3.1

¹Ratings are as of 1 July 2003. Scores range from 1 (most free) to 7 (least free).

²These countries held elections during the period but the electoral regime subsequently broke down as the result of a civil war, coup d'état, or similar episode.

democratic qualities as measured by the Freedom House civil-liberties index. If Carothers and his fellow skeptics are right, we should see no such relationship. But as Table 1 shows, there is a relationship between the number of elections that a country has held and the civil-liberties score that it receives from Freedom House. Countries that have held more elections tend to have better scores.

While remarkable, this observation still falls short of proving that elections *cause* improvements in democratic qualities. In order to make such a determination, we need to explore *when* these improvements usually occurred, using a series of elections. To that end, I examine only those countries that have completed at least two election cycles, which gives us a data set of 184 elections in 33 countries (the last three columns of Table 1). I then measure and compare the positive and negative changes in scores for nonelection and election periods. For nonelection periods, changes in civil-liberties scores are measured from four years before to one year before elections. The data for election periods, on the other hand, represent changes that took place during the year before and the year of the election.⁵ Thus, the data capture the changes in civil liberties that occur as a direct result of election-related activities, such as campaigning and voter education and registration, as well as those that occur in the years between elections (or preceding them, in the case of first elections). Based on these data, Table 2 displays the mean rankings and, more importantly, the average changes in civil-liberties

TABLE 2—CHANGES AND IMPROVEMENTS IN FREEDOM HOUSE CIVIL LIBERTIES RATINGS

CHANGE RESULTING FROM	First Election Cycle		Second Election Cycle		Third Election Cycle		Fourth & Later Election Cycles	
	Preelection period	Election period	Nonelection period	Election period	Nonelection period	Election period	Nonelection period	Election period
Mean change	.19	.84	-.05	.21	.00	.13	.00	-.10
Mean ranking	5.3	4.3	4.3	4.2	3.7	3.6	3.2	3.3
Total N*	70	70	60	61	30	30	21	21

*Total number of elections

scores from the period before founding elections through fourth and later elections.

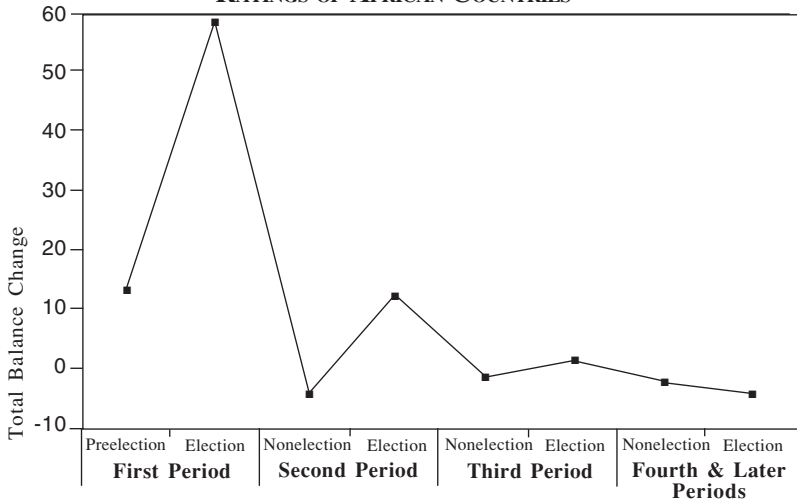
These numbers demonstrate the stark differences between election and nonelection periods as regards improvements in civil liberties. Considering the role that scholars often ascribe to first elections, the way they appear in this analysis is particularly interesting. The rationale for labeling first elections as “founding” rests on the premise that a democratic regime is manifestly installed by the conclusion of first elections. The empirical implication of this argument is that a major improvement in civil liberties would be independent of and precede first elections. That has generally not been the case in Africa. The present analysis shows that such improvements often result from the immediate preparations for and holding of elections.

The low average score of 5.3 on the 7-point scale during the first preelection period indicates that there is much room for improvement; yet the average positive change of 0.19 in the preelection period does not bespeak any radical improvement in democratic quality. Positive changes resulting from election-related activities are much more impressive. The average change of 0.84 during the brief period of first elections reveals significant progress—four times greater than during the preelection period. The picture is further strengthened by the data for successive election and nonelection periods, even if the recorded changes decrease in magnitude with every cycle. This first analysis suggests that in Africa, the holding of elections—regardless of their quality—leads to democratic advances, and not vice versa.

Comparing the mean changes between election and nonelection periods is a limited form of analysis, however, as it fails to show the *extent* of the changes. Figure 1 therefore shows a graphic presentation of the improvements. The graph plots the net changes in civil-liberties scores in all African countries in each period, subtracting the number of negative changes from the number of positive ones.

Looking at the first wave of change, which signifies the effects on civil-liberties ratings of the first election cycle, we find that the magnitude of improvement is almost six times greater during an election year than in the three-year preelection period. In other words, founding elec-

FIGURE 1—TOTAL CHANGES IN FREEDOM HOUSE CIVIL LIBERTIES RATINGS OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES*



*The line represents the total sum of positive changes minus the total sum of negative changes in FH CL scores in all African countries in each period.

tions seem to be the cause—not the effect—of the first massive improvement in civil liberties. Benin and Malawi saw their Freedom House civil-liberties scores improve by as many as four points (both from 7 to 3) in this first period, while Nigeria improved by three points (from 6 to 3). The majority of countries improved by around two points each—among them Zambia, Mali, and Gabon—while some countries saw more modest one-point improvements.

In the interval between the first and second elections, when no election-related activities took place, most countries experienced a period of stagnating or even deteriorating civil liberties (this is indicated by the balance of changes hovering around zero or even going into the negative). Deterioration was seen in Mauritania, Zambia, Nigeria, and Uganda. Chad's civil-liberties score also worsened by one point, even though the country had made no gains during the year of its first election.

Second elections produced positive changes—albeit less dramatic than those of first elections—in countries like Ghana, the Gambia, Kenya, Madagascar, Seychelles, Madagascar, Tanzania, Zambia, and even Ethiopia. Michael Bratton was correct to note that second elections, particularly delayed ones, generally tend to be of lower democratic quality than first elections, and it is even more remarkable then that these elections resulted in improved civil-liberties scores.⁶ The conclusion that dubious electoral experiences also resulted in improvements of civil liberties shows that elections do not have to be free and fair or fully democratic to have democratizing effects. As for third elections in Africa, recorded changes in civil-liberties scores were modest, which would

be expected given the significant gains resulting from the previous two elections. Nonetheless, third elections still produced improvements compared to the preceding nonelection period, during which scores remained unchanged.

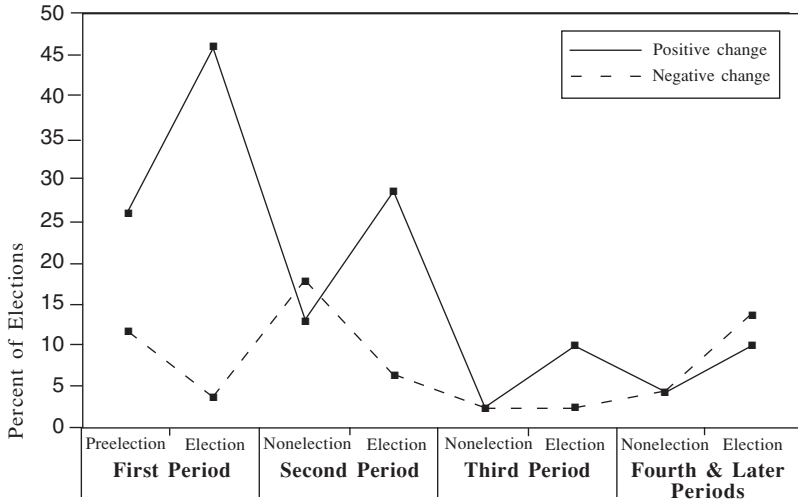
As a way to crosscheck the robustness of these findings, Figure 2 presents a third analysis. Instead of the means compared in Table 2 and the net balance of positive and negative changes presented in Figure 1, Figure 2 shows the share of elections in each of the nonelection and election periods leading to positive and negative changes. By looking at the number and share of elections associated with positive or negative changes, rather than at the average magnitude of such changes, we avoid the risk of being deceived by extreme values in a small number of cases. Thus, Figure 2 shows that almost half of all founding elections resulted in improved civil liberties, while only about a quarter of all countries saw positive changes in the period preceding these elections. In other words, during the first period (including both preelection and election years), no less than two-thirds of all civil-liberties improvements were direct effects of elections. This pattern is then repeated with second and third elections. Thus, the findings shown in Figure 2 further corroborate the hypothesis that elections as such can beneficially affect democratization indicators.

Further Testing the Hypothesis

The above analyses looked at elections without consideration to the developments over time in individual countries. But in order for us to conclude that elections do indeed cause improvements in civil liberties, this pattern must apply to a large number of countries as we look at their electoral histories. Therefore, to further examine my findings, I change the unit of analysis from elections to countries and look at how many individual countries fit the hypothesis. Such a country-based analysis finds that 21 of the 33 countries that have had at least two successive elections (as of June 2003) and have surviving electoral regimes fit the wave-like pattern described above. Only six countries contradict the hypothesis and five provide evidence neither for nor against.

What impact do other well-known causal factors of democratization have on these findings? There seem to be no regional effects, as countries across the continent are among those that fit the pattern. Likewise, regime type seems to have little influence, as among the 21 countries there are both hard-line authoritarian regimes, such as Swaziland and Equatorial Guinea, and democratic success stories, such as Ghana, Kenya, and Benin. There are unstable societies, such as Nigeria, and countries that have enjoyed peace and stability for a long time, including the continent's oldest democracies, Botswana and Mauritius. There are

FIGURE 2—PERCENT OF AFRICAN ELECTIONS RESULTING IN POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE CHANGES IN FREEDOM HOUSE CIVIL LIBERTIES RATINGS



wealthier nations, such as South Africa with an adjusted GDP per capita exceeding US\$10,000, as well as poorer nations, such as Sierra Leone with a GDP per capita of \$556 (figures from 2003). There are those with negligible Muslim populations, such as Madagascar and Zambia, as well as those where a majority of the populace is Muslim, such as Mauritania. Taking these facts into consideration, it is fair to argue that in Sub-Saharan Africa the power of elections is a region-wide phenomenon.

Overall, the emphasis that most of the literature on democratic transitions places on founding elections and the period of liberalization that precedes them generally does not apply to Africa, where most transitions to democracy have taken place over several electoral cycles. Some of the twelve African countries that do *not* conform to the power-of-elections hypothesis have nonetheless made significant democratic advances, but their improvements are not attributable to the holding of elections. These countries—including Mozambique, Namibia, São Tomé, and Senegal—conform to the common view that civil liberties deepen most radically *before* the holding of founding elections. The cases of Burkina Faso and Tanzania reveal the same pattern, albeit to a lesser extent.

There are also a few cases that contradict the power-of-elections hypothesis. Guinea, for example, has held regular elections since 1993, but has remained largely authoritarian, with no significant increase in civil liberties. The country has had only two presidents since independence in 1958: Seko Touré, who remained in power until his death in 1984, and Colonel Lansana Conté, who, despite legalizing political parties and presiding over the country's first multiparty presidential

election in 1992, later removed the two-term limit and bestowed greater powers on the presidential office.

How Elections Advance Democracy

Despite the few cases that contradict the hypothesis, the present research shows that, in general, elections promote democratization in Africa. Yet, the question remains of *how* the mere holding of elections leads to improvements in democratic indicators such as civil liberties. There are at least six issue areas and causal mechanisms that link elections and civil-liberties improvements in transitional societies.

Citizens become voters. Elections bring to the fore fundamental features of equal citizenship: the right to universal and equal suffrage, the right to choose between candidates and parties, freedom of opinion and voice, and the right to form and lead associations. These are rights and freedoms that the citizen encounters for the first time as a voter in conjunction with a country's first elections. Citizens are likely to be targeted by voter-education campaigns and messages conveyed by politicians, activists, and the media. As a result, citizens gain an awareness of their own roles as equal members of the sovereign power, endowed with rights to participate in the political process and to choose between alternatives under legitimate procedures. Once the election is over, many citizens retain this awareness; some may even become "norm entrepreneurs," transferring their awareness to others in the social sphere. The empowerment that comes from voting has important implications beyond the political sphere.

Democratic "lock-in" mechanisms. A second area of linkage is provided by those individuals and groups who learn to identify with the values inherent in democratic electoral practices. Once people perceive themselves as protagonists of democratic participation and competition, and are recognized as such among friends, family, and perhaps even enemies, they have a vested interest in voicing their concerns in the social sphere. Such "lock-in" mechanisms may even influence leaders who are *not* committed democrats but whose social status or role becomes associated with a prodemocratic stance when citizens empowered by electoral socialization expect their leaders to defend democratic principles. For example, a citizen subjected to unjustified imprisonment is more likely to have the case brought to the public by family and friends or civic organizations in an electoral regime with such lock-in effects at work than is a citizen in a nonelectoral regime. The same would most probably be true for citizens affected by gender discrimination, denial of a fair trial, invasion of personal autonomy, or infringement of religious or associational rights. In electoral regimes, expectations placed on leaders become weapons in the fight for expanded democratic qualities in society.

Self-fulfilling prophecies. When a critical mass of citizens have reason to believe that crucial elites—from military officers to political leaders—and a majority of citizens will accept and play by the democratic rules, this can become something of a self-fulfilling prophecy. At this point, even risk-averse and nondemocratic individuals are likely to demand and uphold democratic principles in society. A similar mechanism applies to political leaders. For example, when an autocratic regime holds elections—even if these are not free and fair—those elected unavoidably gain a certain interest in maintaining their respective electoral bases. Thus, elections lead to changes in the power distribution within the party or ruling group, and regimes that receive strong electoral support may also see less need to infringe on citizens' rights and liberties. Moreover, to the extent that independent electoral commissions are in fact independent, they too play a role in advancing a prodemocratic mindset—among both their members and the general public.

Civic organizations. A fourth possible causal link between elections and civil-liberties improvements is provided by organizations already in place and those spawned with the coming of elections. Through various election-related activities—including election observation and voter-education campaigns—such organizations build social capital and gain organizational experience while learning about democratic ideas and values related to transparency issues, the detection of electoral fraud, and the protection of political rights and civil liberties. The future status and recognition of these organizations thus become dependent upon their being prodemocratic. Similarly, trade unions and other organizations may draw inspiration from or even copy the tactics of political parties, using the space freed up during the election to push for liberties such as professional equality or personal autonomy.

New roles for state institutions. The fifth area of possible linkage is in relation to the legal system in the broader state apparatus. With the coming of electoral rules and regulations, the authorities in charge of law enforcement and adjudication are given a formal role in the protection of political rights. The courts, the military, the police, and various security agencies can by means of prodemocratic actions advance their status and prominence, and thus the default option is not necessarily to be antidemocratic. When it becomes obvious that competitive elections will remain part of the political game, some state officials begin to look for a career defending civil rights rather than beating them down. When democratic procedures and standards begin to take hold, suppressing civil liberties can potentially be a detriment to these officials' careers.

The functions that these authorities fill in conjunction with elections—defending people's rights to vote and demonstrate, filing complaints, and calling on the police for voter protection—are likely to carry over into other, non-election-related spheres. While this has not happened in more authoritarian countries, such as Cameroon, Chad,

and Zimbabwe, it is increasingly seen in many of the other countries that conform to my central hypothesis.

The role of the media. During election periods, media entrepreneurs are likely to stretch and redefine the boundaries of what may be said or written. As a transmitter for prodemocratic advocacy, the media can advance civil liberties and other democratic qualities by pressuring politicians and the authorities and by airing political debates openly. Of course, an autocratic ruler may maintain a tight grip on the media, using them as a means of voter manipulation and indoctrination. Yet with the procedural and substantive political rights that follow from repeated elections, it seems likely that such a posture will be difficult to maintain.

These are six possible mechanisms by which the repeated holding of contested multiparty elections translates into improvements in democratic qualities. The list is not exhaustive, and these hypothesized effects are severely simplified. The key to these linkages lies in the logic of elections as a struggle for political power. It is during election campaigns and their immediate aftermath that most individuals and organizations engage in activism. Being the largest peacetime mobilization of political activism, elections provide opportunities for political challenges and change. The element of competition inherent in elections provides voters and organizations with a means to pressure incumbents and demand concessions from politicians. The promise to improve democratic liberties provides a rallying cry for opposition parties. Combined, these forces can lead to a competition over who can most improve civil liberties and other democratic freedoms.

Finally, during elections a country is more likely to be under the scrutiny of the international community and news media. Watchdog organizations capitalize on these occasions, lending weight to the efforts of those advocating political reform and broader civil liberties. The link between elections and democratic qualities, however, is not contingent upon the freeness and fairness of elections. Indeed, the disappointment that results from flawed electoral practices—including padded voter rolls, political violence, fraudulent voting, and voter and candidate intimidation—may stimulate activism to an even greater extent than do free elections. Thus, positive effects are not restricted to free and fair elections, at least not in the early stages of democratization.

Long Live the Transition Paradigm

The research presented in this article shows that elections are not a mere indicator of democracy, but that—at least in sub-Saharan Africa—they have a significant positive effect on democracy as measured by improvements in civil liberties. While this research does not suggest that elections are the only or even the principal causal factor behind

democratization, it shows that the repeated holding of elections in new electoral regimes promotes and breeds democratic qualities: *The more successive elections, the more democratic a nation becomes.*

What are some of the implications of these findings? The evidence shows that first elections signify a step in the transition process rather than the founding of a democratic regime. This conclusion challenges the pervading pessimism that surrounds “hybrid” regimes and suggests that such regimes—even if they remain largely authoritarian for an extended period—tend to advance democratization because they allow for the holding of elections. Thus, regardless of how academic observers choose to label Africa’s emerging regimes, the fact remains that successive cycles of elections are likely, with time, to lead to democratic improvements as measured by civil liberties ratings.⁷

Samuel P. Huntington has suggested that protracted transitions have a greater likelihood of success because incremental progress favors accommodation and adaptation by political elites.⁸ Many of Africa’s democratic transitions have stretched across decades, with repeated free and fair elections playing a key role. Madagascar is a case in point: The country’s transition began with elections in 1982, when Freedom House gave it a very poor score of 6 on civil liberties. Two decades and five successive presidential and parliamentary elections later, that score has improved to a 3, moving the country from the Not Free to the Partly Free category. This shows that democratization by elections may often be a lengthy process, and that many of Africa’s hybrid regimes may in fact be on a slow but steady track to democracy.

It is also noteworthy that elites in so many diverse countries across Africa seem to adjust their behavior and strategies as a result of repeated elections. Fear and mistrust among former combatants and political rivals in places like Mali, South Africa, Mozambique, and Namibia have slowly been replaced by mutual coexistence, acceptance, and peaceful competition. Even longstanding ethnic rivalries that constituted major divides in countries like Ghana, Kenya, and Senegal seem to have over a few electoral cycles lost their potential for generating violent conflict. While it may be too early to pass definitive judgments on more long-term social processes such as these, it appears that democratic frameworks for political competition and participation lead to greater levels of acceptance and peaceful coexistence.

A common misconception among democracy scholars is that opposition groups and parties are always prodemocratic. The dubious character of this assumption is illustrated by the behavior of many African opposition parties: Even in those elections during the period of this study considered free and fair by independent international observers, losing parties immediately endorsed the results (within 72 hours) in only 40 percent of the cases. Many of these were elections in which the incumbents rightfully stayed in power but the opposition parties still refused

to accept the defeat. In an additional 44 percent of elections, it took up to three months for losing parties to accept the results. By disputing the results and questioning the legitimacy of fair elections, losing parties often willfully undermine and discredit the democratic process.

Even countries that at first glance may not seem to possess the necessary preconditions for democratic rule may still benefit from participatory, competitive, and legitimate elections.

All human beings are born equal, with equal rights to participate in government. Elections, despite their flaws, are the best available mechanism for translating this right of self-government into the effective governance of a modern state. Even countries that at first glance may not seem to possess the necessary preconditions for democratic rule may still benefit from participatory, competitive, and legitimate elections. Such elections provide more than just an arena for political contestation: They sometimes give rise to new, independent institutions and often force political actors to adapt at least partly to voter preferences.

Writing in 1971, Robert Dahl posited that polyarchy will not develop in a country where the conditions are unfavorable—which is the case in most African nations.⁹ The present research suggests that Dahl’s prediction has not held true in Africa, as even those societies with poor conditions for democracy have seen positive effects in the field of civil liberties as repeated elections have rolled forward. Such increases in freedoms and rights not only are of fundamental value in themselves, but also serve to propel the forces of democratization. Thus, even if a transition at the outset seems condemned to failure, there is little reason to believe that the struggle for democracy is lost. Any transition, even a faltering one, offers hope for democratization and is better than no transition at all.

NOTES

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1. Thomas Carothers, “The End of the Transition Paradigm,” *Journal of Democracy* 13 (January 2002): 16.

2. Joel D. Barkan offered some suggestions in “PR and Southern Africa: Elections in Agrarian Societies,” *Journal of Democracy* 6 (October 1995): 106–16; and “Protracted Transitions Among Africa’s New Democracies,” *Democratization* 7 (Autumn 2000): 227–43. On Mexico, see Todd Eisenstadt, *Courting Democracy in Mexico: Party Strategies and Electoral Institutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). On Central America, see Mitchell A. Seligson and John A.

Booth, *Elections and Democracy in Central America Revisited* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

3. For example, Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986) posited founding elections as the hallmark of a completed transition to democracy. See also Larry Diamond, ed., *Political Culture and Democracy in Developing Countries*. (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1993) and Larry Diamond, ed., *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999). Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996) argue that the date of the first election should be considered the end of the transition process. This idea was then incorporated in Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

4. See www.freedomhouse.org. Freedom House does not provide a score for each indicator but only a composite rating, which implies a certain limitation on this analysis. Some readers may argue that Freedom House's two scores—civil liberties (CL) and political rights (PR)—are closely related, and that CL rankings are influenced by PR scores. Since PR scores are based in part by assessment of electoral activities, however, taking PR scores into consideration would undermine the present analysis. The two scores are based on different evaluation criteria and are devised to assess different conditions. For example, while a flawed election is likely to lead to a downgraded PR score, it can still have the effect of improving the CL ranking—which is indeed exactly what my analysis shows.

5. This is to some extent moderated by the timing of the election during the election year. Some countries (for instance Kenya and Ghana) hold their general elections in the last quarter of the election year; in these cases, the year before election year is not included in the elections period, but the year following the election is. This seems to be the most reasonable way to account for variations using the Freedom House scores, considering that rankings are yearly and do not account for *when* significant changes occurred.

6. Michael Bratton, "Second Elections in Africa," *Journal of Democracy* 9 (July 1998): 51–66.

7. Larry Diamond, "Elections Without Democracy: Thinking About Hybrid Regimes," *Journal of Democracy* 13 (April 2002): 21–35; Terry Lynn Karl, "The Hybrid Regimes of Latin America," *Journal of Democracy* 6 (July 1995): 72–86; and Robert Luckham, "Dilemmas of Military Disengagement and Democratization in Africa," *IDS Bulletin* 26 (April 1995): 49–61.

8. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), chs. 4 and 5.

9. Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).