

Re-evaluating the effects of Election on Democracy in Africa

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ABSTRACT *In recent time, the effect of elections on democracy has come under strong contestation and investigation. There is an increasing study on electoral politics of authoritarian elections, trying to explore when elections becomes an activity of for improving democracy. Staffan Lindberg has written several articles on elections in Africa, showing the democratizing effects of election regardless of the freeness or fairness of the election. Using a more up to date data, I re-evaluate the democratizing effect of elections to identify whether repeated elections cause improvement in civil liberty or if there is a casual mechanism that causes improvement in civil liberty. The data capture the changes in civil liberties that happened for election, and nonelection periods. The results noted that civil liberty does not really improve in election years. Most improvement in civil liberty in Africa happen in the non-election year, this is evident in all the five countries studied in this research, also holding elections can institutionalize the practice of election and sensitizing citizens on electoral participation.*

Research Focus and Background of the Study

Over the past decade, the widespread malpractice in elections; calls into question the reality of democratization; and scholars debating what precipitates democratization and its consolidation. Scholars have argued possible sources of democratization like: economic society, Rational-legal bureaucratic norms, Constitutionalism, elections, and civil society. Without these sources, and the rules and regulations guiding them, democracy is unlikely to be established (Linz, J.J & Stepan, A, 1996, p.6). Important among these sources is elections, that aggregate large public support to foster democracy. Since we are living in a period where a large number of countries conduct elections, elections have formed much of the ideological and popular debate of democratization (Ibid). As an important source of representative democracy, elections remain a means of deciding who hold executive or legislative power. Yet, the expectation that people believe democracy through election will bring to many countries has yielded little results.

The efficient procedure of democracy is baseline on a minimum requirement of a free and competitive election (Ian McAllister & Stephen White, 2015 p.1). This has increased around the world, election as the hallmark of democracy in many different cultural and political settings. Scholars like (Lindberg, S. I. (2006), Lehoucq Fabrice (2003), Diamond, L.(1994), Birch, S. (2010), and others, have written several academic research on election. The point to whether there

is value in conducting election or conducting election is just a means of democratization has always emerged in the discussion of these scholars.

Based on the above discussion, this study seeks to *re-evaluate the effect of elections on democracy*. The concern here that inspires this question is whether series of election, and other subsequent elections held have had an effect on the increase in civil liberty. According to Lindberg, "more than two hundred third-wave elections in Africa show that an uninterrupted series of competitive elections imbues society with certain democratic qualities (Lindberg, 2006). Series of election irrespective of freeness or fairness of the election show to have a positive impact on civil liberty and democratic values, Lindberg said. Lindberg also relied on the scores from Freedom House Index on civil liberty, which shows that repeated elections have impact on civil liberty. In attempting to give details why it is so, Lindberg draws attention to the link between elections and civil liberties improvement by highlighting the 'opportunities for political challenges and changes' that is involved in elections, which also include 'competition over who wins political power.' Lindberg conclusion came from the optimistic view that in Africa where many regimes are Hybrid, the process to democracy may be slow, but it remains steady toward democracy following the frequency of elections. In addition, Lindberg believes that even societies besieged by ethnic rivalries and division have gradually lost the possibility of generating into violence due to repeated electoral cycles. Jennifer Gandhi & Ellen Lust-Okar (2009) shares a related argument with Lindberg. For Jennifer et al., elections promote democratization when it causes a breakdown of authoritarian regimes, and increasing the likelihood, that democracy emerges. Jennifer et al., believes that when there is a breakdown in authoritarian regimes, it will prompt internal politics that would encourage holding election. What Jennifer et al., tries to argue here is that when incumbent authoritarian ruler stand for elections, the possibility of internal succession crisis will be reduced, otherwise this could generate division within the ruling elite, and opposition can exploit on it (Baturu, 2007). Jennifer further said that election can improve democracy from the bottom to top. According to Pei, "literature on local elections in China advances the claim that elections promote "creeping democratization" (Pei, 1995). Pei's argument came from the idea that local level elections can enhance citizen's engagement, and empower them in politics (Jennifer et al, 2009). Hadenius & Teorell (2007) argues that multiparty elections are a crucial advancement for democratization, even as they are regarded as "multiparty regimes". These are regimes that have chosen to allow elections, maybe as a part of democratization."Multiparty elections may

characterize democratization without necessarily causing it" Hadenius & Teorell said. In Brownless (2007) analysis of a large number of authoritarian regimes, Brownless, "finds no evidence that elections affect regime survival, although he does find that holding elections under an authoritarian regime increases the likelihood that a subsequent regime will be democratic (Brownlee, 2009, as cited in Jennifer Gandhi¹ & Ellen Lust-Okar (2009).

In 2009, further study was conducted in other part of the world like in Latin America in order to check for the democratizing effect of elections. This was to provide a worldview of Lindbergs theoretical framework. In Latin America, Jonathan Hartlyn and Jennifer McCoy observed that elections in Latin America are relatively powerless to democracy especially during the Cold War era and after. They noted, "many authoritarian regimes held undemocratic elections regularly for decades, without making any progress towards democracy" (Matthijs Bogaards, 2013). Other scholars conducted a comparative study in other parts of the world, like in North Africa and Middle East; Ellen Lust-Okar observed, "elections in hegemonic authoritarian regimes are unlikely to serve as a potential mechanism for democratization." According to Bogaards, "elections following the logic of competitive clientelism are expected to foster public disillusionment, weaken political parties, and undermine the opposition" (Matthijs Bogaards, 2013). Nicolas Van de Walle and Lise Rakner noted that in Africa since 1989, regularization of elections do not show evidence of supporting legislative oppositions. On the contrary, Axel Hadenius and Jan Teorell had a different test outcome when they tested the effect of election on democracy by using a global dataset from 1919. The outcome of their findings is that "democratization is furthered by the historical legacy of elections" (Ibid). According to them, it will take about 269 multiparty elections to increase civil liberties by one point. While these explanation are remarkable it is important to re-evaluate how repeated elections can *cause* improvements in democratic values even under a poorly governed election, especially when looking at the ugly incident of Zimbabwe, where overtime the quality and credibility of elections deteriorate.

Research Argument

In this article, I seek to re-evaluate whether repeated elections does improve the level of civil liberties or cause improvement in democratic values. Holding elections are important practices of

democratic governance but it is not enough for democratic development. Conducting a rightful election is a strong base of democracy, this include other important part of democratic constitutionalism like , bureaucratic integrity, political accountability, public deliberation and the rule of law (Birch, 2012). Election with integrity is substantial to the development of democratic values (Ian McAllister & Stephen White, 2015, p.3). While Lindberg further argued that the development of civil liberties does not precede decisions to conduct elections; and that; the idea to conduct elections is made before civil liberty begins to expand. Instead, I argue and show that the relationship between election and improvement in civil liberty is only 'passive' and that 'freedom' and 'equality' is a necessary social choice that must guide the idea of democratic elections' (Schedler, 2002). Elections qualify as democratic when it offers an effective choice of political authorities to the citizens on bases of freedom and equality. Robert Dahl have it that democratic social choices and democratic idea guiding elections should allow citizens an "unimpaired opportunities" to "formulate" their political preferences, to "signify" them to one another, and to have them "weighed equally" in public decision making." Dahl outlines seven conditions that an election must fulfill before meeting the conditions of adding to democratic values. Empowerment, Free supply, free demand, Inclusion, Insulation, Integrity, Irreversibility. *Empowerment*: an election should bestow on the citizens the power to choose without interference, "most powerful collective decision makers." *Free Supply*: elections should have alternatives and choice for the citizens to choose from. In addition, election without alternative candidates or narrow "menu of state-licensed options," cannot qualify as democratic election. *Free demand*: in an election, the people must be allowed the freedom to access other available options. Citizens should form voter preferences at will without been manipulated. *Inclusion*, election must include all adult population. The exclusion of voter right based on education, property, ethnicity or gender cannot form a legitimate manner of conducting election. *Insulation*: in an election, citizens should be able to vote in a manner that will not be a threat to them or subject them to take bribe, or any form of coercion. The use of the secret ballot is made to protect citizens from other pressure as they make their choice. *Integrity*: a democratic election should include professionalism and bureaucratic integrity. The conduct and delivery of election must be with honesty and equality by the electoral management. Any form of compromise in the process reduces the integrity of the election, and cannot qualify as democratic. *Irreversibility*: after conducting an election, it should be able to produce a winner that will assume office, exercise power, and serve according to constitutional

rules. Election can only be considered to improve democratic values "if and only if they fulfill each of the seven items outlined by Dahl." (Schedler, 2002, p.7).

There are three conditions used to determine the degree of civil liberty in a society: *citizen participation*, *competition*, and *legitimacy of authority*. Citizen's participation means that citizens should have an uninterrupted right to freely assembly, and conduct an open debate, citizens have the right to form any group of their choice, and can join any civil organization including pressure groups like Trade union, labor union. When the government adheres to these rights uninterrupted, and allows citizens to participate freely, it increases the democratic quality of a society. Freedom of competition goes beyond elections, to include the freedom to produce economically by ones endeavor, and with support from other people. This freedom also includes the right to trade and be involved in trade for self-profit. The freedom from been excessively dependent on the state, and the right to own private property. In other to achieve an equitable competition, there must be gender balance, professional and educational opportunities. In addition, the last condition is legitimacy. Legitimacy as a condition of civil liberty includes the belief of rightfulness of an authority to govern. The peaceful coexistence of different political groups in a society; and the ability to control or resolve violence and provide security to citizens.

In order to address this concern of whether elections are an asset or a problem to democracy, I first present a theoretical overview of how elections may not improve Democratic Values. Secondly, I explore when improvements in civil liberty usually happen in a society; by investigate beyond the field of contestation over public office in order to know the extent to which a government respects the civil liberty of its citizens. While it remains quite difficult to measure democratic values and civil liberty in a democratizing society, Freedom House has an index every year on civil liberty based on 14 criteria, and each country is assigned an aggregate civil liberty score on a scale of 1-7-point, with one representing the highest degree of Freedom and seven the lowest. Finally, I discuss the outcome of my findings relating it to improvement in civil liberty, in order to show if election is an asset or a problem to democracy.

Literature Review: How Elections may not cause improvement in democracy.

During elections, regimes undermine the rules governing election in different indirect ways like, restricting media freedom, stifling political debates, harassment of opposition, this will make an

election less competitive, and open to no strong objection, and the vote counting process may be compromised and weighed in favor of the ruling party (Birch, 2012). Electoral misconduct varies, and countless, Birch said “resourceful rulers have a very large ‘menu’ from which to choose when planning an electoral event.” Talking of ‘menu’ to choose from, Schedler stated that “in the modern history of representative politics, elections is a tale of authoritarian manipulations as much as it is a saga of democratic triumphs.” (Schedler, 2002, p.2). Most regimes that conduct elections, usually place elections under tight authoritarian control (Ibid). Manipulating elections is not exclusive to authoritarian regimes; even democratic regimes also manipulate elections and carve the democratic heart out of electoral contests. In Nigeria, after the parliamentary defeat of Former President Olusengu's attempt to contest for a third-term, the following election of 2007 "were marred by extraordinary displays of rigging and the intimidation of voters in many areas" (Rawlence and Albin-Lackey, 2007) in the country, leading to people been disenfranchised, killed, and a high level of harassment and intimidation (Ibid). Since the emergence of multi-party elections in Nigeria in 1999, election of 2003, 2007 and subsequent elections have arguable been characterized with continuous violence "less fair, less efficient, and less credible", and a "do or die affair" which is not the will of the people (Gabrielle Lynch & Gordon Crawford, 2011). Also in Kenya, the election of 2007 that caused violent crisis, led to the deaths of over 1000 peoples, and many others displaced within a space of two months. (Ibid). This shows that democratic setback is inevitable in a poorly governed elections free from the will of the people.

When regimes sees possible threat that they will lose in an election, they can engineer manipulation through *reserved positions*, and *reserve domain*: by reserved positions, regimes will allow subordinate positions or offices to be filled by citizens, while positions that are of “high center” will be prevented from public or electoral contest or pressure (Schedler, 2002). *Reserved domain* is used by most regimes to prevent elected officials from acquiring real power (Ibid). Elected officials are shutout of real decision-making duties, their position does not have real power to effect any change but rather take instruction from the high center. Both authoritarian and democratic regimes can use elections to fill official positions, but powers to make real decisions are held exclusive to the rulers or ruling party.

Election promotes rules when it empowers citizens with the right to choose who governs them (Michael Bratton, 1998), and guarantees political participation in politic. However, it is important

to know that elections are not alone an assurance for democratic growth (J. Shola Omotola, 2010). Regimes use different screening techniques to manipulate election and its outcome by excluding political opponent in order to secure total control in the election. Ruling party can engineer division among opposition(s) when it identifies that the opposition party lack the skills and resources. When an opposition party is seen to be weak and lack political skills, most regimes will engineer the failure of the opposition parties by "bribing or harassing political leaders of oppositions until important members defect or division occurs" (Joel D. Barkan and Njuguna Ng'ethe, 1998). Sometimes, ruling party who fear defeat take advantage of this softness of political opponent to divide the party into factions, further weaken the already weak and inexperienced opposition party. The extreme form of candidate screening in election is actual or attempted murder of opposition candidates (Schedler, 2002), like in Armenia in 1994, and Togo in 1991. Opposition parties are in some cases disqualified or banned from contesting in an election. Disqualifying parties and candidates from contesting in an election is in most cases an act of personal bias from ruling party. While in some instances, ruling parties promulgates legal instrument that will allow them to expel or disqualify parties or candidate from election. This is evident in the post-revolutionary Mexico, where religious and regional parties and independent candidates are not allowed to contest in an election (Schelder, 2002, p.8). In most of Arab countries, radical Islamist groups are under strict laws when allowed to contest in an election (Jordan and Yemen), or are banned from any political activities (Tunisia, Egypt, and Algeria).

Under certain situations, elections are only held as transitional practices, where voters have little or no preferences of candidate (Said Adejumobi, 2000). This infringes on the democratization process, by preventing citizens the right of free choice. Said called elections in Africa as "the fading shadow of democracy" (Ibid); when Regimes prevents voters from gaining comprehensive knowledge about different options of candidate contesting in an election by preventing opposition parties from engaging in public rallies or campaigns. Most opposition parties who dissent the regime or ruling party are sometimes shut out of the public space or the use of media, move freely, not allowed campaign resources; like Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni did to his main opposition Bobby Wine in 2021 presidential Election. In most cases, regimes allow some form of competition in the election, but with severe repression (Diamond, 2000). Conducting election under an atmosphere of severe repression and control does not constitute a process of democratization (Michael Bratton, 1998). The relationship between election and democratization

is possible under different forces; among those forces is the administration of the election. The transparency, accountability and acceptance of elections, indicate the extent to which basic attitudinal, behavioral, and constitutional rules are been put in place. Bratton emphasized that "while you can have elections without democracy, you cannot have democracy without elections (Ibid). This signals that holding elections can be functional in the survival of democracy.

Furthermore, elections suffer from systemic violence, when regimes oppress competition in an election and prevent fair electoral contest, through violence against opposition parties, civil society organization, institutional bias, and in most cases independent media. This was a tactics used by Former Zimbabwe's president, Late Robert Mugabe in the 2000 election and other subsequent elections. Intimidation of voters can prevent voters from exercise their right to vote freely: violence and threat against civil societies can prevent them from functioning freely, and harassment of independent media by way of "fine" can prevent independent media from reporting equitably for the public. Sometimes, regimes or ruling parties may not succeed in achieving all of these, but an attempt to initiate any of these threats or violence breaches democratic politics. Elections can be manipulated through institutional bias or electoral fraud (Schedler, 2002). Electoral fraud can be initiated at any stage of the electoral cycle, from voter registration to vote counting. It could also include forging fake voter ID cards, to multiply thumb printing on voter sheet, snatching ballot boxes. These practices outrightly violate democratic equality, and render the electoral contest uncompetitive. Electoral fraud is capable of denying citizens their preferred choice, thereby giving undue opportunity to other candidates.

So far, scholars have debated and emphasized over how regimes use elections to undermine democratic values. Democratic values, we are told are those values or practices that establishes democracy in a society. Both old and new literatures support that regimes manipulate elections in different ways in order to acquire or retain political powers. Most of the strategies used by regimes to manipulate elections include reserved positions/reserve domain (Schedler, 2002); A second explanation is that regime can screen opposition candidate in manners that deliberately disqualifies the opponent (harassment, bribery, attempted or actual murder, banned or legal instrument) (Joel D. Barkan and Njuguna Ng'ethe, 1998). A third explanation is the use of violence and threat on civil society, media outlets, and voters (Diamond, 2000). A fourth explanation is electoral fraud and institutional bias (Schedler, 2002). These explanations are different in their strategies but

compatible with each other to manipulate elections and undermine democratic values. This articles support the explanation that elections must be 'free' and 'fair' so that it can pass as democratic. Bureaucratic integrity, political accountability, public deliberation and the rule of law are important part of democratic practices that can impact in the value of democracy. The increase in civil liberty resulting from repeated elections as identified by Lindbergs (2006) started seeing a decline in subsequent reports of 2007, 2008, and 2009 (Gabrielle Lynch & Gordon Crawford, 2011). More countries began to receive lower ratings in civil liberties and political rights in subsequent years, sub-Saharan Africa countries were among the countries with high rating resulting from repeated elections, but later began to receive lower civil liberty ratings in subsequent year report. So, the fact that some countries continue to undergo growth in their democracy, while others witness democratic setback or rollback, like in the case of Kenya in 2002, should remind us that repeated elections can lead to practice of election, transition and transfer of power, but can also prompt significant level of violence if the election is not "free, fair, participatory, competitive, and legitimate" (J. Shola Omotola, 2010).

Africa Election and Civil Liberty

As at 2019, Forty-three countries in Africa have conducted a “founding” election that indicates a transition from long standing authoritarian regime to democratic government. Out of the forty-three countries, Nigeria and Niger have the highest of eighteen elections while Angola has the lowest of three elections.

Table 1: Successive elections and Freedom House Civil Liberty Index Score

Countries	Number of Elections 1994 - 2020	Civil Liberty Score as at 2020	Rating
Angola	3	5	Not Free
Central Afr. Rep.	19	7	Not Free
Ivory Coast	11	4	Partly Free
Burundi	11	6	Not Free
Liberia	12	4	Partly Free
Comoros	14	4	Partly Free
DRC	9	6	Not Free
Guinea Biss	17	4	Party Free
Lesotho	6	3	Partly Free
Niger	18	4	Party Free

Sierra Leone	10	3	Party Free
Chad	7	6	Not Free
Eq. Guinea	8	7	Not Free
Ethiopia	7	6	Not Free
Gambia	9	4	Partly Free
Guinea	10	5	Partly Free
Malawi	11	3	Partly Free
Mozambique	10	4	Partly Free
Nigeria	18	5	Partly Free
South Africa	6	2	Free
Sudan	9	6	Not Free
Tanzania	8	5	Partly Free
Uganda	12	5	Not Free
Burkina Faso	12	4	Partly Free
Cameroon	6	6	Not Free
Cape Verde	12	1	Free
Djibouti	9	5	Not Free
Gabon	7	5	Not Free
Ghana	8	2	Free
Kenya	11	4	Partly Free
Mauritania	15	5	Partly Free
Namibia	6	2	Free
Sao Tomé	12	2	Free
Seychelles	13	3	Free
Togo	11	4	Partly Free
Zambia	13	4	Partly Free
Benin	12	2	Partly Free
Botswana	6	2	Free
Madagascar	13	4	Partly Free
Mali	13	5	Partly Free
Mauritius	6	2	Free
Senegal	11	3	Partly Free
Zimbabwe	15	5	Not Free

Sources: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world> (2021)

The concern here is whether these series of elections held have had an effect on the development of the quality of democracy in these countries. As shown in the table there is a relationship between the number of elections that a country conducts and the score on civil liberty. Countries with more elections tend to have score between 3 and 5 (Central Africa republic, Ivory Coast, Burundi, Liberia, Comoros, Guinea Bissu, Niger, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Malawi, Mozambique etc.), while countries with about 5, 6, 9, 15 elections tend to have better scores between 1 and 2.

While this figures and ranking remains remarkable, they still fall short of proving that series of elections can cause improvements in the quality of democracy. This is because, the increase in civil liberty resulting from repeated elections as identified by Lindbergs (2006) started seeing a decline in subsequent Freedom House reports of 2007, 2008, and 2009 (Gabrielle Lynch & Gordon Crawford, 2011). More countries began to receive lower ratings in civil liberties and political rights in subsequent years. Sub-Saharan Africa countries were among the countries with high rating resulting from repeated elections, but later began to receive lower civil liberty ratings in subsequent year report. In order to identify whether repeated elections can cause improvement in civil liberty or there is a *casual* mechanism that cause improvement in civil liberty, let us investigate when these improvements or decline usually happen, using repeated elections. To that end, I will replicate Lindberg methodology in his study of “*the surprising significance of African elections*” but with more up-to-date data. I will examine only those countries that score between 1 and 2, and are declared Free, which gives us a data set of 32 elections in five countries (countries marked in green color of Table 1). I will then identify the positive and negative changes in scores for election, and nonelection periods. The data for election period will represent changes that happened during the year before and the year of the election. While for nonelection periods, changes in civil liberties scores are determined from four years before to one year before election. Therefore, the data will capture the changes in civil liberties that happened as a direct effect of election. The reason for choosing only countries that are declared Free is the fact that while some Africa countries continue to witness further democratization, others have undergone democratic rollback. This will alert us of the importance of not simply aggregating regimes in Africa (Van de Walle, 2002). However, what is obtainable in regimes in Africa is one that is not a classic authoritarianism, but not fully democratic (Diamond, 2002). Some regimes may be described as “defective democracy,” while others as a new form of “electoral authoritarianism,” because they did not meet the standards for democracy (Levitsky, Steven, and Lucan Way, 2002; Merkel, Wolfgang, 2004). Another reason is that, the countries that are “Free” witnessed progress in their political process. Like Ghana that escaped political turmoil in 1992 following different military intervention, to be declared a liberal democracy after “the institutionalization of a *de facto* ‘two-party system where voters and political elites are mobilized around two political traditions” (Whitfield, Lindsay, 2009). Thirdly, these countries that are declared Free can best show the period where there was lower civil liberty score and the period where the civil liberty score began to increase or decrease.

Table 2: Changes and Improvement in Civil Liberties (Freedom House Civil Liberty Rating). Civil Liberty Score of Five Africa countries: South Africa, Ghana, Namibia, Botswana, and Mauritius, from 1994 – 2020

South Africa (1994 – 2020)												
	1993	Election Year			Non Election Years							
	4PF	1994			1995		1996		1997		1998	
C.L		*3	F		*2	F	2	F	2	F	2	F
		1999			2000		2001		2002		2003	
C.L		2	F		2	F	2	F	2	F	2	F
		2004			2005		2006		2007		2008	
C.L		2	F		2	F	2	F	2	F	2	F
		2009			2010		2011		2012		2013	
C.L		2	F		2	F	2	F	2	F	2	F
		2014			2015		2016		2017		2018	
C.L		2	F		2		2	F	2	F	2	F
		2019			2020							
C.L		2	F		2	F						
Ghana (1992 – 2020)												
	1991	Election Year			Non Election Years							
	6 NF	1992			1993		1994		1995			
C.L		*5	PF		*4	PF	4	PF	4	PF		
		1996			1997		1998		1999			
C.L		4	PF		*3	PF	3	PF	3	PF		
		2000			2001		2002		2003			
C.L		3	F		3	F	3	F	*2	F		
		2004			2005		2006		2007			
C.L		2	F		2	F	2	F	2	F		
		2008			2009		2010		2011			
C.L		2	F		2	F	2	F	2	F		
		2012			2013		2014		2015			
C.L		2	F		2	F	2	F	2	F		
		2016			2017		2018		2019			
C.L		2	F		2	F	2	F	2	F		
		2020										
C.L		2	F									
Namibia (1994 – 2020)												
	1993	Election Year			Non Election Years							
	3 F	1994			1995		1996		1997		1998	
C.L		3	F		3	F	3	F	3	F	3	F
		1999			2000		2001		2002		2003	

C.L = Civil Liberty

F = Free

NF = Not Free

PF = Partly Free

C.L		3	F		3	F	3	F	3	F	3	F
		2004			2005		2006		2007		2008	
C.L		3	F		*2	F	*2	F	*2	F	*2	F
		2009			2010		2011		2012		2013	
C.L		2	F		2	F	2	F	2	F	2	F
		2014			2015		2016		2017		2018	
C.L		2	F		2	F	2	F	2	F	2	F
		2019			2020							
C.L		2	F		2	F						
Botswana (1994 – 2020)												
	1993	Election Year		Non Election Years								
	3 F	1994		1995		1996		1997		1998		
C.L		3	F		*2	F	2	F	2	F	2	F
		1999			2000		2001		2002		2003	
C.L		2	F		2	F	2	F	2	F	2	F
		2004			2005		2006		2007		2008	
C.L		2	F		2	F	2	F	2	F	2	F
		2009			2010		2011		2012		2013	
C.L		2	F		2	F	2	F	2	F	2	F
		2014			2015		2016		2017		2018	
C.L		2	F		2		2	F	2	F	2	F
		2019			2020							
C.L		2	F		2	F						
Mauritius (1995 – 2020)												
	1994	Election Year		Non Election Years								
	2 F	1995		1996		1997		1998		1999		
C.L		2	F		2	F	2	F	2	F	2	F
		2000			2001		2002		2003		2004	
C.L		2	F		2	F	2	F	2	F	*1	F
		2005			2006		2007		2008		2009	
C.L		*1	F		*2	F	2	F	2	F	2	F
		2010			2011		2012		2013			
C.L		2	F		2	F	2	F	2	F		
		2014			2015		2016		2017		2018	
C.L		2	F		2	F	2	F	2	F	2	F
		2019			2020							
C.L		2	F		2	F						

Sources: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world> (2021)

Findings and Conclusion

Based on the data collected, Table 2 shows the average changes in civil liberties in the five countries from the period before transitional elections to other subsequent elections until 2020. The numbers shown on Table 2 for these countries, demonstrate the basic differences or similarities in civil liberty improvement between election and non-election period of these countries. Considering the argument of Lindbergs that improvement in civil liberties often begins from the moment of preparations and conducting of elections. Other scholars have considered Lindbergs argument in the contrary, explaining that democratic regimes begin from the moment the first elections is concluded (Lindbergs, 2006). That may not generally be the case across all countries. The present analysis shows that some countries after the conclusion of the first election, score high on civil liberty rating, while in the next year (non-election year), the score either increases or reduces. This is the case in South Africa where the year preceding the first democratic election had a score of 4 (Party free), and on the election year the score increased to 3 (Free). However, in the next year which is a non-election year, the score increased to 2 (Free). What this indicates is that, there was an improvement on government relationship with the rights of the people. The score has remained constant from 1995 to 2020 standing at 2 (Free).

In the case of Ghana, the first democratic election was held in 1992 with a civil liberty score of 5 (Partly Free), in the preceding year, the score increased to 4 and remained constant to the next election year in 1996. In 1993, the score increased to 3, and did not change even in the next election year in 2000. In 2003 the score changed to 2 (Free), and since then, the score has remained constant till 2020.

Namibia has been declared Free even before their first election in 1994 with a score of 3 (Free). In the next two elections in 1999, and 2004, the score remains the same. The score changed to 2 (Free) in 2005 a non-election year and since then, the score has remained the same till 2020.

In Botswana, the civil liberty score before the first election is 3 (Free). In the year of the first election the score remains the same, the score changed to 2 (Free) in the non-election year, and has remained constant throughout that period till 2020.

Mauritius since its first election in 1995 until 2020 has witness two changes, and these are in the non-election year, in 2004, a year before election, and in 2006 a year after election. Botswana civil liberty score has remained constant at 2 (Free) after dropping from 1 (First) in 2005 to 2 (Free) in 2006.

What the above findings indicate is that improvement in civil liberty does not really improve in election years. Most improvement in civil liberty that these countries witness happened in the non-election year, this is evident in all the five countries studied in this research. The reasons why elections in these countries may not produce improvement in civil liberties could be attributed to certain reasons, institutional, or procedural failure. Gabrielle Lynch & Gordon Crawford were correct when they said that elections have arguable been characterized with continuous violence "less fair, less efficient, and less credible," and a "do or die affair." Lindberg was not absolutely correct when he said that "dubious electoral experiences also result in improvements of civil liberties, and that elections do not have to be free and fair or fully democratic to have democratizing effects" (Lindberg 2006). Schedler was correct when he said that Election could only be considered to improve democratic values when they fulfill Robert's Dahl seven principles. It is also important to note that the changes recorded by these countries were modest usually at 1 point.

As a way of verifying the richness of these findings, Table 2 shows that almost all "founding" elections in these five countries began with a low civil liberty score 3 - 4 respectively. The improvement in civil liberty began after election year and only in the case of Mauritius that we saw a decline from 1 in an election year to 2 in non-election. Therefore, the findings as shown in Table 2 support my argument that elections alone cannot beneficially cause improvement in civil liberty or democratic values. What these findings show is that, holding elections can institutionalize the practice of election and sensitizing citizens on electoral participation.

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