

2017 African Electoral Index.

Political Participation and Human Rights in African Elections

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CODEBOOK

Introduction

This dataset evaluates the election of federal executive leaders in African countries, from 2000 to 2016. It translates into a numerical value how free, fair and competitive the election was.

There are many methods of selecting executive leaders. In African countries, for the period covered in this dataset, the most common method of selection is through popular vote in elections with more than one candidate. Other methods of executive selection include inheritance, appointment, military coup, *et alia*. As the purpose of this dataset is to evaluate the freedom, fairness and competitiveness of executive elections, it should be clear from the outset that other methods of executive selection are considered to be restricted, unfair and uncompetitive by definition.

Popular vote selects executives directly, in presidential systems, and indirectly, in parliamentary systems. We consider, in principle, that both methods are equally fair, free and competitive.

Sometimes, elections are organized in ways that are not predicted by the constitution. For example, social movements calling for free and fair elections are often outside what has been previously established. While adhering to legal procedures is an important component of fairness, elections that do not follow legally pre-established timetables or procedures may still be free and competitive. Our coding takes into consideration all elections that selected the executive.

Elections are complex political events, with many different facets. To capture this complexity, our evaluation is based on ten different aspects of each election, organized under two main variables: *Free and Fair Executive Elections* and *Opposition Participation in Executive Elections*.

Disruption of an electoral cycle

Two events are considered to disrupt the electoral cycle: non-electoral changes of the executive (such as coups), and long postponements of the executive election date. Postponements are considered long if the new date is more than one year after the original date, or if the date is postponed two or more times.

When the electoral cycle suffers a disruption, the main variables are coded as zero, from the disruption year until the year of the next election. When an election and a disruption occur in the same year, variables will be coded according to the last of these two events. Therefore, if a country experiences a disruption followed by an election, the values for the main variables will be coded according to the election event. If an election is followed by a coup in the same year, values will be equal to zero for those variables.

If a *coup-de-état* fails within one month, with the executive power being restored to its legal occupants, the coup is not considered in the dataset.

Example 1: In 2009, Niger postponed its elections from Nov/2009 to Dec/2010, a disruption of the election cycle in 2009. In 2010, the elections were again postponed. As a result, the main variables receive value 0 both in 2009 and 2010.

Example 2: In 2003, a coup in São Tomé and Príncipe ended one week later when the president Fradique de Menezes returned from abroad, reestablishing the executive power as selected in the previous election. As a result, variables are coded normally for the years 2003 and 2004.

Identification Variables

Country

This variable is just the name of the country

Year

Year in which the election was held, **Year** comprises the period from January 1st to December 31st. *Data Source:* <http://www.electionguide.org/>

The dates are intended to cover all African countries holding elections during the period 2000-2016. Depending on each country's electoral calendar, we included the lagged values of these elections. For example, the electoral cycle of a country in the year 2000 will need to be referenced to an election in the past.

Election Year (electionyear)

This variable informs whether an election occurred in that year or not. It can assume only two values: "Yes" or "No".

Main variables

Free and Fair Executive Elections
Opposition Participation in Executive Elections

The codebook covers the entire collection of data and scoring of the two variables mentioned above on a 0-10 basis. The exception of this scale is the variable measuring electoral turnover (*t_over*) which is scored on a 0-2 scale. We also included a linear transformation of the variable *t_over*, by the name of *transfer* which is scored on a 0 to 4 scale to compute the final index.

Free and Fair Executive Elections

Ordinal variable on a 0 to 10 scale measuring the degree of “free and fair” elections in all African countries between 2000 and 2016.

The standard practice in academic literature to assess whether an election is “free and fair” is to rely on domestic and international reports on their quality and code them in a binary manner or with small number of categories. In our case, we use numerous data sources to code separately five different sub scores and subsequently add them to arrive to an aggregate score of the “freedom and fairness” of an election.

The sub-scores apprehend different temporal stages of the electoral process (campaign, Election Day, post-electoral period) as well as different features of it: electoral procedures, freedom to associate and assembly, legal restrictions on political parties, among others. See below the detailed description of the coding and criteria to code each of these subcategories (variable name in capital letters).

PROC1: Were electoral procedures followed? (Pre-election and Campaign)

Values:

- 0- No, not at all. The election was flawed with procedural irregularities.
- 1- Somewhat observed. Although, some noticeable irregularities exist.
- 2- The electoral procedures were observed with only minor irregularities.

“Electoral procedures” during the pre-election and campaign stages consist of:

- Absence of legal impediments to political parties to as a competing party.
- Absence of legal impediments to join the electoral register (for voters).
- Equal opportunities for political parties and independent candidates to stand for election. (No misuse of government advantage).
- Impartial allotment of public funds to political parties (if relevant).
- Electoral law and electoral system. Is each person’s vote given equivalent weight to those of other voters in order to ensure equal representation? Does the law provide for a universal, free and secret vote?

Note: Freedom of the press and impartial media coverage is coded separately.

Coding criteria:

A **value of 0** is assigned to all cases when the following occurs: *international* organizations monitoring the election declare the election as “not free and fair” AND among the complaints there is evidence of widespread procedural irregularities.

A **value of 1** is assigned to all cases in which more than one international organizations monitoring the election (mostly European or U.S. based monitoring agencies) declare that the election as “generally free and fair” AND the irregularities observed are of “procedural” nature.

A **value of 2** is assigned to all cases in which more than one international organizations monitoring the election (mostly European or U.S. based monitoring agencies) declare that the election as “free and fair” AND there is no specific record of major shortfalls in electoral procedures.

Examples of “procedural irregularities” are:

- Overall “poor planning and administration” by the electoral authority.
- Restrictions applied to the organization of political parties (including banned political parties).
- Uneven or discrimination in voter registration, late issuance of voter registration cards, inaccuracy in the voter rolls (duplicate names, inclusion of dead voters), among others.
- Unfair campaign practices: use of political patronage and control over government jobs, contracts, and resources.

PROC2: Were electoral procedures followed? (Election Day and Post-election)

Values:

- 0- No, not at all. The election was flawed with procedural irregularities.
- 1- Somewhat observed. Although, some noticeable irregularities exist.
- 2- The electoral procedures were observed with only minor irregularities.

“Electoral procedures” during the day of the election and post-election states consist of:

- Effective design of ballot papers.
- Proper ballot boxes.
- Secrecy of the ballot.
- Proper counting procedures.
- Official and expeditious announcement of election results.
- Impartial treatment of any election complaints.

Examples of procedural irregularities during the polling day and post-election:

- Lack or late arrival of voting materials on the polling day: insufficient number of ballots, insufficient or poor quality of the ink during the polling day (e.g. discrepancies between the identification cards and the voting lists, confusion about the polling sites, among others).
- Inconsistent application of the electoral procedures by poll workers.
- Irregularities during the counting and vote tabulation processes at the polling stations.
- Presence of campaigners in and around polling stations on the polling day.

JOIN: Were voters able to vote for the candidate or party of their choice without undue pressure or intimidation?

Note: The variable is different from the measures included in “Opposition Participation”. In the latter, the main focus is on party themselves, whether JOIN measures government attitudes towards voters either on polling day or before.

Values:

- 0- No, major intimidation and harassment of voters and vote buying occurred in most of the polling stations.
- 1- No, there were minor complaints of voter intimidation or vote buying in some polling stations.
- 2- Yes, it was largely a free decision to cast a vote for the political party of their choice.

Absence of undue pressure and intimidation was considered as:

- Absence of intimidation or harassment of voters. Example. Police, military or partisan figures at the poll station intimidating ”inciting” voters.
- Absence of vote buying during or before the polling day.

For example:

- Attempts to coerce or forbid membership in political organizations.
- Civil servants attending opposition meetings are at risk of losing their jobs or governmental benefits.
- Instances of intimidation during voting.
- Credible reports of vote-buying by political parties and/or the government.

DEMS: Were demonstrations allowed? Can candidates make speeches and hold public meetings?

Values:

- 0- No, no political demonstrations were allowed either by decree or by refusing to grant the permit to great majority of petitions.
- 1- Some records of banning assembly or association right exist. For example, the governmental permissions to hold some rallies were denied in a few occasions.
- 2- Yes, there is no record of banning assembly or association rights for candidates and/or voters.

The variable apprehends the largesse with which the following freedoms were allowed during the campaign, the polling day and the post-electoral period.

- Freedom of assembly
- Freedom of association.
- Freedom of speech (for candidates).

Examples:

- Ban on demonstrations.
- Denial of government permissions to hold meetings or political rallies.
- Instances of self-censorship where the political opposition refrained from organizing popular demonstrations, rather than provoke a government crackdown.

INFO2: Was information freely available during the election year?

To construct this variable we relied on the country scores of Freedom of the Press provided by Freedom House (www.freedomhouse.org) adjusted by our own qualitative

information of particular elections (**INFO**). We based our coding on the three-scale values provided by FH to measure the degree of information available to each voter.

Values:

- 0- Major restrictions against freedom of speech were denounced.
- 1- Some impediments exist against at least some sources of political information.
- 2- Yes, there are no records of impediments, limits or reported bias from the media. Therefore, information was available to all voters.

Criteria:

- Freedom of the press (for the media). As described by freedom house, the variable measures three features of press freedom: first, a legal environment providing for a free media; second, it assesses whether the political environment deters or promotes official or self-censorship of the press. Finally, an economic environment providing for a free media, both to be free from interference and able to develop and sustain itself.
- Impartial voter-education programs.
- Equal access to publicly controlled media.
- Impartial reports on the election results by the media.

Opposition Participation in Executive Elections

This variable appraises how much competition is allowed by the rules and practices of the country in each political cycle.

One challenge in constructing such measure is that the observed level of competition – how many parties participate, degree of turnover – may be influenced by the threat of violence or by subtle but powerful exclusion rules. Another challenge is to identify the true competition – among opposing powers – from artificial competition, among parties of the same coalition or orientation.

For these reasons, opposition participation has five components. The first two, opposing parties and turnover, measure the actual electoral competition. The following three components – violence, boycott and loser's acceptance of the results – indicate the level of pressure and manipulation that influenced the observed electoral competition.

The resulting variable is measured on a scale from 0 to 10, for all African countries. Except in the case of parliamentary systems, this variable is measured for executive and legislative elections separately.

OPPAR: Did the opposition participate in the election?

Values:

- 0- if no party outside the government coalition offered candidates.
- 1- if some, but not all, the opposing parties could offer candidates.
- 2- if all the opposing parties could offer candidates.

Criteria:

- Qualitative reports on which are the opposing forces (candidates and parties).
- Information about banned parties/candidates.
- List of final candidates. Note: if a party boycotted the elections and were an opposing force, this fact will influence both this variable and the BOYCOTT variable, leading to some correlation between these two.
- In a system with many opposing parties, the relative size of them, if known, will be taken into account. The score is then calculated as:
 - o 0, if parties representing more than 75% of the opposition are not allowed to participate or decided not to participate.
 - o 1, if parties representing more than 25% but less than 75% of the opposition are unable to compete or boycott.
 - o 2, if only less than 25% of the opposition representation is absent.
- In many cases, it is not possible to assess the strength of such parties. The absolute number of them is then taken into account. Banned parties may have a stronger influence in this case if there are evidences that they have a wide support from the population.
- When major opposing parties are banned, but its members can still compete as independents, the value of this variable may be reduced by one to reflect the reduced effectiveness of such political groups.

BOY_PAR: Were there parties boycotting the elections?

Values:

- 0- Yes. More than 75% of the opposition forces boycotted the election.
- 1- Some. More than 25% but less than 75% of the opposition forces boycotted the election.
- 2- Less than 25% of the opposition forces boycotted the election.

Criteria:

- Official boycotts by parties, as reported by Keesing's Record of World Events and the African Elections Database.
- Boycotts in the second round of executive elections are not taken into account.
- When possible, the size of the forces in the boycott is measured by its last election share. In other cases, it is measured by the proportion of opposing parties in the boycott (regardless of their unknown size).

T_OVER: Did the elections result in a turnover of power?

Values (for executive election):

- 0- No.
- 1- Half. New party OR new person.
- 2- Yes. New party AND new person.

Criteria:

- If the incumbent has changed his party between elections, and his new party used to be in coalition with his old party, this variable will be coded as zero.
- In the case of executives deceased while in power, if the new incumbent is from the same party, this variable will be coded as zero. For example, in the case of Gabon for the election of 2009 and Guinea-Bissau for the same year.

Values (for legislative election):

- 0- No. The coalition-majority has not changed.
- 1- Half. There is a new coalition-majority in parliament in which some parties are new but some remain from a previous coalition.
- 2- Yes. A new party/coalition of parties seize the majority of seats in parliament

Criteria for legislative elections:

- The coalition-majority is a group of parties that not only are in coalition in the assembly but also detain among themselves the majority of seats in it. In many countries, a single party is the coalition-majority.
- Explicit as well as implicit coalitions are taken into account, whenever possible by the information available.
- Fusion and fragmentation of parties are taken into account when existent. Fragments of a coalition party may not work together.
- The value will only be equal to 2 if the new ruling coalition has no party from the old ruling coalition.

(Note: TRANSFER is a linear combination of the variable T_OVER. Specifically, the value of T_OVER is multiplied by 2).

VIOLENCE: Did election campaign/day violence occur?

Values:

- 0- Yes. There happened an organized and wide-spread politically motivated violence in the run-up or in the day of elections.
- 1- Some: Isolated events may occur, but is not organized or widespread.
- 2- No. Elections were peaceful.

Criteria:

- The reported number of deaths related to the political process may suffice to determine this variable. There are four cases:
 - o More than 20 reported deaths: The variable will be coded as “0”.
 - o 1-20 reported deaths: It will be coded as “0” if such deaths are a result of more than one incident, but will be coded as 1 if they come from a single incident. This procedure intends to avoid the excessive influence of a big outlier incident, like a single clash between parties that later on could not happen due to improved security measures.
 - o 0 reported deaths: This will only be coded as “1” if several other cases of violence (like clashes, illegal arrests, torture) are reported. Otherwise, this variable will be coded as “2”.
- In addition, violence aimed at political representatives has an additional weight. For instance, the single case of invasion of an incumbent house by a coup attempt is sufficient to code the variable as “1”, while the invasion of a common citizen would not influence this variable much.

LOSERS: Did the losers accept the result?

Values:

- 0- No; none of the main players

- 1- Not at first but later OR some but not all
- 2- Yes; all main players immediately

Criteria:

- The relevance of the opposing forces influences this variable, the same way it influenced the BOY_PAR and OPPAR variables.
- The level of acceptance can vary. Most losing candidates may accuse the winning forces of irregularities, but this is only relevant if the case goes to the court. If it goes to the court, but a negative result by the court provokes no further action by the losing party/candidate, then it is coded as 1.
- If the main opposition candidate proclaims himself to be the actual winner, and take further actions upon this assessment, such as selecting a parallel government and organizing a parallel inauguration, the coding is equal to 0.
- If the candidate rejects the results to the point that it engages in illegal activities, or boycott successive elections (special when another election is held in the same year), then the level of non-acceptance is equal to 0.
- A boycott is considered a a-priori rejection of the results. As a result, boycott from all parties will lead to a rejection level
- Official statements of non-acceptance by the participating parties.
- This variable is coded as 2 when there are no signs of non-acceptance of the defeat by the losers. This is so because in smooth election process, especially in well-experimented democracies, the acceptance of the results is the rule, and not the exception, and therefore acceptance is generally not reported.

Weights

To account for potential electoral authoritarianism, that is, for the possibility that elections would only serve the purpose of lengthening the stay of power of the same political group, we created an additional component for the Index based on whether the given country transferred power completely, partially, or not. To do so, we created the variable **Transfer**, which considers turnover in a scale from 0 to 4.

- a. If t_over = 0 , then it is 0.
- b. If t_over = 1, then it is 2.
- c. If t_over = 2, then it is 4.

We will then sum all these elements and divide over three to obtain the final index. As an example:

	F_F	Oppar	Transfer	Operation	New Index (in a 0 to 8 scale)
Tunisia	2	6	0	$=(2+6+0)/3$	2.66
Benin	8	10	4	$=(8+10+4)/3$	7.33

The raw score for any country in a given year will then occur in a scale of 0 to 24.

(Note: TRANSFER is a linear combination of the variable T_OVER. Specifically, TRANSFER acquired the value of T_OVER multiplied by 2).

References

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ON-LINE SOURCES:

IFES Election Guide

<http://www.electionguide.org/>

The Carter Center

<http://www.cartercenter.org/peace/democracy/index.html>

Freedom House

www.freedomhouse.org

Keesing's World News Archive

www.keesings.com

Bertelsmann Transformation Index

www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de

Economist Intelligence Unit

www.EIU.com

African Elections Database

www.africanelections.tripod.com

Human Rights Reports (U.S. Department of State)

www.state.gov

Inter-Parliamentary Union

<http://www.ipu.org>

Other sources:

Agencies and Reports: *Adam Carr's Election Archive*, *Agora Election Data*; AllAfrica.com various dates; *BBC News Online*; various dates; *BBC World News*; various dates. *CNN Election Watch*, Freedom House Country Reports, various countries, *Elections Around the World*: electionsworld.org; *IFES Elections Statistics*; Independent Election Commission; various countries; *IPU Chronicle of Parliamentary Election*; *IPU Parline*; International IDEA, News and Voter turnout Project; *Keesing's Record of World Events*; *NDI Elections Observation Reports*, various issues; UN IRIN News Reports; US Department of State Background Notes, various countries and issues.