Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Democratisation

ISSN: 1351-0347 (Print) 1743-890X (Online) Journal homepage: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/fdem20

# Does Democratization Reduce the Risk of Military Interventions in Politics in Africa?

Staffan I. Lindberg And & John F. Clark

**To cite this article:** Staffan I. Lindberg And & John F. Clark (2008) Does Democratization Reduce the Risk of Military Interventions in Politics in Africa?, Democratisation, 15:1, 86-105, DOI: 10.1080/13510340701768182

**To link to this article:** https://doi.org/10.1080/13510340701768182

# Does Democratization Reduce the Risk of Military Interventions in Politics in Africa?

STAFFAN I. LINDBERG and JOHN F. CLARK

This article investigates whether there is an association between a trajectory of political liberalization, democratization, and military interventions. In what is arguably the 'least likely case' region in the world, this study analyzes the experience of 55 regimes in Africa between 1990 and 2004 and finds a striking regularity. Liberalizing, and in particular democratic, regimes have a significantly different track record of being subjected either to successful or failed military interventions. The analysis suggests that democratic regimes are about 7.5 times less likely to be subjected to attempted military interventions than electoral authoritarian regimes and almost 18 times less likely to be victims of actual regime breakdown as a result. Through an additional case study analysis of the 'anomalous' cases of interventions in democratic polities, the results are largely strengthened as most of the stories behind the numbers suggests that it is only when democratic regimes perform dismally and/or do not pay soldiers their salaries that they are at great risk of being overthrown. Legitimacy accrued by political liberalization seems to 'inoculate' states against military intervention in the political realm.

Key words: democratization; military interventions; Africa; elections; legitimacy

This study inquires into the relationship between military interventions in politics and democratization. The question of survival of new democracies is one of the big issues in comparative politics that has come to the fore again since the 'third wave' of democratization[1] swept over Eastern Europe, parts of Asia, and much of Africa during the 1990s. Although Adam Przeworski and his collaborators convincingly showed that a higher level of economic development and growth tends to make democracy endure,[2] this does not provide much guidance for many newly democratizing states in the third world, for whom economic prosperity remains an elusive quest. Meanwhile, the enduring democratic experiments of impoverished India and Benin show that democratization can sometimes precede high levels or rates of economic development. In countries experimenting with multiparty democracy, military interventions in the form of coups or insurgencies are often thought of as posing the main threat to the survival of liberalizing and newly democratic regimes. Can political liberalization and the eventual establishment of a liberal democratic regime de-legitimize military intervention in politics so as to 'secure' elected regimes against breakdown?

Contemporary Africa seems a particularly compelling arena for this inquiry. Concentrating on one region of the world where there are considerable similarities in culture, history, society, and economic conditions means that a number of factors are relatively constant. The frequency of military interventions in politics also

Democratization, Vol.15, No.1, February 2008, pp.86–105
ISSN 1351-0347 print/1743-890X online
DOI: 10.1080/13510340701768182 

makes Africa a good choice. Africa was notable for its high incidence of military coups d'état in the post-independence era. Recent data shows that this troubling phenomenon still plagues the continent: Patrick McGowan documented 53 attempted and successful coups d'état between 1989 and 2001.[3] There is thus a sufficiently large number of cases in order to for us to identify possible relationships between liberalization and military interventions in politics. As a result of these ongoing interventions, many Africanist scholars, mindful of Africa's history of military intervention, continue to view military intervention as one of the greatest threats to continuing liberalization on the continent.[4] This also makes Africa particularly interesting: if there is a 'preventive effect' of liberalization and democratization against military interventions, it is least likely to show in this region; conversely, if we find an association here, it is more likely to be a robust one.

At the same time, African states have experienced a dramatic spread of electoral politics, liberalization, and democratization over the past 15 years. This provides a high concentration of comparable cases of regimes that speaks to the questions posed here. Out of the 48 countries in the region, 44 experimented with political liberalization and democratic procedures between 1989 and 2003.[5] Among these cases, the full range of political patterns can be found, from states whose rulers have reluctantly introduced only a façade of liberalization and are at best electoral authoritarian regimes, such as Sudan and Togo, to successful new democracies such as Benin, Ghana, and South Africa. Two countries, Botswana and Mauritius, have been essentially democratic since independence.

The following sections first theorize the relationship of political liberalization and military intervention; also, the idea that sustained political liberalization reduces the risk of regime breakdown by mechanisms that are usually referred to in the literature as 'legitimacy'. The article then clarifies the identification of the relevant cases of analysis, describes key concepts, discusses the data, and carries out measurements. The third section analyzes evidence from Africa between 1990 to 2003, and finds a surprisingly strong association between liberalization and absence of military interventions. Yet, correlation does not mean causation, and the fourth section provides a narrative analysis that probes the validity of statements about the causal connection between liberalization, democracy, and military interventions. Finally, the findings are discussed in comparative perspective.

## On the Relationship between Democracy and Military Intervention

Since the end of the Cold War, liberal democracy has become an international norm to an unprecedented extent. Although there is a world of difference between the 'continental' liberalism of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) and the Anglo-American liberalism of John Locke (1632–1704) and Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826), legitimacy is central to both: once well established, a liberal democratic regime enjoys legitimacy in the eyes of the populace and the major elites. This article analyzes whether moving towards a liberal democratic regime, and its eventual existence, leads to fewer military interventions in politics. Given the lack of data on direct measures of legitimacy across all African countries, the causal mechanism remain

untested as such, but our analysis provides strong longitudinal evidence of an 'inoculating' effect of liberalization and democratization for which legitimacy provides a plausible explanation.

The concept of legitimacy – contested over millennia from Plato's discussions on justice to Aristotle's distinctions among monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy – remains a subject of great debate. Yet, it seems that there is an emerging consensus in political science that legitimacy is a subjective and therefore psychological phenomena, and not just 'mechanical' or a legal one.[6] Legitimacy does not flow automatically to any regime just because a certain form of a constitution has been adopted in a referendum or because international law recognizes it as legitimate. Political legitimacy must in some sense be 'earned' by regimes, and not all societies necessarily regard procedural democracy as a primary value. Some populations may demand autonomy and international recognition, the reinstitution of traditional social norms, or other such goals. Non-democratic regimes may thus enjoy legitimacy in the sense of popular and elite acceptance without being liberal in their procedures.

Hence, many analyses (such as Max Weber's frequently cited ideal-type constructions of traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal legitimacy[7]) are concerned with identifying the bases of legitimacy for different types of regimes. Realist social analysts, from Thomas Hobbes in the seventeenth century onwards, have connected legitimacy with the provision of basic order. Hobbes recognized that when political or social authority had disintegrated, populations typically crave basic order as a first priority. Similarly, in a country impoverished to the point of devastating famine, people are unlikely to think first of procedural democracy. Political legitimacy can also flow to authoritarian regimes for restoring basic order to a society, though they almost always achieve mastery of those societies through force. This applies to contemporary Somalia or Sierra Leone as it did to seventeenth-century England. Regimes like that of Yoweri Museveni imposing control over predatory army units in Uganda in 1986 could be accorded popular legitimacy for some time. Similarly, Kamuzu Banda's regime in Malawi was a case of 'dictatorship by consent' based on the leader's (in Weberian terms) traditional authority and charisma or personal standing in society.[8] From the early 1960s, many authoritarian regimes in Africa staked their claims to legitimacy on the anti-colonial movements that freed African peoples from European colonialism. Others claimed legitimacy on the basis of their putative ability to bring about revolutionary change and national development, such as Julius Nyerere's one-party regime in Tanzania, or to hasten the end of colonialism and apartheid in southern Africa. Political legitimacy can thus accrue to various regimes on different bases.

This study, however, limits itself to looking at the effect (and not the reasons for its coming into existence) of democratic legitimacy. Specifically, it is interested in whether and when liberalizing regimes acquire legitimacy adequate to reduce the risk of intervention by military actors. One of the most prominent contemporary liberal thinkers in this field, David Beetham, argued that the exercise of power becomes legitimate if and when: 1) it is in accordance with existing rules; 2) if these rules can be justified by shared beliefs; and 3) if there is evidenced consent to the arrangement.[9] The first requirement is one of lawfulness, which seems

beside the point because constitutions are made to reflect what the most powerful actors at the time consider an appropriate regime. Hence it cannot be used to evaluate whether the same system is legitimate. The second part effectively depends on the third requirement of consent. If there is no consent, there must be a lack of shared beliefs about how power should be distributed and exercised. In essence, Beetham's definition thus depends primarily on subjective evaluation of the people and the main elites.

We recognize that political legitimacy in this sense is a relative phenomenon; something that exists to a greater or lesser degree but never completely. Most societies are free of active rebellions but every country has its anarchists – philosophical or otherwise – who deny political legitimacy to regimes that are otherwise widely accepted. In addition, legitimacy does not necessarily materialize immediately, and legal 'multipartyism' therefore does not necessarily translate into legitimacy. Learning and adaptation to liberal procedures occur over time with repetition of elections and ongoing observance of civil liberties. Once allowed to demonstrate the advantages of procedural rights (significantly, by choosing leaders through free elections) and civil liberties, liberals expect that such regimes will enjoy a modicum of political legitimacy sufficient for short-term regime survival. Legitimacy is thus understood here as a possible attribute of democracies but also, even if to a lesser extent, of liberalizing regimes as well. To the extent that all relevant actors manifestly respect a people's right to rule over itself through competitive elections and the respect of civil liberties, self-government has acquired legitimacy.

For the purpose of our empirical analysis it would have been preferable to have individual-level data on legitimacy of regimes across the continent of Africa. The best available source, however, is the Arobarometer data covering at present 18 of the 48 sub-Saharan African countries but with a time series going back to 1999 only. It is thus insufficient even to use as a proxy for our analysis. We therefore have to work by assessing the empirical implications of legitimacy in terms of actual behaviour by crucial elites, in this case military actors. When military interventions occur, it seems more likely than not that the regime in question has not 'earned' enough legitimacy among crucial elites. Conversely, the absence of interruption by another coup, insurgency or similar intervention is more likely to indicate that an elected regime has achieved some degree of legitimacy; if this continues over time, it achieves a deeper legitimacy in accordance with the 'test of time'. Following the general reasoning above about legitimacy, it could be that any kind of regime, not only democratic ones, accrue and maintain legitimacy, thus escaping military interventions. In case of incompetent or corrupt democratic rulers it could even be hypothesized that the military steps in to correct misgovernment more frequently in elected, democratic regimes than in others. Hence, the empirical outcome is not a given.

If the liberal theory of democracy is right, however, military interventions in politics should become less frequent, and less successful, as countries move from transition to democratic experimentation, to the eventual consolidation of a new democratic regime. Transitions to, and consolidations of, democracy are typically considered as two analytically distinct phases, but we see them as a continuum based on the awareness of the 'blurred boundaries' between transition and

consolidation, noting that a transition towards democracy is not necessarily over with 'founding' elections.[10] Among Africanists, Michael Bratton, for example, suggests that transition processes in Africa were often not over even with second elections, and Lindberg argues that it typically takes three or four electoral cycles for these regimes to become even limited electoral democracies.[11] Furthermore, the projection in the mainstream literature by authors such as Guillermo O'Donnell and Samuel Valenzuela on consolidation as *expected* regime stability makes consolidation an inference rather than an empirically observable phenomenon.[12] The operationalization of such a dependent variable is inherently difficult and fraught with epistemological problems, in particular, when claims to consolidation are based on prospective reasoning that cannot be measured directly. For these reasons, we refrain from using the concept of consolidation and instead look strictly at liberalization and the de facto existence of competitive multiparty politics.

Yet, the consolidation literature seeks to identify the moment when a new democracy could be said to have survived the threat of democratic breakdown; in Guiseppe Di Palma's words 'at what point ... can democrats relax?'[13] Juan Linz's classic answer is when democracy becomes the 'only game in town'.[14] This is highly relevant for our study, as it focuses on the reversal of the threat to democratic survival: the ability of democratic institutions to reduce the risk of military interventions leading to regime breakdown. This kind of legitimacy may also be referred to as 'real' as opposed to formal legitimacy, siding with Linz and Larry Diamond.[15] Legitimacy thus means that liberal democratic procedures are accepted in principle, and none of the major political actors make serious attempts to change them for a non-democratic regime. Thus, we are speaking to the same underlying issue: do liberalizing and democracies achieve legitimacy so as to survive? If so, such legitimacy should have a conditioning effect on militaries; namely, they should become more reluctant to intervene in politics as regimes become more liberal-democratic. The study thus aims to examine whether there is an empirical regularity between increasing democratization and less frequent military interventions. Such a regularity is by no means a given. But if such a pattern does emerge from the data then our theory offers a plausible argument that accrued legitimacy among elites (and possibly also the population and the international community) is an important causal mechanism involved, even if it may not be the only factor involved.

*Regimes as the Unit of Analysis*

Since we are interested in the question whether liberalization and/or the establishment of a democratic *regime* reduces the likelihood of military intervention, the relevant unit of analysis is regime rather than country or government. It is doubtless true that leaders (by virtue of their personalities and values) and countries (by virtue of their historical and structural dispositions) are important in understanding military interventions. However, the study is concerned to establish whether regime characteristics alone, across the existing spectrum of individual leaders' and countries' characteristics, can provide one part of the answer of why militaries *sometimes* stay out of politics. Furthermore, such a liberalizing regime must have at least some of the main trappings of the modern democracy. The most basic and identifiable such feature is

the holding of de jure multiparty elections, in our case, elections to the executive.[16] If such elections are held, the regime in question has the potential to display the effects of legitimacy discussed above. With this in mind, we look at the development of electoral regimes from their first and 'founding' elections in Africa from 1989 to 2004.[17]

*Classification of Regimes*

Regimes are divided into three categories, conceptualizing an 'electoral democratic regime' as one in with the population is guaranteed the right in practice to rule over itself through democratic procedures and also where individual civil rights are protected to a reasonable extent. In order to qualify as an electoral democracy, a regime must therefore fulfil two criteria: elections must become free and fair; and civil liberties must be guaranteed at a minimum level. With regards to the former, we rely on data on the number and fairness of elections from Lindberg's study of African elections, based on international and domestic election observation reports.[18] For the latter, Freedom House's data on civil liberties (CL) ratings are used, setting the bar at three or higher.[19]

For electoral regimes that do not qualify as democratic, those whose Freedom House CL ratings improved before the holding of the first election, or which reached a minimum rating of four, are classified as 'liberalizing regimes.' As a benchmark for improvement of CL we use the ratings two full years before the year of the first elections. Any other regimes holding elections are considered non-reformed electoral authoritarian regimes. In other words, these are regimes that do not provide de facto political rights to any significant degree, but stage elections mostly as a façade and typically show little respect for civil liberties.

If and when a successful intervention displaces any of these electoral regimes we consider the regime to have broken down. If a new electoral regime subsequently forms in the same country, we consider that to be a new and separate unit of analysis. This counters claims of circular reasoning: the existence of electoral regimes per definition naturally signifies the absence of (successful) military interventions, but within the electoral regimes there is no definitional relationship between democratic, liberalizing, and electoral authoritarian regimes. Our investigation seeks to ascertain whether there are empirical differences in the risk of military interventions in various electoral regimes, and if so, when such interventions occur.

The Appendix provides an overview of the regimes in Africa according to this classification. A total of 18 regimes were or became electoral democracies (representing a total of 266 regime-years), while 16 were classified as liberalizing (110 regime-years), and 21 remain non-democratic electoral autocracies (150 regime-years). The differences between these three categories of regimes can be seen in Table 1.

There are thus 55 regimes available for analysis and using the typology of three different kinds of regimes (democratic, liberalizing, and electoral authoritarian), we seek to evaluate the following propositions following from the initial discussion:

- Democracies have a significantly lower likelihood of military interventions in any given year than all other regimes.
- Liberalizing regimes have a lower likelihood in any given year of military interventions than non-reformed, electoral authoritarian regimes.

TABLE 1
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ELECTORAL REGIMES

| | | Electoral democracies $N = 18$ | Liberalizing regimes $N = 16$ | Electoral authoritarian $N = 21$ | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Elections Free & Fair | Percent | 74.6% | 50.0% | 27.8% | 55.4% |
| Initial CL | Mean | 4.8 | 5.1 | 5.5 | 5.2 |
| CL 2004/breakdown | Mean | 2.4 | 4.0 | 5.5 | 4.1 |
| CL change | Mean | +2.4 | +1.1 | +/−0 | +1.1 |
| | *N* Elections | *59* | *26* | *36* | *121* |

*Source*: Authors' compilation based on sources for Appendix.

- Among democracies and liberalizing regimes, the more successive elections held, the lower the likelihood of a military intervention.

*Types of Interventions*

In terms of the dependent variable, most analysts have sought to understand why military coups happen, and typically begin by trying to identify all of the cases of coups, and sometimes attempted coups as well,[20] and then hypothesize about the cause(s) of coups and try to isolate those causes. Instead, this study seeks to establish whether more democratic procedures and better observance of civil liberties can reduce the risk of military interventions, by examining the association of such events and various types of regimes. It therefore makes sense in this investigation to start instead by identifying all electoral regimes and then recording instances of both interventions and non-interventions for each regime-year.

Second, 'military intervention' is a more useful concept than 'coup d'état' for the purpose of the present inquiry because attempting coups d'état is not the only the way military units or social groups intervene in politics: they also start rebellions aimed at overthrowing specific regimes. This kind of behaviour is an alternative to coups, when a regime's leaders are sufficiently protected by praetorian guards to make such efforts risky. It is also a more viable strategy for would-be rulers who enjoy a primary support base in the hinterlands. Like coups, military interventions in the form of rebellions can demonstrate that important sectors of a state's elites and/or population deem the governing regime a legitimate target for overthrow through violent means.

Not all kinds of violent interventions in politics by military units are relevant to this study, however. Military rebellions or mutinies clearly aimed at gaining higher pay for soldiers, and not at the overthrow of the regime, are not included. Nor are rebellions that seek regional autonomy, like that in Casamance (Senegal), that were ongoing before the advent of de jure multiparty politics. These military activities were not begun in order to overthrow the electoral regime as such (since that did not exist when the military activities started) and their prevention, therefore, cannot be said to be dependent on the legitimacy of the regime. Finally, unsuccessful coup plots are not included in our list of military intervention, for these are impossible

to verify or catalogue. Some coup plots, in all likelihood, take place without coming to public notice because it is not in the interest of the incumbent regime to advertise them. Meanwhile, African regimes have occasionally claimed that coups are being plotted as a pretext to bring the military – or political opposition groups – under closer control. Alleged plots have been revealed as fabricated, further undermining the validity of any measure of attempted coups.[21] For these reasons, coup plots are not a reliable measure and will not feature in this analysis.

Military interventions understood in this way taking place in the selected set of states are also recorded in the Appendix. If and when any form of military intervention occurs,[22] we have coded the event as either 'regime breakdown' (if successful) or 'attempted' (if the intervention was stifled by the existing government and the existing regime stays in place). Data on successful and failed attempts of military interventions for 1990–2001 is taken from McGowan.[23] Data for the remaining years were collected from the fortnightly newsletter *Africa Confidential*.

In terms of interpreting empirical findings in the light of our hypotheses, successful military interventions leading to breakdown of the electoral regime should be interpreted as signs of insufficient legitimacy. And, if occurring in liberalizing or democratic regimes, they would speak against our stated propositions. If such breakdowns occur when a greater number of elections have been held, such breakdowns would provide even stronger evidence. If, however, we find that breakdowns occur more often in electoral authoritarian regimes than in the two other categories, as well as more often in liberalizing regimes than in democratic ones, then our propositions would be supported. Failed military interventions are more ambiguous. On the one hand, they could be interpreted much in the same way as successful ones. On the other hand, one could argue that a few failed military interventions would not speak against our hypotheses by the very fact that they were defeated by incumbent liberalizing or democratic regime. The outcome – failure to overthrow the existing democratic regime – constitutes survival in the face of crisis, signalling sufficient and perhaps increasing legitimacy. Whereas legitimacy is not sufficiently strong to prevent all military interventions, it would appear strong enough to prevent major elites and substantial military units from siding with the rebellion and instead induce them to side with the legitimate government.

## Declining Military Interventions

Table 2 shows the first part of the empirical analysis. Looking at the figures at the bottom of the table for the total number of (successful and failed) military interventions, we find that democratic regimes are almost 3.5 times less likely to be subjected to such instances than liberalizing regimes, while the difference is about 7.5 times with regards to electoral autocracies. Electoral autocracies are more than twice as likely to be victims of military interventions compared to liberalizing regimes.

Secondly, successful interventions in particular occur significantly less often in democratic regimes than in the other two types giving a likelihood of 0.4 per cent that it would occur in any given year. There has actually only been one

TABLE 2
LIKELIHOOD OF MILITARY INTERVENTIONS IN AFRICA IN ANY GIVEN YEAR

| | | Electoral democracies (266 years) | Liberalizing regimes (110 years) | Electoral authoritarian (150 years) | Average all regimes (526 years) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Successful Interventions | | .4% | 5.5% | 7.3% | 3.4% |
| | *N* | *1* | *6* | *11* | *18* |
| Failed Interventions | | 1.5% | .9% | 6.7% | 3.0% |
| | *N* | *4* | *1* | *10* | *16* |
| Total Interventions | | 1.9% | 6.4% | 14.0% | 6.5% |
| | *N* | *5* | *7* | *21* | *34* |

*Source*: Authors' compilation based on sources for Appendix.
*Note*: Significance: Successful Military Interventions*Type of Regime Approx. T = − 3.632, $p = .000$; Failed Military Interventions*Type of Regime Approx. T = − 1.874, $p = .066$; Total Number of Military Interventions*Type of Regime Approx. T = − 3.020, $p = .004$.

case (representing 6 per cent of all democratic regimes) of successful military intervention among Africa's 18 democratic regimes during the 266 regime-years. This was the 1994 coup in Gambia, which occurred with almost no warning. Incidentally, it was also one out of a total of 18 successful military interventions across the different types of regimes, and was thus a rare exception. Breakdowns were much more common among liberalizing regimes, with six occurrences over 110 regime-years producing a likelihood of 5.5 per cent (almost 14 times the likelihood in democratic regimes) that it would occur in any given year. Here we find interventions against regimes in countries like Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, and Burkina Faso.

Nevertheless, the ratio of military takeovers is still lower in liberalizing regimes than in electoral authoritarian regimes, as stated in our propositions. In electoral authoritarian regimes, 11 breakdowns took place over 150 regime-years, which means a 7.3 per cent chance of such an occurrence in any given year. This is 18 times higher than in democratic regimes and almost 1.5 times higher than in liberalizing regimes. A long list of countries are included in this group, including Burundi, Central African Republic, Niger, and Sierra Leone. The differences in the number of interventions among the categories of regimes are striking.

When it comes to *failed* military interventions, the picture is less clear cut. Whereas electoral authoritarian regimes again have the largest share of interventions by far (with a likelihood of 7.6 per cent in any given year) – a result that supports, again, our hypotheses – the other two categories display a different pattern. Democratic regimes have, both absolutely and relatively speaking, more instances of attempted military interventions than liberalizing regimes, but fewer than electoral authoritarian ones. Although this could be taken as evidence against our hypothesis, our interpretation also takes into account the total number of military interventions. As noted above, Table 2 shows that democratic regimes have had the lowest number of total military interventions and liberalizing regimes the second lowest share, while in the group of 21 electoral authoritarian regimes there has been an equal number of total interventions; this is in line with our expectations. Meanwhile,

the number and share of *failed* interventions in the group of liberalizing regimes is lower than expected.

Our interpretation is that liberalizing regimes are partly in flux, undergoing significant changes in the structure of politics and society, which makes them more vulnerable to military intervention *when this occurs*. While the legitimacy bestowed on them by (even if imperfect) democratic procedures and better protection of civil liberties protects them from interventions to a significant degree (as evidenced by the higher frequency in electoral authoritarian regimes), they are also less capable of defeating attempted takeovers after their launch. Chains of command, clear lines of communication, intelligence apparatuses, and other decision-making procedures have not yet been firmly established, and leaders are typically less experienced than in more mature democracies. In electoral authoritarian regimes, on the other hand, the coercive military apparatus is often more structured and long established leaders are still in control to a large extent. Thus, while military interventions occur much more frequently, they are also defeated more often. Seen in this light, liberalization and subsequent democratization would seem to reduce the incidence of intervention by the military.

## Successive Elections Also Mitigate Against Breakdown

The opening discussion also raised the idea that the liberalizing and democratic regime qualities need some time to take hold and to 'prove' themselves. Over time, more legitimacy should accumulate and thus contribute, along with other factors, to 'insulating' the regime from violent overthrow. Since no direct measures of legitimacy with enough both cross-national and longitudinal coverage are available, the analysis has to make use of indirect measures, and thus turns to other empirical implications of the theory. One such is that regardless of regime type, as long as it is electoral and thus displays some (even if limited) trappings of democratic procedures, military interventions will tend to occur early in a regime's 'life-span', which is when legitimacy has not yet had time to develop. Table 3 reports on the

TABLE 3
SUCCESSIVE ELECTIONS AND SUCCESSFUL MILITARY INTERVENTIONS IN AFRICA, 1989–2004

| | | | 1st elections | 2nd elections | 3rd+ elections | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Electoral Democracies | Regime | | 0% | 0% | 100% | 100% |
| | Breakdown | *N* | *0* | *0* | *1* | *1* |
| | Total Elections | *N* | *18* | *16* | *25* | *59* |
| Liberalizing Regimes | Regime | | 83% | 17% | 0% | 100% |
| | Breakdown | *N* | *5* | *1* | *0* | *6* |
| | Total Elections | *N* | *16* | *9* | *1* | *26* |
| Electoral Authoritarian | Regime | | 91% | 9% | 0% | 100% |
| | Breakdown | *N* | *10* | *1* | *0* | *11* |
| | Total Elections | *N* | *21* | *11* | *4* | *36* |
| Total | Regime | | 83% | 11% | 6% | 100% |
| | Breakdown | *N* | *15* | *2* | *1* | *18* |
| | Total Elections | *N* | *55* | *36* | *30* | *121* |

*Source*: Authors' compilation based on sources for Appendix.

second part of the analysis, looking at the impact of both elections across all types of regimes (at the bottom of the table) and for each type of regime. It shows that across all regimes, 83 per cent of all military interventions took place shortly after the first and 'founding' election was held. The incidence of successful interventions then dropped significantly to 11 per cent and finally six per cent in the categories of second, and third and later elections respectively.

Looking within the categories of regimes, the pattern is largely the same. Almost all successful military interventions occurred shortly after the very first experiment with electoral procedures. But when interventions are repeated – thus, after regimes have had time to 'demonstrate' their credentials – it seems that the effect is to accrue legitimacy so as to prevent further interventions by military groups.[24] At first sight, this might be expected as an effect of 'natural' selection bias. For when successful interventions occur, the existing regime 'disappears' and we have no way of knowing what would have happened if further elections had been held. But this is exactly what this inquiry set out to discover. When do military interventions occur? If, for example, the idea is that military actors step in to 'correct' misgoverning and ineffective governance by elected governments, then we would have no reason to expect that interventions would occur hastily after first elections have been held. Rather, the new regime would be given the benefit of the doubt until it showed its ineffectiveness and bad governance, before the military found a reason to step in. In other words, it is by no means an obvious conclusion that regime survival is associated with the number of elections held. We are the first to agree that holding elections and some measure of 'democraticness' and civil liberties are by themselves not sufficient factors to prevent military interventions in politics. It is very likely that other factors, such as the military capabilities of the incumbents and other armed groups, the position taken by international supporters, historical path dependencies, and the presence of concentrated natural resources might play important roles too. In light of the analysis at hand, however, it seems unlikely that any of these or other factors could entirely wash out the strongly suggestive empirical pattern under investigation. The idea that liberalization and democratization play an important part in preventing military intervention in politics should be taken seriously.

## Learning from Anomalous Cases

The analysis so far seems to suggest that liberalizing regimes and electoral democracies in Africa are indeed less likely to experience military interventions than other kinds of regimes. Nonetheless, the expected outcomes did not come to pass in every single case for the regimes we identified as 'democratic'. Specifically, there were five interventions against four of the regimes that we identified as democratic, as recorded in the Appendix. Further insights about the relationship between legitimacy and military intervention might be provided by a closer analysis of these anomalous cases.

The five cases of (successful *and* failed) intervention against the democratic regimes display no obvious patterns in the military interventions. The failed

intervention in Benin occurred soon after the start of the democratic experiment, whereas those in Gambia and Madagascar occurred several years after their first free, competitive elections. In Madagascar's democratic regime, the failed intervention came in the midst of a disputed presidential election, whereas all of the other interventions occurred against regimes that had been ratified by free elections months or years before. Nor does the timing of the interventions seem to have been driven in general by economic events, like cuts in government subsidies occasioned by structural adjustment requirements. From the perspective of the present study, however, the interventions against the regimes in Benin and in Madagascar need not trouble us too much, for they do not obviously challenge the idea that democratic legitimacy renders regimes less vulnerable to military intervention, as will be explained below. The other three cases show that while democratic legitimacy may reduce the likelihood of military intervention, it does not preclude them altogether.

The apparent coup attempt in Benin is distinctive from other cases in that it is ambiguous whether it was a military intervention at all. We follow McGowan, however, and include it in our Appendix. Most significantly, the extent of the military activity in this instance was some firing of guns around the presidential palace, which was not originally recognized as a coup attempt. According to one of the most knowledgeable observers, it was not described as a coup attempt until later.[25] Captain Pascal Tawes, a military figure about whom Benin's President Nicéphore Soglo had misgivings, was detained, together with other officers, also northerners, believed to be devoted to former President Kérékou. Perhaps the plot was actually crafted by President Soglo himself, to create a pretext for the arrest of Captain Tawes. In that case, this episode was not a military intervention, but a case of civil-rights violation against a military officer. If this was a genuine coup attempt, it was quickly suppressed by loyalists in the army. It is notable that Benin has subsequently enjoyed a 15-year period free of intervention under a multiparty regime.

Whether or not Madagascar's brief civil war of 2002 represents military forbearance in deference to a democratic regime is somewhat ambiguous. The clashes occurred after the December 2001 presidential election that pitted the incumbent, Didier Ratsiraka, against a key challenger, Marc Ravalomanana. In the counting of the votes for the first round, the government-controlled national election commission showed that Ratsiraka had won 40.4 per cent to Ravalomanana's 46.6 per cent, which would have produced a second round run-off.[26] A coalition of civil society organizations, however, had collected data on voting outcomes finding that President Ratsiraka had won only 37.7 per cent to Ravalomanana's 50.5 per cent. If these latter figures were correct, then there would have been no need for the run-off. Rather than proceed to the run-off, which Ravalomanana would certainly have won in a fair contest, the candidates instead began to drum up support from various military elements. Ravalomanana was only able to do so because large contingents of the military absconded. While this build-up was going on, the Supreme Court ruled a decision in favour of Ravalomanana, but the issue was finally settled on the ground and by military force. The action of the military forces was thus ambiguous: on the one hand, military forces acted to resolve the political stand-off through force of arms, rather than constitutionally; on the other hand, the apparent winner of the elections,

who was *not* in command of the army at the time, was installed through the efforts of defecting soldiers. To the extent that the military acted successfully to uphold a democratic result that a losing candidate had sought to overthrow, our main hypothesis about democratic legitimacy is not undermined, but rather strengthened by this case.

The case of the military coup against the elected regime in Gambia in 1994, however, represents a much more serious challenge. Up to the early 1990s, Gambia was celebrated as one of the few cases of democracy in Africa.[27] The system was an 'unconsolidated democracy' (as in Botswana) in that there had not yet been a peaceful change of power between political parties since independence in 1965. Nonetheless, the coup by Yahya Jammeh in July 1994 demonstrated the ability of a military leader to seize power successfully from an elected, civilian leader, and without a plausible democratic rationale. Jammeh subsequently 'won' facade elections in 1996 and also somewhat cleaner elections in 2001 and 2006. Either of two interpretations about this intervention raises doubts about the democratic legitimacy thesis. One conclusion is that even democratically elected regimes can gradually lose legitimacy, inviting the military to intervene. In 1994 when the coup took place, Sir Dawda Jawara had been in office for 29 years, to a large extent by making sure the opposition was divided, but also by creating a personality cult, especially in rural areas. According to one source, Jawara's expulsion led to 'euphoria' among large sections of the population.[28] Jawara's regime may not have been keeping up with the expectations of the Gambian population in the heady years of the early 1990s. A second interpretation is that the Colonel Jammeh and other members of the military simply did not care about legitimacy at all. This interpretation is undermined by the regime's subsequent behaviour in staging three increasingly less fraudulent elections, however.

Less troubling only because they failed were the coup attempts in São Tomé in 1995 and in 2003. The first of these interventions occurred several years into a democratic experiment that had begun in 1991. Two important factors must be kept in mind when interpreting this intervention.[29] First, a grave dispute between President Trovoada and the legislature had developed after the elections in October 1994. Trovoada's most serious political contestant, Carlos de Graça, had become prime minister after the elections, resulting in a political stalemate. The other context was the intense political pressure put on the government by demands from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for structural adjustment, leading to a series of mass protests against austerity measures proposed by the government. The events of the 1995 intervention involved the temporary detainment of both the president and the prime minister.[30] The most salient factor behind the military intervention was that the government had not paid army personnel their salaries for several months. The army resurrected civilian rule as soon as it had been promised amnesty and regular salary payments – again, as in Gambia, pointing to the possibility that lack of adequate performance can undermine the legitimacy of even democratic regimes.[31]

The attempted coup in July 2003 constitutes a more serious challenge to the idea of democratic procedures and civil liberties generating legitimating processes that prevent military interventions. Free and fair elections led a new president to power, Fradique de Menezes, and the following year a new parliament was inaugurated

on the same premise. Some have seen de Menezes' style of rule as increasingly authoritarian,[32] contrary to enjoying good ratings from Freedom House. Before de Menezes' rise to power, however, the government of São Tomé and the international community at large had realized that the country apparently possessed significant petroleum resources under its territorial waters. Intensive negotiations between São Tomé and Nigeria over maritime boundaries followed, as well as high-stake negotiations between the São Tomé government and a number of oil conglomerates. It is conceivable that outside players, including Nigeria and Angola, may have been implicated in this latest coup attempt given the vast oil reserves found in the waters around São Tomé. Yet, the most plausible conclusion is that the prospective coup makers were simply domestic actors motivated by greed.[33] Perhaps the democratic regime in São Tomé has become vulnerable to military intervention due to the high stakes created by the discovery of the country's new-found oil wealth. Only the future will tell, but at the time of writing (August 2007) it seems that the political elites have found a way to agree on the handling of the oil issue, and thus to avoid the 'resource curse'.[34] In sum, these cases serve to remind us that the legitimacy achieved through democratic practices makes military intervention less likely, but does not eliminate that possibility.

## Conclusions

Assessing the proposition that liberalization and even more so, democratization, leads to a reduction of military interventions in politics, the bulk of evidence from Africa suggests support for this thesis. Democratic legitimacy seems to make African liberalizing and democratic regimes less vulnerable to military intervention than they otherwise would be. Furthermore, military intervention appears to be much more likely at the beginning of a democratic experiment, when the legitimacy of the new governments is not yet firmly established. The coup attempt in Benin – if it was one – came very early in the course of their democratic experiments. Yet, the histories of African states such as São Tomé and Gambia show democratic legitimacy is not on its own sufficient to protect states from military intervention.

However it seems unnecessary to make a rapid political change from one day to another. Flawed 'founding' and even second elections are not necessarily a catastrophe from the perspective of regime survival. On the contrary, new regimes may fare better with incremental changes, slowly improving on civil liberties and the 'democraticness' of elections, especially in precarious situations when existing leaders have strong ties to military actors. In this regard, the study lends support to arguments about the advantages of protracted transitions advanced by scholars like Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, Samuel Huntington, and Joel Barkan.[35] These cases also seem to show us that a culture of military interventionism often trumps the legitimacy given to freely elected civilian authorities. Countries with a long history of military rule, such as the Central African Republic, Congo, and Guinea-Bissau, were prone to renewed military interventions in politics. While we have not controlled for any confounding factors, it seems unlikely that such a strong relationship found in this investigation, which makes intuitive and theoretical

sense, would be 'washed out' by the influence of other factors like economic development, education, or availability of concentrated natural resources. Our more qualitative inspection of some of the deviant cases also tends to confirm the same tentative position.

International norms in favour of democratization waxed suddenly very powerful in the early 1990s. They have subsequently faded considerably. At the same time, the provision of economic development and the upholding of public order has also historically been important to the legitimacy of states. If new democracies and liberalizing states in Africa fail to ensure such public goods, they may become vulnerable to increased military interventionism again in the future. If, on the other hand, they do stand the test and prove capable of supplying such goods in addition to freedoms and liberties, then it seems plausible to expect that a tradition of military restraint from intervention in politics will grow in Africa in the coming years.

## Appendix

ELECTORAL REGIMES AND MILITARY INTERVENTION IN AFRICA, 1989–2004

| | Regime | Year Start | Initial CL* | Free and Fair?/Civil Liberties: 1st election | 2nd election | 3rd election | 4+ elections | CL 2004 / year of breakdown | CL change | Year of failed intervention | Year of intervention leading to breakdown |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Electoral Democracies** | Benin | 1991 | 7 | Y/3 | Y/2 | N/2 | – | 2 | +5 | 1992 | |
| | Botswana | 1969 | 4** | Y/4** | Y/3 | Y/3 | Y/2 | 2 | +2 | | |
| | Cape Verde | 1991 | 5 | Y/3 | Y/2 | Y/2 | – | 1 | +4 | | |
| | Gambia 1 | 1982 | 3 | N/4 | N/3 | Y/3 | – | 2 | +1 | | 1994 |
| | Ghana | 1992 | 6 | N/4 | Y/3 | Y/3 | – | 2 | +4 | | |
| | Kenya | 1992 | 6 | N/6 | N/5 | Y/3 | – | 3 | +3 | | |
| | Lesotho 2 | 1998 | 4 | Y/4 | Y/3 | – | – | 3 | +1 | | |
| | Madagascar | 1982 | 6 | N/5 | N/4 | Y/4 | Y/4 | 3 | +3 | 2002 | |
| | Mali | 1992 | 5 | Y/3 | Y/3 | Y/3 | – | 2 | +3 | | |
| | Mauritius | 1976 | 2 | N/2 | Y/2 | Y/2 | Y/2 | 1 | +1 | | |
| | Namibia | 1989 | 3 | Y/3 | Y/3 | Y/3 | – | 3 | 0 | | |
| | Niger 3 | 1999 | 5 | Y/4 | – | – | – | 3 | +3 | | |
| | São Tomé & Pr. | 1991 | 5 | Y/3 | Y/2 | Y/2 | – | 2 | +3 | 1995, 2003 | |
| | Senegal | 1978 | 4 | N/3 | N/4 | N/4 | Y/4 | 3 | +1 | | |
| | Seychelles | 1993 | 6 | Y/4 | Y/3 | Y/3 | – | 3 | +3 | | |
| | Sierra Leone 2 | 2002 | 6 | Y/4 | – | – | – | 3 | +3 | | |

(*continued*)

TABLE CONTINUED

| | Regime | Year Start | Initial CL* | Free and Fair?/Civil Liberties: 1st election | 2nd election | 3rd election | 4+ elections | CL 2004 / year of breakdown | CL change | Year of failed intervention | Year of intervention leading to breakdown |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | South Africa | 1994 | 4 | Y/3 | Y/2 | – | – | 2 | +2 | | |
| | Tanzania | 1995 | 5 | N/5 | Y/4 | – | – | 3 | +2 | | |
| **Liberalizing** | Burkina Faso | 1991 | 5 | N/5 | N/4 | – | – | 4 | +1 | | |
| **Regimes** | Comoros 1 | 1990 | 6 | N/5 | – | – | – | 4 | +2 | | 1995 |
| | Comoros 2 | 1996 | 4 | Y/4 | – | – | – | 4 | 0 | | 1999 |
| | Comoros 3 | 2002 | 4 | N/4 | – | – | – | 4 | 0 | | |
| | Côte d'Ivoire 1 | 1990 | 6 | Y/4 | N/5 | – | – | 4 | +2 | | 1999 |
| | Gabon | 1993 | 4 | Y/4 | N/4 | – | – | 4 | 0 | | |
| | Gambia 2 | 1996 | 6 | N/6 | Y/5 | – | – | 4 | +2 | | |
| | Guinea-Bissau 1 | 1994 | 5 | Y/4 | – | – | – | 4 | +1 | | 1998 |
| | Guinea-Bissau 2 | 1999 | 5 | N/5 | – | – | – | 4 | +1 | | 2003 |
| | Lesotho 1 | 1993 | 4 | Y/4 | – | – | – | 4 | 0 | | 1994 |
| | Malawi | 1994 | 7 | Y/3 | Y/3 | – | – | 4 | +2 | | |
| | Mozambique | 1994 | 6 | Y/4 | Y/4 | – | – | 4 | +2 | | |
| | Nigeria 2 | 1999 | 6 | N/3 | N/4 | – | – | 4 | +2 | | |
| | Rep. of Congo 2 | 2002 | 4 | N/4 | – | – | – | 4 | 0 | | |
| | Uganda | 1996 | 5 | Y/4 | Y/5 | – | – | 4 | +1 | | |
| | Zambia | 1991 | 5 | Y/3 | N/4 | N/4 | | 4 | +1 | 1997 | |
| **Electoral** | Angola | 1992 | 7 | Y/6 | – | – | – | 6 | +1 | | 1993 |
| **Authoritarian** | Burundi | 1993 | 6 | Y/7 | – | – | – | 7 | −1 | | 1996 |
| **Regimes** | Cameroon | 1992 | 6 | N/5 | N/5 | – | – | 6 | 0 | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cent. Afr. Rep. 1 | 1992 | 5 | N/5 | – | – | – | 5 | 0 | | 1992 |
| Cent. Afr. Rep. 2 | 1993 | 5 | Y/4 | Y/4 | – | – | 5 | 0 | 1996, 1997, 2001, 2002 | 2003 |
| Chad | 1996 | 5 | N/5 | N/6 | – | – | 5 | 0 | 2004 | |
| Côte d'Ivoire 2 | 2000 | 4 | N/5 | – | – | – | 6 | −2 | | 2002 |
| Djibouti | 1993 | 5 | N/6 | N/6 | – | – | 5 | 0 | | |
| Eql. Guinea | 1996 | 7 | N/7 | N/6 | – | – | 6 | +1 | 2004, 2004 | |
| Ethiopia | 1995 | 5 | N/5 | N/5 | – | – | 5 | 0 | | |
| Guinea | 1993 | 5 | N/5 | N/5 | – | – | 5 | 0 | | |
| Liberia | 1997 | 6 | Y/5 | – | – | – | 6 | 0 | | 2003 |
| Mauritania | 1992 | 6 | N/6 | N/5 | – | – | 5 | +1 | 2003, 2004 | |
| Niger 1 | 1993 | 5 | Y/4 | – | – | – | 5 | 0 | | 1996 |
| Niger 2 | 1996 | 5 | N/5 | – | – | – | 5 | 0 | | 1999 |
| Nigeria 1 | 1993 | 5 | N/5 | – | – | – | 5 | 0 | | 1993 |
| Rep. of Congo 1 | 1992 | 6 | Y/3 | – | – | – | 5 | +1 | 1993 | 1997 |
| Sierra Leone 1 | 1996 | 6 | Y/5 | – | – | – | 6 | 0 | | 1997 |
| Sudan | 1996 | 7 | N/7 | N/7 | – | – | 7 | 0 | | |
| Togo | 1993 | 5 | N/5 | N/5 | N/5 | – | 5 | 0 | | |
| Zimbabwe | 1980 | 5 | Y/4 | Y/6 | N/4 | N/5 | 6 | −1 | | |

*Sources*: Staffan I. Lindberg, *Democracy and Elections in Africa* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006); Patrick McGowan 'African Military Coups d'état, 1956–2001: Frequency, Trends and Distribution', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (2003), pp. 339–70; *Africa Confidential* (various issues); and Freedom House.

*Notes*: The columns show the beginning year of each regime, the initial coding of civil liberties (CL), each successive elections quality as free and fair (Y for 'yes') or not (N for 'no') as well as the ratings in terms of CL at the time of the election. There are also columns showing the CL rating at the last year of the study (2004) or at breakdown and a column for total CL change over the span of the regime. In cases when such a successful military intervention has occurred to the effect of bringing the CL rating down for the last year of the regime, we have used the previous year to code the CL rating at 'year of breakdown' in order to prevent causal endogenity. The two last columns provide information on military interventions.

*The initial rating on Civil Liberties is taken two years before holding of the first elections to ensure the liberalization process is not reflected in the rating. The exceptions are the cases of regimes following more or less immediately after an intervention, in which case we use the rating for the year of the intervention.

**Botswana's initial rating is taken from 1972, the first year of the Freedom House ratings.

## NOTES

1. Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).
2. Adam Przeworski, Michael Alvarez, José A. Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi, 'What Makes Democracies Endure?' *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1996), pp. 39–55. However, this relationship cannot be found in Africa; see, for example, Nicholas van de Walle, 'Africa's Range of Regimes,' *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2002), pp. 66–80, and chapter six in Staffan I. Lindberg, *Democracy and Elections in Africa* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).
3. Patrick McGowan, 'African Military Coups d'état, 1956–2001: Frequency, Trends and Distribution', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (2003), p. 364.
4. See, for instance, Chuka Onwumechili, *African Democratization and Military Coups* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), especially chapter 4, and George Klay Kieh and Pita Ogaba Agbese (eds), *The Military and Politics in Africa: From Engagement to Democratic and Constitutional Control* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), especially chapter 8 by Pita Ogaba Agbese, 'Democratic and Constitutional Control of the Military in Africa,' pp. 183–211. Both Onwumechili and Agbese concentrate on strategies for preventing military interventions.
5. Lindberg (note 2).
6. The principally different notion of objective, or formal, legitimacy such as in Thomas Nagel's *Equality and Partiality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 35 is based on the judgment of the observer that the people have 'no grounds for complaints'. Hence, it is not the people's views but the supposedly distant observers' assessment of formal procedures and processes that is being evaluated. Cast in Nagel's terms, the communist system in USSR at the time was fully legitimate since Russian researchers and leaders alike would concur the people had no grounds for complaint. Legitimacy is thus detached from the sentiments of others than the supposedly distant observer. This seems counter-intuitive to the general understanding of legitimacy. More importantly, as an attribute of democracy, legitimacy is morally disputable and logically inconsistent. The objectivist view is authoritarian and fails to recognize the sovereignty of the people. No matter what the majority of the people experience, the supposedly objective observer can judge if they should feel happy or not about the current state of affairs. The perspective seriously undermines the notion of self-government and can be used to justify morally unacceptable systems of rule.
7. Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. & ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958).
8. Samuel Decalo, *The Stable Minority: Civilian Rule in Africa* (Gainesville, FL: Florida Academic Press, 1998), pp. 49–101. Also see note 4, above.
9. David Beetham, *The Legitimation of Power* (London: Macmillan, 1991), p. 16.
10. See, for example, Andreas Schedler, 'Taking Uncertainty Seriously: The Blurred Boundaries of Democratic Transition and Consolidation', *Democratization*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (2001), pp. 1–22.
11. Michael Bratton, 'Second Elections in Africa', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (1998), pp. 51–66; and Lindberg (note 2).
12. Guillermo O'Donnell 'Illusions About Consolidation', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (1996), pp. 34–51; Samuel J. Valenzuela, 'Democratic Consolidation in Post-Transitional Settings: Notion, Process, and Facilitating Conditions', in Scott Mainwaring, Guillermo O'Donnell, and Samuel J. Valenzuela (eds), *Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective* (Notre Dame, IL: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992). For a similar critique to the one advanced in this article, see Giovanni Sartori, 'Guidelines for Conceptual Analysis' in Giovanni Sartori (ed.), *Social Science Concepts: A Systematic Analysis* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1984), p. 24 and Andreas Schedler, 'Measuring Democratic Consolidation', *Studies in Comparative International Development*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (2001), p. 67–8.
13. Guiseppe Di Palma, *To Craft Democracies: An Essay in Democratic Transition* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990), p. 141.
14. Juan J. Linz, 'The Perils of Presidentialism', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1990), pp. 51–69.
15. Juan J. Linz, 'Legitimacy of Democracy and the Socioeconomic System', in Mattei Dogan (ed.), *Comparing Pluralist Democracies: Strains on Legitimacy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988), pp. 65–97 and Larry Diamond, 'Three Paradoxes of Democracy', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (1990), pp. 48–61 and his *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).
16. Most countries in Africa have presidential regimes. Only Botswana, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Mauritius, and South Africa are parliamentary and for those countries we use the legislative elections.

17. We make an exception for the countries that in 1989 already practiced some form of multiparty elections (Botswana, Gambia, Mauritius, Madagascar, Senegal, and Zimbabwe). In order to capture their 'founding' election and thus be able to assess the liberal hypothesis, we track them further back in time.
18. Lindberg (note 2).
19. Freedom House ranks countries annually on a 1 to 7 scale in two categories, Political Rights and Civil Liberties. According to Freedom House, 'Civil liberties allow for the freedoms of expression and belief, associational and organizational rights, rule of law, and personal autonomy without interference from the state.' This language is used on the Freedom House website (www.freedomhouse.org) in the section on Methodology, accessed 10 July 2006.This is certainly a rough indicator of liberalization, but not an unreasonable one. Freedom House gives a higher score to regimes that *fail* to observe these rights and liberties for their citizens, so that a 7 represents the 'worst' score that a regime can get for its performance.
20. One of the ablest practitioners of this approach is Patrick McGowan (see note 3).
21. For instance, this was apparently the case with an alleged coup plot in Malawi in 2001. See 'Malawi: Brown Bounces Back,' *Africa Confidential*, Vol. 42, No. 7 (April 2001), p. 4.
22. In a few instances, regimes have broken down for other reasons. Although military intervention did not cause the breakdown, we have still coded the regime as broken down but the outcome is not included in the analysis of interventions.
23. McGowan (note 3), Appendix A, pp. 363–4.
24. It is only in the democratic category that we find a regime breakdown after a significant number of elections have been held. This was, again, the exceptional occurrence in Gambia in 1994.
25. Chris Allen, 'Republic of Benin: President Soglo Begins to Lose His Grip on Power', *Africa Contemporary Record. 1992–1994*, Vol. 24 (New York: Africana Publishing, 2000), B6. Italics added.
26. These events are presented and analyzed in Richard R. Marcus, 'The Fate of Madagascar's Democracy: Following the Rules while Eroding the Substance', in Leonardo Villalón and Peter von Doeep (eds), *The Fate of Africa's Democratic Experimen*ts (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), pp. 169–71.
27. Since President Dawda Jawara and his ruling party had one five consecutive elections beginning in 1970, however, there was some reason to doubt the competitiveness of Gambian democracy, despite its impressive Freedom House scores in the years leading up to the coup.
28. Peter da Costa, 'Out with the Old', *Africa Report*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (January–February 1995), p. 48.
29. See Malyn D. D. Newitt, 'São Tomé and Príncipe: Democracy Survives Continued Political Instability', *Africa Contemporary Record, 1994-1996*, Vol. 25 (New York: Africana Publishing, 2002), pp. 264–6.
30. Ibid., p. 266.
31. This also seems to support the old discussion about performance legitimacy initiated already by Seymour M. Lipset in 'Some Social Requisites for Democracy', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 53, No. 1 (March 1959), pp. 69–105.
32. See 'Fradique's New Front', *Africa Confidential*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (24 January 2003), p. 32.
33. See 'Desperados', *Africa Confidential*, Vol. 44, No. 15 (25 July 2003), p. 8.
34. See, for example, Michael Ross, 'Does Oil Hinder Democracy?' *World Politics*, Vol. 53 (April, 2001), pp. 325–61; Benjamin Smith, 'Oil Wealth and Regime Survival in the Developing World', *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (2004), pp. 232–46; and Terry Karl, *The Paradox of Plenty* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997).
35. See for example, Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Samuel Huntington (note 1), chapters 4 and 5; Joel Barkan, 'Protracted Transitions Among Africa's New Democracracies', *Democratization*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (2000), p. 235.

Manuscript accepted for publication September 2007

Address for correspondence: Staffan I. Lindberg, Dept. of Political Science and Center for African Studies, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida 32611, USA. E-mail: sil@ufl.edu. John F. Clark, Dept. of International Relations, Florida International University, University Park Campus, 11200 SW8th St., Miami, Florida 33199, USA. E-mail: clarkj@fiu.edu