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Publisher: Routledge

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## Commonwealth & Comparative Politics

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/fccp20>

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Published online: 06 Sep 2010.

To cite this article: J. Elklit & A. Reynolds (2002) The Impact of Election Administration on the Legitimacy of Emerging Democracies: A New Comparative Politics Research Agenda, *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 40:2, 86-119, DOI: [10.1080/713999584](https://doi.org/10.1080/713999584)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/713999584>

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# **The Impact of Election Administration on the Legitimacy of Emerging Democracies: A New Comparative Politics Research Agenda**

JØRGEN ELKLIT and ANDREW REYNOLDS

*This article seeks to push the development of a new sub-field of research in the field of democratisation and institutional design, namely the relationship between the institutionalisation of electoral politics – including the administration of elections – and the development of political legitimacy and democratic consolidation in new democracies. Focus is on the conduct of elections and research questions are formulated to enable us to gauge the effectiveness and contribution of election related institutional choices and the impact of various stages of the implementation process. An analysis of eight African countries reveals that individual experiences related to the conduct of elections appears to have a direct bearing on how the sense of political efficacy develops in individuals, and that this is an important factor behind the development of legitimacy and progression towards democratic consolidation.*

At the heart of democratisation attempts lie competitive elections, which are often held during times of societal stress and under imperfect logistical conditions characterised by administrative unreadiness. The relationship between the institutionalisation of electoral politics – in particular the administration of elections – and the emergence of democracy in the developing world is a much under-theorised component part of the study of democracy. This new avenue of research represents an important advance in the study of causal relationships which to date have been neglected in the democratisation canon. We conceptualise the quality of an election as the

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Commonwealth & Comparative Politics, Vol.40, No.2 (July 2002), pp.86–119  
PUBLISHED BY FRANK CASS, LONDON

extent to which political actors see the entire electoral process as legitimate and binding.

After more than a decade of global diffusion of multi-party competitive politics, it finally appears to have been recognised explicitly that the quality of electoral administration has a direct impact on the way in which elections in the developing world and their outcomes are regarded, not merely by international observers, but also – and more importantly – by domestic actors such as voters, parties, media and local observers.<sup>1</sup> These groups do not necessarily see things the same way; indeed their differential perceptions are useful as they allow us to gauge – at least partly – the reasons why different groups come out with variant judgements about the electoral exercise.

While the canon of literature is small, the importance of the quality of election administration both as a theoretical issue and at the management oriented and policy relevant level has been addressed as a general issue.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the importance of these issues has been illustrated by scholars working on recent development in, for example, Mexico<sup>3</sup> and Ghana where a dramatic improvement in election administration quality in 1996 was noted.<sup>4</sup>

The main focus here is on how institutional factors and institutional choices, and the ensuing administrative and political behaviour, contribute to the transition and the consolidation of new democracies. This inevitably leaves aside a whole array of other issues, which also influence the way in which the first democratic election is perceived and – later – the democratic regime accepted as ‘the only game in town’. Elections play a crucial role in this development, as they are a necessary condition for having some kind of democratic regime. We therefore focus specifically on the way in which elections are conducted and formulate our research questions so that they will enable us to gauge the effectiveness and positive contribution of institutional choices related to election management and the impact of various stages of the implementation processes.

Democratisation is brought about by a complicated interplay of factors which all impact both directly and indirectly on the unfolding of the transition and consolidation processes. This cocktail, while not our main concern here, values both structural, agency and international factors as well as an interwoven set of factors conditioning the consolidation process – civil society, political society, rule of law, functioning state bureaucracy and economic society.<sup>5</sup> Here, however, we focus on the importance of the institutional choices.

Diamond offers a causation model of democratisation where he crafts a complex web of causal systemic and individual level factors.<sup>6</sup> However, absent from his model is the character of the first transition. The

institutional choices made as part of the transition are only indirectly integrated, eg through the development and change of variables such as 'trust in political institutions' or 'party system institutionalisation'. But the choice of the institutions themselves, leading also to the developing party system, might have been incorporated as well.

In this context it is appropriate to mention the feeling of political efficacy, which individual citizens might experience and attribute, at least in part, to the democratic transition and the institutional choices connected with the transition. Such feelings are nourished when citizens believe that the new regime functions better than the previous one, ie, it is more responsive, considerate, effective and fair and provides increased channels of influence (however modest).

In sum, our claim is (1) that individual experiences in a number of fields related to the conduct of elections have a direct bearing on how the sense of political efficacy develops in individual citizens and (2) that this is an important factor behind the development of democratic legitimacy as well as a principled commitment to democracy, ie, progression towards democratic consolidation (even during the transition phase).

Two institutional variables of particular relevance are the balance between the executive and the legislative, ie, a more presidential or a more parliamentary system, and the choice of electoral system, defined as the seat allocation system. Sometimes a third element, the federal issue (or some other variant of the centralisation/decentralisation issue) is included. It is important, however, to remember that elections do not just happen and legislatures are not like manna falling from heaven. Elections are complicated processes, particularly when it comes to administration. Because it is not a given that they will run smoothly we argue that the quality of election administration be included among the factors, which must be studied and analysed carefully before any serious explanation of the level of sense of individual efficacy or its relation to the level of legitimacy in a post-authoritarian or emerging democratic system can be ventured.

Since our main concern is the contribution of the quality of electoral administration to the outcome of the electoral process, we are less concerned with definitions and categorisations of the various types and sub-types of democracy.<sup>7</sup> However, we find it useful to adhere to the procedural minimal definition and its three main components of contested elections, full suffrage and effective guarantees of civil liberties, which have gradually developed through the works of Schumpeter, Dahl and Diamond, Linz and Lipset.<sup>8</sup>

The article is structured in the following way: We begin by highlighting five factors central to the study of election administration, which underpin our proposed framework of analysis for the systematic evaluation of

electoral processes and administration. After describing the model we note the behavioural elements which need to be integrated into the study of implementation of election management decisions and actions. Then, to demonstrate possible applications of our framework, we focus on eight sub-Saharan African countries. Here we compare countries with similar electoral systems to see how different levels of election administration quality might impact on the perceived legitimacy of the electoral process. The empirical basis for the comparisons is presented in a summary of the eight cases, which is followed by a concluding section.

#### HOW TO ANALYSE ELECTION ADMINISTRATION?

How can electoral management (or administration) bodies (EMBs) be analysed and what are the constituent elements of such agencies? Further, how might one approach the concept of election administration quality? For our purpose, the trichotomy suggested by López-Pintor<sup>9</sup> appears to be a very reasonable way of categorising EMBs: (i) an office or agency within the civil service or government structure, most often in the Ministry of Home Affairs. This model is primarily found in older democracies in Western, industrialised countries (according to López-Pintor, this is the least numerous category), (ii) a model similar to (i), but under some supervisory authority (the second most numerous category), and (iii) a more or less independent and self-contained electoral management body (often termed Electoral Commission). This form of EMB is usually established under a board of directors with an implementing secretariat under a Chief Electoral Officer. This construction is found most often in new democracies, but also in countries like Australia, Canada and India (the variations of this form of EMB are several; the category covers a little more than half of all cases).

One should be particularly concerned about the following five factors in the analysis of election administration:

- **EMB Organisational Structure** – The organisational characteristics of the EMB have a bearing on the electoral process and the results of that process. How is the relationship between commission and head of staff regulated? Who is the stronger personality, the Commission Chair or the CEO? Are commissioners on good terms among themselves or do internal tensions surface? Such questions are particularly pertinent if the commission is composed of representatives of political parties, but also in situations where commissioners may feel some kind of commitment towards some of the political actors – or are seen as having such attachment. A similar problem exists when commission members are appointed to represent ethnic groups.

- Independence from Political Forces – A perceived lack of independence, oftentimes raised by loosing electoral contestants in need of a scapegoat, is sometimes so serious that it taints the legitimacy of the entire electoral process.<sup>10</sup> Elections in Kenya are here a particular case in point.<sup>11</sup> ‘Level of independence’ is difficult to measure, as necessary evidence is only rarely available for public scrutiny, but perceptions about EMB independence are in any case almost as important as the actual, but indiscernible, level of independence as perceptions might be the basis for actions and counter-actions by political actors at all levels. Examples of how difficult it can be for opposition parties to substantiate claims about EMB dependency are Lesotho 1998 and Tanzania 1995.
- Internal EMB Motivations – Narrow organisational interests can also play a role, ie, the interest among commissioners and staff in seeing *their* organisation prosper and grow, with more staff, more resources, better facilities, more successes – even at the cost of other organisations. This leads to an organisational interest in taking over functions which could just as well be handled by other state agencies, such as issuance of identity cards, education of voters, delimitation and mapping of constituencies and publication of electoral statistics.
- EMB Staff Motivations – Individual interests also play a role. Fights over salaries, per diems, allowances and working hours are in abundance. The pursuit of such interests can compromise the organisation’s ability to deliver within restricted budgets and narrow timelines.
- EMB Transparency – The level of transparency in the work of the EMB is another important, but often overlooked, factor. When parties and voters are given some insights into the basis for decision-making, they tend to accept EMB decisions more willingly. In Ghana (1996) and South Africa (1994 and 1999) a policy of open information contributed substantially to the broad acceptance of results – and therefore to the high level of legitimacy,<sup>12</sup> while the policy of non-transparency of the Kenyan commission in 1992 contributed markedly to the low level of acceptance of that commission’s work.

Following Kimberling,<sup>13</sup> we subdivide the electoral process into a number of basic steps, which are at the same time constitutive and largely chronological. In our model each step consists of from two to six elements. For a systematic analysis of an electoral process, each element must be precisely operationalised and the election management system’s

performance measured. As a minimum, one should at least be able to say whether performance in relation to a particular element is satisfactory or not. Table 1 presents the framework for the systematic evaluation of the electoral process and the electoral administration. The framework is intended to be general, so it can be used as a basis for scrutinising the work of EMBs in all kinds of elections and all kinds of post-authoritarian, more or less democratic regimes.

The first two columns of Table 1 give the 12 basic steps in the electoral-administrative process and the 47 elements into which these steps are subdivided. The fourth column attempts to identify the output of each step, ie, it identifies the immediate, identifiable objective of the particular activity. The fifth column lists the indicators of performance we propose to study, while the sixth and final column identifies indicators to gauge the effectiveness or success of each step. We have little doubt that the formulations and terminology of the table – as well as its specific content – will continue to be a matter of discussion and challenge, but we believe we have at least identified the crucial elements.

One striking feature of Table 1 is that what many see as the quintessential act of electing – polling itself – is only Step 8. This emphasises that the outcome of the polling process depends on how well the seven preceding steps in the electoral process have been conducted. This has only recently begun to be understood by the majority of democratisation support policy-makers and election advisors and the same holds true for election monitors. Indeed, a level playing field in place well in advance of polling is a decisive element in approaching something, which might be defined as a free and fair election.<sup>14</sup>

#### IMPLEMENTATION OF ELECTION MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

The implementation of the institutional choices, which were decided on during the transition phase is instrumental in determining the outputs and the outcomes of the entire process. Implementation has sometimes been disregarded in policy studies, but we expect that the implementation model suggested by Winter might be a useful tool in coming to grips with the processes and factors, which interact to produce the implementation results of election administration systems.<sup>15</sup>

According to Winter, the implementation process has three major behavioural elements, intra- and inter-organisational behaviour, street-level bureaucracy behaviour and target group behaviour. The interplay between the EMB and other organisations with election related functions is of paramount importance for the outcome of the election management process. If an organisation other than the EMB is in charge of issuance of identity

TABLE 1  
FRAMEWORK FOR SYSTEMATIC EVALUATION OF ELECTORAL PROCESS AND ADMINISTRATION

Steps in electoral process	Important elements in step	Provisions in case	Outputs of process	Indicators of performance	Elements to look at to gauge effectiveness/success of step
1. Legal framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constitutional/legal basis</li> <li>• Rules &amp; Regulations</li> <li>• Seat allocation system</li> </ul>	•	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written rules in constitutional, statutory law, and regulatory law</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elections held and on time</li> <li>• Wasted votes</li> <li>• LSQ Ids</li> <li>• ENEP/ENPP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is legislation easily available and understandable?</li> <li>• Perceived legitimacy of electoral system?</li> </ul>
2. Election management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EC appointment and independence, including terms of tenure</li> <li>• Commission/administration relationship</li> <li>• Allocation of resources</li> </ul>	•	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Functioning EC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EC activities</li> <li>• Consumption of resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived legitimacy/acceptance of EC by parties &amp; voters</li> <li>• Adequacy of resources allocated</li> <li>• Accessibility/transparency</li> </ul>
3. Constituency and polling district demarcation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant body identified and active</li> <li>• Principles for delimitation identified</li> <li>• Rules about automatic periodical revision</li> <li>• Adequate resources available</li> <li>• Rules for handling complaints in place</li> </ul>	•	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifiable constituencies (in accordance with the electoral system chosen) and registration and polling districts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessibility of information about constituencies and lower level districts</li> <li>• Malapportionment</li> <li>• Compactness</li> <li>• Geographical Sensitivity</li> <li>• Communities of interest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the boundaries accepted?</li> <li>• Are they temporally sensitive?</li> </ul>



TABLE 1 CONTINUED

Steps in electoral process	Important elements in step	Provisions in case	Outputs of process	Indicators of performance	Elements to look at to gauge effectiveness/success of step
<b>4. Voter education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timing</li> <li>• Quality</li> <li>• Outreach</li> <li>• Adequate resources available</li> <li>• Relationship between EC effort and efforts by parties and NGOs</li> </ul>	•	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voter education sessions conducted</li> <li>• % voters exposed to voter education (related to literacy rates and to literacy rates and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of ballots spoilt or invalid</li> <li>• Resources per capita spent (related to literacy rates and previous voting experience)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scope/extent/penetration into marginalized communities</li> <li>• Adequacy of resources allocated</li> <li>• Are voter education efforts by various groups complementary or overlapping?</li> </ul>
<b>5. Voter registration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Automatic or voluntary registration</li> <li>• Appointment and training of registration personnel</li> <li>• Adequate time for registration and access to registration stations</li> <li>• Rules for public scrutiny of voters' register</li> <li>• Complaints procedures</li> </ul>	•	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Registered voters</li> <li>• Co-ordination of voter register with polling districts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Registration/VAP</li> <li>• Pattern of registration/VAP across regions, ethnicity, gender, age, etc.</li> <li>• # of complaints filed</li> <li>• % of complaints processed prior to issuance of final voters' register</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level of registration</li> <li>• Equality of registration across the country</li> <li>• Complaints procedures</li> </ul>

TABLE 1 CONTINUED

Steps in electoral process	Important elements in step	Provisions in case	Outputs of process	Indicators of performance	Elements to look at to gauge effectiveness/success of step
<b>6. Access to, and design of, the ballot: Nomination and registration of parties and candidates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Registration of parties/candidates</li> <li>• Rules about independent candidates</li> <li>• Mechanisms for ballot paper access</li> <li>• Ballot paper design</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parties and candidates registered and nominated for participation in the election</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of parties registered of those who in good faith sought registration</li> <li>• % of candidates nominated of those who in good faith sought nomination</li> <li>• Disputes over ballot paper design/spoilt ballots</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is access to the ballot inclusive of the diversity of political opinions?</li> <li>• Were parties and candidates rejected for no obvious, legal reason?</li> <li>• Acceptance of ballot paper design?</li> </ul>
<b>7. Campaign regulation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spending rules</li> <li>• Public funding of party expenditures/campaign costs</li> <li>• Access to public media</li> <li>• Rules for meetings/rallies</li> <li>• Codes of conduct</li> <li>• Rules for handling of violations of code of conduct and campaign regulations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political parties and candidates having media access to the electorate</li> <li>• A code of conduct, which is accepted by all political parties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Air time allocated to and used by the political parties and the independent candidates</li> <li>• # of substantiated complaints about violations of campaign regulations, spending rules etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acceptable distribution of public campaign funding, if any?</li> <li>• Do funding laws facilitate a level playing field?</li> <li>• Reasonable equal access to public media?</li> </ul>

TABLE 1 CONTINUED

Steps in electoral process	Important elements in step	Provisions in case	Outputs of process	Indicators of performance	Elements to look at to gauge effectiveness/success of step
<b>8. Polling</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for distribution and location of polling places</li> <li>• Appointment and training of polling station personnel</li> <li>• Procurement of polling material</li> <li>• Polling observation by representatives of political parties and candidates as well as by local and international organisations</li> <li>• Security and integrity of polling</li> <li>• Clear rules for assistance to incapacitated voters</li> </ul>	•	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unhindered and reasonable access to voting for all voters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turnout as vote/registration</li> <li>• Turnout as vote/VAP</li> <li>• % of polling stations operating</li> <li>• % of polling stations which lack integrity</li> <li>• % of constituencies (wards/polling stations) where polling was invalidated</li> <li>• % of re-run elections</li> <li>• % of first-time voters who turned out to vote</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are polling places in place?</li> <li>• Do they function in accordance with their expected role?</li> <li>• Do they function adequately?</li> <li>• Are polling station personnel able to fulfil their role?</li> <li>• Are polling places secure?</li> <li>• Are procedures for observation functioning?</li> </ul>
<b>9. Counting and tabulating the vote</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counting procedures established (including whether to count at polling station level or at counting centres)</li> <li>• Availability of counting results to party agents and others at the lowest level of counting immediately after completing the count</li> <li>• Access for interested parties to observe the count and request a recount</li> </ul>	•	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A complete account of the vote, aggregated according to relevant rules and needs</li> <li>• A complete list of persons elected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of complaints</li> <li>• # of individual recounts undertaken</li> <li>• time elapsed before the conclusion of the count and announcement of results</li> <li>• incidence of incorrectly allocated seats</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are ballot papers counted in accordance with the law (including regulations about what constitutes an invalid ballot)?</li> <li>• Are special ballots assessed on their merits?</li> <li>• Is the count conducted without delay?</li> <li>• Are observation rules followed?</li> <li>• Are interested parties provided with a copy of the counting tallies?</li> </ul>

TABLE 1 CONTINUED

Steps in electoral process	Important elements in step	Provisions in case	Outputs of process	Indicators of performance	Elements to look at to gauge effectiveness/success of step
<b>10. Resolving election related disputes and complaints. Verification of final results. Certification</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provisions for a special electoral court and/or adjudication system</li> <li>Time limits for handling election disputes and complaints</li> <li>Verification of final results</li> <li>Certification of the election</li> </ul>	•	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Settling of all election related complaints and disputes not handled by the EC and the electoral administration</li> <li>Verification of the election</li> <li>A certification decision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># and nature of complaints</li> <li>% accepted</li> <li>Time elapsed before the last complaint or electoral court case is settled</li> <li>Elected body having its first meeting at the time foreseen in legislation (if any)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is an adjudication system available?</li> <li>Are electoral court cases and complaints handled efficiently and without delay?</li> <li>Does verification follow the guiding law?</li> </ul>
<b>11. Election result implementation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Procedures for taking office</li> </ul>	•	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seats filled in accordance with results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of seats not taken by those properly elected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why do elected candidates not take office?</li> </ul>
<b>12. Post-election procedures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provisions for publication of election results at all levels of election</li> <li>Election management body subject to ordinary accounting</li> </ul>	•	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Easily accessible and well documented election statistic</li> <li>Accounting reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time before electoral statistics are publicly available</li> <li>Statement by accountants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are election results (at all levels) made available to all interested parties and persons without delay?</li> </ul>

*Note:* '#' signifies 'number'.

cards (not voter registration cards issued as a proof of valid registration) and these identity cards play an important role in the registration exercise, then the relationship between the two organisations will unavoidably influence the process (as in Zambia in 1991 and 1996 and in South Africa 1998–99).

Other such agencies might be the constituency and polling district delimitation agency, the media, the government printer, or the government computer centre. It goes without saying that the relationship between the EMB and the police/military is a particularly sensitive one.<sup>16</sup> Police interference in the electoral process has often come at the point of the issuance of rally and march permits, where the concern for ‘public order’ has often been the official excuse for not allowing opposition parties the right to organise such events in time (Zimbabwe is here just one case in point).

Similarly, there is a complex relationship between EMB and civil society. Often, a plethora of NGOs – domestic as well as foreign – participate in voter education, election monitoring, etc in new democracies. If the relationship between civil society and the EMB is smooth and constructive, NGOs can contribute considerably and positively to the outcome of the electoral process. If the relationship is tenser, the contribution of NGOs becomes more problematic.

The relationship between the EMB and foreign providers of election and democracy related support is a particularly delicate one, especially if the EMB feels its performance capacity is being underestimated by the foreigners. These external NGOs are also in a strong bargaining position because they command much-needed funds and sometimes even have direct government access. The external pressures can complicate decision-making processes considerably, especially if the EMB tries to establish itself and be seen as an independent body.<sup>17</sup>

Second, in the context of election administration, street-level bureaucracy is primarily the registration station, the nomination office and the polling station personnel. In relation to street-level bureaucratic behaviour, election staff varies considerably both in formal and informal qualifications and in professional dedication. Differences in norms, interests, attitudes and behaviour within these groups – which in some countries involve hundreds of thousands of men and women (in India even millions) – cannot but influence outputs and outcomes.

Target group behaviour is the third kind of implementation behaviour to consider. In this context the primary target group is the voters, but other target groups, which should also be considered, are political parties and candidates. Target group behaviour is a function of a number of factors, including individual and collective motivation, interest and information about rules and regulations, policy options and party and candidate choices.

The least privileged groups in society are also least likely to be reached by information about elections, registration rules, different party agendas, etc. A pilot study of gender differences in registering for voting in six by-elections in Tanzania in 1999 showed that in some constituencies only about one-third of the registered were women.<sup>18</sup> One might expect gender differences pointing in the same direction in other societies where women are still suffering from cultural and social suppression.

In conclusion, we expect implementation factors to have considerable explanatory value when it comes to understanding how election management policy decisions relate to the output of the electoral processes. This will have a strong bearing on the outcome of the process, which is the eventual effects on democratisation, legitimacy and consolidation and this may well turn out to be an area where personal agency factors are particularly important. The behaviour of individuals – and of collective and organisational actors – are in any case central factors in explaining and understanding how the electoral management policy is implemented.

#### A PILOT STUDY OF EIGHT SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN COUNTRIES AND THEIR ELECTIONS

The remainder of this article engages in a pilot study in order to develop a methodology, which subsequently can be applied to a more comprehensive research project. In order to control – at least in part – the influence of contextual factors, we focus on countries from one geographic region only. The reason for this strategic choice is that we envisage differences between the functioning of election management bodies and electoral systems in different parts of the world.<sup>19</sup> For similar reasons, we only compare countries with majoritarian seat allocation systems with other countries with majoritarian systems and likewise for countries using proportional representation systems.

The eight Sub-Saharan African countries we are looking at have a considerable number of socio-economic, cultural, and historical factors in common. Our approach thus provides us with a partial control for the influence of such factors. Furthermore, we select countries according to whether their electoral management processes were relatively good or relatively poor, according to our own as well as other observers' judgements. This kind of strategic choice is necessary to ensure that there is some variation in the independent variable, which might then explain, partly at least, the development of individual political efficacy and probably also the level of political legitimacy.

The methodological challenge is then to establish a causal link between (1) the election management quality variable in all its dynamic complexity,

(2) the perceptions of election management quality, both at the level of the political elite and among the electorate at large, and (3) the eventual impact of such perceptions on the legitimacy of the transition and consolidation processes. Political developments in Ghana are illustrative: observers and commentators on Ghanaian electoral politics agree on the positive development from 1992 to 1996 (and thereafter) and point to a number of specific measures which contributed to this development.<sup>20</sup>

In relation to each of our four categories (PR + high performance of election administration; PR + low performance; FPTP [first-past-the-post] + high performance; FPTP + low performance) we at least look at two countries to decrease the risk of falling victims of unintended consequences of choosing countries with abnormal values. The choice of pilot countries is given in Table 2 together with their electoral systems and the overall rating of the election management quality. The 1992 elections in Ghana were characterised by poor election management, while 1996 was a case of considerable and intended improvement. We therefore treat these elections as separate cases, in the same way as we treat the two Zambian and the two Mozambican electoral processes as separate cases, because of their decline in election management quality from the first to the second election. The ensuing mixture of conflated country cases and individual election cases is, in our opinion, acceptable because we are dealing with a pilot study that seeks to illustrate the different problems one encounters with this kind of project.

So far, we have only included two output and outcome variables in Table 2. One of them is, however, a most central performance indicator from Step 8 (polling) in Table 1. The reason for including this variable (voter turnout compared to estimated voting age population, VAP) is that it not only measures voter turnout, but also indirectly includes voter registration, which is probably the best single indicator of election management quality. In this regard the picture is clear, as the turnout/VAP indicator under both electoral systems tends to be higher for countries with good electoral administration systems than for other countries. While being aware of the risk of circularity in our argument, it should be remembered that we are looking at indicators of election management quality as an independent variable, of which voter turnout/VAP is but an indicator, while the dependent variables are the perceptions discussed below. It is satisfying that differences in the combination of (perceived) election management quality and turnout/VAP are as expected in almost all cases under scrutiny.

It contributes to our confidence in the results that differences between the electoral systems do not explain the differences in turnout/VAP, as the differences are clearly related to levels of management quality. This interpretation is based on expectations developed from studies of

TABLE 2  
EIGHT COUNTRY CASES AND THEIR PERFORMANCE ON SELECTED VARIABLES

Seat allocation system	Overall evaluation of election	Country and election year(s)	Vote turnout/ VAP	Perceived legitimacy of the electoral process among relevant political actors
First past the post	Higher	Ghana 1996	0.78	High
		Botswana 1965–99 (8 elections)	0.46	High
	Lower	Ghana 1992	0.30	Low
		Tanzania 1995	0.52	Middle
		Tanzania 2000	0.54	Middle
		Zambia 1991	0.39	Middle
		Zambia 1996	0.29	Low
		Zambia 2001	0.39	Low
Proportional representation	Higher	South Africa 1994, 1999	0.77	High
		Mozambique 1994	0.66	High
	Lower	Sierra Leone 1996	0.37	Low
		Burkina Faso 1998	0.41	Low
		Mozambique 1999	0.50	Low

differences in turnout between electoral systems, even though these studies primarily focus on industrialised countries.<sup>21</sup> The only case, which differs from the general pattern, is Botswana, where we are looking at a much longer time period. However, long-term changes in registration and participation patterns mean that the average value in Table 2 actually reflects the value of recent elections in Botswana. Another case to mention is Burkina Faso, where Table 3 reveals that the effective number of parties in parliament (ENPP) is as low as 1.8 and 1.2, which is at the same level as in countries using FPTP. The explanation is that elections in Burkina Faso are primarily being conducted in small constituencies, with 31 of 45 constituencies returning only one or two MPs and only six constituencies returning more than three MPs.<sup>22</sup> Clearly, such a system will tend to perform like a FPTP system.

The second variable (the last column of Table 2) is the central outcome variable of the study, the perceived legitimacy of the electoral process. The intention is to present what in our judgement is the general, overall conclusion among relevant political actors – the electorate at large, the political parties and the candidates – as to the legitimacy of the entire electoral process. This variable therefore links the process of electoral management and institutionalisation to the general transition and consolidation processes of the new democratic regime. We realise that we



TABLE 3  
PROPORTIONALITY, PARTY FRAGMENTATION, SPOILT BALLOTS AND PARTICIPATION

	Year	LSQ ID	ENPP	% spoilt and invalid	% of VAP registered	Vote/ registered	Vote/VAP
<i>FPTP-High</i>	Ghana	1996	10.3	1.9	1.5	78.2%	
	Botswana	1965	8.3	1.2	—	—	69%
		1969	7.4	1.6	—	54.7%	37%
		1974	6.7	1.4	—	68%	31.2%
		1979	12.6	1.2	—	84%	55.2%
		1984	11.5	1.4	—	84%	77.6%
		1989	22.9	1.2	—	70%	68.2%
		1994	10.2	1.8	—	58%	76.6%
		1999	20.9	1.4	5.7	73.3%	45%
							46%
<i>FPTP-Lower</i>	Ghana	1992	16.1	1.1	—	28.1%	—
	Tanzania	1995	19.0	1.5	5.5	68%	76.7%
		2000	12.6	1.6	—	67%	81.0%
	Zambia	1991	8.5	1.4	3.4	87%	44.4%
		1996	21.2	1.3	4.8	49%	58.7%
		2001	16.3	3.0	1.9	56%	68.7%
							39%
<i>PR-High</i>	South Africa	1994	0.4	2.2	0.8	NA	NA
		1999	0.2	2.1	1.5	76%	89.3%
	Mozambique	1994	7.7	2.1	11.7	75%	87.9%
<i>PR-Lower</i>	Sierra Leone	1996	4.0	3.8	NA	74%	50.1%
	Burkina Faso	1992	25.7	1.8	3.3	33.8%	33.8%
		1997	24.2	1.2	3.8	44.1%	44.1%
	Mozambique	1999	6.6	1.9	14.5	74%	68.1%

Notes: LSQ ID = Least Squares Index of disproportionality  
ENPP = Effective Number of Political Parties  
VAP = Voting Age Population.

here include a somewhat impressionistic and *ad hoc* element in the analysis, but at the moment that is the best one can do.<sup>23</sup>

Some indicators of the performance of the eight electoral systems are given in Table 3. The table is relatively clear in the differences between the four categories. The percentage of spoilt ballots is not in itself a defining measure, but it is an indicator of the combined quality of voter education, ballot paper design and counting instructions (including rules for acceptance of cast votes). The lowest level of spoilt ballot papers was found in South Africa in 1994, which was partly a result of a conscious effort by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) to avoid disenfranchising new and/or illiterate voters by being overly strict when scrutinising ballot papers during counting. In sum, our more legitimate FPTP elections gave rise to a spoilt percentage of 3.6 on average, while the equivalent PR elections had a 4.6 per cent rate. Less legitimate FPTP elections had a spoilt paper rate of 4.0 per cent, while low performing PR elections averaged 7.2 per cent.

Table 3 also illustrates a pattern of increased disproportionality between votes and seats in the more highly contested and disputed elections. The Gallagher index of disproportionality<sup>24</sup> was on average 12.3 in the high quality FPTP cases, but 15.6 in the low cases. One would expect much lower levels in all PR elections, but here we found a marked difference: 2.8 in the high performing cases, 15.2 in the low (this value is influenced by the two Burkina Faso cases). Last, the degree of parliamentary party fragmentation (or concentration) does not relate to the election management quality: in high FPTP cases, the ENPP averages out at 1.4, in low cases at 1.6. In high PR cases the ENPP is 2.1, in low 2.2.

#### SUMMARY OF CASES

##### *Ghana*

After the ban on political parties had been lifted in mid-1992, in compliance with the Constitution accepted in the April 1992 referendum, presidential elections were held in November. The opposition parties claimed that the election was rigged, even though international observers primarily noted 'the usual technical problems' so often seen in African elections. The opposition, however, felt strongly about the issue and decided to boycott the parliamentary elections in December, which were therefore easily won by President Rawling's party, the National Democratic Congress (NDC). The distrust between the government and the opposition after the 1992 elections was widespread, even though the factual basis for the opposition's claims is difficult to establish.

Nevertheless, the situation before the December 1996 elections convincingly demonstrates that African electoral commissions, and their management styles, can have a major impact on the legitimacy of the outcome of elections.<sup>25</sup> Two major preconditions for the shift from 1992 to 1996 were the determination of the Electoral Commission to do better in 1996 than in 1992 and the availability of funding, partly from donors, which allowed the commission to provide better solutions.

The electoral system and the stipulations about the appointment of the EC (by the President in consultation with the Council of State) were not changed and after December 1996 there were also those who had misgivings about the EC (Steps 1 and 2).<sup>26</sup> But the more important feature of the management process before the 1996 elections was the EC willingness to engage actively in confidence-building, eg, through the establishment of an 'Inter-Party Advisory Committee', which became a major vehicle for the development of a transparent management style, where party grievances were addressed before they became serious allegations against the EC.

Another major contribution to the creation of a high level of general acceptance of the election was that the opposition's 1992 complaints were taken into consideration when the 1996 elections were being prepared. A new electoral roll was put together and considerable effort and skill was used to make it as inclusive and comprehensive as possible – and enough time was left to check the provisional version of the roll. Registration stations were staffed by both government and opposition party agents who were given the same training as EC registration personnel (Step 5).<sup>27</sup> In a similar vein, better and more dedicated voter education activities, counting at polling station level and issuance of copies of the result tally to party agents, party agents present at most polling stations and provision of transparent ballot boxes and small cardboard screens, which provided for secrecy without letting the voter out of sight, were evidence of the new attitude of the Electoral Commission (Steps 8 and 9).

There was substantial agreement among all observers on the commendable work of the Ghanaian EC before and during the 1996 elections. The opposition could not reasonably question the result of the election and the two defeated presidential candidates even congratulated the winner publicly, a dramatic shift from 1992. In sum, the Ghanaian 1996 elections were a demonstration of the impact that good election management can have on the legitimacy of the election result and the development towards a more consolidated democracy, by contributing to the ordinary voters' perceptions of the quality of the election.<sup>28</sup>

*Botswana*

There is widespread agreement, at least in scholarly literature, that Botswana's eight general elections since 1965 have been among the most free and fair on the continent.<sup>29</sup> Participation of those registered to vote has been maintained at a fairly high level (see Table 3), although registration rates have declined markedly since the 1970s and 1980s. Wiseman and Charlton, however, put this down to apathy rather than to administrative inefficiency.<sup>30</sup>

If there have been criticisms of a flawed process they have come in the following areas: the electoral system (Step 1) over-represents the governing Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), under-represents the fragmented opposition and fails to provide the space needed for new parties to insert themselves into the political discourse. Nevertheless, unease with the electoral system has not been translated into dissatisfaction with the administration of elections themselves. When there have been questions of administrative legitimacy they have come in the areas of voter registration (Step 8), campaign regulation (Step 7), district delimitation (Step 3), ballot design (Step 6) and the general area of election management (Step 2).

Registration in Botswana has been criticised on two levels: first, the declining percentage of voters actually enrolled and the ability to register without proof of age (at least before 1994) and, second, the lack of an absentee vote until 1999, which used to exclude a large number of Botswana from voting as they worked in neighbouring countries, especially South Africa. There are also claims that the uneven financial playing field, which leaves the ruling BDP with in-built advantages in campaign resources, has been compounded by the BDP illegally accepting foreign campaign contributions.<sup>31</sup> In the area of districting, up until 1994, urban areas were seriously under-represented and this was where the opposition drew most of its strength. In 1999 there was some question about ballot design as the country for the first time moved from a 'disc in envelope' system to a printed ballot paper. The 5.7 per cent spoilt ballot paper rate in 1999 was high, but as records had not been kept in previous elections it is difficult to ascertain whether the change in the vote casting method had increased the spoilt rate. Lastly, in 1994 over 70 per cent of voters were in favour of establishing an independent, all-party commission to supervise elections, as opposed to the existing practice of government-run elections.<sup>32</sup> Consequently, a number of changes, including the establishment of an Independent Electoral Commission, lowering of the voting age to 18 and other improvements were implemented prior to the 1999 elections.

However, despite earlier criticisms, the legitimacy of Botswana's electoral process is perceived to be high both domestically and externally.

Voter education has been strong and the election office produces a substantial voter guidebook at each election, which describes the purposes of elections, how to register and how to vote, as well as the details of parties, candidates and leaders. Finally, Botswana is notable for actually putting into practice and accepting judicial review of election disputes.

### *Tanzania*

The 1995 first multi-party elections in Tanzania (including Zanzibar) in more than three decades suffered from a number of logistical problems. One problem was that the political discourse after the Nyalili-report did not entail a broad, inclusive discussion about constitutional or electoral law issues. The incumbent party, Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM), did not appear very interested in addressing the issues brought to the fore, such as the requirements for party registration, the different mainland and Zanzibar residence requirements for registration and constituency sizes, the fact that independents could not stand for election, the appointment rules for the National Election Commission (NEC), the vagueness and inconsistencies of electoral legislation, etc.<sup>33</sup> Some confusion over appointment of presiding officers and lower level electoral staff was probably unavoidable, but it contributed to the picture of weak management. A major point of contention during the preparation phase was the insufficient and delayed allocation of funds from the Treasury, which made NEC planning difficult and had as a consequence NEC dependence on donor support for the conduct of the elections (Steps 1 and 2).

The NEC is responsible for delimitation and a number of constituencies were changed prior to the 1995 election. Accusations over the delimitation are difficult to substantiate, but contributed to the opposition parties' perception of the NEC as being biased (Steps 2 and 3).<sup>34</sup> Voter education, both by NEC and civil society, was less than adequate (Step 4), so it was no surprise that registration was slow and the registration period had to be prolonged by ten days.<sup>35</sup> While the NEC claimed that some 80 per cent of the voting age population registered, the actual figure was only about 68 per cent. The same level of registration (about 67 per cent) was seen before the October 2000 elections.

Polling in 1995 was marred by logistical problems in the Dar es Salaam region, where elections had to be re-run in all seven constituencies, while the picture around the rest of the country differed. However, counting of the votes for the Zanzibar presidential election was evidently flawed and there is little doubt that this particular election was rigged during counting. Unfortunately, once the result of a presidential election (Union or Zanzibar) has been officially declared, no complaint can be filed, in itself a rather dubious rule (Steps 8 and 9). Complaints can, however, be filed in

parliamentary races and such complaints have flooded the legal system until the end of 1999, where the last reruns finally took place to settle disputes after the election four years ago (Step 10).

The general verdict about the quality of the election administration quality and the freeness and fairness of the 1995 elections is still being debated. Some of the experiences from 1995 were used to improve NEC's performance during the October 2000 elections, which were on the mainland considered of higher quality than the 1995 elections.<sup>36</sup> However, in Zanzibar the 2000 elections were a disaster. Polling materials arrived very late at polling stations on the islands of Pemba and Unguja and three employees of the Zanzibar Elections Commission were arrested in connection with the disappearance of ballot papers (Step 8). This led to the nullification and re-running of polling in 16 constituencies in Zanzibar and the chaotic situation led all opposition leaders to boycott the swearing in of Mkapa as President.

Before the October 2000 elections the CCM government had been slow in responding to suggestions intended to improve NEC capacity to deliver a better election than in 1995 and the opposition parties appeared weaker and more divided than ever before the elections of 2000. The various problems experienced in 1995 and 2000 still colour the perceptions of most opposition party representatives – and consequently the legitimacy of the incumbent government.

### *Zambia*

The perceived level of legitimacy associated with the 1991 Zambian elections was relatively high despite a low registration rate and subsequent low turnout. There were logistical failures on polling day, incidents of violence and intimidation during the campaign and misuse of state apparatus by the United National Independence Party (UNIP) government. On the whole, the elections went smoothly, which led independent observers to say that the electoral authorities had conducted successful and credible elections.<sup>37</sup>

The chief flaws in the process originated from the legal framework (Step 1), campaign regulation (Step 7) and polling operations (Step 8), but none of these mishaps were serious enough to call into question the general validity of the elections. Indeed, the transfer of power from the old one-party regime of Kenneth Kaunda to the new 'Multi-Party Democracy' movement of Frederick Chiluba was enough to legitimise the process in itself. On election day, the electoral authorities 'transported the ballot boxes, conducted the count, and transmitted the results with relatively few serious problems'.<sup>38</sup> However, polling itself was characterised by a number of logistical failures. Some polling stations did not open in time, some ran out

of supplies and many had invalid equipment and were unable to follow the electoral code in full. Nevertheless, it was believed that the overall results did in fact reflect the general will of the Zambian people.

However, the assessment of the 1996 elections is different, as they were characterised by electoral administrative collapse and manipulation of the legal framework (Step 1). In May of 1996 Chiluba's government passed into law a highly controversial constitutional amendment which, among other things, barred Kenneth Kaunda and his UNIP deputy from standing for the presidency and changed the presidential electoral system from a majority to a plurality system. These clauses precipitated the UNIP's boycott of the November 1996 parliamentary and presidential elections.

Overall, the general environment in the lead up to the 1996 polls was far from being conducive to a 'free and fair election'.<sup>39</sup> The Electoral Commission remained under the firm control of the government in the office of the Vice-President and there was a severe misallocation of media space between political parties (Steps 2 and 7). In 1996 there were serious flaws in almost all the steps of the electoral process. There was government restriction on freedom of expression and assembly (Step 7), duplication of national registration cards (Step 5) and partisan politicisation of voter education (Step 4). Equally disturbing was the failure of a scheme to increase voter registration from the low levels of 1991 (Step 5). In 1995 the government contracted an Israeli firm, NIKUV, to conduct a registration exercise at the cost of US\$18 million. The registration process was complex and required two trips to a registration centre, which led to the exclusion of millions of voters in rural and inaccessible areas. Activities were also concentrated in the rainy season which doubled the difficulties and eventually, after two extensions of the registration period the voters roll consisted of 2.3 million names, 600,000 less than in 1991 and only half of the estimated 4.6 million Zambians of voting age. When registration cards were issued in August 1996 there were so many reports of irregularities that UNIP took the issue to court and were only defeated by the judges ruling that too much money had already been spent on the NIKUV operation to abandon the scheme.

As a result of the UNIP boycott and general alienation from the political system by the electorate, on the day only just over a million Zambians voted in the presidential and parliamentary elections, ie, less than 30 per cent of the eligible electorate. However, even the validity of these low figures was brought into doubt with allegations of widespread multiple voting. Local observer groups claimed that the elections had been fraudulent.

If anything, administrative failures multiplied in the 'third' multi-party Zambian election of November 2001. President Chiluba had been forced by his party not to suspend the constitution and to go for a third term, but his

heir apparent, Levy Mwanawasa of the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD), still made great use of the state controlled media and bureaucracy to tip the playing field (Step 7). The voters roll had only reached 2.6 million (or 56 per cent of the voting age population – Step 5) although turnout in the context of a much more competitive election rose to 68 per cent. However, on polling day there were logistical failings in about one-quarter of polling stations surveyed by the Carter Center, incidents of intimidation by MMD officials and *ad hoc* closing of polling stations after the official end of poll (Step 8). The delegation also noted serious concerns about the tabulation of results and their communication to the Electoral Commission command centre in Lusaka (Step 9).<sup>40</sup> The closeness of the presidential race – 28 per cent for Mwanawasa versus 27 per cent for his chief rival, Anderson Mazoka, and the fact that there was no provision for a run-off – meant that these logistical failings bred huge suspicion on behalf of the opposition parties, suspicions which are now articulated in demonstrations against the incumbent President and legal challenges to his authority (Step 10).

### *South Africa*

The 1994 and 1999 post-Apartheid national elections are interesting cases to study, as they both had various technical flaws (1994 more so than 1999), but the results were nevertheless generally accepted by all – voters, parties, international observers – as reflecting well on the political attitudes of the South African electorate.<sup>41</sup> The explicit trust in the electoral process expressed by participating voters in 1999 is also remarkable.<sup>42</sup> It should also be noted that South African voters on both occasions turned out in high numbers, which contributes to the picture of a political climate conducive to acceptance of the outcome.

The selection and appointment processes of the electoral commissions of 1994 and 1999 were generally accepted as having produced a good blend of personalities, with different political and cultural backgrounds, reflecting the diversity of the new South Africa. Resources were not a concern in 1994, but they became a major concern in 1998–99, when they contributed to Johann Kriegler's decision to step down as IEC chairperson. This apparently contributed to the government's decision to allocate more funds to the commission and to engage more actively in solving most of the problems related to the bar-coded IDs, a technically as well as politically complicated issue.

In 1994 the time available for voter registration was too short and it was decided to conduct polling without a voters' roll. This contributed to more inclusive elections than would otherwise have been the case – and it was a strong argument in many Commission deliberations that voters should not be



disenfranchised in these particular elections. This and the ensuing decision – that voters could vote where they liked – eased some of the preparations, but complicated the distribution of election material (such as ballot papers and spray ink) as it was impossible to know how many voters would turn up at individual polling stations.<sup>43</sup> In this regard, the situation improved in 1999, as the Geographical Information System (GIS)-based demarcation system allowed both the IEC and local election officials to know the number of voters expected at a particular polling station (Steps 3, 5 and 8).

Step 9 (counting) was a particularly contentious issue in 1994 because the political parties had opted for counting in counting centres, some of which were catering for substantial amounts of votes (Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town and Durban), but not allowing enough time for developing and training the procedures for collecting and delivering ballot papers and for counting and reporting. The result was a certain amount of chaos, which was embarrassing for the IEC, but which was also uncoordinated and therefore could not be favourable to any political party. Complications created by the last minute, but still timely, discovery of a computer hacker having accessed the counting and tallying system contributed to the myth that the entire counting operation was a mess, which was certainly not true. The overall acceptance of the final election result by all contestants demonstrates the importance of the IEC efforts to develop good relationships and a policy of transparency between itself and the parties.<sup>44</sup>

The broad acceptance of election results in both 1994 and 1999 is remarkable. Different explanations are available, but a particularly plausible one appears to be the combination of the very proportional electoral system<sup>45</sup> and two commissions, which were seen as reflecting the broad political spectrum of post-Apartheid South Africa and were therefore broadly accepted.

### *Mozambique*

In 1994 Mozambique held multi-party elections within a socio-historical environment, which had all the elements for democratic disaster and breakdown, as in Angola two years earlier.<sup>46</sup> The country had been severely injured by a long-running civil war, the rule of law was virtually non-existent and the two major players had antagonistically positioned themselves as the only two serious parties within the new multi-party competitive dispensation. However, the 1994 elections went off relatively smoothly and were acclaimed to be administratively free and fair by both domestic actors and the international observation community.

The logistical success of these first elections was greatly facilitated by massive international support. The UN deployed a team of 4,000

peacekeepers and 2,000 administrative personnel and over \$1 billion was spent on the transition process. Three-quarters of the eligible voting-age population were registered to vote (of which 88 per cent actually turned out to vote) and an independent National Elections Commission was constituted. The closed list PR electoral system (where seats were allocated within 11 districts, with a five per cent national threshold) proved to be inclusive of all the main parties – even though FRELIMO won an absolute majority of the seats on 44 per cent of the popular vote. Thus the crucial elements of the legal framework (Step 1), the elections management body (Step 2), voter education (Step 4) and voter registration (Step 5) were all accepted and in place by the time of the October elections.

Many transition cases demonstrate serious flaws in the arena of campaign regulation (Step 7), especially when it comes to the financing of campaigning and facilitating a level playing field, but in Mozambique these issues were effectively managed by the international community providing large amounts of campaign finance to both major parties. The FRELIMO governing party was relatively wealthy with its corporate interests to begin with, but Italy, the US, South Africa, Namibia and the UN together contributed \$16 million to RENAMO in the run up to the elections.<sup>47</sup> In the first parliament that practice of ‘state funding’ continued with all three parliamentary parties being allocated monies from the UN Trust Fund to promote Mozambican democracy.<sup>48</sup>

FRELIMO was able to protect its domination of the printed press, but the electronic media were scrutinised by international monitors to ensure neutrality.<sup>49</sup> On the voting days themselves there were some logistical failures, allegations that Zimbabweans were voting on the border and reported cases of journalists being harassed in the RENAMO stronghold of Zambezia, but the high turnout and lack of incidents proved testament to the smoothness and legitimacy of the process. There were no serious objections or repercussions to FRELIMO’s subsequent victory in both the presidential and parliamentary elections.

By the elections of 1999 voter registration had actually gone up (to a reported 85 per cent) and the social environment had been largely peaceful for the preceding years of democratic government. But ironically the perceived legitimacy of the second multi-party elections of December 1999 was somewhat more in question than was the case in 1994. RENAMO claimed before the election that thousands of foreigners had registered and the Carter Center subsequently argued that such complaints had not been effectively dealt with by the electoral commission. On the two days of polling FRELIMO accused RENAMO of stuffing ballot boxes in their strongholds and RENAMO in turn argued that the extension to a third day of voting (as in 1994) was a ruse to rig the final outcome of what was

expected to be a close race. Voting was in fact extended because of serious delays due to flooding in the Zambezia, a RENAMO area. In face of these cited irregularities the election was declared free and fair by international observers, but in a close run race for both the presidency and the legislature RENAMO ultimately rejected the results when they lost by relatively small percentages at both levels and took their objections to the Supreme Court. The Court, however, rejected the appeal for a recount and in January 2000 all parliamentarians took their seats (Step 11).

### *Sierra Leone*

Riley's statement that the conditions under which the 1996 Sierra Leone elections were held were 'far from perfect' is perhaps the greatest understatement in the history of election analysis.<sup>50</sup> The February–March presidential and parliamentary elections were conducted in one of the poorest countries in the world, devastated by years of colonial exploitation, one-party mis-rule, six military coups and, in the 1990s, a horrific civil war, which had not been resolved at the time of the elections. All this meant that many of the elements of free and fair elections were impossible to adequately arrange. The impartiality of the election management (Step 2) was severely constrained by the fact that the independent Interim National Electoral Commission (INEC) sat underneath the existing military regime. The legal framework (Step 1), while altered to allow multi-party competition and a PR electoral system, still retained one-party state anomalies such as the 55 per cent threshold needed by a candidate to win the presidency on the first round. Last, large numbers of rural dwellers had fled from the front lines to the few urban areas, especially Freetown, or abroad to Guinea and Liberia. In March 1996 the UN estimated that over 50 per cent of all Sierra Leoneans were displaced persons.<sup>51</sup>

However, the main administrative obstacle was registering voters (Step 5) in such a hostile environment. Registration efforts may have reached between 60–70 per cent of eligible voters, but over a quarter of a million refugees over the border in Guinea were blocked from registering by the military junta and most Sierra Leoneans left in the war-torn countryside were untouched by voter registration teams. This meant that turnout in the first round of elections in February was little more than one-third of the voting age population.

Because of the conflict between the government and the Revolutionary United Front rebels no real campaigning took place in rural areas and very little took place at all outside of Freetown (Step 7). Nevertheless, access to media (the radio) was relatively balanced as each party could make appeals and the voter education conducted by the INEC, consisting of briefing booklets, radio adverts and road-shows in different local languages, were

successful in reaching voters near to Freetown (Step 4). It is also true to say that those who were able to vote had few difficulties with the switch from the old marble voting system to party list PR legislative and presidential ballot papers.

However, the Commonwealth Observer Team's announcement that the 'elections were transparent and honestly conducted and generally free from fear and intimidation'<sup>52</sup> was clearly a political statement made to facilitate the implementation of an elected government and not a view rooted in the reality of the vote itself. Indeed, this stance was mirrored by the statement of the leading opposition party (UNPP) that 'in spite of the glaring irregularities and flagrant violations of the electoral law ... in the interests of fostering peace, security, and democracy, [they] would overlook these violations and allow the transition process to move forward'.<sup>53</sup>

In the first round of voting (for the assembly and first round presidential elections) there were complete logistical failures in all provinces apart from the West, looting of ballot boxes, attacks on polling stations and threats of reprisals made by soldiers in Freetown and elsewhere, disappearance of ballot boxes in the city of Bo and attacks on the houses of the eventual presidential election winner, Kabbah, and the former dictator, Strasser. In Bo youths danced through the streets with the severed heads and limbs of rebels who had attempted to stop voting and in two of the 12 districts there was almost no voting.<sup>54</sup> Because of these problems voting was extended into 27 February, but the overall turnout remained just half of those who had been able to register.

As no single presidential candidate had won over 55 per cent on the first round, a run-off election between Kabbah (SLPP) and Karefa-Smart (UNPP) was held two weeks later. By this time rebel attacks had reduced and an extra 300,000 votes were cast. However, in a number of districts the legitimacy of this ballot was called into question as voter turnout ranged between 90 and 345 per cent of the electoral roll. Indeed, the election commission arbitrarily reduced Kabbah's vote by 70,000, although this still gave him the victory with over 55 per cent of the vote.<sup>55</sup>

### *Burkina Faso*

The Burkinabe 'regulated democracy' started to develop in 1989 and a Constitutional Commission was established in 1990. From 1991 onwards, a multi-party system was introduced and free, though highly controversial, elections were held. The latest parliamentary election took place in May 1997 and the result was – again – a sweeping victory for the incumbent party, the CDP, which is the successor to the ODP-MT, the party of long-term president Blaise Compaoré.

Burkina Faso has a tradition of opposition parties either boycotting elections or issuing threats to that effect, which testifies to the profound lack of confidence between the ruling party and the opposition. Before the 1997 elections a new EMB was established – *La Commission Nationale d'Organisation des Élections*, CNOE – but only after long debates over whether it should be 'independent' (the opposition's claim) or 'autonomous' (the government position), a debate which reflects the influence of French bureaucratic culture in Francophone Africa.<sup>56</sup> Eventually, the government's proposal was adopted, including the appointment of the CNOE chair by the President, but on the recommendation of the President of the Supreme Court. The appointment in early 1997 of a somewhat controversial magistrate as CNOE chair did not contribute to a good climate for the up-coming elections (Step 2).

The electoral system is proportional and the administrative units are used as constituencies.<sup>57</sup> The residence pattern in Burkina Faso leads to many constituencies having only one or two seats and the consequence is that the system becomes more majoritarian than proportional, as referred to above (Steps 1 and 3). The Burkinabe electorate is among the most illiterate in the world, which makes voter education an extremely daunting task. The continuous need for such education is illustrated by the fact that more than five per cent of the ballots in 1997 were blank or spoilt. Registration is on the basis of the census lists, which explains why a relatively high percentage of the voting-age population (21+) are registered to vote. Participation has traditionally been low, as considerably less than half of the voting-age population has participated in elections. However, participation increased to 56 per cent of voting age population in the November 1998 presidential elections (Step 4).

It has been claimed that the 1997 and 1998 electoral campaigns were heavily marked by state patronage, resources and media to bolster the incumbent's campaign and that the elections were marred by fraud (Steps 7 and 8).<sup>58</sup> That is probably true, but it should nevertheless be remembered that the divided opposition and the majoritarian features of the seat allocation system also contributed substantially to the eventual seat distribution (Step 1).

### CONCLUSIONS

An initial analysis of the cases with low perceived legitimacy of the electoral process demonstrates that there were flaws in many of the steps presented in Table 1. The common themes running through these cases are (i) a perception that the basic legal framework was flawed and unfair (Step 1), (ii) the belief that the EMB was either partisan or incompetent (or both

– Step 2) and (iii) that polling was logistically flawed to such an extent that the results could not reflect the will of the people (Step 8). In some cases there was also unease with registration, delimitation and campaign regulation, but most of these issues were subsumed under the broader rubric of an inherently illegitimate legal and administrative base for the elections, ie, minority parties felt that the playing field was dramatically unequal and uneven and that the rules of the electoral game were stacked against them. While losing opposition and minority parties will rarely be the most trustworthy witnesses, reports from international observers and non-partisan domestic observers and commentators mostly point in the same direction.

Second, if we look at the areas which gave cause for concern in our more ‘successful’ cases, but did not injure the legitimacy of the process to the same degree as in the previous cases, we note that issues of registration (Step 5), polling operations (Step 8) and counting (Step 9) did arise in Botswana, South Africa and Mozambique. However, the fact that the basic legal framework and professional approach of the election administration (Steps 1 and 2) was accepted by all significant parties appears to have stopped complaints from blossoming into a broader delegitimisation of the entire process. It thus appears that the EMBs’ willingness to include and be responsive to all parties – even when they appear to be unfair in their judgement or unable to substantiate complaints – has a considerable potential for defusing potential problems and misgivings among political contestants, as demonstrated in Ghana 1996 and elsewhere. Where there have been problems – such as in Zambia and Burkina Faso – the unhappiness has evidently been exacerbated by poor relations between those administering the elections and those looking for answers or redress. It also appears that a climate of openness in the party-EMB relationship will impact on the general climate, which tends to be less unpleasant when the EMB has been able to establish a general acceptance of its good will and professional approach.

Third, the registration level does matter but only where low registration is perceived to be a product of partisan bias or where disenfranchising some voters is expected to hurt one party more than another. For example, registration was poor in Zambia in 1996, but it was uniformly poor across the country. Thus, most parties do not consider registration a matter of principle (important to ensure inclusiveness), but more as something which may hopefully improve one’s own prospects for winning. The more principled approach – that a high level of inclusion is a *sine qua non* if an election is to be considered free and fair – is primarily found in civil society, among the more dedicated EMB commissioners and staff and among foreigners coming from political cultures nurturing inclusiveness themselves. The seat

allocation system matters as a facilitator of inclusiveness, as seen in South Africa, Mozambique and Sierra Leone. Sometimes a PR system can be exclusionary and cause unhappiness as in Burkina Faso, but it is interesting to note the scant attention, which the use of the FPTP system has attracted. It is well known that this system discriminates against minorities, but most complaints are not directed against the system *per se*. However, the issue of the electoral system appears to be slightly more discussed in Botswana and Tanzania than in Zambia and Ghana.

Theoretical reflections convinced us that a study of the implementation of institutional choices with a direct bearing on election management and administration (and the ensuing legislation and regulation) could contribute substantially towards understanding how election management quality impacts on the processes of legitimation and thereby also on the processes of transition and consolidation in new democracies. The framework in Table 1 is yet to be fully utilised, but it has nevertheless been instrumental in coming to grips with the electoral processes in the cases of the pilot study. The real test, however, will be the performance of the framework when more cases are included and when the analysis of individual cases can build on more in-depth data than here. Policy formulation and design as well as implementation behaviour are of paramount importance not only for the actual conduct of elections and the election management quality achieved, but also for the perceptions evolving around the electoral process – and through that process also for the broad legitimacy of election processes. This means that the policy analysis approach offers a promising methodology from which the study of early elections in new democracies can benefit.

Implementation carried out by individuals and by organisations is often dedicated to the pursuit of high quality democratic elections. But they might also – and simultaneously – be acting to promote bureaucratic, political and personal materialistic interests within the confines established during the transition and especially during the legislative process, which itself impacts on the implementation process. This means that we will only see a democratic development *if* the political and bureaucratic actors find it in their own best interest to pursue such a development. One can lead the horse to water, but one cannot make it drink.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, Mainwaring's suggestion that structure is more important in explaining the second transition (toward consolidation) than the first should probably be revisited.<sup>60</sup> The organisational structure of EMBs matters a great deal – as does the independence (both real and perceived) of the electoral commission.

Election management is a complex cluster of variables, which need to be integrated into future studies of democratisation. This means that in-depth

studies and analyses of individual electoral processes and their administration are needed to validate and enrich broader comparative studies and analyses. In turn, the latter are also needed to get beyond the conclusions based on this pilot study and scattered evidence from other countries.

## NOTES

We appreciate comments from the anonymous referees and from Rafael López-Pintor, Bob Pastor and Andreas Schedler.

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