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**CAN PARLIAMENTS ENHANCE
THE QUALITY OF DEMOCRACY
ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT?
AN ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL
CAPACITY AND PUBLIC
PERCEPTIONS**

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Can Parliaments Enhance the Quality of Democracy on the African Continent? An Analysis of Institutional Capacity and Public Perceptions¹

Abstract

While modern parliaments in Africa receive little attention in the scholarly literature, they are receiving considerable attention from the international donor community. Since the early 1990s, when many African countries resumed multi-party elections and democratic practices, legislative strengthening programmes have become an important part of international democracy assistance. Despite these programmes, our knowledge about Africa's current parliaments remains limited. They seem to be widely regarded as potential agents for democratic change but whether national legislatures are in fact enhancing the quality of democracy on the African continent is far from clear. This paper discusses two important issues that lie at the heart of the democracy enhancing potential of Africa's current parliaments: their institutional capacity and the way they are perceived by the citizens they represent. After a brief review of the existing literature on legislatures in Africa, the paper first considers whether parliaments have the institutional capacity to fulfill a meaningful role and then provides a detailed description of the autonomy of parliaments in 16 selected countries. The paper subsequently turns to the way Africans perceive and evaluate their parliaments. Do citizens see their legislatures as valuable institutions? Finally, we discuss the implications of our findings for the prospects of African parliaments becoming agents of democratic change.

¹ The authors would like to thank Professor Joel Barkan for his constructive comments on an earlier version of this paper; Professor Christina Murray for her input during two half-day workshops on 'Executive-Legislative Relations and Coding African Constitutions' organised by the African Legislatures Project; Mr. Glen Mpani and Ms. Colleen Mallahan for their input during the course of researching and writing this paper; and Chris Laurie for his technical assistance. Mozaffar would like to thank the Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Research and the Center for Legislative Studies at Bridgewater State College for their financial support.

What do we know about legislatures in Africa?

Africa's legislatures are largely absent from the comparative body of literature about parliaments and their members. And although some parliaments in Africa have been described as 'emerging institutions of horizontal accountability', the growing literature on democratisation pays little attention to the representative bodies of Africa's current political regimes.² Most of the existing studies date from three or four decades ago and paint a bleak picture of powerless parliaments in Africa's newly independent states. More recent contributions to the literature have only just begun to identify important variations in the strength of Africa's current legislatures.

The scholarly literature on parliaments in Africa mostly dates back to the early years of independence and has its substantive focus on assessing the strength of the then newly established parliaments. This first generation of studies, comprising mostly case studies and contributions comparing a small number of cases,³ examined the impact of several key variables, such as colonial legacies,

² Although the number of studies of legislatures in emerging democracies is growing, the literature is still dominated by analyses of parliaments and parliamentarians in the established democracies of Western Europe and the U.S. Gamm and Huber (2004) report that 85 percent of the articles published about legislatures in the *American Political Science Review*, the *American Journal of Political Science* and the *Journal of Politics* between 1993 and 2001 dealt with the American experience. The American specialised journal *Legislative Studies Quarterly* (LSQ) shows a similar focus on American legislative politics. Less than 25 percent of the articles in *Legislative Studies Quarterly* between 1995 and 2002 dealt with the legislative experience outside the US. The British *Journal of Legislative Studies* (JLS), on the other hand, devotes most of its space to parliaments outside the U.S. However, African legislatures are absent from both the LSQ and the JLS. The LSQ has published no articles about African legislatures, while the JLS has only published one article on an African legislature by P. Burnell in 2002. Since the early 1990s, when a wave of liberalisation and democratisation started to change the political landscape on the African continent, many African countries resumed multi-party elections and democratic practices but even the growing body of literature on the so called 'third wave of democratisation' has paid little attention to legislatures. *World Politics*, one of the important journals in comparative politics, has published no articles on legislatures since 1992. Nor has the *Journal of Democracy* published any articles (since mid-1993) in which the legislature or the legislative process is the primary focus of discussion. See Gamm and Huber (2004).

³ Loewenberg and Patterson (1979: 337) included the case of Kenya in their seminal work *Comparing Legislatures*. Their discussion of the Kenyan case was mostly based on the data gathered by Barkan, whose work is discussed elsewhere in this paper. Le Vine (1979) presents a comparative analysis of the development of parliaments in 14 francophone African countries in the period from independence until 1975 and concludes that parliaments in the former French colonies do not play an important role in policy-making. Instead, their main contribution has been in the area of nation building. Stultz (1968), looking at 12 'Parliaments in Former British Black Africa' also points to a limited decision making role and identifies a

the appointment and dismissal powers of governing parties, executive control of state resources and role perceptions of legislators. They uniformly concluded that these factors contributed to the institutional weakness of the new legislatures vis-à-vis strong executives as well as to their limited role in policy- and law-making.⁴ Other early studies that examined African legislatures in a broader cross-national comparative framework also emphasised their institutional and policy-making weaknesses, but stressed their roles in legitimising government policies, recruiting and socialising new elites, and mobilising public support for political regimes (Mezey 1970).

With the post-independence emergence of authoritarian regimes throughout the African continent, scholarly interest in African legislatures ebbed away. There are, however, a few studies of national legislatures in the context of a single party state (see for example Kjekshus 1974). Barkan showed that, even within the constraints of a single-party regime, the Kenyan legislature played an important role in the development of a largely agrarian society by linking widely dispersed local constituencies to the state. Barkan's study is an important contribution to the literature because of its relevance to other African countries many of which still are predominantly, if not exclusively, agrarian societies (Barkan 1979).

More recently, the resurgence of democracy on the continent has renewed scholarly interest in Africa's parliaments. Like the first generation of studies conducted soon after independence, the recent studies typically focus on single countries and routinely point to the institutional weakness and limited decision-making role of legislatures in Africa (Thomas and Sissokho 2005; Burnell 2002; Burnell 2003). In an innovative departure from previous approaches, Mattes and Chiwandamira surveyed not only members of and organisations working closely with the Zambian parliament but also members of the Zambian public. They found a 'yawning chasm' between citizens' views of MPs and how MPs see themselves. The public opinion survey highlighted a widespread popular

number of structural and performance characteristics which parliaments in the former British colonies seem to share.

⁴ Hakes and Helgerson (1973) looking at the first parliaments of Zambia and Kenya, explain how the executive's control of state resources and powers to appoint and dismiss members are used as currency in a bargaining process, thus compromising the role of individual MPs. Stultz (1970) in his case study of the first Kenyan parliament, also emphasises the importance of executive-legislative relations and the partisan context in which parliament operates, as well as its function of legitimisation. Stultz concludes that the decisional function of the Kenyan parliament is relatively unimportant and that MPs are lacking a sense of meaningful participation in decision making. Hopkins' (1970) study of Tanzanian MPs similarly reveals that in Tanzania's first parliament the party exerts an influence which renders MPs ineffective: 'the role of the MP in the actual legislature is quite minor'. According to Hopkins, Tanzanian MPs are generally supportive of cabinet ministers because anything to the contrary compromises one's chances of being appointed to positions of influence.

perception of the Zambian parliament as an unresponsive and opaque institution, while MPs reported that they spend most of their time listening to people's problems and dealing with constituency matters (Mattes and Chiwandamira 2004: ii).

In another path-breaking study, Barkan, Ademolekun and Zhou (2004: 252) recently conducted the first systematic comparison of strengths and weaknesses of four African legislatures. Based on interviews with MPs and people working in or closely with parliament, they conclude that although legislatures in Africa are often labeled as weak, there are important cross-national variations. The study found that 'the authority of the legislature ranged from being very weak in Senegal, to moderately strong in Kenya with Benin and Ghana falling somewhere in between' and hypothesises about three sets of variables that might explain this variation: contextual variables relating to the structure of society, variables relating to constitutional provisions and formal rules and variables relating to the internal structure of the legislature and the resources available to members.⁵

Finally, there is a small but growing literature on the South African parliament pointing to the limited success of the National Assembly in terms of oversight and the problems it is encountering in terms of representation and building links with the people (Nijzink 2001; Murray and Nijzink 2003; Harvey 2002; Nijzink and Piombo 2005; Habib and Herzenberg 2005; Barkan 2005). This literature also points to the fact that the South African parliament might, in a number of ways, be different from other African legislatures.

Overall, the existing studies of African legislatures present us with, at best, sketchy evidence on the relative strength or importance of Africa's parliaments in terms of law- and policy-making, oversight and representation or any other functions they might perform. Although these studies offer insights into the structure and operation of certain parliaments, most fail to take a cross-national comparative approach and find that African legislatures are weak and ineffective without offering criteria for conceptualising and measuring legislative strength and effectiveness. In other words, the virtually uniform finding that African legislatures are weak is premised on the notion of a strong legislature, yet, the literature offers little criteria for either conceptualising or measuring legislative strength in a way that enables cross-national comparison.

This problem is not only evident in the first generation of studies conducted immediately after independence, but also plagues some of the more recent studies. The study by Mattes and Chiwandamira (2004), however, while focused

⁵ Another recently published comparative study describes the level of representation of women in Sub-Saharan Africa between 1990 and 1999, see Yoon (2001).

on Zambia, offers a research design that can be fruitfully applied in a comparative study of other African legislatures. It points us to the importance of public opinion; an issue we will discuss later in this paper. The four-country study by Barkan *et al.* (2004) also offers a useful framework for further cross-national comparison. It suggests a number of variables, mostly related to institutional capacity, that seem to influence the potential of parliaments to enhance the quality of democracy on the African continent.

The institutional capacity of African parliaments

At first glance, legislatures in Africa's current regimes seem to have limited institutional capacity to represent citizens, make laws and ensure accountability among presidents. Capacity-building is an important focus of democracy assistance programmes run by international organisations like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Bank and European Union (EU) and country based agencies like the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA). Since the early 1990s when a wave of liberalisation and democratisation started to change the political landscape on the African continent and many countries resumed multi-party elections and democratic practices, international donors have responded by financially supporting efforts to build the institutional capacity of parliaments across the continent. Legislative strengthening programmes have been established in a number of Africa's current political regimes, but international support seems to be unevenly distributed. Some parliaments like those in Malawi and South Africa immediately after 1994 are or were 'donor darlings', while others, like the parliaments of Cameroon or Swaziland, receive little or no support to strengthen their institutional capacity. The success of parliamentary support programmes seems to be equally uneven and more importantly rather uncertain.⁶

To what extent do international donors succeed in strengthening the capacity of parliaments in Africa? Do legislative strengthening programmes actually lead to increased parliamentary performance and enhanced quality of democracy? Questions about the effectiveness of capacity building in African parliaments remain largely unanswered because we do not yet have comprehensive and comparative measures of the institutional capacity and performance of parliaments on the continent. Without such measures, we are unable to assess

⁶ For a review of the progress of the South African parliament in the context of the EU Parliamentary Support Programme in South Africa, see Murray and Nijzink (2003).

and evaluate the impact of international support programmes on the extent to which Africa's current parliaments are able to make laws, represent citizens and oversee the executive and play a key role in enhancing the quality of democracy on the continent.

What we do know is that not all African parliaments are equally weak; some have greater resources, powers and autonomy than others. The African Legislatures Project has embarked on comparative research that seeks to identify the most important differences in institutional capacity and parliamentary performance across Africa in order to explain why some parliaments do better or worse in fulfilling their main responsibilities.⁷ In this paper we will present some of our first findings related to the institutional capacity of Africa's national legislatures. For the purpose of this paper, we define institutional capacity as the instruments that give parliaments the potential to exert influence and perform their main responsibilities of law-making, oversight and representation. In this conceptualisation, institutional capacity has two dimensions: first, the relative powers and level of autonomy of the legislature and second, the infrastructural, financial and human resources available to the institution.

The resources of African legislatures

We know that institutional capacity in terms of resources is generally low amongst African legislatures, especially compared to Western standards of very well resourced legislatures like the American Congress or the German Bundestag. This is not surprising given the differences in the level of state resources available for this purpose. We also know that there are important differences within Africa. We find legislatures like the National Assembly in Malawi which, despite the support of several international donors, is currently housed in temporary office space and is lacking adequate research support. It employs only two researchers and two designated committee clerks serving 13 parliamentary committees (Smiddy 2006). On the other side of the spectrum, we find the relatively well resourced South African parliament which, in 2003, had a budget of €41 million (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa 2002). It is housed in extensive office buildings in Cape Town and has a well staffed research section with 26 researchers (Rustin 2005). The Nigerian National Assembly received \$ 2 million from the African Capacity Building Fund to support a Policy Analysis and Research Project, that was officially launched in 2005 to provide research support to Nigerian MPs.

⁷ For more information about the African Legislatures Project, see http://www.cssr.uct.ac.za/daru_alp.html

Table 1: Number of Members (Lower House) in 16 African countries

<i>Country</i>	<i>Number of members (special seats)</i>
Botswana	63 (6)
Cape Verde	72
Namibia	72 (6)
Lesotho	120
Senegal	120
Zambia	150
Zimbabwe	150 (30)
Mali	160 (13)
Malawi	193
Kenya	224 (14)
Ghana	230
Mozambique	250
Tanzania	295 (64)*
Uganda	305 (91)
Nigeria	360
South Africa	400

Note: These numbers include special seats; where applicable the number of special seats is added in brackets.

*231 members elected from the same number of constituencies; 48 women elected by political parties in terms of Article 78 of the constitution; 5 members elected by the Zanzibar House of representatives; the Attorney-General; 10 members appointed by the president (Parliament of Tanzania website, August 2005).

Source: www.africanelections.tripod.com, constitutions.

Another indication of the differences in capacity that exists amongst African legislatures is simply the difference in size. Although it only includes the 16 countries of our subsequent analysis, table 1 shows the variation that exists on the African continent. The size of the Lower House of parliament ranges from only 63 members in Botswana to 400 members in South Africa. The size of parliaments influences their capacity in two ways. First, members are one of the most important human resources of a legislature. They offer their individual skills, contacts and time to fulfil the collective responsibilities of the institution. When it comes to the day-to-day activities that typically occur in a House of Parliament, more members simply means more hands to get the various jobs done, albeit assessing proposed legislation, drafting amendments, scrutinising budgets, reading departmental reports, introducing motions, asking questions, attending committee and plenary meetings, participating in debates or voting. But size also influences capacity by affecting the need for human, infrastructural and financial resources. The more members a parliament has the more staff and office space are needed to provide an adequately supported work environment. More members also mean that more financial resources are needed to cover their salaries and other expenses.

The size of parliament is closely related to the size of the population it represents. Taking this into account, we again find that African MPs are generally less fortunate than their Western counterparts. Calculated on the basis of our 16 selected countries, there are on average 110,000 African citizens to

one MP, while the average ratio in Western Europe is about 89,000 citizens per MP. And, we, again, find a fair amount of variation within Africa. Countries like Cape Verde and Lesotho have a very low ratio of citizens and MPs, 6000 and 15 000 respectively, while South Africa counts about 110 000 citizens per MP and Nigeria 320 000.⁸ Clearly, this has important consequences for the way MPs relate to the citizens they represent, especially when one takes the geographical size of the country and the conditions of travel, that is, the number of paved roads, into account. We will discuss the relation between parliament and the public in more detail in the final section of this paper. Here, we just want to highlight differences in capacity.

Precisely because of these differences, and the fact that capacity building in Africa's current parliaments seems to have become an important subfield in democracy assistance, the African Legislatures Project is developing more detailed and comparative measures of the resources that are available to parliaments. With the aim of identifying best practices in Africa, we will report on this in future work. In the context of this paper, we will report our first findings on the second dimension of institutional capacity: the relative powers and autonomy of African legislatures.

The level of autonomy of African legislatures

As became clear from our review of the existing literature, powerful presidents seem to be one of the most important reasons why modern parliaments in Africa are generally regarded as weak institutions. Thus, the constitutional design of executive-legislative relations is an important part of the institutional capacity of Africa's parliaments. What are the relative powers of the legislative and executive branches of government? To what extent are legislatures autonomous from the executive? Especially in the African context where neo-patrimonialism and 'big man' rule are more than just minor legacies from a distant past, some degree of autonomy is crucial if parliaments are to exert any influence on law-making or hold strong executives accountable.

Autonomy means something different in parliamentary than in presidential regimes. Where president and parliament have their own electoral mandates, that is, are separately elected, and the executive does not depend on the continued support of the legislature to stay in power autonomy takes a different form than

⁸ Western European figure calculated from Table 1.1 'Ratios of Population per Legislator: Member States EU 1996' in Norton (2002: 15). African figures calculated from World Development Indicators (WDI) Online, Worldbank at <http://devdata.worldbank.org/dataonline/> and *World Population Prospects: The 2002 Revision*, April 2004.

in systems in which the executive is selected by the legislature and stays in power only as long as it has the continued confidence of the legislature. So before we take a detailed look at the relative powers of parliaments and presidents in our selected countries, we need to consider the issue of regime types in Africa.

From parliamentary to presidential regimes

Africa's colonial history has clearly left its mark on the type of regimes that were initially adopted on the continent. When African colonies gained independence, colonial powers not only had a direct say in the constitutions that were adopted, they also served as models of constitutional design. As a result, all former British colonies adopted parliamentary systems at independence, with Zambia being the only exception. In other words, Zambia is the only former British colony which adopted a presidential design when it gained independence in 1964. The colonial experience seems to have had an equally strong influence on the regime choice in former French and Portuguese colonies. All but three adopted presidential systems at independence. Chad is in fact the only former French colony that adopted a parliamentary system. Senegal and Cape Verde followed a semi-presidential model.⁹ With the displacement of democratic governments by authoritarian regimes soon after independence, most inherited parliamentary systems were replaced by presidential systems in which presidents had extensive governmental authority vested in them. This institutional shift from parliamentary to presidential regimes is reflected in the regime types as they are currently in place on the continent.

Today, only seven countries in Sub-Saharan Africa do not have a popularly elected president. In two of these countries, Swaziland and Lesotho, monarchs serve as both head of state and head of government, which means the executive has a separate mandate, albeit not from the electorate. Another two countries, Eritrea and Ethiopia, have parliamentary systems, in the sense that the legislative and executive powers originate from the same electoral mandate, but given the history of these two countries, their current regime type cannot be regarded as part of a British colonial legacy. In other words, only three countries on the continent, Botswana, Mauritius and South Africa, retained the parliamentary regimes they inherited as part of their British colonial legacy and still show the two characteristics that classify them as parliamentary regimes: the executive needs the continued confidence of the legislature to stay in power and shares its electoral mandate with the legislature (Lijphart 1992).

⁹ The former Belgian colonies Rwanda and Burundi were presidential and parliamentary respectively at independence. Equatorial Guinea was colonised by Spain and presidential at independence; Namibia was last colonised by South Africa and followed a hybrid model.

Table 2: Regime Type at Independence in 42 African Countries

<i>Presidential (52%)</i>	<i>Hybrid (7%)</i>	<i>Parliamentary (41%)</i>
Angola, 1975 Benin, 1960 Burkina Faso, 1960 Cameroon, 1960 Comoros, 1975 Congo, Brazzaville, 1960 Cote d'Ivoire, 1960 Djibouti, 1977 Equatorial Guinea, 1968 Gabon, 1960 Guinea, 1958 Guinea Bissau, 1974 Madagascar, 1960 Mali, 1960 Mauritania, 1960 Mozambique, 1975 Niger, 1960 Rwanda, 1962 Sao Tome, 1975 Seychelles, 1976 Togo, 1960 Zambia, 1964	Cape Verde, 1975* Namibia, 1990 Senegal, 1960	Botswana, 1966 Burundi, 1962 Chad, 1960 Ghana, 1957 Kenya, 1963 Lesotho, 1966** Malawi, 1964*** Mauritius, 1968 Nigeria, 1960 Sierra Leone, 1961 Somalia, 1960 South Africa, 1910**** Sudan, 1956 Swaziland, 1968 Tanzania, 1961 Uganda, 1962 Zimbabwe, 1980

Notes:

* Stefan and Skatch (1993) classify Cape Verde as presidential. Their explanation states that Cape Verde's first constitution was not promulgated until 1980 and for the first five years after its independence the country appears to have functioned as a presidential system. The authors of this paper have classified Cape Verde's constitutional design at independence as hybrid, see Lei de organização política do Estado – LOPE, 1975, sections 8 and 13.

** Stefan and Skatch (1993) classify Lesotho as a monarchy but in 1966 Lesotho in fact adopted a Westminster style parliamentary system with a constitutional monarch, similar to the British system. The authors have thus classified Lesotho as parliamentary.

*** Stefan and Skatch (1993) classify Malawi as presidential but at independence in 1964 Malawi adopted a Westminster-style parliamentary system with Hastings Banda as the prime minister. In 1966, Malawi moved to a presidential system and Banda became the first President.

**** South Africa at independence was a self-governing dominion under the British Crown who was represented by a Governor-General.

Source: Adapted from Stepan and Skatch (1993). The cases that did not become independent between 1945 and 1979 have been coded by the authors. The authors also corrected the classification of Cape Verde, Malawi and Lesotho. Liberia, Ethiopia and Eritrea have been excluded from this table because of their specific history.

Where executive and legislative powers are fused rather than separated, it is difficult to measure the autonomy of the legislature in terms of formal constitutional powers. Legislatures in parliamentary regimes, per definition, have the power to censure the executive. Likewise, the calling of new elections, per definition, affects both branches of government and is therefore not a power that one branch of government has over the other. In so far as one can speak of the autonomy of legislatures in parliamentary regimes, it clearly requires measures other than those we can develop by analysing constitutional provisions about censure and dissolution. Within the context of this paper, we will not be

able to further explore this. Instead, we will focus our attention on regimes with separately elected presidents. Given the fact that 85% of current regimes in Sub Saharan Africa have a separately elected president, measuring the relative powers of these presidents in relation to their parliaments is key to assessing the level of autonomy of legislatures on the continent.

Separation of offices

There is, however, one institutional measure that might help us to assess levels of parliamentary autonomy across both presidential and parliamentary regimes in Africa: the separation of offices. While not essential to classify systems as either parliamentary or presidential, this element of the separation of powers doctrine refers to the extent to which positions in government and parliamentary seats overlap. Incompatibility of positions in the executive and the legislature indicate that there is a certain distance between the two branches of government, whereas systems that allow or require the combination of a ministerial position and a seat in parliament, are lacking a similar degree of independence between parliament and the executive.

As indicated in table 3, there is a group of countries where the constitution explicitly prohibits the combination of a seat in parliament and a ministerial position. The Lusophone countries in our study, Cape Verde and Mozambique, as well as the Francophone countries, Mali and Senegal, fall into this group, together with Nigeria. In these five countries, a seat in parliament is incompatible with a position in cabinet and ministers are compelled to give up their seat when they join the cabinet. Our study does not include enough francophone and lusophone countries to conclusively detect a pattern but our evidence does suggest that incompatibility provisions differ according to colonial legacy. The separation of offices creates a certain distance between the executive and the legislature that might be typical for those countries formerly colonised by France and Portugal and suggests that parliaments in these countries have a greater degree of autonomy than their counterparts elsewhere.

Table 3 also shows that there is a large group of countries where the combination of a position in cabinet and a seat in parliament is required. In other words, the constitution stipulates that all ministers need to be MPs in order to be part of the cabinet. Interestingly, this is the design of choice in the parliamentary systems of Botswana and Lesotho but also in most of our countries with elected presidents: Kenya, Namibia, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

This element of constitutional design is especially telling about the degree of parliamentary autonomy when regarded in combination with provisions for the inclusion of special seats in parliament. As table 1 above showed, Botswana,

Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe all have a number of special parliamentary seats that allow the president to appoint someone from outside parliament to a ministerial post and subsequently appoint this person to parliament. Namibia, although not having any special parliamentary seats, has a constitutional provision making members of the executive who have not been elected to parliament *ex officio* MPs without voting rights, thus allowing the president to appoint ministers from outside parliament. In other words, theoretically, the requirement that ministers need to be MPs limits the choice of the president and restricts his authority in cabinet formation. However, provisions for special seats undermine any advantage parliament might have gained in this regard. In fact, it seriously undermines the autonomy of the legislature when the executive can determine part of its composition simply by appointing a portion of its members.

Table 3: Separation of Offices in 16 African Countries

<i>All ministers are MPs: combination required</i>	<i>Most ministers are MPs: combination allowed</i>	<i>No ministers are MPs: combination prohibited</i>
Botswana Lesotho Kenya Namibia Tanzania Uganda Zambia Zimbabwe	Ghana Malawi South Africa	Cape Verde Mali Mozambique Nigeria Senegal

Source: Authors' coding of constitutions.

The case of Namibia points us to another detrimental effect of the constitutional provision dealing with the combination of offices. In small parliaments like the Namibian National Assembly with only 72 seats, the requirement that all ministers need to be MPs might have the effect that more than half of the members of parliament are actually members of the cabinet, thus making it extremely difficult for the legislature to flex its muscles *vis-à-vis* the executive. In fact, the Namibian president has increased the number of cabinet positions to a point where ministers do make up more than the majority of Namibian MPs. It means that cabinet alone can determine the outcome of a vote in the National Assembly. In order to get government decisions accepted in parliament, there is no need for any backbench involvement, let alone any cross party support. This specific set of circumstances explains why the National Assembly in Windhoek has been described as a rubberstamp of presidential decisions (Melber 2005). It makes the Namibian legislature a parliament without any autonomy.

Finally, table 3 shows that there is a third category of countries where the combination of offices is not constitutionally required but merely allowed: Ghana, Malawi and South Africa. In these countries, not all ministers have to be

an MP upon appointment, although most ministers happen to be recruited from parliament and retain their seat once appointed. In Ghana, section 78.1 of the constitution stipulates that the majority of ministers must be appointed from amongst the members of parliament, while section 91.3 of the South African constitution allows the president to appoint not more than 2 ministers who have not been elected as MPs.

The full implications of these differences in fusion or separation of offices needs further study but the pattern described here does suggest important differences in the degree of autonomy amongst African legislatures that cut across the distinction between parliamentary and presidential regimes.

The relative powers of parliaments and presidents

We now turn our attention to 13 countries that have separately elected presidents, in an attempt to further classify and compare parliamentary autonomy in these regimes. We have followed a framework developed by Shugart and Carey (1992) and coded the relative powers of presidents along two dimensions: (1) their powers with regard to appointing and dismissing ministers and (2) their powers in the case of censure by and dissolution of the legislature, that is, the extent to which the separately elected branches of government depend on each other to stay in power.

Separate survival

Measuring the powers of elected presidents in terms of censure means that the president gets the highest score of 4 if the legislature may not censure and remove the cabinet or individual ministers. If the legislature may censure but the president may respond by dissolving the legislature, we gave a score of 2. If a vote of 'no confidence' by the legislature needs to be constructive, in other words, if the legislature can only pass a vote of 'no confidence' if it simultaneously presents an alternative cabinet, the score is 1. If the right to censure is unrestricted, the score is 0. Table 4 shows that amongst our 13 countries, only Ghana and Tanzania have constitutional provisions that indicate the legislature has unrestricted power to censure cabinet. On the opposite end of the scale, we find Malawi, Nigeria, Uganda and Zambia where the legislature does not have the power to censure and remove ministers. In the remaining seven countries, the legislature may censure but the president may respond by dissolving parliament which effectively restricts the power to censure and

signifies a lower degree of parliamentary autonomy. In none of our countries do we find constitutional provisions for a constructive vote of ‘no confidence’.

Table 4: Relative Powers of Separately Elected Presidents in 13 African Countries

<i>Country</i>	<i>Cabinet formation</i>	<i>Cabinet dismissal</i>	<i>Censure</i>	<i>Dissolution of Legislature</i>
Cape Verde	1*	2	2	3
Ghana	3	4	0	0
Kenya	4	4	2	2
Malawi	4	4	4	0
Mali	4**	2	2	3
Mozambique	4	4	2	1
Namibia	4	2	2	2
Nigeria	3	4	4	0
Senegal	4**	4	2	3
Tanzania	1	4	0	1
Uganda	3	4	4	0
Zambia	4	4	4	2
Zimbabwe	4	4	2	4

Notes:

*Cape Verde has a constitutional provision that states that the president nominates the premier but only after consultation with the parties that are represented in the legislature (section 134). The president subsequently appoints the ministers nominated by the premier (section 193). We have taken the first section as a form of investiture and have thus given Cape Verde a score of 1 for cabinet formation.

**Mali and Senegal have been given a score of 4 signifying extensive powers for the president in terms of cabinet formation. They have similar provisions stating that the president names the premier without needing confirmation from the legislature and appoints the other ministers after consultation with the premier.

Source: Authors' coding of constitutions.

Shugart and Carey's (1992) coding scheme also measures the president's power to dissolve the legislature as a separate variable. In this case, the scores range from unrestricted power to dissolve to various types of restrictions to no constitutional provision for dissolution, that is, from no to full autonomy of the legislature. As table 4 indicates, the constitutions of Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria and Uganda do not include a provision for the power of the president to dissolve parliament. In Tanzania and Mozambique, the president can only dissolve parliament as a response to censure by the legislature and thus these two countries received a score of 1. In Kenya, Namibia and Zambia, the power of the president to dissolve parliament is restricted in the sense that the dissolution of parliament requires new presidential elections. These countries were given a score of 2. In Cape Verde, Mali and Senegal, the constitution also restricts the power to dissolve parliament in these cases by frequency or point in term thus resulting in a score of 3. Finally the only president in our study with unrestricted powers to dissolve parliament is the Zimbabwean president, having received a score of 4.

For the purposes of measuring the extent to which the executive and legislative branches of government in our 13 countries depend on each other to stay in

power, we have subsequently reversed the codes for the dissolution powers of presidents as presented in table 4. This indicates that where the powers of the president are strongest, the score is the lowest because the two branches are the least separate. Where the powers are non-existent or weak, the score is higher signifying more independence between the executive and the legislature in terms of survival, that is, more parliamentary autonomy. The horizontal axis in figure 1 is thus based on a combination of the scores for censure and the reversed scores for dissolution.

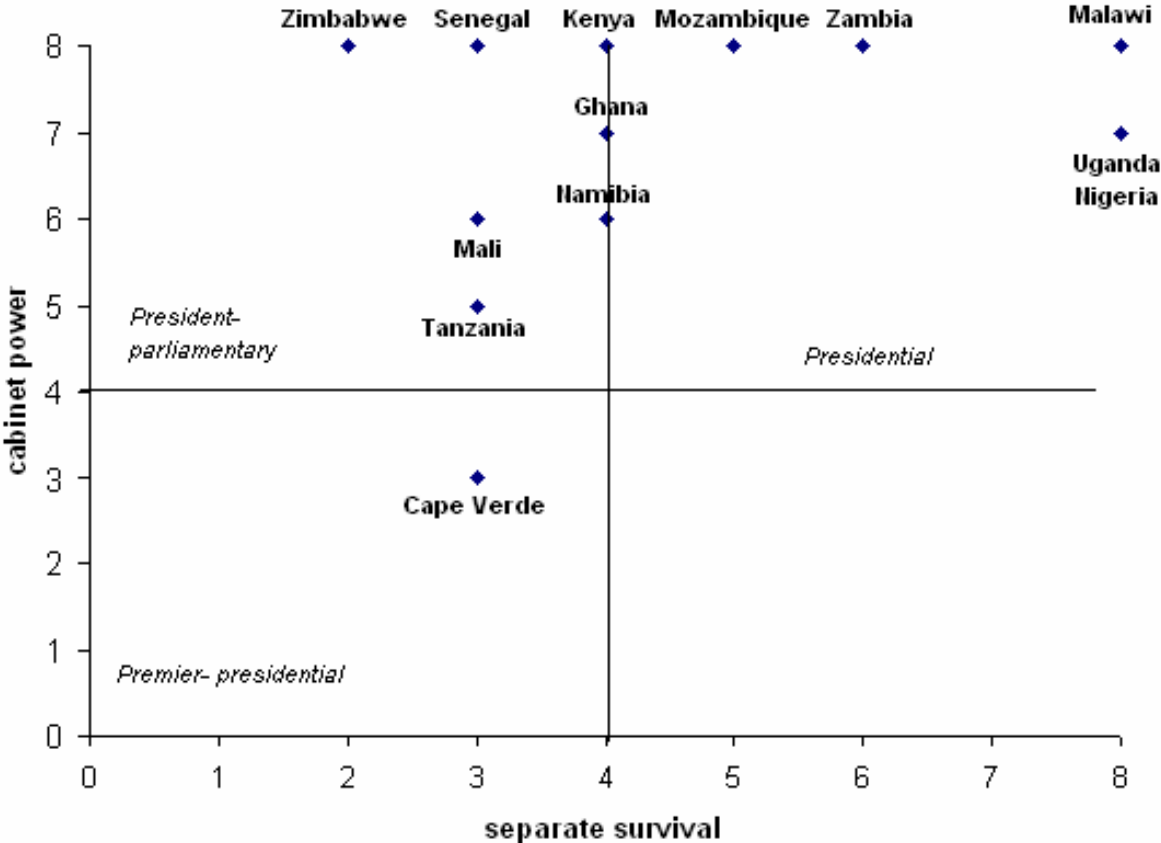


Figure 1: Cabinet Power and Separate Survival in 13 African Countries

Source: Authors' coding of constitutions; typology adapted from Shugart and Carey (1992: 160).

Shugart and Carey (1992) used the dimension of separate survival to differentiate between pure presidential and hybrid systems in which a variety of constitutional checks and balances restricts the separation of powers. Our coding of constitutions shows that amongst our 13 cases, we have five countries that clearly fall into the pure presidential right hand corner of figure 3: Nigeria, Malawi, Uganda, Zambia and Mozambique. In these countries, strong executives do not depend on the legislature to stay in power and do not have unrestricted power to dissolve parliament. Hence, we find that parliaments in these countries might be weak but, at least on paper, have some degree of autonomy: the length of their term does not lie entirely in the hands of the president. In the left hand corner of the figure, we find Zimbabwe where

parliament can censure and remove cabinet but the president has unrestricted power to dissolve parliament, thus signifying a very low degree of parliamentary autonomy. In fact, Shugart and Carey (1992) identified countries falling into this corner as having a president-parliamentary regime. They assert that this form of regime should be avoided because it combines the primacy of the president with the dependence of cabinet on parliament and is therefore prone to regimes crises and instability (*ibid*). Senegal, Tanzania and Mali are the countries in our analysis that together with Zimbabwe clearly fall into this category. Another three countries fall on the boundary between pure presidential and president-parliamentary systems - Kenya, Ghana and Namibia – and will be further discussed below. As will Cape Verde, the only country in our study that can be identified as having a premier-presidential regime, the hybrid system Shugart and Carey seem to recommend.

Presidents, premiers and cabinet power

Measuring the relative powers of elected presidents in terms of cabinet formation and dismissal using Shugart and Carey's (1992) coding scheme is relatively straightforward. The power of the president over cabinet can basically range from unrestricted to restricted to no power. In other words, if cabinet formation depends entirely on the president, the score is 4. If the president names ministers but the legislature needs to approve the nominations, the score is 3. If the president names the premier and after an investiture vote, the premier subsequently names the rest of the cabinet the score is 1. If the president cannot name ministers except when recommended by the legislature, the score is 0. A similar coding scheme is applicable to cabinet dismissal. If the president has full powers to dismiss the cabinet at will, the score is 4. Restricted powers of dismissal score 2. If the president may only dismiss when the legislature accepts an alternative minister or cabinet, the score is 1. If ministers or the cabinet can only be censured and removed by the legislature, the score is 0.

Looking at the first two columns of table 4 and the vertical axis of figure 1, there are a number of interesting findings. The vertical axis of figure 1 shows the combined scores for cabinet formation and cabinet dismissal. It shows that in all our countries presidents scored 5 or higher when it comes to their cabinet power, with Cape Verde being the only exception. Shugart and Carey (1992) used the relative power of the president over cabinet composition to differentiate between the above mentioned president-parliamentary systems and premier-presidential regimes. The figure shows that of the 13 countries in our study, only Cape Verde falls into the premier-presidential corner, which means that it is the only country in our study in which the president has to share a significant amount of authority over cabinet with the premier.

Breaking this pattern down into its two composite variables, we find that Cape Verde, Mali and Namibia are the only countries in which the president's power to dismiss cabinet members is restricted. In all other countries in our study the president can dismiss ministers at will. The picture reveals slightly more variation when we turn to the process of cabinet formation. In eight of our 13 countries, the president has unrestricted powers of cabinet formation. In Ghana, Nigeria and Uganda, some form of confirmation by the legislature is needed to appoint the cabinet. Cape Verde and Tanzania are the only countries in our study in which the legislature plays a strong role in cabinet formation but because the Tanzanian president has full powers to dismiss the cabinet, Tanzania still has to be placed in the top left hand corner of our figure amongst the president-parliamentary systems.

In addition to using Shugart and Carey's (1992) coding scheme to measure separation of survival and the cabinet powers of elected presidents, we set ourselves the task of identifying those countries in which executive powers are shared between the president and a premier. Of the 13 countries selected here, six have constitutional provisions establishing the position of a premier as part of the executive. The position of a premier seems useful in further classifying the three countries that fall on the boundary between pure presidential and president-parliamentary regimes. Of these three, only Namibia has a premier and would thus fall into the hybrid part of figure 1, whereas Ghana and Kenya do not have the position of premier and are therefore more appropriately classified as presidential.

The existence of a premier, however, does not give us an indication of the strength of the parliaments in these systems. Only if the premier has some degree of autonomy vis-à-vis the president would he or she be able to enhance the role of the legislature. We found that in two of the six systems with a premier, Cape Verde and Senegal, the constitution explicitly states that the premier and not the president presides at cabinet meetings. In Mali, Mozambique, Namibia and Tanzania, the four other countries where the position of premier exist, the president chairs the cabinet and the premier seems to mainly function as the Leader of Government Business in Parliament. In other words, Cape Verde and Senegal are the only countries where the premier seems to give parliament some influence in the executive branch of government. However, the president's full powers over the composition of cabinet undermine this influence in Senegal, thus leaving us with Cape Verde as the only case in our study where the powers of the president are balanced by the position of a premier who takes a leading role in the cabinet and depends on parliamentary confidence.

While our measures of the relative powers of parliaments and presidents suggest important variations in regime types and patterns of executive-legislative

relations across Africa, they generally confirm the conventional wisdom about Africa's governments: weak parliaments are faced with strong presidents. Our exercise in regime classification showed a fair amount of countries falling into the hybrid categories but most of these are designed as president-parliamentary systems with generally lower levels of parliamentary autonomy than pure presidential regimes. Combined with generally low levels of parliamentary resources, this means that the institutional capacity of African parliaments to hold strong presidents to account is fairly limited. The fact that Cape Verde is the only premier-presidential case in our study, and probably on the continent, is an indication that the capacity of African parliaments to exert any influence in terms of policy-making is equally limited. As mentioned above, we did find interesting cross-national variations in the institutional capacity of legislatures but need to extend our analysis to all 48 Sub Saharan countries in Africa and include more variables related to resources and constitutional powers to gain more insight into these differences and their possible explanations (see Mozaffar and Nijzink 2006 forthcoming).

What do Africans think about their parliaments?

We have seen that Africa's parliaments generally lack the institutional capacity to be influential in law-making or oversight, but we have not yet paid any attention to the third responsibility typically taken on by parliaments across the world: representation. The study by Barkan, in the 1970s, already showed that even within the context of a single party regime, the Kenyan legislature played an important role in linking citizens to the state. Faced with strong presidents across the continent, representation could be the area in which Africa's current parliaments focus most of their attention. However, the little evidence that we have suggests the existence of a 'representation gap' between MPs and the public.

We have already mentioned the study by Mattes and Chiwandamira (2004) in which they present evidence of a gap between Zambian MPs and the citizens they represent. This study is vital not just because it presents findings on the issue of representation in one of the countries in our study but also because it points us to the importance of public opinion for assessing the relationship between parliaments and the public. Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi have extensively described public opinion in Africa in their recent volume (Bratton *et al.* 2005). On the basis of surveys in 12 African countries between 1999 and 2001 they have identified a representation gap, in the form of a dearth of formal contacts between the electorate and their public representatives. Based on self-reporting of the frequency of contact respondents have had with their MPs,

Bratton *et al.* find that an average of 6 percent of all respondents said they have ever interacted with a national MP, with reported contact rates ranging from 0.2 percent in South Africa and 16 percent in Uganda. In general, African MPs do seem to have trouble reaching the citizens they represent. Interestingly, this does not seem to be related to the physical size of the country or the difficulties of travel in certain areas. And also their electoral systems - whether constituency based or not - do not explain why some countries have higher reported contact rates than others. We obviously need further study, preferably matching public opinion with MP's opinions and behavioural measures, to get to the bottom of this representation gap in Africa and how detrimental it is for the quality of democracy on the continent.

The public opinion surveys that are available to us via the Afrobarometer¹⁰ do not only indicate the existence of a representation gap but also reveal a number of patterns in people's perceptions of their elected representatives that could have more positive consequences for the quality of democracy on the continent. Below we report some patterns in people's perceptions of parliaments from Afrobarometer surveys conducted in 15 countries between June 2002 and November 2003. It covers the countries included in our study so far, with the exception of Zimbabwe.

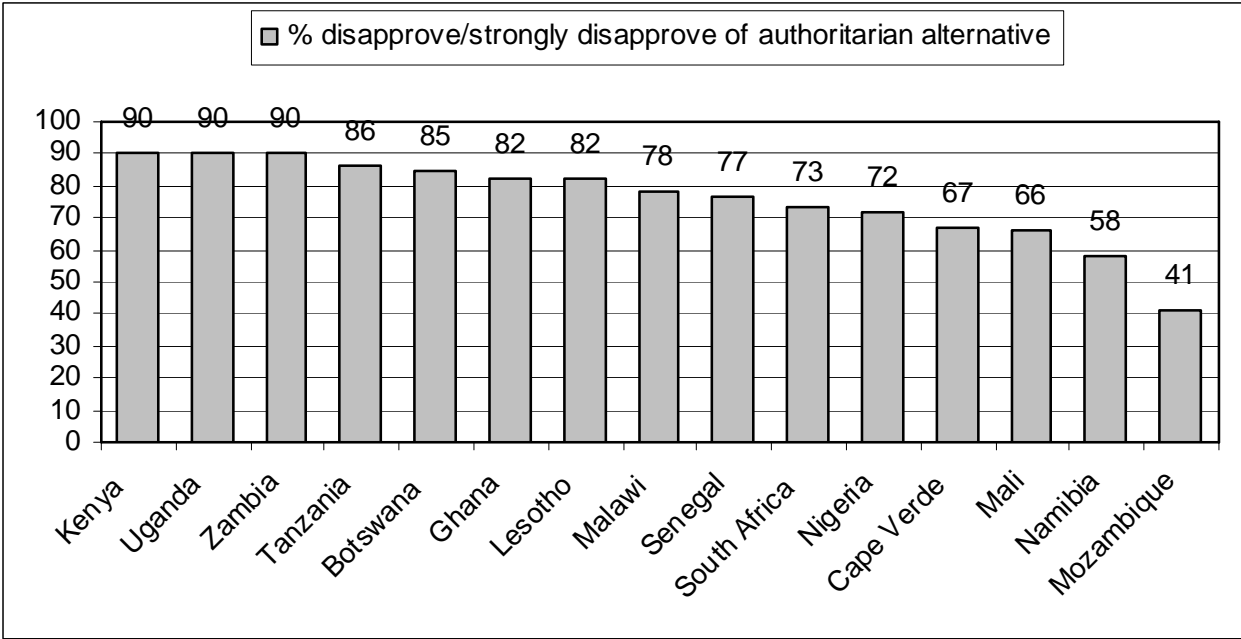


Figure 2: Rejection of Authoritarian Alternative, 2003

Note: The Afrobarometer surveys asked the following question: ‘There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives?’ Figure 2 indicates the percentage of respondents in each country that disapproved or strongly disapproved of the statement: ‘Elections and the National Assembly are abolished so that the President can decide everything.’

Source: Afrobarometer (2004).

¹⁰ See www.afrobarometer.org.

First, the Afrobarometer surveys show widespread support amongst Africans for the institutions of representative democracy, in the form of a firm rejection of authoritarian alternatives. In all countries, except Mozambique, overwhelming majorities of citizens disapprove of a situation in which ‘elections and the National Assembly are abolished so that the President can decide everything’. In Mozambique, 41 percent of respondents rejected the authoritarian alternative. In the other countries, the percentage ranged from 90 in Kenya, Uganda and Zambia to 66 in Mali and 58 in Namibia. (see figure 2) Despite these cross-national differences, Africans generally prefer democratic legislatures over authoritarian presidents.

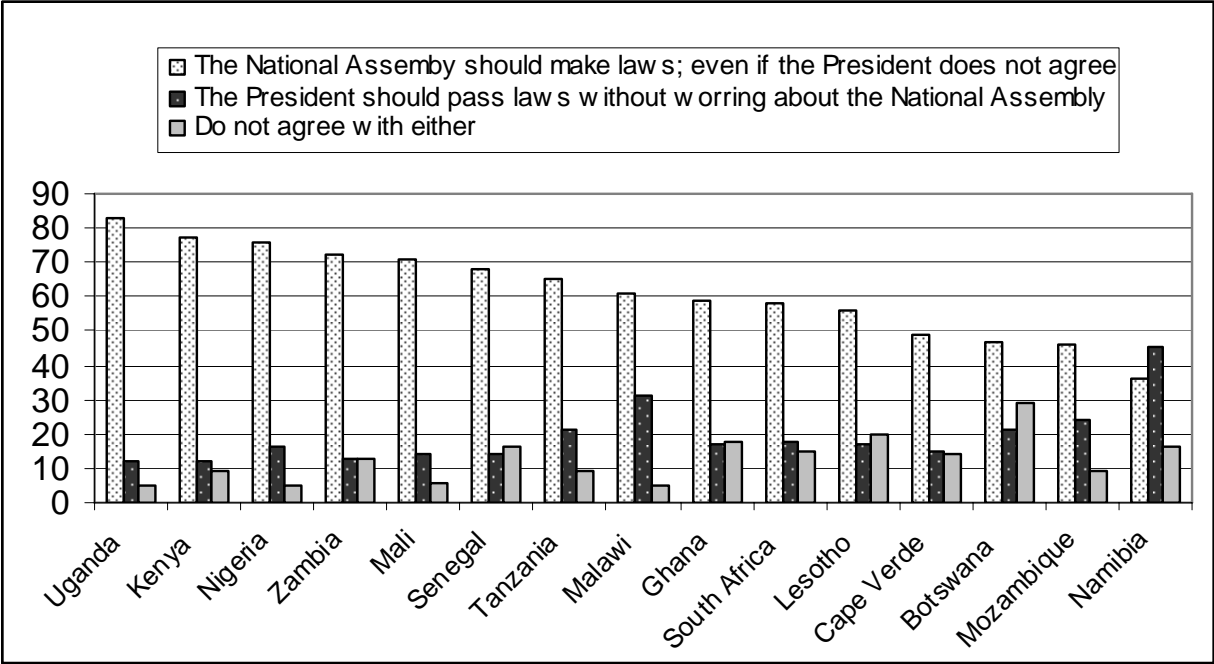


Figure 3: Perceptions of Executive-Legislative Relations, 2003

Note: The Afrobarometer surveys asked the following question: ‘Which of the following statements is closest to your own view, A or B? A. The members of the National Assembly represent the people; therefore they should make laws for this country, even if the President does not agree. B. Since the President represents all of us, he should pass laws without worrying about what the National Assembly thinks.’ Figure 3 indicates the percentage of respondents in each country that agreed or strongly agreed with each statement. Source: Afrobarometer (2004).

Second, Africans support the independence of parliament in relation to the president. In 11 countries, overwhelming majorities of the population think that ‘parliament should make laws even if the president does not agree’. Only in Cape Verde, Botswana, Mozambique and Namibia does the percentage of citizens agreeing to this statement fall below 50. However, even in Namibia, which has the lowest percentage of people agreeing with an independent role for the legislature (36 percent), support for the president does not rise above 50 percent. In fact, the percentage of Namibians agreeing that ‘since the president represents all of us, he should pass laws without worrying about the National Assembly’ is 45. This seems to indicate that Namibians are well aware of the

weakness of their National Assembly and the near absolute control of the President we discussed earlier in this paper. More generally, these findings suggest that citizens prefer their parliaments to have a certain degree of autonomy, perhaps even more than what their respective constitutions prescribe.

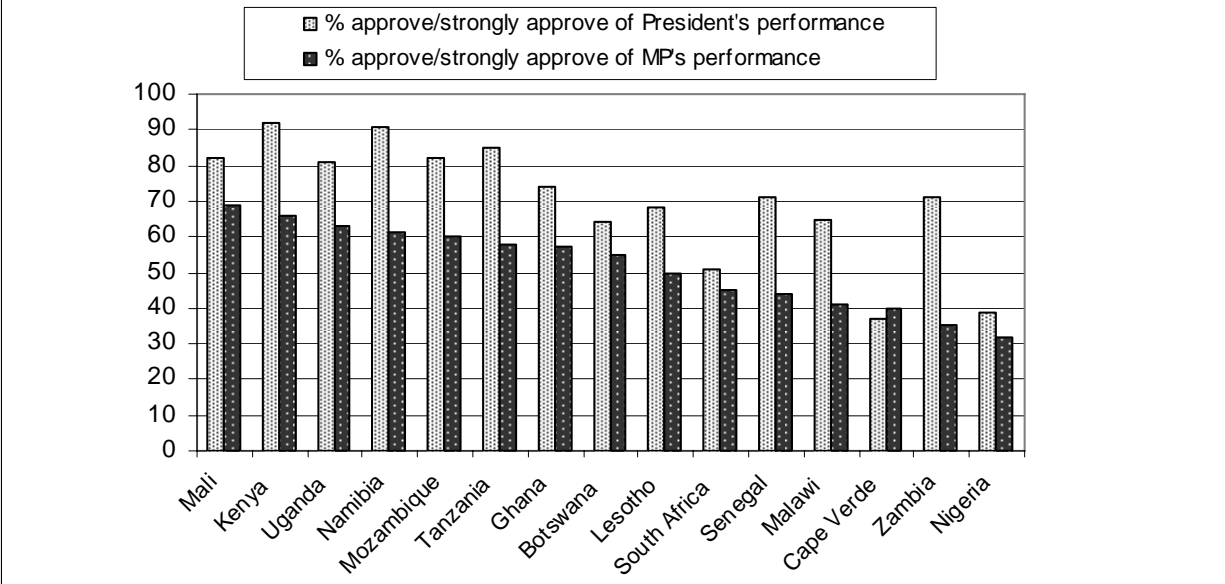


Figure 4: Performance Evaluations of President and MP, 2003

Note: The Afrobarometer surveys asked the following question: 'Do you approve or disapprove of the way that the following people have performed their jobs over the past twelve months, or haven't heard enough about them to say?': The President, the Representative to Parliament or the National Assembly.

Figure 4 indicates the percentage of respondents in each country that approved or strongly approved of the performance of the President and MP, respectively.

Source: Afrobarometer (2004).

Third, the Afrobarometer surveys allow us to compare citizens' evaluations of the way the president and the representative to parliament have performed their job. In the absence of concepts and measures to comparatively assess legislative performance, this data gives us at least some idea of how well or badly MPs do their job. On average, Africans rate the performance of the president higher than that of parliamentarians: 70 percent of citizens approved of their president's performance and 52 percent approved of the performance of their MP. The most highly rated presidents were Mwai Kibaki of Kenya (as measured in September 2003, nine months after his election), Sam Nujoma of Namibia (in August 2003), and Benjamin Mkapa of Tanzania (in July 2003). Despite the presidents receiving better job approval ratings than the MPs, the latter are still judged positively. In nine countries, 50 percent or more of the respondents approved of the performance of their MPs. The countries where this percentage dropped below 50 percent are South Africa and Senegal, where 45 percent of people approved of the MPs performance, and Malawi, Cape Verde, Zambia and Nigeria with levels between 41 percent and 32 percent, respectively.

Interestingly, the Zambian president’s rating was more than twice as high as the approval rating of Zambian MPs, whereas Cape Verdians give their president and MPs similar ratings. Cape Verde is, in fact, the only country where citizens rate their MPs slightly higher than their president, which seems to confirm Cape Verde’s position as an exceptional case in our analysis.

These patterns in public opinion indicate that, overall, citizens in Africa are not greatly dissatisfied with their elected representatives but there is room for improvement. They seem to have a preference for parliaments that are assertive in relation to the executive, which in most cases would mean parliaments that are stronger than our previous analysis indicates. This is a reason for optimism. Although the representation gap is real and needs addressing, especially if parliaments are to play a role as agents of democratic change, citizens do seem to support parliaments asserting themselves vis-a-vis strong presidents. Whether parliaments can in fact assert themselves and enhance the quality of democracy on the African continent brings us back to the question of institutional capacity we discussed earlier in this paper.

Can parliaments enhance the quality of democracy on the African continent?

A first step in addressing this question is to see whether the types of regime as we have recorded them are in any way related to the current levels of democracy on the continent.

Table 5: Current Regime Type in 16 African Countries

<i>Presidential</i>	<i>Hybrid</i>	<i>Parliamentary</i>
Ghana	Cape Verde	Botswana
Kenya	Mali	Lesotho
Malawi	Namibia	South Africa
Mozambique	Senegal	
Nigeria	Tanzania	
Uganda	Zimbabwe	
Zambia		

Note: According to our coding, Namibia, Ghana and Kenya were on the boundary between presidential and hybrid. Here, we have classified Namibia as hybrid because it has a premier; Ghana and Kenya do not have a premier, so they fall into the presidential category in this table. This means that Zimbabwe is the only hybrid system without a premier.

Source: Authors’ coding of constitutions.

Our findings on the current levels of democracy on the African continent are in line with the recent literature about the classification of political regimes in Africa (Diamond 2002) and point to a great deal of variation on the continent. Based on scores for political rights and civil liberties that the U.S. based NGO

Freedom House regularly gives to all countries in the world, table 6 shows there are a number of liberal democracies in Africa today. In our study, Cape Verde, South Africa, Botswana, Ghana and Mali fall into this category. Second, there are a number of ‘electoral democracies’, that is countries with regular, competitive multiparty elections but where civil and political freedoms necessary for political debate and election campaigning are curtailed. Namibia, Senegal and Lesotho fall into this category. Third is a group of ambiguous regimes in which the form but not the substance of electoral democracy exist and scores on civil and political liberties are generally lower. Most of the countries in our study fall into this hybrid category: Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania, Malawi, Nigeria and Zambia. They fall ‘on the blurry boundary between electoral democracy and competitive authoritarianism’ and might move more either towards democracy or autocracy in the near future. Finally, there are countries that cannot be classified other than autocratic because they do not respect important political and civil liberties and, although they might hold regular and even multi-party elections, fail to meet more substantive standards of democracy. In our study, Uganda and Zimbabwe fall into this category.

Table 6: Level of Democracy in 16 African Countries

<i>Liberal Democracy</i>	<i>Electoral Democracy</i>	<i>Ambiguous Regime</i>	<i>Electoral Autocracy*</i>
Cape Verde (7,7) South Africa (7,6) Botswana (6,6) Ghana (6,6) Mali (6,6)	Namibia (6,5) Senegal (6,5) Lesotho (6,5)	Kenya (5,5) Mozambique (5,4) Tanzania (4,5) Malawi (4,4) Nigeria (4,4) Zambia (4,4)	Uganda (3,4) Zimbabwe (1,2)

Note: Country scores are the 2004 scores for Political Rights and Civil Liberties, respectively. Authors have reversed the original scores so 1 represents the least democratic and 7 the most democratic rating.

*including hegemonic electoral autocracies (Uganda) and competitive authoritarian regimes (Zimbabwe)

Source: Freedom in the World website, www.freedomhouse.org; Regime types are adapted from Diamond (2002).

The differences in the quality of democracy that are apparent in this classification of current political regimes in Africa are measures of the broader political context in which African parliaments operate. They also present us with a measurement of the outcome many international donors would like to influence. Exploring whether this outcome is in any way related to the regime types as we recorded them for the 16 countries in our analysis leads to a few interesting findings. Without taking the possible influence of third variables into account, a simple cross tabulation of the two relevant variables (see table 7) shows that, with the exception of Ghana, pure presidential regimes tend to fall into the categories with lower levels of democracy, whereas parliamentary regimes show higher democracy levels. More importantly, hybrid regimes do not seem to be clearly related to a specific level of democracy. Cape Verde with

its premier-presidential system shows in fact the highest levels of democracy but the remaining five hybrid cases do not seem to be clustered around a specific level of democracy or a specific political regime.

Table 7: Quality of Democracy by Regime Type

	<i>Regime Type</i>		
	<i>Presidential</i>	<i>Hybrid</i>	<i>Parliamentary</i>
<i>Liberal democracy</i>	Ghana	Cape Verde Mali	Botswana South Africa
<i>Electoral democracy</i>		Namibia Senegal	Lesotho
<i>Ambiguous democracy</i>	Kenya Malawi Mozambique Nigeria Zambia	Tanzania	
<i>Electoral autocracy</i>	Uganda	Zimbabwe	

This finding suggests three directions for further study. First, we need to extend our measurements of the relative powers of presidents and parliaments to all 48 Sub Saharan countries while including more variables related to resources in order to gain more insight into the institutional capacity of parliaments in various regimes. Second, we need to know more about the way in which the details of institutional designs affect the balance of power between the executive and the legislature if we want to gain more insight into parliamentary autonomy and its effect on the quality of democracy. Third, we need to develop measures of parliamentary performance and take variables related to the social, economic and political context into account to conduct a full analysis of the effect of regime types on the quality of democracy and more conclusively answer the question whether parliaments can enhance the quality of democracy on the African continent.

The study we mentioned earlier by Barkan *et al.* (2004) shows that, given the right conditions, small coalitions of progressive legislators can achieve critical mass and become influential advocates for institutional reform and democratic change. A further study of the institutional capacity of parliaments will identify the constitutional obstacles such coalitions need to overcome in order to be successful. Together with measures of parliamentary performance, it would greatly enhance our knowledge about parliaments in Africa. It would benefit international donors in that it would help them to target their funds where they can have the most impact on the quality of democracy on the continent.

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The **AIDS and Society Research Unit** (ASRU) supports innovative research into the social dimensions of AIDS in South Africa. Special emphasis is placed on exploring the interface between qualitative and quantitative research. By forging creative links between academic research and outreach activities, we hope to improve our understanding of the relationship between AIDS and society and to make a difference to those living with AIDS. Focus areas include: AIDS-stigma, sexual relationships in the age of AIDS, the social and economic factors influencing disclosure (of HIV-status to others), the interface between traditional medicine and biomedicine, and the impact of providing antiretroviral treatment on individuals and households.

The **Democracy in Africa Research Unit** (DARU) supports students and scholars who conduct systematic research in the following three areas: 1) public opinion and political culture in Africa and its role in democratisation and consolidation; 2) elections and voting in Africa; and 3) the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on democratisation in Southern Africa. DARU has developed close working relationships with projects such as the Afrobarometer (a cross national survey of public opinion in fifteen African countries), the Comparative National Elections Project, and the Health Economics and AIDS Research Unit at the University of Natal.

The **Social Surveys Unit** (SSU) promotes critical analysis of the methodology, ethics and results of South African social science research. The SSU seeks to integrate quantitative and qualitative research. Our core activities include the overlapping Cape Area Study and Cape Area Panel Study. The Cape Area Study comprises a series of surveys of social, economic and political aspects of life in Cape Town. The Cape Area Panel Study is an ongoing study of 4800 young adults in Cape Town as they move from school into the worlds of work, unemployment, adulthood and parenthood. Linked to the panel study is an ethnographic study of childhood and adolescence in post-apartheid Cape Town. The SSU also conducts research into inequality, diversity and social policy.

The CSSR maintains a close working relationship with the University of Cape Town's **DataFirst resource centre**. DataFirst provides training and resources for research. DataFirst's goals are: 1) to act as a portal to digital resources and specialised published material available to users internationally; 2) to facilitate the collection, exchange and use of datasets on a collaborative basis; 3) to provide basic and advanced training in data analysis; and 4) to develop and operate a web portal to promote the dissemination of data and research output via the internet.
