Voting AND Democratic Citizenship IN Africa

EDITED BY
Michael Bratton

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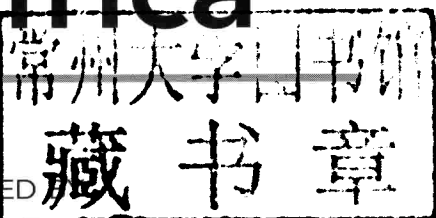
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Preface

Over a long career studying politics in Africa, I have had the privilege of many memorable experiences. These include formal meetings with African presidents, emotional interviews with human rights victims, and the charms and challenges of living for a spell in a rural village.

But one encounter was especially vivid. During the historic multiparty elections of 1991 in Zambia—which brought an end to the one-party rule of nationalist founding father Kenneth Kaunda—I was assigned by the Carter Center to lead a small election observer team to Kalabo district in the country's distant Western province. Our first foray into the area to check on election preparations had been by canoe across the Zambezi; but this time, for the election itself, we were dropped off in style by a small charter airplane. We rose early on election day to watch the opening of polls in the district capital, traveled to several outlying polling stations near the Angolan border, and, on our return journey, stopped at a rural school to observe the closing of the polls. It was here, in the fading light that followed a brilliant African sunset, that the deeper meaning of the day's events began to hit home.

Crowded into a dingy schoolroom, voters—men and women, old and young—declined to leave after casting a ballot. Even though they had queued for hours to wait for a late-opening poll, they insisted on remaining in place to ensure the integrity of their vote. Denied the opportunity to have votes counted and announced at the polling station itself, voters—along with party agents and nonpartisan monitors—were allowed to observe the sealing of the ballot box and its transportation to a counting center. In the gathering gloom, candles were lit to melt red-wax seals. All eyes, reflecting the flickering flames, were focused on the ballot box as if it were a sacred

reliquary. In the eerie silence of the ceremony, one felt that it contained all the hopes and aspirations of the assembled people. Only when polling officials hoisted the box aloft and moved toward the door did the throng burst into a round of cheers and ululations.

I learned that day that vote choice matters. It matters most deeply to people long denied the right. The act of casting a ballot in a meaningful election signifies more than the chance to participate in choosing a head of state or a representative to parliament. The voting act conveys human dignity by symbolizing that every participating individual is an equal and respected member of a political community. As such, voting is a meaningful step on the road to democratic citizenship.

This book reports on how individuals in Africa regard elections, how they vote, and whether and how they try to make themselves heard between elections. Ultimately it is about the political role of the individual citizen in Africa's would-be democracies.

The contents of the book summarize a decade's worth of research on voting and democratic citizenship by investigators in the United States and Africa connected by a cross-national survey project known as the Afrobarometer. This network of researchers is united by a shared concern with the micropolitics of democracy building. All of the contributors base their analyses on Afrobarometer survey data. Together, the contributions represent a collective effort to cast light on the features, origins, and mechanisms underlying popular participation in Africa's new democracies.

* * *

In the course of assembling this volume, the contributors and I accumulated many debts. At the risk of overlooking key colleagues, I mention just a few of the people who helped to bring our project to fruition.

For helping to design research studies and to raise research funds, I thank my collaborators in the executive leadership of the Afrobarometer Network: Emmanuel Gyimah-Boadi, Robert Mattes, Carolyn Logan, Leonard Wantchekon, and Paul Graham. The capable staffs at the Afrobarometer's core partner institutions carried much of the load in research administration, especially Daniel Armah-Attoh at the Center for Democratic Development in Ghana, the late Gregoire Kpekpede at the Institute for Empirical Research in Political Economy in Benin, and Zenobia Ismail at the Institute for Democracy in South Africa.

We could not have implemented surveys or understood results without the efforts of the research teams led by national investigators in every Afrobarometer country. Through the first four rounds of surveys, these investigators included Mogopodi Lekorwe (Botswana), Augustin Loada (Burkina Faso), Francisco Rodrigues, Jose Semedo, and Deolinda Reis (Cape Verde),

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Although African institutions lead the Afrobarometer, support units provide analytic services, quality assurance, and capacity building. At Michigan State University, Rhonda Burns and Kelly Fenn kept the wheels of the project turning. And Libby Downes and Kimberly Smiddy did the same at the University of Cape Town. Also at MSU, the following individuals provided research assistance, managed datasets, or operated publication and website programs: Paloma Bauer, Virginia Beard, Danielle Carter, Tse-Hsin Chen, Wonbin Cho, Tetsuya Fujiwara, Matthew Kirwin, Eric Little, and Fabiana Machado.

We also received insightful comments on draft papers from Yun-han Chu, Jeffrey Conroy-Krutz, Larry Diamond, Boniface Dulani, Nicholas Kerr, Adrienne LeBas, Marta Lagos, Ellen M. Lust, Stephen N. Ndegwa, Muna Ndulo, Nicolas van de Walle, and several anonymous reviewers. The papers on which the chapters are based were road-tested at various professional conferences, university seminars, and public gatherings. Too numerous to mention individually, these events provided audience reactions that helped us with revisions. For sharing his dataset on elections in Africa, I thank Staffan Lindberg.

Several contributions were prepared expressly for this volume (Chapters 1, 2, 13, and 15). Early versions of most of the other chapters first appeared in the Afrobarometer Working Papers series at www.afrobarometer.org. Some were subsequently edited for inclusion in published volumes: Chapter 11 is a revised version of "Voters but Not Yet Citizens: Democratization and Development Aid" in *Smart Aid for African Development,* edited by Richard Joseph and Alexandra Gillies (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2009); and Chapter 14 is a revised version of "The Democracy-Governance Connection" in *Governing Africa's Changing Societies: Dynamics of Reform,* edited by Ellen M. Lust and Stephen N. Ndegwa (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2012). Other working papers were revised for publication in scholarly journals and are included here in further revised form with the permission of the authors and publishers: Chapter 4 is drawn from the *American Journal of Political Science* (54, no. 2, April 2010, pp. 494–510), Chapter 5 from *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* (50, no. 1, February 2012, pp. 27–52), Chapter 7 from *Electoral Studies* (27, 2008, pp. 621–632), Chapter 8 from the *Journal of Modern African Studies* (50, no. 2, pp. 625–655, December 2012), Chapter 10 from *Governance* (25, no. 4, September 2012,

pp. 617–637), and Chapter 12 from the *British Journal of Political Science* (39, no. 2, 2009, pp. 345–366).

No organization or contributor, however, should be held responsible for the contents of this book. All errors of fact and interpretation are the editor's alone.

—*Michael Bratton*

Contents

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Voting and Democratic Citizenship in Africa: An Overview

Michael Bratton

Politics in Africa are commonly viewed from the top down. Journalists and social scientists alike tend to focus on the deeds—and misdeeds—of African presidents and the coterie that surrounds them. The mixed political history of postcolonial Africa, for example, is often written in terms of the leadership of exceptional individuals like Mandela, Mugabe, and Museveni. And political developments are often summarized with reference to distinctive national institutions like dominant ruling parties or interventionist armed forces. Ordinary people, who initially embraced one-party and military rule, are conventionally portrayed in the literature on African politics as mere bit players in supporting roles to centralized institutions or influential "big men."

This imbalance in the coverage of elite and mass politics was disrupted when political openings began across sub-Saharan Africa some thirty years after independence. In the 1990s—foreshadowing the Arab Spring of 2011—citizens in many African countries took advantage of the end of superpower support for ailing dictators to demand civil and political rights. Analysts took note by paying greater attention to civic associations, the informal economy, street protest, and the emergence of opposition political parties. Some of these popular initiatives contributed to a groundswell of constitutional and political reforms, to the convocation of multiparty elections, and occasionally even to transitions to fragile or hybrid forms of democracy. The advent of a measure of democratization seemed, for the first time since the struggle for independence, to hold out the promise of a greater measure in African politics of "rule by the people."

But by the first decade of the twenty-first century, political elites had learned to adapt to new expectations. Leaders had little choice but to

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recognize that political legitimacy required a popular vote in multiparty elections. Thus some African presidents bowed to democratic institutions, for example by peacefully accepting a loss at the ballot box or refraining from running again for office when they encountered term limits. But other leaders chose a different path, which encouraged analysts to return attention to elite behavior and institutional rules. The current literature on African politics features accounts of efforts by political incumbents to manipulate electoral laws, evade formal accountability, employ patronage and violence for political ends, and revive and maintain dominant party institutions. Emblematic of this new form of top-down politics are attempts by long-serving presidents to bypass constitutional restrictions on the number of terms in office that they are allowed to serve.

While acknowledging that political elites and dominant institutions retain the upper hand in African politics, I argue that ordinary people are not powerless. Nor should their political attitudes and behavior be overlooked. By voting in competitive elections, for example, they hold within their purview the power to bestow political legitimacy on—or withhold it from—leaders, institutions, and regimes. And by developing other attributes of democratic citizenship between elections—such as engaging in public events, joining others to address collective problems, and contacting political leaders—individuals can enhance the likelihood of holding leaders accountable.

Purpose

This book draws attention to recent research on voting and democratic citizenship in Africa. It seeks to offset the neglect of mass politics in the recent literature on African politics by posing a set of interrelated research questions. How do ordinary Africans view competitive elections? How do they behave at election time? In particular, do they vote for incumbents or opposition? What motivates their vote choice? How do people react to electoral malpractice? How do they participate in politics between elections? What are the implications of new forms of participation for democratic citizenship? And what are the implications of competitive elections for democracy?

In the past, it was difficult to offer convincing answers to any of these questions. Not only were elections uncompetitive in one-party and military regimes, but few other prospects were available to ordinary Africans for meaningful political participation. Moreover, data on voting and citizenship were often unreliable because official turnout rates or presidential victory margins were manufactured to favor incumbents. And the content of public opinion remained unknown because entrenched authoritarian rulers forbade national probability sample surveys on mass political attitudes and behavior.

In the absence of systematic empirical evidence, analysts had little choice but to make inferences about voting patterns, popular participation, and citizen preferences from small sets of qualitative interviews or narrowly drawn case studies.

The Afrobarometer has created opportunities for a much more rigorous research agenda. The Afrobarometer is a cross-national survey research project that measures a country's social, economic, and political atmosphere as seen by a representative sample of its adult population. Launched in 1999 as a response to a liberalizing political environment on the African continent, the project had conducted five rounds of surveys by 2012. The resulting Afrobarometer database contains well over 100,000 interviews with everyday people on subjects ranging from democracy and governance to social identity and economic well-being.

This volume assembles between two covers a selection of analyses on voting and citizenship by scholars who have made use of this unique empirical resource. As such, *Voting and Democratic Citizenship in Africa* represents the culmination of a focused and collective research effort by scholars on several continents over the course of at least a decade. It aims to move discussion of these topics forward by granting long-overdue attention to the attitudes and behaviors of ordinary people.

Approach

When analysts focus at the macro level, they are inclined to study large structures and whole systems. The literature on democratization, for example, tends to devote attention to relationships between national political institutions and political regimes writ large. For example, considerable ink has been spilled debating the exact nature of the relationship between elections and democracy. Most analysts take to heart Terry Karl's (1986) warning about "the electoral fallacy," namely that elections alone—however free and fair they may be—do not a democracy make (see also Diamond and Plattner 2010; Birch 2011). Instead, other institutions such as a constitutional rule of law, an independent legislature and judiciary, civilian control of the military, and a functioning civil society (including free mass media) are deemed also to be necessary. Indeed, policymakers and practitioners now commonly see the challenge of democracy building—not to mention economic development—in terms of "getting the institutions right" (Rodrik 2004; Bjornlund 2004; Carothers 2006; USAID 2010).

I do not deny the formative influence of a polity's institutional framework on regime outcomes. Nor do I question the centrality of the rule of law to the consolidation of democracy. But political institutions are more than formal-legal structures. They only come alive when political actors

breathe life into them. We need to know what people actually think and do when they inhabit political roles and embrace political rules—in short, when they make institutions their own. Do they attach political value to constitutional norms and allow institutional routines to regulate and shape their behavior? In turn, do they express opinions and exert influences that endow political institutions with indigenous legitimacy? In my opinion, political institutions and political culture tend to coevolve, with the most legitimate institutions being those to which the largest numbers of people voluntarily grant consent. For this reason alone, any account of regime consolidation must attend to the micropolitics of individual attitudes and behavior.

This book puts the spotlight on micropolitics. The unit of analysis in all the chapters that follow is the individual, whether as voter or citizen. A distinction is drawn between voting behavior and democratic citizenship, though each complements the other. Voting behavior is a set of personal electoral activities, including participation in electoral campaigns, turnout at the polls, and choosing for whom to vote. Democratic citizenship is defined here as participation in popular collective action and engagement with political leaders and institutions, including between elections and within a rule of law. This broad notion of citizenship goes well beyond the formal attributes of legal citizenship—such as birth, marriage, or naturalization—that entitle an individual to hold a passport or national identity card. Rather, it refers to a political understanding of citizenship based on civic engagement and participation. It is consistent with the contrasts made in the literature between citizens, on the one hand, and "parochials" (who are disengaged from the political system) and "subjects" (who passively defer to authority) on the other (Almond and Verba 1963; Mamdani 1996). Citizens are also distinguished from "clients," understood as those who simply seek patronage rather than a role in political decisionmaking (Fox 1994; Bratton 2008).

The authors of the chapters that follow employ Afrobarometer survey data to measure both voting behavior and democratic citizenship. They make reference to individuals' turnout at the polls, choice of election candidates, mass engagement with political institutions, and popular affect for political regimes. By viewing politics from below, the aim is to draw a much more complete picture of the range of actors (common as well as elite) who shape political institutions. And by bringing considerations of mass political culture into the picture—usually by means of cross-national analysis—the goal is to improve understanding of the conditions under which political regimes (whether democratic, hybrid, or authoritarian) survive and consolidate.

Take the foundational issue of the connection between elections and democracy. Operating from a holistic perspective, most analysts would probably agree that elections are the sine qua non of democracy, but not its be-all and end-all. One can certainly find empirical cases of elections in the

absence of democracy (see Chapter 2). But the converse is not true: one never finds democracy without elections. Stated succinctly, elections are a necessary condition for democracy, even if not a sufficient one.

But does this relationship hold at the micro level as well as at the macro level? In determining whether people regard elections as essential to democracy, we need in the first instance to know whether ordinary people value electoral institutions. And we must ascertain whether they connect their evaluations of the quality of elections to judgments about the establishment of democracy. Also, we must study whether popular electoral behavior reinforces any such cultural attachment. Finally, we would be interested to know whether individuals follow through after elections to supplement voting with autonomous efforts to seek responsiveness, representation, and accountability from political leaders.

After all, there may be a micro-level analog to the macro-level "electoral fallacy." One might think of it as the "voting fallacy." In this construct, people may minimally meet the necessary condition of turning out at the polls and casting a ballot. But they may also fail to fulfill the much more demanding requirements of active citizenship during the long periods between elections. As a working hypothesis, one should expect that, just as elections do not a democracy make, so voting does not a citizen make. On its own, the act of voting may not be enough to create democratic political orientations or stimulate a full range of democratic behaviors. Rather, other values, attitudes, and activities are required for voters to become well-rounded and effective participants in a democratic regime. Together, these attributes amount to the sufficient condition for citizenship.

The prevailing institutional framework for African politics obviously poses formidable barriers to active citizenship. Many residents of sub-Saharan countries—especially the poor—are citizens in name only, since they enjoy few meaningful channels of political participation. Elections tend to be contests between corrupt and clientelistic elites who stand ready to resort to vote buying, even violence. Far from providing a two-way linkage between citizens and the political center, African political parties are usually personalistic, elite-dominated, and internally undemocratic. As a result, elections often produce national assemblies and local governments that remain unrepresentative of broad-based constituencies and unresponsive to popular demands.

Moreover, shortcomings in democratic development may emanate from the individual level as well as the institutional level. One would expect, for example, that if people in Africa vote reflexively along lines of ethnic identity, then they forego opportunities to appraise incumbent governments on the basis of policy performance. Or, if voters tend to sell their votes to the highest bidder, then it is questionable whether they have a full appreciation of citizen rights and obligations. Alternatively, if individuals are partly responsible

for a "representation gap" between themselves and their elected representatives, then they are unable to participate fully in the democratic policy process. In sum, if people in Africa are voters but not citizens (see Chapter 11), or if they are "uncritical" citizens (see Chapters 9 and 12), then one would expect negative consequences for the consolidation of democracy.

Method

Since the Afrobarometer provides the empirical foundation for this book, a brief review of the project's main organizational features and research protocols is in order. By summarizing this material here, it becomes possible to reduce the amount of methodological justification offered in each chapter. In describing the Afrobarometer method, I make explicit a few technical caveats.

The Afrobarometer is an independent, nonpartisan, social science research project. It is dedicated to three main objectives: to produce scientifically reliable data on public opinion in Africa; to strengthen capacity for survey research in African institutions; and to broadly disseminate and apply survey results. Because of its ambitious scope, the project is organized as an African-led international collaboration. The Afrobarometer Network is managed by core partner institutions: the Center for Democratic Development in Ghana, the Institute for Democracy in South Africa, the Institute for Empirical Research in Political Economy in Benin, and, as of 2011, the Institute for Development Studies at the University of Nairobi in Kenya. Analytic and support services are provided by the University of Cape Town and Michigan State University. The network also includes national partner institutions—such as university-based research groups, independent think tanks, and private polling firms—that conduct surveys and compile raw results in each participating country.

Surveys are conducted in multiple countries—starting with twelve in 1999 and growing to more than thirty in 2012—and are repeated on a regular cycle. Five rounds of surveys had been completed or were under way at the time of writing. The thrust of the Afrobarometer questionnaire concerns democracy and governance. What do ordinary people think about a democratic form of government and alternative regimes? And to what extent do they participate in decisionmaking and policy implementation? Because the instrument asks a standard set of questions, countries can be systematically compared and trends in attitudes and behaviors can be tracked over time. Each round of surveys also includes an in-depth, specialized module on a selected subject like ethnic identity, economic reform, political leadership, local government, or the use of information and communication technology.

This book draws mainly on the Round 3 Afrobarometer survey, conducted in eighteen countries in 2005, which features the project's most comprehensive data module on elections, voting behavior, and political participation between elections.

A multinational committee from within the Afrobarometer Network develops the questionnaire for each round of surveys. The items in the instrument are indigenized to reflect local institutional nomenclature, translated into major native languages, and then blindly translated back into the original national language. Refinements to ensure consistency in question wording are made at every stage. Within each country, interviewers are trained to administer the questionnaire in a weeklong preparatory program that involves interview simulations and field tests. Once deployed to the field, teams of four interviewers travel together to selected research sites and are constantly monitored by survey supervisors. It is the interviewers' job to seek each respondent's informed consent to participate in the survey, to administer the questions in the language of the respondent's choice, and to record responses, usually by selecting a precoded numerical score. On occasion, interviewers also record open-ended verbatim statements in the respondent's own words. Supervisors make follow-up visits to randomly selected households as well as checking every completed survey before teams leave the field.

In each country, the Afrobarometer covers a representative sample of the adult population—that is, those who are over eighteen years old and eligible to vote. Individuals are selected using a multistage, stratified, clustered area design that is randomized at every stage. The stratification ensures that all main administrative regions (and cultural groups) are included in the sample and that urban and rural populations are represented in correct relative proportions. The latest national census, updated with projections where necessary, is used as a sampling frame to randomly choose primary sampling units with probability proportional to population size. If household lists are unavailable within the primary sampling units, which is often the case, then households are selected using a random walk pattern from geographical start points chosen by chance. Within the household, respondents are picked by a blind drawing of names from a list of household members, but with the proviso that interviews are alternated between men and women. This multistage sampling design produces not only equal numbers by gender but also a cross-section of the eligible electorate.

The target sample size for any survey in any country is a minimum of 1,200 respondents. For descriptive statistics, this sample size is sufficient to yield a confidence interval of plus or minus 3 percentage points (actually 2.8 percentage points) at a confidence level of 95 percent. In countries that are especially culturally diverse, a larger sample size of 2,400 respondents

is employed, the better to reduce sampling error and to allow enough cases to enable generalization about minority subpopulations. If minorities are purposely oversampled within a country (like Coloureds and Indians in South Africa, or Delta-region ethnic groups in Nigeria), then data are corrected by weights. Similarly, when data are pooled across countries, an additional weight is applied to standardize all countries at the same sample size ($n = 1,200$) regardless of total population. Frequency distributions record proportions of valid responses (including "don't know") and are rounded to the nearest whole percentage point. Readers should bear these rounding rules, confidence intervals, and weighting effects in mind when interpreting particular data points.

Special care is required when making inferences from aggregate cross-national statistics that purport to represent an Afrobarometer "mean." For one reason, average scores can be misleading because they smooth out and cover up some of the most interesting variations between countries and among individuals. In addition, it is essential to note that, while the countries included in Afrobarometer surveys do not differ significantly from sub-Saharan averages on selected socioeconomic indicators, they are not fully representative of Africa as a whole. Having undergone a measure of political and economic reform, they are among the continent's most open regimes. However, the inclusion of countries with past or present internal conflicts—like Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Uganda, and Zimbabwe—helps to make the country sample more representative of the subcontinent. But considerable caution is nonetheless warranted when projecting Afrobarometer results to all "Africans."

Many of the analyses that follow reflect a growing methodological sophistication in the comparative analysis of African politics. Most of the authors of this volume employ regression analysis, usually based on Round 3 data pooled across eighteen countries ($n = 21,351$). For purposes of inferential statistics, weights are always turned off. In some chapters, authors employ multiple-imputation software to infer values for missing cases; in other chapters, they drop those cases from analysis. Where the possible effects of these alternate data management methods are explicitly tested, results remain robust (e.g., Chapter 5). Several chapters focus on political objects of interest that have a discontinuous, binary form: voters either turn out at the polls or they do not; they vote for the incumbent or they do not. Accordingly, authors choose forms of regression (logit or probit) that are suited to analyzing dependent variables of this kind (e.g., Chapters 3 and 6). Moreover, several authors acknowledge the nested structure of Afrobarometer data in which cases are clustered rather than independent, for example within the distinctive settings of particular countries. To address these systematic patterns, they opt to supplement the Afrobarometer with national-level data from independent sources and to apply multilevel hierarchical regression techniques (e.g., Chapters 4, 5, and 10).