

The end of the cold war during the second half of 1989 also culminated in the Bretton Woods institutions joining the surviving superpower, the United States, in galvanising changes in the world order and for Sub-Saharan Africa. Multiparty, democratic elections were part of the constraints for accessing international finance. This left *part of* the North Africa and Middle East regimes to continue because of its special oil relationship with the West. In implementing competitive leadership change to replace the post-colonial One-Party-State system, a new process of national consultative conventions in former Francophone, Anglophone and Lusophone countries started putting together new draft constitutions, establishing function parliaments whilst reforming the public service to now include Election Management Bodies (EMB) as well as parliamentary mandated Election Commissions (ECs) established through the new Electoral Acts. This structure was and continues to be responsible for managing the six key dimensions of an election: delimitation, voter and candidate registration, campaigning, polling, collating and the announcement of results. The actual start for the continent to implement the new democratic norms was Benin 1991.

However, nearly two decades later, an evaluation of the impact and take up rate of multiparty elections within the previous 48 Sub-Saharan states and now joined by some of the North African countries such as Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia and even Sudan reveals that the notion has not been well received. There has been reluctant acceptance and serious interference regarding the working methods of the ECs and EMBs. Worried with the level of mistrust between the incumbents and their close proximity to dominant ruling party ECs, according to credible surveys by *Afro-Barometer*, a new body of monitors have emerged around the industry of Observer Missions and Monitoring. Their goal was to compel reluctant incumbents to level the playing field and to allow the political opposition an equal chance at the polls. Their action was widespread. From the Mediterranean to the Central African states of the Republic of Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and the Central African Republic (C.A.R), presidents have engineered constitutional amendments to extend their term limits to beyond 2034 nullifying the expected consolidation of the post 1990s multiparty democratic agenda.

Given the uneven pace of democratisation in the majority of the 55 African states, comparative evaluations on the different African elections are more and more useful.

The present issue of *Africana Studia* intends to contribute for the understanding of this ongoing process. Its starting point was the 2018 *Conference Series Internal Changes and Foreign Policy of African Countries* organised by the Institute for African Studies in Moscow, in collaboration with the CEAUP and the University of Pretoria, which focused precisely on African Elections. The network of researchers that came out of this Conference covered a broad range of issues, conceptual and comparative, and thus allowed for an editorial project.

Thus, the article of M. Rupyia tackles the question as to what factors explain the stalling and back sliding of African transitional processes in the 1990s. A comprehensive comparison of ‘Third termism’ cases from the Great Lakes to West Africa concludes that family dynasties and formal election processes are not mutually excluded phenomena.

Foreign observers have been important players in the legitimisation of African electoral processes. Olga Kulkova focus on the EU observer missions and discusses its consequences for the sending institutions, the government and the African societies. In a parallel way, the “Beijing Model” of attitudes towards African transitions is described by the article of Tatiana Deych, which gives particular details regarding Zambian presidential elections of 2011.

The case studies presented in the following sections cover a sample of processes of North, West and Central Africa.

Sergey Volkov checks the policies of the current Egyptian government to tighten control over society in a context of recession and youth unemployment with the results of the 2018 presidential elections and of the 2019 constitutional referendum. Lubow M. Sadovskaya contributes to the knowledge of the Ivory Coast political crisis and of its much discussed electoral dispute between the candidates A. Ouattara and L. Bagbo: an everlasting conflict since the year 2000. Abdou-Wahabi Abdou’s article refers to what may be considered as a standard case of family dynasties, despite so-called transparent elections being held periodically in Togo. His work also stresses the Togolese post-election contestations and their impact on the country’s democratization process.

The last five empirical studies included in the file regard Central Africa. Augusto Nascimento argues that the small but potentially oil-rich S. Tomé and Príncipe is another interesting case of transition from the one-party regime to a periodical failure to hold free and competitive elections. From the project “Re-examining elections after African experiences”, two researchers, Rémy Bazenguissa-Ganga and Pietro Alighieri, use the EleQta digital and direct enquiries in order to a better understanding of the 2016 presidential elections in the Republic of Congo (Congo-Brazzaville). The efficiency of power-sharing as a response to ethnic division in Kenya and its electoral clashes is the focus of Maria Piotrowska article, which analyses Kenyan presidential election results since 1992. Vladimir Shubin considers the electoral history of Zimbabwe and concludes that the major changes in independent Zimbabwe were not determined by any electoral process. In a parallel way, Gordon Moyo stresses the role played in the Zimbabwean politics by foreign powers - the ones connected with the former colonial forces (UK, the EU, and the U.S.) and the new players (Russia and China) - during the 2018 elections.

The geographical range of the case studies is, of course, far from covering the continental scale. But the main goal of this issue is to provide theoretical and empirical data on one of the most biased and media-ephemeral political phenomena – African elections.

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