

The interplay between
poverty and electoral
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Poverty and political
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The interplay between poverty and electoral authoritarianism:

Poverty and political mobilization in Zambia and Uganda¹

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Abstract

In this paper we wish to analyze the interplay between the political setting of electoral authoritarianism and economic grievances expressed in particular by an urban poor electorate in Africa. We show that the outcomes of this interplay have varied considerably across the region. While opposition politicians in some countries such as Zambia (2011) have been able to channel the political discontent into electoral victories and subsequent electoral turnover, most electoral authoritarian regimes in Sub-Saharan Africa have managed to stay in power. Uganda is an example of this. The analysis of recent political developments in these two countries will highlight two interrelated questions: What may explain the variance found? And, are some forms of poverty more challenging for the survival of electoral authoritarian regimes than others?

1. Introduction

Today electoral authoritarianism is the most common regime type in Sub-Saharan Africa, a region hosting some of the poorest countries in the world – Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and the Democratic Republic of Congo among others (Crawford and Lynch 2011). Electoral authoritarian regimes are defined as regimes that hold regular elections that officially determine who holds public offices (Schedler 2006: 1). These elections are broadly inclusive, minimally competitive and minimally open. Yet, “electoral contests are subject to state manipulation so severe, widespread, and systematic that they do not qualify as democratic” (Schedler 2006: 3). As will be shown later in this paper, there has been a proliferation of such regimes in Sub-Saharan Africa over the past 20 years. However, recently many of these countries have seen protests that have been motivated by a mixture of indirect political disenfranchisement and poverty. The spring and summer of 2011 saw large-scale protests against rising costs of food and fuel and subsequent worsening living conditions in 22 Sub-Saharan African countries. While the protests were often at least rhetorically linked to the events of the Arab Spring (Helle et al. 2011a; ACSS 2011), most were linked to domestic political concerns such as the lack of freedom of speech, the lack of a level political playing field and the use of patronage politics. However, economic grievances linked to poverty, inflation, corruption and rising inequality have also characterized these protests. It therefore seems reasonable to assume an interplay between contextual poverty and regime stability in these regimes. *But how does this interplay work, and how does it vary depending on type of poverty and across cases?* In the following we aim to address the two interrelated questions.

The percentage of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa living beneath a poverty line of US\$ 1.25 (2005 PPP) has decreased slightly over the past 30 years, but at a much slower rate than the rest of the developing world, and in absolute terms the number of poor people has increased (Chen and Ravallion 2008). Many African countries have seen economic growth over the past two decades, but this growth has primarily benefited only a small segment of the population. Inequality has risen (Geda and Shimeles 2007: 306). In a situation where rulers are appointed in elections carried out at regular intervals, as is increasingly the case in Africa, arguably, increasing levels of inequality present opposition parties with a unique mobilizing potential. However, when the Zambian opposition leader of Patriotic Front, Michael Sata, won the September 2011 elections, this was only the seventh opposition candidate to win executive elections in a non-founding election in Sub-Saharan Africa since 1990. This inability of opposition parties to capitalize on income disparities and a growing population of poor is linked to the massive organizational and structural advantages that the incumbent president and party enjoy in elections in Sub-Saharan Africa (Rakner and van de Walle 2009; Lynch and Crawford 2011), which is often abused considerably in electoral authoritarian regimes (Schedler 2006; Levitsky and Way 2010). But some electoral authoritarian regimes do lose elections. In addition to Sata, Abdoulaye Wade defeated Abdou Diouf in 2000, ending the latter’s 19 year rule in Senegal. In Kenya in 2002, Uhuru Kenyatta, the chosen successor to long-term autocrat Daniel arap Moi, lost to an opposition coalition headed by Mwai Kibaki. In these cases the opposition was able to mobilize the electorate to such an extent that the organizational advantages enjoyed by the incumbents were not decisive.

In this paper, we analyze two electoral authoritarian regimes in Sub-Saharan Africa that have recently held elections, Zambia and Uganda. However, while Michael Sata defeated the incumbent Banda in Zambia, Yoweri Museveni and his NRM won a landslide in the Ugandan elections. Following this introduction, we begin with a brief discussion of the concept of electoral authoritarianism. Then, drawing on a wide range of theories and examples, we discuss how different forms of poverty, whether urban or rural, and whether situated in a highly unequal society or in a more egalitarian one, might theoretically create different challenges for incumbent presidents and parties in the region. We then turn to assess the recent elections in Uganda and Zambia. The concluding section discusses the examples of Zambia and Uganda in light of the theoretical perspectives and aims to advance some tentative findings and hypotheses for further research.

2. Electoral authoritarianism in Sub-Saharan Africa

In a article from 2002, Andreas Schedler highlighted how an increasing number of regimes were holding controlled authoritarian elections where the opposition was allowed to participate, yet, the elections were held under “tight authoritarian controls and used to “cement their continued hold on power” (Schedler 2002: 36-37). While authoritarian elections are not a new phenomenon, the post-third wave of democratization (Huntington 1991) world has seen a significant increase of contested, yet authoritarian, elections (Hadenius and Teorell 2007; Seeberg 2011). Nevertheless, electoral authoritarianism remains a contentious concept, both in terms of its content, subtypes and operationalization (Munck 2006; Morlino 2009; Möller and Skaaning 2010). In this paper we follow Brownlee (2009), who identifies electoral authoritarianism as an important type of hybrid regimes, and following Diamond (2002), he argues that electoral authoritarianism can be divided into two subtypes based on their degree of competitive and hegemonic authoritarianism based on the levels of competition. Since we are interested in poverty as a context as well as in capturing differences between the subtypes at the extremes, we do not use Freedom House’s electoral democracy dichotomy to separate between democracy and authoritarianism. Instead we follow Hadenius and Teorell (2007) and Howard and Roessler (2006) in using a more maximalist definition of democracy: a numerical cutoff point on the Freedom House scale. We place this cutoff point at 5, indicating that regimes need to be considered “free” by Freedom House to be democratic. While we thus run the risk of including too many countries in our sample of electoral authoritarian regimes, we believe that this is an appropriate point of departure for the reasons mentioned above.

Following this definition, by 2011 electoral authoritarianism has become the most common political regime type in Sub-Saharan Africa. 39 out of 48 African countries now elect their leaders through multi-party elections with an actual opposition to the incumbent candidate. However, only nine of these 39 countries were labeled as “free” by Freedom House. This means that by following Brownlee’s definition, 62.5 percent of all countries in Africa currently have electoral authoritarian regimes.² Both Uganda and Zambia are electoral authoritarian regimes by this definition – While Zambia where considered to be free for a brief period after the initial victory of the MMD in the 1991 transition elections, it regressed into the partly free category in 1993 and has stayed there since.³ Uganda on the other hand have fluctuated between the “partly free” and “not free” categories since Museveni and the NRM came to power in 1986. We are thus comparing two regimes that, even though both electoral authoritarian, differs significantly in how authoritarian they are perceived. This allows us to look at how the issue of poverty interplays with regime stability in both a hegemonic and competitive electoral authoritarian regime.

² Even if you use Freedom House’s more minimalist ‘electoral democracy’ definition, only 17 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa where considered to pass this test in 2011. This means that if you use this as an indicator of democracy 22 countries are electoral authoritarian, 17 democracies and 9 other forms of authoritarian. Electoral authoritarianism would thus still be the most common regime form with 46 percent of the total.

³ Even though the 2012 version of Freedom House acknowledged the recent electoral turnover with a positive trend arrow, it nevertheless still ranked Zambia at a combined rating of 7, leaving it in the ‘partly free’ category. The new PF-led government must be considered a new regime though, and it is yet to be seen what type of regime it is.

3. Poverty and regime survival

While poverty has traditionally been seen as income poverty, it is a multidimensional concept that also entails human development poverty, and some argue that even social exclusion should be included in assessments of poverty (Andreassen and Banik 2010; Banik 2006: 11: 7). This wider definition highlights how poverty is closely interlinked with both domestic and international politics (Banik 2006: 11). As this paper is concerned with the effect of poverty on regime stability in electoral authoritarian regimes, we focus on theories of poverty as a context. In order to illustrate their effect, we argue that in the setting of electoral authoritarianism it can be fruitful to use Dahl's cost of toleration/cost of repression framework. According to Dahl, an authoritarian government must consider both the costs of tolerating and repressing an opposition. These costs are dependent on contextual factors (Dahl 1971: 14-16). Because the framework is built to analyze a situation where authoritarian regimes do have some competition, it is especially suited for electoral authoritarian regimes, as these regimes have at least some form of organized opposition that compete in elections. Furthermore, the framework addresses how the surrounding conditions affect the actions of the actors involved in the process (Dahl 1971: 16), allowing a focus on both agency of the actors and the conditioning effect of structures and institutions.

3.1 Inequality as a trigger or stabilizer under electoral authoritarianism

Many Sub-Saharan African countries have experienced significant economic growth during the past ten years. According to classical modernization theory as put forward by Lipset (1959) and Przeworski and Limongi (1997), this would be bad news for the authoritarian regimes in the region as countries would become more developed and thus more likely to democratize. However, this has not transpired. As pointed out by Lynch and Crawford (2011) and Puddington (2011) more regimes have seemed to stabilize or even regress towards authoritarianism over the past ten years. The trend thus seems to lend support to those who argue that growth primarily stabilizes regimes, regardless of whether those regimes are authoritarian or democratic (Needler 1966; Londregan and Poole 1990). However, while Ortiz and Cummins (2011) claim that the population in Sub-Saharan Africa became more economically equal between 1990 and 2008, others disagree (Geda and Shimeles 2007: 306). It was nevertheless not necessarily so in all countries (as indicated by Uganda and Zambia in table 2 below). Inequality could thus also be a factor. Boix (2003) argues, similarly to Vanhanen (1984, 2000), that the core assumption of modernization theory is dependent on the redistributive effect of the economic growth. He shows how the costs of toleration decrease as the population in a country become more equal, because the redistributive effects are less dangerous for elites if they are faced with an already materially self-sufficient electorate. Thus, democracy is more likely. Conversely, authoritarianism is likely to prevail in unequal societies because here the costs of tolerating an opposition who could potentially unseat them and address the radical economic unfairness are higher. Unequal societies are thus more likely to remain authoritarian.

However, Boix's reasoning does not necessarily fit the empirical reality of electoral authoritarianism in the region today as Boix primarily has been concerned with outright authoritarian regimes. In electoral authoritarian regimes, we have to take into account the fact that elections are held. One of the most famous hypotheses of political science is the median voter model, which holds that in countries that hold elections and where the median voter earns less than the average income of all voters, governments will be larger and social services more extensive because the median voter will seek economic redistribution (Meltzer and Richard 1981). While this previously has been shown not to be the case in low-income countries largely because of market imperfections (Knack and Keefer 1997; Keefer and Khemani 2005), the fact that elections are seen as the legitimacy-generating mechanism in these regimes means that the political players at least superficially have to take the interests of the electorate into account and address issues such as poverty alleviation. Following this logic, the costs of repressing the poor should be considered to be higher in electoral authoritarian regimes because

growth without distribution may lead to an electoral backlash. However, whether incumbents actually have to carry out pro-poor policies depend on an opposition that is able to challenge its policies in the electoral arena (Keefer and Khemani 2005: 19). From here, we may hypothesize that the costs of toleration will rise with the existence of poverty and an organized opposition. It is thus possible that the importance of poverty for regime stability will vary based on the level of inequality and the level of electoral competition. The recent events in the Arab World, suggests that the form that poverty takes in a given polity, may also be a significant factor.

3.2 Urban versus rural poverty: one more dangerous than the other?

2011 saw the end of some of the most durable regimes in one of the most stable authoritarian regions. Long-ruling autocrats in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya have been deposed in turn. The high level of urbanization has been highlighted as reasons for the revolutions both in Egypt and Tunisia (Kuhn 2011: 1), thus following a line that goes back to Lipset (1959) who identified urbanization as a driver of democracy. While some indicate that the role of the urban *poor* in Arab Spring have been overstated (Lopes de Souza and Lipietz 2011), urbanization is nevertheless seen as a danger to regime stability because of the changes in social patterns it entails, and because it brings people closer to the people in power (Huntington 1968).

Not a great deal has been written theoretically on the effect of poverty on regime stability in electoral authoritarian regimes. However, Magaloni has highlighted how the electoral authoritarian regime in Mexico cultivated conditions that stopped rural peasants from escaping from poverty, thus remaining dependent on state patronage and clientelist practices. In this way the PRI regime in Mexico made sure that they had a loyal electoral base that they could rely on to vote for them in elections in return for patronage (Magaloni 2006). While Magaloni finds a correlation between economic growth and electoral support for the PRI, she claims that the patronage practices led to boom-and-bust that were increasingly visible for the voters (Magaloni 2006: 84). Magaloni's research suggests that rural poverty may be easier to control for an electoral authoritarian regime and thus not only easier to tolerate, but actually favorable for regime survival because it creates a regime-dependent and loyal class of rural poor. The costs of repressing poor, disenchanting urban residents may on the other hand be high for electoral authoritarian regimes. Resnick (2010) argues that the urban poor are often targeted by populist politicians in Africa, and that the increasing levels of urban poor create a new challenge for electoral regimes in Sub-Saharan Africa, because the urbanization process has brought the poor closer to their cities. She thus argues that this has created greater opportunities for populist politicians to maximize vote gains in the city. However, she clarifies that this has to be done in a way that does not alienate the rural electorate (Resnick 2010: 2). Furthermore, she argues that because the poor in the cities are more able to see the wealth of the elite than those in the countryside, they are easier to mobilize. Their support of opposition parties could thus be more costly to tolerate, but also to suppress. In a sense, their urban presence increases the stakes in the electoral game.

With a starting point in the comparative theoretical literature, there is scope to argue for a potential link between poverty and the costs of toleration and costs of repression in electoral authoritarian regimes in Sub-Saharan Africa. We now turn to an empirical discussion by focusing on the experiences in Uganda and Zambia, two regimes characterized as electoral authoritarian but where one lost power to the opposition and the other did not.

4. Uganda: The success of the «rural» National Resistance Movement

When Yoweri K. Museveni and his National Resistance Army (NRA) took over power in 1986, Uganda had been devastated by 20 years of civil and military mismanagement. Measured in Gross National Income (GNI) per capita (PPP), Uganda was the 4th poorest country in the world (World Bank 2011). After 24 years of Museveni- and the National Resistance Movement (NRM)⁴ rule, Uganda now holds 22 countries behind them in the ranking, with a tripled GNI per capita. Since 1986, Uganda's economy has grown every year, albeit from a very low base, averaging at 6.6 percent. In light of these economic achievements, it is perhaps not surprising the President won a landslide in the February 2011 election with 68.38 percent of the votes. This was Museveni's fourth consecutive election victory, and the second following the reimplementation of multiparty politics in 2005. The margin of victory over his closest and fiercest rival Kizza Besigye increased by 12 percent compared to the election in 2006.

However, while 67% of the people asked in a poll carried out just before the start of the campaign in June 2010 indicated that they were very satisfied or satisfied with the job done by President Museveni, 68% of the people asked indicated that they would prefer if Museveni had not stood for election in 2011 (TNS Research International 2010: 50). These counterintuitive responses seemed to indicate that while the people of Uganda were grateful for the job President Museveni had done in the last 25 years; they felt it was time for him to step aside. The June 2010 poll results may be linked to the 2008 Afrobarometer poll where 57.9% of the respondents stated that the most important national priority should be to improve the economic conditions of the poor (see appendix 1). While Museveni and the NRM have managed to promote growth in Uganda, results in terms of economic redistribution and poverty alleviation are less conclusive. The level of poverty has halved between 1992 and 2009, yet, in terms of the percentage of the population living below the national poverty line, Uganda still rank as number 161 out of 187 measured by the HDI. According to the Ugandan scholar Tumukwasibwe, the NRM government views poverty reduction more as a secondary benefit from economic growth (2010: 60-61). Linked to this, the distance between the rich and the poor has grown markedly: the richest 10 percent owned more and the poorest 10 percent owned less in 2009 than they did in 1992 (World Bank 2011). The GINI index of Uganda in 2009 stood at 44, the same level it did twenty years ago in 1989. Thus, the situation in Uganda seems to be one where growth has lifted a significant portion out of extreme poverty, but one in which a small segment of the population is benefiting proportionally more than others.

From the theoretical discussion above, arguably, growth without (re)distribution could lead to an electoral backlash, depending on an opposition able to challenge the incumbent (Keefer and Khemani 2005: 19). In the context of the February 2011 elections, the Ugandan opposition could therefore be expected to mobilize a significant number of voters around the issues of economic inequality and corruption. This was also reflected in the pre-election campaign survey (TNS Research International 2010: 57). Why, then, was the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) and other opposition parties not able to exploit the lack of redistribution to their electoral advantage? Many factors have been

⁴ The NRM grew out of the NRA, and first developed as the only legal political organization in the country and thus practically the system of rule (Carbone 2003), before it metamorphed into a political party following the reintroduction of multiparty politics in 2005.

highlighted to explain the election outcome. We will here focus on the nature of the incumbent regime, the weakness of the opposition facing them and the context of the poverty found in Uganda.⁵

4.1 The nature of the NRM regime and its opposition

The electoral authoritarian regime in Uganda is characterized by two related issues: a ruling party that reached power through a civil war, and a weak opposition that has suffered under the legitimacy bestowed NRM as a liberator. When Museveni and the NRM came to power in 1986 they started rebuilding a functioning Ugandan state in which a brand new political system became a central feature: the National Resistance Movement-system, often called simply the Movement-system. The system has both been called a “no-party system” and a fully-fledged “one-party state” (Olaka-Onyango 2000: 55), as well as a limited multiparty system (Kasfir 1998: 55). Carbone characterizes the system as a hegemonic party system (Carbone 2003: 487) and illustrates how the Movement-system in itself practically worked as the party of the ruling elite, and how opposition forces did exist and were nominally allowed to function, but also how they were tightly controlled by the ruling party (Carbone 2008). The first serious electoral challenge against Museveni came from an internal challenger: Museveni’s former physician in the NRM Dr. Kizza Besigye decided to run against him in the 2001 election. Despite being threatened and harassed during the election, Besigye fared fairly well and won 27.82 percent of the vote. He subsequently fled the country after the election because of threats (Kannyo 2004: 134). The responses to the challenge posed by Besigye, suggest that Museveni and the ruling NRM-cadres were willing to tolerate a high cost of repression in order to secure electoral victory (William 1997; Rubongoya 2007). The challenge posed by Besigye in the 2001 election, coupled with increasing donor-pressure to re-introduce multiparty politics, led to a slow, controlled process of opening up for party politics led by the NRM (Carbone 2003: 498; Atoo et.al 2008: 32-33; Keating 2011; 428-429). The party system that followed this change has nevertheless remained similar to that of the Movement-system as described by Carbone (2003) above. The opposition parties faced challenges in terms of fielding candidates for the lower level offices due to resource constraints and poorly developed organizations, particularly in the rural areas (Helle 2011).

The weakness of the opposition is closely linked to characteristics of the incumbent. In the words of Ugandan scholar Golooba-Mutebi, NRM is “a weak party built around a strong President”.⁶ They do however have two huge advantages as an organization compared to the opposition.⁷ The first is their control of state resources, which they use during elections to outspend and co-opt the opposition (Helle 2011; Izama 2011; Kiiza 2011). The second is the composition of the state in Uganda, which the NRM has molded and are in full control over. Two institutional elements from the Movement-system that are still in place are particularly relevant for the NRM’s organization. First of all, elections for the two lowest levels of government (LC1 and LC2) have not been held since 2002 when the last local elections using individual merit were organized (Makara, Rakner and Svåsand 2008: 279). This means that the NRM are still in control of the local level state apparatus, and they are using it to organize local politics (Gloppen et al. 2006: 23-24; Izama 2011). Second, each District in Uganda has its own Resident District Commissioner (RDC). This position was established during the Movement system, but has been continued after multiparty politics were implemented. Each RDC is paid by the state and receive their pay directly from State House. Their loyalty is therefore first and foremost to the President himself (Kasfir 2000: 75). This increases the control of the ruling party in all areas of

⁵ Issues such as the underlying threat of military intervention if the opposition loses as well as the massive resource advantage of the ruling regime definitely also played a central role (Helle et al. 2011; Izama 2011a; Kiiza 2011).

⁶ Interview Kampala December 2010.

⁷ A third advantage is also importance: the close connection between the ruling NRM-elite, the military and the security apparatus. Nevertheless, this is of lesser relevance to the topic at hand.

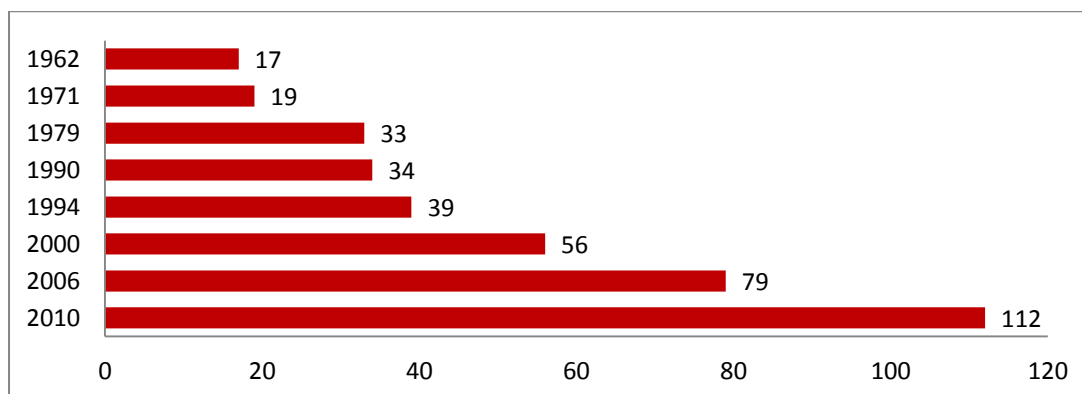
Uganda, and gives them a state-sponsored advantage compared to the opposition. RDCs were often caught harassing opposition politicians, as well as openly campaigning for the NRM-party and President Museveni during the 2011 elections (Commonwealth Secretariat 2011: 15). Arguably, especially in the rural areas, the NRM controls the political landscape through the state apparatus, not its party organization.

4.2 The advantages of rural poverty for NRM 's survival

In Uganda rural poverty is the predominant type of poverty (Tumushabe 2009). The rate of urbanization is 13 per cent (World Bank 2011). As highlighted in the previous section, rural poverty appear less threatening to the incumbent in electoral authoritarian settings– simply because it is further away from the people in power. Furthermore, it may be hypothesized that the wealth of the ruling elite is less visible to people in the countryside. This means that the prospects of a regime change through riots or revolution, as seen in the Arab world in 2011, seem less likely. Moreover, the low urbanization rate signals that the electoral competition is primarily decided in the countryside. And here the NRM and President Museveni have a clear advantage. In addition to NRM's organizational network, the party has also developed a form of "rural" and "regional" populism, which is closely linked to redistrictification and patronage.

While Uganda is a centralized state in that political power lies firmly in Kampala, decentralization has been one of the stated goals of the NRM-government since it came to power, supported by the international community (Ayers 2006; Green 2008; Mwenda 2007). While the number of districts increased slowly up until 1994, the number increased significantly after the 1996 elections (see figure 1 below). Though some scholars have argued that the decentralization and subsequent increase in districts have been a success (Francis and James 2003; Kjaer 2004), arguably, President Museveni has catered to rural and local demands by offering new districts and decentralization of services during election campaigns – utilizing them as "electoral handouts" (Green 2008; Mwenda 2007; Kiiza 2011). In the 2011 campaign Museveni promised several new districts to rural areas, especially in the populous eastern region. By August 2011, a few months after the electoral victory, plans for 21 new districts were in place, which would take the total tally up to 133; a quadrupling since 1994 (Daily Monitor 25.8.2011). While scholars are skeptical about the social benefits of this increase in districts, it has certainly paid dividends for the NRM and Museveni in elections: Newly created districts consistently vote for Museveni by a larger margin than older districts (Tumushabe 2009: 41).

Figure 1: The number of districts in Uganda, 1962-2010



Source: Tumushabe (2009), updated with current numbers from the Ugandan Electoral Commission and State House in Uganda.

Given that the majority of the Ugandan population lives in the countryside, it is perhaps not surprising the agricultural policies are viewed as very important by the NRM-government (Museveni 2011: 9). However, while the NRM talks and writes a lot on the importance of agriculture for lifting the rural

population out of poverty, Naluweiro (2011) point out that this is neither reflected in their manifesto nor in the meager allocation of 3.2 percent of the national budget for 2012/2013. The NRM do however have several support programs for agricultural inputs. The allocations are distributed locally by committees where NRM are ensured representation (Naluweiro 2011: 7), and they are in turn directly controlled by the President (Kjaer and Therkildsen 2011). The criteria for the allocations are not defined in advance and level of poverty is not a defined criterion (Naluweiro 2011: 7). This form of implementation ensures that the NRM can use the allocations as rewards during election times. Thus both the creation of new districts and the use of agricultural subsidies can be seen as a way of maintaining control of the rural vote, and the electoral results.

Events that have taken place in Uganda after the February 2011 elections may challenge the notion of stability suggested in the analysis above. Starting in late March 2011, several protests against the ruling party's handling of the election and a situation of rising food and fuel prices were organized by the opposition and civil society organizations in urban areas in Uganda. The protests were primarily attended by the urban poor (Izama and Echwalu 2011: 106). Throughout April the protests increased in size, partly as a result of the heavy-handed repression by the government who targeted opposition leaders. The protests had its root in the post-election economic downturn, and it will be important to observe whether continued economic decline and inflation may result in similar protests among the urban youth. President Museveni does not seem concerned, however. In his New Year's Speech on the 31st of December 2011, President Museveni aimed at the urban opposition supporters and reaffirmed his commitment to the rural Ugandans who continued to support him:

“Isn't this continued growth of the economy of Uganda, in spite of the bad economic situation globally, a shame to those who were predicting doom at the beginning of the year? It is good that many Ugandans, especially in the countryside, did not believe these charlatans.” (Museveni 2011: 5).

5. Zambia: Turning urban poverty into a winning slogan. The success of populist politics

At independence in 1964, Zambia was a middle income country. Four decades later, Zambia ranks among the poorest countries in the world: In terms of HDI, Zambia is ranked as 150 of 169 countries. In the period after 2000, however, steady growth records of 6-7 per cent have been recorded. But the growth recorded has not been matched by enhanced human development. Close to half of the Zambian population still lives in extreme poverty and near 70 per cent of the population exist below the poverty line. The distribution of income is skewed and the uneven distribution of wealth is also marked by regional differences and an increasing urban/rural divide. In an African context, Zambia is highly urbanized with 36 per cent of the population residing in cities. An increasing young and urban poverty class and conspicuous lack of redistributive politics have proven a fertile ground for populist appeals from the political opposition. In the September 2011 elections, the populist appeals by Michael Sata and the Patriotic Front witnessed the first change of government since MMD gained power in 1991. Zambia now belongs to a select group of African multiparty systems along with Benin, Cape Verde, Ghana, Madagascar, Mali and Mauritius that have experienced two peaceful electoral turnovers, thus qualifying as a consolidated democracy under result-oriented minimalist definitions such as Przeworski's (1991) definition of democracy as uncertainty of outcome and Huntington's (1991: 267) definition of democracy being consolidated when an incumbent have lost power twice through competitive elections. However, as pointed out by Boogards (2007), result-oriented definitions of democracy do not always reflect the reality in the Sub-Saharan African context. One has to look past the election results. The situation in Zambia since the 1991 transition is an example of this.

5.1 The 1991 democratic transition: reactions to economic austerity measures

Zambia's first independent president Kenneth Kaunda and the United National Independence Party (UNIP) aimed to create a political system that enhanced the nationalist sentiments of the independence struggle (Rakner 2003, LeBas 2011). This process culminated with the introduction of the one-party state in 1972 and a system of state corporatism where all interest groups were designated to belong to the state. But, by the late 1980s, with a membership of approximately 350.000, the trade union movement, under its umbrella organization, Zambia Congress of Trade Unions, was considered a political threat to the UNIP. In 1990 ZCTU put its organizational resources at the disposal of Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) and became a central force in the 1991 political transitions. With the slogan —The Hour Has Come the MMD, an opposition drawn from a broad coalition of trade unions, business interests, intellectuals and students, won an overwhelming electoral victory over the single party for the previous 17 years. The 1991 political transition in Zambia was closely linked to protest against the economic austerity measures known as the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP). Economic grievances were channeled into political demands for multiparty democracy.

But economic governance issues soon put the trade union movement and MMD on collision course (Rakner 2003). The MMD coalition started to crumble as a number of central members of government and the MMD Central Committee opposed the implementation of economic reforms. Zambia's party proliferation occurred in tandem with economic reforms that impoverished the urban population while simultaneously increasing its ranks (Resnick 2010). After the first multiparty elections in 1991, the incumbent party MMD won the three following elections. The 2006 election campaign was, however, marked by the successful articulation of populist politics by Michael Sata and the opposition party Patriotic Front (PF), which won a significant majority in urban areas. While the incumbent (MMD) concentrated on vote-buying in the rural areas in the 2006 and 2008 elections, its treatment of the

urban poor proved detrimental to its electoral fortunes in Lusaka and the Copperbelt, where Michal Sata's Popular Front obtained close to 60 per cent of the vote (Cheesman and Hinfelaar 2010).

Table 1: Percentage of vote won by Presidential Candidate by party in Presidential Elections in Zambia, 1991-2011

Party of candidate	1991	1996	2001	2006	2008	2011
MMD	75,8	72,6	28,7	43,0	40,1	36,2
UNIP	24,2	-	10,1	-	-	0,6
ZDC	-	12,7	-	-	-	-
UPND/UDA	-	-	26,8	25,33	19,7	18,5
PF	-	-	3,4	29,4	38,1	42,3

Source: Nohlen et al. (1999); Electoral Commission of Zambia (2011)

Table 2: Percentage of seats won by largest parties in Parliamentary Elections in Zambia, 1991-2011

Party	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011
MMD	83,33	87,33	46	48,66	36,66
UNIP	16,66	-	8,66	-	-
ZDC	-	1,33	-	-	-
UPND/UDA	-	-	32,66	17,33	18,66
PF	-	-	0,66	28,66	40

Source: Nohlen et al. (1999); Electoral Commission of Zambia (2011)

5.2 2006-present: Urban poverty and political mobilization

Sata's attacks on foreign investors (particularly from China) for their abuse of the workforce and their supposedly corrupt relationship with the MMD resonated well with urban Zambians, already angered by the negative impact of economic liberalization. PF's campaign injected popular social demands into what had become a moribund political debate, and PF's campaign contrasted sharply with that of MMD as it specifically focused on urban poor voters (Lamer and Fraser 2007). After two closely fought elections (2006 and 2008, see table 1.1. and 1.2), in September 20, 2011, Michael Sata won the Zambian presidential election in his fourth attempt. In a context where the incumbent party had vastly superior resources to distribute, the opposition ran a very effective campaign by telling their

supporters that it was perfectly acceptable to receive clothes and food distributed by the ruling party, but 'Don't Kubeba!' - in other words don't tell the ruling party that you won't be voting for them! PF's 2011 election campaign message focused on lower taxes, jobs and wealth creation under the slogan "more money in our pockets". The first few months of PF and Sata's term have indicated a distinct 'left turn' in Zambian politics, focusing on minimum wage, labor relations and mines taxes.

Twenty years after the transition elections, Zambia's democratic trajectory continues to be marked by lack of institutionalization, illustrated by a growing concentration of power in the executive office and failure to produce counter-forces against state malpractice and corruption. Yet, at the same time, Zambian politics is marked by a remarkably open and vibrant political debate. All elections in Zambia post 1991 have been competitive and despite considerable incumbency advantages, the 2011 elections changed the political landscape, indicating that election outcomes in Zambia are by no means certain. The case of Zambia signals that urbanization, and economic growth that is not linked to tangible benefits for the poor in terms of job creation and poverty reduction, may provide fertile ground for opposition politics and eventually democratic turn-overs.

6. Poverty and electoral authoritarianism in Uganda and Zambia

Table 3: Key indicators compared, Uganda and Zambia, 1986-2010

	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006	2010
GNI per capita (PPP) Uganda	320	420	580	700	980	1250
GNI per capita (PPP) Zambia	670	800	830	910	1100	1380
GDP growth (%) Uganda	0,4	5,6	9,1	5,2	10,8	5,2
GDP Growth (%) Zambia	0,7	0	6,9	4,9	6,2	7,6
GINI Uganda		43	37	46	43	
GINI Zambia		53	50	42	51	
Urbanization Uganda	10	11	12	12	13	13
Urbanization Zambia	40	39	37	35	35	36

Source: World Bank 2011

While the 2011 elections in Zambia and Uganda were carried out in the context of comparatively widespread poverty and inequality, the above analysis has highlighted several differences between the two country contexts. The first is the nature of the incumbent regime. While the electoral playing fields in both Uganda and Zambia have been tailored to favor the incumbent, the hegemonic regime in Uganda seems to be better able to control the electoral playing field and weaken the opposition than the more competitive regime in Zambia. This is consistent with the theory argument of electoral authoritarianism holding that the degree of hegemony matters. NRM's hegemony in part is explained by the fact that Museveni and NRM brought the transition to the current political system in Uganda and thus were better able to shape it, while the MMD came to power through multiparty elections and there has thus been a history of both personal and party electoral turnovers in Zambia. It is nevertheless clear that the NRM has been better able to "absorb" the political challenges through its control of the state apparatus than the MMD. One can also not ignore that the NRM-led government in Uganda has been better at creating growth and some sort of poverty alleviation than the MMD-government in Zambia, as table 2 above illustrates.

However, the nature of the poverty challenge facing Uganda and Zambia provides an additional explanatory factor for the two different electoral outcomes that so far has not been properly accounted for. This is first and foremost a matter of demography, rather than attitudes. This can be illustrated by comparing the Afrobarometer surveys done in Zambia and Uganda on questions related to both to both democracy and policy preferences (see appendix 1 for an overview of a selection of questions). While the differences are typically more polarized in Zambia than in Uganda, the pattern is nevertheless the same: the urban respondents are more skeptical of both the quality of democracy in their country and the related issue of whether or not they perceive elections to be free and fair than their rural counterparts. In addition, the urban respondents are more concerned with unemployment and poverty as a problem than the rural respondents. The most important difference in this sense is rather, as highlighted in the sections above, the demographics: there are significantly more urban respondents in Zambia than in Uganda as the Afrobarometer is conducted based on demographic parameters. Given that the opposition in Sub-Saharan Africa is often strongest in the urban areas, it is perhaps logical that the opposition won the 2011 election in Zambia and not in Uganda. However, the linkages between poverty and electoral politics are certainly more complex. As the MMD originally came to power supported largely by the urban poor and middle classes, the case of Zambia suggests that the opposition will need to perform once in government if it wishes to keep the urban vote. This means focusing on urban poverty issues – or else they can be exploited by a populist opposition, as the PF and Sata has done in Zambia. In contrast, the masses of rural poor in Uganda have been controlled relatively easily by the NRM, though as indicated by Magaloni (2006), this might not be as easy in the long run.

A starting point for our analysis has been the limited attention given to the effects of poverty on regime stability in electoral authoritarian regimes in the political science literature. While it is important to stress that the conclusions reached above are based on a comparison of only two cases and thus might not be representative for the range of electoral authoritarian regimes in Sub-Saharan Africa, we suggest that tentative conclusions about the effect of poverty as a context on regime stability in electoral authoritarian regimes in Sub-Saharan Africa may be drawn. First, since both Uganda and Zambia must be considered poor and unequal societies, poverty in itself is not necessarily affecting the costs of toleration and repression and subsequently regime stability. However, two related issues are. The more hegemonic NRM party seem more able and willing to use their incumbent power to control the electoral game and neutralize political threats, both in terms of opposition and troublesome issues such as poverty. This suggests that the more hegemonic the regime, the lower the costs of repression as the regime is able to use more “soft power” to repress the opposition, leaving them unable to mobilize the electorate even if the political opportunities are there. Thus, while the costs of tolerating the opposition are low, so the costs of repression are even lower. This is consistent with the theory on electoral authoritarian regimes.

Second, while poverty and inequality might not matter in all cases, it could potentially play a role depending on the demographics of the country. As the case of Zambia has shown, the costs of repression seem to be higher if there are high levels of urban poverty. Furthermore, if there are high levels of urbanization in a country it is also harder to ignore the opposition, which raises the costs of toleration but also the costs of repression. On the other hand the rural poverty in Uganda is easier to control.

The year of 2011 has been a year where the links between political disenfranchisement and poverty has become very visible, both in the Arab World and in Sub-Saharan Africa. This paper has highlighted how poverty as context has played a role in shaping two different outcomes in two elections with a similar political back-dropping, and how other differences in the context in turn has affected both the response of the regime and in turn the effect of the response. There is every reason to believe that the question of poverty and system of governance will demand increased attention in the coming years, and in the Sub-Saharan African region more studies of electoral authoritarianism in the context of poverty and inequality will surely be needed. In this sense, this is more of a challenge than a conclusion.

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Appendix 1: Crosstabulation with data from the 2008/2009 AfroBarometer round for Uganda and Zambia

VALUES SURVEY DATABANK

Selected countries/samples: Uganda [2008], Zambia [2009]

BASE=2281		Country						
		Total	Uganda		Zambia			
			Total	Urban or Rural Primary Sampling Unit	Total	Urban	Rural	
Q30. Support for democracy	Statement 3: It doesn't matter	9.0 %	10.2 %	9.6 %	10.3 %	7.9 %	6.5 %	8.8 %
	Statement 2: Sometimes non-democratic preferable	7.2 %	6.8 %	6.2 %	6.9 %	7.7 %	9.5 %	6.6 %
	Statement 1: Democracy is preferable	83.7 %	83.0 %	84.2 %	82.8 %	84.4 %	84.1 %	84.6 %
	Total	2281 (100%)	1144 (100%)	166 (100%)	978 (100%)	1137 (100%)	431 (100%)	706 (100%)

Source: Values Surveys Databank

VALUES SURVEY DATABANK

Selected countries/samples: Uganda [2008], Zambia [2009]

BASE=2290		Country						
		Total	Uganda		Zambia			
			Total	Urban or Rural Primary Sampling Unit	Total	Urban	Rural	
Q42a. Extent of democracy	Missing	0.1 %	-	-	-	0.1 %	0.3 %	-
	Not a democracy	7.2 %	9.0 %	12.2 %	8.5 %	5.5 %	8.0 %	4.0 %
	A democracy, with major problems	35.8 %	30.9 %	33.4 %	30.4 %	40.6 %	47.0 %	36.9 %
	A democracy, but with minor problems	31.2 %	36.7 %	41.7 %	35.8 %	25.9 %	27.0 %	25.3 %
	A full democracy	22.0 %	21.2 %	12.0 %	22.7 %	22.7 %	16.2 %	26.5 %
	Do not understand question/democracy	3.7 %	2.3 %	0.8 %	2.5 %	5.2 %	1.6 %	7.2 %
	Total	2290 (100%)	1127 (100%)	166 (100%)	962 (100%)	1162 (100%)	428 (100%)	735 (100%)

Source: Values Surveys Databank

VALUES SURVEY DATABANK

Selected countries/samples: Uganda [2008], Zambia [2009]

BASE=2253		Country						
		Total	Uganda		Zambia			
			Total	Urban or Rural Primary Sampling Unit	Total	Urban	Rural	
Q71. Elections free and fair	Missing	*	-	-	-	*	-	0.1 %
	Not free and fair	26.2 %	23.3 %	32.2 %	21.8 %	29.1 %	45.3 %	19.6 %
	Free and fair, with major problems	22.2 %	22.8 %	19.9 %	23.2 %	21.7 %	22.7 %	21.2 %
	Free and fair, but with minor problems	29.5 %	34.1 %	35.0 %	34.0 %	25.0 %	21.1 %	27.3 %
	Completely free and fair	21.4 %	19.1 %	12.5 %	20.2 %	23.7 %	11.0 %	31.0 %
	Do not understand question	0.6 %	0.7 %	0.5 %	0.8 %	0.5 %	-	0.7 %
	Total	2253 (100%)	1122 (100%)	160 (100%)	962 (100%)	1131 (100%)	416 (100%)	716 (100%)

Source: Values Surveys Databank

VALUES SURVEY DATABANK

Selected countries/samples: Uganda [2008], Zambia [2009]

BASE=2391		Country						
		Uganda				Zambia		
		Total	Total	Urban or Rural Primary Sampling Unit		Total	Urban or Rural Primary Sampling Unit	
	Missing	0.1 %	-	-	-	0.2 %	0.2 %	0.2 %
Q40a. Most important national priority	Maintaining order in the nation	18.1 %	18.1 %	20.3 %	17.7 %	18.2 %	16.9 %	18.9 %
	Giving people more say in government decisions	10.0 %	11.0 %	10.4 %	11.1 %	8.9 %	9.2 %	8.7 %
	Protecting people's right to live freely	13.6 %	17.5 %	13.0 %	18.3 %	9.7 %	16.2 %	6.0 %
	Improving economic conditions for the poor	57.9 %	53.1 %	56.2 %	52.6 %	62.7 %	57.4 %	65.8 %
	None of these	0.3 %	0.3 %	0.1 %	0.3 %	0.3 %	0.2 %	0.4 %
	Total	2391 (100%)	1195 (100%)	171 (100%)	1025 (100%)	1196 (100%)	439 (100%)	757 (100%)

Source: Values Surveys Databank

VALUES SURVEY DATABANK

Selected countries/samples: Uganda [2008], Zambia [2009]

BASE=2400		Country						
		Uganda				Zambia		
		Total	Total	Urban or Rural Primary Sampling Unit		Total	Urban or Rural Primary Sampling Unit	
	Missing	0.2 %	-	-	-	0.3 %	0.9 %	-
Q56pt1. Most important problems - 1st response	No problems at all	0.3 %	0.4 %	0.5 %	0.4 %	0.1 %	-	0.2 %
	Management of economy	6.1 %	6.7 %	8.8 %	6.3 %	5.6 %	8.0 %	4.3 %
	Wages, incomes and salaries	3.1 %	2.6 %	4.0 %	2.4 %	3.5 %	4.8 %	2.8 %
	Unemployment	15.7 %	15.6 %	27.2 %	13.7 %	15.9 %	27.8 %	9.0 %
	Poverty/ destitution	19.3 %	25.2 %	21.3 %	25.8 %	13.4 %	12.0 %	14.3 %
	Rates and taxes	2.8 %	4.8 %	7.2 %	4.4 %	0.8 %	0.8 %	0.8 %
	Loans/ credit	1.5 %	2.3 %	1.9 %	2.4 %	0.7 %	0.7 %	0.7 %
	Farming/ agriculture	9.9 %	2.1 %	1.1 %	2.3 %	17.6 %	4.5 %	25.2 %
	Food shortage/ famine	7.0 %	5.9 %	2.2 %	6.5 %	8.1 %	7.5 %	8.5 %
	Drought	0.2 %	0.4 %	0.2 %	0.5 %	0.1 %	0.1 %	-
	Land	0.6 %	1.1 %	1.1 %	1.1 %	0.2 %	0.3 %	0.1 %
	Transportation	1.8 %	2.5 %	1.2 %	2.7 %	1.2 %	1.0 %	1.3 %
	Communications	0.2 %	0.4 %	-	0.4 %	0.1 %	0.1 %	0.1 %
	Infrastructure/ roads	4.9 %	4.2 %	2.2 %	4.5 %	5.6 %	4.2 %	6.4 %
	Education	4.9 %	2.1 %	1.5 %	2.3 %	7.6 %	7.5 %	7.6 %
	Housing	0.4 %	0.4 %	0.5 %	0.4 %	0.4 %	0.8 %	0.2 %
	Electricity	1.4 %	2.1 %	1.2 %	2.2 %	0.7 %	0.2 %	1.0 %
	Water supply	4.8 %	5.5 %	1.3 %	6.1 %	4.1 %	2.8 %	4.9 %
	Orphans/ street children/ Services (other)	0.8 %	0.5 %	0.6 %	0.5 %	1.0 %	1.2 %	0.9 %
	Health	5.8 %	4.9 %	3.3 %	5.1 %	6.7 %	6.6 %	6.8 %
	AIDS	0.3 %	0.4 %	0.2 %	0.4 %	0.2 %	0.3 %	0.1 %
	Sickness/ disease	0.7 %	1.0 %	1.3 %	1.0 %	0.3 %	0.7 %	0.1 %
	Crime and security	1.1 %	1.6 %	0.7 %	1.7 %	0.6 %	0.5 %	0.6 %
	Corruption	2.7 %	2.6 %	6.1 %	2.0 %	2.9 %	5.1 %	1.7 %
	Political violence	0.1 %	0.3 %	0.9 %	0.2 %	-	-	-
	Political instability/ ethnic tensions	0.3 %	0.4 %	0.8 %	0.4 %	0.2 %	0.1 %	0.2 %
	Discrimination/ inequality	0.4 %	0.6 %	0.4 %	0.7 %	0.1 %	-	0.1 %
	Gender issues/ women's rights	0.1 %	0.1 %	0.1 %	0.1 %	-	-	-
	Democracy/ political rights	0.4 %	0.7 %	1.4 %	0.5 %	0.2 %	-	0.2 %
	War (international)	*	0.1 %	-	0.1 %	-	-	-
	Civil war	0.6 %	1.1 %	0.4 %	1.3 %	-	-	-
	Agricultural Marketing	1.0 %	1.2 %	0.2 %	1.4 %	0.8 %	0.3 %	1.1 %
	Other	0.3 %	*	0.1 %	-	0.5 %	0.8 %	0.4 %
	Don't know	0.3 %	*	-	*	0.5 %	0.3 %	0.6 %
	Total	(100%)	(100%)	171 (100%)	1029 (100%)	(100%)	440 (100%)	760 (100%)

Source: Values Surveys Databank

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INDEXING TERMS

Elections

Authoritarianism

Poverty

Mobilization

Regime change

In this paper we wish to analyze the interplay between the political setting of electoral authoritarianism and economic grievances expressed in particular by an urban poor electorate in Africa. We show that the outcomes of this interplay have varied considerably across the region. While opposition politicians in some countries such as Zambia (2011) have been able to channel the political discontent into electoral victories and subsequent electoral turnover, most electoral authoritarian regimes in Sub-Saharan Africa have managed to stay in power. Uganda is an example of this. The analysis of recent political developments in these two countries will highlight two interrelated questions: What may explain the variance found? And, are some forms of poverty more challenging for the survival of electoral authoritarian regimes than others?