



universität
wien

The Processes of Democratization in Global Comparison

**Strategic Choices of
Oppositional Forces in Democratizing
Societies with Case Studies of Ghana,
Slovakia and Uganda.**

10 November 2009

Martina Ciganikova



Why Opposition?

- Crucial importance for democracy
- Participation, Competition, Choice (Dahl)
- Particularly important in democratizing societies where the attainment of democracy is still an open question
- Better understanding of the dynamics of oppositional groups behavior is needed
- Role in protracted transitions



Why Elections?

=> Democratization by elections (Schledler)

- Transitions from authoritarian rule begin with (more or less) competitive elections

- Graded approach towards democracy

⇒ Electoral authoritarianism, Electoral democracy (Diamond, Schedler, Lindberg)

- Critical elections (Slovakia 1998; Ghana 2000; Uganda 2006)



Puzzle

How can oppositional forces in a setting of adverse ruling conditions (when the rules of the game are not yet fully established) trigger political change?

- Menu of manipulation (Schedler 2002)
 - Asymmetry in resources
- => Uneven level playing field



Theoretical Background

- ***Democratization Theories***

- Dahl, Schmitter and O'Donnell, Diamond, Schedler, Lindberg
- Theories on Opposition (participation and competition)
- Two-game level of democratization by elections as analytical tool (Schedler)

- ***Governance Theories***

- Interactive (“social-political”) Governance (Kooiman)
- Participatory Governance (Schmitter)
- Governance Network Theory (Sorensen, Torfing)



Methodology

Interpretive Qualitative Research

- **Talking:** Conducting in-depth, open-end conversational interviews with various representatives of “oppositional forces” in all selected case studies (the micro level)
- **Reading:** Text and Document Analysis – (the structural level)
- **Observing:** Participant Observation
- **Actors oriented research:** Identify the identities of oppositional forces, reasons/motivation for entering the space – exit/enter strategies, assumption of their roles, aims they want to achieve



Loss of Credibility and Legitimacy of the Incumbent

- **Internal level**
 - a) Modernization of societies
 - b) Vulnerability of the regime
 - c) Economic decline, worsening living conditions

- **External level**
 - a) End of Cold War and communism
 - b) Global *Zeitgeist* =>
 - Democratic diffusion
 - Liberal market economy

Withdrawal of support, growing isolation, desperate actions

=> Causal explanation



State-Society Dynamics

- Uncertainty and Unpredictability (O'Donnell and Schmitter)

“No one set of rules, practices, or processes remain unaltered by the dynamics of state action and social response.” (Chazan)

- High Stakes => power reconfiguration
- Incumbent no more guarantor of social order and stability
- Strategic exploitation of the changing state-society relations by the opposition
- “Popular desire for change”
- Questions of credibility and legitimacy arise



When Does Opposition Constitute a Credible and Legitimate Alternative?

- **Same reasoning** (in all 3 settings)

Identification and projection as the only party being able to bring:

- 1) **Change** – “change for better”
- 2) **Democracy** – real/true = liberal democracy

⇒ credibility; legitimacy

- **Different strategies** in different settings (context dependency)



Real (Liberal) Democrats

“However, it was not too difficult to destroy NDC. We were talking about people who killed people. It is easier to let them look bad and let the people believe that they are bad. So we have explained plain democracy to people, and said look this person [Rawlings] is not truly democratic, he is not a natural democrat, the events were imposed on him.”

Dan Botwe, Secretary General of NPP for the 2000 Elections,
Interview on 11th June 2009



Change

“The government was saying they are supporting private sector led development. But we explained the people that they [the government] are not doing it out of conviction, but out of compulsion. We are the ones who do it out of conviction, so you need us. We are the people who believe in it, you need us. We are the people who make sure that your living standards will improve, and they believed that!”

Kwame Pianim, NPP, Interview on 17th June 2009



Ghana: Revival of the Past

Main strategy: Employment of Identities/Legacies

- Survival of party tradition and continuity of democratic behavior
- Distinction between party as a distinct political organization and party as an institution that embodies a specific political tradition (Jonah)
- Tradition providing 2 types of legitimation
 - a) normative or philosophical (inclination towards liberal democracy)
 - b) empirical one (referring to the concrete achievements associated with the founding members of the party)
- **Continuity => stability, credibility, legitimacy**



Survival of Party Traditions during Authoritarian Rule

“You see it is one thing to ban a political party, and it is a totally different thing to kill it!...And we in the Progress Party tradition decided that we are not going to allow ourselves to be killed. We were quietly meeting and planning for the future... We were ready when the ban was lifted... We did not have to start from the beginning as we were already organized.”

B.J. da Rocha, First chairman of NPP in 1990s, Interview on 11th June 2009



Slovakia: The New Beginning

Main strategy: Inter-active Governance of Oppositional Forces

- Institutional *tabula rasa* (Elster, Offe, Preuss)
 - Entirely new electorate and open electoral market (Mair, Körösenyi)
 - Co-operation and backing up of all segments of society
 - Employment of democratic party tradition legacy as soon as it became possible (1968, 1989, 1998)
- => credibility, legitimacy



Co-operation

“...that is why it was clear to me that it cannot work without the unity of all democratizing forces, so I did not mind if left or right-wing, if former dissidents or communists, if Slovaks or Hungarians, the civil society or the trade unions...we needed everybody on board.”

Mikuláš Dzurinda, Prime Minister 1998-2006, Interview on 26th September 2008



Uganda: The Unfinished Project

Main Strategy: ?

- No appeal to democratic party tradition (offshoot of the ruling party) – 20 years of “no-party democracy”
- No appeal to co-operation with other segments of the society as the conditions were too oppressing
- Lacking “popular desire for change”

“For the first time people are secure in their economic lives. They have security which they didn’t have. That makes a very big difference in the way that people conceptualize and struggle for democracy. If at the end of the day you can have your meal in your house, you are satisfied.”

Professor Oloka-Onyango, Makerere University, 16th August 2007



Opposition Parties

- Liberal democracy and market economy policies
- Appeal among better educated, middle class, younger and pro-reform voters
- Accused by the governments to be elitist and disconnected from the people
- Made the incumbents responsible for external factors
- Formation of “catch-all” coalitions
- Government – rigging, intimidation, harassment
- “Adherents” vs. “victims” of the regime



Perspectives of the Government

- **Same reasoning**

- Opposition => chaos, violence
- Government => stability, continuity

- **Different strategies**

- Change of constitutional term limits – Uganda
- Amendment of the Electoral Law - Slovakia
- Misuse of incumbency – Ghana

- Populist, charismatic personalities: protective “father of the nation” figures

- Appeal among older, less-educated, rural voters (recruitment from the same social strata)

- Feeling of Western conspiracy



Inter-linkages

- Strength and strategies of the opposition are linked and embedded in the global democratization discourse
- **Macro level**
 - Global *Zeitgeist* of liberal democracy
 - International context
 - Legacy of authoritarianism
- **Micro level**
 - Oppositional behavior and selection of rational choices



Selection of Rational Choices in all 3 Oppositional Settings

- ***Ideal***
 - Power reconfiguration
- ***Ways and Means***
 - Enhancement of credibility and legitimacy
- ***Concrete Strategy Employment***
 - Appeal to and exploitation of democracy as “new global *Zeitgeist*” and its principles at the local level through context bounded strategies.
 - Self-Projection as the only true democratic actor being able to bring change and increase the living standards.



Electoral Strategies for Success

- Unity of the opposition
- Innovative campaign of “positive change” to energize voters
- Pressure on the incumbent governments to reform election procedures
- Appeal to democratic legacy and continuity
- Build ties with civil society and media (inter-active govern.) =>
 - Create the belief and optimism of possible change
 - Platforms for expression of the opinions of the opposition
 - Conduct public opinion polls, exit polls, parallel voter tabulation
 - Raising awareness
 - Provide for credibility and legitimacy
 - Extensive citizens engagement in campaigns and voting



Main Innovative Contributions of My Study

- Analysis of Africa beyond Africa – Similarities at both the macro- and micro-level
- Qualitative enhancement of the existing quantitative studies - the how of oppositional forces in three concrete settings
- Application of the concept of oppositional forces to societies in transition