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The Processes of Democratization in Global Comparison.

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

Research Topic

This PhD thesis examines the role of oppositional forces in selected countries in the democratization period and explores how oppositional behaviour, i.e. choices and strategies of the opposition to enhance its competitiveness vis-à-vis the incumbent, increase the likelihood of electoral autocracies becoming electoral democracies.

Research 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? How do oppositional forces gain power and operational potential to peacefully replace the semi-authoritarian incumbent?

What are the different strategies that the respective oppositional forces are developing and applying in order to mobilize support and enhance their strategic position?

Theoretical Guidelines

- Democratization by elections (Schedler, Lindberg)
- Elections as „nested“ two-level games (Tsebelis, Schedler)

- Opposition and its indispensable role to democratization (Dahl; Ionescu, de Madariaga; Lindberg)
- Governance theories (Kooiman; Sorensen, Torfing)

Aims and Contributions

- 1) Africa beyond Africa: Global rhetoric of liberal democracy and change
- 2) Qualitative enhancement of existing quantitative studies - "the how" of oppositional victory
- 3) More dynamic and fluid concept of oppositional forces applicable to societies in transition; situation of oppositional forces into a space of political contestation
- 4) Offering "best practices" and thus being of practical use

Methodology

Interpretive qualitative research

- Comparative explorative case study methodology
 - Talking
 - Reading
 - Observing
- Actors oriented research

Comparative Perspectives and Reflections

Interdependence between micro and macro level

- Global similarities

Same reasoning: identification with the notions of change and "real/true" liberal democracy and market economy policies => credibility, legitimacy => competitiveness

- Context-dependent strategies
- Ghana: Revival of the Past
Slovakia: The New Beginning
Uganda: The Unfinished Project

- No random choices – legacies; level of institutionalization
- Strategic interaction between game and meta-game level

- Challenges
 - Pro-democratic actor?
 - Issue-time-space dependent concept
 - Unforeseen chain of actions and reactions
 - Winners and losers of the transition
 - Weakness of civil society
 - High mobility between political and social spheres

Implications and Suggestions

- Most useful strategic choices
 - Unity and coordination of opposition political parties
 - Mobilizational political rhetoric
 - Innovative campaign of „positive change“ – new electoral model
 - Appeal to democratic legacy and continuity
 - Cooperation with oppositional forces (context dependent)
- Importance of informal structures
- Regional and international interests
- New technologies

The Researcher

1982, Slovakia

- University of Vienna
 - African Studies
 - Social and Cultural Anthropology
 - Internationale Entwicklung
- Lecturing, Election observation



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