Democracy and political turnover experience in Africa

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Summary: This paper empirically tests the effect of the quality of democracy on the probability of re-election of African incumbents. A Probit model is estimated on a sample of 43 countries over the period from 1980 to 2020. Our results strongly show that the quality of democracy negatively and significantly affects the probability of re-election of incumbents. Disaggregating the democracy indicators shows that dictatorship practices significantly favour incumbents' re-election. We recommend strengthening institutional mechanisms promoting political rights and freedoms to favour electoral turnover.

Keywords: Africa; democracy; Probit; re-election; turnover.

Résumé : Cet article teste empiriquement l'effet de la qualité de la démocratie sur la probabilité de réélection des dirigeants africains sortants. Un modèle Probit est estimé sur un échantillon de 43 pays pour la période allant de 1980 à 2020. Nos résultats montrent clairement que la qualité de la démocratie a un effet négatif et significatif sur la probabilité de réélection des dirigeants sortants. La désagrégation des indicateurs de démocratie montre que les pratiques dictatoriales favorisent considérablement la réélection des dirigeants sortants. Nous recommandons de renforcer les mécanismes institutionnels favorisant les droits et libertés politiques afin de favoriser l'alternance au pouvoir par les urnes.

Mots-clés : Afrique ; démocratie ; Probit ; réélection ; alternance.

Classification JEL : H, H83.

1. Introduction

In 2023, Africa witnessed yet another significant event in its political history. On the 23rd of July, a military coup occurred in Niger, resulting in the capture of President Mohamed Bazoum and the dissolution of the constitution, parliament, and state institutions. A month later, Ali Bongo, the President of Gabon, who held his position for 14 years, was overthrown by military forces. This took place just hours after he was declared the winner of the presidential election on August 26th of the same year. Unfortunately, this is the seventh coup d'état to occur in Africa between 2020 and 2023. This recent and unfortunate event takes place during a turbulent political and security climate in Northern and Sub-Saharan Africa.

In October 2021, Guinea Republic was also subject to unrest, as protesters voiced their outrage against the government's corruption, lack of judicial independence, and poor governance. While it may not have been explicitly stated in public addresses, the acquisition of a disputed third term as President, which was obtained through a constitutional amendment, is believed to be one of the

contributing factors that led to the downfall of the Guinean leader. This occurred just one year after he was re-elected.

In the early 1990s, many African nations embraced a multiparty system, which was prompted by a desire for democracy, political change, and effective governance. Previously, long presidential terms and frequent military coups had characterized the region. It was in this context that former French President François Mitterrand gave the Baule speech, urging African leaders who wanted to continue receiving foreign financial aid to embrace democratic principles. As a result, Posner & Young (2007) assert that elections have become the primary means of attaining political power in Africa since the early 1990s. More than thirty years after this democratic transition, the issue of heads of state turnover in Africa remains one of the main sources of political and ethnic tension in the continent. The main question this article aims to answer is whether the democratization process initiated after independence and accelerated in the early 1990s has favoured incumbents' turnover in Africa?

According to Schumpeter (1942), the competitive struggle for power and office is one of the main characteristics of democracy. However, the theory of Political Business Cycles (PBCs) initially developed by Kalecki (1943) and prolonged by the seminal work of Nordhaus (1975), states that incumbents generally tend to skew the rules of the political and economic game to stay in power. These strategies include constitutional change, electoral fraud and the manipulation of economic variables to ensure re-election. In this line, economic, institutional and sociologic factors explain the chance of incumbents to be re-elected. In addition, the short-sightedness of voters, who are unable to distinguish opportunistic behaviour by leaders, is also a factor in explaining re-election (Kalecki, 1943; Nordhaus, 1989; Peltzman, 1992; Kraemer, 1997).

Empirically, existing studies analyse the determinants of re-election at both local (Aidt et al., 2011; Chortareas et al., 2016; Freille & Mazzalay, 2019; Balaguer-Coll et al., 2015) and national elections (Arvate et al., 2009; Alesina et al., 2013; Brender & Drazen, 2008; Blanca et al., 2012). According to Akhmedov & Zhuravskaya (2004), Veiga & Veiga (2007a), Sakurai & Menezes-Filho (2008) and Aidt et al. (2011), voters reward economic growth, opportunistic fiscal actions, showing that economic factors significantly increase the incumbents' probability of re-election. However, authors such as Peltzman (1992), Kraemer (1997), Brender (2003) and Brender & Drazen (2008) find that voters punish these opportunistic behaviours. This suggests that many factors have a negative impact on re-election prospects. These results are validated in both local and national elections but are mainly obtained for advanced democracies. However, Blanca et al. (2012) conclude that in developing countries, incumbents distract an important part of foreign financial aid to finance their campaigns and increase their re-election prospects.

Our study contributes to the literature on African political economy in several ways. Firstly, this article is the first study that empirically examines the effects of the quality of democracy on leaders' re-election prospect, following the 1990s political transition in African countries. As Coulibaly & Omgba (2017) state, many African countries succeeded in their democratic transition in the 1990s while others failed. Secondly, the study put into evidence the economic, personal incumbent characteristics and institutional determinants that affect the re-election of heads of state in Africa. In this line, Caselli & Morelli (2004) developed a theoretical model that takes into account the intrinsic characteristics of voters and political leaders in explaining electoral outcomes. Thirdly, our study provides recommendations that can help African countries to reduce the negative consequences of the struggle for political power.

The remainder of the paper is as follows. Section 2 presents the history of political leaders in Africa since independence. Section 3 outlines the methodology and presents the main variables. Section 4 is devoted to the presentation and discussion of results and section 5 concludes the paper with some policy implications.

**2. President's turnover in Africa: A brief history since independence**

The political history of most African presidents began in the late 1950s and early 1960s with independence. Between 1955 and 1965, several countries in Africa gained their independence and engaged in political empowerment, democratization and self-economic development programs. For many new local Presidents, access to the office was the reward for their efforts during the struggles and negotiations for independence. This is the case of the former Cameroonian President Ahmadou Ahidjo, Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe, Herbert Gladstone in South Africa or Modibo Keita in Mali who came to power without an election. For other heads of state, accession to power was the result of elections organized after independence (Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, Ahmed Ben Bella in Algeria). However, political turnover in Africa shows different patterns within two main periods: the first period is from independence to the late 1980s, and the second is from 1990 to 2020. According to Gleditsch & Chiozza (2009) and Carbone & Pellegata (2017a), these two broad periods before and 1990s were each characterized by three main mechanisms of turnover: through elections, peaceful non-electoral transfer of power, and overthrows through coups d'état.

Politically, the first period is characterized by a preponderance of *coup d'états*, but also by a strong tendency to harmonious and voluntary transfers of power. Political regimes during this period were also dominated by a one-party ideological system and a strong restriction of opposition activities, which further increased the incentives for violence and attempts to gain power by force. Carbone & Pellegata (2017a) show that between 1960 and 1989, only 5.3% of presidential turnover was through elections. Thus, Figure 1 shows that 48.1% of heads of state lost power through violence and irregularities, while 46.62 of turnover were carried out through non-electoral process.

The period before 1990 is also characterized by a high longevity in power of heads of state. The average duration of power during this period is 9.32 years. Indeed, the single-party systems that prevailed before 1990 favoured the confiscation of power by African leaders, which record is held by former Gabonese President Omar Bongo, who totalized 42 years in power from 1967 to 2009.

However, the liberalization of the African political market in the early 1990s marked a breakthrough in the political history of the continent with important political and institutional reforms. The most significant of these changes was the adoption of new constitutions in which multiparty systems and a non-renewable two terms in the presidency were adopted. Posner & Young (2007) note that these democratic reforms were aimed at legitimizing access to power and promoting non-violent electoral political turnover. Thus, the phenomenon of *coups d'état* has declined considerably since 1990, giving way to electoral access to the presidency.

Figure 1: Evolution of leaders' turnover mode in Africa from 1960 to 2020
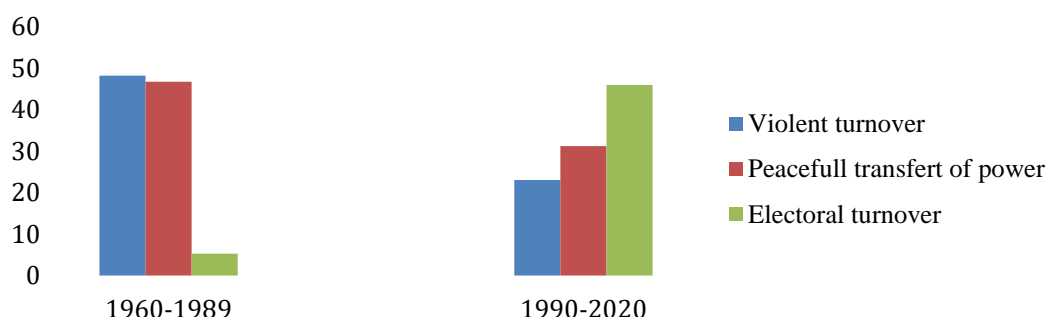
Source: Authors' construction using data from Africa Leadership Change (ALC, 2017).

Between 1990 and 2020, there has been a reversal in the trend of political turnover in Africa, as illustrated in Figure 1. Prior to this date, Presidential turnover was mainly achieved through violence.

Indeed, the African *'strong man'* paradigm states that in Africa, the personal relationships and power of the head of state and other political leaders are stronger than constitutional rules and that their actions and decisions take precedence over laws that might contradict them (Posner & Young, 2007). Thus, Presidents in power may use this advantage to ensure their re-election by distorting constitutional rules and manipulating macroeconomic variables. In this perspective, Sindjoun (1994) argues that in Cameroon, it was the President of the Republic who decided on the content and the agenda of the democratic transition of the 1990s through a tripartite conference in which he did not participate himself and in which traditional chiefs and religious participant were selected strategically by him. In Mali, on the other hand, it was civil society that influenced the path of democratic transition during the same period setting the country on a path of effective democratization (Coulibaly & Omgba, 2017).

3. Methodology

3.1. Variables and data sources

The data used in this article come from different sources. To address our research question, we construct the binary dependent variable named ***re-election***, which the value 1 if the head of state (or his successor at the head of the ruling party) is re-elected after an election and 0 otherwise. Following Brender & Drazen (2008), this variable is constructed using information from the World Political Leaders 1945-2021 database by Zárate (2022) and from the Institute for Democratic and Electoral Assistance (IDEA, 2022). Using these two sources of information allows to determine whether or not the ruling incumbent has been re-elected or not.

Concerning the interest variable, we use the Polity2 democracy index from Marshall et al. (2022). This variable is one of the most widely used in the literature to measure the quality of democracy around the world (Wantchékon & García-Ponce, 2014). The construction of this index combines two main characteristics: democracy itself (***Democracy***) and autocracy or dictatorship practices (***Autocracy***). Thus, the ***Democracy*** component includes all the legal measures and procedures that guarantee citizens freedom of expression, the existence of institutionalized constraints on the executive and the degree of freedom of civil rights of citizens in their daily lives. It ranges from 0 (weakly democratic) to 10 (strongly democratic). The second component (***Autocracy***) measures the systematic dictatorship practices by the executive and is coded from 10 (strong dictatorship) to 0 (weak dictatorship) including constraints to access the executive, transparency in the recruitment of government members and finally the control and restriction of political participation by other citizens. Thus, the Polity2 index is obtained by differentiating between the first and the second components and ranges from 10 (strong democracy) to -10 (strong dictatorship). As Coulibaly & Omgba (2017) show, many African countries succeeded in their democratic transition in the 1990s, thus becoming functional democracies since early 2010 while others are still characterized as autocratic, authoritarian and dictatorship regimes. It seems clear that these two characteristics (***Democracy*** and ***Autocracy***) although combined in the ***Polity2*** variable, cannot have the same effect on the probability of re-election.

In addition, estimates are controlled by other variables including the personal characteristics of the candidate running for re-election, notably the duration in office (Freille & Mazzalay, 2018). In the African context, the length of time passed in office is generally the most easily observable and interpretable individual characteristic that can influence voters' choice. We also control estimations by press freedom and the level of electoral competition as institutional indicators. According to Melingui (2020), the level of education significantly explains the voter turnover in Africa. Through this channel, education can have an important influence on incumbents' probability of re-election. Voter turnout is also included in the estimates as a potential determinant of the probability of re-election.

3.2. Empirical model and estimation strategy

This paper analyses the effect of the quality of democracy on the probability of Presidents re-election Africa from 1980 to 2020. There are two main reasons for choosing this studied period. The first is the availability of data both for the re-election of leaders and for the selected indicators of democracy. The second reason is that we wanted to analyse the relationship between democracy and re-election probability before and after the democratic transition of the 1990s in Africa. Indeed, the 1990s marked a major break in African political history. Thus, an analysis from 1980 onwards allows us to better capture the institutional and democratic dynamics that occurred over time in Africa. The functional form of our model is inspired by the seminal work of Brender & Drazen (2008) and is as follows:

$$Y_{it}^* = \alpha + \beta Democ_{it} + \theta Individual_{it} + \delta Institution_{it} + \gamma Economic_{it} + \varepsilon_{it} \qquad (1)$$

In this equation, Y_{it}^* represent the ratio between the probability p_{it} that the random event "the President or the ruling party is re-elected" as a result of the election held in country i at year t is realized and the probability $(1 - p_{it})$ that it does not occur. ε_{it} represents the error term of the model and α the constant. This equation is estimated by a Probit through the Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimator following Brender & Drazen (2008) and Balaguer-coll et al. (2015). The use of this estimation strategy is justified by the dichotomous nature of the dependent variable. Estimations are made in two steps. Firstly, we determine the sign of the different determinants of the President's probability of re-election. The second step is to analyse the marginal effects. This process determines the percentage by which each variable improves or worsens the probability of re-election of presidents in Africa.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Baseline results

This paper analyses the determinants of re-election in Africa with a focus on the quality of democracy. The baseline results are presented in Table 1. In all estimations, we start by testing the isolated effect of the democracy indicators on leaders' re-election before introducing progressively other controls. The results obtained show that the quality of democracy negatively and significantly affects the probability of re-election of Presidents in Africa. The successive introduction of control variables in the model does not change the signs and the level of significance of the coefficient, strongly suggesting that improving the level of democracy favours political turnover in Africa.
As Posner & Young (2007) argue, it was constitutional constraints and the independence of parliament that pushed out former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, who tried to amend the constitution to seek a third term in 2006. Our result is in line with the abundant literature on factors explaining incumbents' turnover or re-election (Alesina et al., 1998; Brender & Drazen, 2008; Arvate et al., 2009; Blanca et al., 2012; Klomp & De Haan, 2013). Indeed, understanding the factors that explain Presidents' re-election in Africa is of particular interest, given that most armed conflicts on the continent and the recent repeated *coups d'état* in West Africa revolve around the issue of political turnover to control political power and public rent.

Table 1: The effect of democracy (Polity2) on the probability of re-election

				Dependent variable: Re-election				
Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Polity2	-0.114***	-0.113***	-0.123***	-0.144***	-0.179***	-0.181***	-0.166***	-0.186***
	(0.0181)	(0.0204)	(0.0236)	(0.0270)	(0.0308)	(0.0322)	(0.0331)	(0.0378)
Duration		0.00649	0.00750	0.0164	0.0187	0.0262	0.0262	0.0172
		(0.0120)	(0.0121)	(0.0149)	(0.0159)	(0.0166)	(0.0174)	(0.0201)
Vote		0.0133**	0.0132**	0.0146**	0.0136*	0.0152**	0.0158**	0.0133
		(0.00602)	(0.00604)	(0.00708)	(0.00749)	(0.00767)	(0.00772)	(0.00831)
Media freedom			0.145	0.0424	0.136	0.117	0.0914	0.348
			(0.173)	(0.196)	(0.209)	(0.225)	(0.233)	(0.268)
Competitiveness				0.140**	0.183***	0.180***	0.186***	0.136*
				(0.0551)	(0.0608)	(0.0638)	(0.0675)	(0.0750)
Openness				0.00106	-0.000707	-0.00160	-0.00172	-0.00572
				(0.00392)	(0.00411)	(0.00428)	(0.00451)	(0.00497)
Aid					0.0388***	0.0449***	0.0397***	0.0738***
					(0.0133)	(0.0153)	(0.0152)	(0.0240)
Public debt						-0.0152	-0.00898	-0.0241
						(0.0241)	(0.0257)	(0.0293)
Remittance							-0.00325	-0.00750**
							(0.00298)	(0.00369)
Education								0.0259**
								(0.0107)
Constant	-0.672***	-0.242	-0.317	-1.240*	-1.710**	-1.652**	-1.763**	-2.030**
	(0.0980)	(0.430)	(0.441)	(0.649)	(0.708)	(0.768)	(0.785)	(0.866)
Wald chi2	39.54	40.48	40.69	41.32	45.48	44.85	39.82	37.13
Probability	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Observations	223	223	223	223	223	223	223	223
Countries	43	43	43	43	43	43	43	43

Source: The authors.
Note: Standard deviations are given in brackets and (***), (**),
and (*) indicate significance levels at 1%, 5% and 10%.

After adjusting for other variables, we find that education level, official development assistance, and remittances have a significant impact on an incumbent's likelihood of being re-elected. The academic literature acknowledges that, where movement controls are weak, political leaders can use a significant portion of foreign aid to finance their campaigns, suppressing opposition through political patronage, and thus increasing their chances of re-election. This is the view of Branca et al. (2012) show this for a sample of 60 developing countries.

One of the main findings of this study is that migrant remittances have a negative and significant impact on the chances of African political leaders being re-elected. Indeed, several studies have shown that immigrants have a significant impact on the dynamics of political institutions in their countries of origin (Coulibaly & Omgba, 2017; Docquier et al., 2015). According to Coulibaly and Omgba (2017), this effect is mainly achieved through diaspora funding of private organizations and associations fighting for democratic and transparent political institutions in their countries of origin. The second result is the positive effect of electoral competitiveness on the probability of presidential re-election in Africa. According to data from Marshall et al. (205), that variable measures electoral competitiveness by the number of political parties taking part in an election. The positive and significant effect of this variable is linked to the African political context, where the multitude of political parties does not necessarily reflect the competition or competitiveness of elections. Indeed, many parties are created on the eve of elections, or on a purely ethnic basis, with no real sustainable political project, to capture a share of public resources through a coalition with the party in power. Arriola (2009) shows that in Africa, political leaders in power use ministerial appointments to maintain their hold on power, thereby weakening and discrediting opposition parties. In Cameroon in 2018, over 300 political parties were listed, but only eight of them put forward a candidate for the presidential election. The case of the current Minister Delegate at the Ministry of Justice is illustrative

of political clientelism in Africa in general and Cameroon in particular. After creating his opposition political party in 2010 in the run-up to the 2011 presidential election, in which he garnered 0.49%, he was appointed minister in 2019 after renouncing the opposition and pledging his support to the ruling party for the 2018 election.

4.2. Robustness checks: desegregating the Polity2 index

African countries show several disparities in terms of the quality of democratic institutions and practices. Therefore, we test the sensitivity of our result by distinguishing the effect of democratic practices through the **Democracy** indicator (Table 2) for that of dictatorship using the **Autocracy** indicator (Table 3).

Table 2: The effect of democracy (Democracy) on the probability of re-election

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
				Dependent variable: Re-election				
Democracy	-0.190***	-0.178***	-0.193***	-0.244***	-0.292***	-0.307***	-0.278***	-0.318***
	(0.0297)	(0.0324)	(0.0384)	(0.0457)	(0.0517)	(0.0552)	(0.0569)	(0.0675)
Duration		0.00585	0.00671	0.0168	0.0178	0.0261	0.0238	0.0148
		(0.0122)	(0.0123)	(0.0154)	(0.0162)	(0.0171)	(0.0179)	(0.0208)
Vote		0.0143**	0.0143**	0.0158**	0.0151**	0.0174**	0.0179**	0.0156*
		(0.00603)	(0.00604)	(0.00721)	(0.00750)	(0.00776)	(0.00785)	(0.00838)
Media freedom			0.127	0.0191	0.0932	0.0888	0.0392	0.334
			(0.180)	(0.205)	(0.217)	(0.236)	(0.244)	(0.292)
Competitiveness				0.147***	0.187***	0.192***	0.193***	0.143*
				(0.0565)	(0.0619)	(0.0659)	(0.0694)	(0.0777)
Openness				0.00238	0.000790	-0.000198	-0.000153	-0.00395
				(0.00403)	(0.00420)	(0.00442)	(0.00458)	(0.00514)
Aid					0.0377***	0.0452***	0.0384**	0.0737***
					(0.0135)	(0.0156)	(0.0154)	(0.0249)
Public debt						-0.0229	-0.0161	-0.0292
						(0.0240)	(0.0255)	(0.0294)
Remittance							-0.00364	-0.00768**
							(0.00312)	(0.00384)
Education								0.0259**
								(0.0113)
Constant	1.204***	0.171	0.144	-0.735	-1.067	-0.958	-1.053	-1.329
	(0.151)	(0.469)	(0.472)	(0.664)	(0.708)	(0.760)	(0.778)	(0.850)
Wald chi2	40.82	42.25	42.46	43.65	45.32	44.64	38.92	35.65
Probability	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Observations	223	223	223	223	223	223	223	223
Countries	43	43	43	43	43	43	43	43

Source: The authors.
Note: Standard deviations are given in brackets and (***), (**),
and (*) indicate significance levels at 1%, 5% and 10%.

As with the Polity2 index, the **Democracy indicator** has a negative and significant effect on the probability of re-election at the 1% level. This result is stable whatever the number of control variables introduced in the model. On the other hand, dictatorship, measured by the **Autocracy** indicator positively affects the probability of re-election in Africa at 1% level. The way in which some African incumbents have succeeded to amend their constitution to seek a third term and gain re-election can explain our result that dictatorship practices have contribute to maintain them to the office, no matter the competitiveness of election or the size of the opposition.

Table 3: The effect of dictatorship (Autocracy) on the probability of re-election

Variables	Dependent variable: Re-election							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Autocracy	**0.229*****	**0.245*****	**0.239*****	**0.281*****	**0.323*****	**0.312*****	**0.296*****	**0.300*****
	(0.0431)	(0.0512)	(0.0549)	(0.0624)	(0.0673)	(0.0691)	(0.0716)	(0.0764)
Duration		0.0101	0.00968	0.0172	0.0197	0.0256	0.0270	0.0173
		(0.0119)	(0.0120)	(0.0148)	(0.0156)	(0.0160)	(0.0171)	(0.0195)
Vote		0.0155**	0.0155**	0.0173**	0.0162**	0.0169**	0.0177**	0.0161**
		(0.00616)	(0.00615)	(0.00724)	(0.00753)	(0.00766)	(0.00777)	(0.00821)
Media freedom			-0.0447	-0.157	-0.0896	-0.140	-0.131	0.0459
			(0.162)	(0.188)	(0.197)	(0.212)	(0.222)	(0.248)
Competitiveness				0.149***	0.171***	0.166***	0.181***	0.135*
				(0.0549)	(0.0586)	(0.0612)	(0.0656)	(0.0731)
Openness				0.000407	-0.00144	-0.00181	-0.00206	-0.00553
				(0.00374)	(0.00390)	(0.00398)	(0.00424)	(0.00479)
Aid					0.0278**	0.0331**	0.0304**	0.0511**
					(0.0120)	(0.0138)	(0.0141)	(0.0206)
Public debt						-0.00955	-0.00448	-0.0185
						(0.0235)	(0.0255)	(0.0285)
Remittance							-0.00375	-0.00679*
							(0.00292)	(0.00355)
Education								0.0179*
								(0.0101)
Constant	-0.0188	-1.110***	-1.066**	-2.106***	-2.480***	-2.383***	-2.539***	-2.538***
	(0.125)	(0.429)	(0.457)	(0.691)	(0.738)	(0.801)	(0.833)	(0.880)
Wald chi2	28.13	31.95	32.10	33.57	35.66	35.56	33.20	30.23
Probability	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Observations	223	223	223	223	223	223	223	223
Countries	43	43	43	43	43	43	43	43

Source: The authors.
Note: Standard deviations are given in brackets and (***), (**),
and (*) indicate significance levels at 1%, 5% and 10%.

Our econometric results are strongly supported by some important facts that reflect the close relationship between the functioning of democratic institutions and the alternation in power of heads of state in Africa. In Cameroon for example, data from Marshall et al. (2022) indicate a score of 1 for the ***Democracy*** indicator, 5 for ***Autocracy*** and -4 for Polity2 in 2020. In this country, the President is currently serving his eighth term since 1982. In Chad, where former President Idriss Deby Itno came to power in 1996 following a military coup, there has never been electoral turnover in the presidency until his dead in 2021. Both of them amended their constitutions respectively in 2008 and 2006 to run for a new term. Keneck (2019) shows that this political manoeuvring to stay in power depends, among other factors, on the fragility of the institutions, the weakness of the opposition and the ability of the President to influence the legislature. However, the Nigerian Senate also blocked a bill to amend the constitution to allow former president Olusegun Obasanjo to run for a third term in May 2006. This political and institutional event marked a decisive turning point in the history of Nigeria, which at that date had been prone to military coups because of the fragility of the mechanisms of electoral turnover.

In the same vein, the robustness of the democratic institutions led to the historic electoral turnover in Seychelles in 2020. Indeed, the 2020 presidential election was won in the first round by the opposition candidate, Wavel Ramkalawan, leading to the first alternation in the presidency of Seychelles since the country's independence in 1976.

4.3. Alternative measure of democracy

One of the features of functional democracies is the respect for political freedoms. Following Olsson (2009) and Coulibaly & Omgba (2017), the index of political freedoms used to test the sensitivity of our results comes from the Freedom House database. This indicator of democracy is

coded from 1 (full respect for political freedoms) to 7 (non-respect of political freedoms by the ruling party). Thus, a positive sign would indicate that the fewer political freedoms in a country are respected (when the index tends to 7), the higher the probability of re-election of the President.

Table 4: The effect of political freedoms on the probability of re-election

				Dependent variable: Re-election				
Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Political freedom	**0.281*****	**0.256*****	**0.263*****	**0.310*****	**0.354*****	**0.389*****	**0.356*****	**0.378*****
	(0.0532)	(0.0531)	(0.0682)	(0.0808)	(0.0862)	(0.0946)	(0.0989)	(0.109)
Duration		0.00605	0.00783	0.0134	0.0220	0.0290*	0.0295*	0.0220
		(0.0120)	(0.0123)	(0.0149)	(0.0157)	(0.0165)	(0.0169)	(0.0186)
Vote		0.0180***	0.0189***	0.0169**	0.0173**	0.0185***	0.0203***	0.0196***
		(0.00551)	(0.00556)	(0.00668)	(0.00682)	(0.00701)	(0.00714)	(0.00754)
Media freedom			0.0549	-0.00812	0.112	0.129	0.130	0.313
			(0.190)	(0.219)	(0.227)	(0.247)	(0.255)	(0.282)
Competitiveness				0.102*	0.113**	0.118**	0.121*	0.0890
				(0.0526)	(0.0555)	(0.0588)	(0.0621)	(0.0701)
Openness				0.000320	-0.00124	-0.00198	-0.00200	-0.00449
				(0.00375)	(0.00387)	(0.00403)	(0.00426)	(0.00472)
Aid					0.0235*	0.0282**	0.0276**	0.0460**
					(0.0122)	(0.0135)	(0.0135)	(0.0187)
Public debt						-0.0138	-0.0110	-0.0238
						(0.0235)	(0.0256)	(0.0290)
Remittance							-0.00374	-0.00631*
							(0.00309)	(0.00374)
Education								0.0159
								(0.00981)
Constant	-0.721***	-1.891***	-2.026***	-2.727***	-3.299***	-3.451***	-3.462***	-3.696***
	(0.241)	(0.429)	(0.547)	(0.809)	(0.880)	(0.994)	(1.025)	(1.150)
Wald chi2	27.90	37.10	37.26	31.31	32.69	34.32	31.36	28.74
Probability	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Observations	223	223	223	223	223	223	223	223
Countries	43	43	43	43	43	43	43	43

Source: The authors.
Note: Standard deviations are given in brackets and (***), (**),
and (*) indicate significance levels at 1%, 5% and 10%.

As in the previous estimations, we started by capturing the isolated effect of political freedoms on the probability of re-election. The results in Table 5 show that the respect of political freedoms negatively and significantly affects leaders' probability of re-election at 1% level. This result explains why in some African countries such as Mauritius, Botswana, Nigeria, South Africa and Senegal where turnover is regular, indicators of political freedoms are close to 1, on average.

4.4. The marginal effects

The results previously presented only indicate the direction in which interest and control variables affect the probability of re-election and do not allow for deriving precise recommendations. To this end, the literature recommends that the marginal effects analysis should be performed to determine the responsiveness of the probability of re-election following a shock on the interest variable (Brender & Drazen, 2008; Blanca et al., 2012; Balaguer-Coll et al., 2015). In the case of our study, the results in Table 4 show that, on average, a 1% increase in the quality of democracy (Polity2) leads to a 0.114% reduction in the probability of re-election, *ceteris paribus*. Controlling for other variables, the magnitude of the coefficient remains similar with the same level of significance.

Taking into account the different components of democracy, our results indicate that a 1% increase in dictatorship practices in a country by the executive significantly increases incumbents' probability of re-election by 0.322 points, on average. This result partly explains why some African

Table 5: Marginal effects of democracy on the probability of re-election

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
				Dependent variable: Re-election				
Polity2	-0.114***				-0.259***			
	(0.0181)				(0.0607)			
Democracy		-0.190***				-0.418***		
		(0.0297)				(0.0990)		
Autocracy			0.229***				0.322***	
			(0.0431)				(0.105)	
Political freedom				0.281***				0.383***
				(0.0532)				(0.135)
Duration					0.00733	0.00775	0.0163	0.0204
					(0.0210)	(0.0213)	(0.0196)	(0.0199)
Vote					0.0156*	0.0176**	0.0163**	0.0202**
					(0.00858)	(0.00856)	(0.00823)	(0.00806)
Media freedom					0.316	0.361	0.0420	0.276
					(0.279)	(0.295)	(0.248)	(0.291)
Competitiveness					0.120	0.116	0.130*	0.132*
					(0.0792)	(0.0810)	(0.0751)	(0.0766)
Openness					-0.00609	-0.00485	-0.00578	-0.00245
					(0.00536)	(0.00549)	(0.00486)	(0.00480)
Aid					0.0687***	0.0742***	0.0505**	0.0430**
					(0.0239)	(0.0246)	(0.0207)	(0.0191)
Public debt					-0.0275	-0.0338	-0.0191	-0.0199
					(0.0295)	(0.0296)	(0.0286)	(0.0293)
Remittance					-0.00659*	-0.00703*	-0.00672*	-0.00637*
					(0.00372)	(0.00389)	(0.00355)	(0.00382)
Education					0.0219**	0.0245**	0.0176*	0.0143
					(0.0109)	(0.0113)	(0.0102)	(0.0103)
Constant	0.672***	1.204***	0.0188	-0.721***	-2.801***	-1.630*	-2.684***	-3.812***
	(0.0980)	(0.151)	(0.125)	(0.241)	(0.990)	(0.890)	(1.003)	(1.369)
Observations	223	223	223	223	223	223	223	223
Countries	43	43	43	43	43	43	43	43

Source: The authors.
Note: Standard deviations are given in brackets and (***), (**),
and (*) indicate significance levels at 1%, 5% and 10%.

Presidents have never lost an election, mainly in countries where the quality of democracy is still very low. The political instability that continues to plague Africa almost always revolves around the issue of alternating heads of state. This was the case in Kenya in 2007 and 2017 and in Cote d'Ivoire in 2000 and 2012, where the struggle for power led to civil and military wars with many casualties.

5. Conclusion

This paper aimed to empirically analyse the effect of the quality of democracy on the probability of re-election of the President or ruling parties in Africa. Using a sample of 43 countries from 1980 to 2020, the results obtained by estimating a Probit model strongly suggest that the quality of democracy negatively and significantly affects the probability of incumbents' re-election in Africa. Our findings indicate that in Africa, the respect of democratic norms, practices favour political turnover while autocratic, and dictatorial practices significantly contribute to the President's re-election. According to our results, political turnover in Africa depends on the functioning of democracy, in addition to individual characteristics of political leaders and socio-economic factors contributing to better understanding of the political economy of turnover in Africa. Thus, African countries would gain by consolidating the democratization process through the promotion and respect of political and civil liberties, media freedom, constitutional term limits and ballot box results. A

better quality of institutions would also contribute to constraining leaders' behaviour to promote legal turnover, which is a factor of economic growth, international credibility, and political stability.

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Appendices

Descriptive statistics

Variables	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Re-election	267	0.686	0.464	0	1
Re-election = 1	183	/	/	1	1
Re-election = 0	84	/	/	0	0
Polity2	248	0.927	5.366	-9	10
Democracy	242	3.433	3.090	0	10
Autocracy	242	2.446	2.590	0	9
Political freedom	259	4.471	1.746	1	7
Duration	265	11.415	8.221	1	42
Vote	253	68.020	16.907	22.95	99.14
Media	267	0.595	0.6381	0	2
Competitiveness	253	5.160	2.091	1	7
Openness	263	66.047	33.321	10.044	270.363
Aide	265	11.326	11.122	0.085	71.959
Public debt	264	15.692	7.390	2.627	46.153
Remittances	263	35.577	61.143	0.004	348.133
Education	266	35.956	23.073	3.310	112.843

Source: The authors.