

# Opposition Parties and the Politics of Opposition in Africa: A Critical Analysis

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**Abstract**—The major aim of this paper is to investigate the opposition politics in Africa. The paper also examines the status and the role, the contributions and the weaknesses of opposition<sup>1</sup> political parties in Africa, particularly in transitional democracies that emerged in the 1990s. In Africa, many of the opposition parties appear or become active only during an election, and disappear when the election is over. It is found out that most of the opposition parties in Africa are established around the personalities of individuals, lack internal democracy, suffer from inter-party and intra-party conflicts, have severe shortage of finance, and lack strong base and experience. Their weaknesses also include bad organization and weak connection with the popular constituencies. The paper concludes that most of the weaknesses of the African opposition parties emanate from the incumbents' hostile policies, which are mostly aimed at fragmenting and weakening the opposition groups.

**Keywords**—Africa, Hybrid regime, Incumbent party, Neopatrimonialism, Opposition party, Political party, Pseudo-democracy.

A political party is “an organised association of people working together to compete for political office and promote agreed-upon policies” [1, p.41]. For Heywood [2, p.248] a political party is a group of people, which is organized with the aim of winning governmental power, by electoral or other means. Political parties are very important for democratization and democratic consolidation [3]—[6]. According to Canton [7, p.7], political parties in democracies are necessary to train, select and recruit candidates for governmental and parliamentary positions; to formulate government policies and programmes; to gather and implement demands from a society; and to supervise and check a government. As Mathisen and Svasand [8, p.4] pointed out political parties as complex organizations have multiple levels (i.e. national, regional, and local) and multiple units (i.e. central party, youth and women branches etc.). Political parties promote vital competition on policy and ideological alternatives, and play essential roles in a representative democracy. They also give channels for citizen's participation in government decision-making processes and are significant conduits and interpreters of information about a government [9, p. 4]. In one of the earliest

studies on political parties Schattschneider [10, p.1] said that it is impossible to have modern democracy without political parties. Moreover, it is political parties that created democracy, and party politics is the main factor that differentiates democracy from dictatorship. For Linz and Stephan [11, p.4], in order to establish democracy, political parties are very crucial. This is mainly because in the past no form of non-party representation was able to establish a democratic government. Therefore, our world has become a world of democracies based on political parties [12, p. 4]. As mentioned in the New Politics Network [13, p.2], political parties offer alternative policies that give voters a chance to make their choice during elections; field candidates for public office, and organize election campaigns. According to IDEA [14, p.5], “Political parties are crucial actors in bringing together diverse interests, recruiting and presenting candidates, and developing competing policy proposals that provide people with a choice.” For Salih [3, p.7] political parties create a mechanism that serves as a bridge for “the connection between the party system and government on the one hand, and between government and society on the other.”

Political parties play two important roles in a political process: they form a government or they serve as opposition [7, p.7]. Democracy, according to Murphy and Blair [15], is a certain type of relationship between the incumbent party and the opposition parties characterized by: “contestation and participation” [16], “alternation in power” [17], and “ex ante uncertainty about outcomes” [18]. Dolo [19] defines opposition parties as “partisan political institutions that are intentionally designed to temper the ruling party's excesses while still pursuing both legislative and presidential offices.” Opposition parties are also defined as minority parties that do not wield executive power, but act as a check on governments [20]. In democratic countries, opposition parties are free to criticize the ruling party and the government, and they are entrusted with offering policy alternatives. Opposition parties are also expected to recognize and respect the authority of the elected government [21]. Dolo [19] argues that “an authentic democracy is one where the ruling party has an effective opposition.” For Schmitz [22, p.2] “Genuine political opposition is a necessary attribute of democracy, tolerance, and trust in the ability of citizens to resolve differences by peaceful means. The existence of an opposition, without which politics ceases and administration takes over, is indispensable to the functioning of parliamentary political systems.” As Schmitz [22, p.2] argues “the division between government

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<sup>1</sup> The term “opposition” in this paper includes all types of opposition groups: “conventional”, “unconventional”, “constitutional”, “unconstitutional”, “loyal”, “legitimate”, “illegitimate”, rebel groups etc.

and opposition is as old as political democracy itself.” In democratic countries, the government would alternate among different political parties, and “the minority could seek to persuade a majority of its point of view by peaceful, political means.” In liberal-democratic society a government should rest on the consent of the governed, and the minority accepts the right of the majority to make decisions. At the same time, the majority respect the minority’s right to: dissent from the decision set by the majority (i.e. incumbents) and to promote alternative policies [22]. The role of an opposition party in a democracy is to check and poke, and to replace the incumbent party. In established democracies, opposition parties are a “government-in-the waiting” [23, p.57] or they are “alternative government” [24, p.2]. Therefore, “the notion of a loyal opposition is central to any democracy” [21]. The Opposition and the ruling parties are expected to entertain the values of tolerance, cooperation and compromise [16], [21]. According to LeBas [25, p.2], “a strong opposition may be the most effective means of creating checks and accountability in hybrid regimes and, therefore, the most important prerequisite for democratic deepening.”

The paper attempts to answer the following research questions:

- (1) Does the participation of opposition parties legitimate or institutionalize democratic elections in Africa?
- (2) How is the relationship between the incumbents and the opposition parties in Africa?
- (3) What are the major weaknesses of the opposition parties in Africa?

## II. THE STATUS AND THE ROLE OF THE OPPOSITION PARTIES IN AFRICA: PAST AND PRESENT

In the last few years, scholars have attempted to examine how opposition parties function in Africa. For Dolo [19], for instance, being an opposition in Liberia is a dangerous pursuit due to the harassment, imprisonment, press censorship and the murder of opposition politicians. Dolo [19] categorized opposition forces in Liberia into five groups: the first category is composed of academics who at the beginning committed themselves to democratic values. Through time, however, they were emasculated by the dictators and were discarded. Some of them started serving the undemocratic dictators, and others joined the insurgents to overthrow the dictatorial government in non-democratic means. The second category involves individuals who once were officials of the various Liberian dictatorial governments, but due to various reasons were either expelled or resigned and decided to join the opposition. The third group is composed of individuals whose personal and business interests are threatened by the existing governments and thus decided to join the opposition. The fourth category includes students and peasants who wanted social change in the country. The fifth group is composed of individuals who try to take revenge against certain ethnic groups due to ethnic hatred. Opposition politics in Liberia remained ineffective due to opposition parties’ fragmentation, and their failure to form coalitions. According to Dolo [19], in

Liberia “opposition political parties have proven to be just as undemocratic as the governments that they criticize.”

Another scholar, Osei-Hwedie [23] studied how opposition parties failed to topple the incumbent party of Botswana that constantly ruled the country since 1966. Osei-Hwedie [23, p.61] revealed that the opposition parties in Botswana are very weak, divided and resource-poor. According to Osei Hwedie [23, p.62], “the opposition has suffered enormously from the phenomena of factionalism and fragmentation”. Factionalism and internal squabbles in the opposition camp greatly tarnished their public image, reduced their membership drive and support, and made them to lose potential members and leaders [23, p.62]. As Mokopakgosi and Molomo [26] pointed out one of the weaknesses of the opposition parties in Botswana is the lack of standard procedures in candidate nominations and leadership competition.

In Africa, in the early years of the post colonial period, the newly-independent countries became one-party states [27, p.2]. They banned opposition parties and blamed multi-party system for undermining national unity. This kind of situation prevailed in Africa in the 1960s, 70s and 80s. Most of the parties that took political power after independence were liberation parties, which claimed that they represented the will of the people. As a result, the boundaries between a party and a state structure remained blurred and “the party-state system” became the norm. The repressive rule had a very significant impact on the opposition parties. It led to the absence of legally registered opposition parties in many African countries. In this period (1960s-1980s) the only option the opposition groups had was armed struggle to topple the incumbents by force. At the end of the 1980s, the end of the Cold War brought many changes to Africa. This change was visible in the 1990s. The new democratization wind gave rise to the flourishing of multi-party systems in the continent<sup>2</sup>.

In a short time, however, these new democracies turned into one-party hegemonies [28, p.8]. At present, most of the transitional democracies in Africa are one-party dominated states where opposition parties existed, ran campaigns, field candidates, but are not permitted to win elections or takeover the government. In one-party dominated states, the ruling parties function as “hegemonic parties”. For Sartori [29, p.230] a hegemonic party, “neither allows for a formal nor a de facto competition for power. Other parties are permitted to exist, but as second class, licensed parties; for they are not permitted to compete with the hegemonic party in antagonistic terms and on an equal basis. Not only does alternation not occur in fact; it cannot occur, since the possibility of a rotation in power is not even envisaged”.

In many African countries being an opposition is a very risky undertaking even after the introduction of a multi-party democracy in the 1990s. As IDEA [14, p.8] notes opposition political parties in Africa are forced to function under severe political constraints imposed by the electoral authoritarian

<sup>2</sup> However, we should keep in mind that in contemporary Africa, there are still one-party states such as Eritrea [110, p.10].

governments<sup>3</sup>. For instance, in Zambia [30], [25, p.33], in Kenya [31], [32] and in Ethiopia [33], [34] there were political assassinations. Torture, intimidations [35, p.380-381], [36, p.89], [37], arbitrary detention [34], [35, p. 22], [36, p.90], treason charges in countries like Ethiopia [38]; [39] and Zimbabwe [40] and other forms of violence, which are committed by the incumbent parties and governments are common in many African countries [25, p.33]. Rarely, as observed in Zimbabwe, opposition parties could also use violence and intimidation [25, p.34]. In general, however, as LeBas [25, p.34] argues "*Opposition parties*" in Africa "*do not use violent or intimidatory tactics solely for 'self-defense'*" Because, they don't want to provoke the ruling parties and give them excuses to attack the opposition<sup>4</sup>. There are also many cases in Africa, as manifested in Zanzibar in 1995, where the ruling party dismissed civil servants who sympathize opposition parties from their posts [25, p.35]. There are also disturbing cases in some African countries like Zimbabwe [25, p.35] and Ethiopia [41]–[44] where opposition sympathizers were denied access to food by the local authorities. Moreover, as reported by many scholars, a very strange political development is being witnessed in Africa since 1990s: the creation of "phony oppositions" by the incumbents. According to the report of Kiiza [21], in Uganda, the ruling party (the National Resistance Movement (NRM)), has created "phony opposition parties", and bribes the leaders of pseudo-opposition parties.

### III. THE WEAKNESSES OF OPPOSITION PARTIES IN AFRICA

Many scholars have examined the weaknesses of opposition parties in Africa. For instance, Van de Walle and Butler [45, p.15] remarked that "*African political parties are plagued by weak organizations, low level of institutionalization, and weak links to the society they are supposed to represent.*" According to Mathisen and Svasand [8], African political parties can be categorized as "weak" if they have problems in: penetrating areas (i.e. through their networks and branches) that are important<sup>5</sup>; transforming their electorate and supporters into formal and active party membership; developing and observing regularized procedures in their activities; and maintaining themselves over time. Deegan [46,

p.2] also described the problems and the weaknesses of African political systems as follows: "*Often parties had no constituencies or were ethnic-based; equally, political programmes, interaction with the populace and financial transparency were non-existent, internal party democracy was often unknown and many opposition parties actually disbanded between elections.*" Chege et al [47, p.54] summarized the weaknesses of political parties in East Africa as follows: First, they are highly fragile and suffer from severe structural weaknesses. Second, they lack adherence to formal rules, regulations, procedures and programmes. Third, their leadership is centered on a dominant personality, family or clique. Decisions are usually made only by the top leader (s). Moreover, followers of such parties identify the leaders with the party and show their loyalty solely to the party leader and not to the party's ideology. Fourth, they are in a cycle of endless "fusion and fission". This makes the opposition parties to be short-lived. Fifth, they suffer from severe financial shortage. Their financial problem hindered them from recruiting and retaining "qualified staff to manage the business of the party." Sixth, they suffer from lack of mass membership. Due to the repressive rules, many people do not want to be associated with the opposition parties. Seventh, most of the opposition parties hibernate in the period between elections. They become active only during election times. In the following paragraphs, I will examine the major weaknesses of the African opposition parties in detail:

#### (1) Fragmentation

As Mathisen and Svasand [8, p.2] noted, opposition parties in African democracies are highly fragmented. There are many African countries that have many small and weak political parties. This fragmented party system has reinforced the power of the incumbents. As noted by Howard and Roessler [49], and Lust-Okar [50] the ruling parties deliberately employ a "divide-and rule" tactic to fragment and weaken the opposition parties. For Gentili [51, p.11], "*The numbers of parties that appeared with the opening to democratization is not a demonstration of increased participation, but rather of fragmentation and therefore weakness of the party systems.*" In 2001, Botswana had 12 political parties, and the dominant party was the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), which ruled the country since 1966 [23, p.58]. By 2006, Ivory Coast had 130 parties, Senegal 77, and Liberia 200 political parties [52]. Mali had more than 159 parties [53] and in Angola there were more than 138 political parties in 2008 [54, p.1]. Ethiopia had 64 parties in the 1995 election, and in the May 2000 election there were 65 political parties in the country [90]. Rakner and Svasand [55, p.6] divide political party fragmentation into four types:

- (a) Formal fragmentation: This takes place when a large number of parties are registered.
- (b) Competitive fragmentation: This kind of fragmentation emerges "*when more parties are able to nominate candidates in a number of constituencies.*"

<sup>3</sup> Schedler [125] describes electoral authoritarian regimes as those which "*.....play the game of multiparty elections for the chief executive and a national legislative assembly. Yet they violate the liberal-democratic principles of freedom and fairness so profoundly and systematically as to render elections instruments of authoritarian rule.*"

<sup>4</sup> In the 2005 Ethiopian election, for instance, the Ethiopian government gave various excuses for the death of more than 190 election demonstrators in the hands of the security forces. The range of reasons given by the government to justify its actions include: the demonstrators attempted to plunder shops and banks [139]; the demonstrators killed police and security officers [140]; the opposition parties agitated the public to overthrow the government by force [141], [142]; the absence of trained riot police [143], [144].

<sup>5</sup> Mathisen and Svasand [8] indicated that many political parties in Africa do not have a durable network of organizations due to their financial and resource problems.

(c) Electoral fragmentation: This “occurs when votes are spread more evenly across a large number of parties.”

(d) Parliamentary fragmentation: This appears “when parliamentary seats are more evenly distributed across a large number of parties.”

For Lijphart [56], and Taagepera and Shugart [57] the number of parties is determined by two important factors: the electoral system and the number of social cleavages (i.e. social heterogeneity) found in a society. The social heterogeneity could be the result of issue dimensions<sup>6</sup>, ethnic diversity<sup>7</sup> and urbanizations<sup>8</sup>. Social heterogeneity increases the number of political parties particularly when a country’s electoral system allows the representation of small parties. Though Ordeshook and Shvetsova [58], Cox [59] and Jones [60] argue that ethnic diversity increases the number of political parties, recent research works of Moser [61], Mozaffar, Scarritt and Golaich [62] showed different findings. For Moser [61] ethnic diversity reduces the number of viable political parties, while for Mozaffar, Scarritt and Golaich [62] ethnic diversity decreases the number of parties when ethnic groups are geographically dispersed. They argue that when ethnic groups are geographically concentrated, the number of political parties increases.

Intra-party friction also leads to a further fragmentation as the cases of the FORD-Kenya [63, p.6], and the CUD (Coalition for Unity and Democracy) in Ethiopia clearly showed. In Ethiopia, intra-party conflicts not only further fragmented opposition parties, but also greatly damaged their image, and frustrated the hopes of millions of people who overwhelmingly voted for the CUD in 2005. It is interesting to note that in Ethiopia, the major opposition parties wasted most of their time fighting each other and were busy in intra-party power struggle. Therefore, the major opposition parties such as the ONC (Oromo National Congress), the AEUP (All Ethiopia Unity Party), the EDU (Ethiopian Democratic Union), and the major opposition coalitions, i.e. the CUD and the UEDF (United Ethiopian Democratic Front) engaged themselves in very destructive intra-party conflicts that threatened their own survival [35], [36].

So far in Africa, opposition parties are rarely successful in ousting the incumbents in elections largely due to their fragmentation and their failure to form opposition coalitions [64, p.13]. I argue that the fragmentation of the opposition parties is the curse of Africa that hindered the democratization process in the continent. In my opinion, the formation of coalitions is the only hope for opposition parties to increase their chance to successfully challenge the incumbents. There are fairly sufficient evidences in Africa to substantiate my claim: the 1997 and 2002 elections in Kenya, the 1993 election in Malawi [6, pp.61-63] and the 2005 election in Ethiopia. The best example of opposition parties’ coalition that was able to oust the incumbent party was in the Kenyan

2002 election where the incumbent KANU party under Daniel Arap Moi was defeated by the coalition of opposition parties. According to Gandhi and Reuter [65, p.4], “*Coordination in elections among opposition parties can take a variety of forms, including the issuing of joint statements, the creation of joint electoral lists for legislative elections, and the formation of a pre-electoral coalition behind a single presidential candidate.*” As noted by Gandhi and Reuter [65, p.5] dictatorial incumbents do their best to keep the opposition divided since they consider the formation of coalitions as a threat. Therefore, incumbent regimes implicitly or explicitly prohibit certain type of opposition coalitions. For instance, in the 2005 Ethiopian election, one of the opposition coalitions, CUD, scored a stunning victory that nearly toppled the incumbent party, EPRDF, from political power. This painful unexpected electoral defeat compelled the incumbent party to dismantle the CUD by hook or by crook. Through the NEBE (National Electoral Board of Ethiopia) and the EPRDF-controlled courts the incumbent party managed to unravel the CUD<sup>9</sup>. First it divided the coalition by luring the UEDP-Medhin, one of the coalition partners of the CUD. It was alleged that in connivance with the incumbent party, the UEDP-Medhin led by Lidetu Ayallew appealed to the NEBE to stop the merger. Then, the NEBE told to the rest of the coalition members that they could no longer use the CUD as party name citing a technicality problem in the merger process [39], [66], [67].

## (2) “Personalistic”<sup>10</sup> Parties

Many of the opposition parties in Africa are established around individual personalities [8, p.3]. The works of Carroll and Carroll [68, p.181], Chabal and Daloz [69, p.151] and Ake [70] reinforce this finding. According to Ake [70, p.11], “*The democratization of Africa has focused on the power elite, who are the natural enemies of democracy.....their involvement in democracy movements is mainly a tactical maneuver. It is a response to internal contradictions and power struggles within a group for whom democracy is essentially a means to power.*” Samuel Decalo also forwarded a similar remark. For Decalo [71, p.297] the effect of a multi-party system in Africa is the opening of “*Political floodgates, swamping countries with scores of political parties, mostly narrow ethnic and personal power-machines and thousands of power aspirants.*” “Personalistic” opposition parties, which usually rely on “the charismatic appeal of single individual” lack structures extending beyond the national executive, and decision making is highly centralized [72, p.29]. These kinds of parties face split whenever another rising star challenges the founder or the leader of the party. This is one of the reasons for the presence of many, fragmented political parties

<sup>8</sup> Cox [59] has given a detailed analysis on urbanization.

<sup>9</sup> In the post-election period, the CUD coalition partners decided to merge and submitted the necessary documents to the NEBE for getting legal recognition. However, the NEBE rejected their application.

<sup>10</sup> Though this particular phenomenon is a distinguishing feature of incumbent parties in Africa, it is also manifested in many opposition parties.

<sup>6</sup> For further information on issue dimensions, see Lijphart [56], Taagepera and Shugart [57], and Coppedge [145].

<sup>7</sup> See Ordeshook and Shvetsova [58], Cox [59], and Jones [60].

in Africa at present. In Ethiopia, for instance, the major opposition party that scored a stunning victory in the 2005 election, CUD, disintegrated into many factions due to a leadership problem, the Diaspora Ethiopians' too much interference in the day-to-day activities of the party, the "divide and rule" and the "carrot and stick" policies of the incumbent EPRDF party. Due to the disintegration of the party, some left the party for good and others created (re-created) at least five political organizations: UDJ (Unity for Democracy and Justice), UEDP-Medhin, AEUP (All Ethiopia Unity Party), CUD<sup>11</sup>, and *Ginbot 7* Movement for Justice, Freedom and Democracy.

There are many cases in Africa, as Chege [73] and Lawson [74, p.8] elaborated, where political parties were formed as opposition, but the leaders of such parties agree to serve in the cabinet of the incumbent party whenever they get the chance. As Ranker and Sväsand [75] said,

*"The consequence of the personalistic nature of parties is that they are not likely to become institutionalized as organizations. Instead, the party leaders use the party to mobilize sufficient support from the electorate in order to bargain with other party-leaders for the dispersion of public goods....When parties do not institutionalize it means that over time electorate is facing a changing set of alternatives that makes it impossible to evaluate a party on the basis of its past performance."*

Ihonybere [76] calls the leadership problem of the African political parties as "leadership fixation". According to Ranker and Sväsand [75, p.12], the "personalistic" nature of African political parties (both the incumbent and the opposition) is the reflection of the vertical dependency structures of the African societies. That is to say, the linkage that connected the people in the grassroots level with the African political parties' elite is "patrimonialism" and "clientelism"<sup>12</sup>, and not organizational hierarchy. That is why, Chabal and Daloz [69, p.37] said, *"The foundations of political accountability in Africa are both collective and extra-institutional: they rest on the*

<sup>11</sup> One faction led by a former low-level party official, Ayele Chamiso, re-established CUD. It is alleged that this party is a "phony opposition" sponsored by the ruling party.

<sup>12</sup> Party clientelism, for Van Biezen and Kopecky [146, p.241], is *"the selective release of public (material) resources – contracts, housing, subsidies, pork barrel legislation, etc.- in order to secure electoral support from individuals or selected sectors of society"*. According to Wantchekon [147, p. 399], *"Comparative politics scholars have long considered electoral politics in Africa to be systematically and inherently clientelist."* This is because, *"African rulers, whether self-appointed or democratically elected, rely on the distribution of personal favors to selected members of the electorate in exchange for ongoing political support"* [147, p. 399]. Heilbrunn [148, p.21] argues that authoritarian rulers *"use revenues to reward cronies and deny the majority access to resources and wealth"*. As Van Ham and Spirova [149, pp.6-7] pointed out practices such as clientelism, corruption, and patronage are the part and parcel of "Rent-seeking Behaviour". Party patronage is a practice where political parties offer individuals with jobs (in public or semi-public positions) in return for party loyalty [146]. For details on clientelism, see the works of Van de Walle [150] and Wantchekon [147].

*particularistic links between Big Men, or patrons, and their constituent communities."* This means, *"... that parties are able to function as long as they can provide their supporters with some of the spoils from winning office, either in the form of positions in the public sector for individuals, in preferential treatment in bids for licenses and so forth or in the distribution of state resources to geographic areas"* [75, p.12].

### (3) Failure to Produce Alternative Policy<sup>13</sup>

One of the chronic problems of the opposition parties in many African transitional democracies is their failure to forward distinct policy alternatives to the voters. As Mathisen and Sväsand [8] pointed out the obvious problem of African political parties is that they are weak in terms of developing a comprehensive political vision. As I have tried to indicate, political parties which are led by single individual leaders usually do not offer alternative policies to the voters, but emphasize the ability of the opposition party leaders to run the government "better" than the incumbent party and the government leaders. These types of political parties that do not offer policy alternatives do not lead to party stability over time [75, p.12]. Many observers such as Isakpa [77] have examined this major problem of opposition parties in Africa. Emphasizing the need for alternative policy in Nigeria, Isakpa [77] said, *"if ruling politicians are failing the people, it is the responsibility of the opposition to step in, in a credible, robust, articulate, clear and coherent manner, to provide alternative policy options on how to deal with the challenges that confront the country and the majority of the Nigerian people."* Isakpa [77] noted that the Nigerian opposition parties should offer their alternative policy and explain to the people how they would do things differently. In other words, they should explain their policy alternatives for education, healthcare, children, the elderly, unemployment, poverty, agriculture, and so on. This is also true in Ethiopia where the opposition parties have been blamed for their failure to offer alternative policies [35, p.268]; [36, p.52].

### (4) Lack of Long History and Experience

Mathisen and Sväsand [8, p.12] argue that in many African democracies most of the political parties are short-lived and do not have long history and experience. Therefore, the voters do not get a chance to evaluate opposition parties' achievements over time<sup>14</sup>. Moreover, the most important

<sup>13</sup> When I say "Alternative Policy", I am referring to the alternative policy of the "loyal", or "legitimate" opposition political groups that struggle to take political power democratically (i.e. through election). Loyal oppositions in democratic process must produce alternative policy (i.e. social, economic, cultural etc., policies). According to Murphy and Blair [15], if opposition parties offer other type of alternative policy (i.e. "system alternative") that aims to change the fundamental basis of democratic political system, then they cannot be called "loyal", "legitimate", or "democratic" opposition.

<sup>14</sup> In some exceptional cases in Africa, however, even newly-created opposition parties can win or score high results in elections. For instance, in the 2005 Ethiopian parliamentary election the three months old opposition coalition party, CUD, got a very high number of seats in the regional and federal parliaments. At the same time, it is important to remember that though

weakness of the African political parties mentioned over and over by many researchers is the fact that they are seldom grown out of big social movements<sup>15</sup>, and are the creation of ambitious individuals. Let alone in the newly emerged African democracies, even in Mauritius where political parties have long history of existence, the parties are considered as “*personalized coalitions of supporters of a particular political leader*” [68, p.180]. LeBas [72, pp.29-30] argues that in Africa, relatively speaking, the only opposition parties that have real chance to compete for power are “movement parties” that emerged from the wombs of the social movements. These kinds of parties are broad-based and can resist fragmentation. In Africa, opposition parties that emerged out of social movements are more successful in challenging incumbent parties than the “personalistic” opposition parties. There are relatively many cases in Africa where guerrilla movements and insurgents become governments by ending hostilities [78, p.1]. The best examples are Ethiopia, Eritrea, Uganda, and Rwanda where the social movements in the form of guerrilla movements and fronts decided to cease armed hostilities and transformed themselves into constitutionally legitimate political organizations. In Ethiopia, for instance, the EPRDF decided to open for multi-party democracy after overthrowing the *Derg* government in a guerrilla war in 1991. Other insurgent groups in Ethiopia such as the OLF (Oromo Liberation Front), the ONLF (Ogaden National Liberation Front), the IFLO (Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromia), etc. also decided to cease hostility and joined a transitional government in 1991. However, in 1992, they returned to armed struggle due to their disagreement with the EPRDF coalition party, which dominated the then transitional government (1991-1994). To sum up, we can say that the guerrilla movements that transform themselves to a legitimate political organization get a better chance to take political power in Africa.

##### (5) Lack of Mass Base

Many of the opposition parties in Africa lack proper contact with trade unions, labor unions, and peasants associations. Therefore, they are not mass-based. In countries where labor unions are autonomous they can play a very important role in opposition politics [25, p.24]. In many African countries, the ruling parties took repressive measures against the labor unions to discourage them from playing a substantial political role. Therefore, in many African countries the opposition parties' relation with the labor unions is very weak. On the other hand, in countries where opposition parties maintain close relations with labor unions the political picture is

the CUD was a newly established coalition party, the member parties were active in Ethiopian politics for more than a decade. The senior member parties of the CUD (i.e., AEUP and UEDP-Medhin) were the two most important parties that dominated the opposition politics in the country for considerable period of time.

<sup>15</sup> Many scholars have indicated the significances of social movements to political parties. See: Della Porta and Diani [151], Della Porta [119], Garner and Zald [152], Kriesi and Wisler [153], Meyer and Tarrow [154], Tarrow [155], Tilly [156], and Özler [157].

different. In the 1991 election in Zambia, and in the 2000 and 2008 elections in Zimbabwe opposition parties scored electoral success principally because they were led by prominent trade unionists and labor-led opposition parties [25, p.15]. This shows how the support of trade unions and other mass organizations are crucial to opposition parties in Africa to win elections. In Zimbabwe, the ruling ZANU-PF party's electoral defeat in the hands of the opposition party supported by the trade unions was so painful that a top Zanu PF official<sup>16</sup> lamented, “*It was we who created the trade unions, it was we who thought of the workers. But we didn't know then what kind of monster we were creating*” [25, p.15]. One of the major weaknesses of the opposition political parties in Angola, as noted by Amundsen and Weimer [54, p.1], is their few organic links with the civil society. Amundsen and Weimar [54, p.1] argue that the shortage of interest organizations and a weak civil society usually lead to a structural weakness in political parties.

##### (6) Limited Women Membership

As Kasse [79] underscored, “*a true democracy is characterized by the full and equal participation of women and men in the formulation and implementation of decisions in all spheres of public life*”. Moreover, “*No country can call itself democratic if half of the population is excluded from the decision-making process*” [79]. Women and youth are widely underrepresented in many African opposition political parties [64, p.19]. This is true not only to the opposition parties, but also to the incumbent parties. In Senegal, for instance, the number of women in party leadership position is very low [79]. Until 2003, in South Africa, the only party that regulated a quota system for women was the ruling ANC party [80]. In Tanzania, the ruling party (*Chama Cha Mapinduzi* (CCM) had 41 special seats for women MPs in parliament by 2000. The opposition parties such as the *Chama Cha Wananchi* (CCF) had 4 special seats for women MPs; the *Chama Cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo* (CHADEMA) had 1 seat; the United Democratic Party (UDP) had 1 seat, and the Tanzania Labor party (TLP) had 1 seat [81, p.5]. In Mozambique, as listed by Aberu [82, p.63] opposition parties fielded only few women candidates in the 1994 election compared to the ruling party, the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) that fielded 130 candidates. The opposition parties in Mozambique fielded women candidates as follows: the Alliance for Democracy (APD) 18; the United Front of Mozambique (FUMO) 33; the Democratic Congress Party (PACODE) 18; the Democratic Party of Mozambique (PADEMO) 15; the National Convention Party (PCN) 27; the Independent Party of Mozambique (PIMO) 7; the Popular Party of Mozambique (PPM) 82; the Democratic Renewal Party (PRD) 24; the Labor Party (PT) 46; Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO) 38; the Social, Liberal and

<sup>16</sup> Hon. Chen Chimutengwende who was once a politburo member of the ZANUPF, and ex-Minister of communications [25, p.15].

Democratic Party (SOL) 36; the Democratic Union (UD) 40; the Mozambican National Union (UNAMO) 34.

By mid 1999, only 11% of the cabinet ministers in Africa were women [83, p.12]. According to Schoeman [83, p.14], by mid 2004 the percentage of women in African parliaments was as follows: Angola 15%, Botswana 8%, Lesotho 13%, Malawi 8%, Mozambique 28%, Namibia 19%, Seychelles 24% , South Africa 32.8%, Swaziland 7% ,Tanzania 16%, Zambia 10% , and Zimbabwe 9%. In contemporary Africa (excluding Liberia) no country has a female head of state or government and there are only very few foreign ministers in the continent [83, p.7]. By 2004, in South Africa 41.2% of cabinet positions were filled by women, and in Botswana they held 25% of cabinet ministers [83, p.15]. Realizing this weakness, according to Baldez [84, p.3], 22 African countries have laws that require all political parties to reserve a certain amount of quota for women candidates to parliaments. To sum up, we can say that allowing women to join opposition parties would help the parties to appeal to women voters.

#### (7) Weak Financial Position

One big disadvantage of the opposition parties in Africa is their weak financial position. As Johnston [85, p.5] said, *“Governing parties can tap into ‘administrative resources’—state powers and funds not available to the opposition—which are very useful in rewarding friends and punishing enemies.”* For Tshitereke [86, p.1] *“money buys the access, goods and services, favors and skills that are essential to effective party activity.”* According to Mathisen and Sväsand [8, p.4], there are various funding sources for African political parties, though the legitimacy of each type of funding is governed by each country’s rules and regulations. These funding sources are: membership fees, income from property or business owned by the party, taxes on representatives, publications, contributions from individuals, unions, organizations and corporations, and subsidies from a state or government (i.e. public funding). In the newly-established transitional democracies of Africa, one of the most important demands of the opposition parties is the availability of a state or public funding. In fact, let alone in the transitional democracies, even in the developed democracies one of the most contentious issues is the funding of political parties<sup>17</sup> [86]. Financing political parties is usually problematic and controversial everywhere in the world [87]. As Ewing [88, p.191] noted, *“The problem of political funding is a global one, and there is a case for universal standards that establish a framework of principle to which all can be encouraged to subscribe, and by which all can be judged.”*

<sup>17</sup> Fambom [158] defines political funding or political finance as *“the manner in which political parties and individual candidates who seek to get elected to political office gather funds for electoral campaigns and in the case of political parties seek to maintain themselves as organizations.”* For Canton [7, p.6] party assistance is *“any type of international assistance geared towards individual parties or the party system as a whole, with the purpose of strengthening democracy in a given country.”*

According to Mathisen and Svasand [8, pp.17-20], for opposition political parties in Africa receiving financial support from the Western donors has both advantages and disadvantages. In emerging democracies, foreign funding is sometimes viewed as an attempt to influence the outcome of national elections and the directions of political parties. In this case, foreign funding is regarded as something that violates the basic principle of democracy, i.e., *“The election of representatives should express the political preferences of the politically enfranchised citizens”* [8, p.18]. Secondly, there is a general fear that the political parties’ dependence on external funding might limit or decrease their attachment to their electorate. In other words, the political parties’ connection with the electorate will be less as long as they continue depending on foreign aid. Moreover, if the political parties’ connection with the electorate decreases, they no longer reflect the view of the electorate because their leaders start to live comfortable life thanks to the foreign aid. Thirdly, the political party leaders could be turned into authoritarian leaders and might follow a monolithic leadership. As the result they could refuse to entertain criticisms from fellow party members fearing the exposure of their corrupt practices. Fourthly, foreign funding could also lead in to the formation of the so called “party entrepreneurs” (i.e. individuals who establish political parties to tap internationally available funds). Therefore, many ambitious individuals would be encouraged to establish political parties as a short cut to rapid personal wealth. This condition could lead to the further fragmentation of political parties: a development hardly conducive to democratic consolidation. Therefore, at present, many observers feel that foreign funding is both unethical and counterproductive. On the other hand, there are arguments that support foreign funding to political parties in the transitional democracies. They say that foreign funding for political parties is necessary to counter the domination of the incumbents. Though (ideally) political parties should develop and depend on national resources, the absolute poverty in Africa does not allow political parties to grow and entirely depend on national resources. After considering both sides of the arguments Mathisen and Svasand [8, p.21] concluded that *“if democracy is to be entrenched in Africa it needs to be strengthened from within.”* Foreign funding might be necessary, but it should not be tainted and it should not try to impose models from outside.

#### (8) Ethnicity<sup>18</sup>

In Africa, political parties are seen as the *“potential inheritors of the role previously played by ethnicity”* [72, p.11]. In some African countries, the opposition parties’ country-wide mobilizing capacity is curtailed due to ethnicity. This is particularly true for the non-ethnic opposition parties. In the Kenyan elections in the 1990s, both the incumbent KANU (Kenyan African National Union) and the opposition parties

<sup>18</sup> This weakness is not confined to opposition parties, but also to the ruling parties.

exploited ethnicity and mobilized their supporters along ethnic lines [25, p.30]. According to LeBas [25, p.33], Moi's government encouraged limited ethnic conflict to intimidate the opposition.

As Hulterström [89, p.10] argues there is a "very strong relationship between ethnic belonging and voter support" in Kenya. For Hulterström [89, p.21], ethnicity and tribalism are problematic and undesirable elements, because they undermine issue-based politics. Moreover, the evils of tribalism (i.e. violence, genocide) might shatter a country's socio-economic conditions as manifested in Rwanda. In the 2005 election in Ethiopia, the non-ethnic opposition parties such as the CUD and the UEDF strongly opposed the use of ethnicity<sup>19</sup> for political gain unlike the ruling party, the TPLF-EPRDF that mobilized its supporters by cleverly exploiting ethnicity. This tactic has immensely helped the ruling party to stay in power for the last two decades. The incumbent party also used, as manifested in the 2005 election, ethnicity as a weapon to blackmail and intimidates the non-ethnic opposition parties. The incumbent party even accused the CUD and the UEDF of planning to form a Rwandan style "Interahamwe"<sup>20</sup> aimed against the Tigrean ethnic group, the co-ethnic of the ruling TPLF party<sup>21</sup>.

#### (9) They Frequently Employ Uncoordinated Election Boycotts

It is very common in Africa where opposition parties participate in elections that are not "free and fair". On the other hand, there are many instances where the opposition parties boycott elections even if the elections are declared "free and fair" just to discredit the incumbents, and when they

<sup>19</sup> Ethnicity has become very important in Ethiopia particularly after the coming to power of the EPRDF in 1991. The ruling EPRDF party adopted "Ethnic Federalism" and divided the country in to various states along ethnic and language lines. For further information on ethnic federalism in Ethiopia see: Wondwosen and Záhófik [173].

<sup>20</sup> "Interahamwe" is a Hutu paramilitary in Rwanda.

<sup>21</sup> In the pre-election period of the 2005 election the ruling party blamed the opposition for venting ethnic hatred and for trying to lead the country in to a situation similar to the Rwandan civil war [174]. For instance, in his national television address, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi compared the opposition tactics to that of the Rwandan Hutu. According to him, "The Ethiopian opposition is following the same trend to create havoc and hatred" [174]. In a similar manner, the Information Minister, Bereket Simon, told the CNN, "The alternative was strife between the different nationalities of Ethiopia which might have made the Rwandan genocide look like child's play" [159]. On the other hand, the leader of the CUD, Hailu Shawel, rejected the EPRDF's accusation. He said, "The opposition has no military power and does not aspire to mass murder" [160]. Similarly, Berhanu Nega, another top CUD official emotionally rejected the allegations. "It is a shame to call us or to liken us to the Interahamwe....It is the government that was in power that promoted the hatred policy. Therefore, when EPRDF raises this, it makes us think what the ruling party is having in mind" [161]. The head of the EU-EOM (European Union Election Observers Mission), Ana Gomez, in her May 4 letter expressed her concern over the usage of hate speech and racial and ethnic slurs of political parties in their election campaigns. Gomez, particularly, criticized the EPRDF for comparing the opposition with that of the Rwanda's Hutu militia [162]. The report of the EU-EOM clearly stated that there was no visible sign of "Interahamwe" in the country. According to the opposition parties, though the accusation miserably failed, the EPRDF plan was aimed at creating a siege mentality among the Tigrean population and to force them blindly rally behind the incumbent party.

realize that their chance of winning is very low [91, p. 3]. Most of the time, the African opposition parties are the victims of legal and political restrictions crafted by the incumbent parties, which usually force them to boycott elections. In the past opposition parties in Africa had boycotted elections because of various factors: in Ghana (1992), due to the "illegitimacy of the electoral process"; in Mauritania (1997), due to "the government's refusal to establish an independent commission"; in Sudan (2000), due to "the state of emergency" the government imposed" [92, p.7]; in Ethiopia (1992,1995), due to the harassment of the opposition candidates [93, p.20][94] and so on. Most of the election boycotts in Africa are not effective due to the disunity of the opposition parties. As Gandhi [95, p.1] rightly noted, "Electoral boycotts delegitimize the regime only if most (if not all) opposition parties agree to stay away from the contest." Between 1990 and 2001, almost 30% of all elections in the Sub-Saharan Africa were boycotted by at least one opposition party. In the same period, the losers accepted the election results with protests in two-thirds of the elections in the Sub-Saharan Africa [96]. It is interesting to note that even in those elections, which were declared "free and fair" the losers accepted the result only 40% of the time [97]. Manning [98, p.8], after reviewing 54 elections in Sub-Saharan Africa, claimed that in 33 elections the major opposition parties rejected the electoral results immediately. These were: Benin (1996 and 2001); Cameroon (1992, 1997, and 2004); Ethiopia (1995, 2000, 2005); Ghana (1992); Guinea (1993, 1998, 2003); Kenya (1992 and 1997); Madagascar (1996 and 2001); Malawi (1999 and 2004); Mali (1997 and 2002); Mauritania (1992, 1997, 2003); Mozambique, (1994, 1999, and 2004); Seychelles (2001); Togo (1993,1998, 2003, 2005); and Zambia (1996 and 2001). Out of these 33 cases, in 25 instances the losers challenged the results in court. These are: Benin (1996 and 2001); Cameroon (1992, 2004); Cape Verde (2001); Ethiopia (2005); Guinea (1993); Kenya (1992, 1997); Madagascar (2001); Malawi (1999, 2004); Mali (1997, 2002); Mozambique (1999, 2004); Namibia (1994); South Africa (2004); Seychelles (2001); Togo (1993, 1998, 2003, 2005); Zambia (1996, 2001). Only in rare instances (Mali 1977, Benin 1996, Madagascar 2001) opposition parties' legal appeals won favorable court rulings [98, p.8]. However, only in one case (Madagascar 2001) the election result was wholly overturned by the court. In 25 cases protests occurred following the elections. These were in: Cameroon (1992, 1997); Ethiopia (2005); Ghana (1992); Guinea (1993, 1998); Kenya (1992, 1997); Madagascar (1996, 2001); Malawi (1999, 2004); Mali (1997, 2002); Mauritania (1992, 1997, 2003); Mozambique (1999); Togo (1993, 1998, 2003, 2005); and Zambia (1996, 2001).

In some African countries, the incumbents have introduced laws to control the election boycotts of the opposition. In Ethiopia, if a party boycotts two elections, the party's license would be revoked. In the 1992 and 1995 elections in Ethiopia, many opposition parties boycotted the elections. However, in the 2000 Federal and Regional elections most of the

opposition parties participated because some of them did not have other alternatives due to the country's regulation. For instance, the All-Amhara People's Organization (AAPO) decided to participate in the 2000 election simply because it could lose its legal unless it participated in the election [99]. The Political Parties Registration Proclamation [100] says: "where a...political party, after attaining legal personality, fails to take part in two country-wide...elections, its registration shall be cancelled and shall lose legal personality" (Article 38(2)).

To sum up, I argue that though election boycotts could be useful to expose the misdeeds of the ruling parties, at the same time, they negatively affect opposition parties. Repeated election boycotts by the opposition would allow the incumbents to fully control the parliament, a very important institution which is used by the ruling parties in the transitional democracies as a legal cover to persecute and weaken opposition parties by introducing various bills.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, as Lyons [101] stated "the international community regards political boycotts with high suspicion except in the most extraordinary circumstances".

#### IV. DISCUSSION

In multi-party system there are cases where one party dominates and stays in power for decades. According to Murphy and Blair [15], "If one group or party maintains a hold on power for a long time, the quality of democracy may be in question, and if one group maintains this hold permanently, the system cannot be called democratic." These kinds of regimes are known as "Hybrid Regimes"<sup>23</sup>. They are also known as "Pseudo-democracies", "Neo-patrimonial States", "Electoral Authoritarian States", "Semi-authoritarian States", "Illiberal Democracies", "Transitional Democracies" and so on. [102][103][28, p.6], Hybrid regimes, according to LeBas [25, p.5], are "regimes in which authoritarian and democratic traditions seem to mix and even comfortably or stably coexist." Sometimes, this kind of situation *i.e.* the dominance of one party for decades could even happen in consolidated democracies. The best examples are India, Israel, Japan and Sweden where there has been one-party domination for decades<sup>24</sup> [15].

<sup>22</sup> There have been cases in Africa where the incumbents who dominate the legislature deliberately amend the working procedure of the parliament and the parliament members' code of conduct (in case of electoral defeats) to discourage the incoming opposition MPs. In the 2005 Ethiopian election, for instance, when the two major opposition party coalitions, the CUD and the UEDF, won many seats in the federal parliament the EPRDF-dominated parliament reformed its working procedures to minimize and undermine the role of opposition members in the parliament. As Berhanu Nega, one of the top leaders of the opposition, told the English to Africa reporter, William Eagle of VOA, the government called the old parliament that had already finished its term, just to reform the parliamentary procedures. Accordingly, a new regulation was approved requiring the parliamentary body to muster the support of 51% of the members to propose a formal agenda. Earlier, according to Berhanu, only the signature of 20 parliament members was sufficient [163].

<sup>23</sup> There are prominent works on hybrid regimes: Karl [164], Bogaards [165] and Diamond [166].

<sup>24</sup> However, we cannot compare these countries with hybrid regimes in Africa. Because, unlike the hybrid regimes in Africa, opposition parties in

In the period between 1960s and 1980s patrimonialism was the distinguishing feature of the political system in Africa. The period that started after the emergence of multi-party system in the 1990s can be characterized as "neo-patrimonialism"<sup>25</sup> [104]. In the traditional concept of patrimonialism, a patron rewards his followers with gifts in return for their loyalty and support. In such practices, clients get material benefits and protection [105, pp.133-134]; [106, p.7]. In the new form of patrimonialism, *i.e.*, "neo-patrimonialism", the patrons are office-holders in state institutions who misuse public funds or office by rewarding their party members and cronies in return for their party support and loyalty [106, p.7]. The difference between the two is that neo-patrimonials generally lack the traditional legitimations which are listed by Weber [105]. According to Bratton and Van de Walle [104, pp.63-68], neo-patrimonialism exhibits three features: "systematic concentration of political power", "award of personal favors" and the "use of state resources for political legitimation." As Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith [107] argued neo-patrimonialism, most of the time, is associated with the use of public office for private gain. For Bratton and Van de Walle at present [104, p.277] "the distinctive institutional hallmark of African regimes is neopatrimonialism".

As I have already mentioned above, in a dominant party system, one party tends to win an excessive number of seats in the parliament and maintains government control continuously. In contemporary Ethiopia, for instance, in all of the federal and regional parliamentary elections (1992, 1995, 2000, 2005) the declared "winner"<sup>26</sup> was the incumbent coalition party, EPRDF. In the 1995 Ethiopian election for the federal and regional parliaments, the EPRDF was declared a winner in a landslide victory. It won 483 of the 537 seats (*i.e.* 90%) in the Council of Peoples' Representatives. The dominant partner in the EPRDF coalition, TPLF (Tigray People Liberation Front), won all the seats in the Tigray state assembly and all the state's seats in the Council of People's Representatives. All the 92 local assembly seats in Addis Ababa were also won by the EPRDF. The largest opposition party that participated in the 1995 election, the Ethiopian

those consolidated democracies are very strong and have a real chance to win elections and attain political power. These days, some electoral autocrats in Africa have openly tried to justify their intention to remain in political power for decades. In Ethiopia, for instance, according to Gebru Asrat [167], the former governor of Tigray region and the ex-top official of the incumbent party (TPLF-EPRDF), and Berhnanu [35, p.162], the ruling party is determined to stay in power for many decades citing the cases of Japan, Mexico and Sweden as role models. It is also reported that the leaders of the incumbent EPRDF party are contemplating to make Ethiopia a one-party state following the example of Communist China [168].

<sup>25</sup> See Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith [48], and Lawson [74].

<sup>26</sup> As declared by many observers the election results particularly, the 2005 election results were highly controversial [114]. Therefore, when I say the "winner" of the election, I am simply following the official declaration of the NEBE (National Electoral Board of Ethiopia), which has been always accused of favoring the incumbent party.

National Democratic Movement (ENDM) [169] contested for 80 seats but failed even to win a single seat [107, p.135].

In the 2000 election, the EPRDF won 520 seats (more than 90% of the seats) in the 547 seat federal parliament. According to Van der Beken [108, pp.7-15], the member parties of the EPRDF: the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) won all 152 seats in the regional parliament; the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM) won 286 seats out of 294 seats in the Amhara regional parliament; the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO) won 535 seats out of the 537 seats in the Oromia regional parliament; the Southern Nation, Nationalities and Peoples (SNNP) won 323 seats out of 346 seats of the regional parliament. Opposition parties managed to win only 13 seats both in the federal and the regional parliaments [109]. According to Merera [48, p.135], in the May 2000 election opposition parties, namely the AAPO (All Amhara People Organization), the CAFPDE (Council of Alternative Forces for Peace and Democracy), the EDP (Ethiopian Democratic Party), the ONC (Oromo National Congress) and the SEPDC (Southern Ethiopia Peoples' Democratic Coalition) were able to win only 13 seats.

Even in Botswana, a country which is known for having the longest surviving African multi-party system, the dominant party controlled the parliament and ruled the country since independence [23, p.58]. These landslide victories and the one-party hegemony observed in many transitional democracies in Africa are partly due to the weaknesses and the fragmentation of the democratic actors, which are organized as opposition political parties. In fact, their weaknesses as elaborately discussed in this paper, contributed for the dominance of the incumbent parties in many African countries.

As I have already indicated, at present, most of the African multi-party states are turned to one-party hegemony. In a predominant one-party system, *"a single party controls the executive and dominates the legislature, facing a divided and ineffective opposition"* [110, p.14]. In such systems, opposition parties participate in successive elections, but have little or no chance of winning [110, p.14]. If this is the case, why do the incumbent authoritarian rulers or the "electoral authoritarians" in one-party hegemony states conduct multi-party elections? Many scholars have attempted to give answers. For Hermet [111] and Schedler [112] the main reason is to legitimate their rule in the eyes of their subjects. On the other hand, for Diamond [113] and Wondwosen [114, p.130] it is motivated by their desire to secure international aid. For Blaydes [115] the main reason is to recruit new local supporters. Other scholars like Magaloni [116] and Schmitter [117] argue that incumbent authoritarians conduct elections to discipline internal factions. They claimed that the incumbent's stunning electoral victory pacify internal party problems. In addition, "electoral authoritarians" use elections to gauge their own popular support and measure the performance of their allies [118], [116]. According to Cox [120], the "electoral authoritarians" also conduct elections to facilitate their graceful exit since losing power at the ballot box is much better than violent overthrow.

In many African countries, the incumbent parties tend to manipulate elections in order to minimize the chances of the opposition parties to win elections. According to Donno and Roussias [121, p.10], the "menu of electoral manipulation" of the incumbent parties can be grouped into three parts: pre-

election manipulation, election-day manipulation, and post-election manipulation (i.e. in the counting and tabulation process). Pre-election manipulation include: formal or informal restriction on opposition candidates' registration, campaigning, rallies, public assemblies, and media coverage; and intimidation of voters, opposition candidates and the independent media. Election-Day manipulation involves flawed-ballots, biased voter registration lists, barring opposition supporters from voting; state, military or police-led intimidation in polling stations; multiple or "proxy" voting ballot – stuffing. Post-election manipulation may include protocol tampering, manipulating computer software used for electoral data processing etc. Levitsky and Way [122] also voiced more or less similar remarks. They noted that *"non-democratic incumbents violates the spirit of 'free and fair' elections by manipulating electoral rules controlling the media"*, intimidating opposition candidates and their supporters, and electoral fraud. In the worst cases, incumbents might also ban certain opposition parties by introducing very restrictive regulations. In addition to banning parties and prohibiting party coalitions, incumbent parties also may craft electoral rules that "disadvantage and divide the opposition" [123], [65, p.5]. Furthermore, authoritarian incumbents also employ "carrot and stick" tactic to divide opposition parties. They might give patronage, offices etc., to individual opposition members with the aim of dividing and weakening opposition parties [50]. According to Lawson [74, 6], in many African transitional democracies the opposition parties have little to benefit from acting as a parliamentary opposition since they have no access to state resources, which are under the full control of the incumbent parties. Therefore, when they lose election or when they are certain that they are going to lose in the election, opposition parties tend to boycott the election, or reject the election results by using various pretexts in their attempt to de-legitimize the incumbent party. Therefore, in contemporary Africa, only in few countries such as Ghana, Benin, Nigeria, Mozambique, and Malawi, losing parties play the role of loyal opposition in parliament.

Gandhi [95, p.1] argues that if an election is stolen or rigged by an incumbent, a coordinated or unified action of opposition parties may force the incumbent to concede electoral defeat. However, as Gandhi [95, p.1] pointed out, *"Post-electoral mobilization may force the incumbent to concede power only if the opposition makes a unified display of strength on the streets."* As observed by many scholars such as Lavitsky and Way [122], Magaloni [116], Schedler [125], Gandhi [95, p.1], and Thompson and Kuntz [126, p. 10], in many elections the opposition parties fail to take a unified stand and miserably fail to coordinate their efforts, giving the authoritarian incumbents a chance to use elections to perpetuate their rule. In the post-2005 electoral disputes in Ethiopia, for instance, the opposition parties were not able to stand together. In the various protest measures called by the CUD, opposition parties such as the ONC, other UEDF member parties, and the various small opposition parties

refused to participate largely due to the inter-party rivalries and intra-party power struggles.

According to Salih and Nordlund [6, p.47], in some cases, a dominant party system may ignite severe conflict that could lead to state collapse. This is particularly true “*in situations where the ethnic advantage of one political party vis-à-vis the other may lead to the opposition becoming impatient and resorting to the military as a way of advancing civilian politics.*” In fact, frustrated by the fragmentation of opposition parties and the refusal of many African incumbents to hand over power peacefully some political observers felt that unless the army stages a coup it is not possible to remove electoral autocrats democratically [127]. There is also a growing fear in many hybrid states that the army might get an excuse to interfere and stage a coup.

In Ethiopia, increasing number of opposition groups such as the *Ginbot 7* Movement for Justice, Freedom and Democracy, and the EPPF (Ethiopian People Patriotic Front) have decided to use “everything possible” and “every means” including armed struggle to overthrow the incumbents. In many hybrid states of Africa, the incumbents purposely establish party-military<sup>27</sup> relations to solidify their unlimited rule. They also fill parliaments with loyalists, politicize the civil service, and bribe selected opposition leaders to support the government in one way or another [21]. The major disturbing problem in the hybrid regimes of Africa is the incumbents’ control of the countries’ bureaucracy, army, police, economy, administration, the legislature, the judiciary etc. Therefore, the process of changing governments in such countries is very

<sup>27</sup> The ruling parties of the hybrid states in Africa enthusiastically attempt to get the support of the army, though in principle, the army is expected to be neutral in the power struggle between political parties. The major factors that compel the incumbents to control the army include: First, as witnessed in many electoral disputes in Africa, the Western donors usually give their support to the political parties that control the army in order to curb the anarchy and the civil war that could happen during turbulent transitions. For instance, in the 2005 parliamentary election, the major opposition parties (CUD and UEDF) were able to get high electoral votes and popular support, but they were not able to get a positive nod from the Western donors due to the fact that the Ethiopian army was fully controlled by the incumbent party, EPRDF. Such kinds of situations encourage the incumbent parties in Africa to control the army and the police by hook or by crook. Second, there is a constant fear among the incumbents of the hybrid regimes in Africa of military coups. For instance, in the 2005 Ethiopian election, many members of the independent media were either fined or imprisoned for the alleged instigation and defamation of the Ethiopian armed forces [170], [171], [172]. In Ethiopia, the ruling party, TPLF-EPRDF, has fully controlled the army in various ways. First and for most, almost all military generals and commanders of the army, and the air force were members of the ruling party during the guerrilla war (1975-1991) that culminated in the victory of the TPLF-EPRDF over the Derg government in 1991. In 1991, when the Tigrean-led guerrilla front established a government, some became political leaders and the rest remained in the TPLF army that transformed itself to a legal, regular army of the country. In the process, all the soldiers and officers of the former Derg government were disbanded. Secondly, the army commanders, as co-ethnics of the ruling party, are continuously awarded with medals, promotions, and other benefits by the party and government officials to keep their loyalty to the ruling party. It was due to this major problem the CUD requested the government (in its eight preconditions to join parliament) to “*Ensure the police and armed forces do not favor and take sides with the ruling party.*”

complex and could bring a state collapse in every aspect: economically, socially, politically and militarily. According to Oyugi, as cited by Kiiza [21], in contemporary Africa, the “*ruling parties.....become so identified with the government bureaucracy, the legislature, the judiciary, the army and even the treasury that their separate character collapses almost completely.*”

## V. CONCLUSION

According to Gandhi and Reuter [65, p.4], “*elections appear to be a double-edged sword: one used to perpetuate authoritarian rule in the short-term, but perhaps while planting the seeds of the regime’s demise in the future.*” Beissinger [128] argues that the more electoral autocrats hold multi-party elections, the greater they give a chance to the opposition to learn how best to challenge the incumbents. This means, in other words, repeated multi-party elections (even if controlled and manipulated by “electoral autocrats”) could lead to democratization [129], [130]. Moreover, by participating in elections repeatedly opposition parties might realize that unless they form coalitions it is very hard to oust the incumbents from power. As Gandhi [95, p.4] pointed out, for opposition parties in authoritarian elections the likelihood of winning is governed by two conditions: their own actions, i.e. whether they are able to form opposition coalitions, and whether the incumbent is willing to handover power in case of losing an election. Here, the fundamental question is, “when do the incumbents in hybrid states yield power?” One of the very crucial problems in Africa at present is the unwillingness of the incumbent parties to be opposition parties due to their over-dependence on the benefits available to the ruling parties. Therefore, they are “ill-equipped to become the opposition”. In many cases in Africa, the incumbents are not willing to hand over power even if they are defeated in elections. Recently, some scholars have attempted to investigate this chronic problem. For instance, according to O’Donnell and Schmitter [131], Przeworski [18], and Wood [132], electoral authoritarians would be forced to handover power in case of electoral defeats when splits occur within the authoritarian elite. In this case, as demonstrated by Geddes [133], Brownlee [118], Magaloni [116], and Gandhi [95, p.4] elite fissures are necessary for political change<sup>28</sup>. On the other hand, for scholars such as Thomson and Kuntz [126] street actions of the opposition could force the incumbents to yield power. Only in exceptional and very rare cases such as Ivory coast (2000) and Madagascar (2002) post-electoral popular revolts forced the authoritarian incumbents to hand over power to the election winners. In these countries, despite the incumbents’ refusal to yield power, they were thrown out through an opposition taking to the streets [126, p.3]. In Zimbabwe (2008) and Kenya (2007) also the electoral autocrats were forced to accept power-sharing through the

<sup>28</sup> For Gandhi [95, p.4] the very fact “*That there is uncertainty over whether incumbents will step down from power is what distinguishes authoritarian elections from democratic ones.*”

street actions of the opposition in the post-election period [124],[134]—[137]. It is also very important to note that even if the electoral autocrats manage to pass the crisis by forcefully crushing the street action of the opposition they will suffer for years from the loss of international and local legitimacy as manifested in Algeria (1992), Nigeria (1993) [126, p.6], and Ethiopia (2005) [101] [44]. In conclusion, as Burnell [138, p.25] insisted, there has to be inter-party dialogue in Africa over “*how to move beyond the dominant party situation*”.

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