Beyond Voting: Temporal Proximity to Elections, Competitiveness, and Political Participation*

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Abstract

Elections are events of massive political upheaval in new democracies. Which types of political participation intensify as competing parties vie for state ‘power and resources? Using two rounds of Afrobarometer data from 18 African countries, this paper examines whether temporal proximity to an election affects strength in partisanship, cognitive political engagement, and political interaction with the state. The analysis reveals that proximity to an election is associated with an increase in the strength of partisanship, political discussion, and contacting a political actor. More competition increases political discussion, meeting attendance, the belief that political violence is unjustified, and raising issues with leaders; however, it is associated with a decrease in partisanship and political understanding. Lastly, do elections strengthen feelings towards democracy and its main political protagonists or leave citizens disenchanted? Temporal proximity to an election, especially a competitive election, is associated with a decrease in support for democracy and trust in a range of political actors and institutions, while increasing the belief that one cannot talk freely and that the president ignores the constitution. Trust in the opposition, however, improves.

*Thank you to Keith Weghorst for input. All errors are my own.
1 Introduction

Elections, the primary events in citizens’ lives that allow them to connect with and influence national politics, are few and far between in sub-Saharan Africa. Every four to six years in democratic regimes, the state is obligated to interact with citizens, to physically produce millions of ballot papers, hire and train polling station agents, and stage a nation-wide event in which theoretically every single citizen’s voice can be submitted. Otherwise, political actors largely keep their distance to their constituents. Poor information infrastructure and illiteracy, often combined with low state presence outside the capital city, largely allows politicians to operate under a clock of invisibility.

On the flip side, elections constitute the major events where citizens can expect to extract resources from the state and various state actors in return for supporting parties at their campaign events and at the polls on election day. To citizens, an election is a “time to harvest” from the state.\(^1\) Citizens participate in rallies, receive visits to the village by candidates or party agents where cash, sugar, and t-shirts are expected to be handed out into eager hands. In sum, citizens have much more frequent and lower cost opportunities to gain meaningful audience with national political actors around elections than otherwise, be it individually or in groups headed by local leaders such as village chiefs or religious leaders.

Given the scope and meaning of elections for sub-Saharan African citizens, the main inquiry of this paper is to discover whether elections are associated with an increase in political participation beyond voting. I argue that increasing temporal proximity to an election should be associated with an increase in party attachment, cognitive political engagement (e.g. political discussion), and political interaction with the state (e.g. contacting politicians, raising issues, protesting). A second goal of this paper is to understand whether the effect of temporal proximity to an election has a differential effect on political participation when the election is competitive versus non-competitive. While one immediately jumps to the notion that increasing competitiveness would unambiguously increase political participation, in Section 2 I discuss how the predicted direction of the effect of competitiveness is far from obvious in the setting of new democracies in low-income countries.

Lastly, this paper investigates whether temporal proximity to and competitiveness of an election affect satisfaction with democracy and other attitudes associated with democratic consolidation (e.g. trust in state actors and lack of support for political violence). Elections are opportunities for political turnover, a time of hope for change in one’s livelihood if the winner actually implements even a subset of the promises he or she loudly proclaims on the campaign trail. But they are also a time of massive instability, especially since most outcomes are wrought with accusations - real or fake - of fraud and manipulation at the hands of party leaders.\(^2\) Elections are also associated with

\(^{1}\)I heard this expression many times leading up to the Ghanaian National Elections. Like agriculture in which one invests in planting and maintaining plants to harvest, around election time, citizens invest in relations with political actors, and expect to harvest.

\(^{2}\)Przeworski (2009b)
a spike in political violence.\textsuperscript{3} Do elections make citizens feel satisfied or dissatisfied with democracy and the actors and institutions that claim to be honest servants of the people?

To investigate these questions, I pair public opinion data from Rounds 2 and 3 from the Afrobarometer Survey with election data from the African Elections Database.\textsuperscript{4} The analysis reveals that proximity to an election is associated with an increase in the strength of partisanship, political discussion, and contacting a political actor. The probability a citizen reports being close to a political party is 38\% at election time, but only 25\% two years away from an election, a jump of 13 percentage points. The predicted probability of a typical individual discussing politics a lot at election time is about 64\%, one year later 49\%, and at two years later 35\% for a competitive election, and for an uncompetitive election, at election time 36\%, 24\%, and 14\% respectively. There is a 44\% predicted probability that a typical citizen has contacted a political actor at election time in a competitive election, but only 36\% one year away, and 29\% two years away, while for uncompetitive elections, the difference goes from 47\% to 39\% to 31\% respectively. The magnitude of these effects trump the magnitude of many variables commonly used as predictors of political participation such as demographic and institutional variables\textsuperscript{5}

Lastly, do elections strengthen feelings towards democracy and its main political protagonists or leave citizens disenchanted? Temporal proximity to an election, especially a competitive election, is associated with a decrease in support for democracy. At the time of a competitive election, only 79\% of citizens support democracy, compared to 83\% one year away, and 86\% two years away. As for non-competitive elections, 80\% support democracy at election time, 84\% one year later, and 87\% two years later. While overall support for democracy is certainly high, it is worrying that temporal proximity to elections decreases support for democracy. Perhaps more worryingly, temporal proximity to an election decreases trust in a range of political actors and institutions, while increasing the belief that one cannot talk freely, and that the president ignores the constitution. Perhaps paradoxically, the very defining feature of democracy - elections - serves to undermine other aspects of democracy such belief in rule of law and free speech. Yet as a vote of confidence, trust in the opposition improves with temporal proximity to an election.

The paper is set up as follows. In Section 2, I outline the central theoretical arguments of this paper, embedding the argument in related literature on political participation and satisfaction with democracy in sub-Saharan Africa. Section 3 elaborates on the Research Design, including the estimation technique, data sources, and descriptive statistics. Section 4 provides the main results of the analysis and discusses them in light of the hypotheses.

\textsuperscript{3} Strauss (2009)
\textsuperscript{4} The estimation technique builds off the pioneering work of Eifert, Miguel and Posner (2010), who are interested in temporal proximity to elections and the competitiveness of such elections on ethnic identity salience.
\textsuperscript{5} By comparison, gender accounts for a 6 percentage point gap, and education (some primary to postgraduate) a 14 percentage point gap in discussing politics a lot.
2 Theory and Exigent Literature

2.1 Political Participation

2.1.1 Temporal Proximity to Elections

There are four main features of an election which I argue induce a rise in political participation beyond voting: (1) increased frequency of lower cost opportunities for political participation, (2) incentives and increased leverage over political actors from political clientelism as a mobilization strategy, (3) increased access to political information through media, and (4) decreased coordination costs from using elections as focal points. For the purposes of this paper, I focus on the following types of political participation: partisanship, cognitive political engagement, and political interaction with the state. By partisanship, I mean attachment to and closeness with a political party. By cognitive political engagement, I am referring to political discussion, interest, understanding, and consumption of news media. Political interaction with the state refers to such activities as contacting politicians or other leaders, attending meetings, raising issues, and protesting.

First, with the exception of a few high state capacity countries in sub-Saharan Africa, it cannot be overemphasized how brutally absent national state actors are from the lives of citizens between elections. Outside of elections, politicians don’t actually need citizens, often avoiding visiting their constituencies so as to avoid demands and obligations to hand out gifts. Yet as elites salivate and the prospect of obtaining or retaining political power leading up to an election, they hit the campaign trail, loaded with t-shirts, cash money, sugar, rice, bicycles, and other inkind goods to mobilize citizens. Election time constituency tours, commonly subsidized for political actors by parties, lower the cost of travel to politically participate for citizens. In summary, low cost opportunities with which citizens may gain audience with state actors thus increases substantially around election time.

Secondly and relatedly, citizens not only expect to receive inkind goods at election campaign events - much like one expects to consume drinks and snacks at a party, but they believe that if they support candidates politically at rallies, meetings, and at the polls, they will be rewarded by favorable access to state resources if their party wins. In other words, the electoral mobilization strategy of clientelism incentivizes citizens’ political participation. Whether the belief is founded

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6 Although many citizens would prefer development projects to these gifts, they seek these gifts knowing that it is likely the best they can get - it is unlikely that politicians can follow through on bringing state social services like water sources, schools, roads, and health clinics. See Lindberg (2010)’s survey of Members of Parliament (MPs) in Ghana, showing systematically that MPs avoid constituency visits to avoid demands and obligations of giving gifts.

7 Physically showing up and touring are tremendously important. In the last Malian election, the media heavily criticized one of the candidates for failing to ride around in a four by four rather than fly around in a plane, missing the obligatory road trip through the villages. See Young (2009), Jourde (2005)

8 Michelitch (2012) expounds on public partisanship buying, whereby the secrecy of the ballot means that parties must observe public displays of partisan participation in order to monitor the clientelistic exchange.
or not, such a belief prevails, and citizens believe this is the primary accountability mechanism they have to extract from political actors and the state.\(^9\) Citizens have more leverage to have demands met from actors who need them to achieve power around elections.\(^10\) Because this accountability mechanism primarily works at election time when politicians need to mobilize citizens to win (or at least appear to be winning), many forms of political participation have a higher payoff around elections, given audience with state actors. The activities often do not end with the voting process. It may sometimes take weeks to months for the ballots to be counted, recounted, and contested by supposed losing parties. Even after an election, the transition into winnership and losership is surprisingly slow, and parties maintain close contact with their partisans - perhaps in order to mobilize them to protest or contest the results.

Third, as an information provider, opinion leader and topic agenda setter, the media hypes up the election and provides citizens with much more political information than when temporal proximity to electoral competition wanes. Talk radio largely displaces music, and frequent gaps in broadcasting are filled with commentary, debates, and sometimes civic education such as instructions on how to register to vote and cast a ballot around election time. These are non-trivial exercises for low literacy, low income people in the first few elections they have ever experienced, who must invest major effort into learning how to obtain identity documents, register, and actually cast a ballot.\(^11\) Thus, the influx of information combined with the new challenge of voting will increase cognitive political engagement, which ultimately allows citizens to develop partisanship and engage in meaningful political interactions with political actors.

Access to information and deliberation of opinions is essential to produce meaningful participation in the democratic process.\(^12\) Information constraints have been widely identified in developing countries to stymie the ability of citizens to form political opinions and actions.\(^13\) Of different mediums of media communications, radio is by far the most popular means by which political information is spread, especially in rural areas and amongst older folks who are more likely to be illiterate.\(^14\) Newspapers are often popular amongst the urban literates, though often too poor to afford the actual papers, they can be seen crowded around newsstands systematically reading

\(^10\)Note that leverage may come directly but also indirectly through group leaders. Often parties approach notables and group leaders or local traditional leaders as intermediaries with voters. See Piattoni (2001)
\(^11\)Most ballots list party symbols, faces, and names of candidates, whereby party symbol is mostly what illiterate citizens with no visual media (e.g. TV) can use to understand how to mark. Because many citizens cannot write or in some cases hold a pen, they must learn to do thumbprinting or use a writing utensil to mark their ballot.
\(^12\)Dahl (1998)
\(^13\)Pande (2011)
\(^14\)See citeMoehlerSingh2011 and Hyden, Leslie and Ogundimu (2003) on media in Africa. Note that, in very rural areas, citizens may still rely on word of mouth infrastructure, where village chiefs pay to send couriers to nearby towns to retrieve information, or citizens exchange information once a week at the markets. As radio expands, however, such areas are disappearing. See Bleck and Michelitch (2012) on the effect of a radio distribution program on political participation in Mali.
through each newspaper’s displayed front page. Television is also making inroads amongst the wealthy. Parties have largely begun to make use the media to spread campaign songs and video advertisements, even using text message blasts. By contrast to high-income countries where we are overloaded with information to wade through, in information constrained (or “high cost information”) societies, the waxing and waning of political information through the media due to an election is major.

Lastly, elections may act as focal points for the coordination of political participation. Given that many forms of political participation are costly endeavors in terms of time, money, and even physical risk, citizens may prefer to politically participate at times when they believe others are likely to participate. Larger groups are more effective at accruing benefits from political interaction with state actors. Especially women can benefit from coordination with other women in groups to interact with state actors. For women, social norms in many (but not all) areas make individual political participation very costly.

In the case of semi-democratic states in which political participation on the side of the opposition may be physically risky, there may be safety in numbers to do such things as protest against the ruling party. Thus, election time may be a focal time point around which citizens anticipate coordination with others to politically participate in order to increase their visibility and leverage with political actors visavis other citizens.

I predict that these four aspects of elections increase political participation as depicted in Table 1, a hypothesis that has been thus far overlooked in the political participation literature. Existing literature has largely focused on the role of non-dynamic individual-level and country-level factors: (a) socioeconomic determinants (otherwise known as “the resource argument”) such as education, gender, and income, (b) political psychological determinants such as interest in politics, efficacy, and trust, and lastly (c) political institutions.

While the majority of the studies handle political participation in advanced democracies, a few pioneering studies have recently emerged on the determinants of political participation in Africa exploring these factors.

Similarly, most conceptualizations of partisanship - usually considered distinctly from other forms of political participation - consider it to be a stable, long term, fixed attachment to a political party, governed by system level factors such as the age of democracy, the types of parties competing

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15 Even at the very local village level, women may only be able to raise an issue to the chief in a group of other women or through male family members. Communication and coordination between women is much costlier for men because many women lack control over household, and sometimes their own income, or must ask permission on spending their time outside of income generating or household duties. See Isaksson, Kotsdam and Nerman (2012).

16 See Tucker (2006) and Kuran (1991) on protest against recalcitrant incumbents being able to pick up speed or coordinate around elections in Eastern Europe.


Table 1: Hypotheses: Temporal Proximity to Election, Competitiveness, and Joint Effects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Behavior</th>
<th>Temporal Proximity</th>
<th>Competitiveness</th>
<th>Temporal Proximity*Competitiveness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partisanship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cognitive Political Engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political Interaction with the State</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support for Democracy</td>
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</tbody>
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within it, social heterogeneity, and volatility of party system or individual-level factors such as parental socialization, cognitive resources, age, social group, gender, and population density.\(^{19}\) New research has even shown that fixed genetic traits account for a large proportion of variation in strength in partisanship.\(^{20}\) To my knowledge, the most recent partisanship scholarship coming from new democracies has not considered that partisanship may be fluid and dynamic to events such as elections.\(^{21}\) While I would hypothesize that elections are associated with an increase in political participation in older democracies, I would expect that elections would have a much more powerful effect in low income, new democracies where citizens are “learning the ropes” of democratic citizenship, typically live in low capacity states characterized by poor information infrastructure to keep citizens informed and participatory between elections, and engage in a high level of political clientelism that requires visible and monitorable political participation.\(^{22}\)

Lindberg (2006), in perhaps the substantively closest study to this present work, is interested in the long-term effect of successive elections on political participation in new democracies after their first few elections.\(^{23}\) The central thesis of this work holds that repeated multiparty elections in Africa progressively imbue society with certain democratic qualities, including the more active political participation of citizens. The process begins with voting, where citizens become cognizant of their own roles as equal members of the sovereign power, endowed with rights to participate in the national political process. \(^{24}\) Critically, Lindberg’s argument suggests that political participation

\(^{19}\)Huber, Kernell and Leoni (2005), Green, Palmquist and Schickler (2002), Campbell et al. (1960), Converse (1969), Shively (1979), Fiorina (1981)

\(^{20}\)Settle, Dawes and Fowler (forthcoming 2009)


\(^{22}\)Future versions of this paper may expand to a global perspective to understand whether partisanship and other political participation are fluid even in advanced, old democracies and to what degree less than new democracies.

\(^{23}\)Also see Finkel, Sabatini and Bevis (2000)

\(^{24}\)He further goes on to say that elections not only bring about this awareness of active citizenship, but elections
increases monotonically with successive elections, while the argument in this paper would predict
that political participation wanes and waxes over the election cycle.\textsuperscript{25}

2.1.2 Competitiveness versus Non-competitive Elections

The effect of electoral competitiveness on political participation such as partisanship, cognitive
political engagement, and political interaction with the state is underexplored.\textsuperscript{26} Africa’s “mul-
tiparty elections” come in a variety of levels of competition, ranging from razor thin losses that
require runoffs, to elections where the opposition parties stand very little chance of winning seats
against the ruling party.\textsuperscript{27} As Przeworski (2009\textsuperscript{a}) points out, we must recognize that voting in a
semi-democratic election may be an instrument of repression or an act to legitimize the ruling party
in the eyes of the international community rather than an activity where citizens make meaningful
choices between real options.\textsuperscript{28} Experiencing a non-competitive election where citizens are forced to
line up and submit approval for a dictator in democrat’s clothing may depress political interaction
with state actors as citizens “boycott” the state. The leading hypothesis is that competitiveness
would increase political interaction with the state directly and jointly as the election draws near.

However, there is reason to question this hypothesis. Intimidation and backlash against voters
from opposition or ruling parties are not uncommon events around sub-Saharan African elections in
the most competitive of elections. Fear of instability in these nascent democracies experiencing their
increase the opportunity to build the capacity of civil society organizations by giving them incentives to organize
members for political goals (maybe even as election observers), to build the capacity of the media as a watchdog of the
state by expanding its scope to cover the events of the election, and to vest individuals with interest in voicing their
political concerns in the social sphere. Note that the main criticism of this work is that future successive elections are
likely endogenous to political participation. However, the strength of the direction of the causal pathways is difficult
to assess.

\textsuperscript{25}Note that the arguments are not incompatible - political participation may wax and wane while the with the election cycle while the central tendency of political participation monotonically increases over time.

\textsuperscript{26}See Lipsitz (2009) on US states.

\textsuperscript{27}See van de Walle and Butler (1999)

\textsuperscript{28}Regarding such elections, he elaborates that the role of elections was to “show each individual that the regime
can make everyone do what it wants - namely, to force everyone to appear in a particular place on a particular day
and perform the act of throwing a piece of paper into a designated box, thus making it manifest that no collective
resistance was feasible” (p14). Hegemonic party regimes in Africa have a much lower capacity for intimidation than
that of dictatorships elsewhere such that, to my knowledge there is no forced turnout. As aid-dependent regimes in
this current era, African ruling parties must also appear to the outside that they are democratizing. Thus, they tend
to use other tricks to make it clear to voters that they do not intend to lose the election, for example by making
it exceedingly difficult for people in opposition strongholds to register (e.g. by not allowing them to obtain identity
documents or not opening voter registration in those areas), by allowing people to show up to vote but having no
ballots, by allowing people to vote, but then announcing completely fabricated results, sending around hooligans to
intimidate people in polling stations, and even kidnapping and killing opposition candidates. It is unclear to me
the extent to which voters understand that the polls have been manipulated, since they might have low information
about the distribution of actual preferences. Losers almost always believe that they have been cheated, and probably
rightfully so. Also see Gandhi and Lust-Okar (2009) for a review of the literature on elections under non- or semi-
democracies and Lehoucq (2003)’s review of fraud in elections.
3rd or 4th multiparty election may decrease many forms of political participation. Additionally, Przeworski (2012) has shown that elections are temporally associated with coup incidences. If elections are seen by citizens as both substitutes and compliments to a more violent mechanism for choosing society’s leaders - regardless of the level of competitiveness, fear of instability may more or less homogeneously depress political interaction with state actors.

The effect of electoral competitiveness is even less clear for partisanship and cognitive political engagement. While it may seem that competitiveness should strengthen partisan attachment because parties would engage in more mobilizing efforts when elections are close, this notion is couched in the experience of democracies that experience frequent turnover. In countries where turnover has never happened due to a hegemonic ruling party, elections may be seen as the primary time to mobilize opposition support against a semi-democratic regime. Further, hegemonic parties are not without solid partisans. Many such parties such as the ruling parties in Uganda, South Africa, Namibia, and Tanzania hold roots in fairly recent national liberation or emancipation movements, and voters, especially the old, continue to feel close to these parties. Yet hegemonic party regimes often attract young partisans. Hegemonic party regimes typically have higher capacity bureaucracies in which the best and brightest youth hope to find plum employment opportunities. To reach such positions, youth must start early in party youth wings to compete amongst one another for the favor of the party elite.

Citizens may be similarly politically cognitively engaged in competitive and non-competitive areas. Navigating ones political arena may elicit similar levels of political understanding, interest, discussion, and media consumption. However, since there is no real chance for leadership to change in non-competitive elections, we might expect the effect of temporal proximity to an election would be dampened for non-competitive regimes, while for competitive regimes, we might expect a large effect. Table 1 depicts the hypotheses for the independent and joint effect of electoral competitiveness.

2.2 Attitudes Toward Democracy

Satisfaction with and support for democracy, as well as trust in political actors and belief in the ability to participate in politics peacefully and freely, are key attitudes necessary for democratic
As Linz and Stepan (1996) famously state - democracy is consolidated only when an overwhelming proportion of citizens see democracy as the “only game in town.” Thus, it is important to investigate whether elections act to improve confidence in democracy, or whether they leave citizens feeling disenchanted. On the one hand, elections may be a time where citizens may vote and otherwise participate much more in national politics, which might improve confidence in democracy. Further, when the election is competitive, it gives citizens real options, and shows that democracy is necessary for aggregating society’s preferences to choose the leader. Thus, I hypothesize that temporal proximity to an election improves attitudes towards democracy where politics are competitive. As Evans and Whitefield (1995) put it, individuals develop attachments to democracy when democracy works.

On the other hand, elections are a period of “institutionalized uncertainty,” or a period of intense political upheaval. It may not only be uncertain as to who will win, but whether losers will accept results, or citizens become violent. Strauss (2009) shows that elections are associated with a spike in violent conflict. When elections are competitive, the uncertainty is heightened. Such uncertainty and fear may stymie positive feelings towards democracy from elections.

Many works have studied support for democracy in sub-Saharan Africa cross-nationally, testing theory from seminal works from advanced democracies and building new Africa context-specific theory. Mattes and Bratton (2007), for example, explore and find support for four sources of attitudes toward democracy for their cross-national investigation in sub-Saharan Africa: individuals’ deep values and orientations, position in the socioeconomic structure, degree of incorporation into communal good over individual destiny, that leads Africans to think and act as passive, deferential, and dependent subjects of external forces rather than as agents or democratic citizens that can be protagonists in democracy. Further, the sense of ethnic over national identity varies cross-nationally, which may affect attitudes towards the larger national polity (see Horowitz (1985)). Further still they say, rural areas can still largely be characterized as having a parochial, insular culture which reduces civic cooperation outside of the village or clan, and holds strict norms of non-participation for women (See Mamdani (1996)).

The argument goes that the level of poverty, education, and other socioeconomic variables affect social mobility and progressive mass attitudes. See Pye (1990), Mamdani (1996)
the polity through formal and informal institutions, and experience with democracy. Moehler (2009) consider not temporal proximity to an election, but how characteristics of the previous election affects trust in institutions and satisfaction with democracy. Interestingly, they find evidence that electoral turnovers in power, but not level of violence, acceptance or rejection by losers, or level of freeness of the election reduce the gap between election winners and losers. Winners nonetheless have more trust and satisfaction with democracy than the losers of elections.

3 Research Design, Data, Estimation

The twin goals of this paper are to discover whether temporal proximity to an election and the election’s competitiveness increase political participation and improve support for democracy. Table 1 lists the hypotheses about how increasing temporal proximity to an election, the competitiveness of the most proximate election, and their joint effect would be associated with fluctuations in partisanship, cognitive political engagement, political interaction with the state, and support for democracy. To test these hypotheses, I utilize public opinion data from the Afrobarometer rounds 2 and 3, combined with an original dataset of election dates and competitiveness of the elections using the African Elections Database. I only include countries that appear in both rounds 2 and 3 of the Afrobarometer, meaning over 41,000 respondents are included in the sample.

3.1 Political Participation and Attitudinal Variables

The Afrobarometer survey provides public opinion data using the same survey questionnaire, enumerator training manuals, and sampling techniques cross-nationally, making it an ideal data source to test for whether public opinion varies with temporal proximity to elections. Afrobarometer’s sampling method attempts to give every adult citizen an equal and known chance of selection for interview for each round of data collection. Implementing partners employ a clustered, stratified, multi-stage, area probability sample. The survey methodology was standardized (held constant) over the two rounds of Afrobarometer in question and any measures of political participation or att...
titudes towards democracy used in the analyses are sourced from identical questions with identical answer categories.46

In the first category of political participation, partisanship is measured in two ways: (a) **Party Ties** - having an attachment to a party or not, and (b) **Party Closeness** - strength of partisanship ties. The two measurements are important because there may be a different causal mechanism by which someone becomes a partisan or not, versus their strength partisanship once they become a partisan.47

The second type of political participation under question - cognitive political engagement can be measured in four ways using this data: (a) **Political Discussion** - the frequency of discussing politics with friends and family, (b) **Political Interest** - increasing self-reported interest in public affairs, (c) **Political Understanding** - increasing self-reported understanding of politics and government, and (d) consumption of news as measured by variables for **Radio**, **TV**, and **Paper**.

Thirdly, the following variables measure various forms of contact that citizens may have with the state: (a) how often the respondent has contacted the following about a problem or to voice an opinion - **Contact Local Gov't**, **Contact MP**, **Contact Ministry Official**, **Contact Party** and a binary measure of having contacted any of these actors or not **Contact State Actor**, (b) **Attend Meeting** - how frequently the respondent attends meetings, (c) **Raise Issue** - how frequently the respondent has gotten together with others to raise an issue, (d) **Protest** - how frequently the respondent has personally attended a demonstration or protest march.

Lastly, there are a number of variables in this dataset that can be used to gauge attitudes toward democracy. First and foremost, **Satisfaction Democracy** and **Support Democracy** capture respondents’ overall satisfaction with and support for democracy over dictatorship respectively. **Pol Vio Justified** measures whether the respondent thinks that violence is never justified in politics, versus whether it is sometimes necessary to use violence in support of a just cause.48 Whether the respondent feels that she has to be careful about what she says publicly is captured by **Talk Unfree**.49 The extent to which the rule of law reigns true is important for citizens to have faith in democracy. **Pres Ignores Const** captures whether the respondent believes that the president ignores the constitution.50 Strength in trust in political actors is measured by **Trust**.

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46 Round fixed effects are included in Equation 3.4 to capture any differences in response due to differences in the survey environment due to question ordering or inclusion/exclusion of various other survey questions by round.

47 See Brader and Tucker (2008). The analysis is robust to including non-partisans as 0s or not in the Party Closeness variable. Note that round 4 of the Afrobarometer does not include the party closeness question.

48 Currently - higher numbers mean violence more justified. Next version - recode this to be higher numbers mean violence less justified. Some may argue that support for violence in politics is not necessarily anti-democratic. In this context, individuals are likely to interpret this question as regarding peaceful elections versus elections marred by violence or extra-judicial seizure of power by violent force.

49 Currently - higher numbers mean less free. Next version - recode this to be higher numbers mean more free.

50 Currently - higher numbers mean ignores constitution. Next version - recode this to be higher numbers mean

Control variables include an indicator variable for gender - Male, a continuous measure of Age, indicator variables for each level of Education, indicator variables for classes of Occupation, and an indicator variable for the Urban rural divide. Appendix A lists the question wording and answer choice coding used in the analysis.

3.2 Election Variables

In Section 2 I argue that any voting event connecting citizens with the state may affect other forms of political participation or attitudes towards democracy. Thus, it is important to code not only presidential elections, but also runoffs, legislative elections, and referendums. Using the African Elections Database, I coded the following for each country at each round of Afrobarometer survey: (1) the dates of the previous and next presidential round 1 election, (2) the dates of the previous and next presidential runoff election, (3) the dates of the previous and next legislative election, and (4) the dates of the previous and next referendum. For each election and referendum, I coded (1) the vote share of the winner, and (2) the vote share of the runner up. By including all nation-wide voting events, this dataset is more comprehensive than existing datasets for this time period, which only consider a subset of these voting events.

The main independent variables are Temporal Proximity to a voting event, the Competitiveness of that voting event, and the interaction between the two Proximity*Competitiveness. Temporal proximity to a voting event is measured by taking the absolute value of the number of weeks between the interview date and the nearest voting event. Competitiveness is measured by taking the absolute difference between the vote share of the winner and the runner up. For ease of interpretation, these values are multiplied by $-1$ so that larger numbers imply increasing proximity to an election and increasing competitiveness respectively. Temporal Proximity and Competitiveness are multiplied to create the interaction term, then multiplied by $-1$ again so that the interpretation is that larger numbers indicate the most competitive, proximal elections and smaller numbers the least competitive, furthest elections.

Theoretically, I have argued that it is the connective act between citizen and the state provided

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51 http://africanelections.tripod.com/index.html
52 Referendums during this period were mostly highly politicized by party politics, being related to changing presidential term limits and allowing multiparty competition. To ensure these referendums were meaningful, I checked that the turnout of the referendum was within 10 percentage points of turnout in the closest election. All referendums qualified based on this criteria.
53 See, for example, the Lindberg (2006) dataset.
by voting that should increase political participation and improve satisfaction with democracy. Thus, it should not matter what type of voting event it is. For the main analysis, the voting event utilized will be the most proximal voting event. The first robustness checks will test whether the effect is limited to particular types of voting events listed above. However, this type of main analysis conveniently solves the problem posed by differences in political system across these countries. In contrast to the other countries which have presidential systems, Botswana and South Africa are parliamentary systems, where the executive and legislative election is one in the same. Inside of the presidential systems, there is variation in whether a runoff is de jure allowed, and if so, whether the first round’s results necessitate a runoff. Some countries have referendums and others due not. Electoral systems also vary - some countries vote using proportional representation and others for constituency representation. Given these differences, it might be difficult to disentangle the effect of certain types of voting experiences with only 16 countries.

3.3 Descriptive Statistics

Figure 1 shows a timeline illustrating the date of each survey round (2002 - 2005) and the most proximate voting events before and after the survey by country. The type of the voting event is depicted through the symbol, whereby dots represent legislative elections, diamonds represent first round presidential elections, + signs indicate runoff presidential elections, and triangles represent referendums. Survey rounds are indicated by a flat horizontal line. Included countries are Botswana, Cape Verde, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. We can see that the data reveal healthy variation in terms of competitiveness and temporal proximity to the nearest voting event.

Table 2 lists the means, standard deviations, number of observations, minimums and maximums of the dependent, independent and control variables. For indicator variables, the fraction indicated is given. Recall that larger numbers indicate increasing temporal proximity to an election and increasing competitiveness. Temporal proximity to a voting event ranges from 4 weeks away to almost 3 years away, with the mean at little over a year away. Competitiveness ranges from perfectly competitive (negligible difference in vote share between winner and loser), and very non-competitive (an 85 percentage point difference between winner and loser vote shares).

---

54 An expansion to a global scale of this analysis may be very interesting to test for such system-level effects.
55 The analysis is limited to countries included in both the round 2 and round 3 waves of the Afrobarometer.
Figure 1: Timeline of Voting Events and Surveys by Country

- Zimbabwe
- Zambia
- Uganda
- Tanzania
- South Africa
- Senegal
- Nigeria
- Namibia
- Mozambique
- Mali
- Malawi
- Madagascar
- Lesotho
- Kenya
- Ghana
- Cape Verde
- Botswana
- Benin

Events:
- Legislative Election
- Referendum
- Round 3 Collection
- Round 2 Collection
- Pres. First Round
- Pres. Second Round

Dates:
- 01Jan2000
- 01Jul2000
- 01Jan2001
- 01Jul2001
- 01Jan2002
- 01Jul2002
- 01Jan2003
- 01Jul2003
- 01Jan2004
- 01Jul2004
- 01Jan2005
- 01Jul2005
- 01Jan2006
- 01Jul2006
- 01Jan2007
- 01Jul2007
- 01Jan2008
- 01Jul2008
## Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

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<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
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<th>Max</th>
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### 3.4 Estimation Technique

I model each individual $i$ living in country $c$ taking part in survey round $t$ as having political participation or satisfaction with democracy at level $Y_{ict}$. For individual $i$ in country $c$ during survey round $t$, the equation to estimate is given by:
\[ Y_{ict} = \gamma_1 \text{proximity}_{ct} + \gamma_2 \text{competitiveness}_{ct} + \gamma_3 (\text{proximity}_{ct} \ast \text{competitiveness}_{ct}) \\
+ X_{ict}' \beta + S' \Delta + R' \omega + T \phi + \epsilon_{ict} \] (1)

where \( \epsilon_{ict} \) is unobserved/unmodeled determinants of individual \( i \)'s level of political participation or view of democracy, \( T \) is a time trend (years), \( R' \) is a vector of round indicator variables, \( S' \) is a vector of country indicator variables, and the vector \( X_{ict} \) contains the following individual-level variables: male, age, education, and occupation. In order to weight each country survey round equally, each observation will be weighted by \( 1/(\text{number of observations from that country}) \). Standard errors should be clustered at the country-round level to capture non-independence in answers for each country-round. Maximum likelihood will be employed to estimate the coefficients of this model, either with an ordered logistic regression for ordinal dependent variables\(^{56}\) a logistic regression for dichotomous dependent variables. One exception is for support for democracy, which is a discrete choice between three different statements and requires a multinomial logit. Where possible, this estimation strategy attempts to replicate Eifert, Miguel and Posner (2010), who are interested in the effect of temporal proximity to an election and the election’s competitiveness on ethnic identity.

One question about this estimation strategy regards the direction of the causal pathways between political participation, the timing of the election, and the timing of the survey data collection. First, we may be worried that political participation may cause election timing rather than vice versa. Most of the countries in the analysis are presidential systems, where election timing is de jure fixed and exogenous to levels of political participation due to other factors. However, de jure and de facto election timing might be significantly different in the countries in this study. Further, in parliamentary systems, elections may be called endogenously to anything, perhaps political participation. Since elections are incredibly expensive events, African countries are unlikely to hold elections in a willy-nilly fashion. In the next version of this paper, I will investigate whether the elections in the dataset were held according to schedule or not.

Second, we might be worried that the collection of survey data is timed around upcoming or subsequent elections. Figure 1 and Table 2 show that there is variation both within and across countries in timing of the survey in relation to the previous and subsequent elections. From personal interviews with Afrobarometer staff in Ghana, I have been told that they avoid conducting surveys directly before elections. The main reason is logistical - the local partners that implement the survey are often the same folks who work for the NGOs that run other political NGO programming, who are incredibly busy around election time. Thus, it is unlikely that an Afrobarometer survey would be conducted directly prior to an election. In future versions of this paper, I can include more rounds

\(^{56}\)This model assumes that the relationship between any two pairs of outcome groups is statistically the same, yielding one set of coefficients.
of the Afrobarometer, which will generate more variation in temporal proximity to elections.\textsuperscript{57}

The focus of this paper is on the effect of temporal proximity to an election on political participation and attitudes towards democracy. It is therefore outside the scope of the paper to investigate ALL the determinants of each form of political participation here. Because electoral proximity can be reasonably taken to be exogenous to other determinants of political participation and attitudes towards democracy, it is not necessary to control for yet other determinants of the latter. However, the inclusion of other determinants can act to improve efficiency, if significant. Thus, the model includes gender, age, education, occupation, and country fixed effects.\textsuperscript{58}

Lastly, this analysis cannot control for the fact that there may be yet other macro events that might affect political participation and attitudes towards democracy. With only 36 country-rounds, there may be some correlation between survey timing and such variables. For example, it is very difficult to interview during the month of Ramadan in Muslim countries or Christmas in Christian countries, during World Cup or similar soccer events, planting season, harvesting season, or rainy season. These events may all act to decrease political participation because individuals are too busy or tired from fasting to participate in surveys. Survey organizations are likely to avoid those seasons, and elections may be timed so as not to coincide with such events as well.

4 Results

4.1 Partisanship

As Table 3 reveals, the effect of temporal proximity to an election is tremendous for citizens reporting being close to a party (versus being non-partisan) and for strength of partisanship. Because coefficients are difficult to interpret for ordered logits, Figure 2 shows the substantive effect of change in temporal proximity to the nearest election on reporting partisanship and on partisanship strength. Two years away from the nearest election is associated with 25\% of individuals feeling close to a party, versus 32\% one year from the nearest election, versus 38\% at the election time. By contrast, gender accounts for a 6 percentage point difference in favor of males, and the urban is no interactive effect. Why is competitiveness negatively related to partisan ties, however? Non-rural divide a 5 percentage point difference in favor of urbanites.

Interestingly, competitiveness of said election decreases the strength of partisan ties and there competitive elections may reflect older, less volatile party systems, which Harding (2009) shows increases partisanship.\textsuperscript{59} A second interpretation is that partisanship is stronger towards hegemonic ruling parties because they are able to maintain more of a presence in society than other types of parties, and also that one must have strong partisanship - perhaps of an ideological flavor (in favor of democracy) - to actually be an opposition partisan. A more cynical, but perhaps nonetheless valid

\textsuperscript{57}Only a subset of questions used in this analysis are available in rounds 1, 4, and 5, and sometimes they use different answer choice categories.


\textsuperscript{59}The next version of this paper should attempt to test whether party system age, legislative fractionalization, or volatility affect partisanship jointly with temporal proximity.
Table 3: Temporal Proximity to an Election and Competitiveness on Partisanship

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Party Ties</th>
<th>Party Closeness</th>
</tr>
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<td>0.02***</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(0.00)</td>
<td>(0.00)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competitiveness</td>
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<td>-0.01***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.00)</td>
<td>(0.00)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proximity*Competitiveness</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(0.00)</td>
<td>(0.00)</td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>43212</td>
<td>43212</td>
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</table>

Notes: Logit and ordered logit estimation of the effect of temporal proximity (in months) to an election, competitiveness of that election, and an interaction term on being a partisan (versus not), and the strength of partisanship respectively. Standard errors in parentheses. All models include the full set of control variables: male, age, urban, education, occupation, country fixed effects, survey round fixed effects, a time trend. Standard errors clustered at the level of the country-round. Observations weighted by 1/(number of respondents in country-round).

Figure 2: The Effect of Temporal Proximity to Election on Partisanship

Notes: These graphs show that increasing temporal proximity (in months) to an election increases the probability of being a partisan versus a non-partisan (left and right panel) and increases the probability of being a strong partisan (right panel). The x-axis indicates months away from the election, where larger number indicate closeness to the election (0 indicates the election). The y-axis indicates the predicted probabilities of partisanship. All other variables are held at their means.

interpretation is that citizens are more likely to state partisanship in a non-competitive regime because they are afraid not too. 62.23% of respondents thought at the end of the survey that the enumerator had been sent by one of various government entities, even though Afrobarometer enumerators explain from the outset that they are eliciting public opinions from a non-partisan
NGO or survey company. However, running a separate ordered logistic regression controlling for whether the respondent thought the enumerator was from the government, and also an enumerator judgement on whether he/she thought the respondent was lying during the interview does not change results.60

4.2 Cognitive Political Engagement

One essential requirement for democracy is that citizens are able and willing to obtain political information through media to bear on political discussion, opinions and actions.61 Indeed, most other forms of political participation require basic “civic literacy”62 brought about by cognitive political engagement. Due to the influx of information and increased benefit of participation, I hypothesized that temporal proximity to the election would increase cognitive political engagement such as political discussion, interest, understanding, and consumption of news.

Table 4: Temporal Proximity to Election and Competitiveness on Cognitive Political Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Political Discussion</th>
<th>Political Interest</th>
<th>Political Understanding</th>
<th>Daily Radio</th>
<th>Daily TV</th>
<th>Daily Newspaper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>-0.0005</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.010</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(0.007)</td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
<td>(0.006)</td>
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<td>Competitiveness</td>
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<td>0.0002</td>
<td>-0.003***</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>-0.006**</td>
<td>0.002</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proximity*Competitiveness</td>
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<td>44811</td>
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</table>

Notes: Ordered logit and logit estimation of the effect of temporal proximity (in months) to an election, competitiveness of that election, and an interaction term on political discussion, interest, and understanding, as well as daily media consumption, respectively. Standard errors in parentheses. All models include the full set of control variables: male, age, urban, education, occupation, country fixed effects, survey round fixed effects, a time trend. Standard errors clustered at the level of the country-round. Observations weighted by 1/(number of respondents in country-round).

The results of the (ordered) logits in Table 4 show evidence that political discussion increases with temporal proximity to an election, that there is more political discussion where competition is high, and that the effect of temporal proximity to the election is higher for more competitive elections. Figure 3 exhibits the effect of temporal proximity to an election on the highest category of political discussion - ‘a lot’ - splitting the sample into competitive (above the median competitiveness) and non-competitive (below the median competitiveness) proximal elections. There are

60Incidentally, the belief that the enumerator is from the government does act to increase reports of partisanship.
61Mutz (1998)
stark differences for competitive and non-competitive elections. The predicted probability of a typical individual discussing politics a lot at election time is about 64%, one year later 49%, and at two years later 35% for a competitive election. For an uncompetitive election, at election time 36% discuss politics a lot, 24% one year later, and 14% two years later. The magnitude of these effects competes and often exceeds that of the best predictors of political participation found in the literature. By comparison, gender accounts for a 6 percentage point gap, and education (some primary to postgraduate) a 14 percentage point gap in discussing politics a lot.

Figure 3: The Effect of Temporal Proximity to Election on Political Discussion

Notes: This graph shows that increasing temporal proximity (in months) to an election increases the probability of discussing politics ‘a lot’. The x-axis indicates months away from the election, where larger number indicate closeness to the election (0 indicates the election). The y-axis indicates the predicted probabilities of political discussion. All other variables are held at their means.

There is no evidence that temporal proximity to an election and its competitiveness have on political interest. The mean political interest in these countries, is however, very high according to the descriptive statistics in Table 2. Political understanding is also unaffected by temporal proximity to an election, but, perhaps intuitively, there is less political understanding when elections are competitive. Competitive politics take much more cognitive abilities and political information than non-competitive politics. Lastly, there is little support for the hypothesis on media consumption. Radio consumption is unaffected by the main explanatory variables. On average, individuals listen to radio between a few times per week and daily. TV consumption is less in places with competitive versus non-competitive elections, but this effect is mitigated as temporal proximity increases. Perhaps most surprisingly, newspaper consumption decreases in temporal proximity to an election. Later in this paper, Table 8 gives us a clue as to why. Increasing temporal proximity to an election decreases trust in government broadcasting and newspapers, which are by and large the majority of media sources with the most comprehensive coverage.
4.3 Political Interaction with the State

Political interactions with the state - when citizens reach out to influence politics either alone or in groups - is perhaps the most exciting of all political participation types. In learning how to become a citizen of a democracy, attending meetings, raising issues, protesting, and contacting various political actors represent very advanced civic behaviors. Note that the questions used for these variables regard participation in the last year, rather than at the time of the interview, which is not as precise as would be desirable to measure these behaviors for the purposes of this analysis.

Table 5: Temporal Proximity to Election and Competitiveness on Meeting Attendance, Raising Issues, and Protest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Attend Meeting</th>
<th>Raise Issue</th>
<th>Protest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Temporal Proximity</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
<td>0.02</td>
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<tr>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitiveness</td>
<td>0.01*</td>
<td>0.01**</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.00)</td>
<td>(0.00)</td>
<td>(0.00)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity*Competitiveness</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.00)</td>
<td>(0.00)</td>
<td>(0.00)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>45083</td>
<td>44938</td>
<td>44481</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Ordered logit estimation of the effect of temporal proximity (in months) to an election, competitiveness of that election, and an interaction term on contacting ethnic leaders, attending meetings, raising issues, and protesting. Standard errors in parentheses. All models include the full set of control variables: male, age, urban, education, occupation, country fixed effects, survey round fixed effects, a time trend. Standard errors clustered at the level of the country-round. Observations weighted by 1/(number of respondents in country-round).

Table 5 and Table 6 show evidence that, while having competitive elections are associated with more meeting attendance and raising issues, increasing temporal proximity to the election is not associated with meeting attendance, raising issues, or protest. Temporal proximity to an election is associated with contacting various state actors.\(^{63}\) Around elections, citizens are much more likely to contact a political actor (binary measure), with a less rapid increase as competitiveness increases. Figure 4 shows that there is a 44% chance that a typical citizen has contacted a political actor at election time in a competitive election, but only 36% chance one year away from the election, and 29% two years away from the election. For an uncompetitive election, the difference goes from 47% to 39% to 31% respectively, as elections become proximate.

Looking at different types of political actors in turn (and using a scale of frequency of contact), the regression reveals that citizens contact local government at election time less frequently, but this effect is dampened as competition rises (people are much more likely to contact local government

\(^{63}\)Tucker (2006) argues that elections represent a focal point to protest anti-democratic regimes in the Eastern European colored revolutions. No support for a similar phenomenon is found here in this data, even in the very uncompetitive elections.
Table 6: Temporal Proximity to Election and Competitiveness on Contacting Political Actors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Any (binary)</th>
<th>Local Gov’t</th>
<th>MP</th>
<th>Ministry</th>
<th>Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Temporal Proximity</td>
<td>0.032**</td>
<td>-0.007*</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>0.02**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.015)</td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitiveness</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>0.005***</td>
<td>-0.003**</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity*Competitiveness</td>
<td>-0.0007**</td>
<td>-0.0001***</td>
<td>-0.0004</td>
<td>-0.0005*</td>
<td>-0.0004*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>(0.00007)</td>
<td>(0.0002)</td>
<td>(0.0003)</td>
<td>(0.0002)</td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>45374</td>
<td>44156</td>
<td>44034</td>
<td>44050</td>
<td>44103</td>
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</table>

Notes: Logit and ordered logit estimation of the effect of temporal proximity (in months) to an election, competitiveness of that election, and an interaction term on contacting any state actor (binary), and the level of contacting in turn local government, member of parliament, ministry official, and party official. Standard errors in parentheses. All models include the full set of control variables: male, age, urban, education, occupation, country fixed effects, survey round fixed effects, a time trend. Standard errors clustered at the level of the country-round. Observations weighted by 1/(number of respondents in country-round).

Figure 4: The Effect of Temporal Proximity to Election on Contacting a Political Actor by Competitiveness

Notes: This graph shows that increasing temporal proximity (in months) to an election increases the probability of contacting a political actor in the last year for competitive and non-competitive elections. The x-axis indicates months away from the election, where larger number indicate closeness to the election (0 indicates the election). The y-axis indicates the predicted probabilities of contacting. All other variables are held at their means.

if competitive as well). As for members of parliament, individuals are less likely to contact them in competitive regimes, but temporal proximity to an election does not seem to matter. Contacting a ministry official decreases around election time but only for competitive elections. Lastly, individuals are much more likely to contact a party official near an election, with the effect slightly less strong as competition increases.
4.4 Attitudes Towards Democracy

The last analysis in this paper regards the effect of temporal proximity to an election on satisfaction and support for democracy and her actors, which was hypothesized to have a positive effect. Competitiveness was also hypothesized to boost support for democracy. Table 7 shows evidence that, while satisfaction with democracy is unaffected, support for democracy over non-democratic government decreases with temporal proximity to an election, although this effect is mitigated by the election’s competitiveness. Figure 5 shows that the time of a competitive election, only 79% of citizens support democracy, compared to 83% one year away, and 86% two years away. As for non-competitive elections, 80% support democracy at election time, 84% one year later, and 87% two years later. While overall support for democracy is certainly high, it is worrying that temporal proximity to elections decreases support for democracy.

Table 7: Temporal Proximity to Election and Competitiveness on Democratic Attitudes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Satisfaction w/ Dem</th>
<th>Support Dem</th>
<th>Pol Vio Justified</th>
<th>Talk Unfree</th>
<th>Pres Ignores Const</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Temporal Proximity</strong></td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.02***</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.02*</td>
<td>0.05***</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Competitiveness</strong></td>
<td>-0.002</td>
<td>-0.0007</td>
<td>-0.02***</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
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<td>(0.005)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proximity*Competitiveness</strong></td>
<td>0.0005</td>
<td>0.0007***</td>
<td>0.00004</td>
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<td>-0.001***</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>N</strong></td>
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<td>44410</td>
<td>43293</td>
<td>35920</td>
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Notes: Ordered logit and multinomial logit estimation of the effect of temporal proximity (in months) to an election, competitiveness of that election, and an interaction term on satisfaction with democracy, to what extent political violence is justified, to what extent one cannot talk freely, to what extent the president ignores the constitution, as well as support for democracy, respectively. Standard errors in parentheses. All models include the full set of control variables: male, age, urban, education, occupation, country fixed effects, survey round fixed effects, a time trend. Standard errors clustered at the level of the country-round. Observations weighted by 1/(number of respondents in country-round).

Perhaps paradoxically, while elections are a major feature defining democracy, increasing temporal proximity to an election serves to undermine the perception that one can express free speech, and that the president ignores the rule of law. As exhibited in Table 8, trust in a wide range of political actors and institutions also decreases around elections. Trust in the president, ruling party, and government broadcasting and newspapers declines, while trust in opposition parties and government doesn’t matter for someone like me, finding that temporal proximity to the election is associated with moves from the it doesn’t matter to the non-democracy camp (less so if competitive) and moves from the democracy camp into the non-democracy camp increase (less so if competitive).
Figure 5: The Effect of Temporal Proximity to Election on Support for Democracy

Notes: This graph shows that increasing temporal proximity (in months) to an election decreases the probability a respondent reports supporting democracy in competitive and non-competitive elections. The x-axis indicates months away from the election, where larger number indicate closeness to the election (0 indicates the election). The y-axis indicates the predicted probabilities of supporting democracy. All other variables are held at their means.

independent broadcasting increases. It is clear that citizens perceive those in power to abuse it visavis the opposition or independent elements of society around times when the incumbents seek to remain in power (see Figure 6). However, for democracy to root down, citizens also must have faith in the electoral commission, courts of law, the police, and the military...especially at election time. Table 8 also shows that there is less trust in the electoral commission in places with competitive elections (the coefficient on temporal proximity is almost significant, and actually significant if an ordered probit is used instead of a logit). Trust in courts of law decreases with proximity to the election.
## Table 8: Temporal Proximity to Election and Competitiveness on Democratic Attitudes 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>-0.003</td>
<td>-0.05**</td>
<td>0.04**</td>
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<td>-0.01**</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>-0.004</td>
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<td>0.001***</td>
<td>0.004*</td>
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<td>-0.0007*</td>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
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<td>-0.03***</td>
<td>0.02**</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Competitiveness</strong></td>
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<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.01**</td>
<td>0.01***</td>
<td>0.02***</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
</tr>
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<td>0.001**</td>
<td>0.001***</td>
<td>0.001***</td>
<td>0.00007</td>
<td>0.001***</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(0.0002)</td>
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<td>43059</td>
<td>41415</td>
<td>35816</td>
<td>27988</td>
<td>35433</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Notes:* Ordered logit estimation of the effect of temporal proximity (in months) to an election, competitiveness of that election, and an interaction term on trust for various actors and media outlets. Standard errors in parentheses. All models include the full set of control variables: male, age, urban, education, occupation, country fixed effects, survey round fixed effects, a time trend. Standard errors clustered at the level of the country-round. Observations weighted by 1/(number of respondents in country-round).
Figure 6: The Effect of Temporal Proximity to Election on Trust for Ruling and Opposition Parties

Notes: These graphs show that increasing temporal proximity (in months) to an election decreases the probability of trusting the ruling party (left panel) and increases the probability of trusting the opposition parties (right panel). The x-axis indicates months away from the election, where larger number indicate closeness to the election (0 indicates the election). The y-axis indicates the predicted probabilities of trusting a lot. All other variables are held at their means.

5 Conclusion

Political participation beyond voting is a defining element of democratic citizenship. The main finding of this work is that elections contribute more to democracy than voting. Temporal proximity to an election has a meaningfully impact on many forms of citizens’ political participation above and beyond voting in sub-Saharan African democracies where individuals have only undergone a handful of elections and democracy is still finding its footing. Partisanship, political discussion, and contacting political actors increase tremendously around election time. However, although elections serve to improve multidimensional aspects of citizenship, they provoke distrust in a range of state actors and institutions, as well as depress support for democracy generally. The magnitude of the effect of temporal proximity to an election are in many cases much larger than the effects found for other leading determinants of political participation such as gender and education.

This work joins a small but rapidly growing literature on elections and political participation in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as the large body of literature on attitudes towards democracy. The vast majority of previous work has focused on individual demographics and institutional characteristics as determinants of political participation. This work joins Lindberg (2006) and Moehler (2009) on considering the impact of elections on political participation. While these works focus on the cumulative effect of elections and characteristics of elections respectively, this present work focuses on the dynamic impact of elections as they wax and wane in temporal proximity. Mostly, political participation such as partisanship, cognitive political engagement, interacting with politi-

cal actors, and support for democracy are conceptualized in the literature as only slowly moving, long-term, stable, and even fixed. This paper advocates that scholars of political behavior consider not just the systemic or individual-demographic determinants, but also the temporal and dynamic factors affecting political participation.

The extensions for future work in this line of inquiry are vast. The validity of the analysis may be improved by including more Afrobarometer survey rounds, yet other characteristics of elections, and yet other macro-political events that may shape political participation and support for democracy such as coups. The inquiry may also expand cross-nationally, perhaps to discover whether similar effects exist in other new democracies such as Eastern Europe or Asia, or even old democracies such as in Latin America, Europe and North America. It is unclear if the effect found here is due not to the newness of democracy, but by high poverty and illiteracy or low state capacity and poor information infrastructure. Cross-national expansion will illuminate the conditions under which these effects are found or tempered.
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A Survey Questions Wording and Answer Coding

1. Partisanship
   (a) **Party Ties**: Do you feel close to any particular political party? 1 = yes, 0 = no
   (b) **Party Closeness**: Do you feel very close to this party = 1, somewhat close = 2, or not very close=3? (0 = not close to any)

2. Cognitive Political Engagement
   (a) **Political Discussion**: When you get together with your friends or family, would you say you discuss political matters Never=0, Occasionally=1, or Frequently=2?
   (b) **Political Interest**: How interested would you say you are in public affairs? 0=Not at all interested, 1=Not very interested, 2=Somewhat interested, 3=Very interested
   (c) **Political Understanding**: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Politics and government sometimes seem so complicated that you can’t really understand what’s going on. Do you (dis)agree strongly or just (dis)agree? 1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4=Disagree, 5=Strongly Disagree
   (d) **Radio**: How often do you get news from the following sources: Radio? 0=never, 1=less than once per month, 2=a few times a month, 3=a few times a week, 4=every day
   (e) **TV**: How often do you get news from the following sources: TV? 0=never, 1=less than once per month, 2=a few times a month, 3=a few times a week, 4=every day
   (f) **Newspaper**: How often do you get news from the following sources: Newspapers? 0=never, 1=less than once per month, 2=a few times a month, 3=a few times a week, 4=every day

3. Political Interaction with the State
   (a) **Contact Local Govt**: During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons for help to solve a problem or to give them your views: a local government actor? 0=Never, 1=Only once, 2=A few times, 3=Often,
   (b) **Contact MP**: During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons for help to solve a problem or to give them your views: a parliamentarian? 0=Never, 1=Only once, 2=A few times, 3=Often,
   (c) **Contact Ministry Official**: During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons for help to solve a problem or to give them your views: official of a government ministry? 0=Never, 1=Only once, 2=A few times, 3=Often,
   (d) **Contact Party Official**: During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons for help to solve a problem or to give them your views: a political party official? 0=Never, 1=Only once, 2=A few times, 3=Often,
   (e) **Contact State Actor**: Indicator for having contacted any state actor at all
   (f) **Attend Meeting**: Here is a list of actions that people sometimes take as citizens. For each of these, please tell me whether you, personally, have done any of these things during the past year. If not, would you do this if you had the chance: Attended a community meeting? 0=No, would never do this, 1=No, but would do if had the chance, 2=Yes, once or twice, 3=Yes, several times, 4=Yes, often
   (g) **Raise Issue**: Here is a list of actions that people sometimes take as citizens. For each of these, please tell me whether you, personally, have done any of these things during the past year. If not, would you do this if you had the chance: Got together with others to raise an issue? 0=No, would never do this, 1=No, but would do if had the chance, 2=Yes, once or twice, 3=Yes, several times, 4=Yes, often
(h) **Protest**: Here is a list of actions that people sometimes take as citizens. For each of these, please tell me whether you, personally, have done any of these things during the past year. If not, would you do this if you had the chance: Attended a demonstration or protest march? 0=No, would never do this, 1-No, but would do if had the chance, 2=Yes, once or twice, 3=Yes, several times, 4=Yes, often

4. **Attitudes Toward Democracy**

(a) **Satisfaction Democracy**: Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [R’s country]? Are you: 0=my country is not a democracy, 1=Not at All Satisfied, 2=Not Very Satisfied, 3=Fairly Satisfied, 4=Very Satisfied,

(b) **Support Democracy**: Which of these three statements is closest to your own opinion? A: Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government. B: In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable. C: For someone like me, it doesn’t matter what kind of government we have. 0=B, 1=A

(c) **Pol Vio Justified**: Which of the following statements is closest to your view. Choose Statement A or Statement B. A: The use of violence is never justified in [R’s country] politics. B: In this country, it is sometimes necessary to use violence in support of a just cause.

(d) **Talk Unfree**: In this country, how often: Do people have to be careful of what they say about politics? 0=Never, 1=Rarely, 2=Often, 3=Always

(e) **Pres Ignores Const**: In this country, how often: Does the President ignore the constitution? 0=Never, 1=Rarely, 2=Often, 3=Always

(f) **Trust President**: How much do you trust each of the following, or haven’t you heard enough about them to say: The President? 0=Not at all, 1=Just a little, 2=Somewhat, 3=A lot

(g) **Trust Parliament**: see above but with Parliament

(h) **Trust Elec Commiss**: see above but with Electoral Commission

(i) **Trust Local Gov’t**: see above but with Local Government

(j) **Trust Ruling**: see above but with Ruling Party

(k) **Trust Opposition**: see above but with Opposition Political Parties

(l) **Trust Police**: see above but with Police

(m) **Trust Army**: see above but with The Military

(n) **Trust Courts**: see above but with Courts of Law

(o) **Trust Gov’t Broad**: see above but with Government Broadcasting Service (R’s country example for State TV/radio given)

(p) **Trust Indie Broad**: see above but with Independent Broadcasting Services (R’s country examples for Independent TV/radio given)

(q) **Trust Gov’t Paper**: see above but with Government Newspapers (R’s country example for State newspapers given)

(r) **Trust Indie Paper**: see above but with Independent Newspapers (R’s country example for independent newspapers given)

5. **Control or Heterogeneous Effect Variables**

(a) **Male**: enumerator coded 0=female, 1 = male

(b) **Age**: How old are you? continuous

67 An alternative specification of this variable also allowed for 2=C.
(c) **Education**: What is the highest level of education you have completed? Indicator variables for
- No formal schooling / Informal schooling (including Koranic schooling),
- Some primary schooling,
- Primary school completed,
- Some secondary school / High school,
- Secondary school completed/ High school,
- Post-secondary qualifications, other than university e.g. a diploma or degree from a technical/polytechnic/college,
- Some university,
- University completed,
- Post-graduate

(d) **Occupation**: What is your main occupation? (If unemployed, retired, or disabled, what was your last main occupation?) Indicator variables for
- (a) No occupation - never had a job, housewife,
- (b) farming - subsistence, subsistence + sales, sales, worker, fisherman/woman,
- (c) white collar - businessperson owns small or large business, professional worker (e.g. lawyer, accountant, nurse, engineer), teacher, government worker,
- (d) blue collar worker - trader, miner, domestic worker, army/police, skilled/unskilled worker in informal/formal sector, works in business, foreman, retail worker,
- (e) student

(e) **Urban**: Enumerator coded 0 = rural, 1 = urban