

AFRICAN ELECTIONS IN 2015: A SNAPSHOT FOR CÔTE D'IVOIRE, TANZANIA, BURKINA FASO AND SUDAN

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INTRODUCTION

In 2015, many countries in Africa—including the **Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, Guinea, Libya, Mauritius, Niger, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo** and **Zambia**—will conduct presidential and/or legislative elections. Most of these countries have struggled with transition to democracy at least since the mid-1980s, and some of them much more recently. The 2015 elections, then, for some, could be turning points for embracing democracy more closely, and, for others, for significantly deepening and institutionalizing democracy and emerging as democratic strongholds on the continent.

The failure to manage ethnic and religious diversity and provide institutional structures that enhance peaceful coexistence, national integration and nation-building, remains one of the continent's most intractable governance problems. This failure has produced political economies that are pervaded by violence, most of it attributable to destructive mobilization by ethnic and/or religious groups that consider themselves marginalized by public policies, pushed to the economic and political periphery, and prevented from participating gainfully in economic growth. Minimizing violent mobilization requires state reconstruction through

democratic constitution making to provide each country with institutional arrangements that guarantee the rule of law—where the latter exists, the law is supreme; a majority of the citizens voluntarily accept and respect the law; there is judicial independence; the law is not administered arbitrarily or capriciously but citizens are able to expect predictable results; there is protection of human rights, including those of minority ethnic and religious groups; and governments operate in an open and transparent manner.

Openness and transparency are very important for governance in Africa. Making certain that public policies are designed and implemented in an open and transparent manner not only reduces corruption but also improves the chances that these policies will reflect the values, interests and aspirations of the country's relevant stakeholders. If discontented groups have either had the opportunity to participate fully and effectively in policy design and implementation, or were quite aware of how these policies were chosen and why, they are less likely to resort to destructive mobilization.

A major challenge for all countries that will conduct elections in 2015 will be to ensure that the majority of their citizens see these elections as free, fair and credible. These governments

must (1) provide the security necessary to ensure that no one participating in the elections is threatened, molested or denied access to the process; (2) make certain that the opposition is provided with adequate access to the media, including government-owned and operated outlets, so that it can fully and effectively explain its platform to prospective voters; (3) create an open dialogue with all constituencies to prevent feelings of marginalization; (4) minimize political corruption and avoid any activities (e.g., vote-rigging) that can place the opposition at a competitive disadvantage and enhance the ability of the incumbent government to win the elections; (5) make sure that the national election commission is independent enough to function effectively in carrying out the election; and (6) provide facilities for domestic and international monitors so that they can perform their jobs well and ensure that the elections are fair, free and credible.

Importantly, the policy priority for the post-election governments should be participatory constitution making to reconstruct the state and provide institutional arrangements that guarantee the rule of law. However, even if the 2015 elections are successfully carried out and are considered fair, free, and credible, many of these countries will still continue to suffer from high levels of corruption, violence, inequality, and low economic growth and development unless they are provided with institutional arrangements that guarantee the rule of law.

Below, we present an overview of some upcoming African elections in 2015. (For an in-depth look at Nigeria's elections, see **"The 2015 Presidential Elections in Nigeria: The Issues and Challenges."**) Over 15 African countries are planning elections in 2015; however, due to space limitations, this brief only discusses elections in Côte d'Ivoire, Tanzania, Burkina Faso, and the Republic of Sudan.

Côte d'Ivoire

Historical Context



After independence in 1960, Côte d'Ivoire was led by the authoritarian leader Félix Houphouët-Boigny until his death in 1993. His successor, Henri Konan Bédié, who was overthrown in 1999, disastrously emphasized ethnicity in public service, effectively excluding individuals who were not considered *indigènes* of Côte d'Ivoire from serving in administrative positions. In fact, former International Monetary Fund executive and current president of Côte d'Ivoire, Alassane Ouattara, was disqualified from participating in the 2000 presidential elections because of his ethnicity. Then, President Bédié and many others, claimed that Ouattara was a Burkinabè from neighboring Burkina Faso, and the country's new constitution, approved in 2000, mandated that a presidential candidate's parents must both be Ivorian. The citizenship issue partly spurred Côte d'Ivoire's 2002-2007 civil war.

However, in 2007, Laurent Gbagbo, president since the 2000 elections, declared that Ouattara was qualified to run in the 2010 presidential elections. In the second round of elections, an independent electoral commission declared Ouattara the winner with 54 percent of the vote. However, Gbagbo's supporters argued that there had been fraud and sought to annul votes from several regions. The Constitutional Council then annulled the electoral commission's declaration and concluded that Gbagbo had won 51 percent of the vote. Ouattara and Gbagbo took parallel oaths of office—though the international community, including the African Union, recognized Ouattara as the legitimate president. These events resulted in a second civil war and, subsequently, Gbagbo was arrested by the International Criminal Court in

2011 for crimes against humanity. Ouattara remains the president of Côte d'Ivoire.

Election 2015

Côte d'Ivoire has set presidential elections for October 2015. The major players in these elections are (1) incumbent Allasane Ouattara and his *Rassemblement des républicains* (RDR); and (2) the *Front populaire ivoirien* (FPI). The FPI, previously led by the now-indicted Gbagbo, is currently led by Pascal Affi N'Guessan who will likely participate in the 2015 elections. The FPI boycotted the 2011 parliamentary elections, citing bias by the electoral commission for incumbent Ouattara, intimidation of FPI supporters by the national army, and the government banning of the pro-FPI newspaper *Notre Voie*. In fall 2014, the FPI withdrew from, but later returned to, the electoral commission, raising fears that the party might boycott the elections. Such a boycott by the FPI would have undermined both the credibility of the elections and the country's efforts to usher in a period of peace and national reconstruction.

Henri Konan Bédié and the *Parti démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire* (PDCI) were expected to be strong contenders in the 2015 elections. However, in mid-September 2014, Bédié endorsed Ouattara for re-election in 2015, effectively ruling himself out as a candidate for the presidency of the republic in 2015.

The current Ouattara-led coalition government of the RDR and PDCI was supposed to engage Ivorians in a process of state reconstruction, but the institutional structures and governing process that have failed Ivorians in the past remain in place. For one thing, the question of citizenship, a major contributor to the civil wars, has not been resolved. In addition, the FPI and Gbagbo followers believe that they have been pushed to the political and economic periphery, and restless urban youth cry that only the

politically connected have access to food (See, e.g., *Aljazeera* 2013; BBC World Service n.d.; *IRIN* 2008).

Thus, Ivorians face many challenges in the years to come: They must deal with issues such as citizenship; government impunity; entrepreneurship and the full participation of all groups in wealth creation; and peaceful coexistence—all issues that have contributed to past violent conflicts. Whoever wins the elections (and the endorsement of Ouattara's candidacy by Bédié, one of the country's political heavyweights, makes Ouattara a likely winner of the 2015 presidential contest) should form a government that reflects the country's ethnic and religious diversity so that it can effectively lead a credible reconstruction effort. The Ouattara government must work with its international benefactors to make certain that the 2015 elections are fair, free and credible. More importantly, given the distrust that Gbagbo supporters currently have in the incumbent government, it is necessary that the latter create conditions that would significantly improve the chances that the FPI and other opposition groups will accept the results of the 2015 elections and abide by them.

Of course, the post-election government must engage all of the country's relevant stakeholder groups in robust dialogue about issues that are critical to peaceful coexistence, national integration, nation-building, and human development. These include, inter alia, citizenship, youth unemployment, and poverty, especially among vulnerable groups (e.g., women, rural inhabitants, and the urban poor).

United Republic of Tanzania

Historical Context

On April 26, 1964, Tanganyika merged with Zanzibar to



form the United Republic of Tanzania—within the latter, Zanzibar remains a semi-autonomous region with its own government. Throughout most of its existence as an independent and sovereign nation, Tanzania has functioned exclusively as a one-party state.

However, since 1992, there have been four credible competitive elections—in 1995, 2000, 2005 and 2010—all won by the Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) (Party of the Revolution). Though the CCM has been the winner, its margin of victory has not been overwhelming, and most Tanzanians and international observers have considered these elections free, fair and credible. In the general elections held in 2010, incumbent President Jakaya Kikwete received 63 percent of the vote while the party captured 78 percent of the seats in the National Assembly. In the semi-autonomous region of Zanzibar, Ali Mohamed Shein of the CCM won 50 percent of the vote in the presidential election and the CCM won 50 percent of the seats in the assembly—against the opposition Civic United Front’s (CUF) 47 percent.

So, while the CMM has remained dominant, other parties, especially the Chadema (Party for Democracy and Progress), a center-right movement whose popularity continues to increase, have provided effective and growing challenges. In the elections of 2010, for example, Chadema captured 27 percent (presidential) and 24 percent (parliamentary) of the vote. The Civic United Front, another opposition party, captured 8 percent (presidential) and 24 percent (parliamentary) of the vote. These results show a significant deepening of political competition.

Election 2015

Tanzania’s fifth general elections will take place in October 2015. Notably, President Kikwete is constitutionally barred from contesting for a third term, and a large number of candidates

are throwing their hats into the ring. Presently, the most important political parties in Tanzania and their leaders are the incumbent CCM (Mizengo Pinda—presently the prime minister, but is battling an internal challenge to his nomination); Chadema (Freeman Mbowe); and CUF (Mohamed Mnyaa).

Since 1992, when multiparty political competition was reintroduced into Tanzania, opposition parties have significantly improved their ability to challenge the CCM. In fact, as noted above, in the 2010 presidential elections, candidates representing CHADEMA and CUF jointly captured 35 percent of the vote against the incumbent CCM’s 63 percent. This year, the growing strength of opposition parties could force the winning candidate to seek the help of the opposition in forming a government capable of effectively governing the country. Such a “unity” government would be one that includes individuals from not just the winning political party, but from others.

It is expected that the 2015 elections will provide the opportunity for further deepening and institutionalization of democracy in Tanzania. Perhaps, the opposition could capture the government and bring about new and fresh approaches to dealing with what have become intractable problems—rising poverty; high levels of unemployment, especially among the youth and other vulnerable groups (e.g., women and rural inhabitants); high prices, especially for food and fuel; and bureaucratic corruption.

Notably, Tanzania is also currently going through a constitutional review process. It is expected that the new constitution will be adopted before the October 2015 elections. Major amendments might include the removal of gender discrimination from the law (such an amendment to the constitution would allow a woman to transmit her nationality to her husband); ending the ban on dual nationality; removing the rights to citizenship based on birth

in Tanzania; and creating a federal union comprising three governments—a Tanganyika government, a union government, and a Zanzibar Isles government. This constitutional process is not without controversy: The CCM-dominated parliament has approved the country's draft constitution, despite the fact that opposition parties have refused to participate in the process on the grounds that their suggestions have been ignored. The next step is for the constitutional draft to be presented to the public for approval by referendum.

Although elections in Tanzania since 1992 have generally been adjudged fair and free by both Tanzanians and foreign observers, the CCM-led government should continue to ensure that the process remains so, especially in light of legitimate and serious challenges to its political power.

Burkina Faso

Historical Context

Shortly after Upper Volta (which changed its name to Burkina Faso in 1984) gained independence from France in 1960, it was led by Maurice Yaméogo, who quickly banned all political opposition, forcing mass riots and demonstrations that only came to an end after the military intervened in 1966. Military coups in 1980, 1982 and 1983 continued to usher in authoritarian leaders. Although the leader of the 1983 coup, Captain Thomas Sankara, introduced many institutional reforms that effectively aligned the country with Marxist ideals, he was overthrown in 1987 by Captain Blaise Compaoré, who subsequently reversed all of Sankara's progressive policies and led the country until he resigned under pressure in late 2014.



In 2000, the country's post-Cold War 1991 constitution was amended to impose a limit of two five-year consecutive terms on the presidency. However, in 2010, Compaoré's supporters argued that because he was in office when the amendments went into effect, they did not apply to him and, hence, he was qualified to run for re-election a third time. He did—and captured 80 percent of the vote. In the run-up to the November 2015 elections, Compaoré's supporters, especially members of his party, the *Congrès pour la démocratie et le progrès* (CDP), campaigned to change the constitution so that Compaoré could run for a fourth term.

Just before and in response to the scheduled vote on the controversial amendment, on October 28, 2014, thousands of protesters gathered in Ouagadougou, the capital, and Bobo Dioulasso, the country's second-biggest city. In response to the mass demonstrations, legislators postponed and eventually cancelled the vote. Just a few days later, Compaoré, who had ruled Burkina Faso since 1987, resigned and fled.

Also, over the years, both Compaoré and Burkina Faso became important players in the political economy of both the Sahel and the Sahara, especially in the fight against transnational terrorism. As 2015 neared, there was fear that if the president forced a change in the constitution and extended his stay in power, there could arise the type of political instability that might force military intervention. Even if the president left office as mandated by the constitution, there was still fear that he might try to hand over power to his powerful friends and family members, especially his brother, François Compaoré. In fact, many observers were convinced that any attempts by the president to either manipulate the 2015 elections to keep either the CDP and himself in power or to elevate his brother to the position, would most likely not be received well by an increasingly restless and inquisitive opposition. These fears, it turns out, were quite prophetic.

Immediately after the president resigned, army chief, General Honoré Traoré, Compaoré's aide de camp, announced to the nation that he had assumed the powers of president and head of state—a move not sanctioned by the constitution, which states that the president of the senate temporarily assumes those duties in a case like this.

In any case, the opposition, which had contributed significantly to the ouster of the president, rejected Traoré, arguing that as a close and trusted advisor of the ousted president, his leadership would not represent the type of complete break that they wanted with the painful past, as embodied in Compaoré's 27 years in power.

So, on November 1, 2014, Colonel Isaac Yacouba Zida, told the people of Burkina Faso that the military had intervened to prevent further violence and he had assumed the powers of the president and head of state. He went on to say that he would lead a "peaceful transition" and one that would guarantee the "continuity of the [Burkinabè] state." At the time, however, Zida did not provide any details about how he and the military planned to proceed with the transition. However, perhaps bowing to international pressure, Zida later stepped down in this role, with former diplomat and foreign minister Michel Kafando assuming power as the country's interim president. This move was largely seen as a positive development for democracy and civilian rule, though enthusiasm was quickly tempered when, days later, the military announced that Zida would serve as interim prime minister while the country prepared for elections.

Election 2015

So, what happens next? Over more than a quarter century in power, Compaoré used an

unusual formula to achieve relative stability in Burkina—authoritarianism mixed with traces of democracy. The complex governance system relied primarily on Compaoré's dominant and charismatic political power and failed to build sustainable institutions—specifically those capable of maintaining the rule of law and enhancing peaceful coexistence in his absence. He acted opportunistically and sought to exploit his public position for personal gain, endangering the country's democracy and paving the way for the military to intervene in national politics. Now, the foundations for democracy—especially political pluralism and stakeholder engagement—have eroded.

The Burkinabè military must unambiguously hand over power to a civilian government and fully retreat to the barracks, allowing a fully empowered civilian interim president to organize and carry out the 2015 elections.

In terms of the elections: Before Compaoré was forced out of office, he was expected to be one of the principal players in the presidential elections planned for 2015 (if he had succeeded in amending the constitution). Even before the opposition turned against Compaoré's candidacy, many important and close associates in the CDP, aware of maneuvers by Compaoré and his supporters to keep him in office indefinitely, had already left the party and joined the opposition—which is composed of several distinct opposition groups. And so, besides the formerly incumbent CDP, other major political parties in Burkina Faso include the Party for Democracy and Socialism (*Parti pour la démocratie et le socialisme*); and Union for Rebirth/Sankarist Movement (*Union pour la renaissance/Mouvement Sankariste*). As of December 2014, none of them has picked a candidate to lead them in the 2015 presidential election.

Sudan

Historical Context

From 1956 until 1989, the government in the Republic of Sudan was characterized by instability, violence and coups d'état. After a 1989 bloodless coup, Colonel Omar al-Bashir, supported by a military council, rose to power, suspended political parties, extended the Islamic legal code to the entire country, and suppressed and/or banned organizations that opposed his regime. In 1993, al-Bashir declared himself president and dissolved the military council.

As a pro-democracy movement swept the continent in the early 1990s, Sudan also attempted to engage in “democratic” elections, holding presidential and legislative elections in 1996. The attempt did not go well. There were no legal political parties so candidates ran as independents. As a result of the civil war that was raging throughout most of the southern provinces, voting did not take place in that part of the country. The opposition called for a boycott, arguing that the process was unfair to them, especially given the fact that government organs (including public media houses) favored al-Bashir and made it very difficult for opposition candidates to effectively and fully inform the voters of their political positions. In the end, Omar al-Bashir captured 75 percent of the votes cast, while the 39 other candidates collectively received 22 percent.

Al-Bashir's regime has been characterized by significantly high levels of internal violence. In fact, in July 2008, the International Criminal Court called for the arrest of al-Bashir for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur. However, over the last 10 years, the violence within Sudan's borders has fallen



significantly, primarily as a result of the independence of South Sudan in 2011; reconciliation with the exiled opposition group the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), allowing it to participate in governance; and a peace agreement with the main rebel group in Darfur (though fighting has not ceased since some rebels have rejected it).

In 2010, Sudan held both presidential and legislative elections. Al-Bashir captured 68 percent of the vote. However, both domestic and international observers argued that the election was neither free, nor fair nor credible, citing intimidation and harassment of the opposition, corruption, fraud, and interference with the campaigns of opposition politicians (Carter Center 2010).

Election 2015

The elections in 2015 could be a major turning point for Sudan: In October 2013, various members of al-Bashir's ruling National Congress Party (NCP), dissatisfied with the president's leadership, announced plans to form a new party, one that is expected to appeal to secularists and leftists. This move, should it take place, would represent the most important challenge to party cohesion since the decision by Hassan al-Turabi to leave the NCP and form the opposition NDA. However, senior members of the government do not believe that there would be such a split. They have strongly criticized these suggestions, especially those that would weaken the NCP and threaten its hegemonic control of the country.

Regarding the 2015 elections, tentatively scheduled for April 2, 2015, senior government officials have accused the opposition of refusing to engage in a national dialogue, one which would include all of the country's political constituencies in examining (1) ending civil conflict; (2) dealing more effectively with poverty; (3) strengthening national identity; and (4) improving political freedoms. The important

political alliance called the National Consensus Forces (NCF) has boycotted these supposed efforts, arguing that the government is acting opportunistically, is only seeking to maximize al-Bashir's chances of remaining president, and is not interested in genuine dialogue.

So, who is likely to participate in the 2015 elections? First, al-Bashir (who has been in office since 1989) and the ruling NCP will run and—should they win—will continue the same failed policies that have alienated Sudan from the international community, severely limited foreign investment, significantly increased bureaucratic and political impunity, and retarded the country's transition to democratic governance and integrated development. Second, Al-Sadiq al-Mahdi of the National Umma Party (NUP), the country's largest opposition, will likely run. Like other opposition leaders, he favors the formation of a transitional government, which would provide the wherewithal for the holding of a national sovereign conference whose participation would include all the country's relevant

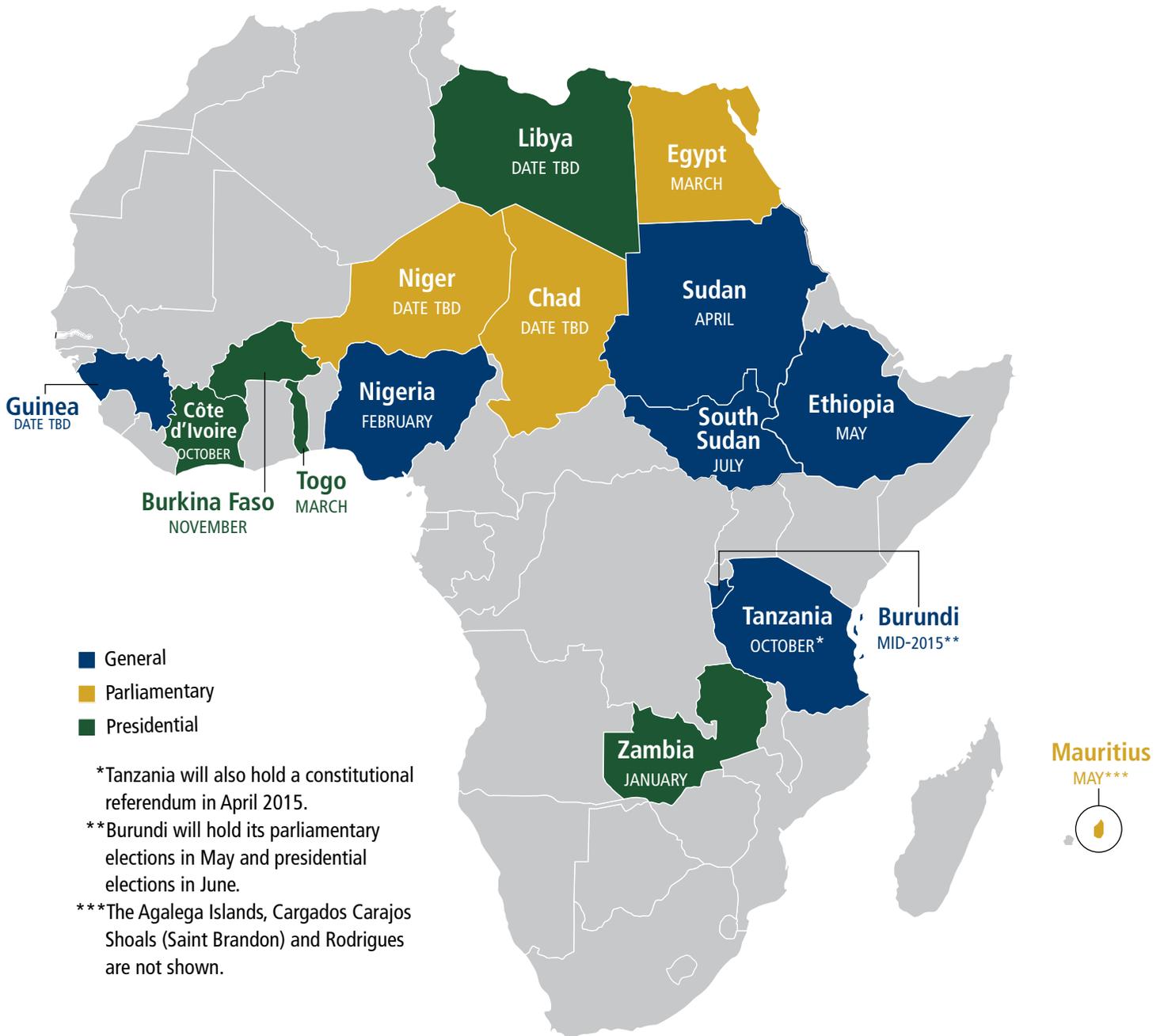
stakeholder groups, including rebel groups, to seek out a solution to intractable problems, particularly the conflicts in Darfur, South Kordofan and the Blue Nile states. Finally, there are other opposition parties, including those belonging to rebel groups, such as the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF), which argue that the elections should be postponed until comprehensive peace has been achieved in the country. They maintain that, under existing conditions, free, fair and credible elections are not likely to happen, and that al-Bashir and the NCP will manipulate the process to ensure they are victorious.

While a free and fair election in 2015 could create the opportunity to engage the peoples of Sudan in the type of state reconstruction and reconstitution that they failed to undertake at independence in 1956, given the current regional violence and the absence of governmental openness and transparency, it is unlikely that the elections will be fully participatory and inclusive, nor would they be fair and free. Hence, the results are likely to confirm the status quo.

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Presidential and Legislative Elections in Africa in 2015



Note: This map reflects all confirmed elections as of December 22, 2014 according to the National Democratic Institute, <https://www.ndi.org/electionscalendar>.