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Peter Anyang' Nyong'o, *Authoritarianism with an Electoral Face in Africa* - Abstract

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This essay is about how authoritarian regimes in Africa use so-called democratic elections to stay in power or to avoid being removed from power. Some of these elections are blatantly rigged; some are semi-competitive and occasionally lend legitimacy to such regimes as being somehow approved by the people or based on the consent of the people. Since Africa is such a big continent with nation-states which have had different histories since independence, we cannot make watertight generalizations, though "typologies" very often prove useful in making comparative studies. In this case, we shall use Kenya as a typical case of former plantation colonies which political economies are comparable and the fortunes of democratic governance quite similar. We conclude that the struggle for democratic governance will always be rooted in people's need to be governed and yet to control their governors.

Key words: Kenya, Africa, authoritarian regime, elections, nationalist movement, political oppression, opposition, presidential authoritarianism, democracy, constitution