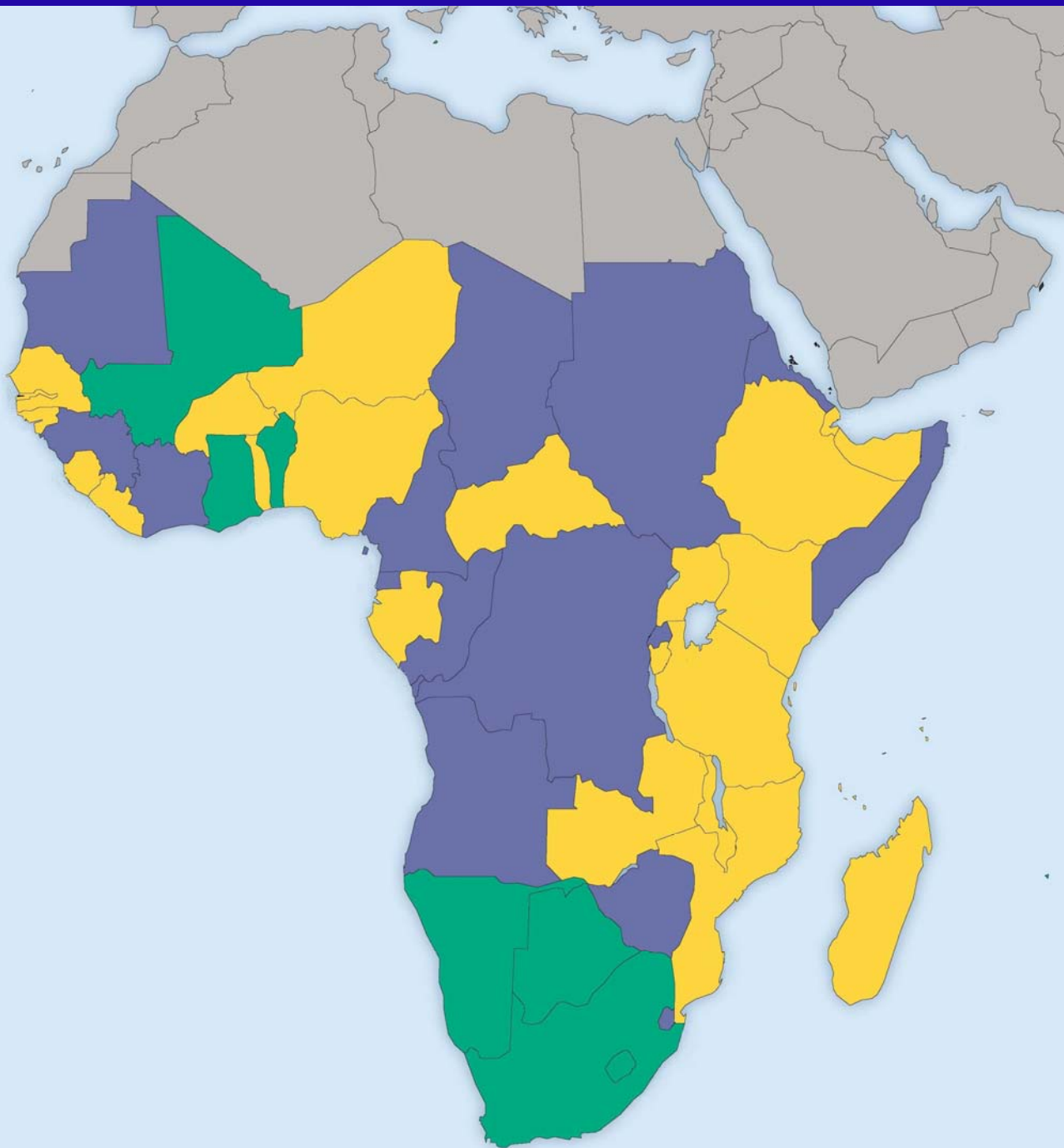




# FREEDOM IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA 2009

A SURVEY OF POLITICAL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES





## Progress and Setbacks for Freedom in Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa in 2009 presents at the same time some of the most promising examples of new democracies in the world—places where leaders who came to power through fair and competitive elections provide real opportunities for their citizens to live in freedom—and some of the most disheartening examples of political stagnation, democratic backsliding, and state failure. Overall, Africa has seen notable increases in freedom over the past generation, but has experienced some troubling setbacks in recent years.

Among the underreported stories on Africa is the significant, if fitful, advance of freedom across the continent. We at Freedom House seek to encourage both a greater appreciation of the strides that Africa has made and an informed discussion on how freedom can be further strengthened in this important region.

Since 1972, Freedom House has published an annual report on the state of global political rights and civil liberties, *Freedom in the World*. During its early years, *Freedom in the World* offered a grim picture. Democracy was concentrated mainly in Western Europe, North America, and the South Pacific. Throughout much of the rest of the world, strongmen, commissars, and military juntas held sway.

The condition of freedom was especially bleak in sub-Saharan Africa, where European colonies and minority-ruled states still existed, and autocracy or conflict afflicted most of the newly independent states. With the exception of a few bright spots, dictatorships of one political stripe or another ruled the majority of countries on the continent in the early 1970s. Coups and countercoups were commonplace, as were leaders who proclaimed themselves “president for life.” Elections, if held at all, were often manipulated to validate a current leader’s rule.

Much has changed since that time, in the world and in Africa. From the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s, a wave of democratization transformed Southern Europe, Latin America, and the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. In Africa, these changes set in motion not only the independence of Portugal’s colonies, but also a series of “national roundtables” that created new political dispensations in a number of Francophone African states. If less far-reaching than in some other regions of the world, the gains for freedom in Africa were nevertheless significant.

*Freedom in the World 2009*, the latest edition of Freedom House's annual survey, records both Africa's progress and the obstacles that have yet to be overcome. Among the 48 countries of sub-Saharan Africa, 10 were rated Free for their performance in calendar year 2008, while 23 were rated Partly Free and 15 were rated Not Free.

After close to two decades of steady and, in a few cases, impressive gains for democracy, sub-Saharan Africa suffered more setbacks than gains in recent years. In just the past year, Mauritania saw its *Freedom in the World* status decline from Partly Free to Not Free after a military coup ousted the democratically elected president, and Senegal was downgraded from Free to Partly Free due to the president's increasingly authoritarian tendencies. The Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria, and Somaliland also suffered notable declines in 2008, while more modest declines were registered in Burundi, Cameroon, Gabon, The Gambia, Guinea, Namibia, and Zimbabwe.

A few countries made progress in 2008. Ratings for political rights were raised for Comoros, due to the restoration of constitutional government throughout the archipelago; Cote d'Ivoire, where the number of registered voters for upcoming elections increased significantly; and Zambia, due to improvements in the judiciary. Political rights also improved slightly in Angola, which held its first legislative elections since 1992.

The causes for sub-Saharan Africa's setbacks in the period from 2006 to 2008 varied from country to country. A regionwide analysis, however, suggests several factors that were common to the decline of freedom in many countries. One was a deterioration in the rule of law, which occurred in 16 countries, including South Africa, due to political interference in the judiciary, and Kenya, as a result of political violence following the 2007 general elections. Also contributing to the general decline were restrictions on political pluralism, such as the harassment of opposition parties in countries including Namibia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, where the main opposition leader was forced into exile. Curbs on freedom of expression, particularly on independent media, also were significant in driving the decline of freedom in Africa. Among the countries that experienced curbs on free expression was Nigeria, where journalists have suffered assaults and threats for covering sensitive issues such as corruption and unrest in the Niger Delta region. While sub-Saharan Africa suffered declines across all categories of political rights and civil liberties over the past three years, the ratings for electoral processes declined the least.

### **FREE, PARTLY FREE, NOT FREE**

*Freedom in the World* provides three broad category designations for each of the countries and territories included in the survey: **Free**, **Partly Free**, and **Not Free**.

A **Free** country is one where there is broad scope for open political competition, a climate of respect for civil liberties, significant independent civic life, and independent media.

A **Partly Free** country is one in which there is limited respect for political rights and civil liberties. Partly Free states frequently suffer from endemic corruption, weak rule of law, and ethnic or religious strife, and they often feature a single political party that enjoys dominance despite a façade of limited pluralism.

A **Not Free** country is one where basic political rights are absent, and basic civil liberties are widely and systematically denied.

The following compilation of charts and graphs presents both current findings and longer-term trends from *Freedom in the World*. They show a steady expansion of African democracy over the course of nearly two decades, followed by declines in the past three years.

Figure 1, comparing *Freedom in the World 1980* assessments with those made in the 2009 edition, shows a substantial increase in the proportion of Free countries (and a related decrease in Not Free societies) in the world. Figure 2 presents the same comparison for sub-Saharan Africa, indicating an equally dramatic increase in freedom on the continent.

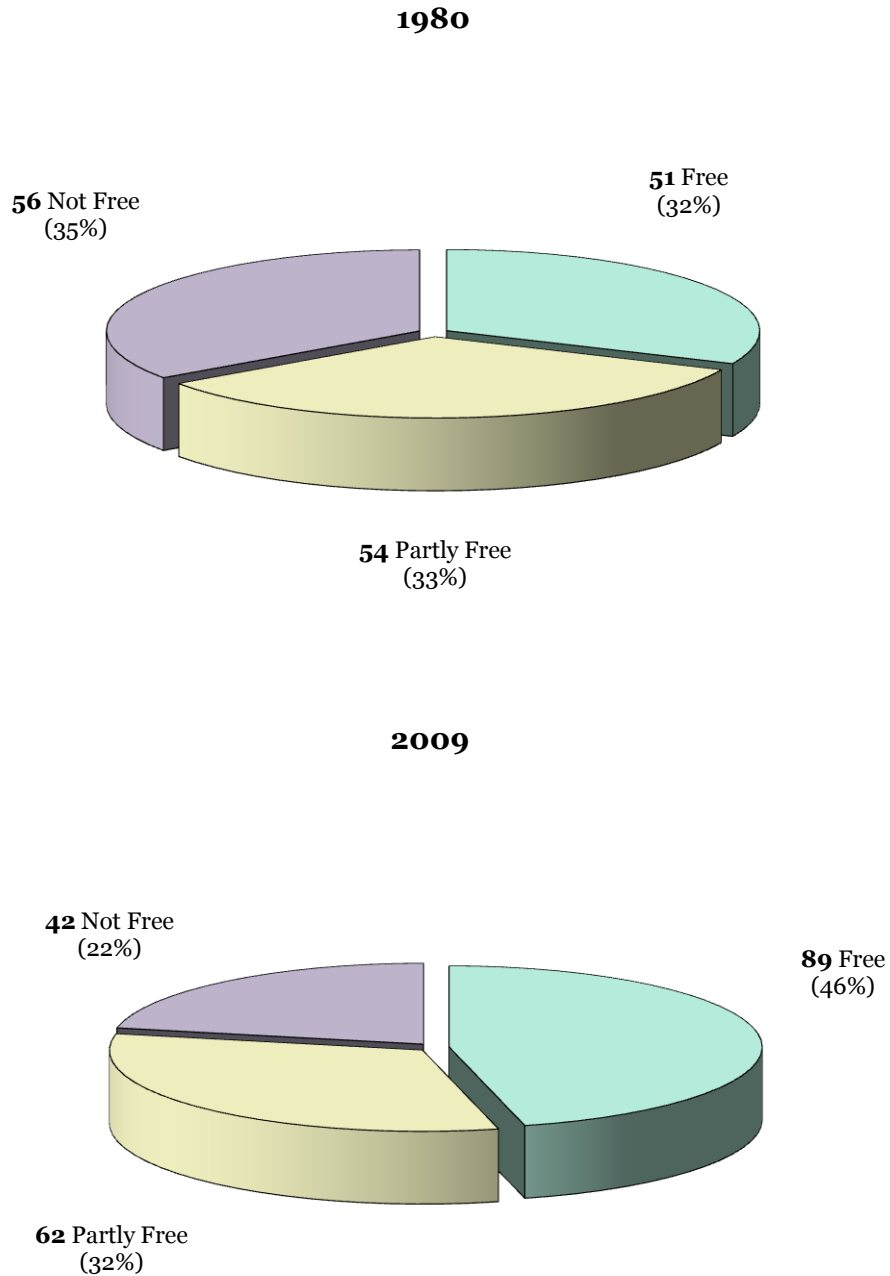
The next set of figures depicts the trends of freedom within sub-Saharan Africa. Figure 3 shows the substantial increase in the percentage of African countries rated Free and Partly Free by *Freedom in the World* between 1980 and 2009, although a significant number of countries have remained in the Not Free category. Figure 4 displays the steady increase in average regional *Freedom in the World* ratings for political rights and civil liberties since 1980. The trends in political rights and civil liberties ratings for each country are presented in Figures 5–53.

We hope these figures provide useful reference points for discussion and dialogue about freedom in sub-Saharan Africa. We welcome feedback on this graphic presentation as well as on the larger issues it illustrates.

Jennifer Windsor  
Executive Director  
Freedom House  
February 11, 2009

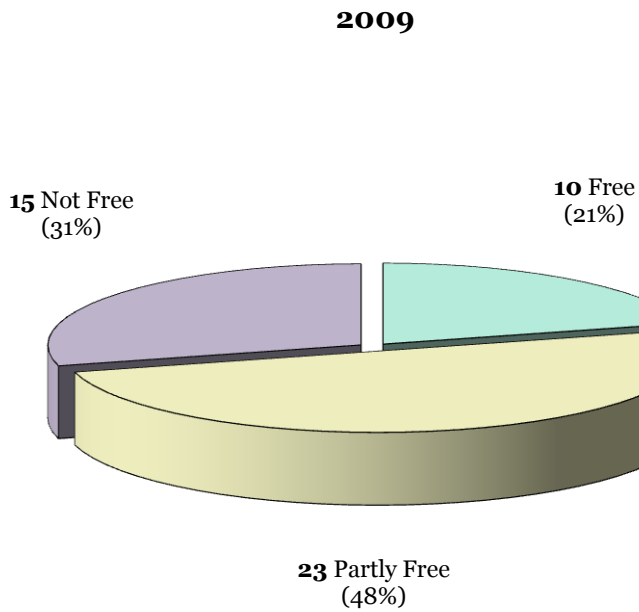
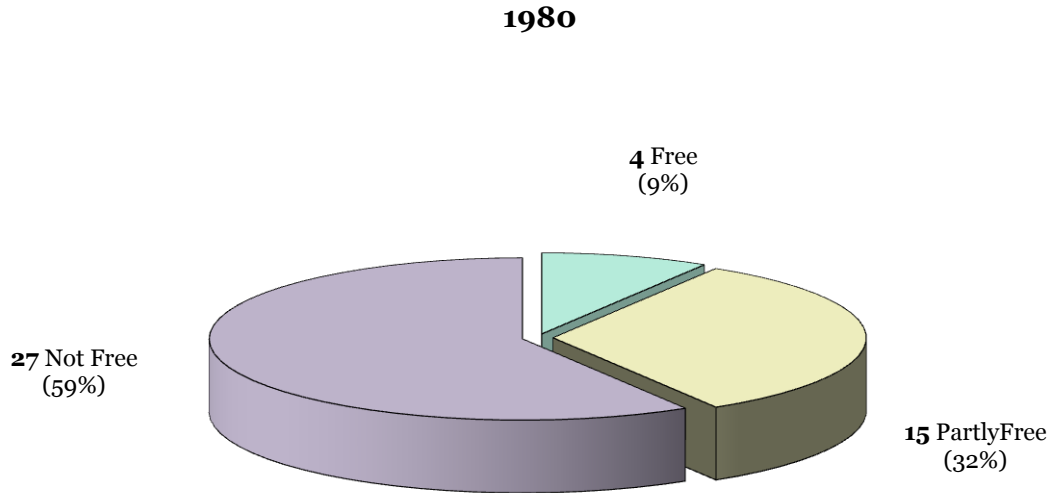
## Freedom in the World (Figure 1)

Number (and Percentage) of Countries Rated Free, Partly Free, and Not Free



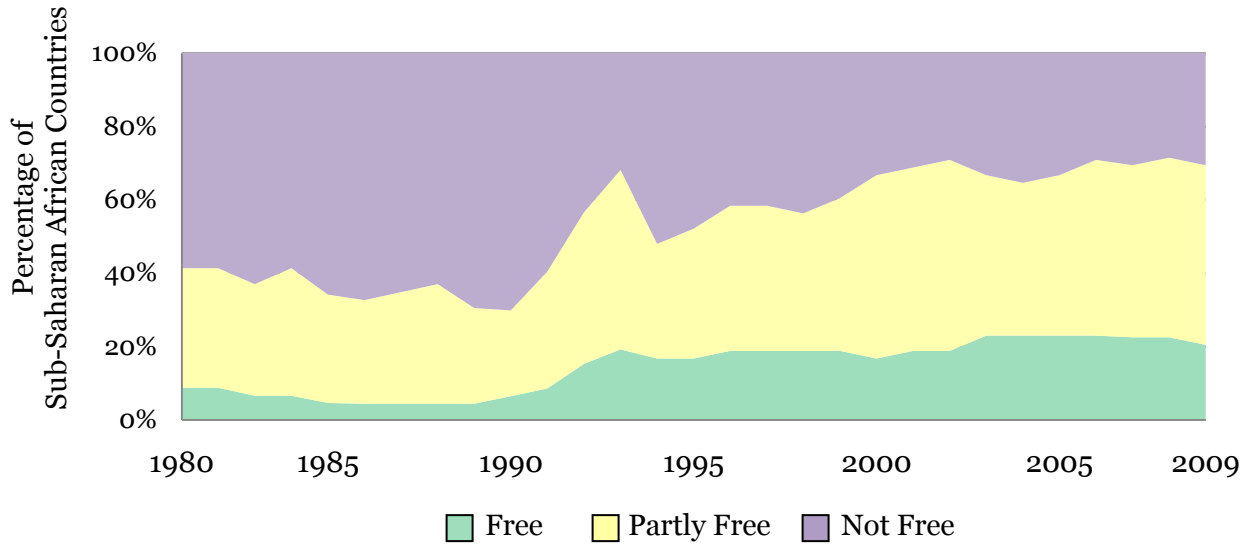
## Freedom in Sub-Saharan Africa (Figure 2)

Number (and Percentage) of Countries Rated Free, Partly Free, and Not Free

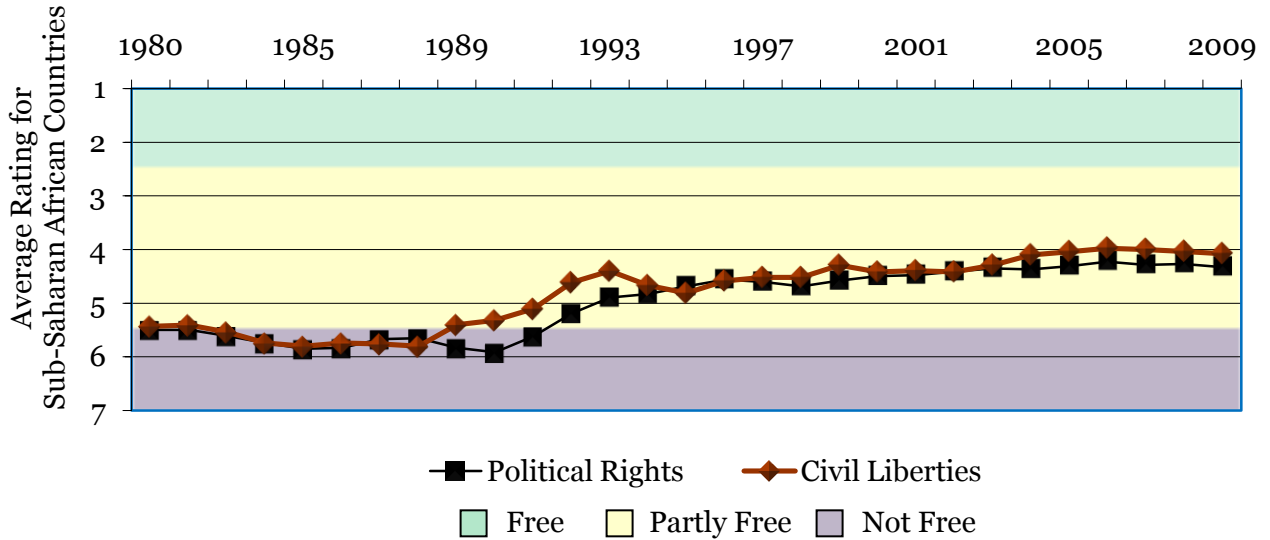


## Trends in Freedom: Sub-Saharan Africa

**Freedom Status, 1980–2009** (Figure 3)  
*Freedom in the World*

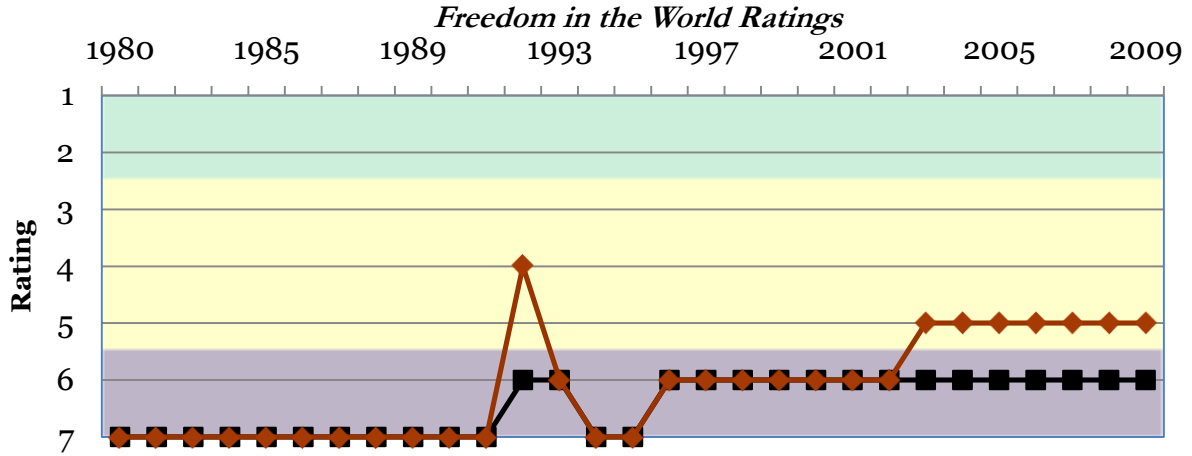


**Political Rights & Civil Liberties, 1980–2009** (Figure 4)  
*Freedom in the World*

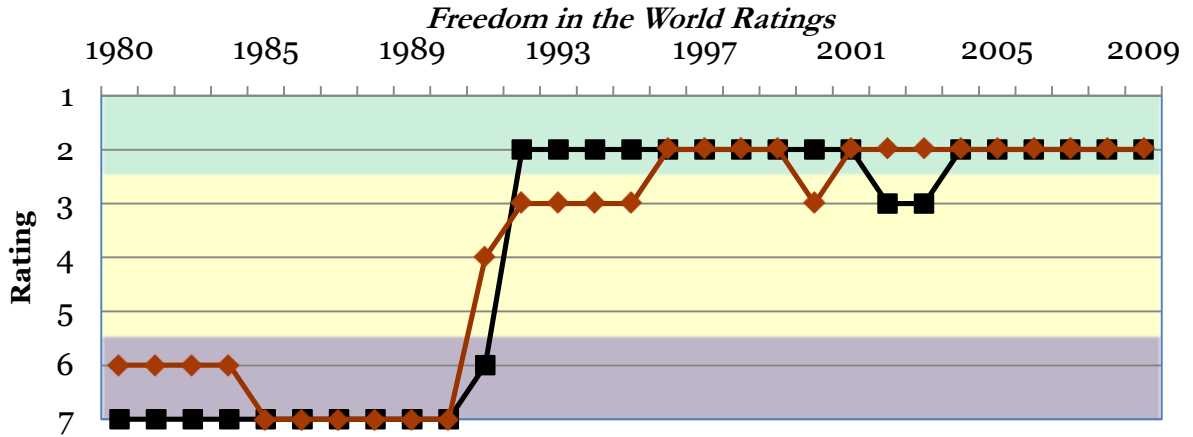


Please note that only two editions of *Freedom in the World* were published in the 1982–84 period.

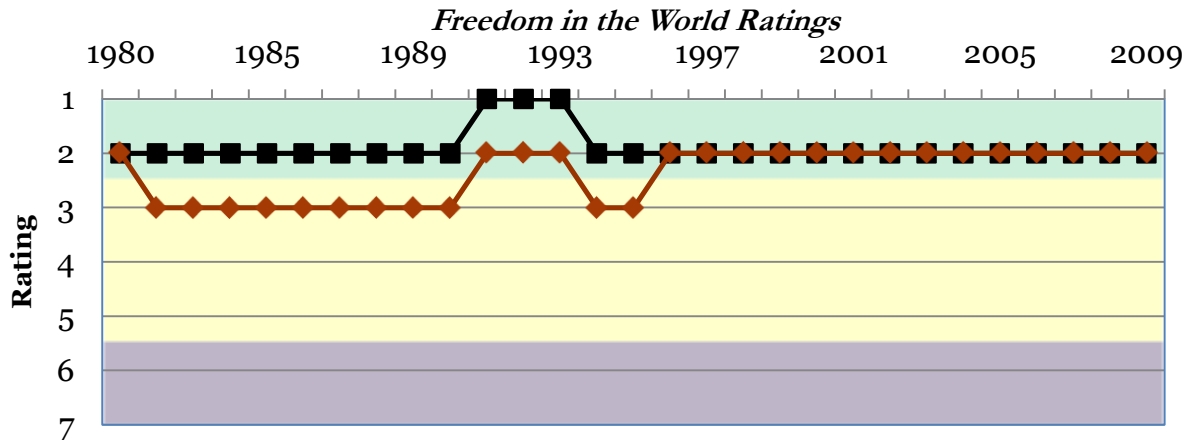
### ANGOLA (FIGURE 5)



### BENIN (FIGURE 6)



### BOTSWANA (FIGURE 7)

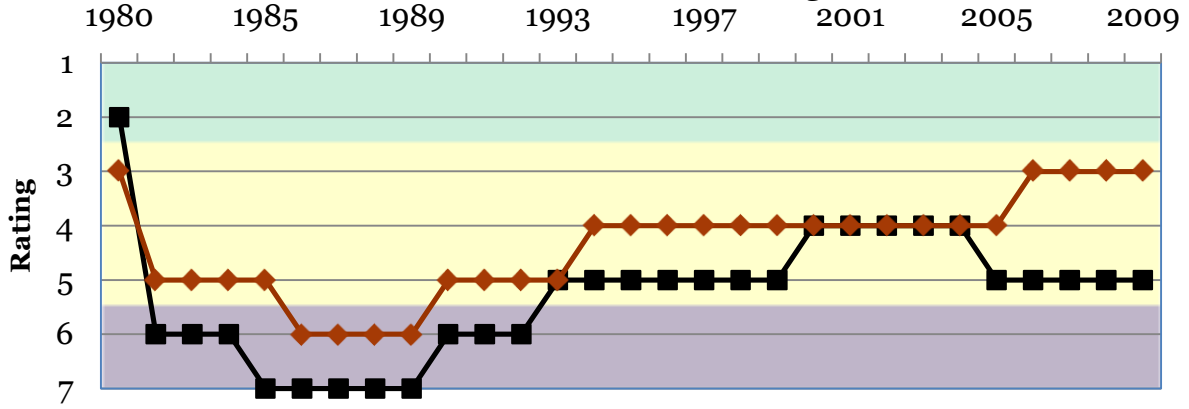


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 Free      Partly Free      Not Free



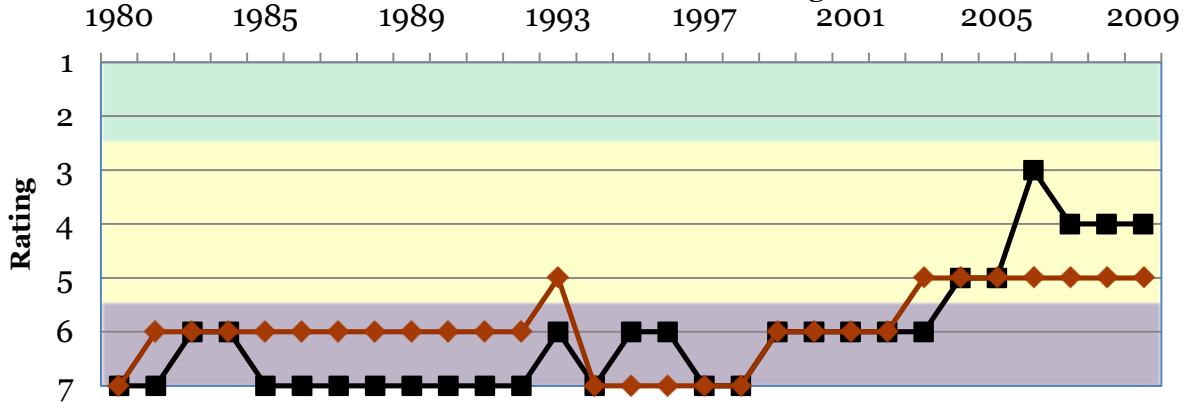
### BURKINA FASO (FIGURE 8)

Freedom in the World Ratings



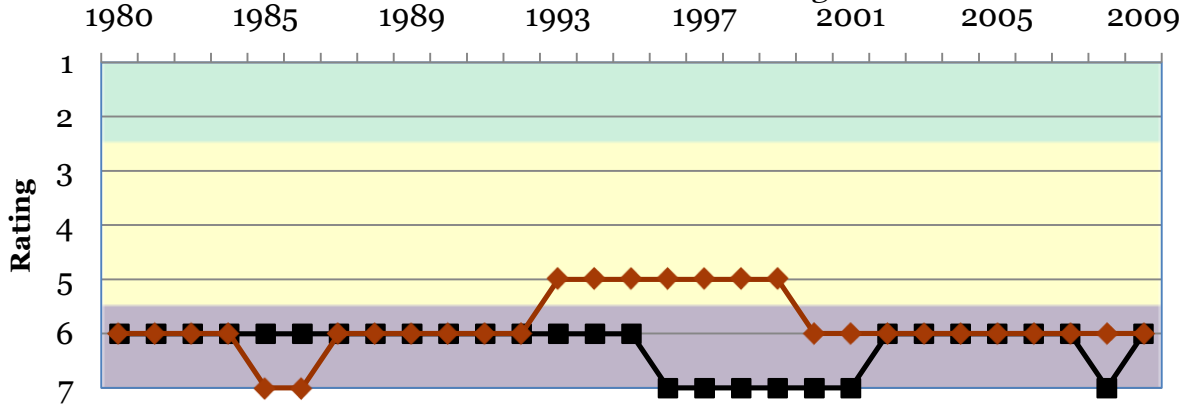
### BURUNDI (FIGURE 9)

Freedom in the World Ratings



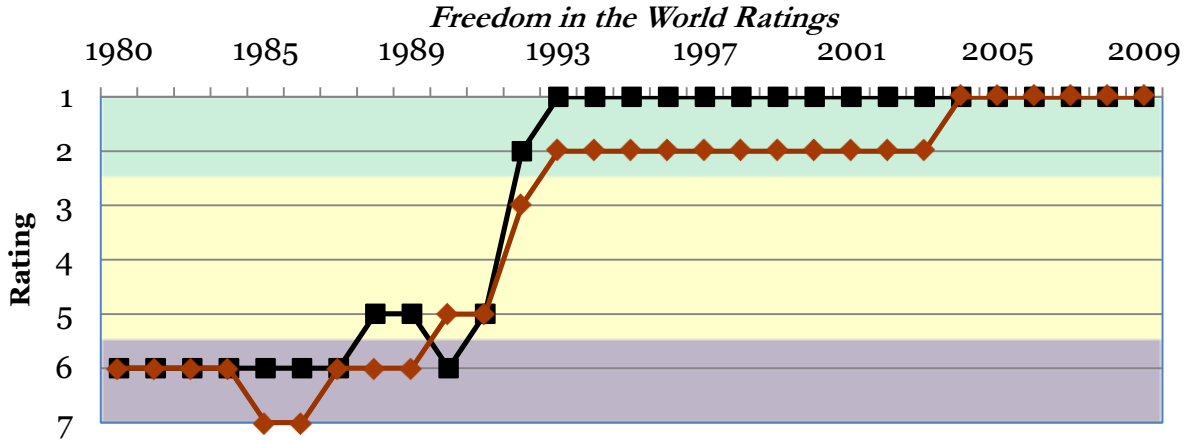
### CAMEROON (FIGURE 10)

Freedom in the World Ratings

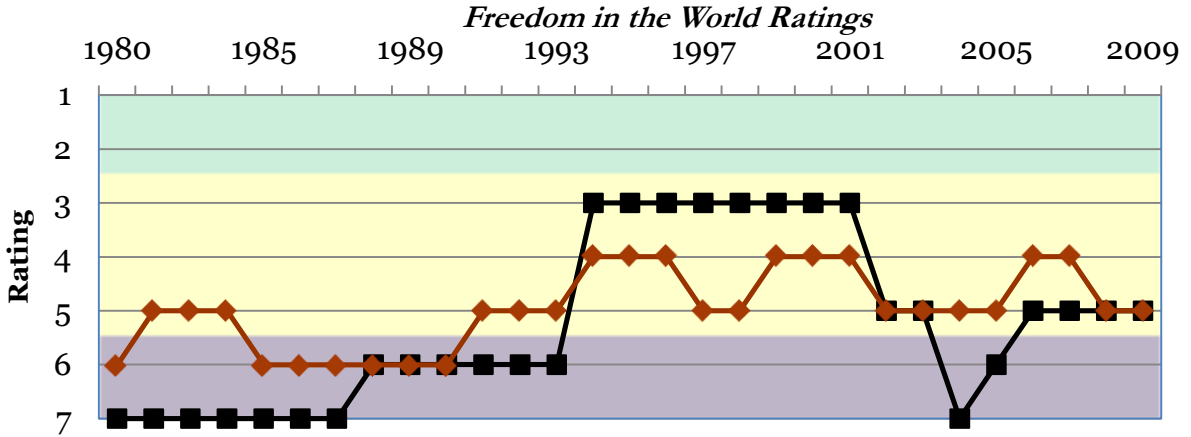


Political Rights    
  Civil Liberties  
 Free    
  Partly Free    
  Not Free

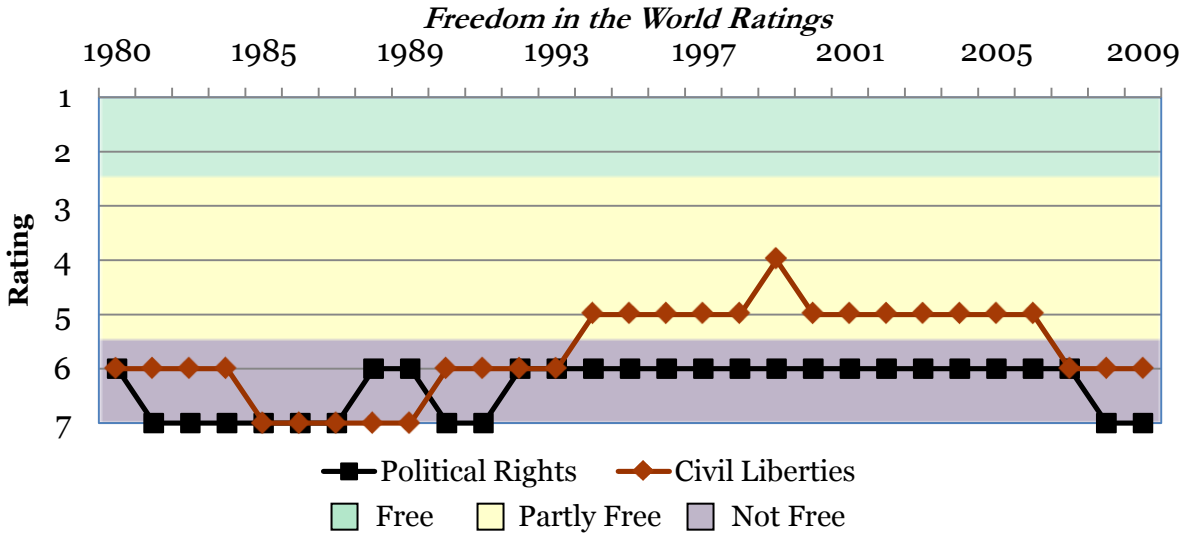
### CAPE VERDE (FIGURE 11)



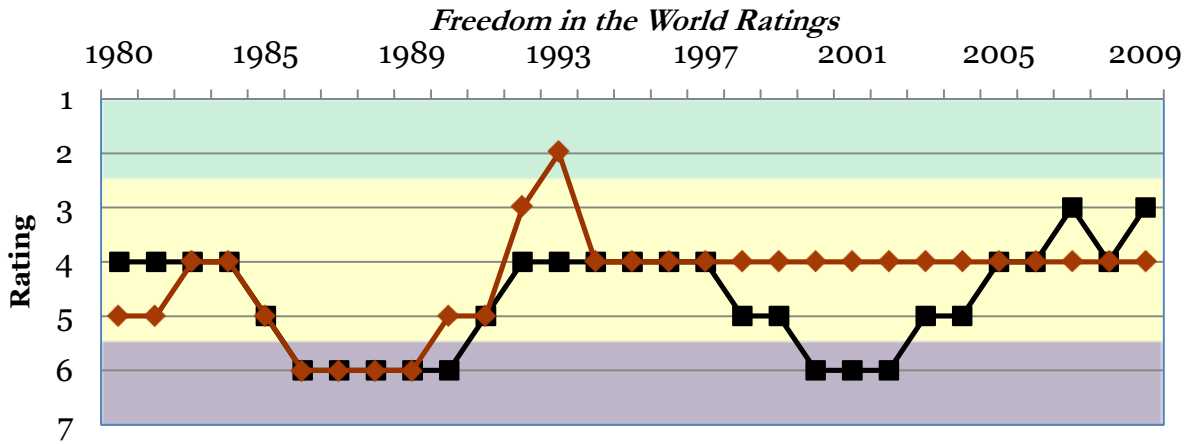
### CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (FIGURE 12)



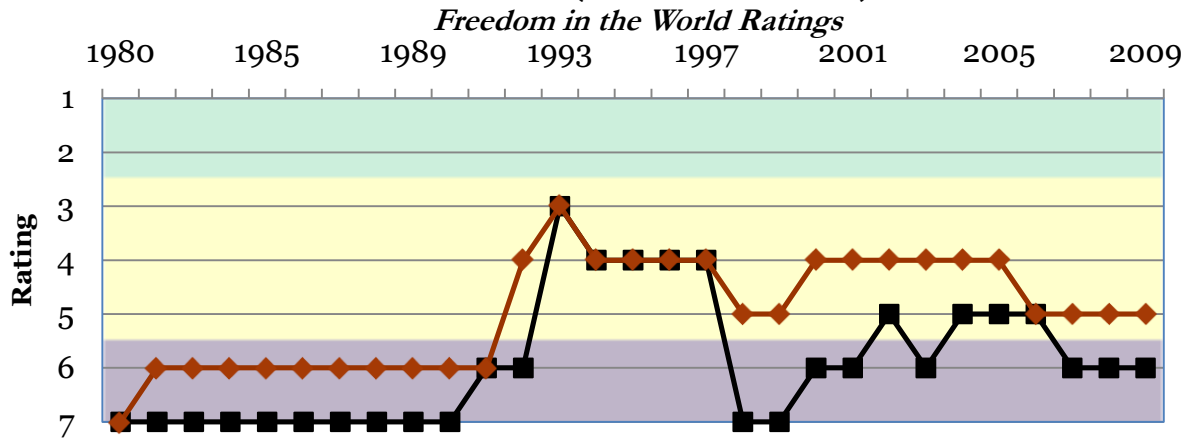
### CHAD (FIGURE 13)



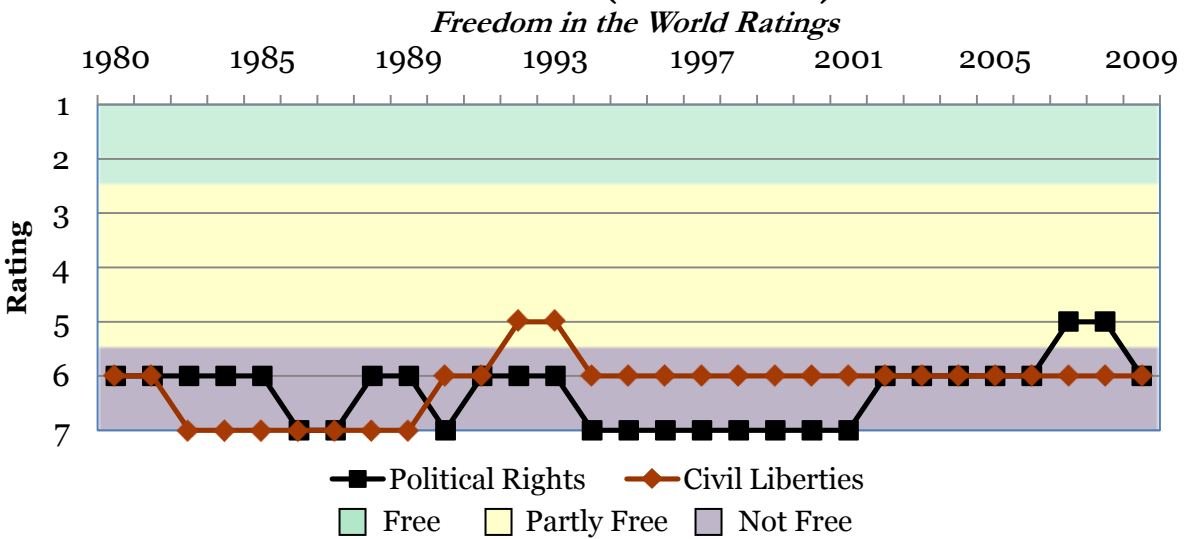
### COMOROS (FIGURE 14)



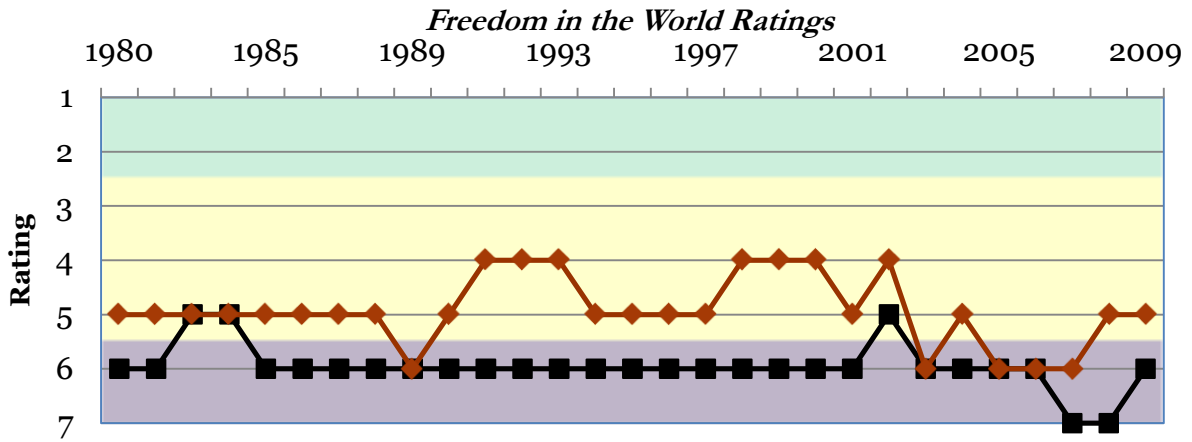
### CONGO (BRAZZAVILLE) (FIGURE 15)



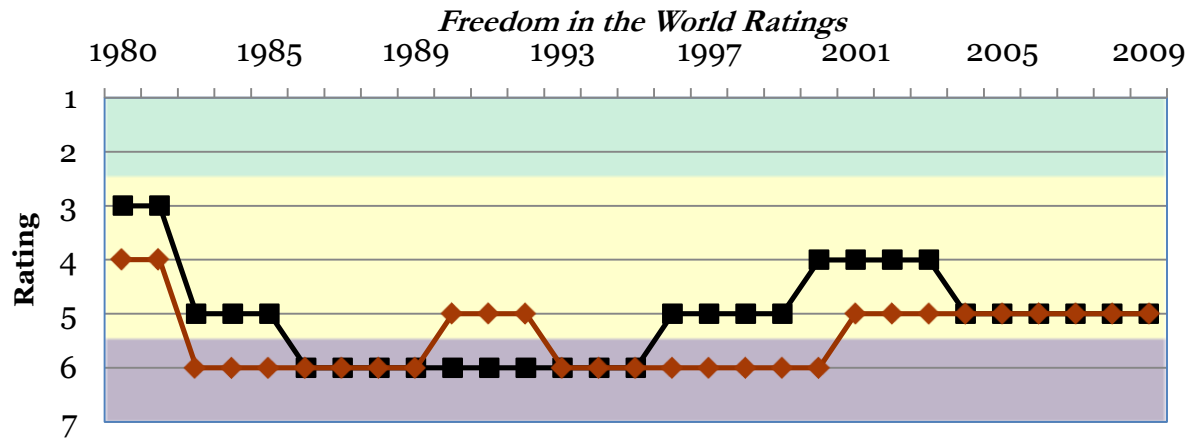
### CONGO (KINSHASA) (FIGURE 16)



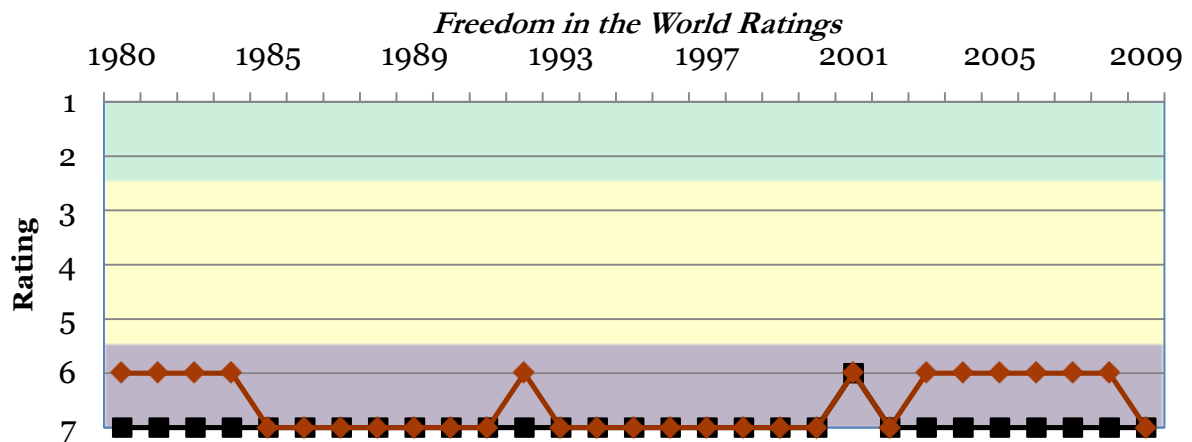
### COTE D'IVOIRE (FIGURE 17)



### DJIBOUTI (FIGURE 18)

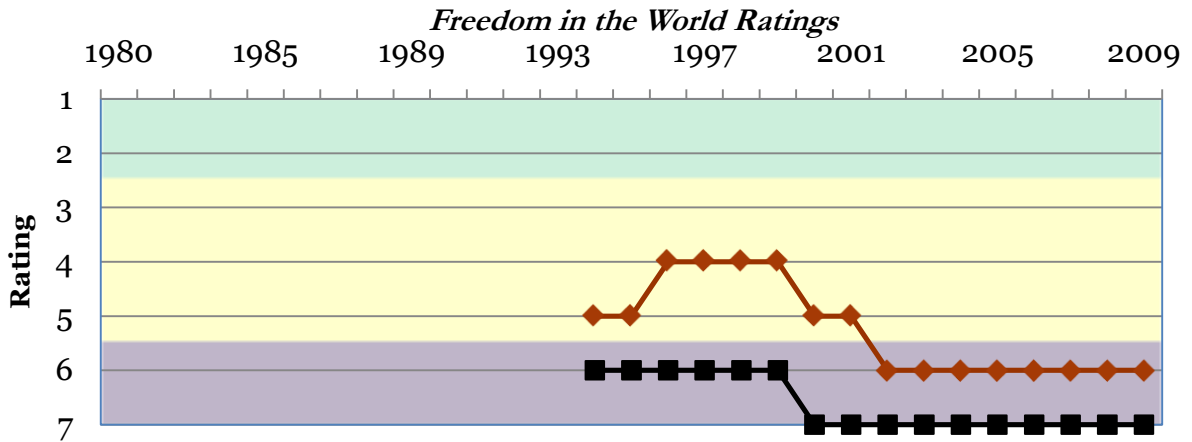


### EQUATORIAL GUINEA (FIGURE 19)

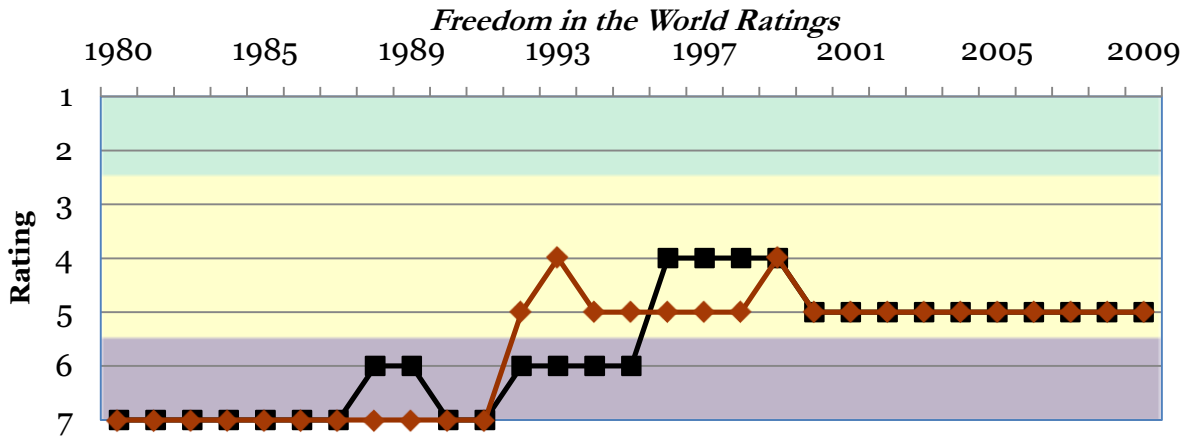


Political Rights      Civil Liberties  
 Free      Partly Free      Not Free

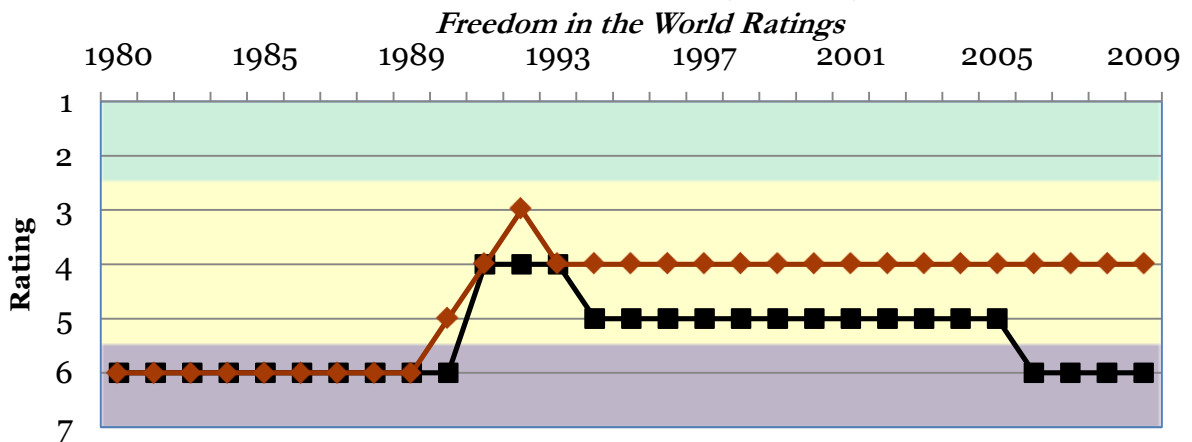
### ERITREA (FIGURE 20)



### ETHIOPIA (FIGURE 21)

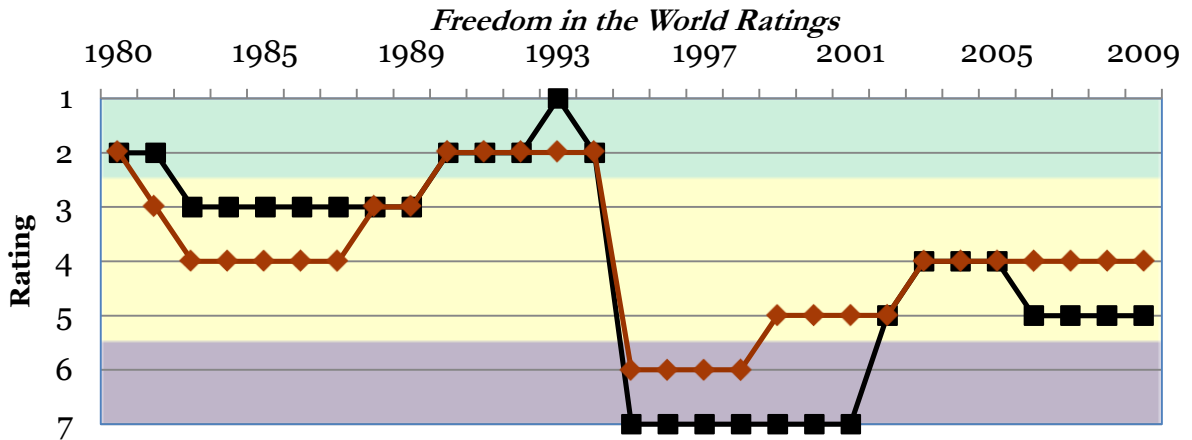


### GABON (FIGURE 22)

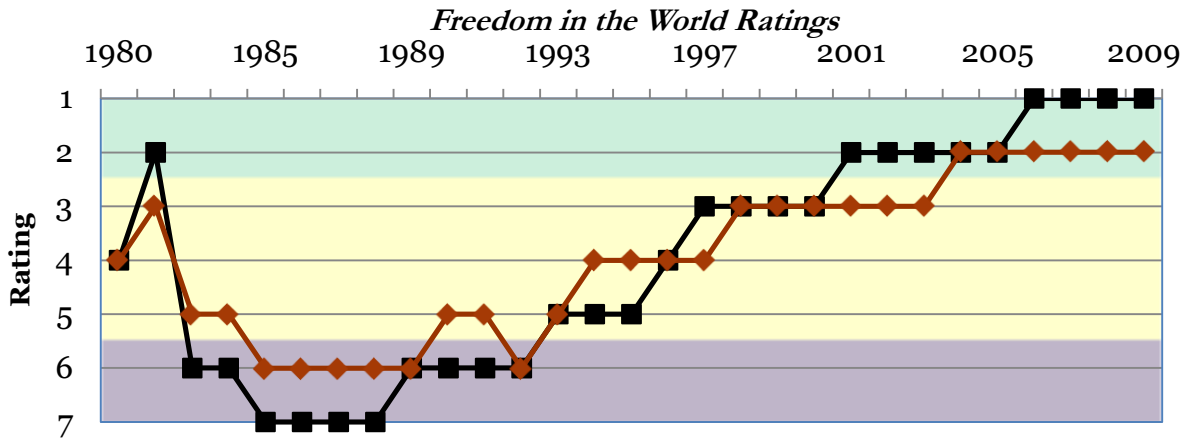


Political Rights    
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  Partly Free    
  Not Free

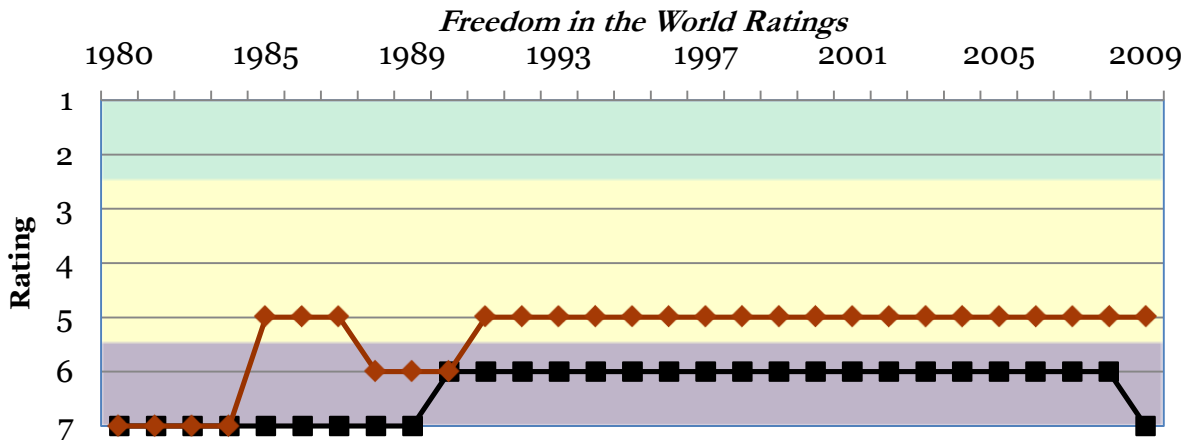
### GAMBIA (FIGURE 23)



### GHANA (FIGURE 24)



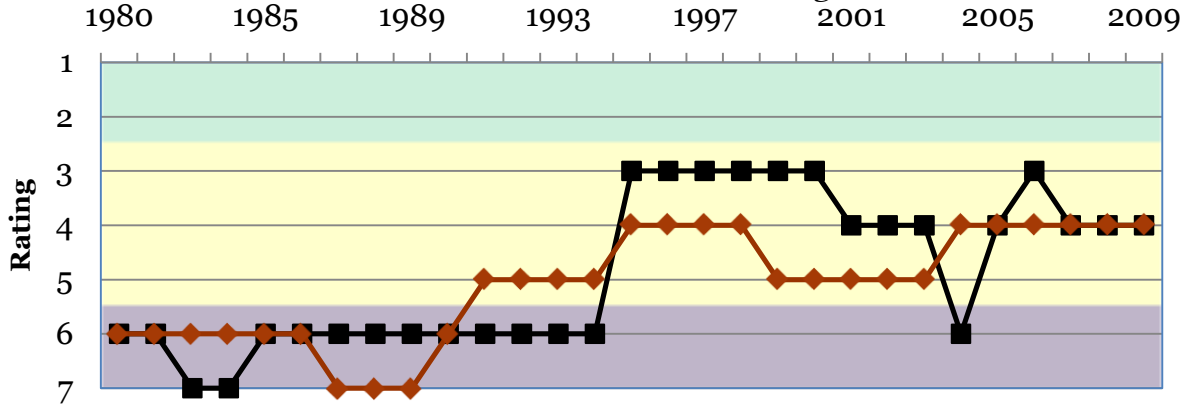
### GUINEA (FIGURE 25)



Political Rights      Civil Liberties  
 Free      Partly Free      Not Free

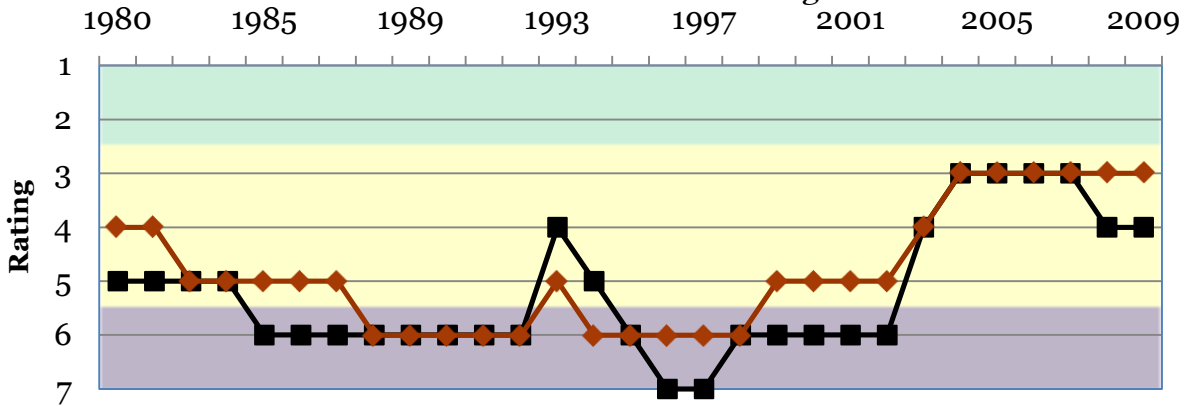
### GUINEA-BISSAU (FIGURE 26)

Freedom in the World Ratings



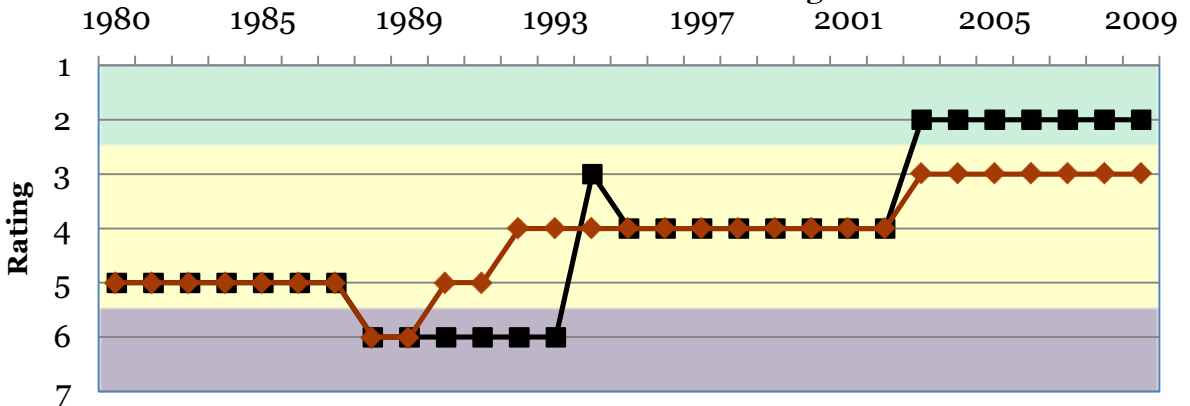
### KENYA (FIGURE 27)

Freedom in the World Ratings



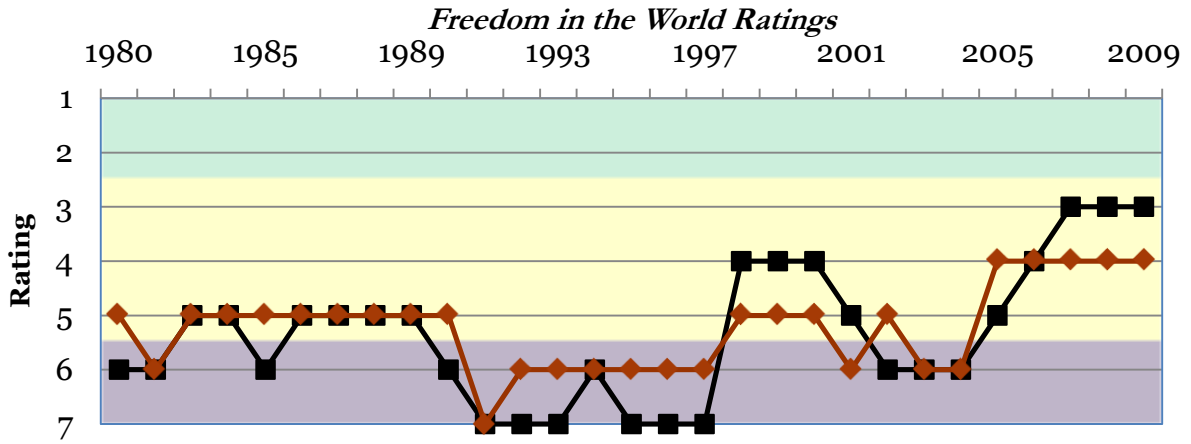
### LESOTHO (FIGURE 28)

Freedom in the World Ratings

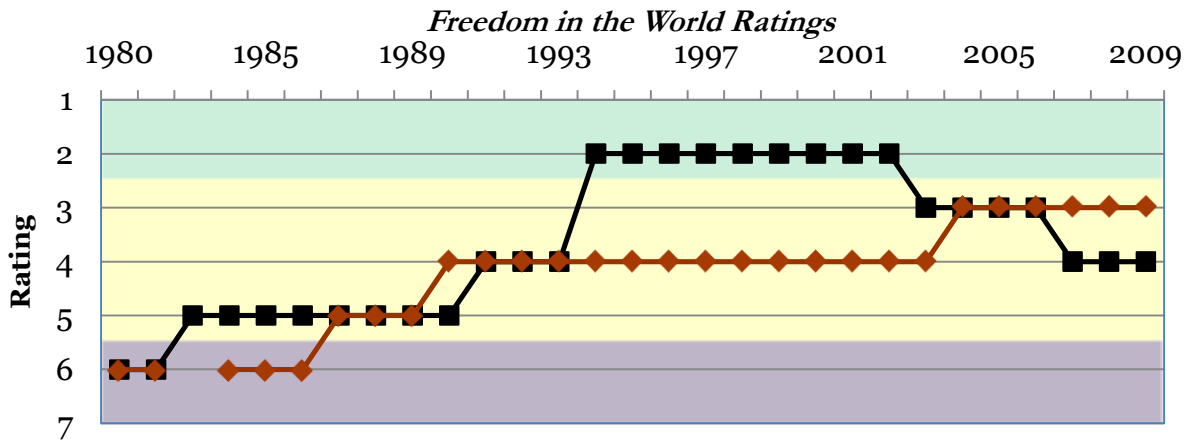


Political Rights      Civil Liberties  
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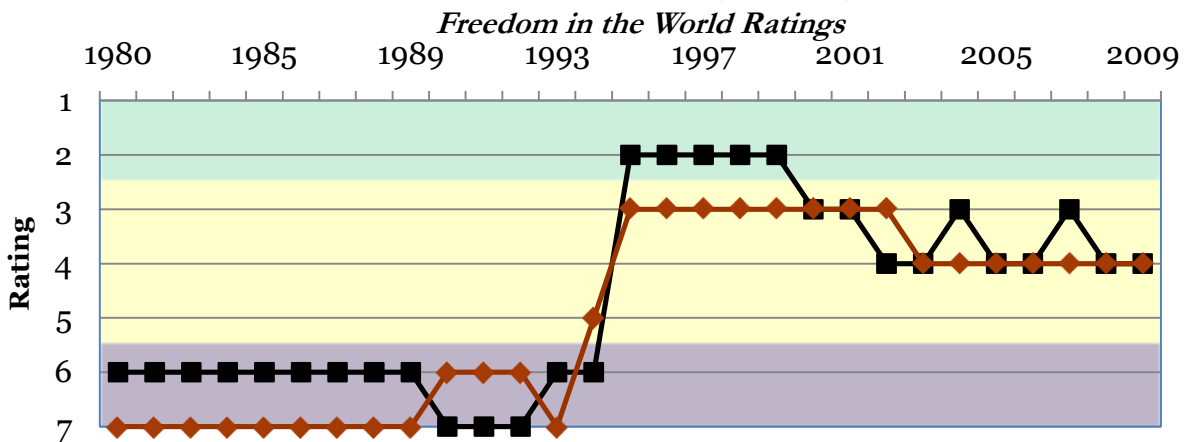
### LIBERIA (FIGURE 29)



### MADAGASCAR (FIGURE 30)

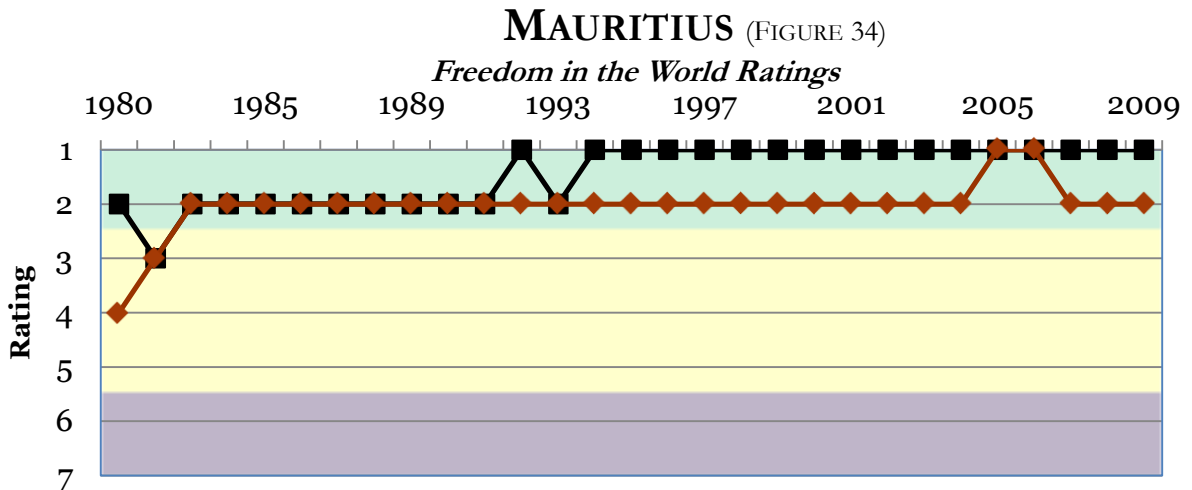
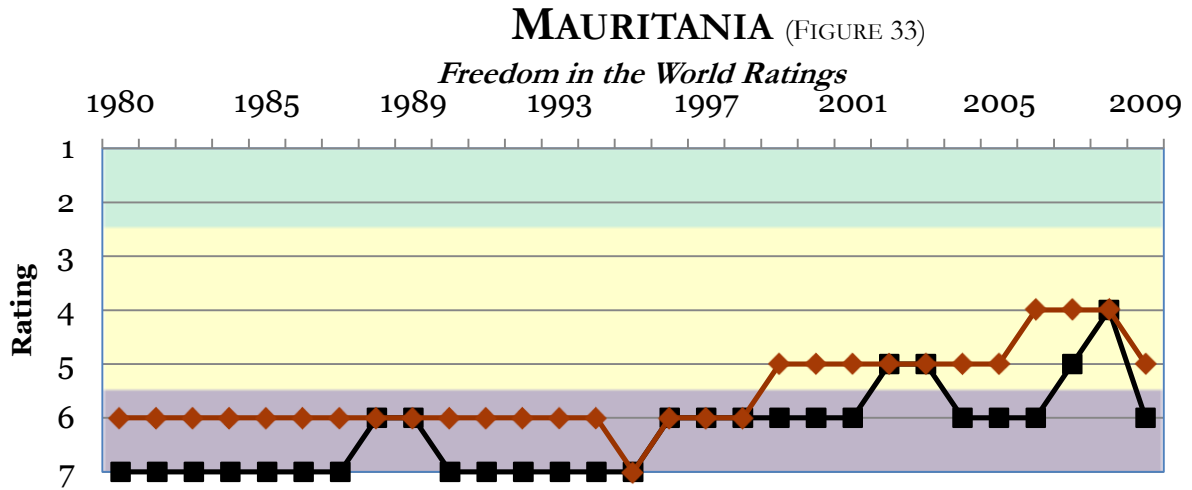
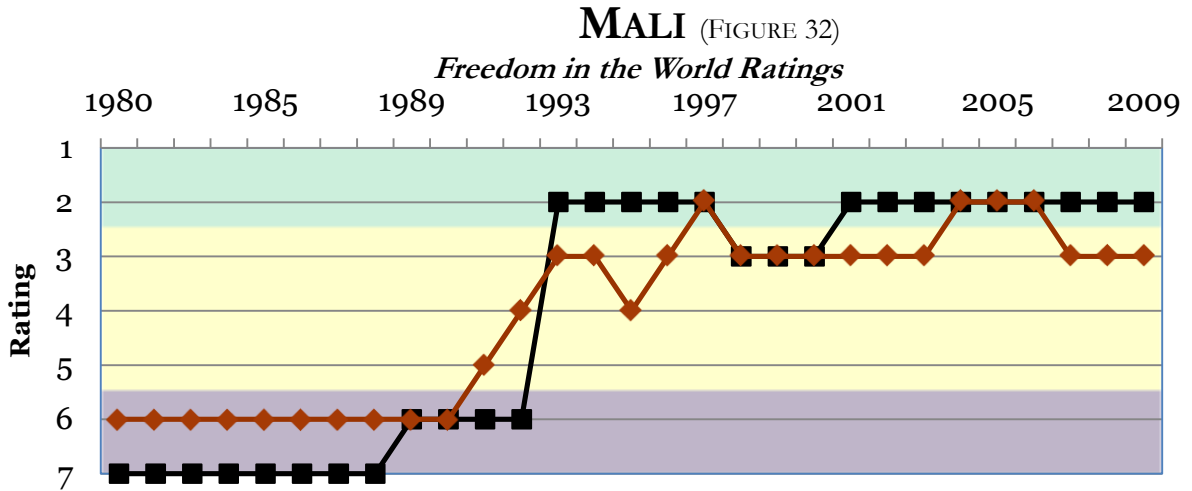


### MALAWI (FIGURE 31)



Political Rights    
  Civil Liberties  
 Free    
  Partly Free    
  Not Free

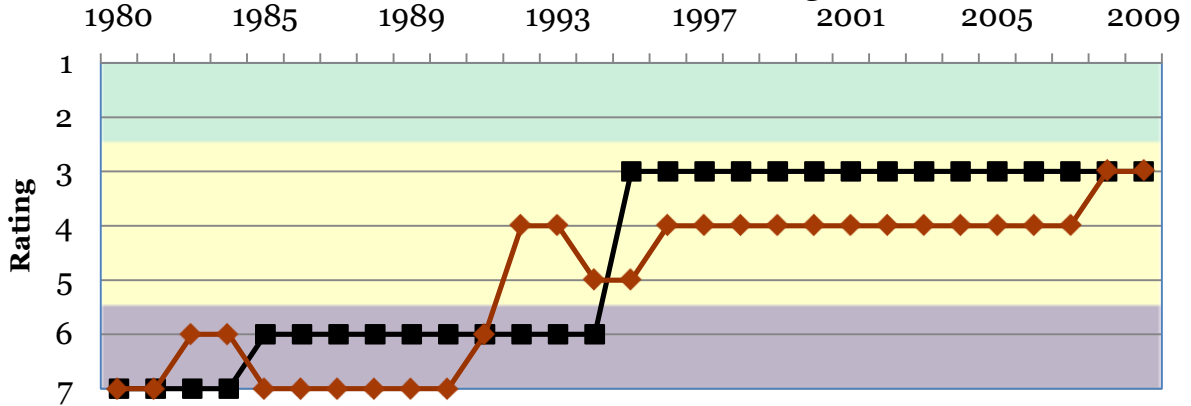




Political Rights    
  Civil Liberties  
 Free    
  Partly Free    
  Not Free

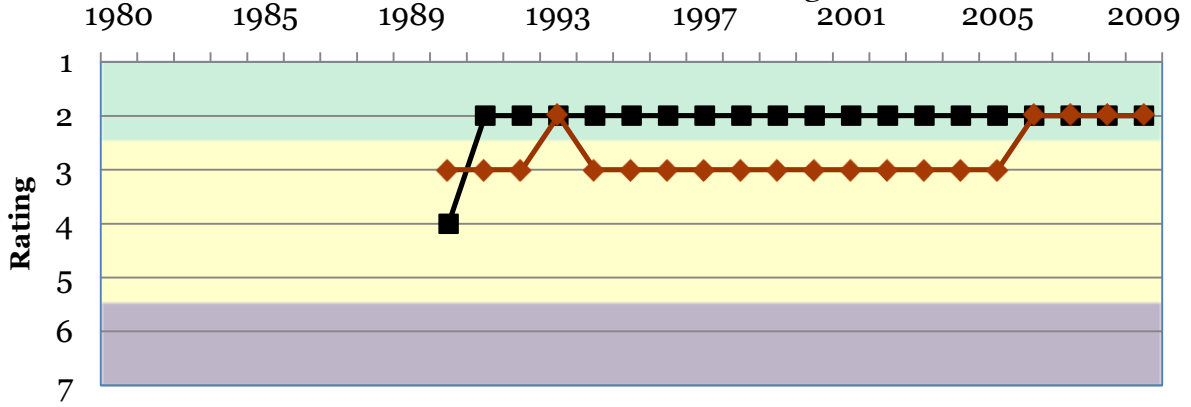
### MOZAMBIQUE (FIGURE 35)

Freedom in the World Ratings



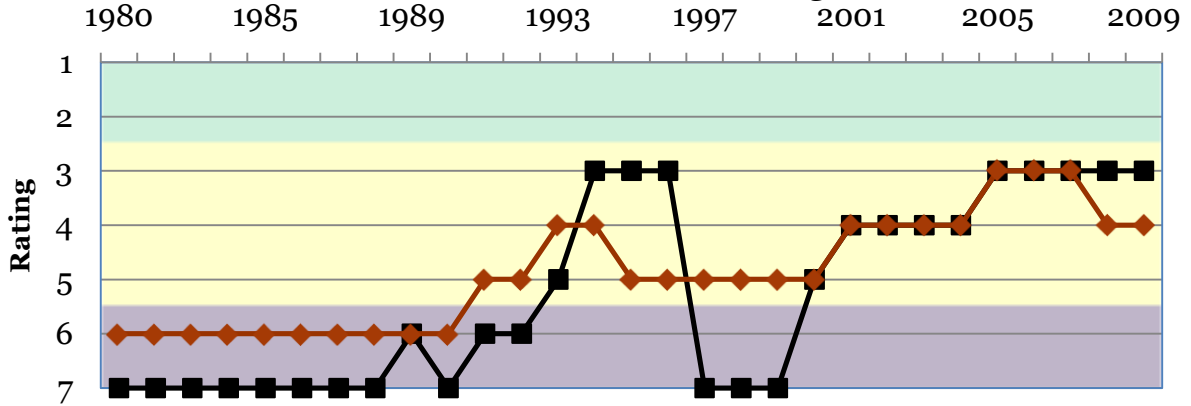
### NAMIBIA (FIGURE 36)

Freedom in the World Ratings



### NIGER (FIGURE 37)

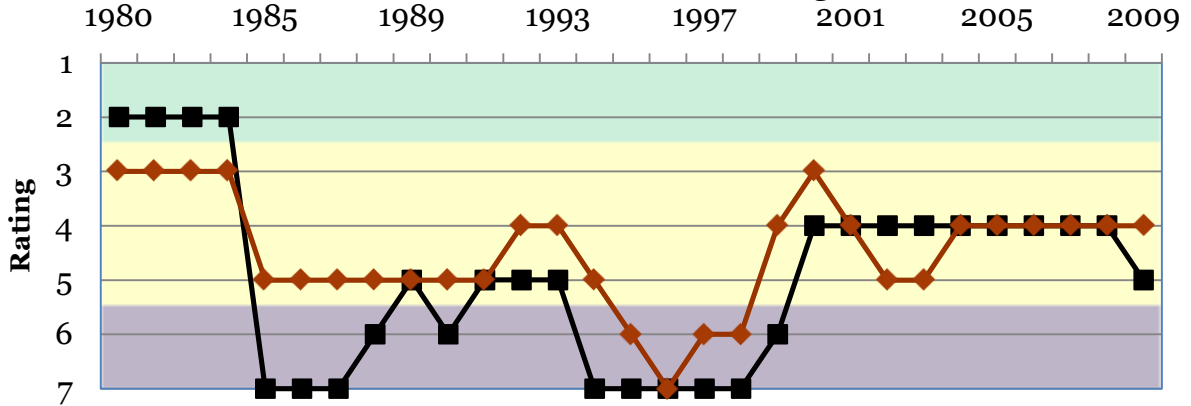
Freedom in the World Ratings



Political Rights    
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 Free    
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  Not Free

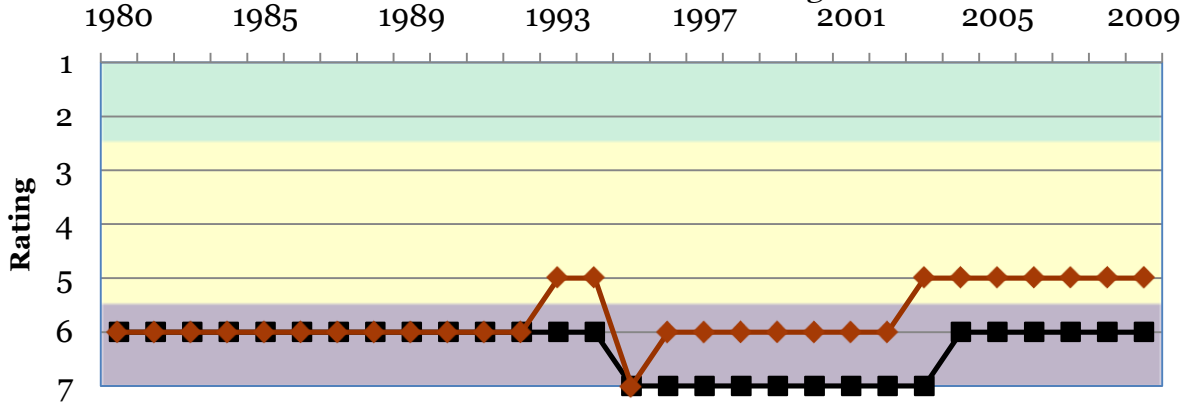
### NIGERIA (FIGURE 38)

Freedom in the World Ratings



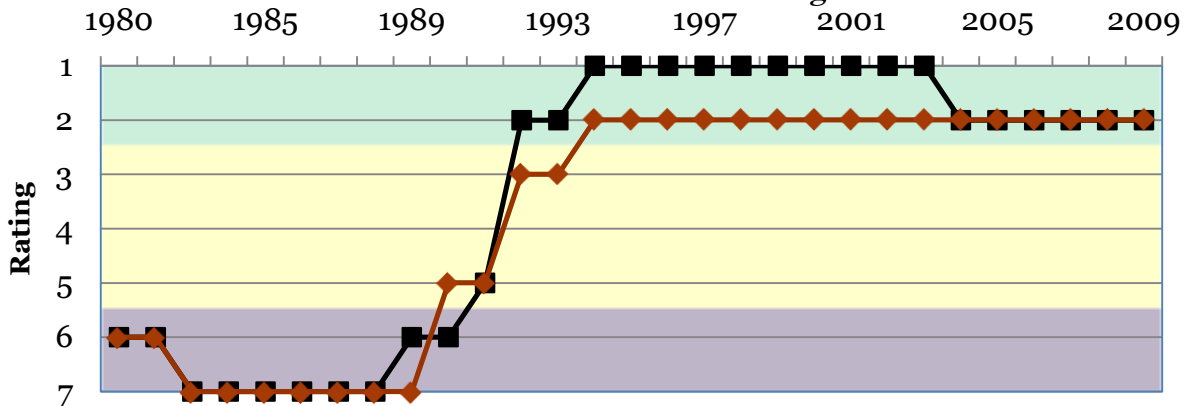
### RWANDA (FIGURE 39)

Freedom in the World Ratings



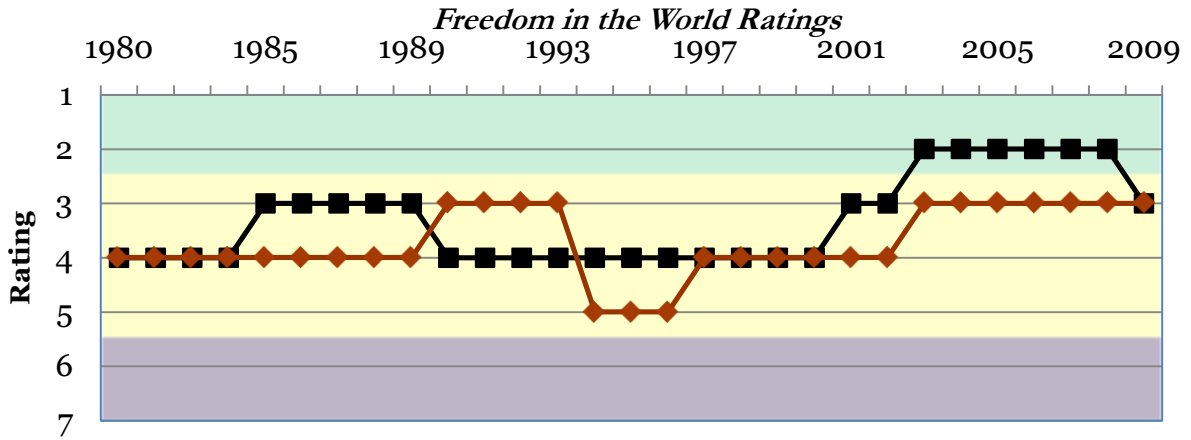
### SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE (FIGURE 40)

Freedom in the World Ratings

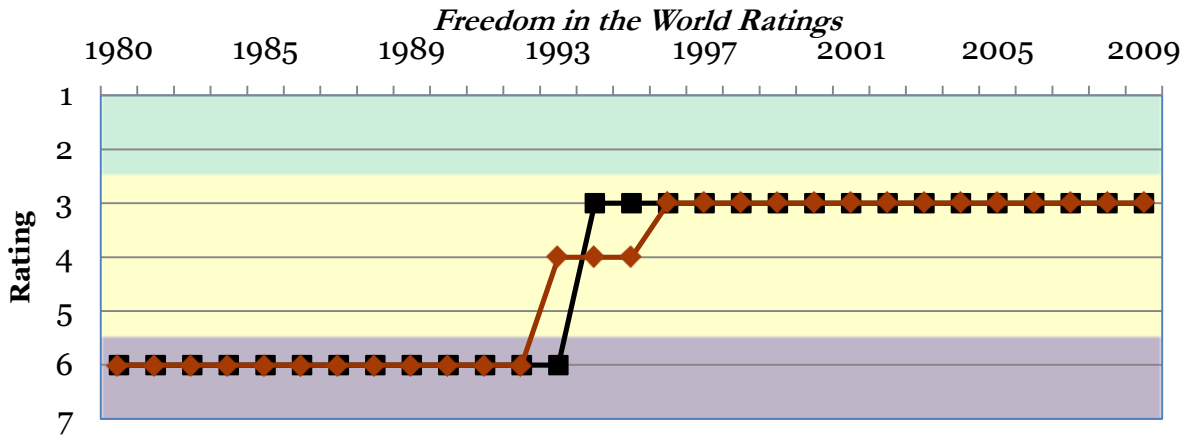


Political Rights      Civil Liberties  
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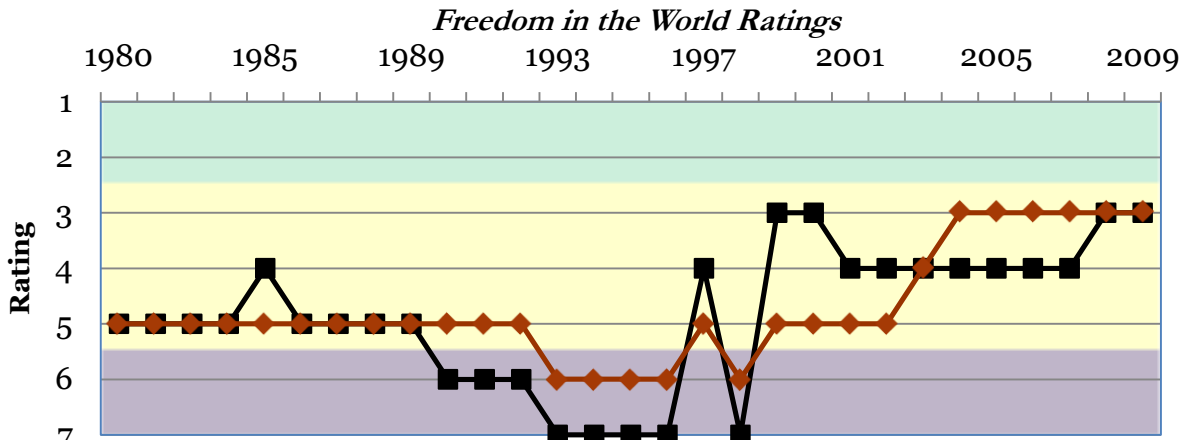
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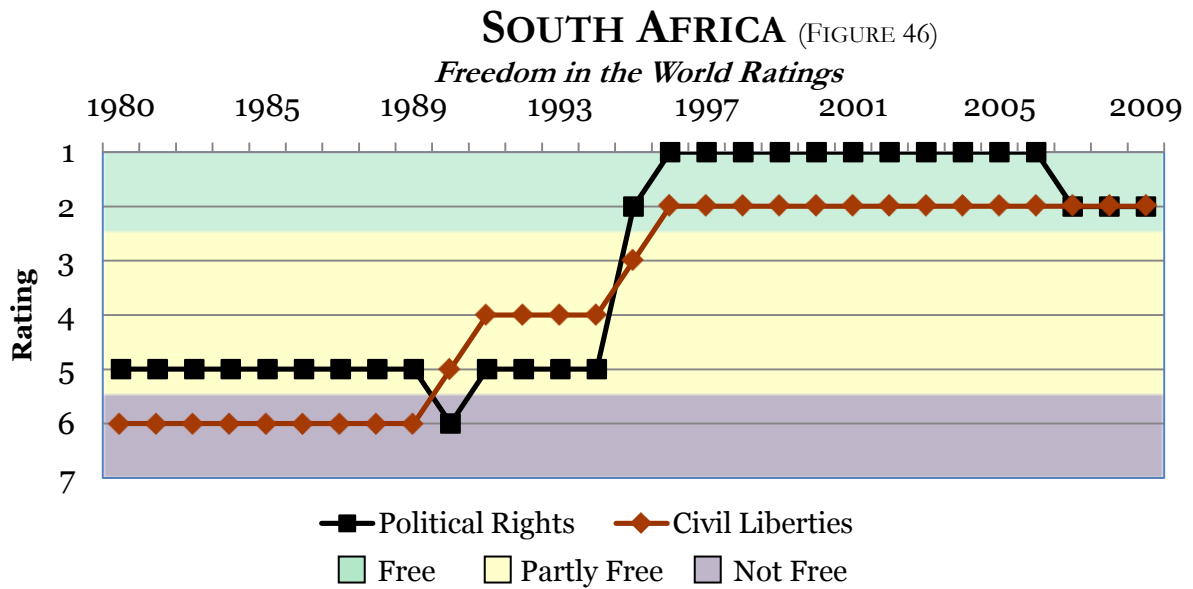
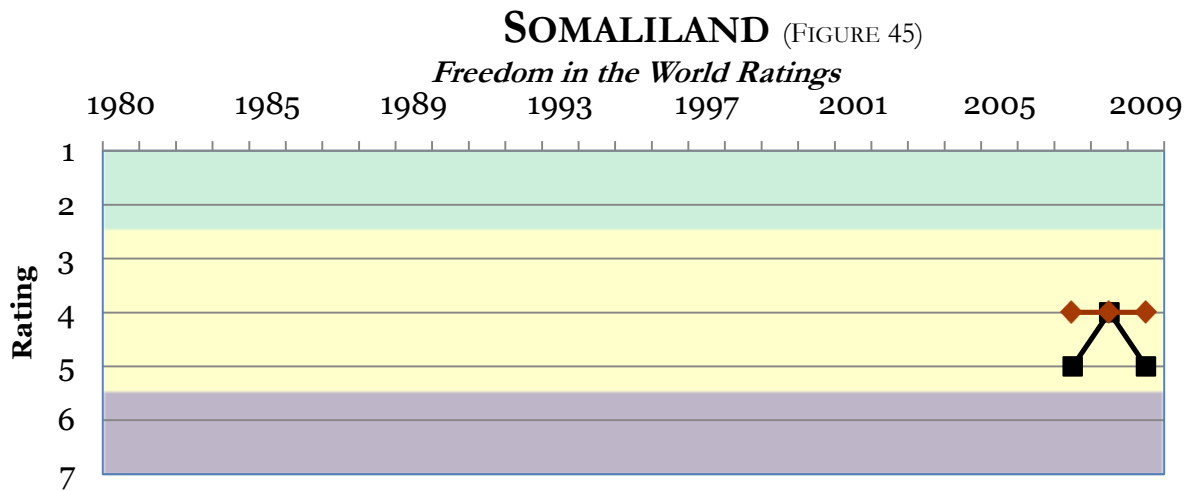
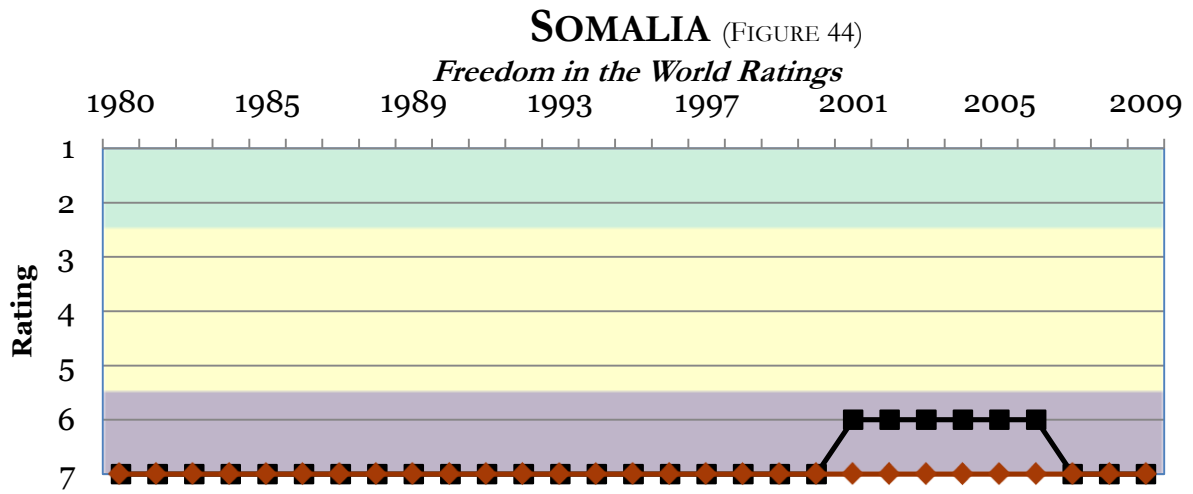
### SEYCHELLES (FIGURE 42)



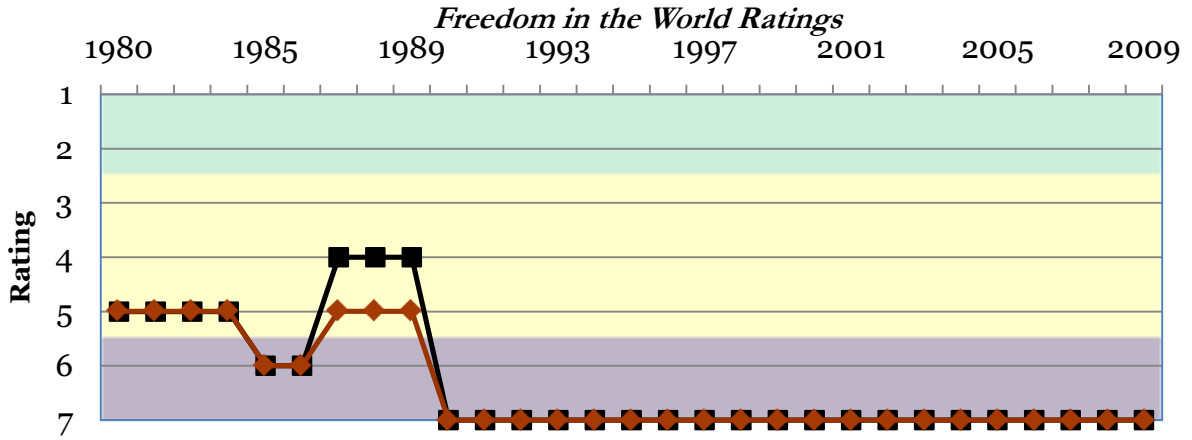
### SIERRA LEONE (FIGURE 43)



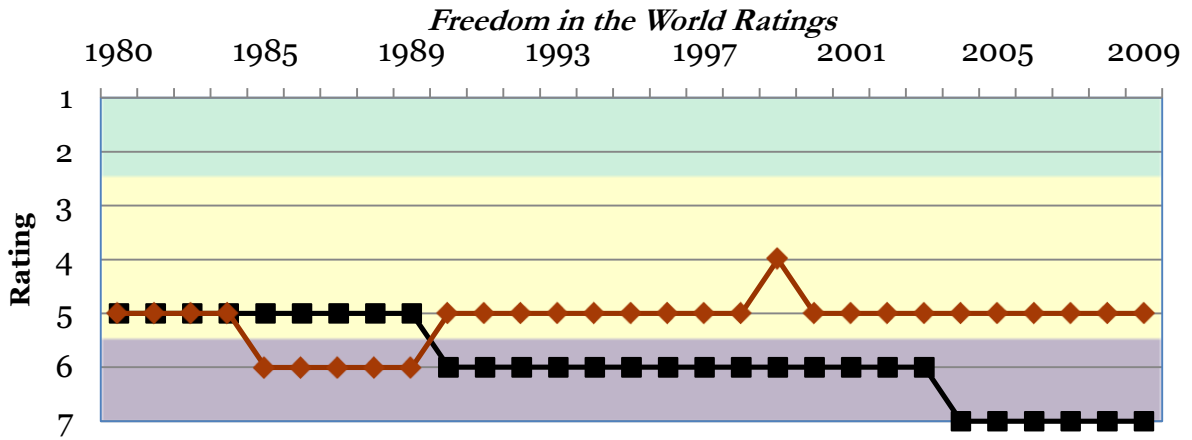
Political Rights    
  Civil Liberties  
 Free    
  Partly Free    
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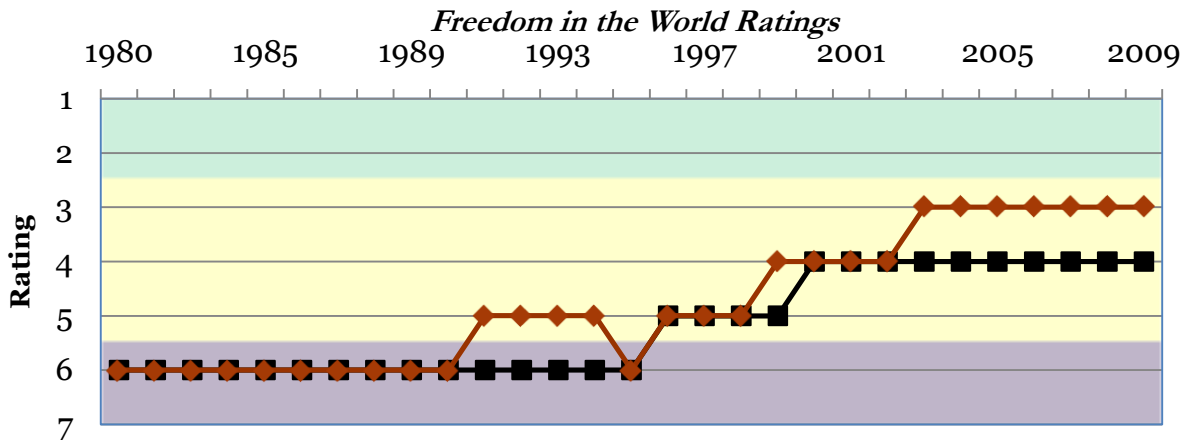
### SUDAN (FIGURE 47)



### SWAZILAND (FIGURE 48)

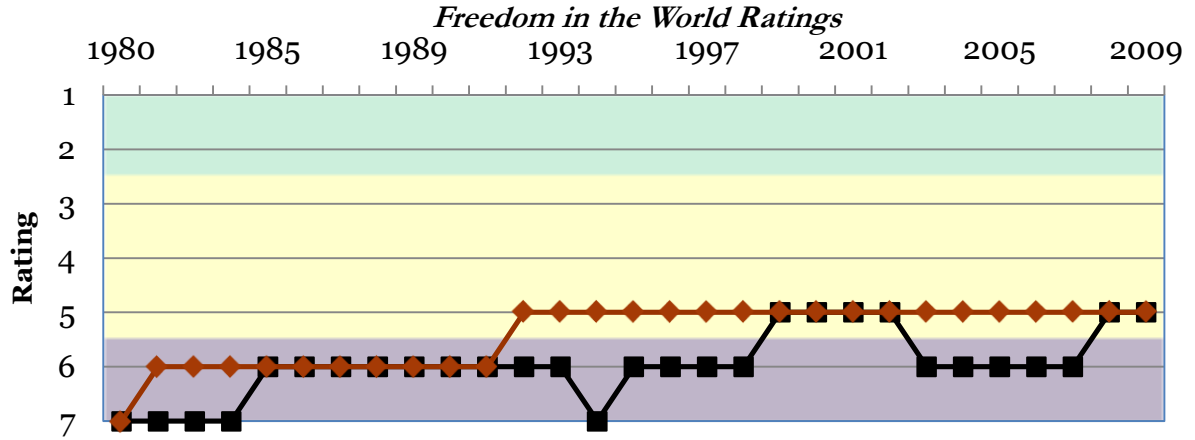


### TANZANIA (FIGURE 49)

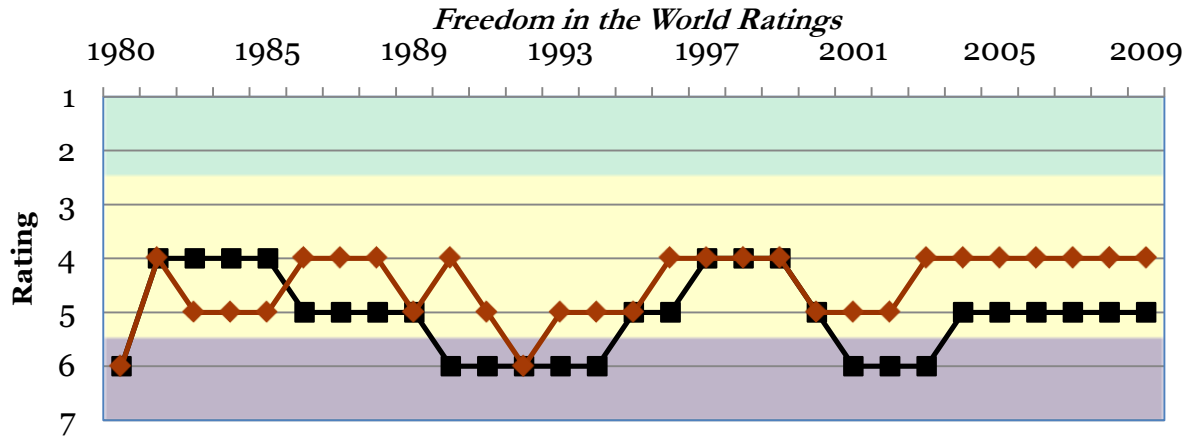


Political Rights      Civil Liberties  
 Free      Partly Free      Not Free

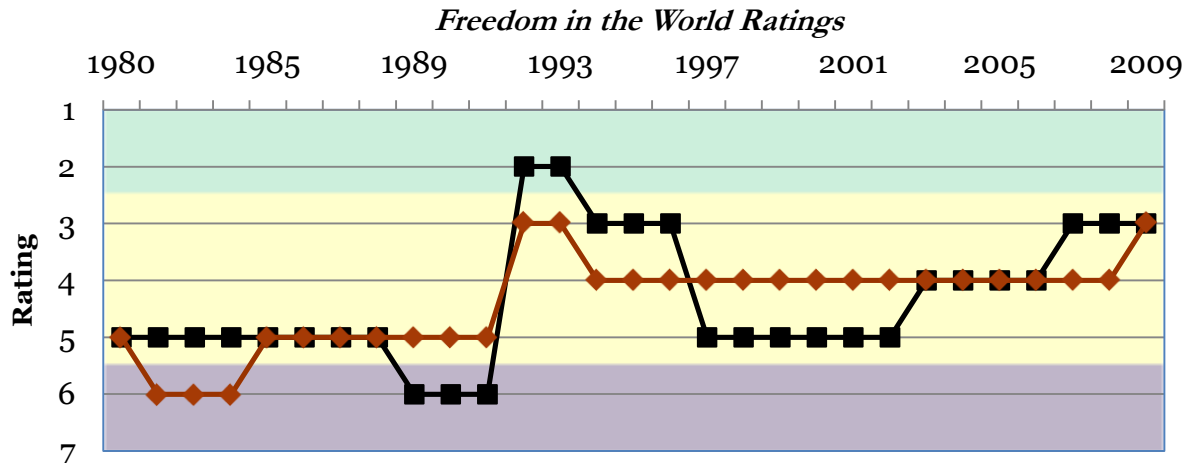
### TOGO (FIGURE 50)



### UGANDA (FIGURE 51)



### ZAMBIA (FIGURE 52)



Political Rights      Civil Liberties  
 Free      Partly Free      Not Free

# ZIMBABWE (FIGURE 53)

## Freedom in the World Ratings

