Democratization in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Empirical Analysis

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This research attempts to find answers to the questions of why Sub-Saharan African countries vary greatly in their levels of democratic institutionalization even though their democratic transitions happened almost simultaneously. Do multi-party systems permitting competitive elections pave the way for democracy or is democratic institutionalization better explained by other structural attributes or variables? To this end, this research explores various factors to explain democratic processes in the Sub-Saharan region of Africa. The five major approaches to explaining democratization, which include modernization, elites, civil society, political culture, and international relations, are tested by analyzing empirically the data having to do with political development throughout the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa. From our analysis, we found that the two social variables of freedom of the press and corruption have more explanatory power for differing levels of democratization in the region.

Key Words: Sub-Saharan African countries, democratization, political development, multi-partyism

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Sub-Saharan Africa experienced a wave of democratization over the past two decades and this has significantly changed the political landscape of this region. Virtually every country in Sub-Saharan Africa has held repeated multiparty elections, meaning all parties at least have had the chance to take control of government offices. Countries in the region have opened their closed political systems through these processes. Many experts have focused on whether a region that historically has lagged behind the rest of the world would be a land of new opportunity and dynamism by dismantling authoritarianism, ending dictatorships, and addressing political instabilities, among others.

Democratization, however, is progressing at an uneven pace across the continent. In some countries, there seems to be a deepening commitment to democratic norms and practices, but in others, this commitment, both by political elites and by the public, has proven tenuous. Even though citizens have more chances now to participate in the political process than they had before, in some countries only one party continues to rule without the peaceful and successful transfer of power to the opposition. In other cases, government takeovers to replace incumbent authoritarians have invoked other uncertainties about democratic transition in those countries.

This research attempts to find answers to the questions of why these Sub-Saharan African countries vary greatly in their levels of democratic development even though their democratic transitions have happened almost simultaneously. Does multi-partyism, which permits competitive elections, pave the way for democratic transitions, or is substantial democratic development better explained by other structural attributes or variables?

To that end, this research explores various factors that contributed to the democratic transitions in the Sub-Saharan African region. The five major approaches explaining democratization—modernization, elites, civil society, political culture, and international relations—here are tested by analyzing empirically the data having to do with political development in Sub-Saharan African countries.

FIVE THEORIES OF DEMOCRATIZATION

Why are South Africa, Botswana, and Namibia considered democracies while neighboring Zimbabwe and Angola are not? In fact, democratization is an abstract concept having complex elements. It is not easy to define the term straightforwardly although it is an important political phenomenon in current

international politics.¹ Therefore, scholars have paid attention to identifying the causes of democratization or explaining its relationships to other elements. Reflecting individual intellectual orientations, some analysts have focused on the dynamics of domestic factors, while others have concentrated on external factors.

Contending explanations for democratization and democratic institutionalization have fallen in and out of favor over time. The fact that there are different perspectives on explaining democratization suggests that certain phenomena in the political world are multilinear rather than unilinear, and this must be explained through multivariate interpretation. In addition, perspectives that were considered accurate at one time can weaken as the world changes, even if they are not totally lost.

MODERNIZATION

This prominent theory argues that democratization is correlated with modernization in developing countries. The theory argues that as societies become more modern, they inevitably become more democratic. Modernization is related to better education, a weakening of traditional institutions that puts stress on authority and hierarchy, greater gender equality, which permits equal access to resources and opportunities regardless of gender, and the rise of a middle class occupying the vast middle of the social hierarchy. Here, modernization implies the diffusion of Western styles of living and values, which can be interpreted in all aspects through the model. Modernization theory postulates that, as peoples become more economically sophisticated and better educated, they need and desire greater control over the state to achieve and

¹ Democratization is a process by which democracy expands or diffuses throughout a sovereign entity. As a reference for some of the attributes of democracy, the following definitions will be helpful. Lipset (1960, 27) defines democracy as “a political system which supplies regular constitutional opportunities for changing the governmental officials, and a social mechanism which permits the largest possible part of the population to influence major decisions by choosing contenders for political office”. Downs (1957) defines democratic government according to these eight characteristics: 1) a single party (or coalition of parties) is chosen by popular election to run the governing apparatus; 2) such elections are held within periodical intervals; 3) all adults who are permanent residents of the society, are sane, and abide by the laws of the land, are eligible to vote in each such election; 4) each voter may cast one and only one vote in each election; 5) any party receiving the support of a majority of those voting is entitled to take over the powers of government until the next election; 6) the losing parties in an election never try by force, or by any illegal means prevent, the winning party from taking office; 7) the party in power never attempts to restrict the political activities of any citizens or other parties as long as they make no attempt to overthrow the government by force; and finally, 8) there are two or more parties competing for control of the governing apparatus in every election. Przeworski et al. (2000, 15) succinctly defines democracy as “a regime in which those who govern are selected through some contested election”.

defend their own interests (O'Neil 2015).

There are many perspectives on modernization. For example, focusing on an economics perspective, Rostow (1960) presented five phases of economic development running from traditional society to the age of mass consumption. According to Rostow, traditional society is one that is predominantly an agricultural economy with subsistence farming, limited capital, and low labor productivity. The age of mass consumption, by contrast, is characterized as the economy's tertiary industries occupying the mainstream. Modernization here is a linear process following the experiences of those developed countries that already had passed through those five stages to reach their current development level.

From a socio-demographic perspective, Deutsch (1961) explains modernization in terms of social mobilization. He argues that social mobilization signifies "the process in which major clusters of old social, economic and psychological commitments are eroded or broken and people become available for new patterns of socialization and behavior" (*Ibid.*, 494-95). Social mobilization can be measured by the amount of exposure to aspects of modern life, such as through demonstrations of machinery, buildings, installations, consumer goods, show windows, rumors, governmental, medical or military practices, mass media, exposure to mass media, change of residence, urbanization, change from agricultural occupations, literacy, per capita income, and others (*Ibid.*).

This political perspective can be represented by the work of Coleman (1968, 395), who defines modernization as a "process of differentiation of political structure and secularization of political culture which enhance the capacity – the effectiveness and efficiency by performance – of society's political system". This perspective can be identified by various elements such as the separation of universalistic legal norms from religion, the separation of religion and ideology, the separation between administrative structure and public political competition, the notion of universal adult citizenship, the predominance of achievement criteria in the recruitment and allocation of political and administrative roles, popular involvement in the political system, efficacy of the implementation of political decisions, institutionalization of political organizations and procedures, and others (So 1990). Those all have to do with attributes of democratization.

Modernization theory fell out of favor in the 1970s when democracy was failing in many Latin American countries, and economic development in some Asian countries was progressing under autocratic regimes. Although scholars of contemporary political science no longer make sweeping claims that modernization inevitably leads to democracy, some insist that wealth and sustainable economic development are essential to the institutionalization and

long-term survival of any democracy (Przeworski and Limongi 1997). Debates about the relationship between modernization and political development draw attention in the discipline of international political economy, especially those involving developing countries.

ELITES

Modernization theory originally implied that democratization was almost automatic once a country developed a strong middle class and reached a certain standard of living. Actually, modernization theory did not fully explain democratization. It could not adequately account for economic development under non-democratic political systems or underdevelopment in countries with democratic systems. Democracy has yet to take hold in the oil rich states of the Middle East, where standards of living have risen with the fortunes of global oil. In Africa, Gabon, one of the richest countries on the continent, is still not a free state, whereas Benin, Senegal, and Tanzania, which are a few of the poorest countries in Africa, are all free states. What explains this?

Other scholars noticed the role of people in power, the political elites, especially the strategic motivations of those political elites. Analysts concentrated on what would lead elites to hang onto or surrender power. Elite theory pays attention to the distribution of wealth more than overall economic prosperity or poverty. As in the case of Nigeria, where economic assets are concentrated in the hands of elites, political change is much less likely if those elites believe that change would divest them of their wealth. However, if elites believe they can take some wealth with them in exchange for stepping aside, they may no longer see much value in clinging to power (Acemoglu and Robinson 2007). Elite theory mainly focuses on the roles of elites in the process of democratization. In this sense, elite theory can be compared to traditional modernization theory.

In this regard, Huntington (1991, 6) argues that “in virtually every country the most active supporters of democratization came from urban middle class,” citing the cases of Argentina, Brazil, the Philippines, Taiwan, Korea, and others during the late 1970s and 1980s. Likewise, Lipset (1959, 83) asserts that “increased wealth is not only related causally to the development of democracy by changing the social conditions of the workers, but it also affects the political role of the middle class through changing the shape of the stratification structure so that it shifts from an elongated pyramid to a diamond with a growing middle-class”. On the contrary, recent research shows that the rise of the middle class as a political force does not necessarily promote democracy. Southall (2014) in his case study on South Africa concludes that the classic theory arguing for an emergent middle class that will be a force for democracy against authoritarianism is not

fully supported. He stresses that the reality is likely to be far more ambiguous than obvious.

According to elite theory, it is elites, not the middle class, who lead political changes. The theory argues that elites have the ability to exert more control over political processes and decision-making, as they possess more political and social assets than the general public. Elites generally have more wealth, higher educational attainment, and higher social status than an average member of the public. They exert a powerful influence over the political world using their money, intelligence, and status as effective tools of control.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Elite-based theories give us a sense of why leaders may be more or less willing to surrender power to the public but not why the public would demand power in the first place. Therefore, some scholars downplay the importance of political elites and elevate the importance of the political power of society. These scholars, who are more interested in the role of society, have stressed the importance of public organization or, more specifically, what is usually referred to as civil society. The term civil society was originally used to explain the movements in Eastern Europe in the 1970s that organized domains independent of communist rule (Tismaneanu 1990). Civil society is defined as organized life outside of the state. Civil society is a group of organizations created by people based on their own interests that are not necessarily political. Environmental groups, churches, sports teams, fraternal organizations, and others make up these associations. They can train people to articulate, promote, and defend what is important to them and eventually to communicate those interests to their governments (O'Neil 2015).

Civil society provides the ideas and the tools for political action and mobilization that allow small-scale democratic practices to spread. Therefore, if civic associations can emerge, they may create enticements for democratic change. Modernization may help foster civil society, and civil society in turn may lead to pressure on elites for change. These elites, however, may or may not acquiesce, depending on their incentives to do so (*Ibid.*).

In this respect, scholars have tried to identify the relationship between civil societies and democratization. Stanski (2005, 219) concludes that "civil society is an important precondition for the formation of a viable democracy because it creates the landscape in which democracy can take form," by analyzing the role of civil society in Iraq after the Iraqi War. Petukhov (2008), on the other hand, argues that budding perceptions about the new institutions of civil society would stimulate development of democracy in Russia, a country that once had a

socialist political system characterized by public ownership and the devaluation of civil society. Indeed, civil society has come to be regarded as something more than a cohesive unit taking collective action outside state or government control.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

While most variables that affect democratization are internal, it is also vital to consider factors that are made up of external influences. As we can see from such cases as the occupation of Japan and Germany after World War II, or of Iraq and Afghanistan after the September 11th terrorist attacks, international factors also have played a role in democratization. In all these cases, the United States played the decisive role in implanting democratic values and governments in these countries that once were ruled by authoritarian or totalitarian regimes. Moreover, foreign investment, globalization, and international trade can lead to modernization and may push democratization forward.

Many empirical studies support correlations between a variety of economic variables and democratization. An analysis by Eichengreen and Leblang (2006) concludes that there are positive relationships between globalization and democracy. Milner and Mukherjee (2009) also identifies certain relationships between democracy and economic liberalization. Interestingly, their empirical testing supports the hypothesis that democratization may help foster economic globalization, but not vice versa. They did not find statistically meaningful evidence that globalization itself promoted democracy. Nevertheless, some still support the thesis that economic variables facilitate democracy. For example, Acemoglu and Robinson (2007) contend that greater capital mobility arising from globalization and increased international trade might lead to the creation of consolidated democracies.

On the other hand, international pressure or incentives may cause elites to favor democracy. Indeed, in the 1990s most Eastern European countries were encouraged to institutionalize democracy because democracy was a prerequisite for membership in the European Union, a political and economic union organized to pursue and reinforce the collective interests of those countries. However, as O'Neil (2015) points out, the influence of external factors may also depend on other environmental factors, including how open to, and dependent on, the outside world that country is.

POLITICAL CULTURE

Some scholars argue that democracy is fundamentally a culture emerging from historical, religious, and philosophical foundations. Political culture is defined by "the system of beliefs and values in which political action is embedded and given

meaning” (Karl 1990, 1-21). It shapes the landscape of political activity and may influence the preference for certain kinds of politics. In this view, modernization does not lead to individualism and democracy. Singapore, in spite of being the epitome of economic success in Asia, is not considered a fully democratic country. It has maintained one-party rule for more than half a century after its independence. It was once a strong advocate for ‘Asian values’ that emphasized collectivism over individualism in the course of rapid development. Late Singapore leader Lee Kwan Yew attributed Singapore’s economic miracle to Asian values, which lost its popularity as an explanatory concept after the 1997 Asian financial crisis. In contrast, in the Western world, democratic and individualist practices have given rise to modernity.

With regard to this, research by Gorodnichenko and Roland (2015) gives some indication. Through empirical testing comparing individualistic and collectivist cultures, they came to the conclusion that the former would have a higher likelihood of switching to democracy than the latter. According to these scholars, “the reason is that a collectivist culture will tend to stick into a ‘good’ non-predatory autocracy, which will not be the case with an individualistic culture” (*Ibid.*, 23).

If this conclusion were general, then we should not expect democratization outside of the West in countries having weak individualistic cultures. This conclusion makes many scholars uncomfortable because Latin American countries, with a strong hierarchical Roman Catholic culture, and Asian countries, many of which share a hierarchically-informed Confucian culture, would seem unlikely to democratize regardless of socio-economic achievements (O’Neil 2015).

In sum, there are numerous ways to explain why democratization takes place in some cases and not in others. While scholars tend to favor one of these explanations over the others, we find that most of these factors play some role in each case of democratization. Modernization can set the stage for political activity and awareness, which can find its organizational expression in civil society. Elites may be influenced by economic conditions at home and international inducements or sanctions. Even culture may encourage certain kinds of identities and ideas that catalyze democracy or get in its way. In the end, changing domestic and international conditions may mean that what leads to democracy now may be unrelated to how it comes about in the future (*Ibid.*).

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Sub-Saharan Africa is the term used to describe the region of the African continents south of the Sahara Desert. While the exact range is not without controversy, it is ordinarily accepted that the demarcation line is the southern edge of the Sahara Desert.² The regions are distinguished culturally as well as geographically from North Africa. Unlike those living north of the Sahara, people in Sub-Saharan Africa were not much influenced by Islam and Arabic culture. The region is comprised of 49 countries, including 43 mainland countries and the six island countries of Madagascar, Seychelles, Comoros, Cabo Verde, Mauritius, and Sao Tome and Principe.

Most have a colonial history. In the 1880s, European interest in Africa increased dramatically. Although the history of colonization by European powers in the region dates back to before the 1800s, the European empires of Britain, France, Germany, Portugal, and the Netherlands had all made pitches for securing colonies by the end of the 19th century. As a result, almost every country in the region was under colonial rule by the dawn of the 20th century. Liberia and Ethiopia were the exceptional cases, both free from colonial rule before World War I.³ The imperial powers mainly made economic use of the territories they occupied, which resulted in the exploitation and deprivation of those colonial countries.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, Africans sought independence for the purposes of achieving equal status with western countries, modernizing, and developing economically in a way that would benefit them. African nationalists especially recognized that economic exploitation by colonial powers was the root cause of their socioeconomic troubles, and so sought their independence. As a result, almost all African colonies gained their independence between the 1950s and the 1970s.⁴

² For example, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank classifies Djibouti as a North African country instead of a Sub-Saharan African country. On the other hand, the Economist Intelligence Unit, a well-known economic research and analysis division of the Economist Group in Britain, classifies Djibouti as a Sub-Saharan African country but categorizes Sudan as a North African country.

³ In the case of South Africa, the country was a colony of the United Kingdom until its independence in 1910. Then, the Union of South Africa was established as the British Parliament enacted the South Africa Act uniting Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Transvaal Colony, and the Colony of Natal in 1909.

⁴ The only country to achieve independence from a European country since the 1980s is Zimbabwe (from Britain in 1980). Namibia achieved independence in 1990 from South Africa, and Eritrea did it in 1993 from Ethiopia.

However, it was a bitter legacy that the imperial powers left behind for most of the newly-independent countries in the region. Even though the imperial powers built infrastructure, this was mainly for extraction purposes, not to further the economic development of the colonial countries. That is, the economies of Sub-Saharan African countries were structured to serve to benefit the imperial powers at the cost of sacrificing their local economies. For this reason, the economies in the region have lagged behind other economies. Now, Sub-Saharan Africa is the poorest region in the world, still suffering from the legacies of colonialism. Moreover, the region is characterized by nativist corruption, non-capitalist economic policies, and inter-ethnic conflicts that are mostly related to the legacies of colonialism. The region contains many of the least developed countries (LDCs) designated by the United Nations.⁵ The region's entire GDP in 2016 only slightly exceeded that of the Republic of Korea's.⁶

In response to both internal and external pressure for change following the wave of democratization over the past two decades, Sub-Saharan countries have increasingly liberalized their political processes, permitting opposition parties to organize and allowing greater freedom of the press. When they agreed in early 2000 to establish a continent-wide organization to work for a peaceful, prosperous, and integrated Africa, the African Union, those Sub-Saharan African countries claimed to be advocating for the promotion of democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and good governance, and promoting and protecting human rights as their objectives. Furthermore, this determination raised external attention to the future potential of Africa. Indeed, the world has witnessed changing images of the region. For example, according to an African Development Bank report released in 2012, there were 99 attempted or successful military coups between 1970 and 1989 in the region. Since then, the number has decreased to 67 between 1990 and 2010. The report pointed out that one of the reasons for the change was "established regimes being equipped with measures of systematic legitimacy that discouraged praetorian assaults from the armed forces" (Barka and Ncube 2012, 5).

Yet, after several years of steady gains for democracy, Sub-Saharan Africa has suffered some recent setbacks. According to Freedom House, the Republic of

⁵ Currently 33 of the 47 countries the UN has designated as LDCs are in the Sub-Saharan African region.

⁶ According to the World Bank, the total GDP of Sub-Saharan Africa in 2016 was 1.513 trillion US dollars, whereas that of the Republic of Korea in the same year was 1.411 trillion US dollars. See World Bank, "World Bank: Data," Accessed at <https://data.worldbank.org/region/sub-saharan-africa> and "World Development Indicators: Structure of output," <http://wdi.worldbank.org/table/4.2> (February 1, 2018).

Congo, Burundi, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Somalia, and South Africa were among those countries that suffered declines (Freedom House 2017a). On the positive side, Freedom House notes the holding of successful presidential elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the first in the country's history, and success in fighting corruption and expanding government transparency in Liberia (*Ibid.*). In this context, the military takeover in November 2017 in Zimbabwe that led to Robert Mugabe's resignation caused a new uncertainty because his downfall was by force, which is not a democratic norm, even though he was a de-facto dictator that had been in power for 30 years by using violence and electoral fraud when the country had had regular elections.

RESEARCH DESIGN: VARIABLES, HYPOTHESES, AND METHODS

The purpose of this research is to determine what are the major determinants of this uneven pace of political development in Sub-Saharan African countries. As noted above, there are 49 countries in the region. These countries have experienced a wave of democratization over the past two decades. However, democratization has been progressing at an uneven pace across the continent. In some countries, transition has proceeded along gradually towards internalizing democracy. Other countries have fluctuated between progress and retrogression, and in some countries the process has dragged. This research examines 45 countries. Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, South Sudan, and Somalia have been left out of the analysis due to a lack of related data.

DEPENDENT VARIABLE

The level of democratization is the dependent variable in this research. The United Kingdom-based company Economist Intelligence Unit has surveyed the state of democracy in 167 countries in the world, with the exclusion of micro-states. Since it has produced its first 'Democracy Index' in 2006, the index has been sequentially updated. Its Democracy Index is based upon measures in five categories: electoral process and pluralism; civil liberties; the functioning of government; political participation; and political culture (Kekic 2007). Scores for each of the five categories are tabulated and aggregated to give an overall score. Then countries are classified under four forms of governments depending on their overall scores: 'full democracies,' 'flawed democracies,' 'hybrid regimes,' and 'authoritarian regimes.'

Countries with scores less than four are designated authoritarian regimes; countries with scores higher than four and less than six are hybrid regimes; countries with scores greater than six but less than eight are flawed democracies; and countries with scores higher than eight are full democracies. According to the most recent report of Economist Intelligence Unit (2016), only one country in Sub-Saharan Africa is a 'full democracy' and seven are 'flawed democracies.' Since the company began taking surveys, the Nordic countries of Sweden, Iceland, Norway, and Denmark have always achieved the highest scores. Countries such as North Korea, Chad, and the Central African Republic have received the lowest scores.

There is another well-known scale for measuring the degree of democratic institutionalization. Freedom House has presented indices and scores annually to access 'Freedom in the World.' It uses a three-tiered rating system consisting of scores, ratings, and status. A country or territory is awarded from zero to four points for each of 10 political rights indicators and 15 civil liberties indicators, which take the form of questionnaires. A score of zero represents the smallest degree of freedom and four the greatest degree of freedom. The political rights questionnaires are grouped into three subcategories: Electoral Process, Political Pluralism and Participation, and Functioning of Government. The civil liberties questions are grouped into four subcategories: Freedom of Expression and Belief, Associational and Organizational Rights, Rule of Law, and Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights. However, these indicators are more specialized to measure an individual's degree of freedom rather than level of democracy, stressing improvements in conditions for political rights and civil liberties. Many would argue that freedom is an essential, but not sufficient, component of any explanation for democratization. The Freedom Index classifies countries into one of following statuses: 'free,' 'partly free,' and 'not free.' The Freedom House index is a narrower measure of democratization than the one used by the Economist Intelligence Unit.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

The independent variables used in this research include economic development, education, freedom of the press, corruption, globalization, and ages of independence. These variables are measurable units of the abovementioned five theories of democratization.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Modernization theory argues that, without economic development, democratic consolidation is seldom thinkable, though not impossible. Is this also the case

in Sub-Saharan African states? A study exploring the link between democracy and economic development for 28 countries of the region for the period 1980-2005 provides a useful starting point for answering this question. In this analysis, the conclusion is reached that economic growth causes higher levels of democratization in the short run, and that the two are mutually reinforcing with both having a positive impact on each other in the long run (Jaunky 2012).

In our study, GNI per capita is used as an indicator. Even though economic development is a much broader concept than economic growth expressed by GDP or GNI, these are widely used to measure or compare the level of development between countries because economic growth is a first and necessary condition for development. GDP and GNI are terms dealing with the income a nation has in a certain period. GDP is the market value of all goods and services a nation makes within its border, whereas GNI adds income obtained from overseas countries to GDP.

In this analysis, PPP-based GNI per capita (hereafter referred to as GNI/capita (PPP)) is used to measure the degree of development. Unlike nominal GNI per capita, which is simply converted to current US dollars at market exchange rates, GNI/capita (PPP), which takes into account the relative costs of living, reflects differences in living standards in different countries. That is, people living in a country with higher GNI/capita (PPP) are apt to feel more affluent than those living in a country with a lower GNI/capita (PPP) even though the countries have equal nominal GNI per capita. It is because the former has more purchasing power than the latter with the same costs.

The source of this index is World Bank data (2018b). The recent index shows that the countries in the Sub-Saharan region with highest GNI/capita (PPP) are Equatorial Guinea at \$38,700, followed by Seychelles at \$28,000, while the countries with the lowest are Somalia at \$400, followed by Central African Republic at \$700.

EDUCATION

Education is essential not only for economic development but also for political development. An educated person challenges tradition and arbitrary rules, whereas uneducated one is more obedient to government, irrespective of regime type. Education broadens horizons about a person's worldview and empowers him to behave more actively to make demands of his government. Moreover, a country with a higher average level of education attainment has more opportunities to access information, so a country with more educated people is expected to have greater potential to foster the kind of politico-social dynamism that could lead to democracy. An empirical study done based on a survey of

Senegalese citizens suggests certain effects of education on democratization. Kuenzi (2005) concludes that both non-formal and formal kinds of education were found to increase the likelihood that people would embrace democratic, tolerant attitudes in Senegal. Likewise, after analyzing a survey of 18 sub-Saharan African countries, Evans and Rose (2012) concludes that education is the most dominant determinant of attitudes towards democracy.

Degree of education in this analysis is measured by literacy rates. Even though literacy simply means the ability to read and write, it far more broadly includes the ability to communicate efficiently and effectively and the opportunity to gain useful information and knowledge about whatever is of interest to that person.

The literacy rate used in our analysis is from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 2006; 2016). The means of the world and the least developed countries' literacy rates as of 2005-2015 were 84.3 percent and 63.3 percent, respectively. The countries that have the highest literacy rate in the region are Equatorial Guinea and Seychelles with 95.3 percent and 95.2 percent, followed by South Africa with 94.3 percent. Mauritius, Botswana, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Gabon, Namibia, Swaziland, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe all have literacy rates above 80 percent. The country with the lowest rate is Niger, where only 19.1 percent of people have the ability to read and write, which is exceptionally low compared to other countries in the region. With the exceptions of Benin, Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Guinea, Mali, and South Sudan, which all scored around 30 percent, all the other countries of the region have literacy rates above 40 percent. Nearly one-third of the countries in the region have a literacy rate below 50 percent.

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

The media play a crucial role in ensuring the flow of information and ideas in order to enable the public to contribute to decision-making by governments and to keep watch on any overstepping behaviors of government officials that are detrimental to the people (*Tribune* 2017). In a society where freedom of the press is hindered, governments are tempted to take less responsibility for the people because government officials are freer from criticism. Furthermore, in such cases, those who are in power are exposed to the possibility of acting arbitrarily and using power to pursue their own interests rather than protecting the interests of the public. Therefore, media freedom is also essential to political development. Here freedom essentially implies the absence of any interference from the state. For example, a totalitarian regime like North Korea only has a press under government control. In that regime, citizens have no freedom of expression and they get information only from a single,

uniform channel where the information is produced or processed to serve the leadership. On the contrary, highly democratized countries like Sweden and Finland have a long tradition of freedom of the press. They abolished censoring of printed publications and guaranteed public access to official documents long ago (Wallström and Soini 2016). In Africa, Karikari (2004, 185) asserts, “It is generally accepted that the more press and media a country enjoys, the greater the respect for human rights. Furthermore, it is open in those countries with greater media freedoms that the structures and practice of democratic governance are likely to show stability and strength”.

The indicator used for this variable is a “Freedom of the Press” score provided by Freedom House (2017b). Freedom House annually rates each country’s level of media freedom. The scoring scale ranges from zero to 100, with lower scores reflecting a freer media environment. The mean of recent freedom of the press scores in the region is 59.26. The highest score (lowest level of media freedom) is in Eritrea with 94, followed by Equatorial Guinea with 91. The lowest (highest level of media freedom) is in Cabo Verde with 27, followed by Mauritius with 29.

CORRUPTION

Corruption is not a new concept. It has deep roots in human history. It has been seen in almost all spheres of human activity, such as the political, economic, and social spheres. Conceptually speaking, it can be said that corruption is a manipulation of policies, institutions, and the rules of procedure in the allocation of resources and financing by political decision-makers who abuse their position to sustain their power, status, and wealth. Individuals often bypass institutions and the rules of procedure to take unfair profits or achieve personal interests. Elites have used corruption as a slogan to name-call or get rid of their adversaries. Corruption has a negative impact on human progress. Similarly, political development seldom happens in countries with widespread political corruption. That is, democratic societies have little tolerance for corruption. In democratic societies, citizens hold their governments and officials accountable for their actions. Furthermore, decision-making processes are more transparent, leading to a more mature democracy. This is why countries work to reduce corruption to promote social justice and development. Countries such as Canada, Germany, Sweden, and Switzerland have low levels of corruption and are highly developed democracies. Fongchingong’s (2004, 34) study of Cameroon’s process of democratization claims that the stalemate after the introduction of political reforms was due to a “disintegrative factor” arising from corruption. Another study similarly argues that corruption among ruling elites in African countries directly led to anti-democratic results (Good 2006).

Transparency International, a global coalition against corruption, has measured and published the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) annually since 1996 (Transparency International 2017). The CPI counts countries on a scale from zero (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean). According to the most recent report, the global average score is a paltry 43. In the Sub-Saharan region, the most corrupt countries are Somalia, Sudan, and Libya, which all have scores around 10. The cleanest are Botswana and Cabo Verde with scores around 60. Botswana ranked 35th among all 176 countries, ‘cleaner’ than the Republic of Korea, which ranked 52nd.

GLOBALIZATION

International factors also play a role in democratization. Foreign investment and international trade lead to modernization, and in turn may push democratization forward. In the world of complex interdependence, where the development of modes of transportation and information and communication technology (ICT) extend human movements and material exchanges, increasing international trade and foreign investment have helped to integrate the world into a single market. Developing countries also have tried to open up their economies to global markets for the purpose of boosting development and improving their quality of life. This eventually facilitates interactions between countries at the global level, not only economic, but also social, cultural, and political. Indeed, globalization has affected global economic and political norms and values. An empirical analysis done with a large number of developing countries presents grounds for a link between globalization and democratization. Rudra (2005) concludes that welfare spending resulting from globalization is an important agent in paving the way towards democracy, rather than globalization itself, after exploring the relationship between economic globalization and democratization in 59 LDCs from 1972 to 1997.

In this study, the measurement of the level of globalization is taken from the KOF Globalization Index (2017). The institute measures the three sub-domains of economic, social, and political globalization to achieve a composite index score. The values range from zero to 100. The lower is the score, the lower the ranking. In 2015, South Africa had the highest score of 70.74, which ranked it 46th among all 192 countries. Eritrea had the lowest score of 27.02, which was second-to-last ahead of French Polynesia.

AGES OF INDEPENDENCE (YEARS)

Sub-Saharan Africa is the poorest region in the world, still suffering from the legacies of colonialism. Overcoming neocolonial cultures is a necessary

condition for achieving political development in the region. To establish successful democratic government, the accumulation of political experiences unobstructed by external influences is required. At the same time, the maturation of democracy is premised on the continuous legitimate handover of power by election, with political tolerance attained by a gradual process of trials and errors. Democracies stress the moral equality of all people and classes, but it may take a considerable amount of time to achieve and internalize acceptance of those values.

This research measures the ages of independence of the countries in the region. With few exceptions, all became independent after the Second World War. Most achieved their independence within two decades after the end of the Second World War, but some remained under colonial rule until the mid-1970s. The country with the longest history of independence in the region is Liberia, with more than 150 years, while the shortest is South Sudan, which gained its independence from Sudan in 2011. Before that, Eritrea became independent in 1993.

HYPOTHESES

This research proposes six hypotheses on the bases of the contents discussed above:

Hypothesis 1: The higher economic development an African country has, the higher level of democracy it will have ($\beta_1 > 0$).

Hypothesis 2: The higher level of literacy an African country has, the higher level of democracy it will have ($\beta_2 > 0$).

Hypothesis 3: The higher level of freedom of the press an African country has, the higher level of democracy it will have ($\beta_3 > 0$).

Hypothesis 4: The lower level of corruption an African country has, the higher level of democracy it will have ($\beta_4 < 0$).

Hypothesis 5: The higher level of globalization an African country has, the higher level of democracy it will have ($\beta_5 > 0$).

Hypothesis 6: The longer history of independence from colonialism an African country has, the higher level of democracy it will have ($\beta_6 > 0$).

As mentioned above, the data used in this research are from the Economist Intelligence Unit, the World Bank, Freedom House, KOF Swiss Economic Institute, UNDP, Transparency International, and the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. To measure the impacts of the independent variables on democratization in Sub-Saharan African countries, this research uses the method of ordinary least squares (OLS) regression using cross-national data across 45 countries.⁷ By running the regression analysis, we will test the relevance of the independent variables for explaining political development in the Sub-Saharan African region. The model we propose to verify these relationships is:

$$\text{Democracy} = a + (b_1 \times \text{Economic Development}) + (b_2 \times \text{Education}) + (b_3 \times \text{Freedom of the Press}) + (b_4 \times \text{Corruption Perceptions}) + (b_5 \times \text{Globalization}) + (b_6 \times \text{Ages of Independence}) + e$$

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the variables. Although all Sub-Saharan African countries have experienced a wave of democratization over the past two decades, and virtually every country in the region repeatedly has held multiparty elections, democratization is progressing at an uneven pace across the region.

According to the 2016 Democracy Index from the Economist Intelligence Unit, only one of the 45 countries in the region was a “full democracy,” eight were “flawed democracies,” 12 were “hybrid regimes,” and 24 were “authoritarian” that year.⁸ This is considerable compared to Latin America, once recognized as a region marked by authoritarianism and lacking democratic institutionalization. Scholars have looked into the causes and effects of the political instabilities of that region, while watching for repeated military coups. For example, in Bolivia there have been more than 150 coups or attempted coups since its independence in 1925. Honduras experienced 13 coups from 1900 to 1990, and Paraguay as many as 16 coups in the same period. In that region, military coups had been the engine for political change for a long time (Nash 1992). However, this trend has changed dramatically in Latin America since the 1990s. A wave of region-

⁷ Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Somalia, and South Sudan were left out of the analysis because the Economist Intelligence Unit does not present scores for those countries.

⁸ Economist Intelligence Unit classifies Sudan as a North African country. Here Sudan is included as a Sub-Saharan country. The country falls into the category of an authoritarian regime, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit.

wide democratization has advanced there, too. As a result, constitutionalism has taken strong hold in certain areas. Latin American and Sub-Saharan countries also share an experience of colonialism. The Economist Intelligence Unit (2016, 23) classified only six countries as “hybrid regimes” and two as “authoritarian regimes” among the 24 Latin American countries in that same year.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	N	Minimum	Maximum
Democracy (0-10)	4.34	1.80	45	1.50	8.28
GNI/capita (PPP) (US\$)	4496.05	5141.78	43	670.0	19940.0
Literacy Rate (%)*	65.90	19.23	44	19.1	95.3
Freedom of the Press (1-100)	59.16	17.50	45	27.0	94.0
Corruption Perceptions (1-100)	32.51	11.58	43	12.0	63.0
Globalization (1-100)	50.34	8.93	45	26.4	69.6
Ages of Independence (Year)	54.36	21.07	45	22.0	168.0

Note: This variable was based on the most recent year available for data between 2005 and 2015, which is different from the other variables which have annually data. Countries do not report literacy rates annually. Due to differences in methodology and timeliness of the data, the UNDP advises that comparisons across countries and over time should be made with caution (UNDP 2007).

The mean score of 4.34 and the standard deviation of 1.80 in the Democracy Index signify that countries in the region are more inclined towards non-democratic regimes. Likewise, a low mean score on the Corruption Perceptions Index implies that the region is generally not free from the problem of corruption.

Table 2 shows correlations between independent variables and political development. Except for Ages of Independence, the five variables seem to have high degrees of correlation with Democracy. However, as the GNI/capita (PPP) and Globalization variables do not satisfy the 0.05 level of significance test, only three variables are supported to have meaningful correlations with Democracy. Moreover, partial correlations where the effects of other independent variables are excluded show that the degree of association between Globalization and Democracy is negligible. To be specific, the Freedom of the Press Index and the Corruption Perceptions Index have the strongest correlations with Democracy, and the Literacy Rate has a relatively weaker correlation with the latter. These results imply that the variables related to Freedom of the Press and Corruption

Perceptions would have higher explanatory power than any other variables in terms of democratization in Sub-Saharan Africa. Partial correlations show higher degrees of associations between Democracy and those two independent variables.

Table 2. Associations Between Independent Variables and Dependent Variable

Variables	Zero Order Correlations	Partial Correlations	Part Correlations	Significance
GNI/capita (PPP) (US\$)	.520	-.016	-.007	.925
Literacy Rate (%)	.350	.413	.193	.012
Freedom of the Press (1-100)	-.793	-.664	-.379	.000
Corruption Perceptions (1-100)	.771	.488	.238	.003
Globalization (1-100)	.669	.143	.061	.407
Ages of Independence (Year)	.046	.188	.082	.272

In addition, the correlations between the dependent variable and independent variables are also in the expected direction. That is, the correlation between the Democracy Index and the Corruption Perceptions Index has a positive direction because a higher score in the Corruption Perceptions Index represents greater transparency. The Democracy Index and Freedom of the Press Index are correlated in reverse direction because a lower score in Freedom of the Press Index reflects a freer media environment.

Table 3 summarizes the results of the multivariate regression analysis.

Table 3. Determinants of Democratization in Sub-Saharan Africa

Independent Variables	Coefficients (b)	Standard Error	t	Significance	β
Modernization					
GNI/capita (PPP) (US\$)	-3.80E-6	0.000	-0.095	0.925	-0.010
Elites					
Literacy Rate (%)	0.022	0.008	2.641	0.012	0.233
Civil Society					
Freedom of the Press (1-100)	-0.058	0.011	-5.184	0.000	-0.514
Corruption Perceptions (1-100)	0.054	0.016	3.259	0.003	0.349
International Relations					
Globalization Index (1-100)	0.020	0.023	0.840	0.407	0.092
Culture					
Ages of Independence (Year)	0.007	0.006	1.117	0.272	0.086

Constant (a)	3.198	1.539	2.078		
R	0.904				
R²	0.818				
F-ratio (6, 34)	25.474				

Source: Democracy Index in 2015 from the Economist Intelligence Unit; GNI/capita (PPP) in 2015 from the World Bank; Literacy Rate in 2005–2015 from the UNDP; Freedom of the Press in 2015 from Freedom House; Corruption Perception Index in 2015 from Transparency International; Globalization Index in 2015 from KOF; Years of Independence from the CIA World Factbook.

The above illustrates that the proposed model only partially fits with the formula. The civil society variables (Freedom of the Press Index and Corruption Perceptions Index) and the elite variable (Literacy Rate) are verified to be suitable for the formula even though all variables collectively explain only 82 percent ($R^2 = 0.818$) of the total variance. Other variables, such as the country's economic situation (modernization), cultural factors, and international relations measured by GNI/capita (PPP), ages of independence, and globalization do not adequately explain levels of democratization. Contrary to the traditional wisdom that economic development leads to democratic consolidation, these results do not support the hypothesis that economic standards as measured by GNI/capita (PPP) promote democratization. This corresponds with a recent empirical examination that concluded that income has no statistically significant effect on democracy (Broderstad 2018). There is no severe multicollinearity, making the estimate difficult in the model.

The influences of the economic variable and the globalization variable are almost the same even when the indicators are substituted. In other words, even though GNI per capita at current price is substituted for GNI/capita (PPP), the result does not change significantly. Using each globalization index, such as political globalization, economic globalization, and social globalization, instead of the combined globalization index does not change the result significantly, either.

Table 4 shows a modified version of the regression analysis in which variables without statistical significance are excluded.

Table 4. Modified Determinants of Democratization in Sub-Saharan Africa

Independent Variables	Coefficients (b)	Standard Error	t	Significance	β
Elites					
Literacy Rate (%)	0.021	0.007	3.041	0.004	0.222
Civil Society					
Freedom of the Press (1-100)	-0.057	0.010	-5.738	0.000	-0.530
Corruption Perceptions (1-100)	0.061	0.014	4.252	0.000	0.400
Constant (a)	4.356	0.982	4.434		
R	0.898				
R²	0.807				
F-ratio (3, 38)	52.867				

Source: Democracy Index in 2015 from the Economist Intelligence Unit; Literacy Rate in 2005–2015 from the UNDP; Freedom of the Press in 2015 from Freedom House; Corruption Perceptions Index in 2015 from Transparency International.

Thus, the modified formula with improved explanatory power is as follows:

$$\text{Political Development} = 4.356 + (0.021 \times \text{Literacy Rate}) + (-0.057 \times \text{Freedom of the Press}) + (0.061 \times \text{Corruption Perceptions}) + e$$

The relationship between the three independent variables and the dependent variable is reported as $R = 0.898$. The result shows that the three independent variables explain more than 80 percent of the variance in the dependent variable, Democracy ($R^2 = 0.807$). Three independent variables (Literacy Rate, Freedom of the Press, and Corruption Perceptions) are all statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Freedom of the Press is the most powerful predictor of Democracy, with a beta (β) value of -0.530 among the three independent variables. This variable alone explains 63.3 percent of total variance. Corruption Perceptions and Literacy Rate also have predictable impacts on Democracy, with beta (β) values of 0.400 and 0.222. The two variables explain an additional 12.7 percent and 4.7 percent of total variance, respectively.

Then do these variables also have explanatory power diachronically? To answer this question, additional analysis was done for 2006.⁹ Table 5 shows the outcomes when all variables are included.

⁹ The reason for setting the year for additional analysis to 2006 is that the Economist Intelligence Unit first produced the Democracy Index (i.e., dependent variable) that year.

Table 5. Summary of Regression Analysis for 2006

Independent Variables	Coefficients (b)	Standard Error	t	Significance	β
Modernization					
GNI/capita (PPP) (US\$)	-6.995E-5	0.000	-1.642	0.110	-0.182
Elites					
Literacy Rate (%)*	0.018	0.010	1.791	0.082	0.205
Civil Society					
Freedom of the Press (1-100)	-0.045	0.013	-3.515	0.001	-0.497
Corruption Perceptions (1-100)	0.946	0.295	3.207	0.003	0.443
International Relations					
Globalization Index (1-100)	-0.002	0.025	-0.086	0.932	-0.011
Culture					
Globalization (1-100)	0.016	0.013	1.165	0.252	0.108
Constant (a)	2.823	1.835	1.538		
R	0.866				
R²	0.751				
F-ratio (6, 33)	16.562				

Source: Democracy Index in 2006 from the Economist Intelligence Unit; GNI/capita (PPP) in 2006 from the World Bank; Literacy Rate in 1995–2005 from the UNDP; Freedom of the Press in 2006 from Freedom House; Corruption Perceptions Index in 2006 from Transparency International; Globalization Index in 2006 from KOF; Years of Independence from the CIA World Factbook.

Note: The figures are from the most recent year available between 1995 and 2005.

The result appears to be a little different from that of 2015. The two variables associated with civil society have explanatory power. On the contrary, the effect of the literacy rate diminishes to a degree that the variable is not suitable for this model. Although it is hard to find unchallengeable evidence for such a change, we can consider two assumptions. One is about the attribute of the collected data. That is, as noted in Table 1 and Table 2, the measuring years for the literacy rate are not the same across countries due to different survey times by those countries. Moreover, the quality of data has been a major problem among countries in the region because of their poor national statistics-gathering systems. This has led to international organization such as UNESCO to undertake projects to strengthen those data-collection systems (UNESCO 2017). There is a possibility, therefore, that this has affected the relationships between variables in the model. The literacy rate might have operated as a new variable able to explain political development at a certain time as the literacy rate reached a kind of tipping point. The mean literacy rate in additional analysis is 59.81 percent with a standard deviation of 19.43, which is far below the mean and standard deviations in the first analysis.

The modified formula composed of variables with statistically significant explanatory power is as follows:

$$\text{Democracy} = 4.141 + (-0.044 \times \text{Freedom of the Press}) + (0.953 \times \text{Corruption Perceptions}) + e$$

The two civil society-related variables explain 71.3 percent of total variance.

To sum up, it is largely social factors more than any others that have affected the political processes shaping democratization in Sub-Saharan Africa. In other words, the results of the regression analyses support the hypotheses regarding the roles of civil society first and the role of elites second. The results also fail to support the arguments in conjunction with the roles of the economy, international relations, and culture.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The focus of this research is to examine the determinants of political development in the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa. Even though there are many scholarly articles about democracy or democratization in the region, few have been interested in empirically finding the casual relationships between democratization and its explanatory variables in more comprehensive ways. This research has tried to find the explanatory variables on the basis of established major theories about democratization spanning various theoretical perspectives.

Scholars have brought attention to democratization as a symbol of political development. This attention reflects the belief that democracy is good and democratization is influenced by other socio-economic or cultural variables. Democratization, which means transition from an authoritarian regime to one in which people exercise power under the principles of majority rule and minority rights, has been one of the most important political movements around the world since the end of the Cold War. Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa also have joined in this trend. Many of those countries have adopted regular election systems to choose their leaders and have tried to establish political regimes permitting people to participate in the political process. They have advocated competitive and multi-party elections. There has been a dramatic drop in successful coups. As a result, countries have come to enjoy relatively good governance compared to the recent past. It should be noted, however, that democratization has not progressed in equal degrees across the region. In some countries, accomplishments are more conspicuous. In others, progress is less

remarkable.

To identify the reasons for such differences, this research quantitatively analyzed relationships between political development and other explanatory variables. To do so, hypotheses based upon theories of democratization regarding various factors representing the economic, social, cultural, and international dimensions of the process were tested to determine what effects on political development they had in the region. Through empirical analysis, this research found that freedom of the press was the most influential factor to determine the level of democratization in the region. The corruption variable was the second-most statistically significant factor to explain the level of democratization. These two variables belong to the social sphere. These were followed by the literacy rate, which represents human development. Contrary to our expectation, globalization, economic life, and history of political independence, which were hypothesized to have an impact on political development in the region, were not statistically significant variables to explain democratization. Even though several hypotheses were nullified, this research found interesting results.

At the same time, this research suggests additional implications. One is a call for follow-up studies and consideration of deeper analysis into the aspects of those social variables having the greatest impact on democratization. The research was conducted with a limited number of cases. There are 49 countries in the region, and several of the countries have no data for analysis. That was why this research used 45 cases (countries). If any statements were to become generally accepted theories, those would need to be verified through an expanded analysis to a larger number of cases around the world. This analysis has some exogenous restrictions that were hard to avoid.

Another implication of this research is that time series analyses by country could provide complementary explanations. The point of time in this research is limited to the year 2015, and to an additional comparison year of 2006 for crosschecking. When follow-up research is made in statistically stronger ways, the model developed here may be further supported or it may be criticized. In the case of confirmations with additional case studies for individual countries, the findings of this research should become more generalized. Along with this, another implication concerns the validity of the operationalization and measurement of some variables, especially ones for testing international relations and culture theories. As with previous research, this has not perfectly measured the variables of these theories. Thus, follow-up research hopefully will find more relevant variables that are better suited to the task.

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