



## **Democracy, Democratization, and Development in Post-Cold War Africa (1990-2012)**

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### **Abstract**

This research project addresses the question of whether democracy would be better than any other political systems to promote development. It attempts to find out whether democracy and democratization have led to a better economic performance in democratic and democratizing countries in Africa. Using data on development from the World Bank and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in combination with data on regime characteristics from the Polity IV Project and Freedom House, this research project finds that democracy has weak statistical correlations with development, as indicated by the Human Development Index (HDI) and the gross national income (GNI) per capita of the fifty and so African countries since the end of the Cold War. Nevertheless, this study also finds that democratizing countries seem to have better economic performances than the other African countries.



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Africa;  
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### **Introduction**

The relationships between democracy and development have been the subject of countless speculations and research projects for some time. Thus, a few decades ago, some modernization theorists suggested that economic development, through different intervening variables such as the improvement of the education and the emergence of a strong middle class, would eventually lead to democracy in dictatorial regimes. Seymour Lipset was one of the first who made this prediction in

the 1950s. In his seminal work on *Some Social Requisites of Democracy*, he makes the argument that economic prosperity would give rise to a literate middle class, which would espouse liberal values and seek to defend its newly acquired assets through the institution of democratic political systems. However, several historical facts (e.g., the persistence of dictatorship in China, despite its huge economic successes in recent years) and the findings from different studies have proven this prediction to be wrong.

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Since the triumph of capitalism and democracy at the end of the Cold War, the so-called “democracy promoters” made another argument that democracy along with capitalism would be the best political system to promote rapid economic development in the developing countries. Thus, promoting democracy around the world became one of the major components of the foreign policies of most developed countries, such as the United States.

However, faced with the inability of many democratic countries to solve their own economic problems and the failure of some of them to even stay alive, particularly in Africa, this argument has now become all the more questionable.

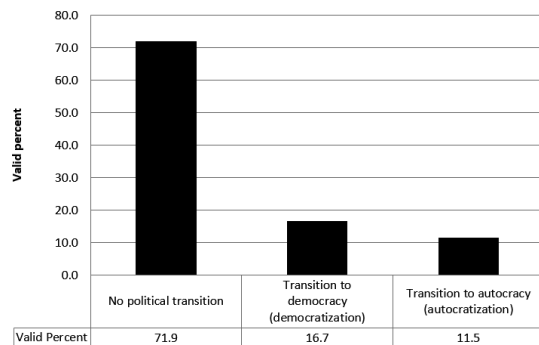
This research project deals with the latter argument. It addresses the questions of whether democracy would be better than any other political systems to promote development in Africa and whether democratic and/or democratizing countries have better economic performances than the other African countries.

Following a quick review of the existing literature concerning the relationship between democracy and development, the methodology, including the data, the statistical procedures, and the software used to carry out the analysis will be presented. Next, the findings will be discussed along with the tables and graphs. Finally, the paper will draw the main conclusions and suggest new directions for future researches.

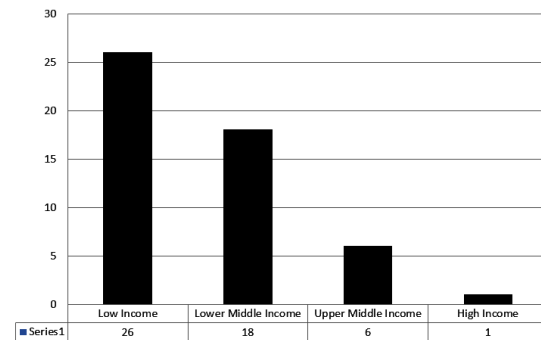
**Literature Review**

Some scholars are categorical in their findings that democracy does not lead to development (or better economic performance). Among these scholars, Doucouliagos and Ulubasoglu, using “meta-regression analysis to the population of 483 estimates derived from 84 studies on democracy and growth,” draw the conclusion that: “democracy does not have a direct impact on economic growth”. The findings of Przeworski et al. and Diebolt et al. seem to confirm this hypothesis of no direct effect of democracy on development. Indeed, Przeworski et al. look at the data from 135 countries between 1950 and 1990, and draw the conclusion that economic development does not generate democracies, as in the case of a country like China, but “democracies may be more likely to survive in wealthy societies”. In other words, instead of finding the direct effect of democracy on development, they come up with the reverse effect of development on democracy survival. In the same vein, Diebolt et al. confirm the inability of democracy to solve economic problems and suggest that: “democratic poverty trap is found to exist indicating the possibility of persistence of (un)stable democratic equilibria at different levels of democracy”.

Among the scholars who support the hypothesis of direct effect of democracy on development, Masaki and van de Walle “find strong evidence that democracy is positively associated with economic growth, and that this ‘democratic advantage’ is more pronounced for those African countries that have remained democratic for longer periods of time”.



**Fig. 1: Political Transitions in Post-Cold War Africa (1989-2012)**



**Fig. 2: Classification of the African Economies in 2012**

**Table 1: Frequencies of Regime Types in Post-Cold War Africa (1989-2012)**

Survey Edition	Free		Partly Free		Not Free	
	Number of Countries	Percentage	Number of Countries	Percentage	Number of Countries	Percentage
1989	2	4	12	26	32	70
1990	3	6	11	24	33	70
1991	4	8	15	32	28	60
1992	8	17	19	40	20	43
1993	9	19	23	49	15	32
1994	8	17	15	31	25	52
1995	8	17	17	35	23	48
1996	9	19	19	39	20	42
1997	9	19	19	39	20	42
1998	9	19	18	37	21	44
1999	9	19	20	42	19	39
2000	8	17	24	50	16	33
2001	9	19	24	50	15	31
2002	9	19	25	52	14	29
2003	11	23	21	44	16	33
2004	11	23	20	42	17	35
2005	11	23	21	44	16	33
2006	11	23	23	48	14	29
2007	11	23	22	46	15	31
2008	11	23	23	48	14	29
2009	10	21	23	48	15	31
2010	9	19	23	48	16	33
2011	9	19	22	46	17	35
2012	9	18	21	43	19	39

Source: Freedom House (2013). Country Status by Region.

**Table 2: Frequencies of Political Transitions in Post Cold War Africa (1989-2012)**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Valid</b>	No political transition	876	68.9	71.9	71.9
	Transition to democracy (democratization)	203	16	16.7	88.5
	Transition to autocracy (autocratization)	140	11	11.5	100
	Total	1219	95.8	100	
<b>Missing</b>	System	53	4.2		
<b>Total</b>		1272	100		

However, most of the scholars who also find this direct effect are more nuanced in their assertion. Thus, Carl LeVan makes the argument that “the key factor is not simply the status of the regime as a dictatorship or a democracy, but rather it is the structure of the policy-making process by which different policy demands are included or excluded”. In the case of Botswana, which is one the success stories of democracy and development in Africa, Acemoglu et al. draw the following conclusion: “Botswana achieved this rapid development by following orthodox economic policies. How Botswana sustained these policies is a puzzle because typically in Africa, ‘good economics’ has proved not to be politically feasible. In this Paper, we suggest that good policies were chosen in Botswana because good institutions, which we refer to as institutions of private property, were in place”.

**Methodology**

This research project uses data on development and economic performance from the World Bank and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in combination with data on regime characteristics from the Polity IV Project and Freedom House. These data are analyzed using the statistical software SPSS.

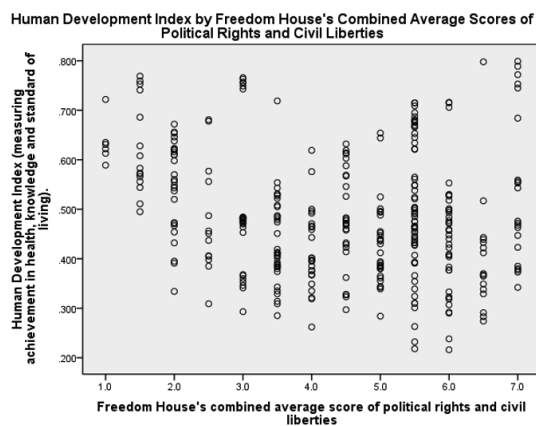
According to the UNDP’s people-centered approach, development is understood as follows: “Human development aims to enlarge people’s freedoms to do and be what they value and have reason to value

[.]. At all levels of development, human development focuses on essential freedoms: enabling people to lead long and healthy lives, to acquire knowledge, to be able to enjoy a decent standard of living and to shape their own lives”. In line with this view, development is measured in this study, not only in terms of the traditional World Bank’s GNI (gross national income) per capita but also in terms of the UNDP’s Human Development Index (HDI).

Following Larry Diamond’s dual conception of democracy, the concept of democracy is defined in this study, not only as “a system for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive

**Table 3: Evolution of the Average GNI per capita in Post Cold-War Africa (1989-2012)**

Year	Average GNI per capita	N	Std. Deviation
1989	832.88	52	1020.262
1990	858.43	51	1085.765
1991	910.2	49	1144.653
1992	945.21	48	1235.693
1993	906.12	49	1231.515
1994	877.96	49	1246.931
1995	893.27	49	1254.513
1996	927.55	49	1303.084
1997	952.2	50	1362.215
1998	928	50	1329.012
1999	894.6	50	1283.416
2000	899.6	50	1303.112
2001	907.4	50	1310.589
2002	948.4	50	1356.653
2003	1028	50	1464.638
2004	1186.27	51	1644.711
2005	1474.04	52	2016.4
2006	1669.62	52	2330.228
2007	1910.38	52	2742.845
2008	2195	52	3136.953
2009	2296.92	52	3328.962
2010	2115.88	51	2828.888
2011	2266.27	51	3119.592
2012	2183.33	51	3109.808



**Fig. 3: Scatterplot: Human Development Index by Freedom House’s Combined Average Scores of Political Rights and Civil Liberties**

Sources: The World Bank, Gross National Product per Capita, Atlas Method (US current dollar)

**Table 4 - Evolution of the Classification of the African Economies**

	Low Income	Lower Middle Income	Upper Middle Income	High Income	Total
1989	42	8	2	0	52
1990	42	7	2	0	51
1991	39	8	2	0	49
1992	36	10	2	0	48
1993	39	8	2	0	49
1994	38	9	2	0	49
1995	38	10	1	0	49
1996	37	10	2	0	49
1997	38	10	2	0	50
1998	38	11	1	0	50
1999	38	11	1	0	50
2000	37	12	1	0	50
2001	37	12	1	0	50
2002	37	11	2	0	50
2003	37	10	3	0	50
2004	38	9	4	0	51
2005	37	8	7	0	52
2006	35	10	7	0	52
2007	34	11	7	0	52
2008	28	15	7	2	52
2009	25	18	8	1	52
2010	26	16	8	1	51
2011	25	18	7	1	51
2012	26	18	6	1	51

Sources: The World Bank, Newest country classification (2012)

struggle for the people’s vote”(thin side), but also as a system ensuring, among other attributes: “substantial individual freedom of belief, opinion, discussion, speech, publication, broadcast, assembly, demonstration, petition, and (why not the internet)”(thick side). Thus, in order to capture the different attributes of democracy, Polity IV’s scores of regime characteristics are used alongside Freedom House’s scores of political rights and civil liberties.

**Findings**  
**Descriptive Statistics**

As shown in Table 1, below, the democratization of Africa really started at the end of the Cold War, when the number of democratic or “free” countries

**Table 5. a: Correlations between HDI, Polity IV Scores and Freedom House’s Combined Average Scores of Political Rights and Civil Liberties**

	Human Development Index (measuring achievement in health, knowledge, and standard of living).	Polity IV Scores (measuring the level of democracy or autocracy)	Freedom House’s combined average scores of political rights and civil liberties
Human Development Index (measuring achievement in health, knowledge, and standard of living).	1	0.103	-204**
Polity IV Score (measuring the level of democracy or autocracy)	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	0.063 323	0 339
Freedom House’s combined average score of political rights and civil liberties	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 1223	-803** 1223
			1 1276

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

increased from two (2) in 1989 to 9 in 1993. However, since then, the democratization of the continent was stalled, as the number of democracies oscillated around nine (9).

The frequencies of political transitions (either to democracy or autocracy) were relatively low

compared to that of no transition, as shown in Table 2 and Fig. 1. In other words, Africa has remained relatively stable and autocratic since the end of the Cold War.

With regard to the economic performance, as shown in Table 3, below, the average GNI per capita of

the continent increased from \$832.88 in 1989 to \$2183.33 in 2012. However, as shown in Fig. 2, the great majority of the African countries (44 out of 51 or 86%) are still classified as low income or lower middle income economies; only 7 countries (14%) are among the upper middle income and high income economies, according to the World Bank.

**Table 5. b: Correlation between GNI per Capita, Polity IV Scores and Freedom House's Combined Scores**

	GNI per Capita, Atlas Method (US current dollar)	Polity IV Scores (measuring the level of democracy or autocracy)	Freedom House's combined average scores of political rights and civil liberties
GNI per Capita, Atlas Method (US current dollar)	1	.099**	-.165**
Polity IV Score (measuring the level of democracy or autocracy)		0.001	0
Freedom House's combined average score of political rights and civil liberties		1174	1210
		1	-.803**
		1223	0
		-.803**	1223
		0	1
		1223	1276

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Table 6: Economic Performance Five Years Before and Five Years After Full Democratization**

	Human Development Index (measuring achievement in health, knowledge, and standard of living).	Gross National Product per Capita, Atlas Method (US current dollar)	Annual percentage growth of the Gross Domestic Product
No democratization	Mean N	1294.29 1004	3.76 967
Five years before democratization	Std. Deviation Mean N	2130.592 747 60	8.0272 3.18 60
Five years after democratization	Std. Deviation Mean N	842.157 1568.84 146	3.2779 4.887 138
Total	Std. Deviation Mean N	1542.384 1300.28 1210	4.5403 3.864 1165
	Std. Deviation	2027.267	7.5235

### The correlations between Democracy and Development

Tables 5a and 5b show that there are correlations between democracy (as measured in terms of Polity IV scores and Freedom House's combined scores of political rights and civil liberties) and development (as measured in terms of HDI and GNI per capita). These correlations are relatively weak, but they are significant, especially when Freedom House's combined scores are used. It is also worth noting that this weak correlation is demonstrated by Fig 3 - Scatterplot: Human Development Index by Freedom House's Combined Average Scores of Political Rights and Civil Liberties.

### The Economic Performance of Democratizing Countries

Table 6 seems to confirm the correlations between democracy and development, as it shows that the countries which have completed full democratizations (i.e., reaching the status of "free countries") are generally performing economically better than those which did not. Indeed, the average HDI of these countries has increased from .4118 (five years before democratization) to .5271 (five years after democratization); and the average GNI per has increased from \$747 (five years before democratization) to \$1568 (five years after democratization).

### Conclusion

Using existing data on democracy and democratization, as well as on the economic performance of the African countries since the end of the Cold War

(1990-2012), this research project finds that the correlations between democracy (as measured in terms of Polity IV scores and Freedom House's combined scores of political rights and civil liberties) and development (as measured in terms of HDI and GNI per capita) are generally weak, even though they are statistically significant.

Furthermore, when comparing the performance of democratizing countries with the rest, this study finds that the former perform in general better than the latter. Particularly, the countries which have completed full democratizations (i.e., reaching the status of "free countries") have witnessed their HDI and GNI per capita increased significantly. This better performance may have to do with the developed countries' generous policies toward the democratic and democratizing African countries. Indeed, many developed countries are conditioning their development aid to African countries on the latter's adoption of democratic political systems. In the case of France, for instance, this conditionality was announced by former President Francois Mitterand in his celebrated discours at La Baule.

With regard to the United States of America, since Bill Clinton's presidency, the American markets are opened to democratic and democratizing African countries through the adoption of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) in May 2000 (AGOA.info, 2016). Thus, the next step of this research is to find out why democratizing countries are performing better.

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