Chinese Leverage and Democratic Backsliding in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Introduction

Writing in the *Journal of Democracy* in 2015, Larry Diamond noted that in every year from 1975 to 2006, the observed number of democracies in the world had either increased or held constant. This upward trend, however, stopped in 2006 and has since showed signs of reversal - a pattern Diamond labels as the "democratic recession."[1] Freedom House's more recent 2018 *Freedom in the World* data supports this trend, finding that the percentage of countries rated as "free" declined from a peak of 46.6% in 2007 to 45.1% in 2017, while the proportion of "not free" countries increased from 22.3% in 2007 to 25.1% in 2017.[2] The report also suggests that the number of countries experiencing declines in aggregate freedom scores has exceeded the number showing improvement for each of the last twelve years.[3] An alternative measure, the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project's Liberal Democracy Index (LDI), finds that while the global of democracy remains near its historical high, "more countries experienced significant democratic backsliding than improvement over the last five years," suggesting that the level of average global democracy has receded to its levels from ten or fifteen years ago.[4] Similarly, the Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) has also recorded a modest global decline on its Democracy Status measure from 2006 to 2016,[5] while the global average on the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index has seen overall decline from 2006 to 2017.[6] This global shift is related to several constituent patterns: signs of deconsolidation in established democracies, the stabilization and entrenchment of fully authoritarian regimes, and the slowing of democratization and rise in backsliding among hybrid or partially democratic regimes. This article examines the latter phenomenon – that of democratic backsliding, which Lust and Waldner (2015) define as "a deterioration of qualities associated with democratic governance within any regime; it is a decline in the quality of democracy, when it occurs within democratic regimes, or in democratic qualities of governance in autocracies."[7]

To explore the phenomenon of democratic backsliding, this article examines all nineteen sub-Saharan African (SSA) regimes classified as "partly free" in Freedom House's 2005 *Freedom in the World* report: Burkina Faso, Burundi, Congo (Brazzaville), Djibouti, Ethiopia, Gabon, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya,

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[1] Larry Diamond, "Facing up to the Democratic Recession," *Journal of Democracy* 26:1 (2015): 141-155. For the debate over the "democratic recession," also see: Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, "The Myth of Democratic Recession," *Journal of Democracy* 26:1 (2015): 45-58.
[2] Michael J. Abramowitz, *Freedom in the World 2018: Democracy in Crisis* (Freedom House, 2018), https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FH_FITW_Report_2018_Final_SinglePage.pdf (accessed 2/2/2018): 4.
[3] Abramowitz (2018): 8.
[4] Anna Lührmann et al, *Democracy at Dusk? V-Dem Annual Report: 2017* (Varieties of Democracy Institute, 2017), https://www.v-dem.net/en/news-publications/annual-report/ (accessed 2/5/2018): 8-12.
[5] Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index (BTI) 2016, https://www.bti-project.org/en/index/ (accessed 2/5/2018).
[6] Economist Intelligence Unit, "Democracy Index 2017: Free Speech under Attack," 2018, http://www.eiu.com/home.aspx (accessed 2/25/2018): 17.
[7] Ellen Lust and David Waldner, "Unwelcome Change: Understanding, Evaluating, and Extending Theories of Democratic Backsliding," US Agency for International Development, June 11, 2015: 2.

Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia.[8] As of 2005, these regimes met the basic criteria of "hybrid regimes" as described in Diamond's 2002 essay; they embraced the "form" of electoral democracy, holding regular, competitive and multiparty elections but failed to meet international standards for the "substance" of democracy.[9] In such regimes, a degree of multiparty competition and uncertainty about electoral outcomes is present. The electoral process is also flawed, distorted by the incumbent party's manipulation and misuse of government resources; its intimidation, surveillance and intimidation of opposition activists, journalists and civil society actors; its formal restrictions on freedoms of speech and assembly; and/or its politicization and corruption of judicial and electoral bodies for political ends.[10] Such regimes exist in a "political gray zone" between genuine electoral democracy and fully authoritarian regimes.[11] The ambiguity of such regimes creates an "inherent tension;" nominally democratic institutions are intended to help incumbents manage popular challengers but they also allow for a degree of political contestation, providing space for opposition forces to organize a challenge to incumbents.[12] Under certain conditions, such challenges can become powerful enough to threaten the regime, forcing the incumbent to either manipulate electoral results, repress the challengers, or allow the democratic process to play out. All of these can result in regime change.[13] As a consequence, hybrid regimes are susceptible to political instability and regime change, including both shifts to greater democracy as well as backsliding into more closed forms of authoritarianism.[14] Looking at these nineteen hybrid regimes from sub-Saharan Africa, the article investigates the explanatory power of socioeconomic development, short-term economic performance, and international linkage and leverage in explaining their divergent regime trajectories during the period of 2005 to 2014, some cases moving the direction of greater democracy, others backsliding into greater authoritarianism.

A focus on the time period, 2005 to 2014, and geographic focus on sub-Saharan Africa is of particular theoretical and practical importance. First, 2005-2006 coincides with the period in which the global "democratic recession" began,[15] as charted by an overall decline in global democracy observed by Freedom House, Bertelsmann Stiftung and the Economist Intelligence Unit. Second, the period 2005-2014 coincides with the emergence of China as a critical supplier of trade, aid and assistance in sub-Saharan Africa offering outside support "with no strings attached."[16] China's new position as an alternative source of economic support could have contributed to the deleveraging to traditional Western donors and international financial institutions (IFIs), enabling African incumbent leaders in hybrid regimes to engage in backsliding when challenged by powerful opposition challenges. Importantly, Chinese assistance and engagement varied substantially by country, ranging from countries seeing a rapid intensification in relations, such as Congo (Brazzaville), Ethiopia, and Djibouti, to others, such as Burkina Faso and the Gambia, which recognized Taiwan during this period,[17] seeing none. Third, during this time period, the global economy experienced a sudden decline and subsequent turmoil and uncertainty during and after

[8] Abramowitz (2018).
[9] Larry Diamond, "Thinking About Hybrid Regimes," *Journal of Democracy* 13:2 (April 2002): 21-23.
[10] Diamond (2002); Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 5-16.
[11] Thomas Carothers, "The End of the Transition Paradigm," *Journal of Democracy* 13:1 (January 2002): 9-11.
[12] Levitsky and Way (2010): 20.
[13] Levitsky and Way (2010): 20.
[14] Jack Goldstone et al, "A Global Model for Forecasting Political Instability," *American Journal of Political Science* 54:1 (January 2010): 194-197.
[15] Diamond (2015).
[16] Steve Hess and Richard Aidoo, *Charting the Roots of Anti-Chinese Populism in Africa* (London: Springer, 2015): 1-2.
[17] The Gambia's recognition of Taiwan ended in 2013.

the 2007-2008 global financial crisis. While SSA as a region fared better than the global economy during the Great Recession, some economies fared much better than others. Those countries most negatively impacted were those with higher average incomes, greater dependence on exports to advanced economies, fewer commodity exports, and more civil unrest.[18] As a consequence, SSA during the period, 2005-2014, provides an excellent vantage point from which to observe factors such as the impact of short-term economic change and the deleveraging of Western influence on the political trajectories of hybrid regimes.

Economic Development

As scholars since Seymour Lipset in the 1950s have frequently observed, democratic regimes are more likely to appear in countries with higher average incomes.[19] Noting this pattern, Barrington Moore (1966) argued that the development of democracy occurred in historical cases where capitalist modernization produced a commercial middle class powerful enough to tear down despotic barriers to its economic advancement. Conversely, the presence of "labor-repressive" modes of production tended to lead to democratic breakdown and political transitions into authoritarian modes of government.[20] Challenging Moore's thesis that the bourgeoisie was the historical agent of democratization, Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens (1992) instead found that when modernizing societies produced powerful and well-organized working classes, these popular classes were the force that would emerge with the organizational power and interest in forcibly pushing for democratization, often against the resistance of a reluctant capitalist class.[21] Przeworski and Limongi (1997) challenged the notion that the establishment of democracies was the result of endogenous social forces that emerged through process of modernization. Instead, they suggested that democracy was "not a byproduct of economic development;" democracies came into being for a variety of reasons, including external factors, and emerged at many different income levels. But new democracies were much more likely to survive when they appeared at higher levels of development.[22] In later research, Boix and Stokes (2003) argued that development does in fact "have a strong endogenous effect on democratization" when it produces greater economic equality and social mobility, reducing the threat of redistribution to economic elites posed by newly empowered working class voters, and improvements in human capital, such as rising literacy rates.[23] Similarly, recent work has found that factors such as unequal socioeconomic distribution, low per capita incomes, high poverty rates, and high rates of infant mortality were strong predictors of democratic reversals.[24] While

[18] Antoinette Sayeh, "Africa and the Great Recession: Changing Times," International Monetary Fund Blog, May 14, 2012, https://blogs.imf.org/2012/05/14/africa-and-the-great-recession-changing-times/ (accessed 2/14/2018); Alfredo Cuevas et al, "Sub-Saharan Africa: Maintaining Growth in an Uncertain World," International Monetary Fund, Regional Outlook (October 2012): 1-15.

[19] Seymour Martin Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy," *American Political Science Review*, 53:1 (March 1959): 69-105.

[20] Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966): 430-431.

[21] Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Huber Stephens, and John D. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

[22] Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi, "Modernization: Theories and Facts," *World Politics* 49:2 (January 1997): 177.

[23] Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes, "Endogenous Democratization," *World Politics* 55:4 (July 2003): 519, 540-543.

[24] Maeda (2010) finds that development indicators predict exogenous terminations of democracies, such as military coups, but not endogenous terminations, driven by executives from inside the government. Ko Maeda, "Two Modes of Democratic Breakdown: A Competing Risks Analysis of Democratic Durability," *Journal of Politics* 72:4 (October 2010): 1138-1141; Christopher Reenock, Michael Bernhard and David Sobek, "Regressive

disagreeing on the mechanisms driving democratization, these works agreed that high levels of development significantly stabilized democracies and reduced the likelihood of democratic reversals.

Macroeconomic Performance

Challenging scholarship that linked democratic transitions and reversals to development factors, O'Donnell (1973) found that the collapse of democratic rule in many Latin American countries in the 1960s was less connected to those societies' level of development and more connected to short-term economic crises. In those cases, democratic and semi-democratic regimes had attained relatively high levels of development through import substitution industrialization (ISI) strategies but had then struggled to implement the "hard" stage of economic reforms. This resulted in short-term economic crises that prompted powerful economic and political elites to reject democratic rules and procedures as an impediment to development and embrace bureaucratic-authoritarian forms of government.[25] In a similar vein, Linz (1978) suggested that democratic regimes tended to break down when elected governments were incapable of addressing wide-ranging societal problems, including economic crises. Such conditions resulted in "legitimacy crises," wherein political actors uncommitted to the democratic process would oppose the system.[26] Later, Gasiorowski (1995) found that recessionary economic crises were a strong predictor of democratic breakdown in cases observed from the 1950s to the late 1980s.[27] Subsequent studies lent support to this idea, with Alesina et al (1996) and Feng (1997) finding that strong economic growth minimized the threat of political instability and irregular government changes.[28] Svolik (2008) suggested that among unconsolidated or transitional democracies, authoritarian reversals were most closely related to economic recessions, not other factors such as level of development, presidential political systems or military authoritarian pasts.[29] Dresden and Howard (2015) have found that economic crises increased the likelihood of democratic backsliding, particularly in resource-dependent states.[30] In such cases, economic crises tended to weaken public support for incumbent regimes, creating an opportunity for opposition forces and popular challengers to gain ground and motivating incumbent rulers to engage in backsliding behaviors to tighten their increasingly tenuous grip on power.

Linkage and Leverage

Socioeconomic Distribution and Democratic Survival," *International Studies Quarterly* 51:3 (September 2007): 677-699; Ethan Kapstein and Nathan Converse, "Why Democracies Fail," *Journal of Democracy* 19:4 (October 2008): 61.

[25] Guillermo O'Donnell, *Modernization and Bureaucratic Authoritarianism: Studies in South American Politics* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1973).

[26] Juan Linz, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Crisis, Breakdown, & Reequilibration* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

[27] Mark J. Gasiorowski, "Economic Crisis and Political Regime Change: An Event History Analysis," *American Political Science Review* 89:4 (December 1995): 882-897.

[28] Yi Feng, "Democracy, Political Stability and Economic Growth," *British Journal of Political Science* 27:3 (July 1997): 409; Alberto Alesina, Sule Özler, Nouriel Roubini and Phillip Swagel, "Political Instability and Economic Growth," *Journal of Economic Growth* 1:2 (June 1996): 190.

[29] Milan Svolik, "Authoritarian Reversals and Democratic Consolidation," *American Political Science Review* 102:2 (May 2008): 155, 166.

[30] Jennifer Raymond Dresden and Marc Morjé Howard, "Authoritarian Backsliding and the Concentration of Political Power," *Democratization* 23:7 (2016): 1135-1136.

According to scholars such as Huntington (1991), Bunce and Wolchik (2006), and Levitsky and Way (2010), international factors have played an important role in determining the political trajectory of regimes.[31] One such factor is linkage. Drawing upon works such as Keohane and Nye (1989)[32] and Kopstein and Reilly (2000),[33] Levitsky and Way (2010) define linkage as "the density of ties (economic, political, diplomatic, social and organizational) and cross-border flows (of capital, goods and services, people and information) among particular countries and the United States, the EU, and Western-dominated multilateral institutions."[34] Another key variable has been "leverage," a regime's "vulnerability to external democratizing pressure," which is greater when a state is small, economically weak, and/or dependent on Western aid.[35] Such leverage is reduced when Western powers have competing foreign policy interests, such as a target's importance as a supplier of energy resources or as a strategic security partner. Additionally, Western leverage is weakened by the presence of a "black knight" – an outside power that can offer military, economic or diplomatic support to blunt democratizing pressures.[36] According to Levitsky and Way (2010), linkage and leverage play a critical role in guiding the political direction of hybrid regimes. Strong linkage to the West deters incumbents from engaging in backsliding. In low linkage cases, hybrid regimes, particularly those with strong organizational power, have a relatively free hand to engage in backsliding. But for organizationally weak regimes, Western leverage can be pivotal in deterring backsliding.[37]

Research Design

To examine the explanatory power of leading theories of democratic backsliding, this article conducts a comparative analysis of a sample of nineteen hybrid regimes in sub-Saharan Africa during a period beginning in 2005 and ending in 2014. For all independent variables, the range covers this period (2005 to 2014), whereas the dependent variable, measuring democratic backsliding/advancement, ends in the year 2017, allowing for the observation of lagged effects of the explanatory variables. The nineteen cases include all of the countries in the region that received a "partially free" rating from Freedom House in the year 2005. This designation indicates a combined score on political rights and civil liberties ratings (or "freedom rating") ranging from 3.0 to 5.0 on a seven-point scale.[38] Among the nineteen cases, Kenya, Madagascar, and Niger were the most free with freedom ratings of 3.0 in 2005, whereas Burundi, Djibouti, and Ethiopia, were the least free, with ratings of 5.0. The mean for the group was 4.05.[39] The Polity IV POLITY regime measures were referenced to confirm the reliability of designating these cases as hybrid

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[31] Samuel Huntington, "Democracy's Third Wave," *Journal of Democracy* 2:2 (Spring 1991): 16-18; Valerie Bunce and Sharon Wolchik, "Favorable Conditions and Electoral Revolutions," *Journal of Democracy* 17:4 (October 2006): 10-14; Levitsky and Way (2010): 40-43.

[32] Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, *Power and Interdependence* (Glenview, IL, Scott, Foresman and Company, 1989): 33-34.

[33] Jeffrey S. Kopstein and David A. Reilly, "Geographic Diffusion and the Transformation of the Post-communist World," *World Politics* 53:1 (2000): 12-16.

[34] Levitsky and Way (2010):43.

[35] Levitsky and Way (2010): 40-41.

[36] Gary Clyde Hufbauer, Jeffrey J. Schott, and Kimberly Ann Elliott, *Economic Sanctions Reconsidered: History and Current Policy, 2nd Edition* (Washington, D.C.: Peterson Institute, 1990): 12; Levitsky and Way (2010): 41-42.

[37] Levitsky and Way (2010): 70-71.

[38] For a more detailed discussion of methodology, see Freedom House, "Freedom in the World 2018: Methodology," 2017, https://freedomhouse.org/report/methodology-freedom-world-2018 (accessed 2/21/2018).

[39] Abramowitz (2017).

regimes.[40] For the 2005 Polity IV POLITY regime measure, which ranges from +10 (strongly democratic) to -10 (strongly autocratic), the nineteen cases ranged from Kenya (+8) to -5 (the Gambia) with a mean of +2.[41] For Polity IV, this meant that in 2005 six regimes were "democracies:" Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Nigeria, Guinea-Bissau, and Burundi; six regimes were "open anocracies:" Zambia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Mozambique, Niger, and Djibouti; and seven regimes were "closed anocracies:" Burkina Faso, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, Gabon, Congo (Brazzaville), and the Gambia. As intended in their designation as hybrid regimes, each of the nineteen cases in 2005 failed to meet the "fully democratic" standard of "unrestricted, open and fully competitive" political participation, elective executive recruitment, and "substantial" constraints on the executive. Additionally, none of the cases were mature or institutionalized autocracies, with regularized rotations of national executives, the complete elimination of institutional checks on the executive, and the suppression or restriction of competitive political participation.[42] Thus, each of the nineteen cases could be characterized as having "competition that [was] real but unfair."[43]

The nineteen observed cases took significantly different political trajectories during the period 2005 to 2017, with over half seeing a decline in the quality of overall democratic governance, six experiencing improvements, and three seeing no observable change. The twelve cases with a net decline in their freedom rating from 2005 to 2017 (a rise in a case's combined scores in civil liberties and political rights) were identified as having experienced backsliding. These included the Gambia, Ethiopia, Congo (Brazzaville), Burundi, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Gabon, Uganda, Niger, Madagascar, Djibouti, and Mozambique. Those four cases with a net improvement in their freedom rating from 2005 to 2017 (a decrease in a country's combined score of political rights and civil liberties), were identified as having experienced a movement in the direction of greater democracy. These included Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso, Malawi, and Liberia. The remaining three cases, Nigeria, Zambia and Tanzania experienced no observed change during this period of time.[44]

To measure the degree of economic development in a country, the study utilizes the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Index (HDI), averaging the annual HDI for each case over the timespan of 2005 to 2014. Instead of using measures of income, such as Gross National Income (GNI) per capita to determine a society's degree of development, the HDI considers three dimensions of development: having a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and having a decent standard of living. For the health dimension, HDI uses life expectancy at birth as an indicator and creates a life expectancy index. On the knowledge dimension, HDI adopts the indicators of mean of years of schooling for adults aged 25 years and older and expected years of schooling for children at the age at which they enter school and generates an education index. For the standard of living dimension, HDI uses the indicator of GNI per capita adjusted for relative purchasing power parity (PPP) to create a GNI index. These three indexes are aggregated into a composite index using geometric means ranging from 0 (lowest level of human

[40] According to the V-Dem Liberal Democracy Index for 2005, which ranges from 0 (not democratic) to 1 (fully democratic), the nineteen cases ranged from 0.494 (Niger) to 0.100 (Congo – Brazzaville) in 2005 with a mean of 0.283. See Anna Lührmann et al (2017).
[41] Monty G. Marshall, *Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2013* (2018), http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm (accessed 2/26/2018).
[42] Monty G. Marshall and Keith Jaggers, *Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2006, Dataset Users' Manual* (George Mason University and Center for Systemic Peace, 2007): 12-15.
[43] Levitsky and Way (2010): 12.
[44] Abramowitz (2017).

development) to 1 (highest level of human development).[45] Using this multidimensional measure for development is consistent with more recent scholarship that finds that societies with lower education levels and standards of living are more susceptible to democratic backsliding.[46] Such societies are more likely to lack the kind of active, educated and politically efficacious citizenry capable of either deterring an incumbent leader from engaging in executive aggrandizement or electoral manipulation or effectively pushing back should he or she do so. Cutting against the popular representation of sub-Saharan Africa as a uniformly underdeveloped region and in tune with Radelet's (2010) observation that states in sub-Saharan Africa had taken dramatically different developmental trajectories from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s,[47] the average annual HDI scores of the nineteen cases varied dramatically from 2005 to 2014. The highest HDI (0.66) was observed in Gabon, followed by Congo (Brazzaville) (0.55) and Zambia (0.53). The lowest HDIs were in Niger (0.32), Burundi (0.36) and Burkina Faso (0.37). The mean HDI for the nineteen cases was 0.45.[48]

World Bank data for average annual GDP growth per capita from 2005 to 2014 is applied to examine claims that democratic backsliding is associated less with a society's level of development and more with short-term macroeconomic performance.[49] As suggested by Sayeh (2012), while sub-Saharan Africa as a region outperformed the world in economic growth during and after the 2007-2008 global financial crisis, there was significant variation across countries. Among the nineteen cases examined, Ethiopia (7.79% average annual GDP growth per capita), Sierra Leone (5.06%), Mozambique (4.38%), and Zambia (4.34%) stood out as economic over-performers. Meanwhile, Burundi (0.81%), Guinea-Bissau (0.66%), Madagascar (0.07%), Gabon (-0.03%), and the Gambia (-0.25%) experienced weak or even negative average annual growth from 2005 to 2014.[50]

The KOF Swiss Economic Institute (*Konjunkturforschungsstelle*) Globalization Index is adopted as a comprehensive measure for the density of a country's linkages to the West.[51] The KOF Globalization Index aggregates economic, social and political dimensions of globalization. Economic globalization adopts indicators for trade globalization, such as the sum of exports and imports of goods as a share of GDP, the degree of trade partner diversification, and the presence of tariff and non-tariff trade barriers. It also includes indicators for financial globalization, such as foreign direct investment as a share of GDP, international equity portfolio investments as a share of GDP, international portfolio debt securities and bank loans and deposits as share of GDP, and international reserves as a share of GDP.[52] For social globalization, KOF includes indicators for interpersonal globalization such as international voice traffic, international financial transfers, international tourism, and the share of foreign-born persons. It also includes informational globalization, which includes the number of patent applications made by non-

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[45] United Nations Development Program, "Human Development Index (HDI)," 2018, http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi (accessed 2/26/2018).
[46] Maeda (2010); Reenock et al (2007); Kapstein and Converse (2008).
[47] Steven Radelet, *Emerging Africa: How 17 Countries Are Leading the Way* (Baltimore, MD: Brookings Institution Press, 2010): 9-26.
[48] UNDP (2018).
[49] Linz 1978; Svolik (2008); Dresden and Howard (2015).
[50] World Bank, "GDP per capita (current US$)," World Bank National Accounts Data, 2018, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD (accessed 2/26/2018).
[51] KOF Swiss Economic Institute (*Konjunkturforschungsstelle*) Globalization Index, 2018, https://www.kof.ethz.ch/en/forecasts-and-indicators/indicators/kof-globalisation-index.html (accessed 2/26/2018).
[52] Savina Gygli, Florian Haelg and Jan-Egbert Sturm, "The KOF Globalisation Index - Revisited," KOF Working Paper, 439 (2018): 13-17.

residents and the total number of international students; and cultural globalization, derived from the number of McDonald's restaurants and IKEA stores, the number of trademark applications by non-residents, and the volume of trade in cultural goods and services. For political globalization, KOF includes indicators such as a country's participation in United Nations peacekeeping missions, its number of embassies, and number of international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) active within its boundaries.[53] The Globalization Index, which combines the economic, social and political dimensions, is measured on a scale from 1 (least globalized) to 100 (most globalized). For this study, annual Globalization Index scores are averaged over the period from 2005 to 2014. While SSA stood out as a region with relatively low overall globalization during this period, the measure revealed significant variation among the nineteen sub-Saharan African states under investigation. Within a group averaging 48.00 on the Globalization Index, Nigeria (56.83), Kenya (56.75), and Zambia (54.51) were the most globalized countries, and Ethiopia (41.18), Guinea-Bissau (38.12), and Burundi (35.00) were the least globalized.[54]

To assess the degree of Western leverage over cases, the study examines the ratio of Chinese finance to official development assistance (ODA) provided by members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) during the period 2000 to 2014. The DAC consists of thirty member states that are exclusively from high-income democracies, including European nations as well as the United States, Canada, South Korea, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. These member states have agreed to uphold the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and 2008 Accra Agenda for Action, which require that the delivery of foreign aid ensures "ownership, alignment, harmonization, results and mutual accountability" and encourages poverty reduction, promotes good governance, reduces corruption, and improves transparency.[55] Unlike DAC members, China emphasizes the principle of noninterference and extends aid and assistance without economic or political conditions.[56] Thus, if DAC assistance places a degree of democratizing pressure on recipient states, China's unconditioned delivery of assistance could have a black knight effect,[57] providing incumbent executives with an effective counterbalance to such pressure. As a consequence, Chinese aid is compared in relative terms to OECD-DAC ODA. To measure Chinese aid, the report uses AidData's Global Chinese Official Finance Dataset. The dataset uses the Tracking Underreported Financial Flows (TUFF) methodology to triangulate data from four different sources: English, Chinese, and local language news reports; official statements and publications from Chinese officials; documents released by official counterparts in partner countries; and the reports and field research of NGOs and scholars.[58] This approach is applied to develop a dataset of "4,304 projects financed with Chinese official development assistance (ODA) and other official flows (OOF) in 138 countries and territories around the world" during the years 2000 to 2014.[59] Because China's delivery of aid does not follow the OECD-DAC standards for transparency and Beijing does not publish official statistic for development aid, the Global Chinese Official Finance Dataset provides a unique and useful instrument for measuring the extent of Chinese aid.

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[53] Gygli et al (2018): 13-17.
[54] KOF Globalization Index (2018).
[55] OECD, *Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action,* 2016, http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/parisdeclarationandaccraagendaforaction.htm (accessed 2/27/2018).
[56] Eric Gabin Kilama, "The Influence of China and Emerging Donors Aid Allocation: A Recipient Perspective," *China Economic Review* 38 (2016): 76-77; Steve Hess and Richard Aidoo, "Beyond the Rhetoric: Noninterference in China's African Policy," *African and Asian Studies* 9 (2010): 358-363.
[57] Levitsky and Way (2010): 41-42.
[58] Axel Dreher, Andreas Fuchs, Bradley Parks, Austin Strange, and Michael Tierney, "Aid, China, and Growth: Evidence from a New Global Development Finance Dataset," AidData Working Paper 46 (October 2016): 2-3.
[59] Dreher et al (2016): 4.

Results

Table 1

	HDI 2005-2014	GDP per capita growth 2005-2014	KOF 2005-2014	China Finance as % of DAC ODA (2000-2014)	FH 2005-2017
Gambia, The	0.44	-0.25	51.28	0.00	4
Ethiopia	0.40	7.79	41.18	0.35	3
Congo (Brazzaville)	0.55	2.05	49.16	0.41	3
Burundi	0.36	0.81	35.00	0.04	3
Guinea-Bissau	0.41	0.66	38.12	0.10	2
Kenya	0.52	2.49	56.75	0.23	2
Gabon	0.66	-0.03	53.09	1.29	2
Uganda	0.47	3.26	52.30	0.06	2
Niger	0.32	1.84	45.60	0.15	2
Madagascar	0.50	0.07	44.84	0.03	1
Djibouti	0.44	3.02	47.38	0.37	1
Mozambique	0.39	4.38	49.42	0.13	1
Nigeria	0.50	3.27	56.83	0.85	0
Zambia	0.53	4.34	54.51	0.25	0
Tanzania	0.49	3.32	48.52	0.18	0
Sierra Leone	0.39	5.06	43.11	0.08	-1
Burkina Faso	0.37	2.81	50.83	0.00	-2
Malawi	0.43	2.70	42.79	0.04	-2
Liberia	0.41	3.30	51.24	0.04	-2

Level of socioeconomic development, as measured by average annual HDI scores from 2005 from 2014 did not appear to be a significant predictor for backsliding or democratization. The nineteen cases had an average annual HDI of 0.45 from 2005 to 2014. Those cases identified as backsliders had an average score of 0.45, ranging from Niger's average HDI of 0.32 to Gabon's average HDI of 0.66. The four countries with identified improvements in democratic governance had an average HDI of 0.40, a figure not significantly different from the average of cases with backsliding regimes. Moreover, cases with improvements in democratic governance would be expected to have a higher, not lower, level of socioeconomic development than their backsliding peers. Of course, the nineteen cases as a group have generally low levels of human development. As of 2014, only Gabon, Congo (Brazzaville), Zambia, and Kenya were classified by the UNDP as "medium human development" countries, with the others falling into the category of "low human development" countries.[60]

Economic performance stood out as a more effective predictor of political change. Among backsliding cases, the average annual per capita GDP growth from 2005 to 2014 was 2.17%. However, there was substantial variation among backsliding countries, and this score was significantly skewed upward by one outlier – Ethiopia, which had a remarkably high growth rate of 7.79%. If this case is excluded, the backsliders averaged a 1.66% average annual rate of growth, including five cases: the Gambia, Burundi, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, and Madagascar with average annual growth rates below 1%. In comparison, the four cases with improvements in the quality of democratic governance averaged an annual growth rate of 3.47% and the three cases with no observed political change averaged 3.64%. Notably, while the backsliders contained both high and (very) low growth countries, the growth rates of improvers and stable hybrid regimes were all solidly in positive territory, with Malawi (2.7%) having the lowest average annual growth of the growth. From this limited sample, it appears that while economic performance was lower among backsliders than improvers or stable hybrid regimes, poor economic performance was not in itself

[60] UNDP (2018).

a strong predictor of backsliding. But solid economic growth did appear to be an important factor in encouraging countries to improve the quality of democratic governance.

Cases with dense economic, political, social and organizational linkages to Western countries and international financial institutions were expected to be more vulnerable to democratizing pressure from outside powers and thus more likely to experience democratization and less likely to experience backsliding. Using the KOF Globalization Index as a measure for international linkages, this study found that the twelve backsliding regimes averaged 47.01 from 2005 to 2014. Within the group, there was great variation, ranging from Kenya (56.75) to Burundi (35.00). The four cases with improvements in democratic governance had a nearly identical average annual KOF Globalization Index of 46.99. This suggests that international linkages did not have an observable influence on the political trajectories of the hybrid regimes under examination, either in the direction of backsliding or democratization. However, this finding is not inconsistent with studies that have observed international linkages as a factor influencing regime trajectories. For example, Levitsky and Way (2010) found that international linkages were "extensive" in Eastern Europe and Latin America during the post-Cold War period but "low…in most of Africa and the former Soviet Union."[61] The KOF data found similar patterns continued to exist during this more recent period (2005-2014). Despite increases since 2000 (42.23) and 2005 (45.82) regional KOF Globalization Index averages remained relatively low in sub-Saharan Africa (50.49) in 2014, continuing to lag behind Europe and Central Asia (74.9) and Latin America (59.16) as well as the Middle East and North Africa (63.05).[62] Thus, as the region becomes more connected to Western powers, hybrid regimes might become more vulnerable to democratizing pressure.

Of course, with the rising influence of China and other non-Western power, the influence of Western powers over Latin America and the post-communist region in the immediate post-Cold War period may not be repeated in contemporary sub-Saharan Africa. According to AidData's Global Chinese Official Finance Dataset, China committed to extending $354.3 billion USD in official finance from 2000 to 2014, compared to the United States' official finance of $394.6 billion during the same period.[63] China's total official finance, which was only $2.6 billion USD in 2000, has since surged to over $30 billion USD in every year since 2009, reaching a level in $37.3 billion USD in 2014 – the last year in which data was available.[64] The nineteen cases investigated in this study all received significant but highly variable amounts of ODA from OECD DAC member states. For all nineteen cases, the average annual ratio of ODA to GNI from 2000 to 2014 was 14.9%, ranging from post-conflict Liberia (65.6%) to Gabon (0.5%). On average, countries with observed improvements in democratic governance had a greater level of dependence on OECD DAC aid (29%) than backsliding countries (11.8%). The average of democratizing countries was skewed upward by the presence of post-conflict Liberia, but even after excluding Liberia, the remaining three democratizing countries had an ODA-to-GNI ratio of 16.6%, a number nearly 30% higher than the average observed in backsliding countries.

To address the potential role of China as a black knight – an outside source of support that might leverage incumbent executives from the pressure of democratizing powers, the ratio of Chinese official finance to OECD-DAC ODA was also examined. For the nineteen observed cases, the average annual ratio of Chinese official finance to OECD-DAC ODA from 2000 to 2014 was 24%. Among backsliding cases, the average annual ratio was 26%, while among democratizing cases the ratio was 4%. For the cases with

[61] Levitsky and Way (2010): 23.
[62] KOF Globalization Index (2018).
[63] Aid Data, Global Chinese Official Finance Dataset (2018), http://aiddata.org/china (accessed 3/9/2018).
[64] Aid Data (2018).

improvements in democratic governance, Chinese finance was uniformly dwarfed by official assistance from DAC member states, with Sierra Leone (0.8%) having the highest ratio of Chinese finance. These findings suggested that a relatively high level of ODA from DAC members (creating democratizing pressure) combined with an absence of significant Chinese finance (a potential counterbalance against democratizing pressure) created conditions conducive to democratization. Conversely, leaders of hybrid regimes with high levels of Chinese official finance appeared to have a freer hand to engage in backsliding. Among the eleven cases where the ratio of Chinese official finance to DAC ODA exceeded 10%, average combined freedom ratings rose (signifying a decrease in freedom) by 1.45. For those with ratios above 30%, average combined freedom ratings rose 1.80. Meanwhile, among the eight cases where the ratio of Chinese official finance to DAC ODA was below 10%, freedom ratings were largely stable, with average combined freedom ratings increasing by only 0.38. However, Chinese official finance was not always present in cases of backsliding. Several backsliders, including Burundi (4%), Uganda (6%), and Madagascar (3%) had very low China official finance to DAC ODA ratios. Moreover, the case that experienced the most extensive backsliding (a dramatic four point change in its combined freedom rating) was the Gambia. It recognized Taiwan throughout the 2000 to 2014 time period under examination and consequently received no Chinese official finance.[65] Another noteworthy case, Nigeria, had an extremely high Chinese finance to DAC ODA ratio of 85% but did not have an observable change its regime between 2005 and 2014. These observations suggest that while Chinese support does not appear to encourage backsliding, countries that have high levels of Chinese finance are more greatly insulated from Western democratizing pressure. And should incumbent leaders – the agents who strategically choose to whether or not to engage in backsliding – carry out such actions, they will face fewer repercussions and incur lower political costs for doing so.

Conclusions

While datasets have provided evidence of an emerging global democratic deficit since 2006,[66] this study provides a more focused picture of how this larger trend has played out among hybrid regimes in sub-Saharan Africa. Among the nineteen cases examined, a country's level of socioeconomic development did not play an observable role in encouraging improvements in democratic governance. Moreover, lower levels of socioeconomic development did not appear to make regimes more susceptible to backsliding. Despite significant variation among the cases observed and improvements over the observed time period, the nineteen cases all remained at relatively low development. Poor economic performance also did not appear to directly influence backsliding in hybrid regimes. However, there is some support for the notion that poor economic performance interrupts improvements in democratic quality that might be driven by other factors. All four of the cases that showed improvements in democratic governance occurred in cases that experienced an overall economic expansion from 2005 to 2014. The study provides support for the suggestion that shifts in the regional balance of power and influence in sub-Saharan Africa, namely the rise of China as an outside player, and the relative decline of traditional Western donors, has played an important role in regional declines in democratic governance. To begin with, the KOF Globalization Index, utilized as a measure for international linkage, demonstrates that despite advances by many sub-Saharan African regimes in their deepening integration into the global economy, the region remains one with relatively weak linkages to the West. In terms of international leverage, those countries with higher levels

[65] In 2016, the Gambia switched its official recognition from Taipei to Beijing, and has since received official assurances that Chinese financed projects will be forthcoming. *Reuters,* "China Promises Support to New African ally Gambia," August 1, 2017, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-gambia/china-promises-support-to-new-african-ally-gambia-idUSKBN1AI01K (accessed 3/9/2018).
[66] Diamond (2015): 141-155.

of dependence on ODA from OECD-DAC member states were more likely to experience improvements in democratic governance. This examination of international leverage also suggests that China, as an emerging alternative source that extends external aid and assistance with 'no strings attached,' has likely played an important role as a black knight in influencing shifts in democratic quality in hybrid regimes. Countries with higher ratios of Chinese finance to OECD-DAC ODA were less likely to experience democratic improvements and more likely to experience backsliding. Meanwhile, those four hybrid regimes that saw improvements in the quality of democratic governance - Sierra Leone, Liberia, Malawi, and Burkina Faso all had low levels of Chinese finance relative to OECD-DAC ODA. These findings suggest that official development assistance and other forms of leverage provided by Western donors played an important role in encouraging improvements in the quality of democratic governance, as seen in Sierra Leone and other African hybrid regimes. Meanwhile, China's provision of alternative support helped counterbalance this democratizing pressure in many venues, deleveraging Western pressure, and enabling many African incumbent executives in hybrid regimes to engage in backsliding.

These findings diverge in subtle ways from patterns observed in post-communist Eastern Europe, where leverage alone (in the absence of linkage) was usually only effective in pushing closed authoritarian regimes to nominally accept elections and shift into competitive authoritarianism, not in driving already-competitive hybrid regimes into making improvements in civil liberties and other aspects of democracy.[67] In the case of typically low-linkage hybrid regimes, Western leverage alone appears to have proven effectual in promoting improvements in democracy but only in cases in which such leverage was not counterbalanced by alternative Chinese financing or undermined by sudden economic downturns associated with the 2007 global financial crisis. Such findings suggest that enhanced Western diplomatic engagement with sub-Saharan Africa and increased support for development assistance could play a constructive role in addressing the regional pattern of backsliding observed since 2006. However, the impact of such efforts would likely be mitigated by the depth of Chinese support for the recipient nation, which would provide an alternative, non-Western source and minimize the costs incurred for engaging in backsliding. Since the rise of Xi Jinping in 2013, China's confidence as a global power and willingness to extend support and financing in the developing world has only grown through bold new programs such as the One Belt, One Road Initiative (2013) and the continuing extension of loans and credit through sources such as the People's Bank of China, the China Development Bank, the Export-Import Bank of China, and the China-Africa Development Fund.[68] These developments suggest that for many recipient nations in sub-Saharan Africa, Western engagement and development support would need to significantly surpass 2005-2014 levels to provide effective leverage. This would mean raising the position of foreign assistance and democracy promotion on the national foreign policy agenda of major Western democracies at a moment in which Western power and influence appears to be in relative decline and politics in the United States and many European powers has shifted in a more inward and isolationist direction.

[67] Levitsky and Way (2010): 42-43.

[68] Nadège Rolland, "China's "Belt and Road Initiative:" Underwhelming or Game-Changer?" *The Washington Quarterly* 40:1 (2017): 127-142; China Africa Research Initiative, "Chinese Loans to Africa," 2018, http://www.sais-cari.org/data-chinese-loans-and-aid-to-africa (accessed 3/19/2018).