

Democratization and Literacy in Sub-Saharan Africa

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## **Abstract**

Many scholars have investigated factors that may influence the rate of democratization and democratic consolidation in states. A robust relationship generally exists between human and economic development and levels of democracy. Some argue that of these factors, adult literacy is by far the best predictor of democracy across the world.

However, some argue that democratic transitions in Africa differ from those elsewhere. This paper argues that the literacy thesis does not hold true in Sub-Saharan Africa, possibly because a lack of job opportunities for educated citizens prevents the establishment of a strong middle class.

## **1. Introduction**

The drama and excitement that surround political maneuvering and elections make fascinating theater for observers. New democracies often have the most vibrant political cultures as a result of the relative novelty of elections and referendum. After African countries became independent in the 1950s and 1960s, they briefly flirted with democracy before many regressed to authoritarianism. Decolonization in Africa led to the single largest growth of independent authoritarian governments in history.<sup>1</sup> Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, political transitions back to democracy are occurring across the continent. The variety of experiences makes for fascinating study.

It is important to study democracy because a large number of the most powerful countries in the world and their citizens are convinced that it is the best form of government and have launched numerous democracy promoting endeavors, up to and including military engagements. Change is never easy; political change even less so.

Transitioning to democracy contains many different pitfalls. Once the hurdle of trying to define democracy is overcome so that the goal of the process is known, one still has to develop appropriate institutions and public attitudes. There are numerous conditions which can inhibit a successful democratic transition. Identifying those conditions as well as situations which can facilitate a transition is important in order to understand how to best promote democracy and political rights.

Many studies have examined various factors thought to contribute to democratization and democracy; “It is difficult to imagine making a claim about either democratization or consolidation that has not appeared somewhere in some form in the literature.”<sup>2</sup> Each region of the world has its own idiosyncrasies which affect its transition to democracy. Hence, while worldwide studies are nice, regional studies might be more helpful to practitioners. This paper focuses on democratic transitions in Africa. It examines one particular theory, that of Stephen Sanderson, who did an interesting study that showed literacy to be the most statistically important factor in explaining states’ levels of democracy across the world since the 1850s.<sup>3</sup> The paper argues that while literacy is important for increasing citizen engagement and creating a middle class of skilled workers, the lack of job opportunities in Sub-Saharan Africa mitigates the effect of literacy because it prevents the creation of a strong middle class.

In section two, the many definitions of democracy are discussed. Without a solid background in democracy theory, it is impossible to appreciate the intricacies of democratization and democracy promotion. A single set of elections does not a democracy make. Section three examines the phenomenon of democratic consolidation, the necessary strengthening of democratic institutions for a country to remain democratic.

In section four, factors that scholars have linked to democratization are discussed, and the discussion is continued in section five which is dedicated to factors relating to modernization theory. Section six lays out the methodology used to test the relationship between democracy and adult literacy in Sub-Saharan Africa. Statistical results are related in section seven and case studies are examined in section eight. Analysis of the previous two sections takes place in section nine, and the paper concludes in section ten.

## **2. Defining Democracy**

As Jack Lively says regarding democracy, “The almost universal approval given to the word and the very general desire to appropriate its prestige makes the task of elucidation more difficult.”<sup>4</sup> Without a proper understanding of the difficulties involved just in defining democracy, it is impossible to fully understand the difficulties posed by the rest of the study of democracy. After an overview of the original democracy, various scholars definitions of the term will be presented, including views on compatible cultural democracy versus liberal democracy.

The word ‘democracy’ comes from the Greek roots ‘demos’ meaning village or people and ‘cratos’ meaning rule. Together, they literally mean ‘the rule of the people.’ The concept of democracy originated in the Greek city-state of Athens. All men over the age of eighteen who could prove that they were not a slave and that their parents were citizens of Athens were eligible to participate in the Assembly of the Demos.<sup>5</sup> All members of the Assembly had the right to bring any subject up for discussion, and the Assembly had wide jurisdiction to create legislation.<sup>6</sup> The closest thing Athens had to a chief executive was the chairman of the Council, who served for only a night and a day.

It has been estimated that about half those eligible to be members of the Assembly served as the chairman at some point.<sup>7</sup> There was no constitution, but some laws were written in ways that made them extremely difficult to abrogate and the rule of law was widely respected.<sup>8</sup> Democracy disappeared from Athens after a military defeat to Macedonian forces.<sup>9</sup>

## **2.1 Liberal Democracy**

Today, the term “democracy” is used in a wide variety of situations and a democratic government is thought by many to be the ideal political system. Actually describing what makes a state democratic, however, is much trickier. Jack Lively has described seven different regimes which could fall under the purview of ‘rule by the people’:

1. That all should govern, in the sense that all should be involved in legislating, in deciding on general policy, to applying laws and in governmental administration
2. That all should be personally involved in crucial decision-making, that is to say in deciding general laws and matters of general policy
3. That rulers should be accountable to the ruled; they should in other words, be obliged to justify their actions to the ruled and be removable by the ruled
4. That rulers should be accountable to the representatives of the ruled
5. That rulers should be chosen by the ruled
6. That rulers should be chosen by the representatives of the ruled
7. That rulers should act in the interests of the ruled<sup>10</sup>

Scholars tend to define democracy either in terms of specific institutions or the ends achieved by the system.

Joseph Schumpeter was the first to attempt to define the democratic system of government. He preferred to define democracy by a process – that of elections.

“Democracy does not mean and cannot mean that the people actually rule in any obvious

sense of the terms ‘people’ and ‘rule’. Democracy means only that the people have the opportunity of accepting or refusing the men who are to rule them.”<sup>11</sup> He did not trust the average person to make important decisions. David Held calls Schumpeter’s model of democracy ‘competitive elitism.’<sup>12</sup> Schumpeter believed that while democracy could be used to establish social justice or for other causes, such goals should not be confused with democracy itself – political decisions should not be confused with the method used to take them.<sup>13</sup>

While elections may be essential to democracy, going through the motions of polling is not enough. Jack Lively asserts that the operative principle of democracy is political equality. Political equality is not itself an end to Lively, rather, the ends of democracy are the general interest, the common good, liberty, and participation.<sup>14</sup> Lively acknowledges that the path to achieving political equality is not always apparent. While some conditions are obvious and referenced by many scholars – wide freedom of association, freedom of speech and free election – others are not. Lively says, “Beyond this, the degree to which political equality is present (or, from a normative standpoint, the ways in which it can be enhanced) is a matter of weighing the specific effects of the institution and practices of particular communities.”<sup>15</sup>

Michael Saward has a twist on the concept of equality regarding democracy. He disagrees with Schumpeter that the common people should only get to choose their leaders from among those qualified to lead. Saward says that political equality must be the standard in democracies not because people are inherently equal but because knowledge of a community’s best interests is not like a craft such as carpentry in which some people can claim to have superior knowledge. Everyone has an equal right to

“decide the political course of their [sic] community.” A country is only democratic to the extent that the government is responsive to the desires of the citizenry without devolving into a tyranny of the majority.<sup>16</sup>

Adam Przeworski, Michael Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi blend the different types of definitions into their own. They focus on institutions as proof of democracy, but qualify that such institutions must remain accountable to the people. These authors say that when other scholars talk about the responsiveness of governments as a criterion for democracy, they mean one of two things,

- 1) that when and only when the government is responsive, the regime is democratic regardless of anything else, or
- 2) that if a system is democratic by some other criteria, then the government will behave responsively. The standard way of thinking follows Dahl, who lists several conditions that are necessary and sufficient for governments to be responsive. And it is the presence of these conditions, not responsiveness, that defines a regime as democratic.<sup>17</sup>

The essential feature of democracy to Przeworski et al is contestation.<sup>18</sup> They consider the following four conditions obligatory to label a country a democracy:

1. the chief executive must be elected in a popular vote and be accountable only to the voters or a popularly elected parliament,
2. the legislature must be elected (and have legislative power)
3. there must be more than one party available to choose from on the ballot<sup>19</sup>
4. Alternation of parties in power must be possible<sup>20</sup>

The last requirement is controversial. Przeworski et al attest that countries which have yet to peacefully pass power between political parties are not democratic. They do not consider Botswana, which is widely hailed as a successful African democracy, to be a democracy because there is not enough “observable evidence” to trust that the ruling party would give up power if it lost an election.<sup>21</sup>

## 2.2 Cultural Differences in Defining Democracy

Several prominent African scholars argue that ‘Western style’ liberal democracy is not appropriate for Africa. They insist that there is no single definition of democracy but that each society must decide what democracy means to it based on local culture and history. It is worth presenting their views, even if this paper will use a definition of liberal democracy to measure the effect of literacy, to provide insight into some local views on democracy and into how political concepts can change when adopted in different areas.

Daniel T. Osabu-Kle defines democracy as “above all else a means by which the people as a whole can determine their own fates, determine the directions of their societies.” He claims that if democracy is really a form of government by and for the people, then Africans must determine the shapes and conditions of their own democracies rather than accepting an outside interpretation.<sup>22</sup> The democracy that was “imposed” on African countries by the west has failed because of the difference in African and European political cultures,

What Africans required were political systems with a balance between centralization and decentralization to enable effective participation in the political process at the local level in their own languages and cultures. What was imposed was a political opium in which the language of Parliament as well as the political practice was alien, parliamentary debates were published in a language that the majority of the population could not understand, and the only participation at the local level was a ballot box into which some piece of paper was dumped once every four years.<sup>23</sup>

Partisan politics has failed because the years of colonization bred a deep mentality of us versus them in the field of politics and “because of the underlying African cultural value of unity of purpose and action among brothers and sisters of the same nation and the



perception of partisan politics as a weapon that the enemy might use in any strategy of divide and conquer.”<sup>24</sup>

Claude Ake agrees with Osabu-Kle that to be successful, democracy in Africa will have to look different than democracy in the west; however, he respects the cultural diversity of Africa while Osabu-Kle emphasizes its homogeneity, “For there is so much diversity among African countries and within African countries that it will be misleading to recommend specific practices and institutions for democracy which will be valid all over Africa.”<sup>25</sup> Social democracy may be unpopular in the wider world at the moment, but Ake argues that it is needed in contemporary Africa for its emphasis “on concrete economic rights and also on the removal of conditions which block the democratic participation of ordinary<sup>26</sup> people such as gross economic inequality.” The presidency must become less powerful and have less control over the rest of the government. Ake believes this will also result in more peaceful and lawful elections. The legislature must become more powerful, and the judiciary must be removed beyond the reach of the president. Judges ought to be popularly elected and overseen by an independent judicial commission. The power of the state needs to be decentralized with local governments being granted more autonomy.<sup>27</sup>

### **3. Consolidation of Democracy**

After a country has made a transition out of an undemocratic regime, it begins the process of consolidating its democracy. Many countries which experiment with democracy do not finish the process of consolidation and return to authoritarianism.<sup>28</sup> At its simplest, consolidation means the process of strengthening democratic institutions so

that democracy “is the only game in town” and not in danger of reverting back into another form of government. However, multiple requirements have been added over the years so that, like democracy, one must now detail what one means when discussing consolidation,<sup>29</sup> “The consolidation of democracy, as scholars use the term, represents a cluster concept with an intelligible structure but without a core, without a meaningful common denominator.”<sup>30</sup> Consolidation can be talked of either positively or negatively, strengthening democratic institutions and making democratic advances or preventing back sliding.<sup>31</sup> States in the process of consolidation walk a fine line between stamping out opposition that is opposed to democracy itself and opposition that is merely opposed to the current holder of power.

The great political scientist Samuel Huntington theorized that there have been three large waves of democratization in world history. He refers to the thirty democratic transitions that took place in the fifteen years from 1974 to 1990 as the third wave of democracy. The first wave took place from 1828 to 1926, and the second wave took place from 1943 to 1962. Huntington considers the democratizations accompanying the breakup of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and early 1990s to be the second phase of the third wave,<sup>32</sup> but other scholars consider them to be a fourth wave and fundamentally different from countries of the third wave.<sup>33</sup> Both of the first two waves were followed by reverse waves which swept some, but not all, of the new democracies back into the murky depths of authoritarianism.<sup>34</sup> Huntington identified six main factors that contributed to democratic consolidation among countries that have not participated in a reverse wave. Most states fail to consolidate their first attempt at democracy. Those states which have more previous experience, especially recently, with democracy are

more likely to be successful than neophytes.<sup>35</sup> Huntington believes that states with higher levels of economic development are more likely to become consolidated democracies because a more industrialized, modern economy comes hand-in-hand with a more complex society and a more educated citizenry.<sup>36</sup> A favorable “external environment” encourages young democracies, especially when inducements like inclusion in a regional organization are dangled. Peer pressure can be a strong motivator even if no carrots are available.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, states that have adopted democracy in response to others’ transitions have traditionally not fared very well. Those states with indigenous reasons for the transition have the greatest likelihood of maintaining the new regime style.<sup>38</sup> Peaceful transitions into democracy and possessing fewer and less severe “contextual problems” which need solving also assist in the successful consolidation of democracy according to Huntington.<sup>39</sup>

Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle argue that “the nature of political authority and its embodiment in political institutions differ in Africa in several significant respects from other world regions that have undergone fundamental change in recent years.”<sup>40</sup> The consolidation of democracy in Africa has been uniquely difficult due to the high tendency of neopatrimonial rule in African states. Even though neopatrimonialism can be found across the world, in Africa it has been the core feature of politics. Neopatrimonial rule is characterized by clientelism and the concentration of political power in one person. African states have tended towards neopatrimonialism because of Africa’s cultural history of patrimonial authority.<sup>41</sup> Under neopatrimonial regimes, elections become symbolic exercises which do not encourage popular political participation since the conclusion is foregone.<sup>42</sup>

#### **4. Factors Influencing Democratization**

It is important to recognize that there is no magic bullet for democracy. There is no single condition or factor responsible for even one democratic transition, let alone the transitions to democracy world wide over the past two hundred years. The following is a discussion of some of the most popular explanations for the rate and success of democratic transitions, including the effects of past colonial periods, the resource curse, the possibility of military interventions, and the consequences of choosing either a presidential or parliamentary system of government. Section five will cover economic and social development factors.

There is a body of work devoted to examining the effects of past colonial rule on contemporary states. A significant portion of the work compares the effects of French and British rule in preparing their colonies for political independence. The French ruled their colonies much more directly than the British. While the British allowed local chiefs to remain in power and avoided overruling them as long as they facilitated taxation and certain other imperial directives, the French installed chiefs loyal to the republic, even when there was not a local tradition of chiefs, and used them solely as mouth pieces. The French sought to turn Africans into “little Frenchmen” and assimilate them into French culture, but the British maintained a standard of “separate development.” They were partners in development but Africans were never intended to develop into Britains.<sup>43</sup>

Jennifer Widener offers a look at the structural economic differences that arose from both French and British colonialism. In Francophone former colonies, more public enterprises existed, including marketing boards, which allowed greater rent seeking among government officials. In Anglophone former colonies, the marketing boards

largely did not survive independence, which resulted in fewer budgetary restraints. Former British colonies have tended to use their greater budgetary latitude to finance their debt through inflation.<sup>44</sup> Zimbabwe is the extreme cautionary tale of the effects of runaway inflation.

A second factor is the resource curse. Paul Collier argues that rents from natural resources cause democracy to malfunction because they make political patronage easier and more cost effective. The populations of resource rich countries also tend to hold their governments less accountable because the government asks less from them in terms of taxes.<sup>45</sup> Besides spawning corruption, large volumes of valuable resources have destabilized states through arguments over their control. Multiple civil wars in Africa have been fought amongst populations over the control of oil or diamond producing regions.

Some scholars have expressed concerns about the strength of a state's military as a third factor affecting transitions to democracy. Mark Malan says that "the fact that the military was often the most highly organised and technically competent organ of the state provided fertile ground for the politicization of security forces and for their transformation into *de facto* armed wings of ruling parties." This privileged position over other civil servants led to unaccountability and a lack of transparency.<sup>46</sup> Chuka Onwumehili points to five reasons that it is difficult to prevent military coups in Sub-Saharan Africa: the military has control over weapons and ammunition and is willing to use them, a declining sense of professionalism among troops, people see the military as a viable alternative route to power rather than launching a political career, democracy has yet to be consolidated in many countries, and some members of the global community are

willing to offer support to military coups in countries with uncooperative regimes. He says that the military launches coups because it is a quicker way to achieve goals than parliamentary haggling and because during the colonial days the military got used to resolving internal conflicts.<sup>47</sup> The presence of a strong military prevents civilian leaders from enacting necessary reforms, because if military leaders do not like the reforms, they can use their power to either coerce the civilian government into leaving well enough alone or topple a government that pushed through the reform anyway. Until democracy is consolidated in a country and the population is no longer willing to accept usurpations of power, a strong military is a security liability rather than an asset.

The form of government chosen by a newly independent state can also impact how successful democracy will be in that state. When granted their independence, the former African colonies were all democratic, but many abandoned the system eventually. Both presidential and parliamentary systems of democracy have their strengths and weaknesses. Parliamentary systems are less stable because the parliament can institute a vote of no confidence in the Prime Minister and demand new elections, for example, Italy. However, when a Prime Minister enjoys a strong majority, it is much easier for him as the executive to pass legislation. The merits of a presidential system rely very much on the occupant of the office. A weak president can have no control over the legislature, but a strong and forceful president can turn his state towards authoritarianism through his guaranteed term of office and control over the military.

## 5. Modernization Theory and its Legacy

Modernization theory has had such a large impact on the thought regarding factors influencing democracy that it deserves its own section. Modernization theory originally related solely to economic development, but more recent modernization scholars have examined the effects of social development, such as rising literacy rates, as well.

Modernization theory is based on the idea that economic development leads to democracy. One of the original modernization scholars was Seymour Lipset, who postulated that there needs to be a certain amount of wealth in a country distributed somewhat equally in order for democracy to take root.<sup>48</sup> Several studies have shown that rising quality of life indicators have a stronger correlation with democracy than simple economic development.<sup>49</sup> However, “the well-known correlations with socio-economic variables actually fluctuate considerably—depending on how democracy is measured.”<sup>50</sup>

Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson have contended that the existence of a strong middle class aids in democratization and democratic consolidation. Generally, the middle class prefers democracy more than the very rich because the middle class have less to lose from the introduction of democratic taxation.<sup>51</sup> The middle class favors radical policies much less than the poor do, so the rich will fear a transition to democracy less if there is a moderate middle class to prevent drastic wealth redistributions and other horrors. The middle class also keeps democracy from getting too expensive for the rich and thereby helps prevent coups according to Acemoglu and Robinson. If the middle power becomes too rich, however, it will no longer be able to be a buffer between the rich and the poor.<sup>52</sup> Przeworski frankly presents the task facing states, “The strategic

problem of transition is to get to democracy without being either killed by those who have arms or starved by those who control productive resources.”<sup>53</sup>

Acemoglu and Robinson also believe that states with higher levels of industrialization will be more democratic than those which depend more heavily on agriculture. The authors claim that “industrialists have less to lose from democracy and perhaps more to lose from disruption and violence than landowners,” because it is cheaper for landowners to use force and repress their workers than it is for industrialists.<sup>54</sup> Also, “democracies will rationally tax land and the income from land at higher rates than capital and the income from capital.” These two claims have not been empirically tested, although the authors claim that they are consistent with the correlation of democracy and per capita income and many case studies. High levels of capital intensity will also supposedly make violence between ethnic groups less attractive to the elites as long as both groups have capital owners amongst them.<sup>55</sup>

Development is also measured by social indicators such as literacy and infant mortality rates. Literacy is important to democracy for three main reasons. Literate people are better able to access unbiased sources of information about the government and politics. Illiterate people must rely on intermediaries who filter information through their own biases whether they be television or radio personalities or religious authorities. A workshop on democracy in Africa revealed that “In most African countries, participants recognized that a tremendous amount of information does not circulate beyond a small portion of the urban population, owing to illiteracy, language barriers, and costs.”<sup>56</sup> An individual participant noted that “Individual ignorance of personal rights and understanding of what democracy means has encouraged authoritarianism in Africa.”



Education also exposes people to others from different cultures, even if just through books. Participants also recognized that “education would be crucial to the development of a culture of tolerance” which could help overcome fears of transition.

According to Kenneth Bollen, a better educated workforce is better able to organize and mobilize itself to demand more political representation. Access to more forms of media increases the workers’ desire for political representation.<sup>57</sup> A better educated workforce is also a more productive workforce and can help transform and diversify an economy away from agriculture and simple manufacturing – the definition of a modern economy. Compatible cultural democracy scholars also support the importance of literacy for democracy,

The intensifying crisis of underdevelopment is not conducive to the advancement of democracy in Africa. Too many people are too engrossed in mere survival. The vulnerabilities of ordinary people, especially peasants, are not conducive to a democratic citizenry. For instance, lack of education is a problem because it is bad for self-esteem which is necessary for effective participation; it devalues democratic choice because there is no choice in ignorance.<sup>58</sup>

Stephen Sanderson has extensively tested Tatu Vanhanen’s Index of Power Resources and found that adult literacy is the best predictor of democracy in a country. The predominance of literacy is reduced when testing only non-advanced industrial power countries, but literacy remains a better predictor of democracy than Vanhanen’s other five power resources: size of the nonagricultural population, size of the urban population, the degree to which farms are owned by independent families, the number of students in higher education, and the deconcentration of nonagricultural economic resources. In less developed countries, literacy explained thirty-seven percent of the variation in levels of democracy.<sup>59</sup> Sanderson’s work is important, yet limited. He takes

all of his data from Vanhanen's works, both Vanhanen's index of democracy and literacy rates. Vanhanen measures democracy by multiplying the percent of the votes the winning candidate for chief executive won (competition) by the percentage of the population that voted (participation) and then dividing by one hundred. He claims that political rights and civil liberties are indirectly measured by the competition variable. Some bonus points for holding referendums are available.<sup>60</sup>

A more extensive testing of the relationship between literacy and democracy is needed with an index of democracy that includes political rights as indicators. The world is a rather diverse place. Universal judgments about culture and politics should never be made without testing a hypothesis region by region. Worldwide surveys are too easily skewed by large values in one or a few areas and may cover up an inconvenient discrepancy (from a theory proponent's point of view) in one or more regions.

Vanhanen's index of democracy is fundamentally flawed. His participation variable is what percent of the entire population voted, rather than what percent of the adult, and thus theoretically eligible to vote, population voted. In countries with large youth bulges, which includes the majority of low income developing countries, this variable would be extremely inaccurate because a larger than usual percentage of the country's population would be below the legal voting age. In Sub-Saharan Africa, nineteen countries out of forty-seven have a median age below age eighteen, and an additional twenty-two have median ages between eighteen and twenty. In comparison, in Latin America, the average median age is around thirty, and in Europe, it is approximately forty.<sup>61</sup> Voting rights are granted at age eighteen in nearly all Sub-Saharan countries, except for Gabon and the Central African Republic where it is twenty-

one, Cameroon in which it is twenty, and Seychelles where citizens can vote at age seventeen.<sup>62</sup> Another flaw is that if a majority party legitimately wins a large percentage of the vote because it is popular among the citizenry, under Vanhanen's index, that country would receive a lower score for its amount of democracy. To properly test the relationship between literacy and democracy, one needs to use an index of democracy which takes into account political rights.

## **6. Methodology**

### **6.1 Measuring Democracy**

Those scholars who believe in different cultural definitions of democracy do not believe that democracy around the world can be measured by indices because indices assume that there is a normative model, one correct version of democracy. Before measuring 'democracy' one must describe exactly what one means, "It may be more appropriate to speak of assessing implementation of *certain* democratic values (for example, human rights) rather than assessing 'the level of democracy' as such."<sup>63</sup>

However, this paper will operate under the assumption that a democratic state is one in which there are regular elections that do not bar certain candidates based on ethnic group, sex, or party affiliation and in which all adult citizens are able to vote if they so choose and to have their votes counted, with possible exceptions for convicted criminals and currently serving members of the military. The result of such elections cannot be tampered with by the state or the opposition. There must be freedom of the press and freedom of association to allow opposition candidates to make their platforms heard and

understood. It agrees with Robert Dahl that large scale democracies will need to provide the following if they hope to survive the consolidation process:

1. elected officials
2. free, fair, and frequent elections
3. freedom of expression
4. alternative sources of information
5. associational autonomy
6. inclusive citizenship<sup>64</sup>

Because these conditions must be present, democracy could be seen as a dichotomous variable. However, there is a spectrum of states both within the democratic group and the non-democratic group. Democracy is a dichotomous variable in the same sense that pregnancy is. One either is or is not pregnant; however, once a woman is pregnant, she can be further along than others who are pregnant, and if she is not pregnant, a woman is more or less likely to become pregnant based on several variables. In recognition of these spectrums, the creation of indices is a valid way to measure states' positions in the spectrum of democracy and the likely hardness of democracy within states.

There are several well respected indices of democracy, including Vanhanen's and Przeworski's as well as Freedom House and Polity, two of the most frequently used indices of democracy in empirical research<sup>65</sup> The strengths and weaknesses of these latter two will be discussed below, as well as those of a relative newcomer, the Economist Intelligence Unit's Index of Democracy.

Freedom House measures democracy in its *Freedom in the World* annual report because it believes that "Freedom for all peoples is best achieved in liberal democratic societies."<sup>66</sup> Freedom House began an annual survey in 1972 with 151 countries and 45 territories. The 2008 edition surveyed 193 countries and 15 territories.<sup>67</sup> The survey consists of two sections, political rights and civil liberties. There are ten political rights

questions – three about political processes, four about political pluralism and participation, and three about the functioning of the government. There are also two discretionary questions that can be asked in cases of traditional monarchy or foreign occupation. There are fifteen civil liberties questions – four on freedom of expression and belief, three on associational and organizational rights, four on rule of law, and four on personal autonomy and individual rights. Both sections are scored out of seven points and the separate scores are averaged together for a cumulative score. States with lower scores are considered more free than states with higher scores. Freedom House groups states into three categories depending on their cumulative score. “Free” countries score from 1.0 to 2.5, “Partly Free” countries score from 3.0 to 5.0, and “Not Free” countries have scores between 5.5 and 7.0.<sup>68</sup>

The Polity Project claims to be the most widely used data set by researchers studying regime transitions and the effects of regime authority. The project has gone through four different research phases since beginning in the 1970s. The current phase, Polity IV, was released in 2007.<sup>69</sup> Countries are re-scored at the end of each calendar year, and adjustments to previous years’ scores may be made to reflect gradual changes which are only noticeable as significant in hindsight.<sup>70</sup> Polity scores countries on a twenty-one point scale from negative to positive ten. A negative ten would be a hereditary monarchy and a positive ten would be a consolidated democracy. Like Freedom House, countries are assigned to one of three statuses depending on their score.<sup>71</sup> In general, autocracies score from -10 to -6, anocracies (mixed or incoherent authoritarian regimes) from -5 to 5, and democracies from 6 to 10.<sup>72</sup> Polity scores states on two separate questionnaires measuring the amount of democracy and the amount of

autocracy in the state, then determines a state's final score by subtracting its democracy score from its autocracy score. States are assigned points in each category depending on how well they meet the indicators on each scale. The democracy scale includes the indicators: competitiveness of executive recruitment, openness of executive recruitment, constraints on chief executive, and competitiveness of political competition. The autocracy scale comprises the same indicators plus the regulation of participation with points being assigned for different conditions than on the democracy scale.<sup>73</sup>

Not all indices are created equal. While they will all locate the same strong authoritarian states and strong democratic states at opposite ends of the spectrum, Axel Haedenius and Jan Teorell have found that wide discrepancies can be found in the rankings of the many states which occupy an in-between place.<sup>74</sup> Haedenius and Teorell believe that Freedom House and Polity are the best of the available indices, despite their flaws.<sup>75</sup> They complain that Freedom House's survey has methodological flaws while Polity's has conceptual issues.

Although Freedom House covers nearly the whole range of regularly accepted democratic criteria, it also includes irrelevant criteria such as freedom of worship, property rights, and political decentralization. While these might be features of strong democracies, they are not absolute requirements to designate a state as democratic. Also, the methodology is not transparent enough for the authors. They feel that not enough explanation has been given regarding the discretionary questions and that the justification for certain decisions has not been made available. They claim that outsiders are unable to replicate the report.<sup>76</sup> Conservative regimes and Latin American states tend to score higher levels of democracy with Freedom House's index than leftist states and those from

Eastern Europe.<sup>77</sup> Freedom House also has a tendency “to overrate the level of democracy in traditional monarchies.”<sup>78</sup>

Haedenius and Teorell disagree with how Polity has constructed its survey. They believe that the overall rating of a country is unduly influenced by the amount of constraints on the executive, which they do not agree should be a factor at all. The authors feel that the connection between standard democratic criteria and the components of the survey is weak. Weighting of the different components also seems arbitrary to them and no justification is given for the assigned weights.<sup>79</sup> Polity tends to “overrate the level of democracy, in large part due to the fact that it fails to pay attention to political violence and repression occurring between elections.”<sup>80</sup> Countries in the process of democratization tend to get a higher score from Polity than from Freedom House.<sup>81</sup>

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) released the first version of its Index of Democracy in 2006, after Haedenius and Teorell wrote their article. The second version was released in late 2008, reflecting the state of affairs in September 2008. States are scored on a scale of zero to ten and are classified into four categories depending on their score, full democracies score from 8 to 10, flawed democracies from 6 to 7.9, hybrid regimes from 4 to 5.9, and anything below a 4 ranks as an authoritarian regime. The EIU scores states on sixty indicators grouped in five different categories: electoral process and pluralism; civil liberties; the functioning of government; political participation; and political culture. States will lose an extra point in some categories if they do not get full marks for what the survey authors consider the essential requirements for democracy, “Whether national elections are free and fair, the security of voters, the influence of foreign powers on government, the capability of the civil service to implement policies.”

A combination of dichotomous and trichotomous systems are used, many but not all indicators have the option of giving a half point.<sup>82</sup> Some indicators are judged based upon public opinion surveys such as the World Values Survey and other well-recognized polling institutions.<sup>83</sup>

The EIU survey is not perfect. The first three questions are too broad, they ask directly whether national and municipal elections are free and fair, then the rest of the survey asks the individual questions that would determine whether the elections were indeed free and fair. Like the Freedom House survey, it asks some questions about civil rights that are not directly related to the practice of democracy, such as private property rights and religious tolerance. There is a question regarding the number of women in parliament. While having women elected in equal numbers to men is a laudable thing, again, it is not an indicator of democracy. Perhaps women voters overwhelmingly support male candidates for some reason even though many women are running as well. A better question would be how many women run serious campaigns for office and have a feasible chance of winning. It also asks about if people think they have free choice and control over their lives and if they think that democracy is good for the economy. However, these sorts of irrelevant questions constitute a much smaller percentage of the survey than they do in the Freedom House report. Haedenius and Teorell claim that corruption should not be part of a survey of political liberties, but it can be argued that a corrupt government bypasses the people's will.<sup>84</sup>

The EIU Index of Democracy asks some pertinent questions that get more to the heart of the level of democratic ideals and consolidation in states than other surveys do. It asks about people's willingness to demonstrate against the government. The EIU also



asks about level of public confidence in political parties. Political parties are not necessary to the functioning of a democratic state, although they make coordinating political activities easier. There is a question about literacy under the theory that it is easier to disseminate campaign literature and information regarding government actions among a literate society. While not all of their questions are directly necessary to define a democracy, the EIU does a good job of analyzing how far democratic ideas have permeated society and is the best available index of democracy.

## **6.2 Measuring Adult Literacy**

Adult literacy is generally defined as the ability of those over the age of fifteen to read and write in a recognized language. Unfortunately, there is not a recognized set of accurate statistics on literacy in Sub-Saharan Africa. The World Development Index, Human Development Report, and United States Central Intelligence Agency all report different numbers (sometimes varying by as much as ten to twenty percentage points) within a span of approximately three years. All of the data collectors claim that their numbers are what were reported to them by the respective governments.

## **6.3 Quantitative Tests**

In order to test the relationship between adult literacy and democracy, linear regressions will be run between the Central Intelligence Agency's statistics on adult literacy and the Economist Intelligence Unit's Index of Democracy scores.

The CIA's statistics were chosen over those of the World Development Index due to their greater completeness and over the Human Development Report which reports

data from between 1995 and 2005 without distinguishing how current each country's numbers are. The World Development Index did not have information on literacy rates in seven countries (nearly a seventh of the sample size) within the past ten years.

Despite its imperfections, the Economist Intelligence Unit's Index of Democracy was chosen over the other available indices of democracy for its clarity of design, trichotomous scoring system, and focus on democracy rather than liberties in general. A trichotomous scoring system is preferable to a dichotomous system because it reduces the risk of coding errors. With dichotomous systems, the line is drawn between democracy and non-democracy is much starker.<sup>85</sup> Trichotomous systems allow for more of a scale and description of 'gray areas' without making the differences between scores seem arbitrary and increasing the risk of experts scoring the same country different ways.<sup>86</sup>

### **6.3 Case Studies**

After running the regressions, four different case studies will be examined for greater insight. The case studies were chosen with an eye to reducing the number of other causal explanations for the level of democracy in the countries. Two Francophone and two Anglophone countries were chosen, one with a higher level of democracy and one that has been struggling with democracy in the recent past. Mali and Chad, the Francophone countries, are both landlocked states on the northern edge of Sub-Saharan Africa. Botswana and Sierra Leone, the Anglophone countries, both possess large amounts of mineral wealth, including diamonds.

## 7. Statistical Results

When a linear regression is run between adult literacy as the independent variable and the level of democracy according to the Economist Intelligence Unit as the dependent variable for forty-six states in Sub-Saharan Africa, the correlation between the two is only nine percent with a statistical significance of 0.043. The correlation is significant, meaning that there is a link between the two variables, but a link of nine percent is weak, especially compared to Sanderson's results.

Because of this low correlation, regressions were run with various combinations of the Freedom House, Polity, World Development Index, and Human Development Report data as well. The Freedom House and Polity indices had even lower correlations with the CIA's literacy data, two percent and one-one-hundredth of a percent respectively. Using the World Development Index's literacy rates decreased the correlation; when used with the Economist Intelligence Unit's democracy scores, there was a correlation of three percent. The worst correlation was between the Human Development Report and Polity –  $r^2=0.0003$ . When a regression was run using only the case study countries with the originally specified data sets, the correlation was a remarkable eighty-two percent, but at 0.09 the significance did not stay below the standard recognized threshold of 0.05 which is the commonly accepted highest value for a result to be declared statistically significant.

These results suggest that there is not a connection between literacy rates and levels of democracy in Sub-Saharan countries. Such a low correlation is surprising given the thirty and forty percent correlations obtained in Sanderson's global study of the

relationship between literacy and democracy. An explanation needs to be found for this discrepancy.

Looking at countries as individuals in case studies might help discover why literacy is not a predictor of democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa. The following case studies come from four very distinct countries at first glance but which have many similarities when one looks closer.

## **8. Case Studies**

Botswana, Sierra Leone, Mali and Chad were chosen as case studies. Botswana and Sierra Leone are both former British colonies, and Mali and Chad are both former colonies of France. All countries possess significant mineral deposits; Botswana and Sierra Leone have diamonds, Chad has oil, and Mali has gold and uranium. Botswana, Mali and Chad are landlocked. All of the countries have constitutions based on the presidential system of democracy rather than the parliamentary system. In Botswana, Mali and Sierra Leone, there seems to be a connection between the employment rate of literate adults and demand for democracy. It is unclear whether this theory holds for Chad as well, because the country has never produced many literate adults.

### **8.1 Botswana**

Modern Botswana is the former British protectorate of Bechuanaland in central southern Africa.<sup>87</sup> It received its independence from Great Britain in 1966. Botswana was mostly self-governed during its time as a British protectorate from 1885-1966. During colonialism, less than three thousand white settlers resided in Botswana. Great

Britain originally planned to annex it to Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, or to South Africa. The administrative capital did not move from South Africa into Botswana itself until 1965.

Botswana has a multiparty parliament and a president. The Botswana Democratic Party has held the majority of seats in the National Assembly since its creation. There has not been an alternation in political parties holding the presidency. The second president was the vice president of the first, the third president was the vice president of the second, and the current president is the son of the first president. However, all of the elections have been judged free and fair by the international community. Opposition parties are stronger in urban areas and the BDP is stronger among rural voters. There was some unrest in the 1990s.

GDP per capita rose quickly after independence, going from less than \$50 to \$13,300 today.<sup>88</sup> Botswana is mineral rich, especially in diamonds, and the government spends its mining related income on rural infrastructure and healthcare programs. There is a tradition of strong government planning in the economy. The yearly income from mining stopped increasing in the 1990s, but Botswana began to expand its manufacturing sector to provide goods for domestic and South African markets.<sup>89</sup>

Nearly half of Botswana are under the age of fifteen even though life expectancy is in the low sixties for women and the high fifties for men. The birth rate has been falling as the life expectancy has risen. More than three-quarters of Botswana are literate. Botswana struggles with HIV/AIDS; more than a third of adults are infected. The government became the first in Africa to provide its citizens with free antiretroviral drugs.

Botswana's government has not financed its debt via inflation like Widener claims is common among Anglophone African countries. Botswana's economy looks more like a former French colony due to the amount of government participation and ownership of important sectors, which opens the door wider for corruption. Botswana's resource wealth has not destabilized it; although, Collier's comment that the citizenry of resource rich countries tend to demand less accountability from their government because the government demands less of them in taxes is interesting. Botswana's military is considered professional and focuses mostly on regional peacekeeping missions and anti-poaching efforts.<sup>90</sup> None of these three theories, nor its adoption of a presidential system, were negative factors in Botswana's development of democracy. What kept them from being so? The high value Botswana place on education and the state's ability to provide literate citizens with jobs might be the answer.

## **8.2 Sierra Leone**

Sierra Leone was named by the Portuguese explorer Pedro de Sintra in the 1400s after the hills ringing the harbor of what is today Freetown, the capital. The capital is named after the fact that freed slaves from the United States and West Indies returned to Africa and settled there in the nineteenth century, becoming an educated class of elites known as Krios. Great Britain took over the Freetown settlement in 1808 and declared the area a British protectorate in 1896. There was a short uprising in 1898. Krios had held powerful positions during the 1800s, but were gradually removed in favor of British administrators after the declaration of the protectorate. Parliamentary structures were

gradually introduced throughout the 1950s and Sierra Leone became independent of Great Britain in 1961.

The new country became a republic in 1971 and a one party state in 1978. Political opposition was not tolerated from at least 1967 and governmental corruption has been rampant from the same time. A multiparty system was reestablished in 1991 until a violent military coup in 1992 which suspended all political activity until the 1996 democratic elections. Another coup in 1997 suspended the constitution again for another year. A civil war over the mismanagement of diamond resources and government corruption began in 1991 when fighting from Liberia spilled over the border into Sierra Leone. At least 50,000 people died and two million were displaced before the civil war officially ended in 2002. A Truth and Reconciliation Committee and a United Nations War Crimes Tribunal were set up at the end of the war. UN peacekeeping troops stayed until 2005.

About half of Sierra Leoneans engage in subsistence agriculture for survival.<sup>91</sup> Sixty percent of Sierra Leonean's are farmers. The primary cash crop is rice. Sierra Leone possesses large mineral deposits, however the mining rights to the deposits are owned mostly by foreign companies, especially European, Lebanese, and Indian. Inefficient state owned companies were privatized in the 1980s and 1990s. Economic difficulties began in the 1980s. The civil war from 1991 until 2002 destroyed most of Sierra Leone's formal economy. Alluvial diamonds, bauxite, rutile, chromite, columbite, gold and platinum are all mined in Sierra Leone.

Schooling is not compulsory. Sierra Leone's literacy rates are among the lowest in the world. Until the civil war, access to health care was fairly widespread. Now Sierra Leone has one of the lowest life expectancies in the world.

Sierra Leone has struggled with bad leaders since 1964. Control of the diamond mining industry and its wealth has remained in very few hands. The military has been misused by the government since 1967. All of these are detriments to democracy, but other countries have overcome them. Why hasn't Sierra Leone? Most Sierra Leoneans have not had access to education since the late 1960s and jobs continue to be scarce. An uneducated, unemployed population might explain many of Sierra Leone's problems.

### **8.3 Mali**

The French finished their conquest of the southern Sahara from the Muslims in 1899. Mali was known during French rule mostly as French Sudan and did not have constant borders. The territory that is now Mali was considered less important economically and politically than Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal and peasant agriculture was encouraged for the most part. Several local revolts occurred over issues of forced labor, conscription, and taxation but none ever amounted to anything serious. In 1958, what was then known as the Sudanese Republic became independent from France but stayed within the French Community. In 1959, it joined with Senegal to form the Mali Federation, which broke up again in 1960 over major policy differences. After the breakup, the name Mali was adopted.

Mali's first constitution in 1960 set up a parliamentary democracy even though it was not fully implemented before a military coup in 1968. In 1974, a new constitution



was approved in a referendum that made the Malian People's Democratic Union the only legal political party. General Moussa Traoré was elected to begin "civilian" rule in Mali again in 1979 and was re-elected in 1985. Traoré insisted that the country was not ready for multiparty democracy in 1991 despite popular demonstrations in favor of it. He was deposed by the military which held power only briefly before following through on its promises to hold elections in 1992. In 1992, a multiparty democracy was instated and governmental powers were separated into executive, legislative, and judicial bodies. The president's term is limited to two five year terms. In 1994, the government instituted National Complaints Day when any Malian can freely present his complaints to the government. The current president is the second elected under the current constitution and is former general Amadou Touré who led the 1991 coup. He does not belong to a particular political party but is supported by a coalition of parties. International observers did not report any major irregularities after the 2007 election which reelected Touré to his second term. However, turnout was only 33%.<sup>92</sup> The military remains strong in Mali. The president and key election officials are former military officers.<sup>93</sup> The government has continued to struggle with economic issues, Tuareg rebel groups, and cross border skirmishes over land.

Eighty percent of Malians engage in subsistence farming, herding, or fishing. Mali has extensive mineral resources, but they have yet to be fully tapped. The national debt is continuously rising due to an imbalance in trade, resource mismanagement, and a dependence on foreign aid. The economy was run on socialist policies for the first eight years after independence but has been privatizing ever since, especially after the institution of democracy in 1992. All of Mali's debt to the International Monetary Fund

and the World Bank was cancelled in 2005. Mali is a member of the West African Economic and Monetary Union as well as the Economic Community of West Africa. Workers have the right to unionize.

Mali is one of the largest countries in Africa in terms of territory size but not in terms of population. The notion of ethnicity and culture is somewhat complicated in Mali as sometimes people marry outside their ethnic group and speak other mother tongues without changing their cultural affiliation while other times they do, especially as more people learn Bambara. Life expectancy has risen since 1990 and birth and death rates have slightly declined since the same time. The child and infant mortality rates in Mali are amongst the highest in the world and health care is not readily accessible. Malnutrition and poor sanitation are issues in Mali, but the HIV rate is not particularly high, although it is growing in the urban areas. Primary and secondary school are free and compulsory from ages seven to sixteen, however, currently only almost half of Malians are literate. The literate tend to be concentrated in urban areas.

Mali conforms to Widener's stereotype of francophone countries continuing the tradition of state-owned enterprises. It still maintains its cotton marketing board. It has resources to be mined, but not to the extent of the other case studies. Mali is a case in which the military acted beneficially towards democracy. Why did the military act the way it did in response to the people's demands for more democracy? Why did the people demand more democracy after a relatively peaceful twenty-five years of authoritarian rule? Right before the demonstrations for democracy that set Mali's democratization in

progress, many government jobs disappeared and many of the literate found themselves unemployed. Could there be a connection between the two events?

#### **8.4 Chad**

In 1910, the area that is now Chad became part of the federation of French Equatorial Africa. The French had difficulty pacifying the region and had only just managed it when WWI broke out. Very little development took place in the interwar period and in 1946 Chad became an overseas territory of the French Republic. The first territorial government was formed in 1957 by a West Indian, and Chad was declared an autonomous republic within the French Community in 1958. Chad achieved complete independence in 1960.

From the start, there was serious tension between the more economically progressive and largely Christian southwest and the more conservative non-black Muslims of the formerly feudal northern states. Chad became a one party state in 1963 when only government candidates were allowed to run in that year's election after a supposed Muslim conspiracy led to the disbandment of the National Assembly and a short period of emergency during which leading members of the opposition party were arrested. Guerilla movements emerged in the 1960s opposing the current government, but by the 1970s the north-south struggle became instead a struggle between the northern factions. Chad had a complicated relationship (including invasions) with Libya during the 1980s but a truce was declared in 1987. One year after a failed coup, Idriss Déby installed himself as president and suspended the constitution while promising to set up a multiparty democracy. Fighting over his rule continues despite him having been

reelected in suspect elections three times. In 2008, rebels reached the capital before being forced to retreat. Sudan and Chad accuse each other of supporting the other's rebels and will stage occasional incursions onto each other's land.

Chad started producing oil in 2003 and it now accounts for the majority of Chad's exports. Chad's natural resources include natron, oil, gold, uranium, and bauxite.

Foreign aid can equal a quarter of GDP some years. Most travel throughout Chad has to be done via air. Over eighty percent of the population relies on subsistence agriculture.<sup>94</sup>

Chad's population is not increasing as fast as other African states. Two-fifths of Chadians are under age fifteen. Emigration might explain the low population growth rate. Very few children in Chad attend primary school – less than fifty percent. Chad has a population density of only twenty people per square mile. The rebel fighting has displaced many Chadians. Chad also hosts over 200,000 refugees from Darfur.

Chad is a perfect storm of factors working against democracy, even more so than Sierra Leone. Chadians lack even a national identity. For hundreds of years, even before the French arrived, strong men have controlled as much territory as they can while fending off those who want it for themselves. The beginning of oil related investments in 2000 has not helped the issue of strongman rule in Chad. Why have Chadians never been able to unite and demand democracy? Other countries have overcome the issues resultant from colonial powers arbitrarily drawing state boundaries without consideration for pre-existing national territories. One possible explanation is that Chadians have never been well educated and thereby have little exposure to those different from them and lack the

resources and ability to demand democracy and have a middle class which can serve as a barrier between the rich elites and the desperately poor majority.

## **9. Analysis**

If literacy is a significant factor impacting levels of democracy in the rest of the world, why does it have such a weak impact in Sub-Saharan Africa? The case studies suggest that literacy must work in conjunction with other factors, especially job availability. Literacy and employment are both necessary for the creation of a middle class, the existence of which seems to be the common factor among countries which have made it past the initial institution of democracy to work towards consolidation.

The rampant problem of unemployment might be responsible for literacy's weak impact on democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa. If people are educated, but there are no jobs for them, in an economic sense they are no better off than before. A middle class cannot gain in size and strength when more than a quarter of the population has no income. Literate adults who are not part of a middle class do not provide a buffer between the rich and the poor strong enough to convince the elites that democracy is safe enough to attempt a transition. Also, it is the middle class, not the poor, that begins most revolutions. Even the French and Russian revolutions were instigated by members of the middle class who claimed to be working on behalf of the poor. It is the middle class that has the time and resources to agitate for change; this holds as true for democratic change as for any other type.

Botswana may not meet Przeworski's definition of a democratic state because it has yet to undergo an alternation in political power, but it is widely considered to be an

African success story both in terms of democracy and human development. Balefi Tsie says that “Successful development policy in Botswana is the outcome of a feasible development strategy implemented by a competent public service under the supervision of a political leadership committed to its policy objectives.”<sup>95</sup> The government spends its resource revenues on public projects especially education and projects intended to promote economic growth. A strong professional bureaucracy has been created, partly by the state’s financing higher education in return for government service after graduation.<sup>96</sup>

Botswana has succeeded in democracy because the original post-independence government committed itself to economic and social development and developed a civil service resistant to corruption. Inertia has kept it along the democratic path. The people of Botswana are well educated and jobs are available in the cities. Botswana have been content with the status quo as their GDP per capita begins to grow and so there is no widespread support for a forceful change in power. Przeworski may argue that Botswana is not a democracy, but as long as the elections have been free and fair there is nothing wrong with Botswana re-electing the same party to power if it continues to be responsive to their needs. A literate people which enjoys extensive political rights should be trusted to make decisions in its own best interest and not have outsiders carp that they are making the wrong decisions.

In contrast to the high rates of literacy and employment in Botswana, Sierra Leone failed because the government bankrupted the education system. Sierra Leone is stable at the moment, but it has not yet been five years since the United Nations peacekeepers left the country. Unlike Botswana, Sierra Leone was viewed as a

promising young country at the time of independence. It was well known for its university and its civil service.<sup>97</sup> The first president attempted to build a unified nation, but after his death in 1964 his less altruistic brother took over the presidency. Albert Margai engaged in large scale patronage and loaded the government with civil servants from his own tribe. As a result, Sierra Leonean politics became ethnically based. Margai was unwilling to leave power after losing the 1967 election. Siaka Stevens, the president-elect, took power only after a series of coups and counter coups, and proceeded to be the very dictionary definition of a neopatrimonial ruler. He bankrupted the state in order to maintain his grip on power. The famous university was unable to maintain itself without government funds and the entire educational system collapsed when the state stopped paying primary school teachers' salaries and the teachers were forced to charge families who could not afford to pay. Many of those who took up arms in the civil war were unemployed urban youths.<sup>98</sup> One poor leader started a chain of events that prevented Sierra Leone from becoming a democracy. The control of and profit from Sierra Leone's resources stayed in a very small number of hands. When the education system collapsed, urban young people were left without any means of supporting themselves since the mining industry was strictly controlled and they did not have the basic education necessary to enter any other line of work. No middle class was ever able to emerge to demand reforms.

Mali was not always a successful democracy. It was run as a single party socialist state from independence until the early 1990s. The ruling powers successfully held onto power until the 1980s by allowing competition within the structure of the single party

state and allowing turnover in the legislature. It also guaranteed government employment for secondary school and university graduates. In the 1980s, however, the state began running out of money and was unable to pay civil servants. Many civil servants were also put out of work when the government closed some of its public enterprises in order to gain international funding. The 1992 coup was unusual in that the coup makers did not seek to maintain their hold on power. Allegedly, it was launched when army elements objected to being asked to fire at unarmed opposition demonstrators. The coup allowed Mali to write a new constitution and hold elections under it without pressure exerted by a ruling party.<sup>99</sup> Yet again, we see a democratic transition at least partly motivated by the interplay between education and job availability. When jobs were no longer available, the urban elite decided that it was tired of the semi-authoritarian regime. A coup leader like Amadou Touré who acts for reasons other than to take power for himself is an exceptional thing. The true test of Mali's consolidation of democracy will come when Touré's second term as president ends in 2012.

Chad has never been truly democratic. While it theoretically started the process of democratization in 2001, any steps taken have been for show to the international community. Chad remains deeply divided into ethnic and religious groups. There is no Chadian national identity. There is no real educational system in Chad. According to Hans Eriksson and Björn Hagströmer, the rule of law in Chad has been weakened because uneducated supporters have historically been given high level governmental posts following military takeovers. All they know is how to obey orders.<sup>100</sup> It is difficult



to analyze the role of education and literacy in Chad other than to note the lack of it throughout Chad's history.

Unity of the country is Chad's biggest impediment to democracy rather than the resource curse of the strength of the military. A unified populace has been shown to be overcome those problems. Perhaps with more education, Chadians would be more tolerant of each other and form bonds with those outside of their own family and ethnic groups. More jobs in the oil industry would also open up to Chadian workers and the oil companies would bring fewer foreign workers into the country. The more Chadians working on the oil projects, the greater the distribution of wealth would be. The distribution still would not be equal, but it will be better than it currently is. Greater education could also result in greater participation in government and the establishment of a professional bureaucracy to handle oil affairs and other matters.

## **10. Conclusion**

Democracy is a tricky concept to study. There are multiple ways to define and measure it, and there is no sure way to institute it. Democracies can take many shapes, but the core principles of a democratic state are political equality and responsiveness to the electorate. In order to measure democracy, certain characteristics of democratic regimes can be coded for to produce an index, but because of the differences between democratic states and disagreements between what counts as democracy and what does not, no index will ever be perfect in everyone's eyes.

Literacy ought to have a positive impact on the level of democracy in a state because it allows for greater political participation and the creation of a middle class which can serve as a buffer between the rich elites and the lower class. However, there is a very slim correlation between literacy and democracy in the Sub-Saharan African states. The discrepancy between this paper's finding and the work of Stephen Sanderson may be explained by Sub-Saharan Africa's high unemployment rates. While high literacy rates might still encourage greater political participation, the lack of jobs prevents the creation of a strong middle class which has strength enough of its own to demand greater political inclusion as well as serving as a politically moderate buffer between the radical poor and reactionary rich. Those countries which have overcome other factors identified as detrimental to democracy have all possessed a reasonably strong, educated middle class which helped to unify the country and set the agenda for change.

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<sup>6</sup> Blackwell, p. 5

<sup>7</sup> Blackwell, p. 6

<sup>8</sup> Blackwell, p. 7

<sup>9</sup> Blackwell, p. 10

<sup>10</sup> Lively, p. 30

<sup>11</sup> Held, p. 143

<sup>12</sup> Held, p. 149

<sup>13</sup> Held, p. 142

<sup>14</sup> Lively, p. 111

<sup>15</sup> Lively, p. 148

<sup>16</sup> Michael Saward. "Democratic Theory and Indices of Democratization" in Defining and Measuring Democracy ed. David Beetham, SAGE Publications, London, 1994. pp. 13-15

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