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WORKING PAPER SERIES

222, 2022

Political inclusion and democracy in Africa: some empirical evidence

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to examine the effect of political inclusion on democracy in Africa. The results of the analyses through the OLS, system GMM, IV-Tobit and IV-2SLS show that political inclusion enhances democracy in Africa. This result is robust across alternative specifications of political inclusion and democracy. Besides, the results equally stood when controlled for colonisation and internal conflicts. As policy implications, policy makers in Africa should enhance their fight for political inclusion as one of the gateways to promoting democracy. In this respect, national laws could be put in place, which impose gender quotas in political positions in every country. Equally, the African Union could sign a convention on these quotas for respective countries to ratify.

Keywords: Political inclusion; democracy; Africa

JEL Classification: I32; O55; P16; P43; P50

1. Introduction

Democracy has been a great concern for governments and development agencies since the dawn of the Cold War in the 1990s. In essence, it has often been put forth as a prerequisite for both bilateral and multilateral grants (Leftwich, 2005). African countries are not left out in this drive; while some have been gradually succeeding in their democratic transitions, others still lag behind (Coulibalya and Omgba, 2021; Asongu and Nwachukwu, 2016). Despite this struggle, several empirics and theories have struggled to evaluate the actual importance of democracy for an economy.

Democracy ameliorates undesirable social and ethnic cleavages, lessens conflict tensions and promotes peace (Armijo and Gervasoni, 2010). Democracy enhances economic growth (Acemoglu et al., 2019), worsens corruption in poor countries, with high income required to mitigate this effect (Jetter et al., 2015). Compared to autocracies, there are time and level contingencies associated with the benefits of democracy in boosting financial development (Asongu, 2014). Democracy equally improves the health of the population (Rosenberg, 2018) and helps in mitigating the negative effect of information and communication technology (ICT) on wealth inequality (Njangang et al., 2021). Besides, literature has it that democrats spend more in providing social amenities than autocrats. Within the underlying framework of research, democracy increases educational and health spending (Kaufman and Segura-Ubiergo, 2001; Stasavage, 2005).

In the African specific case, Stasavage (2005) posited that democratically elected African leaders spent more on primary education while higher educational spending had no effect on democracy. Harding (2020) braced this argument and put into evidence that democratically elected leaders increase access to primary education and reduce infant mortality. However, recent studies have rather argued that the effect of democracy for Africa is more of a tragedy. This includes Khodaverdian (2021) who posit that democracy has no effect on economic growth and that it is devastating on health in Africa.

Given these economic importance of democracy, the situation of democracy around the globe has been wanting especially in the African continent. According to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), the situation of democracy around the globe has recently become degrading and needs revival. Indeed, the value, viability and future of democracy are more contested now than ever before in modern history, or

at least since the 1930s (International IDEA, 2019)[1]. The actual situation of democracy in Africa is still very much a call for concern. While 100%, 93%, 86% of countries respectively in North America, Europe and Latin America are democracies, Africa still lags far behind (41%) compared to these regions although the situation is better than that of the Middle East (17%). Among the so called democracies in Africa, majority have been classified as weak democracies, with the continent having the highest number of weak democracies in the World (11). At the same time, all the countries with a high level of gender equity are high democracies except for Rwanda, while more than half of non-democracies have very low levels of gender equality (International IDEA, 2019).

This stake of the statistics leaves the impression that gender equality promotes democracy. At the same time, one may question why Rwanda is different with one of the best representation of gender in economic and social lives, yet the country still has a lot to do as far as democracy is concerned. Accordingly, women make up majority of the population in most countries and if the majority of the population lacks political rights in a nation, then the country are seen as non-democratic. Before the 20th Century women did not have the right to participate in politics in many nations, and despite the situation improving at the dawn of the 20th Century, most women were still excluded in political positions until the last few decades when the situation picked another turn especially with the dawn of the third wave of democracy across the globe after 1975 (Inglehart et al., 2003; International IDEA, 2019). The representation of women became more popular after the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals and the post 2015 sustainable development agenda, with gender inclusion featuring as priority targets (Asongu and Odhiambo, 2020a, 2020b).

In this respect, this study aims to examine the effect of political inclusion on democracy in Africa. Several studies have established this relationship, including Nikooghadam et al. (2018) who have approached women empowerment through labour force participation of women and education, and established an enhancing effect of women empowerment on democracy. The effect of democratization on women empowerment through electoral systems, participation and political experience has been equally established (Lindberg, 2004). Besides, religion can affect the perception of gender towards democracy. In this respect, Rizzo et al.

[1]https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2019.28

(2007) established that in non-Arab Muslim countries, there were higher levels of support for gender inclusiveness, and those who supported gender equality were significantly more likely to support democracy. The reverse was true in the Arab Muslim countries. Although the advent of democracy was long before the advocacy on gender inclusiveness, the process of modernisation drives cultural change that encourages both the rise of women in public life, and the development of democratic institutions (Inglehart et al., 2003).

To the best of knowledge, the extant literature on political inclusion has not focused on the problem statement being considered in this study. This extant literature has largely focused on *inter alia*: (i) the reduction of the informal sector (Ngouhouo and Njoya, 2020) and more economic prosperity (Duflo 2012; Doepke and Tertilt, 2019; Kabeer, 2020) owing to enhanced female political participation and (ii) reduction in child mortality (Hosain, 2015), reduction of corruption (Jha and Sarangi, 2018; Barnes and Beaulieu, 2019;DiRienzo and Das, 2019; Ngouhouo and Njoya, 2020), human capital consolidation (Hornset and de Soysa, 2021) and enhancement of entrepreneurial opportunities (Al-Dajani and Marlow, 2013; Goltz et al., 2015) owing to increased participation of women. Moreover, there is also another strand of studies positing that the inclusion of women, especially in the formal economic sector engenders favourable macroeconomic outcomes in terms of economic growth and development (Choudhry and Elhorst, 2018;Jemiluyi and Yinusa, 2021), financial inclusion (Balasubramanian and Kuppusamy, 2020) and tax performance (Asongu et al., 2021).

Despite this existing studies, there is lack of empirics on the relationship in the African continent, whereas, the highlighted facts established Africa as one of the worst in terms of performance in democracy in the World. Past studies have equally focused on women economic inclusion. This study as an extension considers political inclusion of women. Moreover, this study distinguishes the effects through the different types of democracy. The study further test for the effect of internal conflicts through ethnic and religious tensions which past studies on the subject neglect. This is particularly important given that Africa is made of different religious groups that struggle along with African tradition to dominate in its sphere. Similarly, the African countries are made of different ethnic groups and languages and the multiculturalism has often contributed to the political outcome of these countries. Examples include Cameroon with several ethnic groups and languages that have in recent years been under political tension because of differences in cultural identity inherited

during colonial rule (Okereke, 2018). Also, in Nigeria, the Biafra ethnic group has in the past caused political tension, requesting separation from the Hausa and Yoruba dominance (Johnson and Olaniyan, 2017). In order to account for some of the underpinning historical elements, this study therefore controls for colonisation given that the majority of these countries are former colonies of the Western economies. There is therefore the need to verify the effect of this Western colonisation on democracy in Africa today.

The intuition of this study is simple to follow, especially as it pertains to the expected nexus between political inclusion and democracy. In terms of conceptual underpinnings, political inclusion is likely to promote democracy, not least, because political inclusion is understood within the remits of, *inter alia*, (i) civil liberties, (ii) involvement of women in business and society and (iii) the political representativeness of women in organs of decision-making (Sundström et al., 2017). As argued by Asongu et al. (2021), political inclusion of women entails a process by which the benefits of women are increased in terms of their ability to have an influence on ideals of politics, participate in civil society organisation and exercise their freedoms. While these underlying benefits are characteristics of democracy, there is an attendant debate that the substantive representation of women is not necessarily linked to more favourable macroeconomic and institutional outcomes (Htun and Weldon 2010, 2011; Kodila-Tedika and Asongu, 2017). Hence, it is relevant to provide scholars and policy makers with insights into the conflicted nexus between political inclusion and democracy, especially when dynamics of political inclusion (political empowerment, civil liberty, political participation and civil society participation) and democracy (liberal, electoral, participatory, deliberative and egalitarian) are considered, as apparent in this study.

The rest of the study is structured as follows. Section 2 discusses the economic approach in terms of data and methodology while the empirical findings are disclosed and discussed in Section 3. Section 4 concludes with implications and future research directions.

2. Econometric Approach

2.1. Data and variables adopted

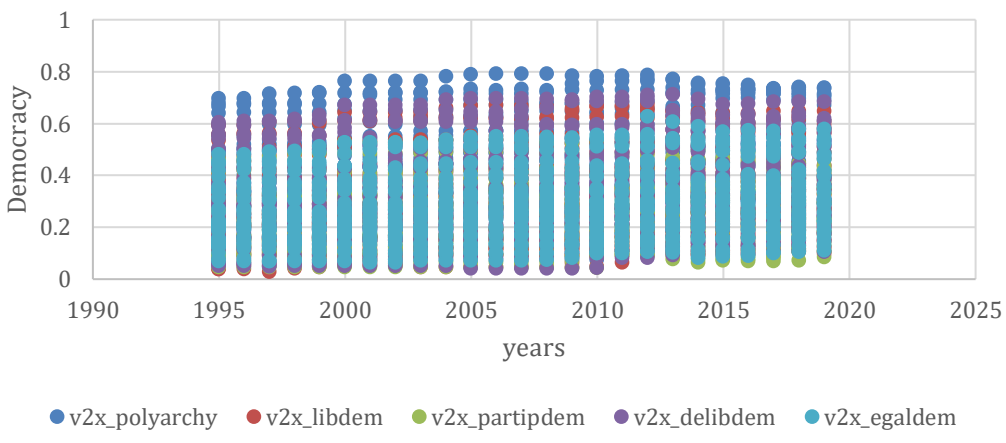
The data for this study are collected from the World Bank, the country risk guide and the V-DEM databases. In what follows, the nature and choice of the variables used are discussed.

Dependent variable

Past studies have often used the Polity 2 Index or Freedom House measures as indicators of democracy (Bhattacharyya and Hodler, 2014; Omgba, 2015; Coulibalya and Omgba, 2021). However, Oskarsson and Ottosen (2010) identified several setbacks to this indicator. The Varieties of Democracy (V-DEM) indicator corrects for most of these shortcomings. It is made up of five indicators of democracy, namely: electoral, liberal, deliberative, participatory, and egalitarian dynamics of democracy.

In electoral democracy, leaders are responsive to citizens, achieved through electoral competition for the electorate's approval under circumstances when suffrage is extensive; political and civil society organizations can operate freely; elections are clean and not marred with irregularities, and elections affect the composition of the chief executive of the country. In the liberal principle of democracy, individual and minority rights are protected against the tyranny of the state and the tyranny of the majority. The participatory principle of democracy dwells on active participation by citizens in all political processes, be it electoral or non-electoral. The deliberative principle of democracy focuses on the process by which decisions are reached in the institution. The egalitarian principle of democracy holds that material and immaterial inequalities inhibit the exercise of formal rights and liberties, and diminish the ability of citizens from all social groups to participate. Figure 1 highlights the evolution of the different types of democracy.

Figure 1. evolution of the different types of democracy in Africa



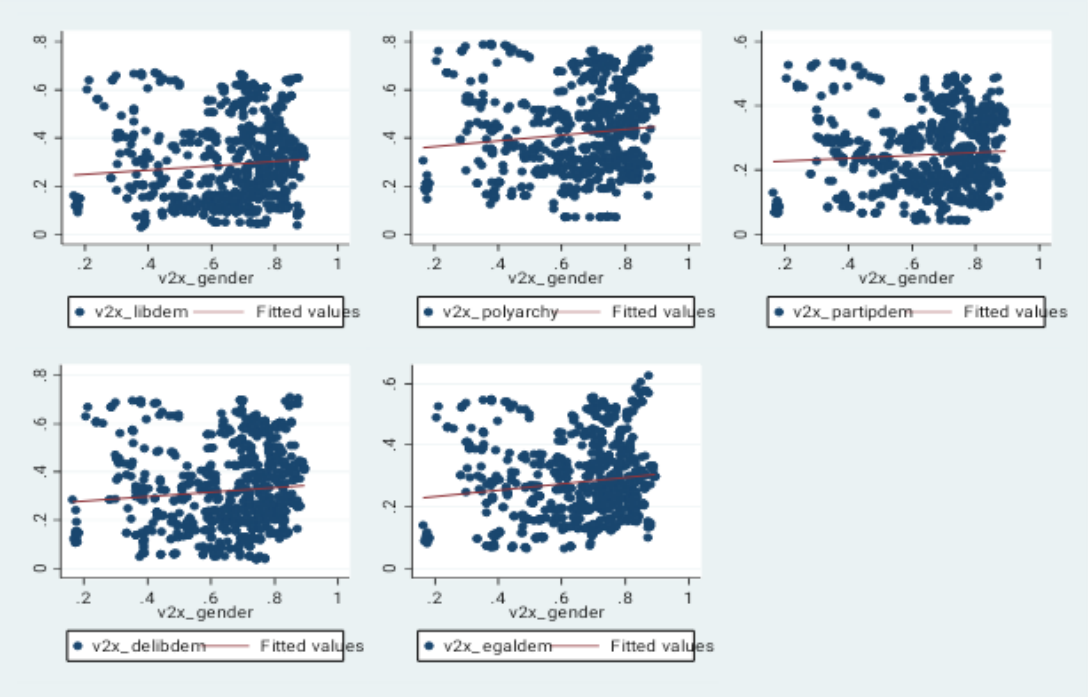
Source: Authors' computation from V-DEM data.

Figure 1 shows that the situation of democracy in Africa has been improving though very slowly. This is particularly noticeable with electoral and egalitarian democracies.

Independent variable of interest

The women's political empowerment index adopted for this study provides information about women's political participation, women civil liberty, and women civil society participation. The index is collected from the V-Dem database. According to Sundström et al. (2017), the political empowerment of women is defined as a process of increasing capacity for women, leading to greater choice, agency, and participation in societal decision-making. This index has been used in recent empirical studies including the works of Tadadjeu et al. (2021) and Nchofoung et al. (2021a). The indicators, together with its sub-indexes isscaled are scaled between 0-1, with empowerment increasing as one moves closer to 1. Figure 2 establishes the relationship between the dependent and independent variable of interest in a two-way fitted plot. The figure indicates an apparent positive effect of women political empowerment on democracy.

Figure 2. Two-way fitted plot.



Source: Authors' computation

Control variables

The control variables are chosen based on extant literature on the determinants of democracy. In this respect, the first control variable is per capita growth. The variable is the natural logarithm of GDP per capita (constant 2010 US dollars). Economic growth is expected to enhance democracy in accordance with the study of Narayan et al. (2011). The next control variable is natural resources rents. It is measured as the total natural resources rents (%GDP). Following the studies of Omgba (2015) and Coulibalya and Omgba (2021), natural resources are a hindrance to democracy for Africa. Foreign aid is also used as a control variable, measured as the Net official development assistance received (%GNI). In accordance with the study of Gibson et al. (2015), aid promotes democracy. The next control variable is education, proxied by primary school enrolment (%gross). Education is expected to improve democracy following Acemoglu et al. (2005). Besides, religious and ethnic tensions are introduced in the model in accordance with the study of El Badawi and Makdisi (2007), and Bezemer and Jong-A-Pin (2013). Religious tension measures the desire of a single religious group to dominate governance while ethnic tension is the assessment of the degree of tension within a country attributable to racial, nationality, or language divisions. Lower scores indicate high ethnic or religious tensions and vice versa. Tables 1 and 2 present the summary statistics and the correlation matrix, respectively.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Liberal democracy	850	.29	.168	.027	.671
Electoral democracy	850	.418	.176	.072	.79
Participatory democracy	850	.248	.118	.043	.535
Deliberative democracy	850	.321	.169	.039	.71
Egalitarian democracy	850	.28	.129	.064	.626
Women political empowerment	850	.658	.167	.164	.895
Women civil liberty	850	.624	.216	.025	.903
Women parliamentary participation	850	.742	.198	.17	1
Women civil society participation	850	.622	.171	.144	.896
religious tensions	850	4.165	1.278	0	6
GDP per capita	841	7.155	.993	5.212	9.398
Resources rents	845	12.99	12.125	.193	67.918
Foreign aid	835	7.462	9.104	-.188	92.141
Basic education	665	95.625	22.376	27.776	149.307

Source: Authors' computation

Table 2. Matrix of correlations

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)
(1) liberal democracy	1.000													
(2) electoral democracy	0.965	1.000												
(3) participatory democracy	0.932	0.944	1.000											
(4) deliberative democracy	0.965	0.962	0.917	1.000										
(5) egalitarian democracy	0.944	0.955	0.884	0.953	1.000									
(6) women political empowerment	0.056	0.074	0.022	0.062	0.114	1.000								
(7) women civil liberty	0.049	0.066	0.007	0.052	0.140	0.914	1.000							
(8) women political participation	-0.015	-0.006	-0.049	0.003	0.007	0.852	0.625	1.000						
(9) women civil society participation	0.129	0.152	0.118	0.120	0.163	0.899	0.795	0.635	1.000					
(10) Religious tension	0.221	0.207	0.199	0.144	0.203	0.221	0.231	0.086	0.293	1.000				
(11) GDP per capita	0.249	0.161	0.195	0.227	0.208	-0.174	-0.224	-0.089	-0.135	-0.012	1.000			
(12) total resources rents	-0.386	-0.343	-0.365	-0.321	-0.396	-0.109	-0.162	-0.018	-0.107	-0.175	0.016	1.000		
(13) foreign aid	0.025	0.074	0.031	0.030	0.012	0.136	0.143	0.046	0.182	0.153	-0.547	0.139	1.000	
(14) basic education	-0.005	-0.016	0.032	-0.005	-0.037	0.166	0.064	0.246	0.149	0.193	0.414	0.053	-0.277	1.000

Source: Authors' computation

Tables 1 and 2 show that the variables are all distributed more or less around the mean values. The scores for democracy within our study period is on average very low, all falling below the 50th percentile. The performance of gender inclusiveness has been better compared to democracy, with the average scores all above the 60th percentile.

2.2. Model specification and estimation method

The study uses at first place the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) and in order to correct for potential endogeneity problems resulting either from reverse causality or simultaneity bias, robustness checks are done using the system Generalized Methods of Moments (system GMM), IV-2SLS, and the IV-Tobit. In this respect, the following models can be specified.

$$Democracy_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 GENDER_{it} + +\beta_j X_{it} + \beta_2 \varepsilon_{it} \qquad (1)$$

Where X is the vector of control variables of country i, at time, t. j is the number of coefficients associated with the control variables, *GENDER* is the measure of women empowerment as explained above. ε is the error term while β is the coefficient of explanatory variables.

If the system GMM were to be specified, certain criteria must be met. According to Roodman (2009) and Tchamyou (2019), GMM can only be used in any regression if the cross-sectional dimension is greater than the time dimension. We have data for 24 years and 34 countries, which meets this condition. GMM estimation method equally controls for cross-country dependence across panels, heterogeneity and simultaneity biases. (Tchamyou et al., 2019; Nchofoung et al., 2021b).

The following equations summarises our model using the GMM procedure in level and in difference.

$$Democracy_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 democracy_{i(t-\tau)} + \beta_2 GENDER_{it} + \sum_{h=1}^{k} \delta_h W_{h,i(t-\tau)} + \upsilon_t + \gamma_i + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (2)$$

$$Democracy_{it} - Democracy_{i(t-\tau)} = \beta_1 \left(Democracy_{i(t-\tau)} - Democracy_{i(t-2\tau)}\right) + \beta_2 \left(GENDER_{it} - GENDER_{i(t-\tau)}\right) + \sum_{h=1}^{k} \delta_h \left(W_{h,i(t-\tau)} - W_{h,i(t-2\tau)}\right)(\upsilon_t - \upsilon_{t-\tau}) + \varepsilon_{i(t-\tau)} \qquad (3)$$

The variables are all defined as above. To solve the problems of identification, simultaneity and restrictions that are usually associated with the GMM procedure, all our explanatory variables are treated as endogenous in accordance with contemporary literature (Nchofoung et al., 2021b).

Equally, the IV-Tobit specifications can be applied. This is particularly because the democracy variable ranges between 0 and 1. To control for this limited range, IV-Tobit is applied in accordance to attendant literature (Nchofoung et al., 2021c). Besides, the method is also efficient in the presence of double causality. The model can thus be specified as

$$Democracy^*_{it} = \alpha_0 + \beta X_{it} + \mu_{it} \qquad (4)$$

Where Democracy* is the latent response variable to the vectors of explanatory variables, X. α_0 is the constant term, while μ is an independent variable in X which is identically and independently distributed.

3. Results and discussion

In this sub-section, the results of the baseline regressions are presented, then that of the robustness through alternative specifications.

3.1. Baseline result: OLS estimations

Table 3 presents the results of the OLS regression. The variables are introduced one after another for the sensitivity of the results with respect to the choices of control variables. The results show that women political empowerment enhances democracy in Africa and that this positive result is consistent across different choices of control variables.

Looking at these control variables, economic growth and foreign aid enhance democracy while natural resources abundance and basic education are detrimental. Also, when the colonial origin of these economies is considered, the effect of French colonialism is negative on democracy while that of English is positive (though non-significant). The findings are consistent with the literature discussed in the data section.

3.2. Robustness checks

In this sub-section, the results are presented across different specifications of political inclusion and democracy. Equally, robustness is verified across other estimation methods (system GMM, IV-Tobit and IV-2SLS). In all these specifications, political

inclusion enhances democracy in Africa as was the case in the baseline specification. It is therefore worthwhile to proceed and provide an economic interpretation to these results with much assurance.

The positive effect of women political implication on democracy is in accordance with the results of Rizzo et al. (2007). Explaining this result, gender inclusiveness enhances economic development (Duflo, 2012), whereas, enhancement in economic development enhances democracy (Narayan et al., 2011). Besides, women are always trusted than men to stick to their political promises. In this respect, people will be willing to exercise their political rights (voting etc.) when women are involved in the political scene. According to Grönlund and Setälä (2007), political trust increases voter turnout which is a component of electoral democracy.

Table 3. Baseline OLS regression

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Dependent Variable: liberal democracy							
Women political empowerment	0.0912***	0.123***	0.0801***	0.0638**	0.0691**	0.112***	0.111***	0.153***
	(0.0344)	(0.0343)	(0.0301)	(0.0288)	(0.0347)	(0.0333)	(0.0333)	(0.0344)
Per capita growth		0.0320***	0.0454***	0.0782***	0.0887***	0.0875***	0.0861***	0.0829***
		(0.00581)	(0.00515)	(0.00594)	(0.00784)	(0.00743)	(0.00757)	(0.00751)
Resource rents			-	-	-0.00691***	-	-	-0.00606***
			0.00674***	0.00730***		0.00666***	0.00656***	
			(0.000418)	(0.000412)	(0.000552)	(0.000524)	(0.000533)	(0.000539)
Foreign aid				0.00593***	0.00643***	0.00463***	0.00479***	0.00477***
				(0.000634)	(0.000840)	(0.000823)	(0.000838)	(0.000828)
Basic education					-	-	-	-0.00133***
					0.000812***	0.00138***	0.00135***	
					(0.000285)	(0.000278)	(0.000280)	(0.000276)
French colonization (dummy)						-0.0966***	-0.0892***	-0.113***
						(0.0112)	(0.0134)	(0.0144)
English colonization(dummy)							0.0142	0.000811
							(0.0140)	(0.0142)
Other colonial rule(dummy)								-0.0609***
								(0.0143)
Constant	0.230***	-0.0176	0.00159	-0.258***	-0.262***	-0.164***	-0.168***	-0.147**
	(0.0234)	(0.0510)	(0.0446)	(0.0501)	(0.0617)	(0.0596)	(0.0597)	(0.0591)
Observations	850	841	841	835	658	658	658	658
R-squared	0.008	0.043	0.269	0.336	0.495	0.567	0.568	0.586
Fisher	7.022**	18.63***	102.7***	104.9***	54.65***	63.04***	54.18***	50.90***

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Source: Authors' computation

Table 4. Robustness across alternative specifications of democracy and political inclusion

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Dependent variable:							
Variables	Liberal democracy	Electoral democracy	Participatory democracy	Deliberative democracy	Egalitarian democracy	Liberal democracy		
Per capita growth	0.0922***	0.0762***	0.0505***	0.0836***	0.0625***	0.0933***	0.0909***	0.0886***
	(0.0114)	(0.0123)	(0.00894)	(0.0124)	(0.00854)	(0.0113)	(0.0117)	(0.0110)
Resource rents	-0.00635***	-0.00574***	-0.00448***	-0.00495***	-0.00482***	-0.00623***	-0.00675***	-0.00624***
	(0.000482)	(0.000576)	(0.000368)	(0.000559)	(0.000369)	(0.000495)	(0.000455)	(0.000494)
Foreign aid	0.00747***	0.00845***	0.00566***	0.00739***	0.00511***	0.00747***	0.00798***	0.00717***
	(0.00241)	(0.00244)	(0.00182)	(0.00265)	(0.00173)	(0.00238)	(0.00246)	(0.00236)
Basic education	-0.00142***	-0.00104***	-0.000391***	-0.00124***	-0.00108***	-0.00133***	-0.00130***	-0.00135***
	(0.000217)	(0.000269)	(0.000174)	(0.000238)	(0.000175)	(0.000207)	(0.000227)	(0.000211)
French colonisation	-0.113***	-0.0681***	-0.0457***	-0.0831***	-0.0520***	-0.118***	-0.105***	-0.104***
	(0.0134)	(0.0138)	(0.0109)	(0.0141)	(0.00899)	(0.0139)	(0.0133)	(0.0132)
English colonisation	0.0126	0.0227	0.0192*	0.0199	-0.00165	0.0108	0.0127	0.0201
	(0.0136)	(0.0146)	(0.0109)	(0.0142)	(0.00934)	(0.0138)	(0.0138)	(0.0136)
Other colonial rule	-0.0669***	-0.0610***	-0.0304***	-0.0854***	-0.0612***	-0.0674***	-0.0561***	-0.0651***

	(0.0129)	(0.0136)	(0.0102)	(0.0135)	(0.00871)	(0.0130)	(0.0126)	(0.0125)
Women political empowerment	0.146***	0.125**	0.0290	0.160***	0.149***			
	(0.0439)	(0.0489)	(0.0360)	(0.0461)	(0.0359)			
Women civil liberty						0.114***		
						(0.0348)		
Women political participation							0.0719**	
							(0.0347)	
Women civil society participation								0.149***
								(0.0401)
Constant	-0.214**	-0.0371	-0.0449	-0.177	-0.0808	-0.204**	-0.180*	-0.197**
	(0.101)	(0.105)	(0.0778)	(0.110)	(0.0744)	(0.0989)	(0.104)	(0.0963)
Observations	573	573	573	573	573	573	573	573
R-squared	0.594	0.563	0.584	0.596	0.521	0.594	0.581	0.598
Fisher	67.35***	35.24***	39.04***	43.44***	44.21***	70.49***	63.31***	71.81***

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Source: Authors' computation

Looking at other control variables, the positive effect of economic growth on democracy is in accordance with the results of Narayan et al. (2011). An increase in economic growth engenders favourable social and economic transformations which support political pluralism. Equally, foreign development aid enhances democracy in accordance with the results of Gibson et al. (2015). Political actors especially in developing economies with high poverty rates like countries in Africa will move towards democracy as a wish and recommendations of Western powers to benefit more from aid allocation to be used in the development process. Aid equally boosts economic growth and investments in higher education which are key drivers of democracy. Furthermore, the negative effect of natural resource abundance on democracy corroborates the results of Omgba (2015). Extensive literature has established the resource curse that many African countries are suffering from. Accordingly, it has been argued that oil strengthens authoritarian regimes, making transition to democracy less likely (McFerson, 2010). The negative effect of French colonial origin is in line with the results of Coulibalya and Omgba (2019). The French colonial rule in Africa has not favoured democracy. This is particularly true given that, on average, English speaking African countries have comparatively better democracies in the continent (Asongu, 2012). For instance, Countries like Ghana, South Africa and Nigeria with English cultures have shown progress in democracy compared with other countries like Cameroon, Gabon or Central African Republic with French cultures.

Table 5. Robustness across alternative estimation methods

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Dependent variable: Liberal democracy		
Variables	System GMM	IV-Tobit	IV-2SLS
Liberal democracy (-1)	0.983***		
	(0.00508)		
Women empowerment index	0.0108*	0.146***	0.146***
	(0.00531)	(0.0375)	(0.0439)
Per capita GDP	0.00289**	0.0924***	0.0922***
	(0.00131)	(0.00901)	(0.0114)
Resource rents	-5.34e-05	-0.00635***	-0.00635***
	(7.06e-05)	(0.000630)	(0.000482)
Foreign aid	0.000635***	0.00748***	0.00747***
	(0.000214)	(0.00149)	(0.00241)
Basic education	-8.41e-05***	-0.00142***	-0.00142***
	(2.84e-05)	(0.000314)	(0.000217)
French colonization (dummy)	0.00205	-0.113***	-0.113***
	(0.00247)	(0.0163)	(0.0134)
English colonization (dummy)	0.00191	0.0126	0.0126
	(0.00264)	(0.0158)	(0.0136)
Other colonial rules (dummy)	-0.00332	-0.0669***	-0.0669***
	(0.00232)	(0.0157)	(0.0129)
Constant	-0.0170*	-0.215***	-0.214**
	(0.00914)	(0.0769)	(0.101)
Observations	547	573	573
R-squared			0.594
Number of countries	34		
Prop>AR1	0.00535		
Prop>AR2	0.432		
Instruments	28		
Prop> Hansen	0.429		
Fisher	44552***		67.35***
ar1p	0.00535		
chi2		371.9***	

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Source: Authors' computation

Extending the analyses to examine the role of internal conflicts such as ethnic tensions and religious tensions on the results, Table 6 shows that the positive effect of political inclusion on democracy persists. Besides, ethnic tensions are harmful to democracy in this study. The ethnic tension is mostly from ethnic fractionalisation that characterises most African countries. People prefer at times to stick to power backed-up by the ethnic groups which most often are the majority. In essence, the majority ethnic groups with the fear of losing the advantages that come with political positions, always do everything for power to rotate among them. This has

often led to the minority group revolting. For instance, the political crisis in Cameroon started as a result of the marginalisation of English speaking Cameroonians in terms of sharing the national cake (Okereke, 2018). The Biafra war in Nigeria equally erupted as a result of similar circumstances (Johnson and Olaniyan, 2017).

Table 6. Role of Internal conflicts

Variables	(1) Dependent variable: liberal democracy	(2)
Women political empowerment	0.184***	0.139***
	(0.0411)	(0.0429)
Per capita growth	0.118***	0.0915***
	(0.0140)	(0.0114)
Resource rents	-0.00720***	-0.00621***
	(0.000494)	(0.000511)
Foreign aid	0.00867***	0.00729***
	(0.00279)	(0.00244)
Basic education	-0.00170***	-0.00146***
	(0.000228)	(0.000219)
French colonization	-0.142***	-0.109***
	(0.0137)	(0.0131)
English colonization	-0.00328	0.0146
	(0.0126)	(0.0136)
Other colonial rule	-0.0935***	-0.0655***
	(0.0136)	(0.0128)
Ethnic tensions	-0.0391***	
	(0.00605)	
Religious tensions		0.00411
		(0.00438)
Constant	-0.228**	-0.221**
	(0.111)	(0.101)
Observations	573	573
R-squared	0.434	0.396
Fisher	64.54***	60.99***

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Source: Authors' computation

The findings in this study have clarified a debate on the substantive representation of women in development outcomes in the African context. This debate is important in gender inclusion literature because as much we have highlighted documented studies on the positive ramifications of gender inclusion in the introduction, there is also another strand of studies which argues that substantive representation of women does not engender positive governance and economic outcomes. Hence, by establishing in the present study that political inclusion (political empowerment, civil liberty, political participation and civil society participation), leads to better democratic (liberal, electoral, participatory, deliberative and egalitarian) standards, this study negates earlier positions such as, *inter alia*, (i) Kodila-Tedika and Asongu, (2017) who have concluded that women in power does not necessarily improve the power of women, (ii) Rivas (2013) and Xu (2015) in that the political involvement of

women is for the most part, limited to community development issues and (iii) a substantial body of literature supporting the position that female political inclusion does not guarantee enhancement of political representation (Weldon 2002; Celis and Childs 2008; Stoffel 2008; Squires 2008; Htun and Weldon 2010, 2011).

4. Conclusion and Policy Implications

Democracy has been a great concern for government and development agencies since the dawn of the Cold War in the 1990s. Though the situation seems to have improved around the globe, with most countries especially in North America and Europe classified as democracies, in Africa, there is still a lot to be done as less than 50% of these countries are classified as democracies and among the so called democracies, the majority are weak democracies. Equally, countries with a high level of gender equity are high democracies except for Rwanda, while more than half of non-democracies have very low levels of gender equality (International IDEA, 2019). Therefore, this study, motivated by both policy concerns and scholarly gaps in the literature as outlined in the introduction, aimed to examine the effect of political inclusion on democracy in Africa. The results of the analyses through the OLS, system GMM, IV-Tobit and IV-2SLS show that political inclusion enhances democracy in Africa. This result was robust across alternative specifications of political inclusion and democracy. Besides, the results equally stood when controlled for colonisation and internal conflicts. It is also worth noting that French colonial role, ethnic tensions and natural resource abundance can be cited among others as the reasons for low democracy in Africa.

As policy implications, policy makers in Africa should enhance their fight for political inclusion as one of the gateways in promoting democracy. In this respect, national laws could be put in place that imposes gender quotas in political positions in every country. Also, the African Union could sign a convention on these quotas for respective countries to ratify. Equally, to enhance democracy in the continent, the countries should resolve internal conflicts, and diversify their economies to depend less on natural resources. This will boost economic growth which has been found to be a main driver of democracy.

Future studies on this subject could focus on transmission mechanisms and country specific studies for more oriented policies. Besides, future studies could consider the education background of political leaders and how it affects democracy.

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