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Authoritarian Leadership, Conflicts and Economic Performance in Sub-Saharan Africa

Abstract

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE: The goal of the paper is to analyze how the authoritarian leadership could impact economic performance in the region of Sub-Saharan Africa in the post-colonial period until currently.

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND METHODS: Authoritarian leadership and power abuse led to a number of armed conflicts in the region since its formal independence. This may be accounted as one of the reasons, for which the region lags in terms of economic development compared to developed countries. The research comprises of qualitative and quantitative methods, including comparative analysis, basic statistics, and correlations.

THE PROCESS OF ARGUMENTATION: First, the literature review was conducted with the application of comparative and system analysis. Next, based on the available World Value Survey and Global Governance Indicators data, empirical analysis of the power indicators and economic growth relations in Sub-Saharan Africa was performed. The results are discussed in the context of the ideas anchored in the theory of public choice and new institutional economics.

RESEARCH RESULTS: The results indicate the existence of a power paradox, which burdens development of the region, people rely on strong leaders despite the fact that strong leadership leads to power abuse and economic crises. The attitudes to politics, democracy and trust are particular for the region and may be related with this problem.

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CONCLUSIONS, INNOVATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The lack of control mechanisms over the exercise of public authority in politically unstable Sub-Saharan African countries contributes to the consolidation of unfavorable attitudes and the abuse of power by privileged position by political leaders. The focus should be placed on reinforcement of institutional capacities and accountability for power abuse.

KEYWORDS:

Authoritarian Leadership; Abuse of Power; Conflicts;
Sub-Saharan Africa

INTRODUCTION

The conditions of living in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) are most challenging, compared to other parts of the World. Since the decolonization, the countries have been struggling with socio-economic problems and policy syndromes (Fosu, 2013) which led to a number of violent armed conflicts, political instability, and corruption. Despite the fact that the societies seek democracy, the abuse of power by authoritarian leaders fueled by the rent seeking is ubiquitous. These in turn have gravely disturbed the social cohesion and catching-up process, which could stimulate the economic development in the region (Andrzejczak, 2017).

There is a number of economic theories, which attempt to explain the circle of poverty and differences in economic growth, linking it with a plethora of economic indicators (i.a. Klenow & Rodriguez 1997; Chanda & Dalgaard, 2008; Rodrik, 2009; Easterly, 2009; Hausmann, 2009). Lately, with the input of the so called randomistas (Nobel prize winners 2019), development economics turned towards randomized evaluation experimental research based on particular interventions and micro data (as opposed to aggregate econometrics) (Banerjee, 2007; Duflo, Kremer & Robinson, 2008; Duflo, Kremer & Robinson, 2009)¹. At the same time, some researchers analyze the fundamental causes

¹ Banerjee and Duflo (2010) claim that field experiments allow to elaborate understanding of economic issues relevant to poor people by conducting a research under a precise control of variation in the data by the researcher, which allows the estimation of parameters and testing of hypotheses that would be very difficult to implement with observational data. In the Banerjee

of the economic performance, focusing on the role of formal and informal institutions (e.g. institutional economics, constitutional economics) as well as the human behavior factor for the economic performance (e.g. public choice theory, rent seeking) (i.a. Krueger, 1974; Buchanan, 2003; Commons, 2017; Olsson, 2004; Hopkins, 2009; Fosu, 2013; Cabronne et al., 2016)².

With this study we attempt to add to this “third” way and investigate the root causes of economic performance related with social attitudes, values and perception of power and its role in a society. The goal of the paper is to analyze how the authoritarian leadership could impact economic performance in the region of SSA. The hypothesis is that the lack of control mechanisms over the exercise of public authority contributes to the consolidation of unfavorable attitudes and the abuse of the privileged position by political leaders in SSA countries. Our results indicate the existence of a power paradox, which burdens the development of sound institutions (conducive for economic development) in the region. We found that the support for strong leadership is more common in countries with lower economic performance and in particular in SSA, despite the fact that the share of strong supporters for democracy also prevails in this region over other parts of the World.

The paper is divided in 4 sections. In the second section we described data and method of the research. It is followed by the literature and historical facts of contemporary Africa review. Next, we conducted the quantitative analysis based on the available data. We summarize our findings in the conclusions.

2. DATA AND METHOD

In this research we applied qualitative and quantitative approach. First, we conducted an analysis of theoretical assumptions with regard to the role of the institutions (and democracy). This included a general explanation of institutions impact on economic performance

book “Making Aid Work” (2007) the methodology based on field trials is presented.

2 Most of these works concentrate on the experiences of high-income countries, but some relate to the specifics of the Global South as well (Acemoglu et al., 2001; Olsson, 2004; Hopkins, 2009; Fosu, 2013; Adanu, 2017).

and historical analysis of power (democracy) abuse in countries from the region. We included data on democracy index and confronted it with the cases of severe presidential power abuses in Africa. We used both authors observations from the field.

Tab. 1. Variables description

Variable name	Variable explanation	Variable source*
L_GDP	Economic performance. The GDP per capita, despite its inaccuracy has been applied here as widely used approximation of the economic performance of a given country	Log of the GDP per capita for 2018 (PPP constant 2011) extracted from WDI 2020.
TRUST	The level of trust in a given society	The share of respondents who claim that: "Most people can be trusted", extracted from World Value Survey wave 5 2005-2009 data.
POL_Vimp	Importance of politics in a given society	The share of respondents who claim that: Politics in life: "Very important" extracted from World Value Survey wave 5 2005-2009 data.
LEAD_VG	The need of a strong leader (The measure of hierarchical values)	The share of respondents who claim that: Having a strong leader: "Very good" extracted from World Value Survey wave 5 2005-2009 data.
DEM_S	The support for democratic political system in a society	The sum of the share of respondents who claim that: Having a democratic political system is: "very good" and "fairly good" extracted from World Value Survey wave 5 2005-2009 data.

* Detailed explanation of the methods of data collection, sample details and techniques applied are available on the WVS and WDI Database websites. All data was extracted in January and February 2020.

Source: own elaboration.

Second, for the quantitative analysis we applied available World Value Survey (WVS) and World Development Indicators data. The idea was to relate the conditions of the abuse of power influence and economic performance in the SSA using quantitative methods. We employed two samples of countries: first sample consists of 73 countries from the WVS Wave 5 2005-2009 and 6: 2010-2014³; second

³ Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, China, Colombia I, Cyprus, Ecuador, Egypt, Estonia, Ethiopia,

smaller sample includes selected 24 countries included in the WVS wave 5 2005-2009⁴.

The evaluation of the data may allow us to assess the prospects of the leadership, democracy, trust, and importance of politics for particular countries. This in turn enabled us to relate certain social values in the given countries and their correlation to the economic performance of a country. The data is scarce; however, the WVS provides some indicators which can be helpful to approximate the problem under investigation. The answers of the respondents are subjective, and this requires to be taken into account in the results interpretation (the database is constructed on a qualitative surveys results conducted in selected countries every several years). Variables applied in the analysis are described in Tab. 1. Provided the limited character of the data, we used basic statistics, Spearman correlation, and two-scattered graphs to visualize the relations between the variables.

3. LEADERSHIP AND INSTITUTIONS AS A FACTOR OF ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE IN CONTEMPORARY SSA

3.1. Institutional quality and economic performance nexus

The existence of institutions (as understood by D. North, 1990 and O.E. Williamson, 1998) and their operativeness (the fact that they

Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Haiti, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Mali, Mexico, Morocco, Morocco I, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Palestine, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Poland I, Romania, Russia, Rwanda I, Singapore, Slovenia, South Africa I, South Korea, Spain, Spain I, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, United States I, Uruguay I, Uzbekistan, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe. When a country would appear in both waves, we took the latest data and added "I" to the name of a country.

- 4 Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Hungary, Mali, Morocco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Rwanda, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Egypt, United Kingdom, United States, Burkina Faso, Uruguay, Zambia

formally work the way they should) is directly linked with the quality of state policy and governance. Establishment of institutions, the rule of law and ensuring the development of civil society provide the economy with the resilience to external factors (shocks) required for economic development (Rodrik, 2006; Wojtyna, 2008). Countries with better institutions (and less harmful policies) invest more in physical and human capital and in qualitative factors of their effectiveness (Acemoglu et al., 2001). This way the institutional background constitutes foundations for the macroeconomic policy and economic theory to work (Wilkin, 2012)⁵.

These findings have been supported with research focused on SSA countries. Already Freeman & Lindauer (1999) suggested that if a system of institutions could be created in Africa to reward investment, it would remove the barriers to growth and development that have existed to date⁶. Further, the quality (operativeness) of institutions was found to be one of the factors which explains the differences in the efficiency of regional economies (Danquah & Ouattara, 2015), investment and aid absorption (Dollar & Kraay, 2003), structural change (Mensah et al., 2016), as well as productivity (Świerczyńska & Kryszak, 2019), to name just a few.

Many works, including this paper, concentrate in particular on how democratic/democracy related institutions can foster prosperity⁷. According to Cabronne et al. (2016), in democracy the mechanism of power choice and political responsibility for economic decisions is an incentive to choose the best possible macroeconomic policies. The democratic system is assumed to have a positive impact on the rule of law, and thus on the creation of an investor-friendly environment. The functioning of democracy and the electivity and thus removability of the authorities is conducive to the transparency of the selection process. However, many countries (called democracies) do not use the mechanisms indicated by Cabronne et al. and in fact remain

5 Islam (1995) argues that differences in institution (and technology) development explain the different results of economic growth.

6 For example, according to Barro (1996), political laws initially contribute to growth, but as democracy matures, it starts to slow it down, the research was conducted on a sample of about 100 countries over a period of 30 years

7 We are aware that democracy is not the “only” way and we comment on that in the results section.

authoritarian systems with strong (practically irremovable) executive power, formally influencing the law-making process. Regardless of making bad decisions and not keeping promises, they stay in power, as the formal aspect of democracy is limping. This is the case in a number of Sub-Saharan countries and the dilemma we intend to address.

Buchanan (2003) argues that people should be loyal to constitutional democracy, not to governments; in the sub-Saharan area, there is limited loyalty to the decision-making system, as it is not permanently and sufficiently constituted. The institutions that serve as a means of election and removal are instrumentalized by incumbents. Adanu (2017) claims that historically, African societies have had institutional social control instruments that have prevented opportunism and reduced transaction uncertainty. However, he claims that the 1960s saw a sudden cultural shift towards consumerism, which created opportunities for the spread of opportunistic attitudes. The lack of reaction from an inefficient state led to the perpetuation of negative patterns of behavior. Hopkins (2009) claims that this encouraged extensive farming methods and the non-maintenance of permanent habitats, which hampered, for example, the introduction of taxation due to the impossibility of exercising real control over the moving population.

Likewise, Olsson (2004) argues that the historical conditions of the institutions are connected with the time of colonization and the wave of colonization. The time of colonial submission has, in the light of his research, a positive impact on the quality of the institution but a negative impact on the ability of an independent colony to maintain democracy. Colonies formed under the second wave of imperialism are, in his opinion, less capable of creating institutions but more capable of implementing democracy. Fosu (2013) believes that the quality of the policy has contributed to the failure of economic development after independence. State control led to policies of import substitution, making the exchange of raw materials for processed goods dependent on former colonial metropolises and disturbing the normal functioning of markets (Bates et al., 2012). Unjustified social investments which were made mainly in the interests of the ruling elites led to the polarisation of society, due to the ethnic aspect and support for regions of origin of the ruling sphere. These phenomena had a negative impact on the process of a civil society development in the region.

3.2. Decolonization and abuse of power – historical perspective

Far from drawing up a complete chronology, we give some historical references on decolonization, the constitution of current authoritarian regimes and the conflicts that they engender in Africa. The war of independence in Africa began in the first half of the 1950s, but we note that the wave of massive decolonization of Africa began in 1960 (L'Histoire, 2002). The last country to gain independence was Eritrea in 1993, which can be considered the ultimate decolonization of Africa. Decolonization has led to the adoption of new constitutions that have formed, forged and structured the political and economic life of the new African states. As can be seen through the evolution of the political regimes that followed one another in Africa after decolonization, this continent experienced three constituent moments.

The first was the adoption of pluralist and democratic constitutions in a massive way in the 60s, then quite marginally in the 70s, 80s and 90s (with the last decolonizations). These early constitutions are largely a mimicry of the constitutional models of the former colonial powers, Eastern European (e.g. USSR, Poland), Asian (e.g. China) and Latin American (e.g. Cuba) countries. It marked the rising Soviet Union presence in African countries and a pro-communist wave, which in some countries was seen as an alternative to the former metropolis influence. The second, which began in the late 1960s and spread across the continent until the early 1990s took hold with the evolution of multiparty politics and the establishment of one-party state and authoritarianism. These were stemming from revolutionary movements strongly inspired by the models of the communist countries. The third moment was the wave of mass political liberalization with the return of the multiparty system in the late 1990s which spread to all African countries. Most recently a reconfiguration of political regimes on the continent may be observed, old or new democratic, hybrid, authoritarian, etc. regimes appear or reappear.

Tab. 2. Authoritarian regimes still in uninterrupted power since the first mandate of the (current) President to 2020 according to the democracy index from 2016 to 2019 in ten countries in black Africa

No.	Country	President in power	1st mandate*	Number of constitution modifications	Number of mandates	Years in power	Democracy index			
							2016	2017	2018	2019
1	Burundi	Pierre Nkurunziza	2005	1 (2018)	3	15	2,40	2,33	2,33	2,33
2	Cameroun	Paul Biya	1982	1 (2008)	7	38	3,46	3,61	3,38	3,28
3	Congo	Denis Sassou Nguesso	1997	2 (2002, 2015)	4	23	2,91	3,25	3,31	3,31
4	Djibouti	Ismail Omar Guelleh	1999	1 (2010)	4	21	2,82	2,76	2,87	2,87
5	Gabon	Ali Bongo Ondimba	2009	1 (2018)	2	11	3,74	3,61	3,61	3,61
6	Guinea	Alpha Condé	2010	Attempt (2019)	2	10	3,14	3,14	3,14	3,14
7	Equatorial Guinea	Teodoro Obiang Nguema	1979	1 (1982)	7	41	1,70	1,81	1,92	1,92
8	Rwanda	Paul Kagame	2000	2 (2003, 2015)	4	20	3,07	3,19	3,35	3,35
9	Chad	Idriss Deby Itno	1990	4 (1991, 1996, 2005, 2018)	6	30	1,50	1,50	1,61	1,61
10	Togo	Faure Gnassingbé	2005	1 (2018)	4	15	3,32	3,05	3,10	3,10

Source: own elaboration based on data from the official press and the Ecofin-L' Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), <https://www.agenceecofin.com/aide-au-developpement/0901-63078-classement-2018-des-democraties-africaines-selon-leiu>, retrived January 19, 2020.

In the table 2 we present the authoritarian regimes in ten African countries, according to the democracy index produced by the Ecofin Agency of the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)⁸. We indicate current African presidents, who maintained or are trying

⁸ According to the democracy index, perfect or full democracies are index values 8-10; impartial democracies 6-8; hybrid regimes 4-6, and authoritarian

to remain in power without interruption since their first mandate (obtained by replacement, designation, acting or election) by modifying or trying to change the constitution.

Reading Tab. 2, since the first mandate, the Presidents of Equatorial Guinea, Cameroonians and Chad have been at the forefront of the oldest African leaders in power. They have 41,38 and 30 years of power respectively and completed 7,7 and 6 mandates. Those of Equatorial Guinea and Cameroun have each changed the constitution only once. While that of Chad four times. Chad and Equatorial Guinea have particularly low value of index of democracy, which can be described as very authoritarian. The Presidents of Congo (Rep.), Djibouti, Rwanda are the second-ranking old African leaders in power with 23,21 and 20 years in office, respectively. They have already completed 4 mandates each. The Congo government has already made two constitutional changes. His Djibouti counterpart has done this once. While the Rwandan accounts for two modifications.

In short, we observe that democracy in the universal sense does not really exist in authoritarian regimes. The leaders in power maintain a kind of phantom democracy in the service of their interests. Thus, they voluntarily block the development of a true democracy and install their own democracy which some describe as Afrodemocracy. Widely spread and established on the continent, Afrodemocracy is based on well-known instruments of dictatorship such as intimidation, torture, clientelism, "police" and militarization of the state, the annihilation of and/or the imprisonment of political opponents, the confiscation or reduction of individual freedoms, the personalization of power (marked by tribalism, clanism and lobbysm), the cult of personality, etc. These lead opponents to often contest the results of the presidential elections and to treat these regimes as illegal. Election observers indicate presence of fraud, corruption, lack of transparency, electoral masquerade, publication of false results, ballot stuffing, etc., objectively noted and revealed sooner or later. Contested presidential election results are a source of instability and deep political conflict in Africa.

regimes with an index less than 4. In this paper, we are particularly interested in authoritarian regimes.

The political history of the decolonized countries of SSA shows that the successors of the first generation of the leaders of these countries established authoritarian regimes in a violent way, as noted in the archives of several international presses.

3.3. Data analysis

In the first stage of the quantitative analysis, we computed the basic statistics for the first, larger sample of 73 countries, including all continents and income groups. In order to assess the specifics of African countries we compared the results with a subsample including exclusively SSA countries. The results are presented in Tab. 3.

Tab. 3. Summary Statistics, using the observations 1-73 (missing values were skipped)

	Full	SSA	Full	SSA	Full	SSA	Full	SSA
Variable	Mean		Median		Min		Max	
POL_Vimp	13.7	22.9	12.2	21.1	2.00	17.3	36.9	36.9
DEM_Vimp	46.9	65.3	47.8	66.4	18.0	32.2	83.9	83.9
DEM_S	83.6	87.2	84.0	88.5	63.8	68.3	97.6	96.8
LEAD_VG	12.8	14.8	9.30	15.3	0.30	5.50	41.5	27.0
TRUST	23.7	14.7	18.7	14.9	3.20	8.30	73.7	23.3
l_GDPpc	4.19	3.50	4.25	3.43	3.22	3.23	4.95	4.08

*Summary Statistics, using the observations 73 observations for the full sample (Full) and 9 observations for SSA sample including: Burkina Faso, Ghana, Ethiopia, Mali, Nigeria Rwanda, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Source: own elaboration based on WDI 2020 and WVS waves 5 and 6.

If we take into consideration the results, we can see that the SSA countries differ from the other regions. There seems to be much more people who indicate that politics and democracy is “very” important to them in Africa, than elsewhere (DEM_Vimp). Yet, these differences are not so apparent if we take into account the share of people who claim that democracy is “only” important (DEM_S variable). This indicates a difference in the share of the democracy idea strongest supporters in different regions and can be explainable by the concept of diminishing marginal utility (people living in democracy value it

less). Interestingly, at the same time Sub-Saharan Africans support strong leadership more than other groups, especially if the median value is considered. This can further suggest that the subjective understanding of a concept and expectations related to democracy differ across the sample. At the same time, the level of trust and the income per capita are lower in SSA than in other regions.

Second, we conducted a non-parametric Spearman rank correlation. From the results presented in Tab. 4. In this step we excluded the democracy variable which was uncorrelated with the other variables. Apparently strong interest in politics tends to be more common in countries where people express the desire for strong leadership. Both are negatively correlated with the GDP per capita variable. Trust is positively correlated with the level of income and negatively with the interest in politics and strong leadership. This may suggest that in rich countries people are more trusting, while strong leadership is desired more often in poor countries (as a general trend).

Tab. 4. Spearman correlation results.

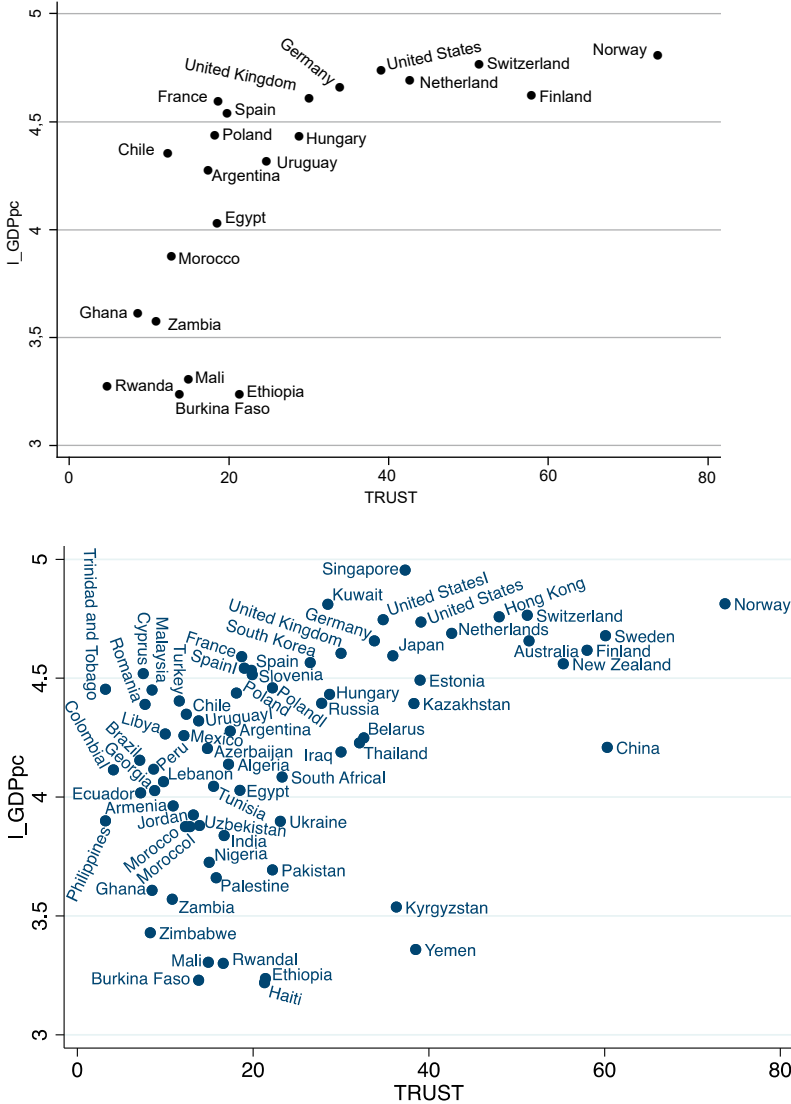
Variable	POL_Vimp	LEAD_VG	TRUST	L_GDP
POL_Vimp	1.0000			
LEAD_VG	0.3183*** (0.0064)	1.0000		
TRUST	-0.2985*** (0.0109)	-0.4132*** (0.0003)	1.0000	
L_GDP	-0.3933*** (0.0006)	-0.4248*** (0.0002)	0.4973*** 0.0000	1.0000

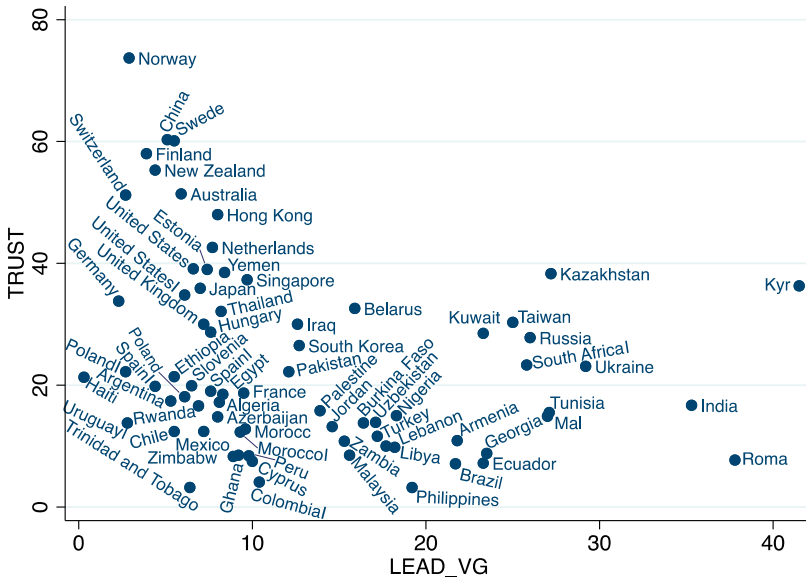
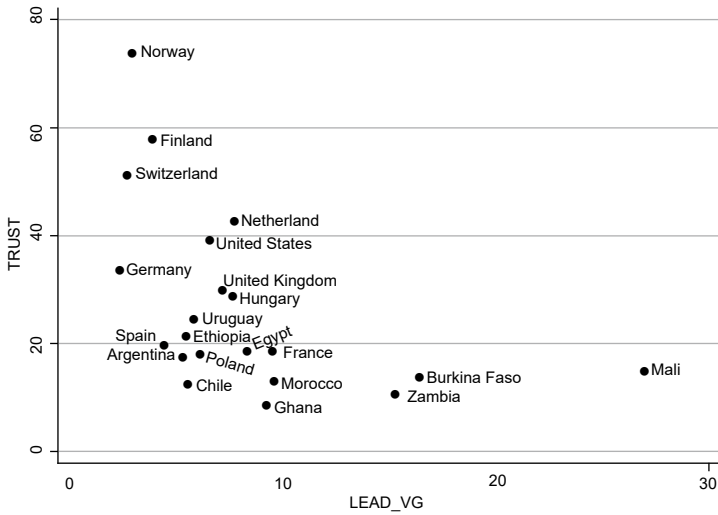
Source: own elaboration performed in STATA.

In the next stage, the two-way scatter graph of the selected pairs of variables was conducted. The pattern has been detected in the case of the variables approximating economic performance and trust and between the leadership and trust. The results are presented in Fig. 1. We can see that countries with high economic performance, such as Norway, tend to have a high level of trust in the society and little desire for strong leadership. On the other hand, strong leadership seems to be important for the people in e.g. Mali, where economic performance is rather moderate and so is the social trust. A case can be made that the social values which are related with the leaders we choose, and the attitudes held in a society can be used to explain

elements of economic performance, especially in the light of the institutional and political theories.

Figure 1. The relations between variables TRUST and IGDP (economic performance) (top graphs) and variables TRUST and LAED_VG (support for leadership) in groups of countries describes as Sample 1 and Sample 2.





Source: own elaboration based on WVS and WDI data.

Note: Left data sample 1 (24 countries), right data sample 2 (73 countries).

The sample of countries included both SSA, the region of interest, and countries from other regions to control the robustness of the results.

Regardless of the size and composition of sample (and time span, cf Data and method section) and method applied, we note similar patterns in terms of relation between GDP per capita, trust and support for strong leadership variables. We also note that SSA region has its own characteristic, compared to other regions of the World.

4. RESULTS

Process of decolonization in Africa resulted in a power and democracy paradox in the region. People consider politics very important and they seem to highly appreciate democracy (Tab. 3), despite the fact that most of the countries are not full democracies. As noted before, this phenomena may be explained by the decreasing marginal utility of democracy in democratic countries (Tab. 1). At the same time, despite the fact, that recent history of African countries reveals numerous cases of power abuse by leaders (dictators), people still seem to consider strong leadership as a good thing.

Tab. 5. Economic performance of selected authoritarian regimes in Africa.

	GDP growth (annual %)	GDP per capita, PPP (const. 2011 internat.)	Oil rents (% of GDP)	Total nat. res. rents (% of GDP)
Burundi	0,5	670,8	0,0	16,2
Cameroon	3,5	3312,9	2,5	6,6
Congo, Rep.	-3,1	5103,1	36,7	42,7
Gabon	0,5	16144,9	15,3	18,4
Guinea	10,3	2153,7	0,0	20,2
Equatorial Guinea	-4,7	22298,9 ⁹	19,2	24,3
Rwanda	6,1	1888,8	0,0	5,9
Chad	-3,0	1753,8	15,3	22,0
Togo	4,4	1537,5	0,0	16,4

Source: own elaboration based on WDI, 2020 data.

⁹ This value requires comment and explanation. Equatorial Guinea is considered to struggle with the highest inequality issues in the World; over 90% of population lives below the poverty lines, while the oil revenues are consumed by the president and its closest circle, artificially busting the mean value of the GDP per capita.

The explanation for the cases of power abuse may be anchored in the rent seeking mechanism. Leaders are very often fueled by the desire of wealth. Most of the countries which struggle with the presidential abuse of power and democracy seem to rely heavily on natural resources - more than other countries in the region (sub-Saharan region 9,3%) (Tab. 5). Also, the GDP per capita in most cases in these countries is generally lower than in the region on average (3 534,4 PPP const. int.) (Tab. 5). Conflicts over access to natural resources led to economic, financial, political and social crisis in the mid-1990s and it still causes armed conflicts today. It is much more complex to comprehend the desire for strong leadership as a solution to mitigate the risks associated with the practices of authoritarian regimes.

In principle, while Buchanan (2003) believes that the governments of high-income countries overestimated their capabilities in the 1960s, it can be said that institutional deficiencies did not allow SSA countries to lift economic policies of structural adjustment policies in the 1990s. One of the reasons for that may be, that apart from countries like Botswana, or Namibia, most countries in a region are not full democracies. The effectiveness of democracy may manifest itself when ineffective leaders who steer economic policy are removed from power¹⁰. This is not the case of Africa.

From the point of view of public choice theory (Buchanan, 2003), the conditions for democratic decision making were not met in Sub-Saharan countries. If one accepts the need to obtain broad social consent for the rules of exercising power that would legitimize the current exercise of power under conditions of majority support, in Africa this is not the case. At the same time, strong leaders who break the rules of formal democracy often are strongly supported

10 The issue of good governance is ambiguous on the African continent, and particularly in the sub-Saharan part of the continent. Antonio (2001) is optimistic about the changes that have taken place since the adoption of the African Charter of Human Rights in Banjul in 1981 and about democratization in the 1990s. He claims that the adoption of the constitution by many African countries has made it possible to break with systems characterized by strong executive (president) and mono-party rule. Nevertheless, the contemporary political reality (e.g. Central African Republic, Rwanda, Rep. Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo) calls for a reflection on pluralism in the region. A number of African constitutions have been amended in a way that allows long-time presidents to apply for further re-election.

(e.g. P. Kagame in Rwanda). The accountability of rulers is limited, and people declare both support for democracy and strong leaders. We suggest that the lack of control mechanisms over the exercise of public authority contributed to the consolidation of unfavorable attitudes and the abuse of the privileged position by political leaders in SSA countries. This makes the accountability mechanism under democratic regime in Africa ineffective.

The results of Spearman correlation, descriptive statistics and the analysis of two-scatter plots imply further, that the countries in which the level of trust is lower seemed to be poorer. As the level of trust rises, economic performance seems to ameliorate. On the other hand, in countries which perform better, the support for strong leaders declines. The same can be noted that countries, in which people consider that politics is important, have lower GDP per capita level. Based on that, we can suggest that economic performance in African countries is related with the trust and leadership issues.

African leadership is a socio-economic phenomenon rooted in historical perspective. It fulfills the needs for independence and strength of a nation (in opposition to foreign powers). It is resilient to the Western criticism, which historically is perceived as a way of imposition of colonial values on African nations. The democracy desired by the people in SSA seems to be a different democracy than the one defined by Western culture and sociology.

The question which still stands is, whether the institutions desirable for economic development should be (Western) democratic, or can they be non-democratic, as it happens in China¹¹. The crisis of neoliberal ideas and post-modern values raises the question among many, whether democracy is really needed to achieve economic progress. The China vs. India example is often given as a proof of the inefficiency of democracy compared to the state driven comparative advantage strategy based on the new structural economics, with limited democratization and strong government (Lin, 2012).

11 Rigobon and Rodrik (2004) stated that the rule of law is positively correlated with democracy and also with higher income per capita. Barro's earlier research (1996) led to the same conclusions. However, this does not mean that the transition from a dictatorial system to a democratic system guarantees economic development, but only that economic development is conducive to the democratization of countries (Przeworski and Limongi 1997).

The experience of economic history confirms that economic growth can also be achieved under dictatorship, and political or institutional changes (Hausman et al. 2004). Democracy (political freedom) may or may not go hand in hand with economic freedom (Barro, 1994). Further research is required to investigate whether SSA countries need democracy and democratic institutions, or do they need any institutions that would be efficient?

5. CONCLUSIONS

The region of SSA lags behind others in terms of the quality of life and economic performance. It seems that the informal institutions, which we associate with people beliefs and attitudes, may be at the root causes of these problems. People lack trust in others and despite the fact that politics is important in their lives and democracy is valued highly, they support strong leadership, which hinders mechanisms of accountability. In the region, the history of power abuse is long and did not cease with the 60 years of independence. The authority in the region is related with personal gains for the government and the close circle of power. It appears that the “curse of power” is closely related with the “resource curse” in Africa. Presidential abuse of power, fueled by the rent seeking mechanism, has a negative impact on economic performance. The power paradox in Africa (support for strong executive despite negative experiences of power abuse) seems to slow down the development of institutions which could support the rule of law and political stability and in turn sustainable development.

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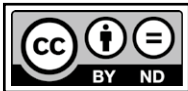
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