

THE AFRICAN PUZZLE: A STUDY OF DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDING IN SUB
SAHARAN AFRICA

by

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ABSTRACT

The following study examines the future of democratization and the apparent trend towards autocratization within the context of democratic backsliding in Sub-Saharan Africa. Initially, the findings indicate that regionally, backsliding is not acting fundamentally different in Sub-Saharan Africa when compared to other regions. The analysis finds that regime duration and civil conflict are both significant when it comes to the study of democratic backsliding. The variable for the prior military regime's is extremely significant in all of the models and is, therefore, a strong indicator of backsliding in Africa. The chief takeaway from the study is in the variable for economic growth and finds that as economic growth increases the likelihood of backsliding decreases. This variable is negative and significant for all of the models, but if Africa is taken out of the analysis the trend ultimately disappears, which indicates that Africa is potentially driving this trend of economic growth and backsliding.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The ‘*Democratic Recession*’ that Larry Diamond (2015) and others have cited refers to the trend that indicates declining global democracy and increasing autocratization (Lührmann et al, 2018). While scholars enthusiastically pointed to the ‘wave of democracy’ that began in 1974 with Portugal, it seems that this ‘wave’ stagnated in 2006, and has since reversed (Diamond, 2015; Lührmann et al, 2018). With that being said, Lührmann and colleagues examined global trends in democracy using the *Varieties of Democracy* dataset (V-Dem) and found a steady decline in democracy throughout Western Europe, North America, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Eastern Europe. Sub-Saharan Africa was largely resistant to this autocratization trend, and the authors found that there was a slight increase in levels of democracy by population in the African region as compared to other regions (Lührmann et al, 2018). This finding seems to go against the existing literature on factors that catalyze democratic backsliding and based on this literature we would expect to see significantly more backsliding in Africa in comparison to other regions.

While the literature on ‘democratic backsliding’ is copious, according to Waldner and Lust (2018) there is an important conceptual challenge among the literature in defining what exactly constitutes backsliding. Inevitably, as the definition of the term changes, so do the parameters and scope of each paper. Some authors find that the term refers to “fine-grained degrees of change and incremental within-regime change”, in which the author carefully observes the increase or decrease in the quality of democracy in a specific region or state (Waldner and Lust, 2018). Alternatively, others have measured democratic backsliding as a categorical change from one measure to another. A study by Geddes, Wright and Frantz (2014),

uses a dichotomous measure to determine whether a regime is a democracy or an autocracy, and measures democratic backsliding under such conditions. The latter approach fits most appropriately with the purpose and scope of this paper, as rather than looking at incremental changes within a regime, the theory aims to examine overall large-scale changes in governance. Therefore, rather than looking at the nuanced differences, or a decline in democratic institution this study examines the overall regime change from a democracy to an authoritarian regime.

The study of backsliding, a term henceforth used interchangeably with autocratization and reversal, yields several causal explanations. While some authors point to economic indicators as the primary causal factor, others study the interaction between democracy and ethnic fractionalization (Svolik, 2008; Easterly and Levine, 1997). An amalgamation of this research finds that countries with low GDP per capita, high ethnic fractionalization and previous military dictatorships are more likely to experience backsliding. According to the World Bank data, as a region the GDP per capita for Sub Saharan Africa was averaged at 1,467 U.S. dollars in 2015, compared to 57,638 dollars for the United States in the same year (World Bank, 2015). In a comparison of regions, Sub Saharan Africa ranks last in the averages for GDP per capita followed by South Asia and the Middle East (World Bank, 2015).

One would assume that these factors alongside the colonial legacy, the historical prevalence of military dictatorships and military-led coups in Africa, would predispose Africa to be more prone to backsliding in general. Alternatively, Lührmann et al, (2018), find that Africa is less prone to reversals, a puzzling and unexpected finding. This leads to an important question: withstanding current conditions, is Sub Saharan Africa experiencing similar levels of backsliding in comparison to other regions? While previous studies specify explicit causal variables that

presumably explain the phenomenon of backsliding, these variables may not hold up in the African context. Is Sub Saharan Africa seeing different backsliding results than the rest of the world? If so, why is this happening?

The following study uses a multiple regression analysis to examine the dependent variable, democratic backsliding, as it relates to several independent variables. In order to better understand this puzzle, I examine the theoretical arguments posed by previous scholars and pose additional hypotheses about backsliding in the context of Sub Saharan Africa. My independent variables of interest are ethnic fractionalization, economic conditions, and previous regime type. The study examines the causal direction studied by previous scholars- such that low GDP per capita, high ethnic fractionalization and previous military dictatorships are more likely to experience backsliding, in the African context. The population of interest is states in Sub Saharan Africa, from independence (around 1960) to the present. In order to effectively examine the relationship between the variables in Africa, first we must understand what variables scholars have found important in the study of backsliding.

First, I examine the previous scholarship on backsliding in order to understand how the relationships can be understood in Sub Saharan Africa. The subsequent section examines the theoretical arguments presented throughout the literature review and introduces the hypotheses. Finally, the various datasets and variables are introduced in the research design and the method for testing the hypotheses is discussed.

CHAPTER TWO: EXPLAINING DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDING

The classic Modernization Theory, influenced by Max Weber, finds that an increase in GDP per capita is associated with democratization, and that wealthier states are more likely to democratize (Bernstein, 2007). A study by Przeworski et al (2000) finds that GDP per capita is not a causal factor of democratization, and that with all variables considered that democratic transitions are not negatively associated with wealth. More so, they argue that there is a relationship between democratic consolidation and GDP being that countries with a high GDP are less likely to revert (Przeworski et al., 2000; Epstein et al, 2006). Epstein and colleagues disagree, and find that by distinguishing between autocracies, democracies and partial democracies, that a higher GDP per capita does increase the likelihood of democratization- a conclusion tantamount to that of Modernization Theory (Epstein et al, 2006). Similarly, in a study of democratic survival, Milan Svolik (2008), finds that in a study of transitional democracies economic development is positively associated with democratic survival. He finds that a one percent increase in economic growth is associated with an eight-month increase in the survival of a transitional democracy (Svolik, 2008). Miller (2012) similarly finds that economic development fosters democratization in autocracies that have experienced a violent regime change in the recent past.

Similarly, a study of democracy duration by Alemán and Yang (2011) argues that socioeconomic development is the leading factor associated with consolidation, and that low income is the ultimate threat to reversal. While the relationship between democratic consolidation and economic conditions is certainly telling, more important to this study, authors have also examined the association between GDP and backsliding. There is an unanimity among

scholars that finds that level of income, as indicated by GDP per capita, is negatively associated with democratic backsliding. In other words, countries with low levels of income are more likely to experience backsliding, whereas high levels of income are more closely associated with democratic consolidation (Alemán and Yang, 2011). Therefore, one would anticipate that the rate of backsliding would be higher in Sub Saharan Africa, given that on average the region has a lower GDP per capita.

The relationship between democratic duration and economic development is well documented, as scholars re-emphasize the interaction between level of development and consolidation (Przeworski et al, 1996). The theoretical argument behind these models of economic instability find that economic growth fosters economic equality, decentralizes power, and establishes political awareness (Dahl, 1971; Alemán and Yang, 2011). With that being said, there is a clear difference between levels of wealth and changes in wealth. The theories presented generally focus on the level of wealth-such that poorer countries are more likely to experience backsliding. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this paper, I will also examine the changes in wealth, such as that caused by an economic crisis, or a civil war.

One of the original scholars of Modernization Theory, Martin Lipset, finds that increased wealth is associated with democracy because it changes the working conditions of the people and ultimately re-structures the political functions and responsibilities of the middle class (Lipset, 1959). These theories among others aim to understand why levels of GDP are associated with democracy-a supposedly consistent trend in the global context.

With that being said, there are others who do not find a significant relationship between economic development and indicators of backsliding. Gibler and Randazzo (2011) capture a

variable called economic crisis, which examines when an economic crisis leads to violence or conflict, which they record as a three percent change in GDP. While this measure is slightly different to a model that captures GDP per capita, their intention is to understand whether an economic crisis leads to more conflict, for which conflict can consequently lead to backsliding. The variable is not significant in their model meaning that they did not find a relationship between economic crisis and backsliding (Gibler and Randazzo, 2011). Their measure of conflict as a representation of backsliding is somewhat misleading and the lack of significance may be attributed to their coding decisions.

Conclusively, therefore, there exists an abundance of literature on the level of economic development and its effect on democracy. While these studies generally find that low GDP is associated with backsliding, this assumption does not seem to translate in the African context. If low GDP is associated with an increased likelihood of backsliding and if Sub Saharan Africa as a region has the lowest average GDP per capita, why are we not seeing more backsliding in the African continent? Thus, this paper tries to understand whether GDP per capita behaves differently in Sub-Saharan, among other predictors of democratic backsliding; such as ethnic diversity.

Additionally, scholars have cited ethnic fractionalization as a causal factor for backsliding, ultimately arguing that more ethnic diversity is associated with an increased likelihood of backsliding. Being that many of the countries in Sub Saharan Africa are highly diverse, the literature on democratic backsliding and ethnic diversity is extremely relevant.

Easterly and Levine (1997), examine the relationship between economic growth and ethnic fractionalization in Africa. Their findings indicate that ethnic fractionalization can explain

the differences in growth rates in Sub Saharan Africa. The authors conclude that diversity in Africa has led to poor economic growth- which consequently creates political instability, poor political and economic infrastructure (Easterly and Levine, 1997). Scholars such as Robert Dahl (1971) and Donald Horowitz (1971), find that ethnic diversity inhibits democratization and that democratic consolidation has been more successful in monoethnic societies in comparison to multiethnic ones. In a study of Eastern Europe, Horowitz observed that democratization was more successful in the countries without ethnic diversity such as Hungary and Poland and less successful in those with more ethnic diversity such as Bulgaria and Slovakia (Horowitz, 1971).

These studies, which argue that ethnic diversity creates conditions that are not conducive to democratic consolidation, often theorize that increased diversity leads to conflict, which in turn leads to democratic backsliding (Horowitz, 1985; Mousseau, 2001; Novta, 2016). In a comparison of ethnically diverse and ethnically homogenous states, Mousseau (2001) finds that ethnically diverse societies are more prone to political violence. Nevertheless, she concludes that economic development and democratization are conditions that improve political violence (Mousseau, 2001). There is a clear distinction though between the early literature on ethnic diversity and democracy, and current studies. Recently, authors have more carefully examined the definition of ethnicity, to find that diversity in itself does not cause democratic backsliding, but rather that certain aspects of ethnic fractionalization lead to conflict (Alesina, 2002; Houle, 2018).

Easterly and Levine's (1997) measure of ethnic fractionalization captures the ethnolinguistic differences between ethnic groups and specifically focuses on linguistic diversity. Alesina (2003) separates linguistic, ethnic and religious fractionalization, in order to capture a

more inclusive measure of ethnic fractionalization. The Ethnic Power Relations dataset examines what they call ‘politically relevant ethnic groups’ and improves upon previous attempts to capture power relations of ethnic groups (Wucherpfenning et al, 2011). Posner (2004), critiques Easterly and Levine’s (1997) measure of ethnic fractionalization, called ELF [ethno-linguistic fractionalization] and instead offers a measure called PREG, or *Politically Relevant Ethnic Groups*. In his evaluation of 42 African countries, Posner compares the two measures of ethnic diversity, and finds that the PREG measure is a more accurate representation of ethnic fractionalization (Posner, 2004). In an evaluation of ethnic voting, Houle (2018), argues that ethnic diversity only impacts democratic breakdown when ethnic fractionalization is used as a tool by politicians for political mobilization. He concludes, therefore, that the presence of ethnic diversity itself does not lead to backsliding, but rather that when a country experiences high levels of ‘ethnic voting’, they are more likely to see democratic backsliding (Houle, 2018).

With that being said, Fish and Brooks (2004), review the scholarship on ethnic fractionalization, conflict, and democracy and argue that the findings are inconsistent. While there seems to be a relationship between ethnicity and democratic survival, scholars cannot seem to agree on the exact parameters of that relationship. Part of this inconsistency can be attributed to the absence of a clear definitive definition of ethnicity. While some authors define ethnicity in linguistic terms, others focus on the importance of ethnic power in politics. How does ethnic diversity impact democratization and backsliding in Sub Saharan Africa, and is this impact different to that theorized in previous literature?

Each of the authors use a distinct and different measure of ethnic diversity, each capturing a different aspect of the variable. While there is a benefit to studying these discrete

nuanced differences in the variable, it is also important to capture diversity in its entirety. What these studies fail to capture is an overall measure of diversity, which is a gap that this paper aims to fill.

The third independent variable, previous regime type, is also an important measure that authors have used to explain democratic backsliding. This theoretical argument dates back to Juan Linz's (1994) classic finding that parliamentary systems are more likely to support democracy in comparison to presidential systems. He argues that presidential systems have a winner-takes-all structure that inhibits democratization stabilization (Linz, 1994). Subsequently, in 1996, Alvarez and colleagues (1996) created a classification for 141 countries as either democracies or dictatorships, to establish a more systematic way to classify regimes. These studies opened an avenue for research for understanding the relationship between presidential systems and democratic consolidation. While several authors posited theoretical pathways for this relationship, Cheibub et al (2004), suggested that the struggle to form government coalitions ultimately impacted democratization efforts. Consequently, this argument was proven wrong in their analysis, and they concluded that both forms of government are vulnerable to the difficulties of coalition formation (Cheibub et al, 2004). The puzzle of presidentialism remained, for which Cheibub (2007) offered an alternative explanation: the legacy of military dictatorship. He finds instability among regimes with a previous military regime, as opposed to one of civilian leadership, which he attributes to this instability among presidential regimes- or a tendency towards backsliding (Cheibub, 2007).

Building on the work of Cheibub, Milan Svobik (2008) finds that alongside economic determinants, a country's previous regime type impacts the likelihood of backsliding. He finds

that previous scholarship including the work of Przeworski et al (2000), fails to distinguish between consolidated democracies, and transitional democracies. This distinction is important for understanding the age of a democracy, and the likelihood of reverting. Contiguous with Linz's findings, Svobik's model finds that previous military dictatorships are less likely to consolidate in comparison to civilian regimes (Svobik, 2008). In a notable study of 280 autocratic regimes, Geddes, Wright, and Frantz (2014) examine regime transitions, how leaders leave power, and the regime time prior to and following the transition. They re-examine the previous regime-type classifications and expand upon the different types of rule and find that personalist dictatorships are much less likely to democratize compared to dominant-party regimes (Geddes, Wright and Frantz, 2014). This leads to the question of whether certain types of autocracies are more likely to experience backsliding. If personalist dictatorships are less likely to democratize, are they more likely to experience backsliding? While the list of explanations for why democracies fail is extensive, the methods for which to examine democratic failure are also extensive.

What makes certain autocratic regime legacies less accustomed to consolidation than other regime types? Cheibub (2007) finds that it is the legacy of military influence in politics that 'kills' democracy, rather than simply being an autocratic regime. Similarly, Svobik (2008) finds that having both a military legacy and a presidential executive increases the 'susceptibility' to reversals. The author argues that the military past of a country does not have a direct effect on democratic backsliding, but rather it increases the likelihood of backsliding during an economic recession. Additionally, the legacy of a monarchy in a democracy actually reduces the likelihood of reversal (Svobik, 2008).

Is Linz's (1994) assumption correct, are presidential systems less likely to experience democratic survival in comparison to parliamentary systems? Adserà and Boix (2006) find that in the developing world, presidential systems are less secure and stable. They argue that a president, as compared to a prime minister, is less constrained by the legislative, allowing for corrupt behavior in less wealthy countries. The authors argue that this somewhat unconstrained power leads to two scenarios of democratic breakdown, either the president abuses their power and democratic institutions are weakened, or a third-party source intervenes such as the legislature or the military.

While Linz (1994) and Adserà and Boix (2006) find that presidential regimes are less likely to democratize, why specifically are former military dictatorships more likely to revert? Bjørnskov (2017) examines the democratization of autocratic regimes, and he finds that military dictatorships generally become presidential democracies. He argues that this occurs because shifts towards democracy in military dictatorships are generally premeditated, whereas those in civilian leadership are unexpected or unanticipated (Bjørnskov, 2017). Alternatively, Alexandre Debs (2016) argues that because of the legacy of violence often associated with military dictators the leader continues to be a threat to the successor. The author finds that military dictatorships democratize rapidly, as democratization provides protection to the leader against violent bids at usurping their power (Debs, 2016). Being that Sub Saharan Africa has an extensive history of military dictatorships, one would expect that backsliding would be extremely prevalent in the region. In the African context, are military dictatorships more likely to experience backsliding, or is this trend not as apparent in Sub Saharan Africa?

Although the research on backsliding is far from scarce, the uniformity of the research is disconcerting, as authors use exceptionally different markers for what they define as democratic failure. A majority of the scholars use Dahl's (1979) conceptualization of democracy to some extent, but the different thresholds and markers for democracy are instrumental in understanding how the independent variables impact democratic backsliding. While some authors capture backsliding using the Polity IV data to capture the nuanced differences in backsliding, a majority of the authors examined in this literature review code a country as either democratic or autocratic. Gibler and Randazzo (2011) examine the difference in overall regime score, as measured by Polity IV, and consider a country to be a democracy within a range of 3 to 6 on the -10 to +10 Polity range. As they intend to measure large differences in regime change, they code backsliding as a negative change in four or more points on the Polity scale (Gibler and Randazzo, 2011). A study by Epstein et al (2006), codes countries as either autocracies, democracies or anocracies, using the traditional Polity IV scale. Similarly, Kapstein and Converse (2008) use Polity IV and economic data in order to capture democratic backsliding in 88 countries between 1960 to 2004. In their analysis of regime breakdown, Alemán and Yang (2011) also use the Polity IV measure to examine backsliding, and defined regime transition by a 3-point difference in either direction. While the Polity IV measure can be a useful tool for understanding global trends of democracy for the purpose of understanding backsliding, categorically distinct classifications are more useful. Rather than looking at nuanced differences in democracy in Africa, we are interested in large-scale differences from democracy to autocracy.

A study by Gleditsch and Ward (1997) finds that there are several pathways to the same polity score, and that the executive constraints aspect of democracy is the most important indicator, followed by competitiveness. There are potentially important implications for how both democracy and democratic backsliding are defined through coding decisions, therefore it is important that an author understands what aspects of democracy they are capturing in order to understand what is causing a country to experience backsliding. Nancy Bermeo (2016) discusses the issues with the study of democratic backsliding and finds one of the biggest challenges is the large breadth of concepts that can qualify as 'backsliding'. While in its most basic form, backsliding refers to the breakdown of democratic institutions, the oversimplification of this concept leads to an important inconsistency in the literature on backsliding. First, in referring to democratic breakdown, are we simply referring to the breakdown of electoral quality, such as extending term limits and corrupt election practices? Does this definition include other forms of democratic breakdown such as the reduction of social rights and human rights?

The question of how this should be measured is an important aspect of studying democracy- and the answer depends on how the author defines backsliding, and what aspects of democracy the author hopes to capture. For the purpose of this study, the dataset by Geddes, Wright and Frantz (2014) defines democracy by the presence of competitive elections and major policy changes, and therefore focuses on the political structure of the state. This measure does not capture smaller changes in social democratic rights, it instead focuses on larger political changes. The inconsistency in measuring democratic backsliding across studies leads to the necessity of this research project.

CHAPTER THREE: HYPOTHESES

Democracy is a very comprehensive term, therefore defining democracy and its conceptual relevance to backsliding is central to understanding why democracies fail. In its origin, democracy can be divided between three classic categories: the idea of direct democracy for which Jean Jacques Rousseau spearheaded, the accountability of leaders by John Locke and competition amongst leaders by Robert Dahl (Harvard University). Scholars studying backsliding have generally used Dahl's concept of polyarchal democracy because of its inclusivity. For the purpose of this paper we will adopt the following definition of democratic backsliding "the state-led debilitation or elimination of any of the political institutions that sustain an existing democracy" (Bermeo, 2016). In short, democratic backsliding refers to the transition from a democracy to an authoritarian regime, and this excludes democracies that still qualify as democracies that are becoming less free.

The relevance and necessity of this paper is in the consistency that it provides for the measure of democracy across the different explanations for backsliding. The study re-evaluates existing causal pathways and therefore, the theoretical approaches employed are consistent with those used by previous scholars. With that being said, rather than just re-testing existing theories, this project examines three prevalent explanations for the same phenomenon, using consistent measures across the data. More so, the results will enable us to better understand the puzzle of whether these trends are consistent within the African context.

When comparing global levels of diversity, Fisher (2013) finds that Sub Saharan Africa is by far the most ethnically diverse region, with the top twenty most diverse states all being in Africa. The findings introduced by Lührmann and colleagues (2018) discovers that, as a region,

Sub Saharan Africa is experiencing less backsliding as compared to other regions. This study focuses solely on Sub Saharan Africa, in order to understand whether or not the continent is experiencing different levels of democratic backsliding, given the elements previously discussed. While the relevance to Africa is clearly delineated in the puzzle presented by Lührmann et al (2018), this limited focus to Africa has inevitable consequences. While previous scholars have generally analyzed the data in a global sample, the main focus of this study is on Sub Saharan African, which presents certain issues with external validity. While the findings may provide insight to democratic backsliding in Africa, this information cannot be generalized to other poor, ethnically diverse military regimes. While the scope of this study is limited to Africa, this opens an avenue for future research on how these patterns transfer to other ethnically diverse, poorer regions.

As the following study is predicated on the assumption that comparatively Africa is experiencing less backsliding, I will employ a dummy variable in order to test the following hypothesis:

H1 Is Sub Saharan Africa experiencing different levels of democratic backsliding in comparison to other regions.

Next, I introduce the three independent variables to the measure of backsliding, in order to understand whether or not the variables are significant across a constant measure of democracy. I will test the following hypotheses using the same measure as my dependent variable:

H2: Countries with a low GDP per capita are more likely to experience democratic backsliding than those with a higher average GDP per capita.

H3: Highly diverse countries are more likely to experience democratic backsliding in comparison to those with less diversity.

H4: Presidential systems are more likely to experience backsliding, in comparison to parliamentary systems.

H5: Previous Military dictatorships are more likely to experience backsliding, in comparison to civilian leadership.

As these hypotheses elucidate, the following analysis examines these trends in Sub Saharan Africa, in order to understand whether the hypotheses are consistent in Africa, or if the data behaves differently. Should we expect these patterns to remain significant in the African context, or do these patterns behave differently in Sub Saharan Africa? Nevertheless, before answering this question the details of the research design must be carefully analyzed.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH DESIGN

As discussed previously, the first independent variable of interest is economic stability, as captured by GDP per capita. The theories argue that poorer countries are less likely to become consolidated democracies, and more likely to revert. The GDP per capita variable measures the value of the goods and services produced in a given country, divided by the population (United Nations, 2007). The GDP per capita marker shows the overall welfare of citizens in a state and is a straightforward indicator of the success or failure of a given economy. While other variables such as Gross National Income (GNI) and the Human and the Development Index (HDI) incorporate variables that assess economic stability, they also measure indicators that are unnecessary for this study such as education, life expectancy and income (United Nations Development Programme, 2016). The GDP per capita indicator is a standard measure, and as we are re-evaluating previous work, we will use this measure, as it is consistent throughout the scholarship. While measures of GDP per capita are generally standard across datasets, I use the World Bank measure because of its comprehensive capture of GDP across the globe.

The second independent variable, ethnic fractionalization is more complex-as there are several different methods used by scholars to capture ethnic diversity. Whereas some authors look at the number of ethnic groups in a country, others have looked at the political relevance of ethnic groups (Posner, 2004). In order to accurately represent the work on ethnic fractionalization and democratic backsliding, I will use several measures to capture the variable. The following table presents the different measures of ethnic fractionalization examined in this paper.

Table 1: Measures of Ethnic Fractionalization

MEASURE OF ETHNIC FRACTIONALIZATION	ELF (1997)	PREG (2004)	EPR (2018)	ALESINA ET AL. (2003)	ROEDER (2001)	BAH (1989)
SAMPLE	129 countries	42 African countries	Global sample of over 800 ethnic groups	215 countries	185 cases from 1961 and 1985	41 African Countries
MEASURE	Ethno-linguistic fractionalization	Politically relevant ethnic groups	Politically relevant ethnic groups measured by the power of the representatives	Ethno-linguistic and religious diversity	A measure of multiple aspects of ethnic diversity combined into one distinct measure -Ethnolinguistic Fractionalization	Ethnolinguistic Fractionalization

The first measure is Posner's PREG dataset (Politically Relevant Ethnic Group), which analyzes 42 African countries and the dynamic between ethnic groups, competition over resources and competition among ethnic groups. Using the ethnic classifications in *Atlas*, the author examined each individual case, in order to create the PREG measure. With that being said, the PREG measure does not account for the "concentration of the ethnic groups, or the divisions among them", a shortcoming the author acknowledges (Posner, 2004). While there are several alternative measures to PREG, including the ELF data, these measures do not account for the political relevance of such groups, and instead examine the ethno-linguistic differences within a country. Posner (2004) proposes that this distinction is instrumental to understanding the process of backsliding. There are clear advantages to both approaches therefore, for the purpose of this paper we will include several measures for both politically relevant groups and for ethno-linguistic differences. Morrison and colleagues (1992), introduced what is called the Black Africa Handbook, henceforth BAH, which examines political, social and economic factors of 32 black African countries. Both the data from the BAH (1992) and Roeder (2001) is taken from Posner's data on ethnic fractionalization, and they provide two additional measures of ethno-linguistic fractionalization.

While Posner's in-depth analysis of each African case provides a deeper understanding of ethnic diversity and power relations in the 42 African countries, this also limits the study. Therefore, I also use the Ethnic Power Relations dataset from 1946 to 2018, which includes data on over eight hundred ethnic groups (Vogt et al, 2015). The EPR Core dataset examines politically relevant ethnic groups and determines the level of state power that the representatives of an ethnic group have access to (Vogt et al, 2015). I also incorporate the Fractionalization

dataset created by Alesina and colleagues (2003), in order to account for the second theoretical argument. Does overall diversity impact the likelihood of backsliding, regardless of political power dynamics? This data examines the linguistic and religious aspects of ethnicity, to create a comprehensive measure of fractionalization for 215 countries (Alesina et al, 2003). The combination of these measures of ethnic fractionalization provides a varied and inclusive representation of the scholarship examined, and while there are both shortcomings and advantages to all of these datasets, they are the most appropriate measures for this study. While both the PREG and EPR datasets are advantageous in their use of political relevance, the data by Alesina et al (2003) fills the gap of simple diversity that the first two do not account for.

The third independent variable, previous regime type, is accounted for by the data provided in the Geddes, Wright, and Frantz (2014) dataset, the Autocratic Regimes Dataset. While the study mainly examines autocratic regime breakdowns, (which captures the dependent variable) the authors include a variable for regime type. They code each case as either a dominant-party, military, personalist, monarchic, oligarchic, indirect-military, or a hybrid. These coding decisions are made based on the following definition of regime type: “basic informal and formal rules that determine what interests are represented in the authoritarian leadership group and whether these interests can restrain the dictator” (Geddes, Wright and Frantz, 2014). In other words, the authors look at who controls party policies and important domestic and international policy decisions, and then decide which of the seven categories an autocratic regime should reside. Within the umbrella of autocratic rule there is variation in the degree of democratic structure and repressiveness, therefore, this distinction is very important. While authors of datasets such as that by Cheibub et al (2007) and Svobik (2008) provide very similar

categorizations of regime type- the primary goal of this study is to offer consistency within the measure. As the Geddes, Wright and Frantz (2014) dataset is used for the dependent variable, the logical progression was to use their regime classification.

Finally, I use the Geddes, Wright and Frantz (2014) data to account for the dependent variable: democratic backsliding. The Autocratic Regimes Dataset observes regime breakdown in autocracies from 1946 to 2010 and captures both transitions from an autocracy to a new autocracy, and the transition from an autocracy to a democracy (Geddes, Wright and Frantz, 2014). Similar to their classification of regime-types, they code transitions based on the informal and formal rules made by leaders, and the decisions and characteristics of the ruling regime. Unlike the data provided by Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland (2010) [CGV], which revises and updates the data in Przeworski et al. (2000), the Autocratic Regimes data includes coding for provisional governments and for periods of failed rule or anarchy. While previously coded under autocratic regimes, the dataset distinguishes between autocratic, democratic, not independent, occupation, provisional government and having no central government (Geddes, Wright and Frantz, 2014). Rather than comparing yearly, the authors identify the regime start date, and the end date, in order to understand transitions better-and include the method in which a regime ends (coup, civil war etc.) and the level of violence. Although their dataset is quite similar to that of CGV (2010), the differentiations made amongst autocratic regimes are important for this study. The authors include variables that capture suffrage and party competition in determining when autocratic regimes start and end, which are not included in CGV (2010), but are central to understanding backsliding (Geddes, Wright and Frantz, 2014).

There are inevitable shortcomings associated with each chosen dataset given that a definition of democracy, regime-type and authoritarianism are far from comprehensive. While the Geddes et al (2014) data may focus on undemocratic means of consolidating power and change of formal and informal rules, it does not account for other aspects of democratic backsliding such as loss of formal institutions and human rights. There are alternatives to the Geddes, Wright and Frantz (2014) data, but ultimately, I decided that the Autocratic Regimes dataset is the best fit for this study. The definitions provided, the coding decisions and the extensiveness of their available observations, fit well with my independent variables.

In order to account for a spurious relationship in the data I control for the following variables: economic growth, civil conflict, regime duration and civil conflict. The first control variable relates to the first independent variable or a countries level of wealth, being that changes in growth rates could impact backsliding, in addition to GDP per capita. Changes in growth rates accounts for instances of economic crises, following the theoretical argument that the likelihood of backsliding increases after an economic crisis (United Nations, 2007). Subsequently, rather than ethnic fractionalization it could be that civil conflict, or ethnic conflict may be related to the dependent variable. Lastly, scholars have argued that democracy duration impacts the likelihood of democratization, being that the longer the regime has been a democracy, the more likely they are to consolidate; therefore, we must control for regime duration (Carbone and Memoli, 2013).

We should expect that newer democracies are more likely to experience backsliding, in comparison to older democracies. This is measured in regime years, such that older democracies (+3 years) are less likely to revert in comparison to newer democracies (-3 years). The measure of civil conflict is taken from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), which examines

armed conflict with a minimum of 25 battle related deaths (Themnér and Wallensteen, 2013). I also examine the relationship between backsliding and presidential vs parliamentary systems, which is taken from the Database of Political Institutions (DPI) which differentiates between parliamentary systems and presidential systems (Cruz et al, 2015).

As the dependent variable (backsliding) is a dichotomous variable, meaning a state is either a democracy or an autocracy, a logistic regression is the most appropriate measure to analyze the variables. The sample examined will exclude autocracies, as the study aims to measure democratic backsliding in African democracies. The study measures whether or not a democracy reverts to authoritarianism in the subsequent year, if so the country is excluded from the following year. In using logistic regression, as compared to other methods, one can assess the strength of the independent variable on the dependent variable, after adjusting for the control variables, which removes confounding effects (Pollock, 2016). The following section illustrates the findings and analyzes the results.

CHAPTER FIVE: DATA AND ANALYSIS

In order to understand the impact of democratic backsliding in Sub-Saharan Africa, first we must determine whether or not there is a significant regional difference in the prevalence of democratic failure. As a region has Sub-Saharan Africa been less susceptible to the decline in democracy that other regions such as the Americas and Europe have experienced, as Luhrmann and colleagues suggest? The conclusions presented by Luhrmann et al (2018) seems to go against what we would intuitively expect based on the literature previously reviewed. Therefore, the first hypothesis asks if there is a regional difference in backsliding and if the levels of backsliding are different in Sub-Saharan Africa compared to other regions. Using Sub-Saharan Africa as the exclusion group, the following table measures democratic backsliding on a regional basis.

Table 2: Democratic Backsliding A Global Comparison

	<i>Alesina Eth</i>	<i>Alesina Lang</i>	<i>Alesina Rel</i>	<i>EPR Groups</i>	<i>EPR EGIP</i>
<i>Americas</i>	-0.366 (0.725)	0.002 (0.932)	-0.689 (0.748)	-0.637 (0.683)	-1.046 (0.711)
<i>Europe</i>	-0.584 (1.033)	-0.641 (1.043)	-1.134 (0.977)	-1.590 (1.051)	-1.392 (1.018)
<i>MENA</i>	1.129 (0.989)	1.123 (1.026)	0.774 (1.006)	0.499 (0.953)	0.505 (0.988)
<i>Asia & Oceania</i>	0.602 (0.666)	0.413 (0.641)	0.368 (0.662)	0.050 (0.659)	0.197 (0.631)
<i>Ethnic Diversity</i>	1.720 (1.079)	1.130 (0.968)	0.460 (1.109)	0.086** (0.038)	-0.096 (0.106)
<i>GDP per Capita</i>	-0.421 (0.275)	-0.543* (0.312)	-0.428 (0.268)	-0.351 (0.269)	-0.422 (0.280)
<i>Economic Growth</i>	-7.539*** (2.012)	-8.986*** (2.357)	-7.038*** (2.077)	-6.902*** (2.060)	-7.114*** (2.064)
<i>Civil Conflict</i>	0.689 (0.470)	0.596 (0.485)	0.770* (0.467)	0.498 (0.484)	0.650 (0.473)
<i>Presidential Regime</i>	-0.290 (0.545)	-0.415 (0.545)	-0.223 (0.502)	-0.363 (0.537)	-0.245 (0.507)
<i>Regime Duration</i>	-0.048** (0.022)	-0.052** (0.022)	-0.055** (0.023)	-0.058*** (0.021)	-0.044* (0.023)
<i>Constant</i>	-0.854 (2.190)	0.567 (2.347)	0.135 (1.933)	-0.367 (1.983)	0.590 (2.005)
<i>Observations</i>	2,006	2,000	2,024	1,877	1,877

***p<.01, **p<.05, *p<.10

Being that Sub-Saharan Africa is the exclusion group in the model, each region is being compared to Africa across every measure of ethnic fractionalization. The measures are all insignificant, which means that for each distinct region there is no significant difference in democratic failure between the region and Sub-Saharan Africa. In other words, for these specific models we did not find a regional difference in backsliding such as the one indicated by Luhrmann and colleagues (2018). The first hypothesis is not supported by the data, therefore the

idea that Sub-Saharan Africa is quantitatively different to other regions in the context of democratic backsliding is not supported.

As there are no samples of prior military regimes in the European cases, this variable was removed from this specific analysis. With that being said, both economic growth and regime duration appear to be extremely significant for all of the different measures of ethnic diversity. Economic growth is negative and significant, meaning that as economic growth increases, the probability of democratic backsliding decreases, such that economic growth fosters stability. Similarly, the longer a regime is a democracy the less likely they are to experience backsliding.

The second hypothesis introduces the relationship between GDP per capita and backsliding, which is represented in all of the tables.

Table 3: Democratic Backsliding and Regime Type

	<i>Alesina Eth</i>	<i>Alesina Lang</i>	<i>Alesina Rel</i>	<i>EPR Groups</i>	<i>EPR EGIP</i>
<i>Sub-Saharan Africa</i>	0.083 (0.599)	-0.191 (0.665)	0.465 (0.667)	0.447 (0.577)	0.323 (0.615)
<i>Prior Military Regime</i>	1.251** (0.523)	1.660*** (0.626)	0.873* (0.492)	1.108** (0.514)	1.020* (0.542)
<i>Ethnic Diversity</i>	3.503*** (1.235)	3.588*** (1.164)	0.313 (1.224)	0.098* (0.052)	0.090 (0.147)
<i>GDP per Capita</i>	-0.743** (0.327)	-0.784** (0.359)	-0.650** (0.296)	-0.808** (0.316)	-0.715** (0.305)
<i>Economic Growth</i>	-5.222* (2.719)	-6.600** (3.198)	-4.742* (2.519)	-3.916 (2.731)	-3.995 (2.678)
<i>Civil Conflict</i>	1.187** (0.463)	0.906* (0.494)	1.362*** (0.462)	1.108** (0.478)	1.273*** (0.459)
<i>Presidential Regime</i>	-1.149** (0.542)	-0.835 (0.516)	-0.610 (0.490)	-0.742 (0.502)	-0.666 (0.494)
<i>Regime Duration</i>	-0.017 (0.035)	0.007 (0.040)	-0.032 (0.035)	-0.014 (0.036)	-0.027 (0.035)
<i>Constant</i>	0.354 (2.660)	0.467 (2.946)	1.206 (2.372)	2.036 (2.449)	1.659 (2.413)
<i>Observations</i>	1,045	1,021	1,045	1,042	1,042

***p<.01, **p<.05, *p<.10

The GDP per capita variable is negative and significant for all of the measures of ethnic diversity, meaning that as GDP per capita increases the probability of backsliding decreases. With that being said, in Table 4, the results are mixed, being that in the African sample the results are significant across some of the measures and not for others. Therefore, while the results are strong in the overall measure of democratic backsliding, when the analysis is isolated to Sub Saharan Africa the relationship is less apparent. The data partially supports the idea that GDP per capita leads to an increased probability of backsliding, but due to the inconsistency in the results we cannot support the second hypothesis.

The third hypothesis discusses the relationship between ethnic diversity and democratic backsliding, and the data partially supports this conclusion. The measure of ethnic diversity is positive and significant for both the ethnic and linguistic measures of the Alesina variable and the EPR data. It is important to note that diversity is a comprehensive topic and that each measure means something different and could potentially have a distinct and different impact. In the findings there is a consistent trend that finds that the ethno-linguistic measures of fractionalization appear significant while the politically relevant ethnic groups are mostly insignificant. This important theoretical distinction could have a profound impact on the study of ethnic diversity and its role in democratic backsliding. With that, the measure for politically relevant ethnic groups could only be capturing a partial picture of politically relevant ethnic groups. A study by Beth Rabinowitz (2018) finds that leaders in Sub Saharan Africa are increasingly accountable to groups outside of the central leadership and that leaders find themselves creating relationships with rural leaders. These rural leaders, who often represent minority or even majority ethnic groups could play an important role in democratic backsliding, but they would be excluded from the list of ‘politically relevant’ ethnic groups.

Table 4: African Sample of Ethnic Diversity and Backsliding

	<i>Alesina Eth</i>	<i>Alesina Lang</i>	<i>Alesina Rel</i>	<i>EPR Groups</i>	<i>EPR EGIP</i>	<i>Bah</i>	<i>Roeder</i>	<i>PREG</i>
<i>Prior Military Regime</i>	3.426*** (1.197)	3.501*** (1.198)	3.457*** (1.201)	3.642*** (1.341)	3.504*** (1.257)	3.371*** (1.227)	3.232*** (1.140)	3.795*** (1.343)
<i>Ethnic Diversity</i>	1.189 (2.806)	2.686 (2.318)	2.687 (2.179)	-0.013 (0.156)	-0.132 (0.191)	0.520 (2.704)	4.913 (4.078)	-1.468 (1.795)
<i>GDP per Capita</i>	-1.284 (0.83)	-1.533* (0.848)	-1.582* (0.888)	-1.291 (0.873)	-1.352 (0.899)	-1.276 (0.859)	-1.333* (0.799)	-1.402 (0.889)
<i>Economic Growth</i>	-11.684** (5.327)	-12.217** (5.357)	-10.948** (5.123)	-10.967** (5.532)	-11.656** (5.699)	-12.030** (5.268)	-12.132** (5.183)	-12.415** (5.335)
<i>Civil Conflict</i>	1.064 (0.756)	0.994 (0.737)	1.251 (0.767)	0.805 (0.81)	0.679 (0.803)	1.011 (0.744)	1.270* (0.765)	0.920 (0.743)
<i>Presidential Regime</i>	2.749 (2.067)	2.235 (1.949)	3.598** (1.664)	3.396* (2.019)	3.512** (1.676)	2.900 (2.495)	0.677 (2.620)	3.919** (1.873)
<i>Regime Duration</i>	-0.015 (0.095)	-0.008 (0.094)	-0.004 (0.096)	-0.007 (0.098)	-0.015 (0.095)	-0.020 (0.095)	-0.020 (0.092)	-0.035 (0.095)
<i>Constant</i>	1.669 (4.933)	2.785 (4.928)	2.138 (5.073)	1.979 (5.209)	2.674 (5.432)	2.052 (5.218)	1.090 (4.862)	2.786 (5.332)
<i>Observations</i>	204	204	204	201	201	189	204	203

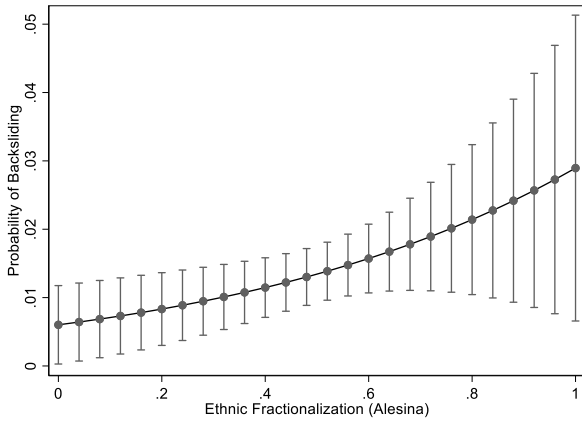
***p<.01, **p<.05, *p<.10

With that being said, when the study is limited to Sub-Saharan Africa- as displayed in table 4 above- the measure is no longer significant for any of the measures of ethnic diversity.

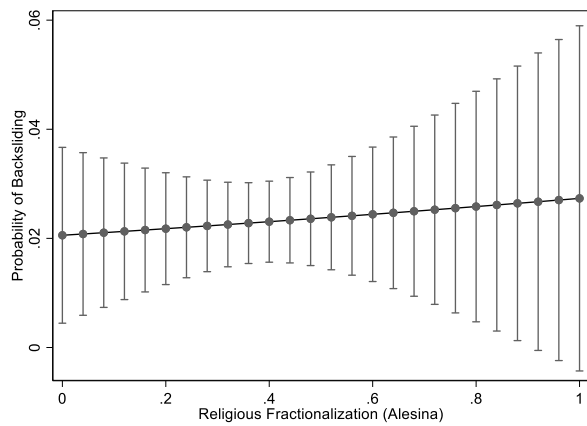
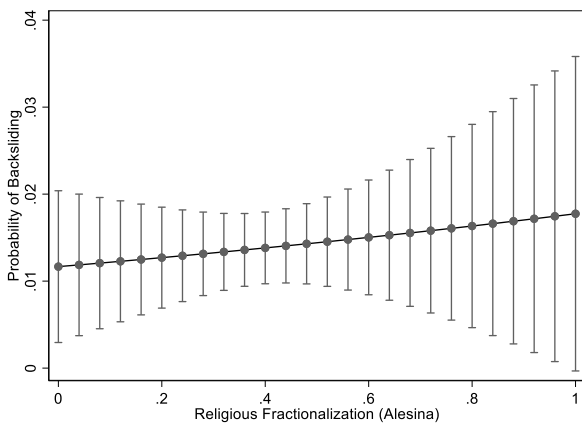
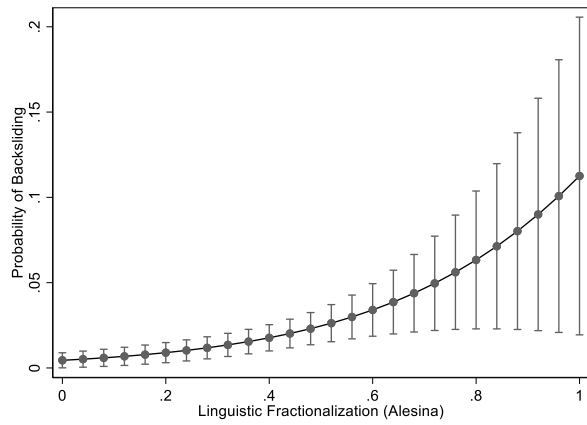
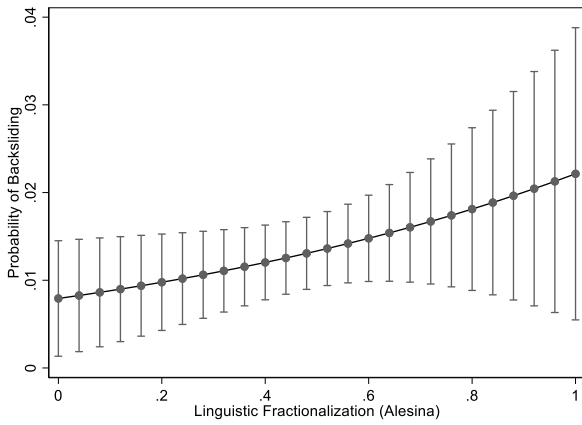
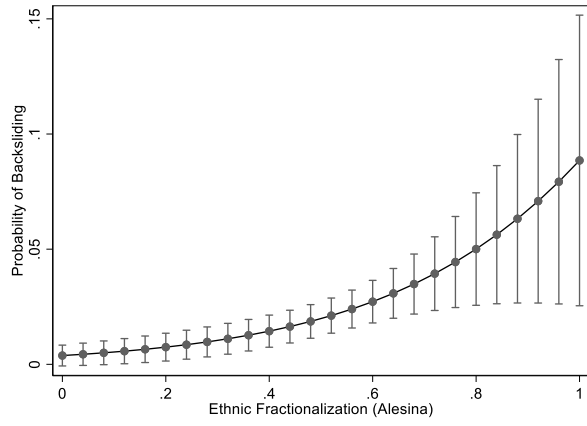
Therefore, the data does not support the third hypothesis, and based on this information we are unable to decisively conclude that in Sub Saharan Africa ethnic diversity cultivates political instability, as the results are mixed. With that being said, the measure for ethnic diversity is positive and significant for one measure in table 2 and for three measures in table 3. The following figures demonstrate the relationship between ethnic diversity and democratic backsliding, and the first column represents the data in table 2, while the second column represents the data from table 3. While the figures display a general trend of an increased probability of backsliding as diversity increases, it is important to remember that not all of the figures are significant.

To the left of each individual figure the probability of backsliding is recorded whereas, the measure for ethnic diversity is on the bottom. The top six graphs in figure 1 record a measure of ethno-linguistic diversity, whereas the bottom four graphs indicate an increase in the number of ethnically diverse groups.

Ethnicity Figures for Table 2



Ethnicity Figures for Table 3



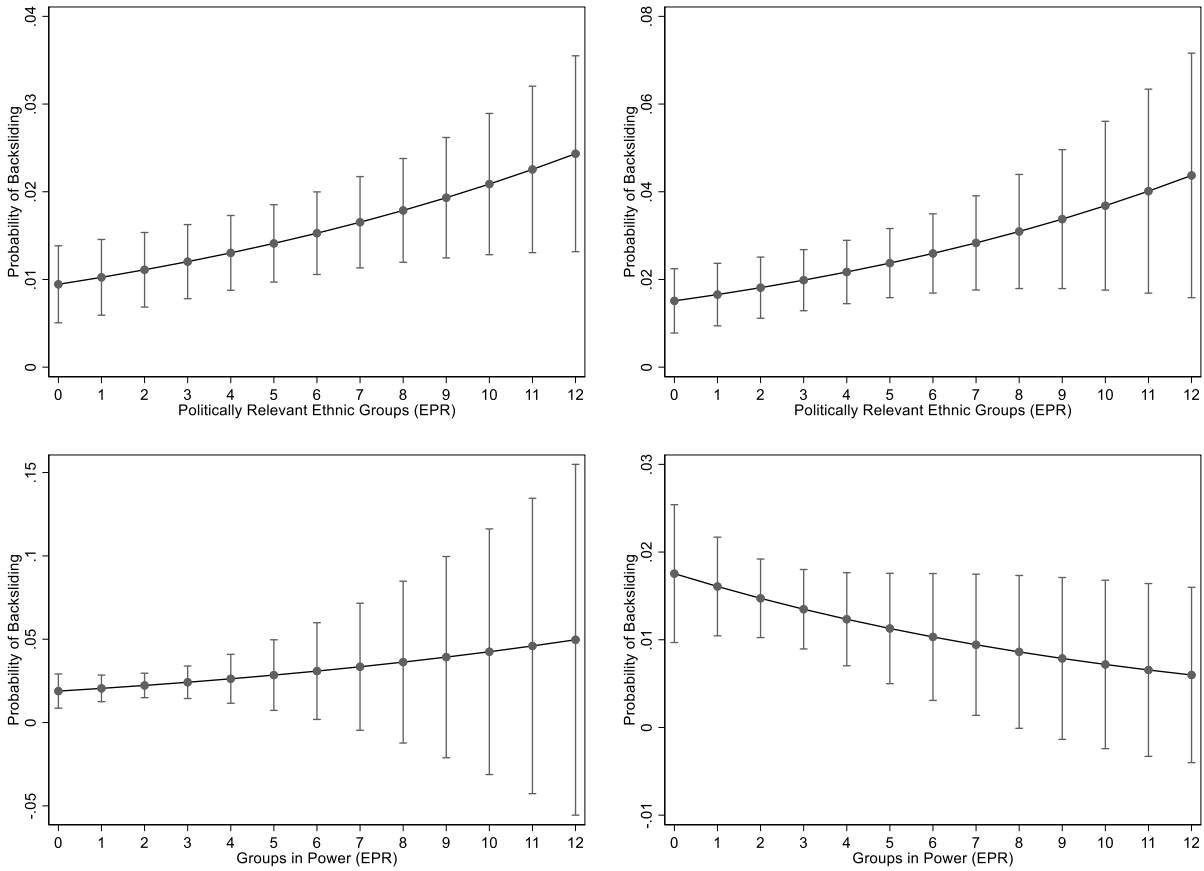


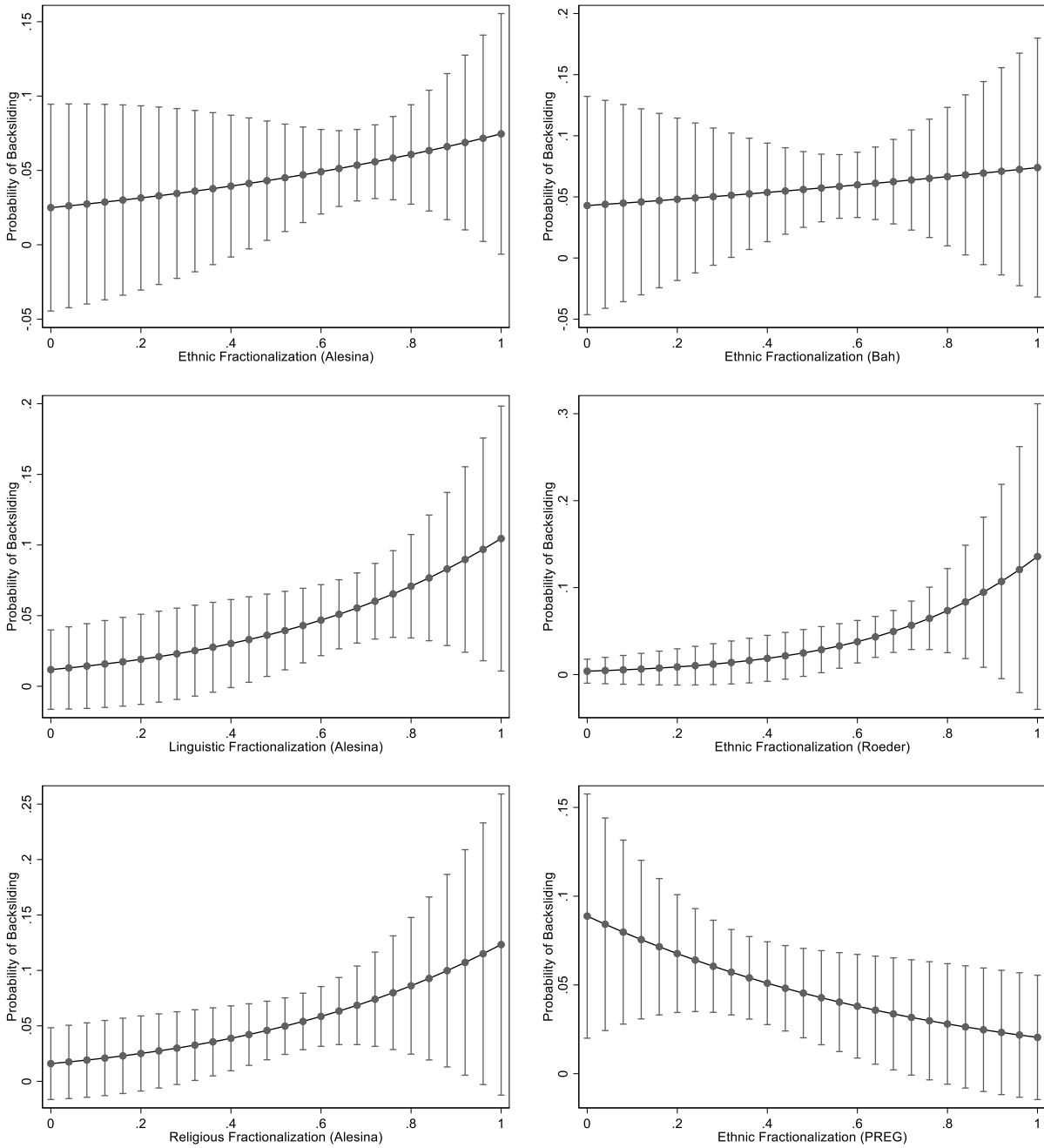
Figure 1: Ethnic Fractionalization and the Probability of Backsliding

The fourth diagram in column one is significant for the Ethnic Power Relations Data and it finds that as the number of politically relevant ethnic groups increases, so does the probability of backsliding. In the second column, the first two Alesina measures are significant, meaning as the sample becomes more ethnically diverse, the likelihood of backsliding increases.

Additionally, the fourth diagram in column two is significant for the politically relevant ethnic groups.

When the study is limited to Sub Saharan Africa the significant relationship between ethnic fractionalization and democratic backsliding is not apparent. The diagrams in Figure 2 are

based on the data in Table 4, and they show an overall trend that as diversity increases, backsliding becomes more prevalent; with that being said the measures are not significant.



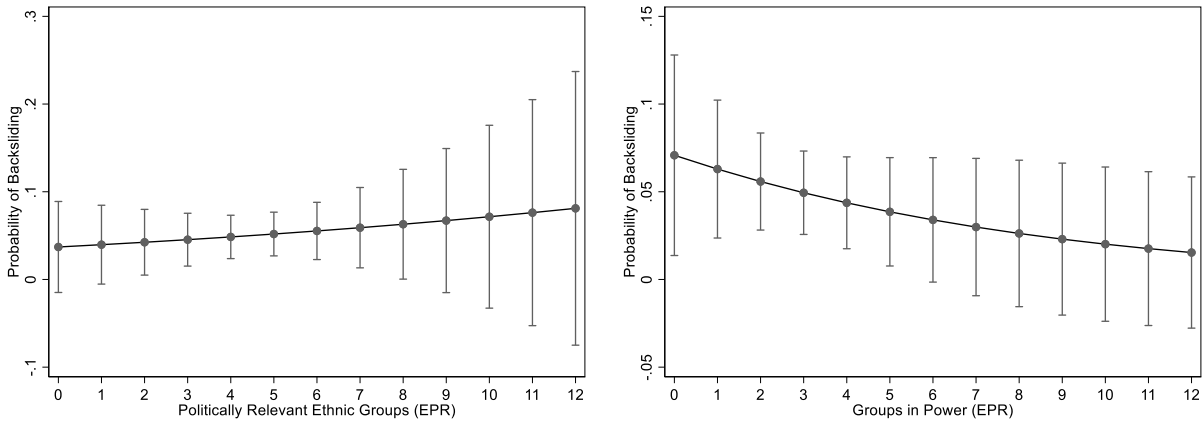


Figure 2: Ethnicity Figures for Africa

Overall the data points to a relationship between ethnic diversity and democratic backsliding, but in order to arrive at a more definitive conclusion a more in-depth analysis would need to take place.

The fourth hypothesis compares presidential systems to parliamentary systems and asks if presidential systems are more likely to experience backsliding. The variable is not significant in table 2, and it is negative and significant for one model in table 3. Unlike the predicted hypothesis this finding means that presidential systems are less likely to see backsliding, with that being said the variable is not significant for most models. Alternatively, in table 4 the measure is positive and significant for four of the eight models, as expected in the predicted hypothesis. Therefore, the data suggests that in Sub-Saharan Africa presidential systems are more likely to experience democratic backsliding. We can cautiously conclude that the data supports the fourth hypothesis. Nevertheless, we acknowledge that a challenge in the data on Presidential vs Parliamentary systems is in the large absence of Parliamentary systems in the sample of Sub-Saharan African countries. There are very few examples of Parliamentary systems

in the study, and those that do show up were replaced quickly. While there may be a significant relationship between the variables, it may be that it just is not showing up in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The fifth and final hypothesis finds that if the prior regime was a military dictatorship they are more likely to experience backsliding. This hypothesis is strongly supported by the data, and the measure is positive and significant for all of the models in both table 3 and table 4. The third table is comparing Africa to the rest of the world and finds that if a prior regime was a military dictatorship they are more likely to experience backsliding.

The control variable of the occurrence of civil conflict is positive and significant in Table 3, meaning that as a civil conflict increases, the likelihood of backsliding increases. Interestingly, this trend is not significant in the African sample in Table 4. Additionally, while the measure for regime duration is significant in Table 2, this trend is no longer significant in Table's 3 and 4. Economic growth is negative and significant, meaning that as economic growth increases, the likelihood of backsliding decreases. This measure is negative and significant in all of the tables and is especially strong in the sample limited to Sub-Saharan Africa. The following diagrams in Figure 3 show the relationship between economic growth and backsliding.

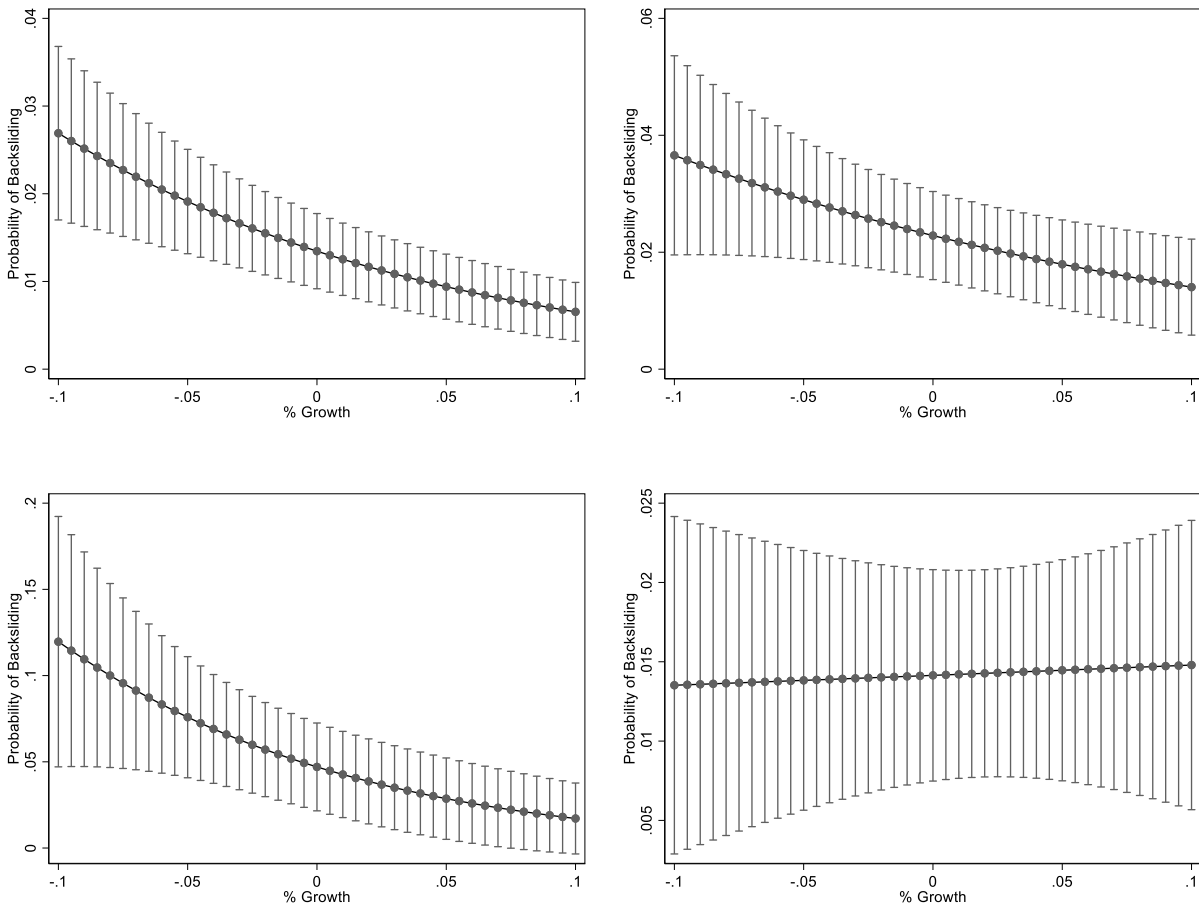


Figure 3: Economic Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa

The figure on the top left is based on the data in Table 2, and it shows that as economic growth increases the probability of backsliding decreases. The diagram on the top right is of a sample of countries who have had a regime type change, and it is based on the data from Table 3. The figure on the bottom right is showing the relationship between growth rates and backsliding when Sub-Saharan Africa is removed from the sample. The graph indicates that without Africa in the sample the relationship between economic growth and backsliding disappears. Ultimately Africa is driving the trend between growth rates and backsliding, which is important for the context of Sub-Saharan Africa.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

The notorious 'wave of democracy' in the 1990's stimulated intense debate among scholars about the extent of democratization and the future of democracy (Huntington 1998; Klingemann 1999). As the expanse of democracy continues to not only slow but rather reverse, the discussion of potential explanations for this trend is increasingly vital and necessary (Lipset, 1993). The study of democratic backsliding has similarly roused important questions: is there a global trend of a reversion to authoritarianism and away from democracy? This paper sought to understand democratic backsliding in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa and consequently revealed unexpected trends and discoveries. Firstly, a regional analysis found that there is not a significant difference between the different regions of the world in terms of democratic backsliding.

In surmising the research on the decline of democracy and the potential catalysts for democratic backsliding, it became clear that while the literature is extensive it lacks consistency and uniformity. Each paper examines democratic backsliding through a different lens, each with different parameters for what the phenomenon entails. The first objective in the research process was figuring out a middle ground for which to base the project in order to create a paper that can objectively compared to the existing research. The Geddes Wright and Frantz measure of democratic failure accomplished this middle ground, and I included several different measures of ethnic fractionalization and regime type indicators. After determining that there is not a regional difference in backsliding, I introduced a second measure that included prior regime type data. After analyzing the data, we were able to reject the first hypothesis, support the fourth and fifth hypotheses, and the data was inconclusive for both the second and third hypotheses.

While ethnic fractionalization measure is positive and significant in both table two and three, the relationship disappears when the study is limited to Sub-Saharan Africa. With that being said, ethnic diversity- and specifically politically relevant ethnic groups- seem to play an integral role in democratic backsliding, and this study could be inadvertently overlooking its impact in Africa. A more comprehensive and in-depth study of ethnic diversity and its impact in Africa could provide additional insight into what factors drive backsliding.

An aspect that is missing from this study, but advantageous nonetheless, are case studies looking into specific aspects of democratic backsliding and their root causes. For the purpose of time I was unable to provide a thorough investigation of case studies in Sub-Saharan Africa- but the importance of such a study should not be underemphasized for future endeavors.

As with every paper, there are shortcomings that potentially impacted the results, validity and replication of this study. As a student with moderate expertise on the subject of democratic backsliding, I am limited in my ability to completely and wholly grasp every aspect of what democratic backsliding entails. More so, while the study revealed interesting and telling aspects of democratic backsliding in both Sub-Saharan Africa and in the global sample- these results are limited in scope. While these results are specific to Sub-Saharan Africa, a comparative study between other regions with low GDP per capita, high ethnic diversity and a history of military regimes- such as South America- would enhance and develop the study. Additionally, the study relied on data and findings from other authors, and therefore the definitions and parameters were limited to the expanse of such studies.

The biggest takeaway from the data was the impact of economic growth, especially in the case of Sub-Saharan Africa- as it seems to be the driving force behind the trend. After removing

Sub Saharan Africa from the analysis, the impact of economic growth disappeared. Why does economic growth have a strong negative and significant impact in Sub-Saharan Africa, and why does this disappear in other regions? As economies become stronger they seem to become more resilient to the occurrence of democratic backsliding, and this important finding can enable policymakers and politicians to potentially curb the extent of backsliding in the future.

Alongside economic growth GDP per capita, regime duration, previous military regime type and ethnic diversity all play an important role in the story of backsliding. In order to avoid democratic recession and this seemingly global move towards autocratization, our focus should revolve around economic stability and measures that promote economic growth. The wave of democracy so eminently foretold by Huntington (1999), may have stalled and reversed but the story not yet complete. As the relatively young countries of Sub-Saharan Africa continue to grow and develop and foster economic growth, democratization will likely follow. The next ‘wave of democracy’ will potentially develop in Africa as policymakers overcome existing obstacles and begin to focus on initiatives that encourage economic stability.

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