

Research Article

Democracy and development: A critical analysis of the nexus in Malawi and Rwanda

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Whether democracy is the best system of governance that expedites development is increasingly gaining traction in academic debates as the answer to settle the question remains elusive. This study uses parametric data to compare 2004–2019 trends of development progress between Malawi as a democratic country and Rwanda as a nondemocratic country to contribute to the ongoing debates. Findings do not support democracy as a development catalyst. As much as the findings cannot be generalized to all democracies and nondemocracies, they point to further examination of democracy and call for innovative thinking to figure out new alternative systems of governance.

Key words: *Authoritarianism, democracy, development, governance.*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, critics have emerged on the development scene, arguing that democracy does not improve livelihoods of the poor (Gerring, et al., 2005, Ross, 2006, Friedman, 2009). These critics raise serious doubt about democracy, yet, as we all know, democracy is universally cherished and celebrated as the best system of governance in the contemporary world. Indeed, it is widely assumed that democracy enhances literacy, life expectancy, economic growth, food security, and other dimensions of life that are indicative of development progress (Moon et al., 1985, Sen, 1999, Boone, 1996, Lake, et al., 2001, Siegle, et al., 2004, Acemoglu, et al., 2019). So, what should we make for these contrasting views? This question is my motivation for this research.

As much as democracy has been globally viewed as pristine for decades, most policymakers and scholars have done so without empirical evidence to prove this positive view of democracy.

Surely, the effect of democracy seems to have been taken for granted as evident in the little research on the relationship between democracy and development. As such, the recent

critics cannot be ignored. In this work, I critically compare development progress for Malawi as a democratic country and Rwanda as an authoritarian regime to contribute to this conversation. Using parametric data for trends of development spanning 16 years from 2012–2019, I demonstrate that there is no empirical proof to support democracy as a development catalyst.

Problem statement

This research sought to compare 2004–2016 trends of living standards, economic performance, poverty levels, hunger, and corruption for Malawi as a democratic country and Rwanda as an authoritarian regime to determine whether there was a significant difference. Specifically, the study focused on Human Development Index (HDI), Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, proportion of population below the poverty line of \$1.90 per day, number of undernourished people, and Corruption Perception Index (CPI) to discover the relationship between democracy and development.

Hypothesis

Considering the contrasting claims about the effect of democracy on development, the hypothesis of this study was non-directional. Thus, the null hypothesis expected no difference between development progress for Malawi and Rwanda in the period 2004–2019, suggesting that there is no relationship between development and democracy.

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BRIEF REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This section reviews germane literature to clarify the definition of democracy in this paper, to peregrinate the historical origins of democracy in Malawi and Rwanda, and to understand perspectives of other scholars on whether democracy is good or not with the overarching objective of situating the problem of this research in the academic debate on the nexus between democracy and development.

Definition of democracy

Democracy is a concept that has attracted scholars from a wide gamut of disciplinary traditions, resulting in numerous definitions. For instance, while some define democracy as a system of governance whereby political leaders are answerable to citizens (Schumpeter, 1943, Diamond, 2004), others understand it as collective rule by the citizens, implying the constitutional right of everyone to participate in decision processes such as electing occupants of public offices and to contest for such offices (Heywood, 2003). Besides multiple definitions, scholars have also proposed different types of democracies. They include direct and representative or liberal democracies. Direct democracies accord all citizens the right to participate in all political processes and the final decisions are based on majority rule (Kitschelt, 1996 and Bernhard, 2012) as cited in (Haller, 2017). In contrast, representative democracy involves electing representatives like delegates to participate in political decisions on behalf of the citizens to whom they are also held accountable (O'Donnell, 1994). To avoid what (Drnovsek, et al., 2010) have described as errors of inclusion (assuming to be working with the same construct as one's audience when the underlying definitions are not the same) or exclusion (assuming to be working with different constructs when the underlying definitions are similar), one needs to articulate their definition and the type of democracy. This study focuses on representative democracy for the following two reasons: First, it is more popular and highly favored in the modern world compared to direct democracy (Fukuyama, 1989, Hewlett, 2000). Second, it is the form of democracy that is characteristic of Malawi as I shall demonstrate shortly.

Origins and etymology of democracy

Democracy is originally part of western culture. Its origins can be traced to antique Athens in Greece circa between 450 BC and 350 BC (Hewlett, 2000). It was invented by the Athenians (Harrison, 1993). As a concept, democracy is a Greek word which means rule by the people (Harrison, 1993). It is compounded by two Greek words namely "demos" and "kratos" which means people and power or rule respectively. Put together, these two words become "demokratia", meaning rule by the people or more precisely, self-rule (Harrison, 1993). The first form of democracy that emerged in Athens involved regular meetings of legitimate citizens who formed the Athenian Assembly to collectively make political decisions. This form of political participation has been described as direct democracy (Held, 2006, Haller, 2017). Worth highlighting is that the Athenian democracy was not inclusionary and there was no universal suffrage. For example, women and foreigners were deprived of the right to participate in political decisions (Hewlett, 2000, Dahl, 2008). Perhaps this explains why democracy ended up

with different variants and multiple definitions as scholars attempted to appropriate it in a more inclusionary fashion to iron out weaknesses of Athenian democracy. However, Athens remains the point of departure in conversations on the historical origins of democracy to this day.

It was not until the sixteenth century when other western countries started opening their doors to embrace Athenian democracy. Among the early western countries to do so was Switzerland (Haller, 2017). France democratized in 1851 (Nohlen, et al., 2010), while the United States introduced democracy circa between 1890-1920 (Bolton, 2014). The United Kingdom and many other western countries followed including Germany in 1918 and Italy in 1947 (Haller, 2017). Democracy or at least its basic principles such as universal adult suffrage, majoritarianism on policy formulation, freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and freedom of religion were widespread and settled as a western tradition of governance (Hewlett, et al., 2000). Thus, history points to the west as the cradle of democracy. So, how did it cross the Mediterranean Sea and make its way to Malawi, skipping Rwanda?

Brief history of democracy in Malawi

Democratization of Malawi is largely attributed to western influence. While other factors played a role in ushering in political change, democracy would not have found entry into Malawi without intervention of the west as I shall explain in this section. Malawi formerly called Nyasaland was a British protectorate for about 72 years since 1892 (Mchombo, 2005). The British colonial power thawed when Malawi attained independence in 1964 under the leadership of Kamuzu Banda who would later declare himself life president in 1971 and establish autocratic rule with the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) (Mchombo, 2005). But prior to that, the colonial rulers had attempted to introduce democracy in Malawi without success.

Early western attempt to introduce democracy in Malawi

The British introduced democracy in Malawi with the first democratic elections for a new Legislative Council held in 1961 in which MCP triumphed. But democracy was gradually crushed starting in the second elections of May 1964 when Kamuzu and his MCP won without any challenger. Several parties such as Mbadwa, Nyasaland Constitutional Party (NCP), and the Nyasaland Asian Convention (NAC) emerged on the political landscape of Malawi to contest the general elections but Kamuzu and MCP used their influence to ensure there was no opposition in the elections (Rowland, 1964). And, as Kamuzu and MCP had wished, all the other parties dissolved and announced that they would not run (Rowland, 1964). As a result, Kamuzu was the only presidential candidate on the ballot. The MCP won the elections and Kamuzu assumed absolute power (Mchombo, 2005).

In 1971, Banda declared himself life president of Malawi, suppressing the democracy that was introduced by the British colonial authorities. History records show that Kamuzu and MCP ruled the country with an iron fist. They tolerated no criticism whether constructive or not and any critics or suspects would be detained or sentenced to death without trial (Posner, 1995, Ross, 1996). Kamuzu's cronyism marginalized the Tumbukas and other minority tribes in the country while

people from his tribe, the Chewa enjoyed many privileges (Posner, 1995). He was a notorious dictator whose authoritarian leadership spawned numerous critics that paved the way for the return of democracy in Malawi.

The return of democracy in Malawi

There was heightening disaffection with Kamuzu and MCP as frustrated Malawians from non-Chewa tribes demanded change. It should be noted that most Malawians did not know anything about democracy at the time and their struggle was not for democracy, but rather new leadership. This was expressed through chants of “zisinthe” (we want change) in the street demonstrations that became order of the day toward the end of Kamuzu and MCP’s cruel regime. Also, the clergy joined with the protesters to take down Kamuzu and MCP as evident in a pastoral missive that was read out to congregants in churches across the country, demanding accountability of the government, respect of human rights and dignity for every Malawian (Chiona, et al., 1992). But this was not enough to change Kamuzu. Instead, he intensified espionage to silence his critics (see Posner, 1995, Mitchell, 2002). It was only western intervention which brought Kamuzu down on his knees to make way for democracy.

As a country that depends on foreign aid, the economy of Malawi suffered severely when its major donors namely the United States and Britain withheld their financial support to pressurize Kamuzu to embrace democracy (Posner, 1995). Government coffers were empty and Kamuzu had no one to turn to for support. It was this US-British joint effort which pressurized Kamuzu to open the door to democracy when he accepted a referendum for Malawians to decide whether to continue with one-party rule in 1993. The result of the referendum was the obvious loss of one-party rule in favour of multiparty democracy. This was followed by a general election in May 1994 in which Kamuzu and MCP were unseated and a new party and president took over the country’s leadership (Mchombo, 2005). Since then, Malawi has remained a democratic country characterized by representative democracy whereby citizens elect the president and legislatures from their constituencies to represent them at the National Assembly.

Rwanda as an authoritarian country or monarchy

Rwanda formerly called Ruanda-Urundi Kingdom is known for an infamous genocide that took place in 1994 following the clash of the Tutsi and Hutu ethnic groups. Its history is very long and complicated but it suffices to say that it was a monarchy before it was colonized by the Europeans and is still run as a monarchy to this day in the post-colonial epoch although it is disguised as a republic.

Brief history of monarchism and the role of colonists in Rwanda

Ruanda-Urundi was colonized by Germany from 1897 to 1916 and Belgium from 1919 to 1962. The history of Ruanda-Urundi is marred by constant ethnic power wrangles between the Bantu early settlers known as the Hutu and the Tutsi immigrants believed to have been part of the Kushites from Somalia or Ethiopia (Jenkins, 2008). For instance, in 1895 Rwandans fought each other over succession of King Rwabugiri who died suddenly. This pattern of political turmoil would

repeat in 1994 following the assassination of President Juvénal Habyarimana, which culminated in the Rwandan genocide. It must be pointed out that tribal tension in Rwanda was by and large orchestrated by the German colonists who favored the Tutsis. History records show that the German colonists were racist and regarded the Tutsi as bearing more resemblance to White people than the Hutu. As such, the Germans favoured the Tutsi for political leadership positions while the rest were relegated to positions of servitude. This German racist attitude sowed seeds of hatred and tribal divisions that still haunt Rwanda to this day. Note that much of what is presented in this section is drawn from Aimable Twagilimana’s (2015) Historical Dictionary of Rwanda.

After WWI, Germany was deprived of its colonies and Ruanda-Urundi was taken over by Belgium. The Belgian colonists worsened off the class system by using wealth as a tool for classifying people. Any member of Ruanda-Urundi Kingdom with at least 10 cattle was classified as Tutsi. Also, worth highlighting is that the colonial administration continued to run Ruanda-Urundi as a Kingdom while exercising their authority through the Tutsi elites as monarchs. The Hutus were frustrated and were the first to lobby for democratic reform following influence from Africans from neighboring countries that were fighting their colonizers to attain independence and self-determination. It seems the Tutsi did not want to lose their grip on power and were determined to do anything to maintain Ruanda-Urundi as a Kingdom. For instance, in 1959 they negotiated with Belgium for independence on the condition that Ruanda-Urundi would continue as a Tutsi monarchy. In the same year, they murdered a Hutu politician Dominique Mbonyumutwa and attempted to assassinate another Hutu politician Gregoire Kayibanda. In retaliation, the Hutu massacred over 100,000 Tutsi and thousands fled outside Ruanda-Urundi for asylum. Those who fled to Congo came to be known as “Banyamulenge”, meaning people living in Mulenge (a mountainous region in south Kivu, Congo). This name is also often used to refer to the Paul Kagame inspired Tutsi uprising of the early 1990s against a Hutu led government of Rwanda.

Belgian attempt to democratize Rwanda

When the struggle for independence heightened in the early 1960s, Belgium was compelled to concede. As was the tendency among most European colonists, Belgian exit strategy was to impose democracy to ensure power sharing between the Tutsi and the Hutu. This did not go well with the Tutsi who were not willing to share their elite privileges. They wreaked havoc which forced Belgium to divide Ruanda-Urundi into Rwanda and Burundi. But this division of the Kingdom did not bring peace as the Tutsi remnants in Rwanda wanted a monarchy, while the majority Hutus wanted a republic. When a referendum was held in 1962, the Hutu won and Rwanda became a republic with Kayibanda as the first elected president, ending Tutsi dominance in leadership. However, the Tutsi did not give up. They kept organizing guerrilla attacks to which the Hutu led government responded by killing thousands of Tutsis. This continued during the administration of Juvénal Habyarimana another Hutu president who overthrew Kayibanda in a 1973

coup d'état (Britannica, 2020). It should be noted that as much as the Hutus had voted for democracy, their leadership was not democratic. There was clear favoritism of Hutus, while the Tutsis languished. Democracy was openly rejected when Habyarimana established one-party rule in 1978. However, as per constitution, Rwanda continued to hold elections after every five years from 1978 to 1988 though this was just a formality as Habyarimana was always the only presidential candidate on the ballot.

In 1990, another invasion of Rwanda by Tutsi rebels (also known as Banyamulenge) led by Paul Kagame incited war which was fought till 1994. This war escalated when the Hutus connived to wipe out the "Inyenzi" (a hate name used against the Tutsi ethnic group which means cockroaches) following the assassination of president Habyarimana in April 1994. Over a million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were massacred between April and July in the same year. Tutsi sympathizers provided support which helped Kagame to overpower the Hutu led Rwandan government and establish his own government which he has ruled since then. But the war seems far from over as Hutu led militias keep attacking Rwanda from time to time to reclaim leadership. In terms of governance, Kagame's administration is undemocratic. Critics are not tolerated. For example, he imprisoned a Hutu politician Pasteur Bizimungu in 2002 for criticizing his government. Media reports about politics in Rwanda are full of assassinations, arrests, and disappearance of opposition leaders allegedly engineered by Kagame administration (McVeigh, 2015, Mwakideu, 2019, Human Rights Watch., 2018, French, 2021, St. Mary's University, 2021). In 2015, Kagame revised the constitution of Rwanda to allow him to extend his rule like a monarch. This blatant rejection of democracy seems connected to the Tutsi stance before independence of Rwanda that they wanted their country to run as a Kingdom ruled by Tutsi monarchs. It is, therefore, not surprising that experts describe Kagame's regime as authoritarian (EIU, 2021). In this paper, I maintain this expert view.

Whether democracy is a good system of governance

Having skimmed history to understand the prevailing political systems of Malawi and Rwanda as democratic and authoritarian respectively, I now turn to the central question of this research paper: Is democracy a good system of governance? A footnote to this question is that good governance is gauged by development progress. Thus, whether democracy is good can be answered by its impact on development in the countries that embraced democratic reform. At this point, I must provide a cursory definition of development for clarity rather than assuming that everyone understands development in the same way as we scholars of development studies do especially today in the twenty-first century when the term is commonly associated with computer engineering.

By development, I mean improvement in various dimensions of human wellbeing such as income, literacy, and life expectancy. Also, development includes environmental conservation, improved infrastructure such as roads and railway lines for transportation. In simple terms, the development enterprise is concerned with ending global poverty, promoting global health, promoting equality, promoting universal human

rights, and environmental sustainability (Craggs, 2014 and Dambula, 2021). Bilateral and multilateral organizations whose objectives are aligned with these facets of development include the United Nations, CARE, World Vision, and Plan, SAVE the Children, USAID, DFID, JICA, CIDA, and DANIDA. I must admit that development cannot be fully unpacked in this paper due to limited space. However, the description I have provided here is sufficient to distinguish this paper's perspective of development from other fields such as computer engineering. For further reading on development, I recommend Bryant L. Myers' (2011) "Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development and Vandana Desai and Robert B. Potter's (2014) Companion to Development Studies".

Early debates

Whether democracy is a good system is an age-old question that dates to antique Greece. The philosopher Plato viewed democracy as a potential oasis of anarchy. He questioned the very premise of democracy that all humans are equal. According to Plato, humans are not equally gifted and therefore they cannot govern competently (De Gruchy, 1995). Note that Plato was concerned about competency. In his opinion, people who are inept must not contest for leadership otherwise the government would be ineffective. This view of democracy as not a recipe for good governance was also shared by Aristotle. He argued that choosing between democracy and a generous and fair monarch, the former was the worst form of government (de Gruchy, 1995). For those not familiar with Greek philosophers, Aristotle was the brightest student of Plato. In contrast, the Roman philosopher Marcus Tullius Cicero supported protection of individual rights and participation in formulation of laws that would affect them (d'Entreves, 1967). Thus, according to Cicero, democracy was a good system of governance.

These debates slowed down if not completely stopped until the eighteenth and the twentieth centuries when Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Max Weber, and their contemporaries brought up the question again. According to Rousseau, democracy is good if it can be achieved. Unfortunately, he argued, it is a romanticized ideology that is not realistic and attainable in large populations (Rousseau, 1947). For (Weber, 1978), he seemed to echo Plato's argument that democratic governments are not effective. Both Rousseau and Weber's arguments were aimed at direct democracy. Such arguments triggered new ideas that helped to improve democracy, resulting in the birth of representative form of democracy. Thus, most contemporary debates have representative democracy in mind.

Contemporary views about democracy

It looks like representative democracy was accepted as pristine both among scholars and policymakers when it emerged on the western political scene. It quickly gained traction and got indoctrinated in the statutes of most countries in the west including the United States and the United Kingdom. These western superpowers assumed the role of promoting democracy across the globe as I demonstrated in the case of Malawi. Democracy has been encouraged and sometimes imposed using weapons of war in countries like Libya, Iraq and Afghanistan in the name of freeing the people. Conversely, monarchy, oligarchy, autocracy and all other forms of government have been condemned and discouraged. In academia, democracy has

been romanticized. Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen argued that as much as authoritarian countries like China and South Korea experienced high economic growth, there is no proof that authoritarianism promotes economic growth (Sen, 1999). He added that democracy is very effective in preventing famines and enables people to get their demands (Sen, 1999). Other researchers claimed that a country that embraces democratic reform gains 20 percent higher GDP per capita over a period of 30 years (Acemoglu, et al., 2019). Several other voices support these views (Moon, et al., 1985, Dasgupta, 1995, Boone, 1996, Lake, et al., 2001 Siegle, et al., 2004, Acemoglu, et al., 2006).

However, critics have surfaced again with arguments that cast doubt on democracy as a recipe for development. Tom Friedman (2009) seems to resound Plato's concern about competency as crucial for effective and efficient governance where he argues that it does not require democracy but a reasonably enlightened leader to move a country forward. (Gerring, et al., 2012) provide empirical evidence that the effect of democracy on economic growth ranges from negative to null. Responding to studies that claim that democracies do better in improving livelihood of the poor, (Ross et al., 2006) argues if that was the case, then countries that democratize should experience improvements in their infant and child mortality rates. In contrast, findings from his analysis did not support the positive claims about democracy. The sense, wisdom, and logic in both sides of this conversation are compelling and make it not easy to choose a stance. One way to get around such a conundrum is to conduct a fresh analysis to answer the question for oneself. In the sections that follow, I compare development progress for Malawi as a democratic republic and Rwanda as an authoritarian regime to contribute to this conversation on democracy and development nexus.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this work was armchair research. Parametric data for trends of development progress spanning 16 years from 2004–2019 were collected from virtual databases of Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), The World Bank, The United Nations, and Transparency International. The period 2004–2019 was chosen for two reasons. First, data was available and accessible. Second, it shows a conspicuous distinction of development progress between Malawi and Rwanda. Data analysis involved comparison of development indices for these two countries with specific focus on Human Development Index (HDI), Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, poverty, hunger (undernourished people), and Corruption Perception Index (CPI). As much as corruption is not a development indicator, it was included because it is a setback to development.

Justification for the selected development indices

There are many macro-development indicators and indices that are widely used in research to assess development progress at country or regional level such as Universal Human Rights Index (UHRI), Gini Coefficient or Index (GI), Infrastructure Development Index (IDI), infant and maternal mortality rates, coverage of potable water and improved sanitation facilities, employment rate, Human Development Index (HDI), Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, poverty line (population

proportion under the poverty line of \$US1.90, and hunger (undernourished people). While all these dimensions are helpful, this work focuses on HDI, GDP per capita, poverty, and hunger because it would not be feasible to consider all indicators due to limited timeframe. As such this work can only be treated as a partial picture of the development landscapes of Malawi and Rwanda.

Synoptic definitions of the selected indices

HDI: The dimensions of development that are reflected in Human Development Index (HDI) are life expectancy at birth, average number of years in school, expected years in school, and gross national income per capita (The United Nations). Measures of HDI take values between 0 and 1, denoting least and most developed respectively.

GDP per capita: The Gross Domestic Product is the total value of marketed goods and services produced within a country's territory converted to the \$US dollar using Purchasing Power Parity rates (The World Bank). GDP per capita is calculated by dividing the total value of marketed goods by the country's total population. GDP per capita reflects wealth of a country.

Poverty line: The poverty line is a level of income at which an individual or a household can meet the minimum living standards every day. This research focuses on the proportion of a country's population living below the poverty line of \$US1.90 per day.

Hunger: Hunger measures the number of people without adequate nutrition in a country. In other words, it is the number of undernourished people measured as an average every three years (FAO).

CPI: The Corruption Perception Index (CPI) is a measure of a country's integrity with respect to abuse of public office for personal gain. It ranks countries on a scale from 100 (very clean) to 0 (highly corrupt) (Transparency International). Thus, high scores denote high integrity, while low scores indicate low integrity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods.

Descriptive statistical analysis

Descriptive statistical analysis involved plotting the data on a linear graph for visual comparison of the trends of development for Malawi and Rwanda. This graph has been presented in Figure 1 below. To plot the graph (Figure 1), data were converted into neutral values to ensure clarity and visibility of all the development indices that were used. The data on the graph can be reconverted to actual values by following the instructions provided in the note beneath the graph.

Clearly, the development performance of Rwanda was better than that of Malawi in the period 2004–2019 except for hunger. According to the graph, standard of living for Rwandans was higher than that of Malawians as evident in the trends of HDI. Throughout the whole duration of 16 years, Malawi's HDI was below 0.50, which is the cut-off point for good and poor living

standards. On the other hand, Rwanda's HDI hiked above 0.50 in 2012 and remained so for the rest of the research focus period. Similarly, Rwandans were wealthier than Malawians as indicated by trends of GDP per capita. While Rwanda's GDP per capita kept rising, Malawi's GDP per capita rose slightly between 2004 and 2010, and remained almost stagnated throughout the rest of the assessment period. On average, a Malawian was worth \$900, while a Rwandan counterpart was worth \$1600. In terms of poverty, the proportion of Malawians living below the poverty line of \$US1.90 per day was bigger than that of Rwandans. As much as Rwanda started off with a higher proportion of poor people in 2004 (see the graph in Figure 1), it made remarkable progress, while Malawi was almost stagnated as the flat curve indicates. On average, 51 percent of Malawians and 44 percent of Rwandans were living below the poverty line in the period 2004–2019. Also, Malawi underperformed on corruption. As much as Rwanda's integrity on corruption declined between 2013 and 2014, it improved in 2015 and its CPI remained above 50 which is the cut-off point for clean countries. In contrast, Malawi remained highly corrupt with an average CPI of 33, which seemed to continue growing worse. Note that CPI data is only available from 2012. Rwanda was only outperformed on hunger. An average of 2.8 million

Malawians and 3.1 million Rwandans were undernourished during the assessment period. While the trends of hunger were rising for both countries, Malawi seemed to be slowing down compared to Rwanda's situation which seemed to be growing worse. Overall, the development performance of Rwanda was better than that of Malawi despite underperformance on hunger.

As much as the graph in Figure 1 shows that development progress for Rwanda outperformed Malawi in the period 2004–2019, further analysis was required to determine whether the differences were statistically significant to draw a substantial conclusion about the relationship between development and democracy. Surely, some differences between datasets are statistically orthogonal and do not provide adequate grounds for a solid conclusion. To determine whether the differences that were observed between Malawi and Rwanda in Figure 1 were statistically significant, an inferential statistical analysis was conducted.

Inferential statistical analysis

To determine whether the differences between Malawi and Rwanda were significant, the means (μ) of their development datasets were tested using two-sample t-tests for variances at $\alpha=0.052$ -tail (Table 1).

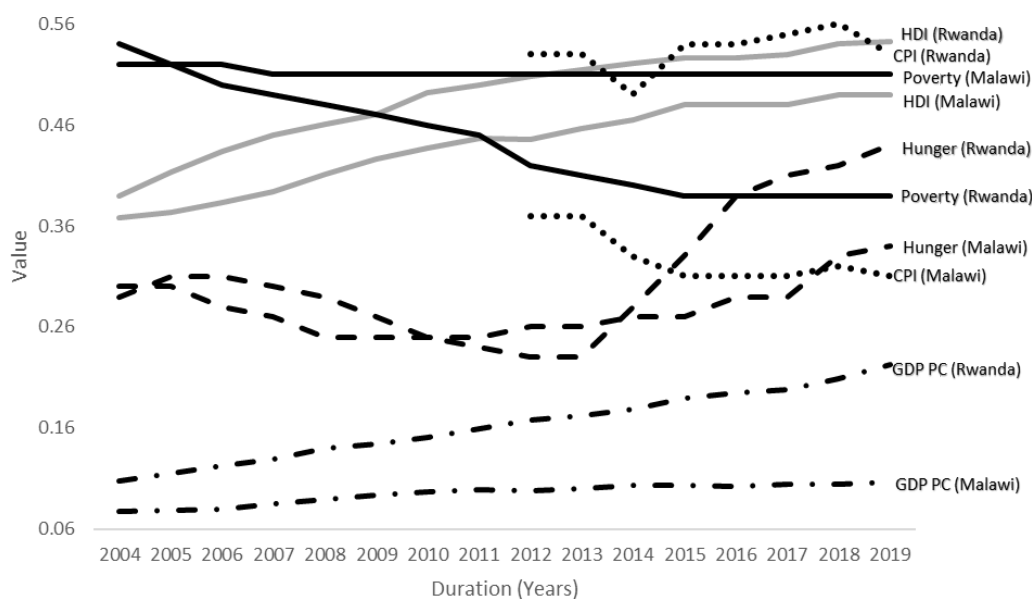


Figure 1. Size of the shadow economy of 31 european countries in 2020 (in % of off. GDP)
Source: Own Calculations, March 2021.

Table 1. T- test: Two sample variances.

	HDI		Poverty		GDP PC		Hunger		CP	
	Malawi	Rwanda	Malawi	Rwanda	Malawi	Rwanda	Malawi	Rwanda	Malawi	Rwanda
Mean	0.44	0.49	51.19	44.31	948.02	1623.19	2.79	3.12	32.88	53.38
Variance	0	0	0.16	27.16	9930.27	121596.98	0.08	0.47	6.98	4.27
Observations	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	8	8
df	30		15		17		20		13	
t Stat	-3.13		5.26		-7.45		-1.79		-17.29	
P(T ≤ t) one-tail	0		0		0		0.04		0	
t Critical one-tail	1.7		1.75		1.74		1.72		1.77	
P(T ≤ t) two-tail	0		0		0		0.09		0	
t Critical two-tail	2.04		2.13		2.11		2.09		2.16	

Note: H0 ($\mu_{\text{Malawi}} - \mu_{\text{Rwanda}}=0$) not supported for HDI, poverty, GDP PC, and CPI ($t > t_{\text{Crit}}$); H1: $\mu_{\text{Malawi}} (\text{Hunger}) - \mu_{\text{Rwanda}} (\text{Hunger}) \neq 0$ not supported ($t < t_{\text{Crit}}$)

Abbreviations: HDI: Human Development Index; GDP: Gross Domestic Product; PC: Per Capita

$H_0: \mu_{\text{Malawi}} - \mu_{\text{Rwanda}} = 0$

$H_1: \mu_{\text{Malawi}} - \mu_{\text{Rwanda}} \neq 0$

Where μ = means of HDI, GDP per capita, poverty, hunger, and CPI. Results have been summarized in Table 1 below.

Interpretation of the results

According to Table 1, $H_0: \mu_{\text{Malawi}} - \mu_{\text{Rwanda}} = 0$ is rejected for HDI ($t_{3.13} > t_{\text{Crit}} 2.04$), Poverty ($t_{5.26} > t_{\text{Crit}} 2.13$), GDP per capita ($t_{7.45} > t_{\text{Crit}} 2.11$), and CPI ($t_{17.29} > t_{\text{Crit}} 2.16$) but retained for Hunger ($t_{1.79} < t_{\text{Crit}} 2.09$). This means there was a significant difference between development progress for Malawi and Rwanda in terms of living standards, Poverty alleviation, economic growth, and corruption levels in the period 2004–2019. However, as much as the curves for Hunger in Figure 1 suggest a difference between Malawi and Rwanda, it was orthogonal and not statistically significant.

Considering that Rwanda generally outperformed Malawi as observed in the graph in Figure 1, it can be suggested that there is no evidence to support democracy as a development catalyst. If anything, democracy seems to be a setback.

As Plato noted (de Gruchy, 1995), democracies can be ineffective and inefficient due to incompetent leaders. This seems true for Malawi where corruption was worse in the study period. Political leaders and technocrats were abusing their power to divert public resources into their personal accounts. This contrasts the purpose of power which is to serve the poor and marginalized (Myers, 2017). Another setback is that the choices of Members of Parliament that Malawians make to represent them seem to be largely inept. In Malawi, anyone can get elected as a Member of Parliament regardless of education, basic knowledge of development, and above all, philanthropic heart. Also, as (Rousseau, 1947) argued, democracy is unrealistic. In Malawi, political leaders often represent wishes of their parties rather than the will of their constituents. When the demands of the constituents contrast the wishes of the party, the Member of Parliament must decide whether to side with their constituents or their party. In most cases, the obvious choice is to side with their political parties for fear of losing private gains from political appointments. In addition, it is not uncommon for elected political parties to abandon development projects of preceding administrations with the intent of frustrating their political rivals. Such challenges seem to be the failure of democracy.

However, the cases of Malawi and Rwanda in the period 2004-2019 do not suggest that authoritarianism is the best alternative. As mentioned, government critics are not tolerated in Rwanda and opposition leaders live under constant threats of arrest or disappearance. There is no freedom of expression and other universal human rights. Perhaps a more holistic analysis of Rwanda should include an examination of the human rights dimension of development as well. But as far as the development indices examined in this paper are concerned, there is no evidence to support democracy as a system of governance that expedites development.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research sought to contribute to the debate on

democracy and development nexus using Malawi and Rwanda as case studies with the former representing democracy and the latter representing authoritarianism. The findings suggest that democracy is not a development catalyst as Malawi was found to be lagging in several dimensions of development compared to Rwanda in the period 2004–2019. It should be noted that the case studies used in this research are not absolute reflections of all democracies and non-democracies, which may encumber generalizability of the findings. Nevertheless, this paper points to the need for further examination of democracy and its role in development. It seems democracy is not the best and the last system of governance humans can ever invent to expedite development processes.

Humans are progressively innovative by nature and have the capability to figure out better systems than democracy. But settling for democracy as the alpha and the omega of the systems of governance can thwart this human progress in innovative thinking.

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