

Tracing the Link Between Digital Globalization and the Demand for Democracy: The Case of Social Media Use in Mali and Sudan

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Abstract

The need to establish stable democratic rule in the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa has recently been accentuated in the context of overcoming the ailments eroding African societies, such as ethnic violence, gender inequality, neopatrimonialism, ineffective governance and mass levels of poverty. However, despite the continuous calls for democratization on behalf of the international community, the majority of the countries in the region is still characterized as widely undemocratic. This state of affairs, in turn, necessitates a deeper scrutiny of the patterns of democratization in Sub-Saharan Africa, with a particular emphasis on the study of the endogenous and exogenous factors with a potential for producing a positive impact on the demand for democracy. Following the events of the Arab spring, digital globalization in the form of Internet and social media use may be hypothesized to represent one of such factors. This study rests on the hypothesis whereby there is a correlation between social media and Internet use, on the one hand, and the demand for democracy, on the other. Using the latest Afrobarometer merged dataset, a multivariate logistic regression was carried out for Mali and Sudan to establish a correlation, or a lack thereof, between the intensification of digital globalization and the increase in the demand for democracy in these countries. Based on the results obtained, conclusions were drawn regarding the role of digital globalization in the democratization process Mali and Sudan.

Keywords: Digital globalization, the Internet, social networks, democratic protests, democratization, Sub-Saharan Africa, Mali, Sudan.

Взаимосвязь между цифровой глобализацией и запросом на демократию: пример использования социальных сетей в Мали и Судане

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Аннотация

Последние несколько десятилетий необходимость установления стабильной демократии в странах Африки к югу от Сахары подчеркивается в контексте преодоления пагубных особенностей развития африканских государств, таких как, например, этнические конфликты, гендерное неравенство, неопатримониализм, неэффективное государственное управление и массовые уровни бедности. Тем не менее несмотря на продолжительные призывы к демократизации со стороны международного сообщества большинство стран региона по-прежнему характеризуются как недемократические. Подобное положение дел, в свою очередь, обуславливает необходимость более глубокого изучения паттернов демократизации в странах Африки к югу от Сахары и уделения особого внимания изучению различных эндогенных и экзогенных факторов, способных оказать положительное влияние на усиление демократического запроса

в данных странах. События первой «арабской весны» позволяют предположить, что цифровая глобализация в виде Интернета и социальных сетей представляет собой один из таких факторов. Данное исследование основывается на гипотезе, в соответствии с которой существует корреляция между использованием социальных сетей и Интернетом, с одной стороны, и спросом на демократию — с другой. При использовании новейшего набора данных Afrobarometer в исследовании была проведена многофакторная логистическая регрессия с данными по Мали и Судану с целью установления наличия или отсутствия корреляции между интенсификацией цифровой глобализации и увеличением спроса на демократию в этих странах. На основании полученных результатов регрессионного анализа были сделаны выводы о значимости цифровой глобализации для процесса демократизации в исследованных государствах.

Ключевые слова: цифровая глобализация, Интернет, социальные сети, продемократические протесты, демократизация, Африка южнее Сахары, Мали, Судан.

1. INTRODUCTION

The need to establish stable democratic rule in the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa has long been emphasized by scholars in the academic community [10; 17]. While the stabilization and strengthening of democracy in these countries is often projected as pivotal for overcoming the various issues eroding African societies ever since independence (e.g., ethnic violence, gender inequality, civil conflicts, neopatrimonialism and ineffective governance [1; 14]), the conceptual interpretation of democratic rule, adopted in this paper bears a more procedural character, although with a certain degree of digression.

Much of the contemporary debate around the theory of democracy has been focused on the features that make up the concept, with several major identifiable dichotomies: the one between Western and non-Western theories of democracy [23]; minimalist and maximalist interpretations of democracy [22]; liberal and electoral democracy [22], as well as more dispersed taxonomizations which include such notions as participatory, deliberative and egalitarian democracy¹.

While the concomitant features such as mass public participation and socio-economic equality are typical of liberal/Western theories of democracy [11], recent developments in the global rhetoric on democracy have witnessed the emergence of the s.c. non-Western alternatives of the democratic theory. Stemming from the disenchantment and poor performance of Western democratic models, support for the non-Western democratic alternatives is becoming increasingly pertinent [23]. Yet, in the lack of a clear outline of the features constituting non-Western democracies [23], the demand for the recognition of the local specificities in defining democracy may pose certain threats.

Here, Ugochukwu Nwosu [22] warns of the transition from “political adjustment to despotic adjustment”, whereby violation of the foundational principles of democracy is framed as mere democratic adjustment to the local context [22].

Therefore, the perception of democracy used in this paper, while not focusing on the concomitant socio-economic aspects of democracy, will emphasize the procedural aspects of democratic rule in the form of elections, simultaneously allocating due relevance to the principles of electoral competitiveness, freedom and fairness, with the focus on the effective power of the elected government to rule, not impeded by the unelected elite [11].

¹ Democracy report 2023. Defiance in the face of autocratization // V-Dem. [Electronic resource]. URL: Democracy Reports – V-Dem (date of access: 06.12.2023).

In this context, the marked prevalence of undemocratic regimes in Sub-Saharan Africa² despite the calls to action by the international community necessitates more nuanced studies of the factors of democratization in the region. Digital globalization may be claimed to represent one of such factors. Here, social media is widely acknowledged to have substantially contributed to the spread of democratic demands across the neighboring region of Northern Africa and the Middle East within the framework of the Arab spring [21]. Moreover, certain authors put forward the notion of the “African spring” as denoting the rise in the demands for democracy among the population of African countries [4], which makes the case for an enquiry into the potential role of social media and Internet use behind such shifts.

Here, several previous studies have shown the presence of a correlation between the use of social media/Internet and the rise in the demands for and the levels of democracy [20]. In their study on Internet use and the perception of democracy in Africa, Cariolle et al. [6] found that the correlation between the use of social media and the rising demand for democracy is particularly pertinent for immature democracies and autocracies, where social media/Internet serve as the sources of mobilization for the public [19]. Interestingly, Mali and Sudan were not included in the list of cases for this ample study, which further necessitates the exploration of the presumed correlation there.

In line with previous research, this paper dwells on the hypothesis whereby the progressive increase in the use of and the trust for social media is positively correlated with the simultaneous increase in the support and demand for democracy in Mali and Sudan which were chosen as cases for analysis for the following reasons: 1) data availability 2) some of the lowest democratic performance indicators³ coupled with large population count 3) insufficiency of previous research on the topic for the selected countries. To test the suggested hypothesis, a multivariate logistic regression analysis was carried out using the Afrobarometer’s most recent merged dataset (2022)⁴.

2. THE DIGITAL GLOBALIZATION – DEMOCRACY NEXUS

While it is widely accepted that social media may exhibit both positive and negative effects on democracy, its major enticements for the promotion of democratic ideas may be summarized as follows:

- 1) Social media possess unprecedented capacities for bringing people together across national borders, constituting a generative platform for the exchange and promotion of ideas.
- 2) Until recently, social media were considered a realm extremely difficult and costly to control and, therefore, one conducive to the expansion of unrestricted communication.
- 3) A venue for communication between the public and the political establishment, social networks can be used both for direct channeling of demands to the authorities, and for challenging the establishment’s decisions.
- 4) Social media exhibit a profound visualization capacity, being able to tackle misinformation with visual content [12].

At the same time, social media may also constitute a detriment to the development and dissemination of democracy. Here, it is necessary to consider several major risks presented

² Freedom House. Countries and territories // Freedom House [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores> (date of access: 02.10.2023).

³ The V-Dem Dataset // V-Dem [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.v-dem.net/data/the-v-dem-dataset/> (date of access: 02.10.2023).

⁴ Afrobarometer. Merged Round 8 data (34 countries) (2022) // Afrobarometer [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.afrobarometer.org/survey-resource/merged-round-8-data-34-countries-2022/> (date of access: 02.10.2023).

to democracy by social media: surveillance, personalization, disinformation, moderation, microtargeting⁵. These risks have become particularly pertinent in the recent years as authoritarian states acknowledged the rise of social media and the increase of its impact propensity on the general society. In this light, the crackdown of autocratic regimes on social media has recently become particularly evident, while some authoritarian leaders additionally managed to harness social media for their own advantage.

Nonetheless, the existing challenges outlined above cannot take away from the social media's capacity for the promotion of democratic ideas. In what follows, a brief outline of the evolution of democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa will be presented, followed by a multivariate logistic regression to establish the relationship between social media use and the demand for democracy in Mali and Sudan.

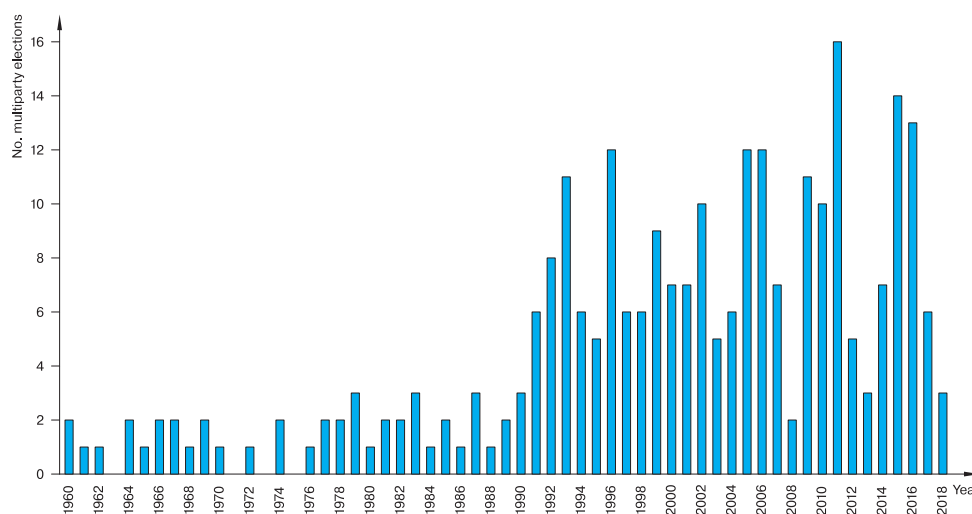
3. DEMOCRACY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA IN RECENT DECADES: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

In the history of Africa's political development, the 1990s era became an epitome of change. It came as replacement to the "lost decades" (1960s-1980s) [15] marked by the dominance of the colonial heritage: ineffective borders seeding intrastate and interstate conflict [3], propensity towards neopatrimonialism [13] and the divinization of the leader [7], as well as profound deterioration of institutional rule [15].

In the beginning of the 1990s, however, the situation began to change: the new paradigm of global development assistance accentuated the importance of good governance and witnessed the introduction of political conditionalities as the primary instrument in the development assistance schemes [9]. All in all, a surge in the perceived costs of authoritarian rule coupled with internal demand for democracy resulted in a relative democratization in the region.

This democratization was epitomized by two major tendencies:

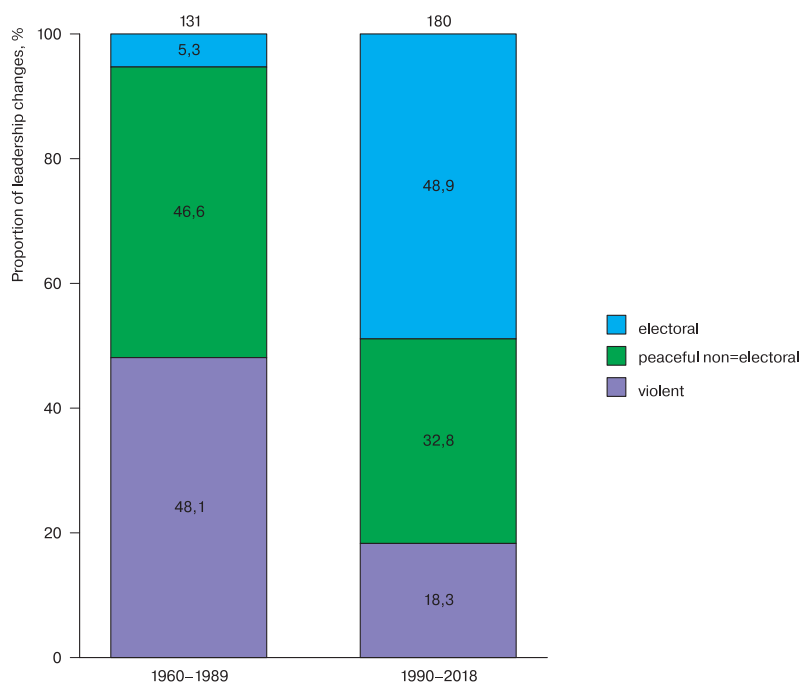
- the introduction and stabilization of multiparty elections and constitutional transitions;



Picture 1. Number of multiparty elections per year in Africa, 1960–2018 [7]

- a decline in violent takeovers and increased respect for the existing institutional systems [7].

⁵ European Parliament. Key social media risks to democracy: Risks from surveillance, personalisation, disinformation, moderation and microtargeting // European Parliament [Electronic resource]. URL: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_IDA\(2021\)698845](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_IDA(2021)698845) (date of access: 02.10.2023).



Picture 2. Distribution of leadership change types in Africa, 1960–2018 [7]

Democratic backsliding

While the trend outlined in the previous paragraph had been relatively pertinent in the region until the mid-2010s, it recently saw a reversal known as the “democratic backsliding”. More specifically, many of the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa (including Mali and Sudan), classified as democracies in the beginning of the 2010s were categorized as either closed or electoral autocracies in the beginning of the 2020s.

Interestingly, the tendency for democratic backsliding in Africa has been relatively consistent with the trends in democracy on the global stage: in 2019, all the regions of the world experienced a downgrading of democratic institutions [18]. Here, N. Bermeo [5] stipulates a coexistence of two major trajectories within the overall tendency for democratic backsliding: the decline in the traditional forms of democratic reversal, i.e., coups d’état, executive coups, and blatant election-day fraud; and the strengthening of new forms of democratic backsliding, such as promissory coups, executive aggrandizement and strategic manipulation [5].

4. TRACING THE LINK BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND MASS DEMOCRATIC DEMAND IN MALI AND SUDAN

Democratic protests and coup d’état in Mali

The democratic backsliding in Mali became particularly evident during the 2018 presidential elections characterized by the presence of broad irregularities and rigging. In 2018, the popular protests were contained and Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta was reelected as president. However, public outrage over the undemocratic regime of Keïta grew larger and turned into mass-scale popular protests following the irregularities during the 2020 parliamentary elections⁶. These events became a trigger for months-long protests and,

⁶ ISPI. Sudan’s Revolution: One Year On // ISPI [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/sudans-revolution-one-year-26200> (date of access: 02.10.2023).

subsequently, a military coup which saw both the president and the prime-minister ousted. Given the ample and continuous nature of Mali's protests and the fact of their co-occurrence with the events of the Arab Spring 2.0., it seems expedient to scrutinize whether the support for social media in the time of the protests and in the years preceding them had any correlation with the growing public support and demand for democracy.

Democratic protests and coup d'état in Sudan

The protests in Sudan, centered around the public demand for Omar Al-Bashir's resignation, began in the end of December of 2018 and spilled over to 2019. The protests were followed by a military takeover and the arrest of Al-Bashir, which, however, did not lead to the cessation of demonstrations – the newly established military government announced a three-month state-of-emergency period which triggered a new wave of popular unrest. Following the intensification of protests, a political agreement was signed, which stipulated the formation of a joint civilian-military transitional government with the aim of establishing democratic rule in Sudan by 2026⁷. In 2021, however, another military coup led to the ejection of the transitional government and to the reversal of the agreement. This, in turn, gave rise to a new series of protests demanding a return on the path towards democratization⁸.

5. THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY IN SUDAN AND MALI: REGRESSION ANALYSIS

For the multivariate logistic regression, it was decided to use the variables from the 2022 Afrobarometer merged dataset which contains the results of surveys for the years 2018-2021. The selection of variables was based on the formulated research hypothesis indicating the presence of a correlation between: a) the support for social media and the use of social media and the Internet as the independent variables b) the support for democracy and the demand for democracy as the dependent variables.

1) Independent variables

- a) Variable: the presence of Internet access on the phone of the respondent (Q92G). Initially a categorical variable, this variable was recoded into a dummy one with the following outcome categories: the newly generated variable takes the value of 1 only if the response to the initial question is "Yes". Otherwise, the new dummy variable takes the value of 0. The newly generated variable was assigned the label "*internetaccessphone*".

		Freq.	Percent	Valid	Cum.
Valid	-1 Missing	2	0.00	0.00	0.00
	0 No (Does not have internet access)	18834	39.17	39.17	39.17
	1 Yes (Have internet)	20554	42.75	42.75	81.92
	7 Not Applicable	8442	17.56	17.56	99.48
	8 Refused	11	0.02	0.02	99.50
	9 Don't Know	241	0.50	0.50	100.00
	Total	48084	100.00	100.00	

Table 1. Internet access on the phone⁹

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ ISPI. Just another coup in Sudan? // ISPI [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/just-another-coup-sudan-32657> (date of access: 02.10.2023).

⁹ Compiled (designed) by the author.

- b) Variable: social media: helps people have more impact on politics (Q59D). The newly generated dummy variable takes the value of 1 provided the answer to the original question is either “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”. In all the other cases, the variable would take the value of 0. The generated (recoded) dummy variable was assigned the label “*socmedimppol*”.

		Freq.	Percent	Valid	Cum.
Valid	1 Strongly Disagree	1559	3.24	3.24	3.24
	2 Disagree	4056	8.44	8.44	11.68
	3 Neither Agree or Disagree	1604	3.34	3.34	15.01
	4 Agree	16314	33.93	33.93	48.94
	5 Strongly Agree	8206	17.07	17.07	66.01
	7 Not applicable	14272	29.68	29.68	95.69
	8 Refused to Answer	43	0.09	0.09	95.78
	9 Don't Know/Haven't heard enough to say	2030	4.22	4.22	100.00
	Total	48084	100.00	100.00	

Table 2. Social media can help impact politics¹⁰

- c) Variable: effects of social media on society (Q59F). The newly generated dummy variable takes the value of 1 if the response to the original question is either “somewhat positive” or “very positive”. Otherwise, the variable takes the value of 0. The generated (recoded) variable was assigned the label “*attitudesocmed*”.

		Freq.	Percent	Valid	Cum.
Valid	1 Very negative	2962	6.16	6.16	6.16
	2 Somewhat negative	5423	11.28	11.28	17.44
	3 Neither positive nor negative	4738	9.85	9.85	27.29
	4 Somewhat positive	12031	25.02	25.02	52.31
	5 Very positive	6804	14.15	14.15	66.46
	7 Not Applicable	14272	29.68	29.68	96.14
	8 Refused	66	0.14	0.14	96.28
	9 Don't know / Haven't heard enough	1788	3.72	3.72	100.00
	Total	48084	100.00	100.00	

Table 3. The impact of social media on the society¹¹

2) Dependent variables

- a) Variable: reject one-party rule, reject military rule, reject one-man rule (Q20A, Q20B, Q20C). These three categorical variables were recoded into three dummy ones in which a given variable takes the value of 1 only if the answer to the original question (do you approve of one-party/military/one-man rule?) is either “Strongly disapprove” or “Disapprove”. The three newly generated variables were assigned the labels “*onpartyrulesupport*”, “*militaryrulesupport*”, “*onemanrulesupport*”, accordingly.

		Freq.	Percent	Valid	Cum.
Valid	1 Strongly Disapprove	24610	51.18	51.18	51.18
	2 Disapprove	12167	25.30	25.30	76.48
	3 Neither Approve Nor Disapprove	810	1.68	1.68	78.17
	4 Approve	5753	11.96	11.96	90.13
	5 Strongly Approve	3923	8.16	8.16	98.29
	8 Refused	86	0.18	0.18	98.47
	9 Don't know	735	1.53	1.53	100.00
	Total	48084	100.00	100.00	

Table 4. Reject one-party rule¹²

¹⁰ Compiled (designed) by the author.

¹¹ Compiled (designed) by the author.

¹² Compiled (designed) by the author.

		Freq.	Percent	Valid	Cum.
Valid	1 Strongly Disapprove	24397	50.74	50.74	50.74
	2 Disapprove	11409	23.73	23.73	74.47
	3 Neither Approve Nor Disapprove	1374	2.86	2.86	77.32
	4 Approve	6186	12.86	12.86	90.19
	5 Strongly Approve	3785	7.87	7.87	98.06
	8 Refused	94	0.20	0.20	98.26
	9 Don't know	839	1.74	1.74	100.00
	Total	48084	100.00	100.00	

Table 5. Reject military rule¹³

		Freq.	Percent	Valid	Cum.
Valid	1 Strongly Disapprove	26450	55.01	55.01	55.01
	2 Disapprove	12855	26.73	26.73	81.74
	3 Neither Approve Nor Disapprove	1077	2.24	2.24	83.98
	4 Approve	4163	8.66	8.66	92.64
	5 Strongly Approve	2430	5.05	5.05	97.69
	8 Refused	83	0.17	0.17	97.87
	9 Don't know	1026	2.13	2.13	100.00
	Total	48084	100.00	100.00	

Table 6. Reject one-man rule¹⁴

Subsequently, the generated variables were merged into one dummy variable which was assigned the label ***“rejectautocracy”***. This dummy variable takes the value of 1 if at least one of the three of its constituent variables takes the value of 1 for a given respondent. It takes the value of 0 if none of the three dummy variables take the value of 1 for a given respondent.

- b) Variable: satisfaction with democracy (Q37). This categorical variable which represents the categories of responses to the question “How satisfied are you with the state of democracy in your country?”, was recoded into a dummy variable “satisfdemo”. This newly generated variable takes the value of 1 if the answer to the original question is either “Not at all satisfied” or “Not very satisfied”. Otherwise, it takes the value of 0.

		Freq.	Percent	Valid	Cum.
Valid	0 The country is not a democracy	849	1.77	1.77	1.77
	1 Not at all satisfied	11441	23.79	23.79	25.56
	2 Not very satisfied	13860	28.82	28.82	54.38
	3 Fairly satisfied	14521	30.20	30.20	84.58
	4 Very satisfied	5950	12.37	12.37	96.96
	8 Refused	127	0.26	0.26	97.22
	9 Do not know	1336	2.78	2.78	100.00
	Total	48084	100.00	100.00	

Table 7. Satisfaction with democracy¹⁵

- c) Variable: support for democracy (Q21). This categorical variable was recoded into a dummy variable labeled ***“Dummydemsupport”***, which takes the value of 1 only if the respondent agrees with statement №1 (“Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government”). Otherwise, it takes the value of 0.

¹³ Compiled (designed) by the author.

¹⁴ Compiled (designed) by the author.

¹⁵ Compiled (designed) by the author.

		Freq.	Percent	Valid	Cum.
Valid	1 STATEMENT 3: For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have.	6840	14.23	14.23	14.23
	2 STATEMENT 2: In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable.	6919	14.39	14.39	28.61
	3 STATEMENT 1: Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.	32837	68.29	68.29	96.91
	8 Refused	110	0.23	0.23	97.13
	9 Don't know	1378	2.87	2.87	100.00
	Total	48084	100.00	100.00	

Table 8. Support for democracy¹⁶

- d) Variable: demand for democracy (DemandDemo). This categorical variable which contained several categories of answers corresponding to the ratio of aspects of democracy endorsed by a given respondent, was recoded into a dummy variable ***“DemandforDemocracy”***. The newly generated dummy variable takes the value of 1 only if the outcome of the original variable is “Full demand for democracy” (the respondent agrees with 4 out of 4 components of democracy). Otherwise, the generated variable takes the value of 0.

		Freq.	Percent	Valid	Cum.
Valid	0 No demand for democracy	1683	3.50	3.52	3.52
	1 Agrees w/ 1 of 4 components	3855	8.02	8.06	11.57
	2 Agrees w/ 2 of 4 components	7259	15.10	15.17	26.74
	3 Agrees w/ 3 of 4 components	14187	29.50	29.65	56.39
	4 Full demand for democracy	20872	43.41	43.61	100.00
	Total	47856	99.53	100.00	
Missing	.	228	0.47		
Total		48084	100.00		

Table 9. Demand for democracy¹⁷

The recoding of the selected categorical variables allowed to accommodate them to the chosen method of analysis – multivariate logistic regression.

Additionally, two control variables were applied that could have altered the outcomes of the regression analysis: respondent's age and individual living conditions. Here, the assumption regarding age is that younger fractions of the population tend to use the Internet and social media more frequently and more extensively while having a more positive attitude towards social media [2]. The hypothesis regarding the potential impact of economic well-being on the demands for democracy is that those belonging to the higher-income class would be less incentivized to support political shake-ups for the sake of democracy than those belonging to lower-income classes [8].

The age variable (Q1) was recoded into a categorical variable “generations”, containing several categories of outcomes: “Gen Z” (19-26 years old), “Millennials” (27-42 years old), “Gen X” (43-58 years old), “Boomers” (59-68 years old).

In turn, the individual well-being variable (Q4B) was recoded into a categorical variable “econsit” with three categories of outcomes: “Good economic conditions”, “Average economic conditions” and “Bad economic conditions”. The two control variables were inserted into the logistic regression as factor variables.

¹⁶ Compiled (designed) by the author.

¹⁷ Compiled (designed) by the author.

6. FINDINGS

Below, are the visualized results of a series of multivariate logistic regressions for Mali and Sudan.

	Mali	Sudan
Internet access on the phone	1.246458 (0.288)	1.052788 (0.709)
Attitude to social media	0.4583834** (0.000)	0.9002623 (0.470)
Social media can produce an impact on politics	1.126602 (0.658)	1.489509** (0.004)
Pseudo R2	0.0485	0.0119
Prob > chi2	0.0001	0.0413

Table 10. Results of multivariate regression analysis¹⁸. Dependent variable — satisfaction with democracy in one's country. Coefficients are standardized, the P-values are indicated in brackets.

Note: * — P-value < 0.05; ** — P-value < 0.01.

	Mali	Sudan
Internet access on the phone	1.832895** (0.000)	1.289988 (0.085)
Attitude to social media	1.124494 (0.478)	1.874425** (0.000)
Social media can produce an impact on politics	0.8743446 (0.524)	2.288069** (0.000)
Pseudo R2	0.018	0.0479
Prob > chi2	0.0389	0.000

Table 11. Results of multivariate regression analysis¹⁹. Dependent variable — Demand for democracy. Coefficients are standardized, the P-values are indicated in brackets

	Mali	Sudan
Internet access on the phone	1.727326** (0.002)	1.077992 (0.554)
Attitude to social media	1.18865 (0.327)	1.23213 (0.120)
Social media can produce an impact on politics	1.157342 (0.508)	1.429063** (0.007)
Pseudo R2	0.0184	0.0127
Prob > chi2	0.0534	0.0122

Table 12. Results of multivariate regression analysis²⁰. Dependent variable — Support for democracy (dummy). Coefficients are standardized, the P-values are indicated in brackets

¹⁸ Compiled (designed) by the author.

¹⁹ Compiled (designed) by the author.

²⁰ Compiled (designed) by the author.

	Mali	Sudan
Internet access on the phone	2.716189* (0.021)	1.802716* (0.013)
Attitude to social media	0.9175428 (0.827)	1.936603** (0.006)
Social media can produce an impact on politics	1.10897 (0.832)	1.408147 (0.162)
Pseudo R2	0.0494	0.0296
Prob > chi2	0.1493	0.0306

Table 13. Results of multivariate regression analysis²¹. Dependent variable — Rejection of autocracy (cumulative). Coefficients are standardized, the P-values are indicated in brackets

Notably, as a results of the analysis, the following correlations have been established:

For Mali:

- 1) Attitude towards social media – satisfaction with democracy.
- 2) Presence of mobile Internet access – demand for democracy.
- 3) Presence of mobile Internet access – support for democracy.
- 4) Presence of mobile Internet access – rejection of autocracy.

For Sudan:

- 1) The perceived impact of social media on politics – satisfaction with democracy.
- 2) The presence of mobile Internet access – demand for democracy.
- 3) Attitude towards social media – demand for democracy.
- 4) Perceived impact of social media on politics – demand for democracy.
- 5) Perceived impact of social media on politics – support for democracy.
- 6) Presence of mobile Internet access and attitude towards social media – rejection of autocracy.
- 7) Presence of mobile Internet access and attitude towards social media – rejection of autocracy.

Therefore, the following conclusions may be drawn:

For Mali:

- 1) The presence of mobile internet access on the phone increases the probability of a) preferring democracy over other types of rule b) complete endorsement of democracy c) rejection of at least one form of authoritarian rule.
- 2) Positive attitude towards social media increases the probability of dissatisfaction with democracy in the country and, therefore, initiating bottom-up demand for change.

For Sudan:

- 1) Trust in the social media's capacity to impact politics increases the probability of a) dissatisfaction with democracy in the country and supporting the demand for change b) full endorsement of democracy c) preferring democracy over other types of rule.
- 2) Exhibiting a positive attitude towards social media increases the likelihood of rejecting at least one element of authoritarian rule and fully endorsing democracy.
- 3) The presence of mobile internet access increases the probability of rejecting at least one component of authoritarian rule.

²¹ Compiled (designed) by the author.

7. CONCLUSIONS

A positive correlation between digital globalization and the support and demand for democracy in Mali and Sudan has been argued in this paper. Using four outcome variables and three predictor variables in separate logistic regressions for Mali and Sudan has been relatively successful in confirming the suggested hypothesis: digital globalization in the form of social media and Internet use has been found to be correlated with the increase in the probability of popular support and demand for democracy in these countries. An important point to make, however, is that different predictors produce diverging effects on the different outcome variables. Additionally, these effects have also varied in the two countries, which indicates the possible presence of country-specific effects. At the same time, while the differences in the probabilities for the individual categories of the control variables (generation, individual economic conditions) were established, no statistically significant effect of the overall control variables was found (but for the individual economic conditions in the regression model for the satisfaction with the state of democracy in Mali).

The initial hypothesis stipulating the presence of a correlation between the intensification of digital globalization and the endorsement of democracy in Mali and Sudan has been confirmed, albeit with divergent effects of various predictor factors on the different outcomes of interest. Given the velocity of the dissemination of Internet and social media use across the African continent, the findings of this paper may imply that social media outlets and the Internet overall could constitute some of the major channels of pro-democracy influence in the studied countries. However, the lack of success of recent democratic protests as well as the absence of a tangible effect of the outlined tendencies on democracy in Mali and Sudan indicate that the bottom-up social media approach alone cannot suffice in establishing democratic rule in these countries. According to the V-Dem dataset²², in 2012, Mali exhibited an electoral democracy index of 0.356 out of 1, whereas in 2022 it fell to 0.235. The same pattern was discovered in the parameters of liberal democracy: 0.234 in 2012 and only 0.153 in 2022. In Sudan, the electoral democracy index fell from 0.231 in 2012 to 0.169 in 2022, while the liberal democracy index stayed the same: 0.74 in both 2012 and 2022.

Importantly, one of the potential limitations of the research is the arguable presence of “coupvolution” in both countries at the time of the collection of data for the Afrobarometer dataset, as well as at the time of the research [16]. Here, “coupvolution” may be defined as a rather specific type of revolutionary processes, when the revolutionary mass mobilization of the first phase leads to a coup, which can be regarded as the second phase of the revolutionary/coup-volutionary process, during which some of the important demands of the participants of the first phase are implemented [16]. In this regard, the collection of data during the active phase of coupvolutions in Mali and Sudan could have altered the perceptions and the responses of the interviewed population and, therefore, the outcomes of the present research. In turn, this necessitates further scrutiny of the studied correlation in these countries, while resorting to alternative datasets and longer periods of longitudinal data.

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²² The V-Dem Dataset // V-Dem [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.v-dem.net/data/the-v-dem-dataset/> (date of access: 02.10.23)

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