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# The Role of Parliament in Promoting Good Governance in Africa

## Introduction

The international community's attitude toward development has gone through four main phases. In the 1950s, when the political science profession was dominated by the modernizations theorists, the common wisdom was that democracy and development were going hand in hand and that by promoting democracy one was also promoting development and viceversa.

This view, championed by Lipset (1959), was then challenged by Samuel Huntington in the late 1960s. According to Huntington (1968), the promotion of socioeconomic development required strong government, strong states, strong political institution (what he called political development) rather than democracy. Huntington made this point because he feared that democratic regimes were not sufficiently strong to cope with the social pressures and demands of modernizing societies.

This view has been very influential until 1991, when Huntington, in his *Third Wave of Democratization*, noted that democracy is good in theory, good in practice and it is good for development.

In the past few years, international organizations dedicated to the promotion of development have articulated a fourth position: democracy is not enough to promote development, in order to promote development we need democracy with good governance.

In the light of this new approach to democracy, development and good governance, one of the big questions that have emerged is: if democracy with good governance promotes socio-economic development, how do we promote democracy and good governance?

What kind of institutions are beneficial in promoting good governance? And what is the role of parliament in promoting good governance? The purpose of this paper is to answer this question.

Part One of this paper shows some data concerning the relationship between democracy, development and good governance in the world and in Africa. In this section we show that regardless of how we measure socio-economic development (GDP per capita, life expectancy, adult illiteracy, inequality), there is a strong relationship between democracy and development. Countries that are more democratic are also more developed and conversely countries that are more developed are more democratic. In this section we also show however that good governance is a more important determinant of development than democracy. This evidence is used to argue that while democracy may be beneficial in promoting development, good governance is actually crucial for development. Development is promoted not only by governments that are democratic and representative, but it is also and more importantly promoted by governments' accountability and responsiveness.

Part Two investigates the relationship between democracy, development and good governance in Africa. The results of the data analysis presented in this section sustain the claim that higher levels of development however measured are associated with higher levels of democracy and good governance. The analysis shows however that in the African continent what is really needed to promote development in the continent is good governance. The relationship between good governance and development is

remarkably stronger and more significant than the relationship between democracy and development. On the basis of this evidence we suggest that in order to promote development in Africa it is even more important than in the rest of the planet to promote good governance.

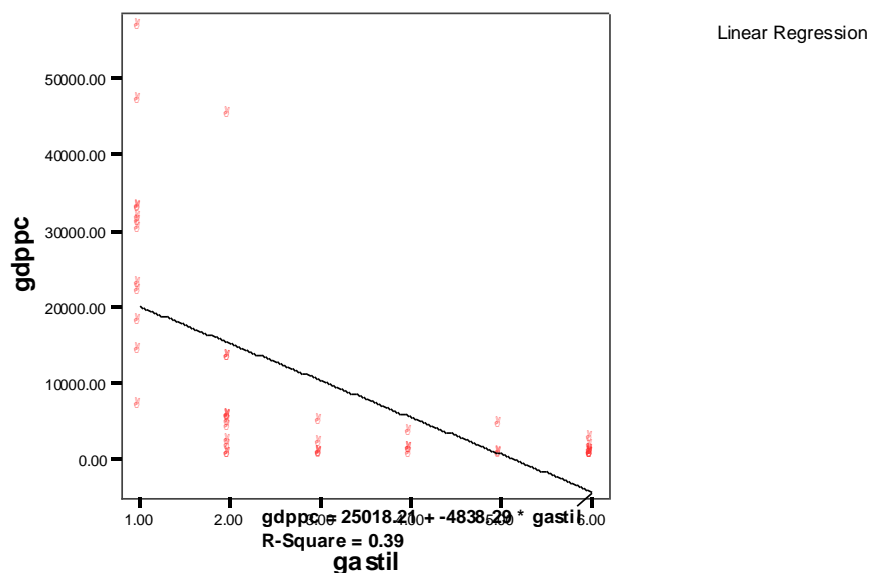
Building on this discussion, Part Three discusses what is the role of the parliament in promoting good governance. In doing so specific attention is paid not only to how the parliament can promote good governance by controlling the executive branch of government but also to how the parliament can promote good governance by controlling itself and the behavior of its members. In the fourth and conclusive part of this paper, institutional reformers are provided with some guidelines as to how to proceed and make the process of institutional reform as successful as possible.

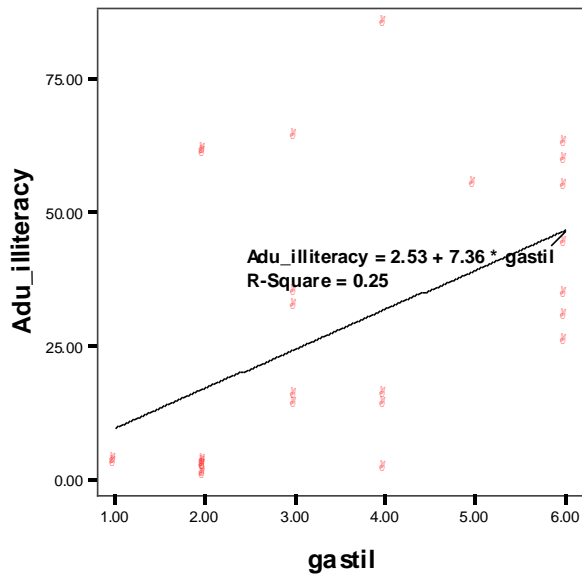
### Part One: Democracy, development and good governance

The WBI in collaboration with the IPU constructed a dataset concerning the executive-legislative relationships in 83 countries. That dataset has been used by Pelizzo and Staphenurst (2004a; 2004b; 2006a) to discuss what are the tools of legislative oversight, how are they related to other socio-economic variables, and what is their impact on democracy.

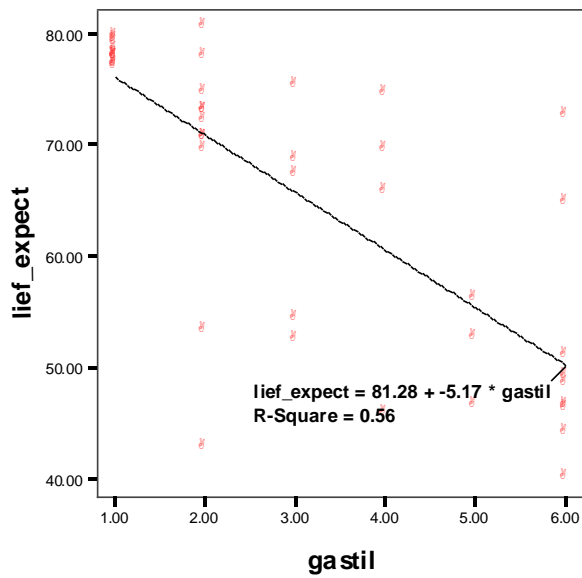
Since information provided by the 83 countries included in the survey was not complete, Pelizzo and Staphenurst decided to focus only on the 49 countries for which complete information was available.

For the purposes of this presentation I have added additional information to the 49-country dataset used by Pelizzo and Staphenurst. Specifically I added information concerning the level of socio-economic development (several indicators) and the level of honesty/corruption as measured by Transparency International. The results of my analyses are presented in the following figures:

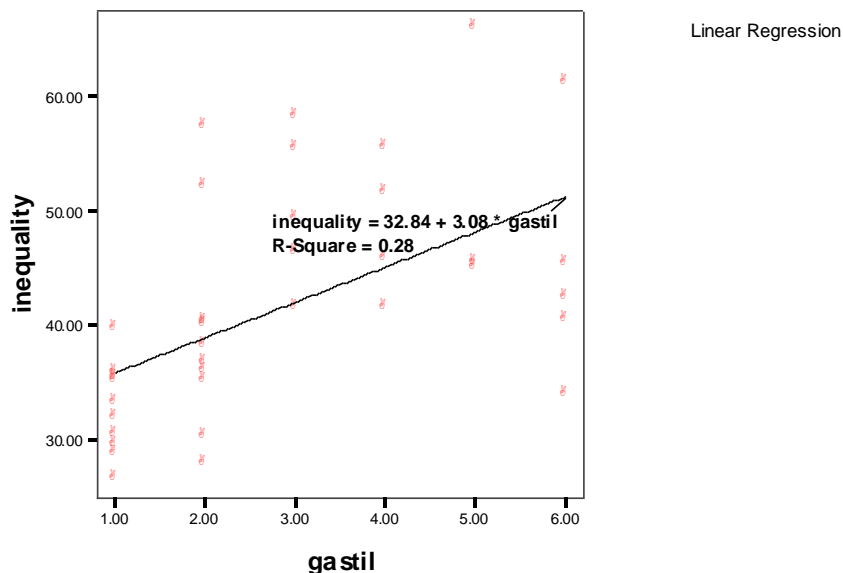




Linear Regression



Linear Regression

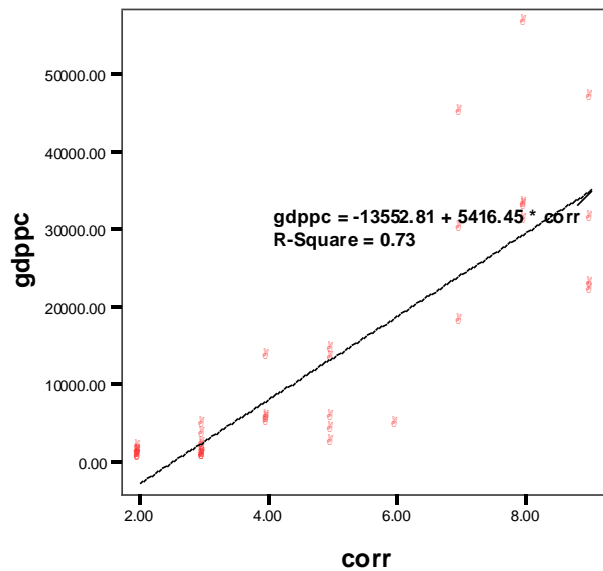


Democracy is measured on the basis of the Gastil index. Countries that score between 1 and 3 are liberal democratic, countries that score between 3.5 and 5 are (formally) democratic, and countries that score 5.5 points or more are non-democratic.

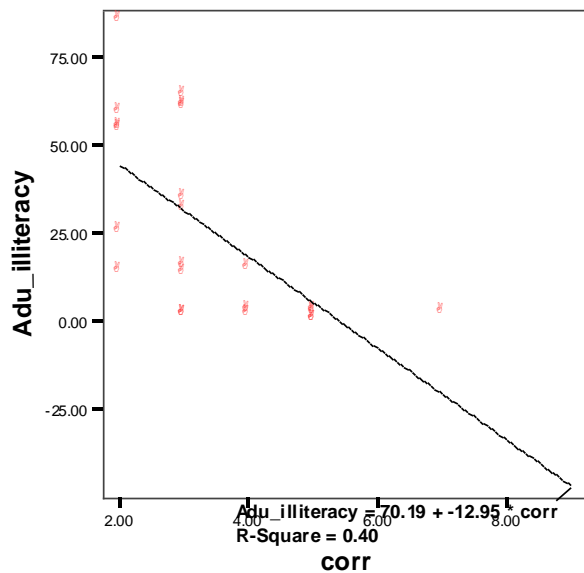
The results of the data analysis show a coherent picture. No matter how you measure socio-economic development (gdp per capita, adult illiteracy, inequality, life expectancy), more democratic countries are socio-economically more developed than non-democratic countries.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This point has extensively been debated in the political science literature. Political scientists have always acknowledged that democratic nations were more developed than non-democratic ones. However, it has long been debated whether the correlation between democracy and development means that economic development creates the conditions, as modernization theory postulates, for democratic transitions or whether democratic transitions occur for a variety of reasons but democracy survives and democratic consolidation occurs only in developed countries as was originally suggested by Lipset. In fact, while Lipset is credited (Przeworski and Limongi, 1997) for having suggested that economic development is responsible for both democratic transitions and democratic consolidation, in his seminal he explicitly addressed the relationship between development and democratic consolidation and not the relationship between development and democratic transitions. Lipset in fact noted that “the more well-to-do a nation, the greater the chances that it will sustain democracy” (1959:75). Lipset’s work was criticized by Macridis (1968) because it was mostly correlational. Lipset only found that a relations or a correlation between democracy and development but, as Macridis pointed out, “at the end of this excellent study, the reader is not sure whether open democratic societies are affluent because they are open and democratic or whether is the other way around” (Macridis, 1968:86). More recent studies have attempted not only to detect correlation between democracy and development but also to assess whether democracy was causing development or whether and if so to what extent development was promoting democracy. Empirical analyses conducted, with regard to the latter point, by Przeworski, Alvarez, Limongi and Cheibub (2000) reveal that development is responsible for democratic consolidation but not for democratic transitions. More recently Epstein, Bates, Goldstone, Kristensen and O’Halloran (2006) have shows that when democracy is operationalized as a trichotomous variable, it is possible to detect not only a positive impact

If we take a look at this second set of figures, we detect a second and more interesting pattern.

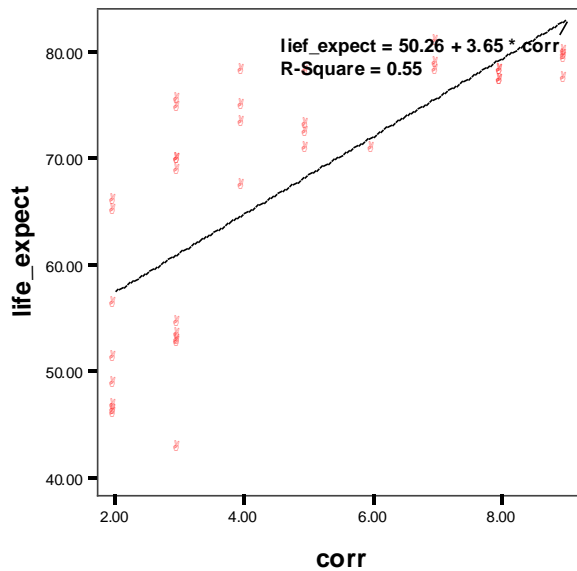


Linear Regression

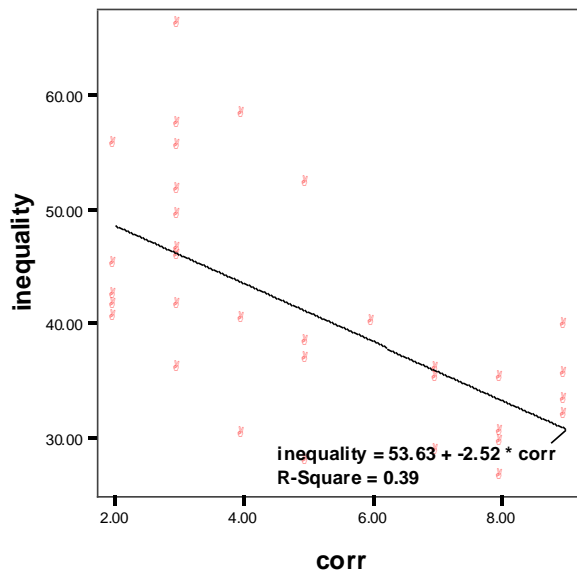


Linear Regression

of development on democratic consolidation but also a positive impact of development on democratic transitions.



Linear Regression



Linear Regression

This second sets of figures shows the relationship between development and a crude measure of good governance—corruption. The measure of corruption used by Transparency international is a 10-point scale where a score of 10 indicates perfect honesty and 1 indicates absolute corruption.

The results of our data analysis show a consistent picture: countries with higher levels of honesty (and lower levels of corruption) are socio-economically more developed.

But let's take a closer look at the results of the analysis. In each of the graphs, we provide evidence concerning the R-squared. This statistics indicates, roughly speaking, the strength of the relationship between the variables under study. Various levels of democracy in our sample explain about 39% of the variation in the GDP per capita in our sample, 25% of the variance of adult illiteracy, 28% in the variation of inequality and 56% of the variance in life expectancy. Various levels of good governance explain more: almost 73% in the variance of GDP per capita, 40% of variance in illiteracy, 39 % in the variance of inequality and 55% in life expectancy.

These results have a clear meaning: democracy is good for development, but by itself is not enough. In order to promote development, democracy is not enough. To promote development you need democracy with good governance, a democratic regime which is not only representative, but also responsive and accountable.

Table 1. Correlations. Democracy, Good governance and development indicators

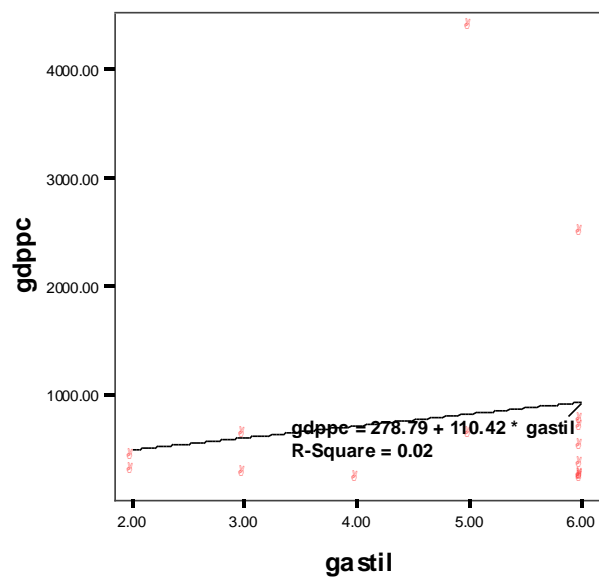
	gdppc	Illiteracy	Life expectancy	Infant mortality	Inequality
Gastil	-.621** (.000)	.495** (.000)	-.745** (.000)	.124 (.446)	.534** (.001)
Corruption	.857** (.000)	-.630** (.001)	.744** (.000)	-.079 (.663)	-.625 (.000)

The results of correlation analysis sustain this claim. Democracy is strongly correlated with very indicator of development, but the relationship between good governance on the one hand and the various indicators of development on the other hand is even stronger.

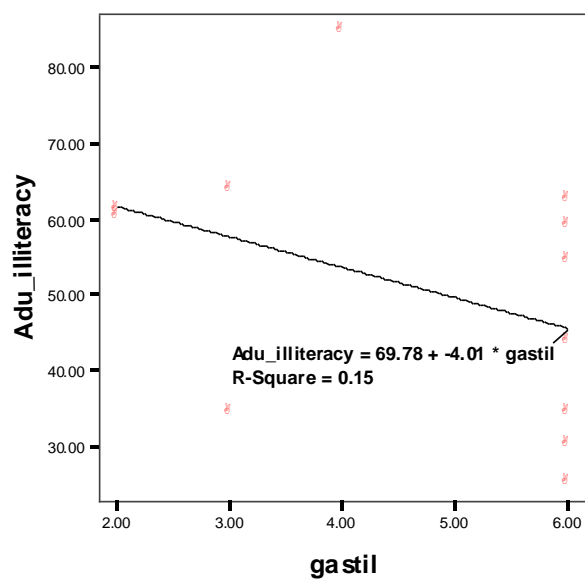
## Part Two. Democracy, Development and Good Governance in Africa

If instead of looking at the relationship between democracy, good governance and development in the world, one looks at their relationship in Africa, one finds that democracy and good governance both have a positive impact on development, that development is generally more sensitive to good governance than to democracy, and that the relationship between democracy, good governance and development in Africa is not as strong as their relationship at the global level. See figures below.

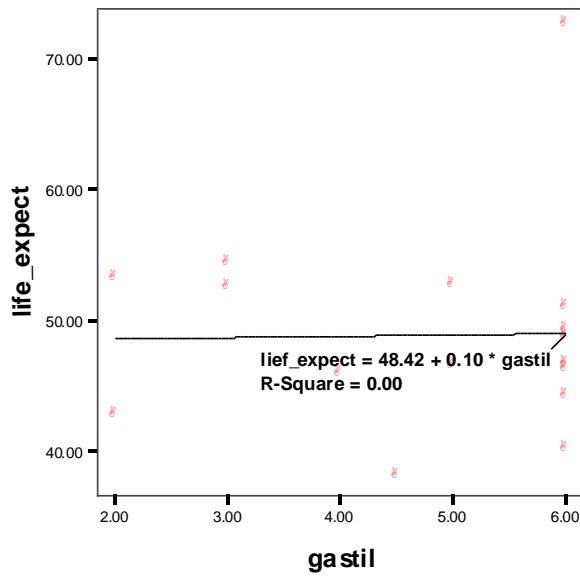




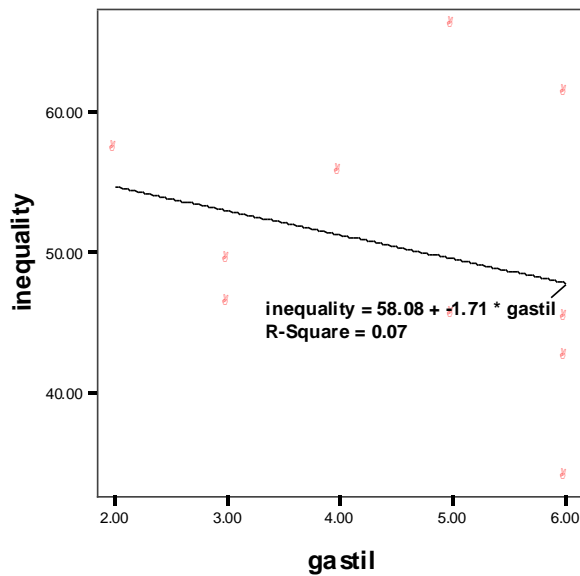
Linear Regression



Linear Regression

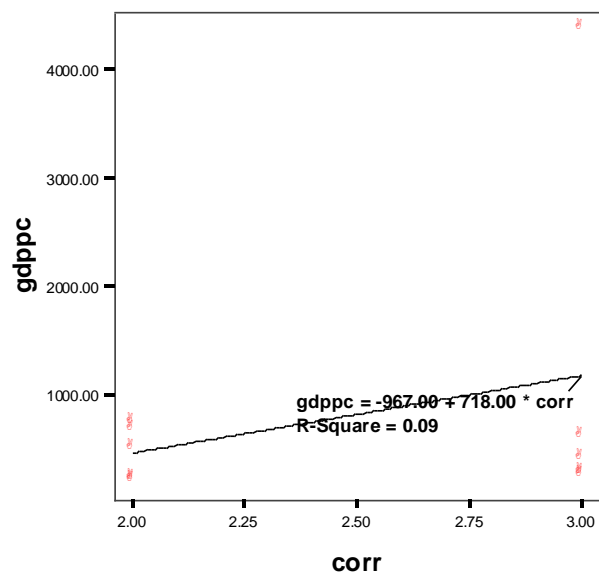


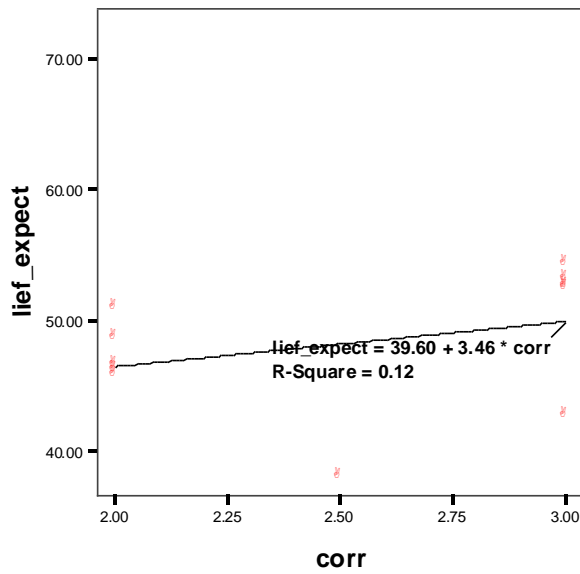
Linear Regression



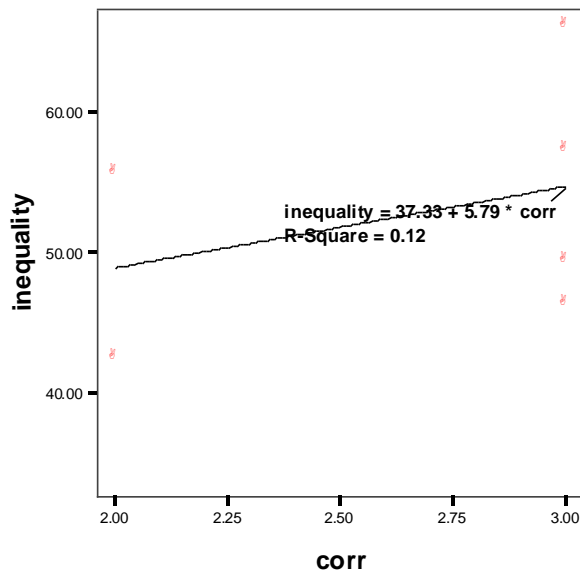
Linear Regression

The scatterplots reveal that while higher levels of democracy are generally associated with higher levels of socioeconomic development, the relationship between democracy on the one hand and the development indicators is not a particularly strong one.





Linear Regression



Linear Regression

Various levels of democracy in our sample explain about 2% of the variation in the GDP per capita in our sample, 15% of the variance of adult illiteracy, and 7% of the variance in life expectancy. Various levels of good governance explain more: almost 9%

in the variance of GDP per capita, 12 % in the variance of inequality and 12% in the variance of life expectancy.<sup>2</sup>

These results sustain the claim that good governance is more important than democracy in promoting development, though the relationship between these variable is not as strong as the relationship that we detected at the global level. The big question is: how do you make democratic regimes responsive and accountable?

### Part Three. Parliament and the promotion of good governance

#### *Legislative Oversight*

The answer to this question is: by promoting control. And control can be promoted through proper institutional and constitutional design. In order to combat corruption and to promote good governance, the parliament needs to be strengthened. Specifically, it is necessary to strengthen the parliament's ability to oversee effectively the government and, as we will argue later on, to control the behavior of its members.

The parliament should be given proper oversight tools to scrutinize the actions of the government both *ex ante* and *ex post*. *Ex ante* oversight refers to all the actions the parliaments (its members, its committees) can take to see whether and to what extent the government plans are actually needed, useful viable, efficient, effective, economic and so on. *Ex post* oversight refers to all the actions that a parliament can take to check whether and to what extent the government is implementing its policies, plans and programs as they had been approved by the Parliament.

Previous studies (Pelizzo and Stapenhurst, 2004a; 2004b) have revealed that parliaments in parliamentary regimes are generally better equipped than parliaments in either presidential and semi-presidential system to perform their oversight functions. Parliaments in parliamentary systems have generally a larger number of oversight tools at their disposal than their counterparts in both presidential and semi-presidential regimes.

Furthermore, previous studies also revealed that –at least with regard to the legislative oversight of the budget – there is a major difference between the role that parliaments play in parliamentary systems and the role that they play in either presidential or semi-presidential systems. Parliaments in presidential systems play a more active role (are more active *ex ante*) and contribute to a greater extent to the drafting of the budget than parliaments in parliamentary regimes. By contrast parliaments in

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<sup>2</sup> These findings are not surprising if one considers that African countries are perceived to be plagued by very high levels of corruption. Every year, Transparency International administers a survey to assess the perceived level of corruption in a country. In 2006 respondents were asked to assess the level of corruption of 163 countries. Thirty one of the bottom half countries were African. Algeria, Madagascar and Mauritania were ranked as the 84<sup>th</sup> most honest country in the survey (which means that 89 countries were perceived to have lower corruption), Gabon was in the 90<sup>th</sup> position, Eritrea and Tanzania were in 93<sup>rd</sup> position, Mali and Mozambique were tied in 99<sup>th</sup> position, Zambia was 111<sup>th</sup>, Gambia and Benin were in the 121<sup>st</sup> position, Rwanda, Swaziland, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Togo and Zimbabwe were ranked in the 130<sup>th</sup> position, Cameroun and Niger were in 138<sup>th</sup> position, Angola, Congo, Kenya, Nigeria and Sierra Leone were placed in the 142<sup>nd</sup> position, Ivory Coast was 151<sup>st</sup>, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan, were 156<sup>th</sup>, while Guinea was 160<sup>th</sup>. Only 11 African countries were in the upper half: Botswana was 37<sup>th</sup>, Mauritius was 42<sup>nd</sup>, South Africa and Tunisia were 51<sup>st</sup>, Namibia was 55<sup>th</sup>, Seychelles was 63, Ghana and Senegal were in 70<sup>th</sup> position and Burkina Faso, Lesotho and Morocco were in 79<sup>th</sup> place. Data can be found at: [http://www.transparency.org/policy\\_research/surveys\\_indices/cpi/2006](http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2006).

parliamentary regimes are more reactive, they react to the actions of the executive, but they have a greater ability to oversee the implementation of the budget than their presidential counterparts.

In order to perform their oversight function, parliaments can use a variety of tools: committee hearings, hearing in plenary sessions of the parliament, the creation of commissions of inquiry, questions, urgent questions, written questions, questions to be answered in the committees, interpellations, urgent interpellations, the ombudsman, auditors general, and the public account committees. Interestingly public accounts committees (PACs) were once a peculiarity of parliamentary systems modeled after Westminster but they have recently been spreading to countries that were never part of the Commonwealth. The reason is that PACs have proved to be extremely useful in overseeing the government expenditures and promoting good governance.

The importance of providing the parliament with a proper set of oversight tools should not be overlooked. Increasing a parliament's oversight potential promotes democracy and promotes good governance.

The probability that a middle income country is formally democratic increases as the number of oversight tools at the disposal of parliaments increases. In fact, there is a 95% probability that a middle income country with seven tools is formally democratic.

**Table 2. Number of Oversight Tools and the probability that a country is formally democratic**

If in a middle income country the number of oversight tools is	The probability that a country is formally democratic is:
0	.01
1	.03
2	.10
3	.26
4	.54
5	.79
6	.93
7	.98

Source: Pelizzo and Staphenurst, 2006a.

Furthermore as the number of oversight tools increases, the probability that a country is liberal democratic also increases. In fact, there is 73% probability that a middle income country is liberal democratic when its parliament has seven oversight tools at its disposal a liberal democratic.

**Table 3. Number of Oversight Tools and the probability that a country is liberal democratic**

If in a middle income country the number of oversight tools is	The probability that a country is liberal-democratic is:
0	.06
1	.09
2	.15
3	.24
4	.35
5	.48
6	.61
7	.73

Source: Pelizzo and Staphenurst, 2006a.

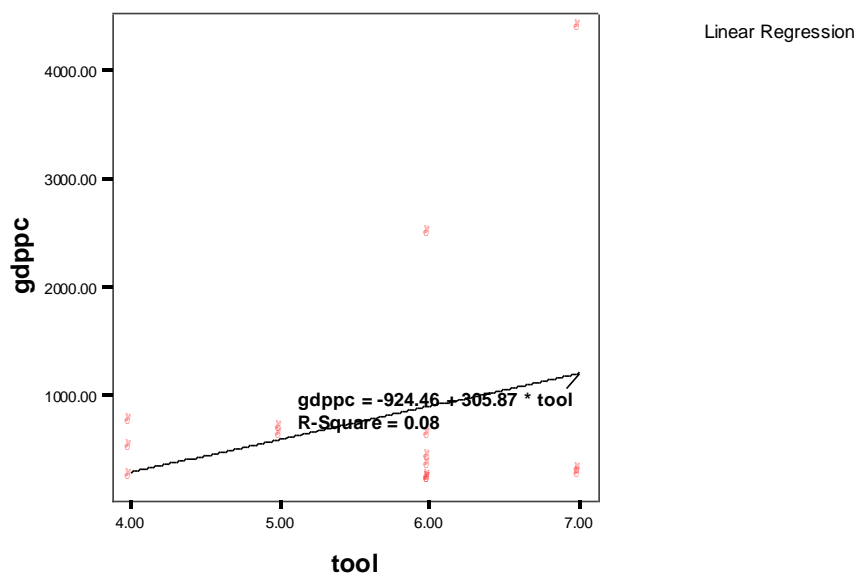
The quality of democracy improves as the number of oversight tools at the disposal of a parliament increases. And more importantly, the level of honesty perceived in the country increases as the number of oversight tools increases.

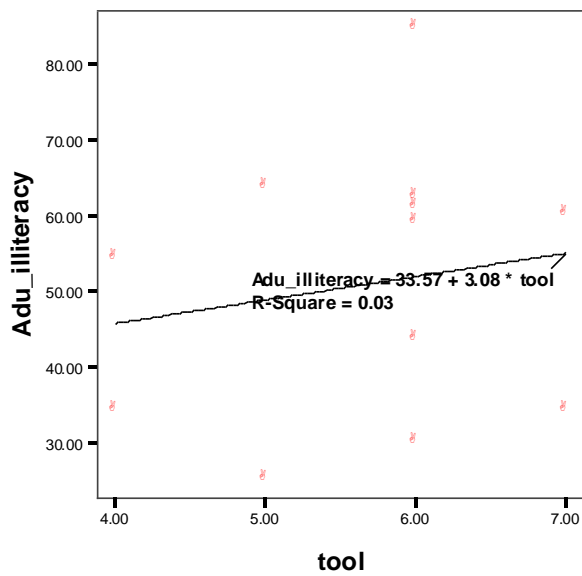
Table 4. Correlations, Democracy, Good Governance and Oversight Tools

	Corruption	Gastil	Oversight tools
Corruption	1	-.810 (.000)	.458** (.003)
Gastil	-.810 (.000)	1	-.503** (.000)
Oversight Tools	.458** (.003)	-.503** (.000)	1

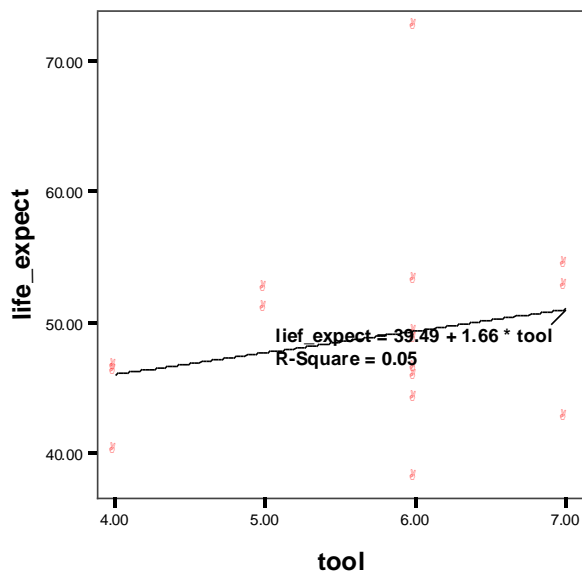
To sum up: The quality of democracy and the level of honesty are both very strongly and very significantly related to the number of oversight tools. Therefore, increasing a parliament's oversight potential is good for democracy, is good for governance, and in the end it is good for development.

To further test whether the parliament's oversight potential, that is its ability to oversee the government actions, contributes to promoting democracy, good governance and, ultimately development, we ran some scatterplots to assess the impact of the oversight tools on various measures of development in Africa.



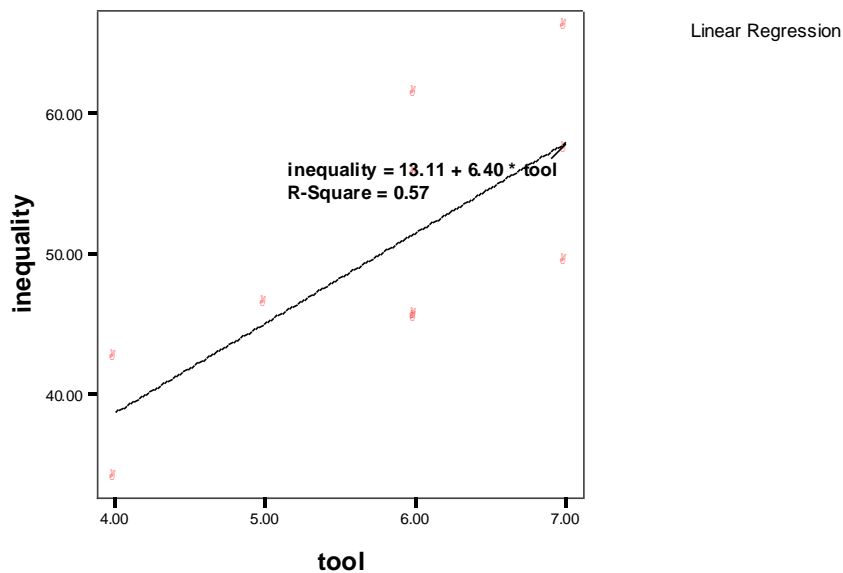


Linear Regression



Linear Regression





The presence of oversight tools explains respectively \*%, 3%, 5% and 57% of the variance in GDP per capita, adult illiteracy, life expectancy and inequality. This means that in African countries the availability of oversight tools is more important than the country's level of democracy in promoting GDP per capita or life expectancy, it is a better predictor of adult illiteracy than good governance, and it is a better predictor of both democracy and good governance in promoting social equality.

The analysis of African data sustain the claim that strengthening parliaments' oversight capacity is good for three different reasons. Oversight is good because it promotes African democracy (which in is good for development), is good for good governance (which is also good for development) and it contributes to promoting development in way that are not accounted for by either democracy or good governance.

Table 5. Correlations, Democracy, Good Governance and Oversight Tools

	Corruption	Gastil	Oversight tools
Corruption	1	-.804 (.003)	.634* (.036)
Gastil	-.804 (.003)	1	.481 (.059)
Oversight Tools	.634* (.036)	-.481 (.059)	1

## *Ethics Reforms and Codes of Conduct*

What we have said so far is very important. Democracy, good governance and parliaments' oversight potential are all good for development, development is a legitimizing factor for any political regime (Lipset, 1959), legitimacy of the political system prevents the breakdown of the constitutional order and contributes to political stability. Hence, all the good things seem to go together.

However, one should not forget that the argument that we have presented so far (oversight is good for democracy with good governance; and parliaments' oversight potential should be expanded) is based on a major assumption, namely that the executive branch of government is responsible for all the problems, while parliaments are virtuous institutions and should be empowered to control the governments and oversee their activities.

In some countries, however, this is not the case. According to the *2006 Report of the Global Corruption Barometer*, Parties, which are the most important actors in the parliamentary arena, are regarded as single most corrupt institutions in South Africa, as the second most corrupt institution in Gabon, Kenya and Nigeria, as the third most corrupt institution in Cameroun and Congo, and the fifth more corrupt institution in Morocco. Parliaments themselves are regarded as very corrupt institutions. Parliament is considered the second most corrupt institution in South Africa, the third in Kenya, the Fourth in Cameroun and Nigeria, and the fifth in Congo, Gabon and Morocco.

In countries where legislatures are significantly more corrupt than governments it is actually necessary to adopt some institutional mechanisms to reduce/constrain the extent to which the parliament and parliamentarians are involved in illicit or unethical activities.

The basic step that legislature can take to improve the ethical standards and the behavior of their members is to establish the so called ethics regimes. Ethics regimes can be established by enacting several reforms and by introducing several institutional mechanisms and devices (Pelizzo and Staphenurst, 2006b).

The main elements of ethics regimes are a) Ethics codes or codes of ethics; b) Codes of conduct; c) ethics committees and d) Disclosure requirements. Each of these solutions will be discussed in the course of this presentation.

Codes of ethics, that were originally developed in the private sector to preserve the reputation of various companies, are a statement of general principles that guide an organization. They are aspirational rather than prescriptive, and they are general and do not provide concrete guidelines as to what represents proper or improper conduct. For example, at the beginning of the Code of Conduct adopted by the House of Commons, the documents states some general principles: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. Codes of ethics set, in a very loose sense, the standard of behavior for the members of an organization as well as the standard by which an organization wants to be judged.

Codes of Conduct are adopted and institutionalized for the same reasons why code of ethics are adopted. They are adopted to perform both an internal and an external functions. Codes of conduct perform an internal function in that they are institutionalized to improve the conduct of the members that the code is expected to regulate. These codes also perform an external function as they signal to society that a given organization is committed to behaving in an ethical manner. In this respect, we can say that codes of

ethics and codes of conduct have the same purpose and perform very similar, if not identical, functions.

However, there are major differences between codes of ethics on the one hand and codes of conduct on the other hand. Unlike ethics codes, codes of conduct are prescriptive in nature. They provide very clear, very specific and very concrete guidelines. They state what forms of behavior are acceptable and what forms of behavior are instead inappropriate and should be avoided. There is an additional difference between ethics codes and codes of conduct: codes of conduct generally establish some sanctions for the violations of the dispositions of the code itself.<sup>3</sup>

In some instances, parliaments have created specific committees (Ethics committees) to advise members pertaining their conduct and the proper interpretation of the code; ensure the proper enforcement of the dispositions of the code; administer the sanctions for the violations of the code.

The establishment of ethics regimes often requires the adoption of disclosure rules. In order to ensure members' proper conduct and to prevent possible conflicts of interests, members must disclose their interests. Disclosure of interests can take two forms: the registration of interests; and the declaration of interests.

At the beginning of the legislative term, parliamentarians may be required to register their professional, economic and financial interests. In addition to registering his or her interest a member of parliament may have also to declare his or her interest when his or her interest may be perceived to be somewhat related to the issues debated in either a committee or the assembly.

We can now answer our question, namely what can the parliament do to promote good governance? The parliament can take two steps. It can expand the number of oversight tools at its disposal, use them wisely and use them effectively. If MPs ask too many irrelevant question, they provide the government with justification for eventually dismissing questions altogether.

Second, the parliament can take some steps to improve its own ethical standards. Specifically parliaments can adopt codes of ethics, codes of conduct, some disclosure rules, and they can also establish ethics committees to implement all these ethics reforms.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In 2007 Transparency International (TI) released The Rapport Final of the a survey entitled "*Enquete Nationale 2006 Aupres des Entreprises sur la Corruption Au Cameroon*" that had been conducted in collaboration with the Centre des Recherche et Etudes en Economie et Sondage (CRETES). The study indicated that parties and parliament were regarded as respectively the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> most corrupted institution out of the 20 institutions listed. More interestingly, when asked what factors were responsible for corruption, respondents reported that corruption was due to many factors, the five most important of which were: a) absence of sanctions; b) the fact that the government was not doing much to fight corruption; c) private desire to become richer; d) lack of transparency; and e) low salary. The adoption of a code of conduct can do very little to improve the salary conditions of parliamentarians and government officials or to eliminate people desire to become rich. Yet, codes of conduct by specifying which forms of behaviour are appropriate and which forms of behaviour are instead inappropriate contribute to promoting transparency. They also represent a concrete attempt (by the parliament, the government) to fight corruption and they do establish a system of sanctions whose absence was lamented by the respondents. Hence, the adoption of properly drafted codes of conduct addresses three of the top five causes of corruption listed in the survey analysis conducted in Cameroon. The study by TI and CRETES is at: [http://www.transparency.org/policy\\_research/surveys\\_indices/africa\\_middle\\_east](http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/africa_middle_east)

<sup>4</sup> The Global Corruption Barometer revealed that corruption in Africa affects not only parties and legislatures, but also the military (Congo), the legal system and the judiciary (Senegal), and the police

So, if you were interested in enacting some ethics reforms, how should you proceed? This is what we will discuss in the next and conclusive section.<sup>5</sup>

#### Guidelines for reformers (as a way of conclusion)

If you are caught between in the dilemma of passing a useless reform or failing in passing reforms because they were too incisive, always choose the second option. Do not pass useless reforms. They will not produce any positive outcome, they will not curb corruption, they will not eliminate misconduct, they will not help you restore citizens' trust in the legislature and worse they will make people lose faith not only in the institution but also in what institutions can do to fix the existing problems.

Be ready and be willing to make concessions as long, these concessions do not threaten the core of the reformist process.

In your attempt to enact ethics reforms, try to generate some support in the population. Even in imperfectly democratic societies, the people are sovereign. If the reformist process is massively supported by the population, it would be much harder for institutional conservatives and dishonest politicians to oppose the adoption of ethics reforms. If necessary, be ready to mobilize the supporters of the reformist process.

In your attempt to convince your fellow parliamentarians of the importance of ethics reforms, play on their loyalty/commitment to the institution and explain to them how ethics reforms are crucial in promoting and securing the integrity, the credibility, the prestige and the social standing of the parliament.

In your attempt to implement ethics reforms, always choose the path of least resistance. Do something that will not generate too much open opposition, and take further steps at a later stage.

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(Cameroon, Gabon, Morocco and Nigeria). Hence, proper codes of conduct should be adopted and enacted by all the major institutions which have been plagued or are believed to be plagued by corruption.

<sup>5</sup> These guidelines can be useful not only to parliamentarians who are trying to pass some legislative ethics reforms but also to all those who want to improve the ethics standards of what are now discredited and little trusted institutions.

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