

The Political Situation, Trends and Geopolitical Implications of Sub-Saharan and North African Countries: Comparative Study

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Abstract

Political instability appears to be one of the most important obstacles to economic development and has become endemic in several African countries. Lack of political stability in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and the North African countries, the existence of a number of socio-political, economic, religious and cultural factors that are likely to provoke the economy of the continent had been a headline for long. This paper organized chronologically, beginning with the reign of civilization, continues to the means of political instability and concludes with a different perspective of fundamental aspects of African countries. By seeking the truth from facts, this paper contributes to the gap of knowledge for the African nation and the foreign countries about the political condition, trends and economic diversification of Africa. This paper also investigates few issues including the possibilities of Africa's political turbulence and provides an overview of the major considerations associated with SSA and North African situations, contemplating whether SSA replicates the North African political chaos and discusses thoroughly Africa's pressing political governance issues, including the power thirstiness, leadership institution and the action of African Union (AU). The AU has improved its fragile reputation somewhat in recent years, but the challenges that Africa faces are still huge.

Keywords

Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), North African Countries, Arab Spring, Military Coup, Political Instability, MENA

1. Introduction

This paper has a compile of information about the whole African countries and

the Arab World's internal and external situations, more especially the sub-Saharan and North African countries. It explores different issues of the sub-Saharan, Middle East and North African (MENA) countries including the "Arab Spring" social development and economic growth, poor governance, civilizations, religious movements, traditional governance, the impact of financial crisis, political reform, geopolitical impacts, and others.

Civilization: the sum of all the achievements of mankind, including material civilization, institutional civilization, and spiritual civilization. Different scholars described different things about the origin of the world civilization. To date, there are many contradictions about the chronological comings and historical foundation of civilization as there are many monstrous falsifications about it. In the history of humanity, the existence of monstrous falsification by the modern historians is tremendous (Cook, 1989: p. 43). Several historical records show that the introduction of African civilization begins in the pre-colonization period (Connah, 2001; Fyle, 1999; Jackson, Clarke, & Rashidi, 2001), some scholars claim the origin of African civilization is in Ethiopia (Phillipson, 2012), and others insist in Egypt (Fletcher, 2016). A book entitled, *Wonderful Ethiopians of the Ancient Cushite Empire* by Drusilla Dunjee Houston approved that, the history of African civilization began in ancient Ethiopia and she wrote that:

The history of the Cushite Ethiopians down through the ages is one of the most thrilling as well as tragic of all time's age-old stories. It is almost incredible that its rich treasure for developing our understanding has so long remained veiled. The Ethiopian is a great race, probably the oldest. It is a race that does not die out under adversity (Houston, 1926: p. 9-10).

She added "Ethiopia was the source of all that Egypt knew and transmitted to Greece and Rome. We are accustomed to thinking of Ethiopia as a restricted country in Africa, but this was not true" (Houston, 1926: p. 18). Before the introduction of foreign civilization into Africa, the African traditional civilization continued to develop and gradually formed a unified openness and closeness, material and spiritual, and holistic and individual unity; the traditional religion used as a link to the unity of sensibility and reason for civilization development. However, since the introduction of Christianity in Africa, African civilization has embarked on a path of development.

On the other hand, the book called *The African origin of civilization: Myth or reality* written by Cheikh Anta Diop and edited by Mercer Cook in 1989 explicitly stated that:

According to the unanimous testimony of the Ancients, first, the Ethiopians and then the Egyptians created and raised to an extraordinary stage of development, all the elements of civilization, while other peoples especially the Eurasians, were still deep in barbarism (Cook, 1989: p. 230).

Unfortunately, it is unnecessary to talk about every detail of civilization here-as the title of this paper limits us, however, we argue that civilization is the sum of all the achievements of mankind. Its scholars' literature explores that

Africa is the source of civilization, the cradle of mankind (Brunet, 2010), the very richly endowed with natural resources, and yet Africa is the poorest continent and paradox of plenty, an example of poor governance and plagued with authoritarian regime, civil conflicts and human rights violation (Arthur, 2014; Grant, Compaoré, Mitchell, & Ingulstad, 2015; Hardy, 2011), not to mention the Arab Spring wave also homogenizing to the North African countries. Generally speaking, Africa pronounced as the failed continent (Leigh, 2013; Lloyd, 2010; Yates, 2012).¹ Such argument raises a set of questions: Why African nation still left at the bottom of world society, precisely what happened? When will Africa's issue drop off from the world's agenda as the recession bites? What is the significance of the organization called the African Union (AU)?

On 9 July 2002, in South Africa/Durban, the organization changed its brand name from the Organization of African Union (OAU) into the African Union (AU) (Martin, 2013; Poku, Renwick, & Porto, 2007; Tawfik, 2016; Turner, 2007; Vines, 2013), and then two years later established the Peace and Security Council (PSC), and the significance of forming the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AUPSC) is to the resolution, management, and prevention of conflicts in Africa and it gives an advanced warning and immediate response for the prevention of crisis and conflict situations. As several scholars mentioned, the AU in collaboration with the regional economic communities established the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) (Poku et al., 2007). The role of APSA is to promote peace, to prevent and resolve the conflict and to assure the stability of the continent. In this case, Erastus Mwencha, the Deputy Chairperson of the AU Commission argued that Africa has made a great progress in the promotion of peace, stability, and security in the continent (Vines, 2013: p. 90). There were many times that the AU recognized—Peace and Security for Africa, as the theme of the year.² The AU hopes to promote a peaceful settlement of internal conflicts and crises in the entire African territories and create a favorable environment for economic development but the results were far below expectations. Not only the original crisis, the conflict has not been eased, it was approaching the end of an incident in 2010 in Tunisia which triggered a national riot (Jebnoun, 2014). The “Arab World” through a chain reaction, brought a direct result of political turmoil in North African countries, followed by a vulnerably delicate situation for the regions' leaders, for instance, the Tunisian President Ben Ali a fugitive, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak was forced to resign (Jebnoun, 2014; Joffé, 2011; Joya, 2011; Tawfik, 2016), and the Libyan revolutionary

¹(Ayangafac, Bulcha, & Bekele, 2016: p. 51) notes that “This phenomenon, popularly known as the resource curse or paradox of plenty, is used to describe and narrate the development path of many African countries rich in natural resources but poor in terms of development outcomes.”

²The retreat discussions about the revolutions that occurred in North Africa since the beginning of 2011 hosted in Egypt. The discussion brought together a number of delegates, international peace movements and actors which involved in peace-making in the continent so as to contribute towards preventing and lastingly resolve the crises, in addition to promoting stronger managing and political governance for peace and security.

leader Muammar Gaddafi's death fate (Brahimi, 2011; Hellyer, 2011).

On the other hand, in SSA the situation in Sudan was also worrying South Sudan, located in the North-South disputed areas of Abyei armed conflict and caused hundreds of casualties, the referendum has just settled from January 9–15, 2011 for the South Sudan Independence (Seidel & Sureau, 2015; South Sudan 2012; South Sudan, 2013). Also the Ethiopian political situation in the East Africa has started turmoil since 2015 in different regions of the country (Ethiopia, 2016a). Multiple anti-government protests pop up in Amhara, Oromia, and Ogaden regions, and during the protest against the regime more than 500 people have been killed including the peaceful protesters (Ethiopia, 2016b). As of October 10, 2016, the Al Jazeera listed on the website that the Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn a day before on the state television pronounce that “A state of emergency has been declared because the situation posed a threat to the people of the country”, and the prime minister again confirmed that this state of emergency will last for “six months”.

Not to mention the country is currently under Incident Command Post (ICP). However, according to the opposition parties and rights groups the reality of the declaration of a state of emergency—is because of the violent anti-government protests (Ethiopia, 2016a; Ethiopia, 2016b). Following this declaration of state of emergency, Siraj Fergessa, the Ethiopia's minister of defense and head of the Command Post, set up the new measures and under these new measures: internet has been blocked, prohibited to use social media, freedom of press seized, prohibited to watch and listen to satellite television and radios, diplomats are not allowed to travel 40 kilometers outside the capital, Addis Ababa without official permission, and others. Accordingly, those who break the state of emergency rule risks jail for three to five years. Conversely, the US embassy in the capital has disclosed that the decree severely affects their working activities including other foreign diplomats and restricts the ability to assist the US citizens.³

Hypothetically, Africa's political situation even after a decade people may still be a “bystander” attitude to be judged calmly. Africa will remain a corrupt nation until the end of the time, as corrupted leaders continue to emerge into power every day through crooked means. On top of this, there will not be change if the current government officials are equally corrupted and follow the same pace and ways of thinking as the past governments used.

2. The Possibilities of Local Turbulences

The turmoil in North Africa lasted after several years are not only because of the direct impact of the Middle East and Arab Spring movements, but also the in-

³As of October 21, 2016, the Africa news listed on its website that among the restrictions under the curfew, foreign diplomats have to avoid travelling longer than 40 kilometers from the capital for the sake of their own safety. However, the US diplomats including others have objurgated the government's decision to impose the state of emergency and the decree severely affects the work of the embassy.

<http://www.africanews.com/2016/10/21/ethiopia-state-of-emergency-affecting-work-of-us-embassy/>

(Last checked: 22 October 2016).

ternal conflicts. These conflicts were alarming the possibility of local turbulence and instability to SSA countries and other parts of the continent in different ways:

First, the political, economic and social problems that caused unrest in North Africa also present in many SSA countries at varying degree. The unfair distribution of social wealth, the polarization between the rich and the poor, public officials abuse of power, corruption, mismanagement of resources, demographic rejuvenation, young adult's high unemployment rate, contradiction-prone period, the impact of the global financial crisis (Allen & Giovannetti, 2011; Anyanwu, 2011; Leigh, 2013; Seck & Gaye, 2014), late globalization and the role of new media are among the potential issues of SSA countries. Furthermore, on the negative impact of socioeconomic status, the problems facing North African countries also exist in SSA only in some ways. For instance, unemployment and inflation in many of SSA countries are comparable to those of North Africa countries, while the economic inequality, poverty rate, population growth are much higher than North African countries. In the economic globalization and international financial crisis, the background of the superposition of ordinary people on the prospects of life disappointment will easily transform into political anger.

Second, in recent years SSA countries, although the generally stable political situation, but the local situation is not calm, the situation in some countries even very fragile, more prone to sudden events, "further complicated by civil wars in Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Somalia" (Musila & Ligaga, 2016: p. 171). The protracted civil war in Somalia which lasted nearly 20 years is still on the rise (Linke & Raleigh, 2011; Menkhaus, 2014; Salih & Wohlgemuth, 1994), with no signs of loosening, the repeated postponement of the Guinea-Bissau conflict (Rudebeck, 1998), the election crisis in Côte d'Ivoire has intensified, not only in ending the eight-year political crisis but in the chaos of "one country, two systems" and provoking a civil war (Côte d'Ivoire, 2011), the South Sudan referendum on the separation from the Republic of Sudan is also facing a number of difficult issues, such as border demarcation, nationality ownership, security issues, as well as oil income distribution (Johnson, 2012; South Sudan-Sudan, 2012) and Ethiopia's politics, which remains under authoritarian rule (Aalen & Tronvoll, 2009), often marked by crackdowns on the press, several civilian deaths in Ethiopia 2005 election (Stremlau, 2011: p. 716-717) are among others. In addition, Yemane Negish and Costantinos Berhe, made a presentation at the ninth International Conference on African Development held at Addis Ababa University on May 28, 2016, the presentation title was *Ethiopia between Election Events: The Possibility of U-Turn into Authoritarianism*, it generally describes about the 2005 and 2010 elections, the issues of opposition parties, democratic challenges and election crisis. The authors noted that Ethiopia has joined electoral authoritarianism camp. Prof. Gudian, a politician and the leader of the Oromo Federalist Congress, also shares the same argument (Gudina, 2011).

Third, the North African state of affairs motivated a number of SSA countries for violence against own governance. Some of the causes of incidents are anti-government sympathy, planned conspiracy action to pour the government, encourage people through the internet for the “street revolution”. For instance, a Tunisian street vendor named Mohamed Bouazizi on 17 December 2010 he set himself on fire in front of the local municipality in response to the local police officer humiliation (Dalacoura, 2012; Jebnoun, 2014; Zeraoui, 2012), harassment and mistreatment, police would confiscate his fruits and vegetables.⁴ A month later, as of January 22, 2011, the *Al-Arabiya News* listed on its website, a man named Yacoub Ould Dahoud, Mauritanian businessman who emulated Tunisian vendor and set himself on fire in front of the presidential palace to protest against the government’s injustice.

An Algerian man named Mohsen Bouterfif, self-immolation after he doused himself in fuel set on fire at the government building in the same year; self-immolations have become a regular scene in the Arab World (Jebnoun, 2014; Zeraoui, 2012). Consequently, on February 23, 2011 demonstrations were held in major Cameroon cities demanding the resignation of President Paul Biya; without delay in Zimbabwe more than 40 teachers, students, trade unionists, and anti-government officials have been charged with treason for attending the meeting, watching Egyptian and Tunisian uprising videos. At that period the underground activists, teachers and students convened in the lecture hall at the meeting to discuss how the Arab world revolution might impact the situation in Zimbabwe. “The Revolt in Egypt and Tunisia: What can be learnt by Zimbabwe and Africa” was the theme of the seminar, and some opposition parties were plotting to overthrow President Robert Mugabe.⁵ Likewise, Angola’s anti-government group on Facebook called on people to hold mass protests in the capital city, Luanda’s Independence Square on 6 March to overthrow the current regime. Swaziland and Zambia in April, activists have also encouraged people to follow Egyptians’ example, a street revolution to overthrow the current regime. Furthermore, some western Medias also added fuel to the flames. In general, as the above phenomenon indicates the North African turmoil was the precursor of the spread of SSA, and even at that time it was predicted that South Africa, Mozambique, and other countries have been on the brink of protest.

Fourth, most SSA countries have problems in their own political development. Democratic politics is still limited or stranded in the institutional ar-

⁴As of January 20, 2011, the Al Jazeera listed on its website about Mohammed Bouazizi, a Tunisian street vendor that the policewoman harassment finally became physical, publically humiliated Bouazizi and slapped him and forced him to the ground, took away his produce and scale. Bouazizi went to the local municipality building and torched himself on fire in protest against the police harassment. <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2011/01/2011116842518839.html> (Last checked: 28 October 2016).

⁵As of September 03, 2011, the HUFF Post listed on its website which entitled “Zimbabwe May Emulate Tunisia, Egypt, Libya ...” authored by an associate professor Clarence Lusane that the protests that have shaken autocrats in MENA might bring an end to President Mugabe. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/clarence-lusane/zimbabwe-may-emulate-tuni_b_833746.html (Last checked: 28 October 2016).

rangements, but not yet fully realized that democracy is the development of the conditions, the expected goal to promote the social and economic development of the driving force (de Haan & Sturm, 2003; Yacouba & Emmanuel, 2016). The process of democratization in SSA countries is a reverse move trend, as reflected in the fact that in some of the African countries, the democratic elections under the multi-party system have led to the election of a new authoritarianism, while at the same time being shielded from domestic and international public opinion. Whereas, the inheritance of political power in several SSA countries shows the tendency of the family rule while in other countries their political governance has adopted a strong political chain reaction or military coup and set off another authoritarian rule.

Among the 16 SSA country leaders listed below in **Table 1**, the duration of leadership of individuals or families have an average of more than 40 years of

Table 1. Summary of the situation of some of the leaders of SSA countries.

Country	Head of state	Age	The time of administration and way of taking office	Period of administration
Togo	Faure Gnassingbe	50	Inherited power from his father. In 2005 became president. His father Gnassingbé Eyadéma from 1967 to 2005 in power	His father ruled 44 years, personally ruled 11 years so far
Gabon	Ali Bongo Ondimba	57	Inherited power from his father. In October 2009 became president. His father Omar Bongo from 1967 to 2009 in power	His father ruled 44 years, personally ruled 7 years so far
Swaziland	Mswati III (King)	48	Inherited power from his father. 1982 succession to the throne, in 1986 the pro-government; Father Sobuza II reigned from 1921 to 1982	His father ruled 90 years, personally ruled 34 years so far
Djibouti	Ismail Omar Guelleh	69	Since 1999, the 2010 parliament passed a constitutional amendment, the abolition of the number of re-presidential restrictions. His uncle Hassan Gouled Aptidon from 1977 to 1999 in power	His father ruled 14 years, personally ruled 17 years so far
Equatorial Guinea	Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo	74	Military strongman, from August 1979 military coup took office, re-elected four presidential terms	He ruled 37 years so far
Angola	Jose Eduardo dos Santos	74	In 1979 came to power and re-elected so far	He ruled 37 years so far
Zimbabwe	Robert Mugabe	92	In 1980 came to power and re-elected so far	He ruled 36 years so far
Cameroon	Paul Biya	83	In November 1982 came to power and re-elected so far	He ruled 34 years so far
Republic of the Congo	Denis Sassou Nguesso	73	Military origin, 1979 to 1992 in power and again in 1997 ruling so far	Altogether he ruled 32 years so far
Uganda	Yoweri Museveni	72	Military origin, came to power in January 1986 military coup, ruling so far	He ruled 30 years so far
Burkina Faso	Blaise Compaore	65	Military origin, came to power in 1987 military coup, October 2014 fled to the Ivory Coast	He ruled 27 years
Sudan	Omar al-Bashir	72	Military origin, came to power in 1989 military coup, ruling so far	He ruled 27 years so far
Chad	Idriss DebyItno	64	Military origin, came to power in 1990 military coup, ruling so far	He ruled 26 years so far
Ethiopia	Melese Zenawi	57	Military coup, in 1991 armed seizure of power	He ruled 21 years till he died but his political party ruled 25 years so far
Eritrea	Isaias Afwerki	70	In 1993 came to power, re-elected so far	He ruled 23 years so far
Gambia	Yahya Jammeh	51	Military strongman came to power in 1994 military coup, re-elected so far	He ruled 22 years so far

Source: Authors' investigation according to the relevant information as of late 2016.

governance of which the longest is 90 years, King of Swaziland (Masuku & Limb, 2016), and the shortest is 22 years, President of Gambia. There are four country leaders (Togo, Gabon, Swaziland, and Djibouti) who inherit power from their parents', seven military leaders came to power from the military coup and nine leaders over the age of 60 in SSA, of which the oldest is Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe, 92 years old. In contrast, Faure Gnassingbe is the youngest Togo's president, 50 years old which inherited the power from his family. Angola's President Jose Eduardo dos Santos is Africa's second-longest serving head of state next to Equatorial Guinea's President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo. According to the book entitled *Tyrants: The world's 20 worst living dictators*, by David Wallechinsky mentioned that King of Swaziland Mswati III, President of Equatorial Guinea Teodoro Obiang, President of Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe, and President of Cameroon Paul Biya are the worst living dictators in the continent (Wallechinsky, 2006). All these shows that the SSA countries democratic politics are not yet well matured, and Africa needs strong, moral, responsible and selfless leadership.

3. Will Sub-Saharan Africa Replicate the North African Mess?

On the above parts we tried to investigate the possibilities of political instability in some parts of SSA countries, however, the possibility does not mean that necessarily inevitable into political instability. To put it in another way, in SSA where there is political turmoil, there is a difference in nature from the North African countries, and moreover, there is no divergence across borders, which could cover the entire sub-regions. This perspective is based primarily on the following judgments and facts:

3.1. Differences in National Conditions

When people talk about an event triggers a chain reaction often called "domino effect" to describe an observed series of actual collisions. However, the domino effect is conditional, it requires related dominoes in an interconnected system, and its size, thickness, texture, and weight also has the corresponding requirements. In the era of globalization and "new media", the interrelationships and interactions between countries are more intimate than ever before. In this sense, SSA countries including other parts of African countries are not insulated from any kind of domino effect, and any country would undoubtedly be more or less affected by the other country's situation.

However, due to the geographical barrier of the Sahara Desert, in the history of SSA and North Africa relationships, the economic and trade ties and cultural exchanges are not close, and nowadays the relationship has been enhanced but still have limitations. More importantly, sub-Saharan and North African countries in the political system, party organization, political culture, political governance, political participation, and in the economic, national and social structure, religious beliefs, traditional culture, etc. have large differences.

3.2. Differences in Cultural Permeability

Why the political chaos rapidly spread in the Arab world, such as in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Jordan, Syria, Iraq and Morocco (Alsoudi, 2015; Joffé, 2015), including other North African countries (Joffé, 2011; Zeraoui, 2012)? On top of the political, economic and social reasons, the homogeneity or isomorphism of the national structure, religious beliefs, cultural traditions and traditional governance are also the important reasons for the rapid spreading of political chaos. These feature makes the internal events of many countries in the Middle East have the characteristics of cross-border (transnational) mutual penetration and linked by strong bonds (Dalacoura, 2012). Arab nationalism, pan-Islamism, Sunni Islamist, Islamic fundamentalism, the Muslim Brotherhood and other ideological trends have a supranational identity, and in the modern history of the Middle East those transnational connections have set off a large-scale regional movement (Brown, 1964).

On the contrary, SSA countries' are much more complex to form transnational movements because, the social structures of the vast majority of countries are reflected in the complex ethnic or multi-ethnic state. Not only ethnic structures (tribes) are heterogeneity or fragmentary but also its religious beliefs are diverse. In fact, the heterogeneity of social structure of SSA countries is directly related to the diversity of traditional forms of religious belief. The reason for this is that the traditional religions of SSA are essentially indigenous even within a country, their geographical or local characteristics are apparent, both their ancestor worship and worshipping god are based on the actual or hypothetical relationship of the same family spirit, the so-called gods do not accept the worship of aliens, so that the people do not worship the gods of different ethnic groups. Accordingly, not only the North African political situation produce a "butterfly effect" in SSA, but emergency chaos within SSA countries do not have the same spillover or proliferation power as the Arab states in the Middle East does. Thus, causing a chain reaction or domino effect within SSA countries will barely happen (Dalacoura, 2012; Joffé, 2011; Zeraoui, 2012). Accordingly, the SSA countries culture is not permeable for the political chaos as the Arab culture.

3.3. Differences in the Cause and Nature of Political Unrest

It is true that the situation in SSA has been uneven in recent years and sadly some countries are still in civil unrest and armed conflicts exist, but this would not be confused that the causes of problems of SSA countries differ in nature from those of the North African countries. As far as we can notice the factor of political instability or even violent armed conflict in SSA was not a bottom-up rebellion against civilians or street revolution. Moreover, the countries that are experiencing severe turbulence are the country which has strong opposition forces. A couple of years back some of the countries mentioned as an example of severe turbulence are Zimbabwe, Madagascar, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Somalia and Sudan (Chigora, 2010).

On the other hand, in the context of political developments, the political turmoil or armed conflict in the SSA countries political situation has been shown a tendency towards relaxation. In the case of Guinea's electoral crisis, Cellou Dalein Diallo accepted the Supreme Court's on 3 December 2010 that Alpha Conte won the election. Correspondingly, the political confrontation between the two camps in Côte d'Ivoire and the use of force against the arrest of former president Laurent Gbagbo somehow showed relaxation (Côte d'Ivoire, 2011). Despite the fact that the road to national reconciliation is still uncertain (Bellamy & Williams, 2011); the resolution of the political crisis in Madagascar also revealed the dawn of March in 2011, most political parties and political groups accepted the Southern African Development Community (SADC) proposed to resolve the crisis program. Although Zimbabwe's coalition government has contradictory, the two factions were hoping to solve the dispute through the political process. Angola has 27 years of painful memory of the civil war (1975-2002), the national reconstruction in the ascendant and people do not want to repeat the same mistakes (Pearce, 2012). In general, the cause or nature of political unrest in SSA countries is distinct comparing that of North African countries.

3.4. The National Economy Gradually out of the Haze of the Global Financial Crisis

In the first ten years of the twenty-first century, Africa's economy has experienced a period of rapid development. Over the past five years, the SSA's economic growth rate has been higher than the global economic growth in all year, and in most years higher than in North Africa (Ahmed, Cruz, Go, Maliszewska, & Osorio-Rodarte, 2016). In addition, in 2009 due to the international financial crisis economic growth 2.6 percent has slowed down, but the remaining years were higher than 5 percent (IMF, 2016). The SSA's economic growth rate was reached 4.5 percent and 4 percent in 2014 and 2015 respectively, and expected to expand 2 percent in 2016 and 3.6 percent in 2017 (IMF, 2016).

According to the IMF regional economic outlook of SSA in April 2016, the decrement of the economic growth in the region is just because it has been hit by multiple domestic challenges and low prices of raw materials (IMF, 2016). The report also pointed out that the good performance of the SSA's economy benefited from the stable growth of countries before the crisis, the increase in foreign exchange reserves, fiscal revenues, foreign direct investment inflows and the gradual reduction of debt. While the rapid development of the African market, the African Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) will also help to boost the region's commodity exports. For these reason, the national economy of the SSA countries was gradually out of the haze of the global financial crisis. In contrast, several literature highlighted North Africa has little economic problems, however, the revolutions and insurgencies were not happened because of economic issues (Joffé, 2011; Pfeifer, 1999; Riordan et al., 1998). Not to mention, the political

turmoil has economic consequence, such as a dramatic escalation in food and energy cost, together with external problems, such as a global spike in oil price and some others, which add fuel to the situation (Barugahara, 2015; Joffé, 2011; Shafik, 1998).⁶ These and some other differences indicate that the SSA does not have the conditions to replicate the North African mess.

4. Will Sub-Saharan Africa Remain Politically Stable?

The impact of political uncertainty and turbulence in the MENA countries were very complex and caused by different factors, Arab Spring was among the reasons. In fact, the political uncertainty and turbulence was indeed the outcome of the combination of internal and external factors. On the internal factors, social, economic and political issues but comparatively speaking the turmoil in MENA was not primarily an economic issue rather a political issue associated with it (Chau, Deesomsak, & Wang, 2014; Omgba, 2009). Correspondingly, Collier and Hoeffler observed that “Potentially, any increase in conflict risk may be due to rebel responses to such poor governance rather than to financial opportunities” (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004: p. 567). In fact, in the post-political chaos, North Africa’s economic growth rate in all years was higher than the expected global economic growth (Ncube, Anyanwu, & Hausken, 2014). On the external factors foreign media and hegemony played a decisive role at some point. Furthermore, there are several differences between the SSA and North African countries: such as:

4.1. Political Change Is More Painstaking Than the North African Countries

The political turmoil in the North African political situation happens mainly because its political democratization process has contained counterfeit. Those who understand the political development in Africa knows that the wave of political democratization that flourished on the continent at the end of the Cold War originated in Tunisia. According to Jean Ping, Chairperson, AU Commission on September 2011 articulated that “this year’s retreat comes amidst unprecedented political developments that took place in North Africa, first in Tunisia, then in Egypt and, finally, in Libya” (Kodjo, 2011: p. 1). Scholars argued that after the incident of a young vendor set himself on fire the entire region triggered the revolutionary wave, “firstly in Tunisia and then elsewhere in the Arab world. These widespread protests and demands for reforms (the so-called “Arab Spring” movements) have led to varying degrees of political changes” (Chau et al., 2014: p. 2). This kind of incident continued in North Africa and at least six Algerians self-immolated in Algeria, the demands of political reform with widespread protests continued emerging. However, in order to avoid the

⁶See, Focus on Economics by DrMartin RaschenNo. 95 June 9, 2015, KFW Research. https://www.kfw.de/PDF/Download-Center/Konzernthemen/Research/PDF-Dokumente-Fokus-Volkswirtschaft/Fokus-englische-Dateien/Fokus-Nr.-95-Juni-2015_EN.pdf (Last checked: 18 September 2016).

national regime falling into the hands of the Islamic radical forces or Islamic militants and in fear of changing the nature of secular states, with the intervention of foreign countries election were held. The Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in favor of the establishment of the Islamic state has won succession in the local and national legislative elections in June 1990, which was the first multi-party elections in Algeria since independence 1962 (Brumberg, 1991; Iratni & Tahi, 1991; Zeraoui, 2012).

Foreign countries which advocated sovereignty over the people made the choice of maintaining the status quo based on the consideration of national interests and seeking hegemony to fulfil their own interests. It was also in the foreign country's acquiescence, a strong military intervention to prevent "Iraq array" through the elected way and to control the state power. Due to the precedent of Algeria, the political reform across the MENA was not carried out in a thorough way and can be said it has been "fruitless". This situation is buried in the future hidden danger for the North African countries common political turmoil, to make up the "political debts". Indeed, the unresolved social issues do not die out; they pop up every now and then.

In contrast, SSA countries although their socio-economic level lagged behind North African countries, at least in terms of political development and political reform they are far more thoroughly than North African countries. Although SSA countries have paid a heavy price for this, after experiencing the throes of political change in the first few years, and the resulting political instability, social unrest and economic recession with the establishment of institutional arrangements for democratic politics, especially with the establishment and consolidation of multi-party democracies within the nation, the political situation in SSA countries has generally been gradually improving. The tendency of political democratization in the political system, including the political power, the electoral system and other positive changes which brought to SSA countries was apparent; and from the trend point of view its positive effect will be further demonstrated.

4.2. Identify the Institutional Construction of Democratic Politics Is Better Than the North African Countries

Although Tunisia, Egypt and other North African countries have parliament, political parties and election system, but in the authoritarian countries these kinds of system are useless and can be evaded easily, and they have slight supervisions and controls for the system. For instance, Libya banned political party activities, the design of the political system itself is to exclude political competition and political participation (Bellamy & Williams, 2011; Brahimi, 2011). As a result, in the North African countries in addition to the ruling party or ruling group, the power of other political forces, such as opposition parties or civil society are weak, as Arriola wrote "Not only are African governments generally weak, but the opportunity cost for joining a rebellion against them is relatively low" (Arriola, 2009: p. 1343). That is why the leaders of the North African coun-

tries can be elected with a high vote. For instance, the Tunisian President Ben Ali (being in the position for 23 years) was re-elected twice in 2004 and 2009 with 94.48 percent and 89.62 percent votes respectively (Zeraoui, 2012). Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in 2005 and 2010 re-elected with 88.6 percent and 81.0 percent votes respectively, and in May 2014 Egyptian presidential election an independent party Abdel Fattah el-Sisi won the election with 96.91 percent votes.

In contrast, the democratic systems of institutional construction situation in SSA countries are much better than North African countries. In SSA, the democratization of politics has characterized as a multi-party system and one-party will be elected. In terms of the establishment of the national political system in line with the principle of separation of powers, and checks and balances respectively set up the elected legislature, administrative bodies, and independent judiciary. At the same time, the establishment of national political activities related to the competitive party institutions and electoral systems, between the civil society and the state power, established a media to reflect and gather the interests of citizens, such as the mass media system, various Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and social interest groups (Shivute, 2008). Therefore, compared with the North African countries check and balance, the power of the opposition parties and strength of civil society, the mass media supervision mechanism of SSA countries is much more powerful. Identically, Shivute observed the SSA media freedom that “It is also to be noted that, in the area of media freedom, some SSA countries are performing better than others” (Shivute, 2008: p. 218).

4.3. The Political Legitimacy of the Regime Is More Broadly Based Than North Africa

The leaders of the North African countries have long been ruled and monopolized power, and the inheritance of power appears to be a hereditary tendency. From the seven North African countries three of them have the average leader in power for more than 31 years with an average age of more than 75 years old and stayed in longer political turmoil, which are Libya, Egypt, and Tunisia, and their respective leaders are: Muammar Gaddafi (69 years old) for 42 years in power, Hosni Mubarak (83 years old) ruled 30 years, both of them were interested in transferring the power to their own son (Brahimi, 2011; Joffé, 2011; Zeraoui, 2012), and Ben Ali (75 years old), being in power for 23 years also tried to amend the electoral law by seeking additional long-term ruling. Since the political legitimacy of the leaders of the North African countries mainly comes from the political power itself, it was easier to trigger the crisis of power inheritance or political legitimacy crisis (Jebnoun, 2014; Zeraoui, 2012).

In SSA, along with the strengthening of constitutional consciousness and the establishment of party politics and electoral system, the regime change in most countries tends to institutionalization and normalization. One of the positive changes in political development in SSA has been the widespread recognition of

political power through multi-party competition and popular elections, within the framework of constitutionalism in accordance with the principle of majority rule. At present, in the majority of SSA countries the constitution provides that the presidential term shall not exceed two terms, thus the system provides a legal basis for the political parties rotation. Almost all SSA countries now have legislative and presidential elections in the framework of democratic politics; many of them have completed the fourth or even a fifth round of national elections since 1990s. In addition, with the aid of institutional arrangements political democracy can basically guarantee that the political bodies can express their political and interest demands, simultaneously endorses the political participation of the citizen (Yacouba & Emmanuel, 2016). In accordance with the established political rules and orderly competition of the political parties, the foundation of the political legitimacy of SSA countries become expanded, so that the elected power of the ruling party become more stable relative to the North African countries.

4.4. Political Governance Is Generally Stronger Than North African Countries

Multi-party democracy in SSA countries generally established the process of democratization progressively from the institutional level to the value level. Democracy, legal system and the concept of human rights have infiltrated imperceptibly into the political and social life of the majority of SSA countries. In the multi-party democracy since freedom of the press is guaranteed by law the intensity of public opinion continues to strengthen, especially in view of the fact that the political parties have spurred the change of regime frequency, to speed up the frequency of political power, to promote the ruling party and its leaders pay attention to their own image and nation, and to consolidate the multi-party system.

Although there are tremendous long-term challenges in Africa, such as endemic corruption, terrified terrorism, persistent poverty, political uncertainty, epidemic diseases, HIV/AIDS, economical and environmental crisis, and some other similar problems, but in recent years the AU has improved its fragile reputation in collaboration with domestic and nationwide organizations. The AU has also creatively put forward and established the “reconciliation mechanism” to verify and evaluate the effectiveness of good governance in the member countries (Hilson & Maconachie, 2008). Although good governance and “mutual inspection” cover the entire African continent with the help of NGOs, in this regard SSA countries are more active than North African countries (Börzel & Hackenesch, 2013; Poku et al., 2007). For example, Burundi, Tanzania, and some other SSA countries are among the government of good governance. At present more than half of the 29 member states that have voluntarily joined the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) have completed the mutual inspections and assessments of the good governance and its outcomes and several are nearing completion of their first review (Poku et al., 2007; Shivute, 2008), which is

mainly in SSA countries.

[...] almost all sub-Saharan African countries are alive to their international obligation to promote the rule of law at home and abroad, and are prepared to work with international organisations and other countries towards attaining that goal.... the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) under the New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which is aimed at encouraging and assisting African states to institutionalise a culture of respect for democracy, human rights, the rule of law, social justice and economic development (Shivute, 2008: p. 217).

5. Conclusion

There are two regions in this world that conflict and political insecurity existed at the highest level, which are Africa and the Middle East. Based on the above analysis and comparative study of political situations in sub-Saharan and North African countries, we argue that SSA will not replicate the political chaos of North African countries. In the era of globalization and new media, the butterfly effect of the North African country's situation was artificially magnified. Additionally, its political situation was basically regional, local and its radiation area mainly concentrated in the Middle East countries and had little chance to cross the desert unfold to the SSA countries and caused the turmoil in the entire continental level. Apparently, the North African countries in religious beliefs, cultural traditions, especially political reform and political governance are related to the Middle East and Arab countries but different from the SSA countries.

Incidentally, in most of the African country's election, before the election, during the election, and after the election, sudden uncontrollable events are likely to happen. Sadly, certain African leaders are the longest ruling president in the world so far. Bad leadership has long been a brake on the political, economic, social and cultural development of certain countries in the continent. Meanwhile, poor African countries cannot invest health, infrastructure, institutions and others development sectors without adequate tax base for their nation—because the fundamental rule of the country's development is to keep your money within your racial group. However, certain African government officials' offshore accounts instead of using domestic banks. The reason behind this is to limit their privacy, to protect their assets, to dilute political risk and to diversify portfolio risk but to the contrary since the off shored money is illegally taken from the citizen for personal benefit the country's economy diminishes. Thus, money laundering and corruption by the African government officials, which divert the public funds from their planned allocations are the major problem that drags down African development far behind (Poku et al., 2007).

Although the article has a compile of information and contributes to the academia, researchers and scholars through historical records, archaeological discoveries and evidence of comparative religious, political and economical studies of these two giant subcontinents, it has also the deficiency on some aspects that

hinder the findings of the research, due to the scarcity of the data availability, time consuming findings, unwillingness of the delegated persons to give information about current situations of their countries, and some reasons this paper could not stretch as expected. Accordingly, the overall evaluations of the research were made with some recommendations. Nevertheless, we believe that the overall paper could serve as a road map for the African politics and civil society, and also useful for the starting point of the future research works.

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