

# AFRO BAROMETER

Afrobarometer Paper No. 29

## DEVELOPMENT AS FREEDOM: A VIRTUOUS CIRCLE?

By John Gay

**A comparative series of national public  
attitude surveys on democracy, markets  
and civil society in Africa.**



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John Gay retired in 2001 after 42 years in Africa, teaching and doing research primarily in Liberia and Lesotho but also in several other African nations. His most recent publications include novels on conflict of cultures in Liberia and a book-length report on poverty in Lesotho.

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## DEVELOPMENT AS FREEDOM: A VIRTUOUS CIRCLE?

The paper is based on Amartya Sen's seminal work *Development as Freedom*. Sen describes five requirements that should ideally work together in order to bring true development. I quote from his introduction:

Five distinct types of freedom, seen in an "instrumental" perspective, are particularly investigated in the empirical studies that follow. These include (1) *political freedoms*, (2) *economic facilities*, (3) *social opportunities*, (4) *transparency guarantees* and (5) *protective security*. Each of these distinct types of rights and opportunities helps to advance the general capability of a person. They may also serve to complement each other. Public policy to foster human capabilities and substantive freedoms in general can work through the promotion of these distinct but interrelated instrumental freedoms. In the chapters that follow, each of these different types of freedom - and the institutions involved - will be explored, and their interconnections discussed. There will be an opportunity also to investigate their respective roles in the promotion of overall freedoms of people to lead the kind of lives they have reason to value. In the view of "development as freedom," the instrumental freedoms link with each other and with the ends of enhancement of human freedom in general.

While development analysis must, on the one hand, be concerned with objectives and aims that make these instrumental freedoms consequentially important, it must also take note of the empirical linkages that tie the distinct types of freedom together, strengthening their joint importance. Indeed, these connections are central to a fuller understanding of the instrumental role of freedom. (Sen: 10)

In other words, the requirements for development can be described as an individual's ability to participate freely in the political process, the mechanisms and capacity to seek economic well-being, the networks and connections which make social integration possible, free access to reliable information sources, and structures which allow personal safety. Sen puts it well:

...enhancement of human freedom is both the main object and the primary means of development. The objective of development relates to the valuation of the actual freedoms enjoyed by the people involved. Individual capabilities crucially depend on, among other things, economic, social, and political arrangements. In making appropriate institutional arrangements, the instrumental roles of distinct types of freedom have to be considered, going well beyond the foundational importance of the overall freedom of individuals.

The instrumental roles of freedom include several distinct but interrelated components, such as economic facilities, political freedoms, social opportunities, transparency guarantees and protective security. These instrumental rights, opportunities and entitlements have strong interlinkages, which can go in different directions. The process of development is crucially influenced by these interconnections. Corresponding to multiple interconnected freedoms, there is a need to develop and support a plurality of institutions, including democratic systems, legal mechanisms, market structures, educational and health provisions, media and other communication facilities and so on. The institutions can incorporate private initiatives as well as public arrangements and also more mixed structures, such as nongovernmental organizations and cooperative entities.

The ends and means of development call for placing the perspective of freedom at the center of the stage. The people have to be seen, in this perspective, as being actively involved - given the opportunity - in shaping their own destiny, and not just as passive recipients of the fruits of cunning development programs. The state and the society have extensive roles in strengthening and safeguarding human capabilities. This is a supporting role, rather than one of ready-made delivery. The freedom-centered perspective on the ends and the means of development has some claim to our attention (Sen: 53).

The goals of this paper are, first to create an empirical measure which sums up Sen's freedoms, and second to analyse the relation between this measure and attitudes toward democracy. Sen's theories about freedoms suggest that, with these five support structures, people can achieve well-being. The empirical measure I will construct uses the Afrobarometer Survey, which gives insight into the underpinnings of democracy in selected African countries. The Afrobarometer includes many questions with political implications, some of which I will discuss in detail in this paper.<sup>1</sup>

The Afrobarometer research group, under the leadership of the Centre for Democratic Development in Ghana (CDD-Ghana), the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa), and Michigan State University (MSU) in the United States, interviewed 21,531 randomly selected adults in 12 African countries (Botswana, Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe) between 1999 and 2001. Questions included in the survey can be broadly characterised as either independent or dependent variables. In this paper, I seek to show the relation of dependent variables that measure attitudes and values about democracy to independent variables that reflect social, economic and political location.

Sen relates democracy to freedom, but does not explicitly deal with such technical questions as elections, political parties, administration, the judiciary, legislative processes or policy formation. Rather, his extended chapter on democracy (Sen: 146-149) considers political rights and participation, economic equality and growth, and the right to free speech and dissent. In this paper I wish to show how the practical issues of democracy in action, such as those investigated in the Afrobarometer survey, relate to the general theory of rights and freedoms as developed by Sen.

I have chosen 15 core independent variables to build the index. These were chosen from a narrow set of questions which state respondents' personal attributes and behavior, and which were asked in all or almost all of the 12 countries. The questions furthermore represent the issues that are central to Sen's theory. The analysis of attitudes toward democracy is based on a subset of 79 questions that can be characterized as dependent variables, which were included in most of the 12 country surveys as independent variables.<sup>2</sup>

### **Measuring Freedoms and Well-Being: The Sen Scale**

The purpose of this section is to find what internal order there is among the 15 core questions that I have identified as independent variables. My initial conjecture was that they would naturally sort themselves into groups related to the five freedoms (political, economic, social, information access, and security) that Sen identifies in his book

In order to test this, I conducted factor analysis on the 15 independent variables. Factor analysis examines the correlations among variables, and identifies which subsets of variables co-vary most closely. In fact, as I anticipated, the analysis does produce five factors that groups themselves as follows:

1. Have you worked for a political candidate?  
Have you attended an election rally?

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<sup>1</sup> Samples of the actual questionnaires can be obtained from the Afrobarometer website at [www.afrobarometer.org](http://www.afrobarometer.org).

<sup>2</sup>Survey instruments in the 12 countries were roughly comparable, but not identical, for the simple reason that collaboration between the different country teams was not firmly established until after some of the individual country surveys had been completed. This meant, for example, that in considering social opportunities I had to omit a question on strength of ties to personal identity groups, but could include a question on pride in national identity. In the end, my analysis is mostly limited to 10 countries: Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Unfortunately, the lack of data on several relevant questions required omitting Ghana and Uganda from the bulk of the analysis.



- Have you gotten together with others to raise an issue?
- Are you a member of a development group?
- 2. How often have you been without food?
- How often have you been without water?
- How often have you been without health care?
- What is your educational level?
- 3. How proud are you of your national citizenship?
- How proud are you of your group identity?
- 4. How interested are you in politics?
- How often do you discuss politics with friends?
- How often do you get news from the radio?
- 5. How is your personal safety compared with five years ago?
- How well is the government handling the matter of crime?

The structure matrix obtained from the factor analysis is shown in Table 1.

	1	2	3	4	5
worked for candidate	<b>.633</b>	-.032	-.014	-.262	.010
attended election rally	<b>.748</b>	-.061	-.065	-.303	.006
raised an issue	<b>.527</b>	-.052	.061	-.300	.016
member of development group	<b>.278</b>	-.091	-.109	-.067	.004
without food	-.111	<b>.644</b>	.016	-.137	-.091
without water	-.056	<b>.391</b>	-.076	.000	-.037
Without healthcare	-.139	<b>.620</b>	.105	-.113	-.042
education level	.115	<b>.284</b>	-.131	-.323	.133
proud of citizenship	.029	.004	.118	.016	<b>-.556</b>
proud to be in identity group	-.038	.110	.052	.030	<b>-.635</b>
interest in politics	.320	.040	.089	<b>-.716</b>	.038
discusses politics	.344	.031	.032	<b>-.749</b>	.025
radio news	.137	.226	-.082	<b>-.319</b>	.013
safety compared with 5 years ago	-.060	-.019	<b>.546</b>	-.005	-.086
government handling of crime	-.035	-.010	<b>.655</b>	-.029	-.113

*Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood. Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.*

The five factors that emerge from the analysis do not meet rigorous reliability standards, where reliability is a measure of the internal consistency and inter-correlation of the variables. I should thus perhaps not be impressed with the results of the factor analysis, but the remarkable similarity of the five factors to Sen's five freedoms leads me to choose to identify them with Sen's categories:

*Political Participation:* works for candidate, attends rally, raises issues and joins groups

*Economic Well-Being:* food, water, health and schooling

*Social Integration:* citizenship and identity group membership

*Information Access*: interest in and discussion of politics, and access to radio news  
*Personal Security*: improved personal safety and government protection from crime

I have standardized responses to each of these 15 questions on a 0-1 scale from least well-off to most well-off, and added the scores in each group to make a single score. I have then put the scores for each of the 5 groups on a 0-1 scale, and added the resulting numbers together to again produce a single score. These scores form a scale, which I call the Sen Scale.

I give an example of how these scores are developed. The political participation score is calculated as follows: responses on working for a candidate range from 0 to 4, meaning respectively “don’t do it,” “would if I had the chance,” “done once or twice,” “done a few times” and “done often.” Thus, in order to put the scores on a 0-1 scale, scores for individuals would be divided by 4, giving scores of 0.0, 0.25, 0.5, 0.75 and 1.0, respectively. The same recoding would apply to attending an election rally and raising an issue. Being a member of a development group may be answered either no or yes, so that valid responses now would be 0.0 and 1.0. To continue the example, a person who never worked for a candidate, attended a few election rallies, and only once raised an issue, but did belong to a community group would be given a score of  $0.0+0.75+0.25+1.0=2.0$ . Likewise a person who has worked a few times for a candidate, always attends election rallies, does not personally raise any issues, and belongs to a community group would have a score of  $0.75+1.0+0.0+1.0=2.75$ . The political participation factor is then converted to a 0 to 1 scale by again dividing by 4, giving scores of 0.5 and 0.69 respectively for these two individuals.

Each of the other four scores is constructed in the same way, so that the minimum score a person can get for each is 0.0 and the maximum is 1.0. Thus the total score can range between 0.0 and 5.0, by adding the political participation, economic well-being, social integration, information access and personal security scores.

I have labeled the resulting number the Sen Scale to acknowledge the author of the overall theory. The Sen Scale is in effect a measure of well-being. Those who are highest on the scale are politically active, economically well-off, socially well-connected, have access to information, and are personally secure. In contrast, those at the bottom are politically uninvolved, economically insecure, socially isolated, uninformed, and insecure. Those in between have varying combinations of these factors.

For convenience of analysis I have divided the Sen Scale into four quartiles, defining the bottom quarter as lowest, the next quarter as lower middle, the next quarter as upper middle, and the top quarter as highest. This will allow me to group the respondents into four categories, depending on their total scores.

### **The Sen Scale and Attitudes Toward Democracy**

The Sen Scale forms the basis for the next stage of my analysis, which analyzes the relationship between this scale and attitudes toward democracy among respondents. In this section I will demonstrate that there is in fact a close relation between the Sen Scale and favorable attitudes toward democracy.

In order to test the hypothesis that position on the Sen Scale closely correlates with attitudes toward democracy, I turn to the 79 selected questions that measure political attitudes. In some cases I use individual questions as the dependent variables, while in others I combine related questions that form valid scales. This analysis shows that those who have low scores on the Sen Scale tend to be the ones most likely to seek alternatives to democracy. If democracy is to survive, therefore, efforts should be concentrated on improving people’s well-being in the areas of political involvement, economic strength, social networks, information access and personal security. These contribute to what Sen would call “development,” which is intimately linked in a

virtuous circle with freedom. Democracy is not identical with freedom, but is perhaps the only political way we know of to achieve freedom.

What becomes immediately evident in this analysis is the high degree of correlation between the Sen Scale and the political variables, all in the direction predicted by Sen's theory. Specifically, 74 of the 79 variables correlate with the Sen Scale at better than the .000 level. The actual correlation coefficient is greater than 0.3 for 2 of the correlations, is between 0.2 and 0.3 for 15, is between 0.1 and 0.2 for 31, and is between 0.03 and 0.1 for the remaining 26. Whereas I would not normally be impressed by correlations below 0.1, the fact that 74 out of 79 of the results agree with what Sen's understanding of development would predict is impressive.

To repeat the earlier quotation from Sen: "Corresponding to multiple interconnected freedoms, there is a need to develop and support a plurality of institutions, including democratic systems, legal mechanisms, market structures, educational and health provisions, media and other communication facilities and so on." (Sen:53) This support can best be obtained from people who are secure enough in their own lives to work for the freedom of all. What emerges, therefore, is a mutually reinforcing process by which personal well-being supports the quest for democracy, which in turn leads back to development in the very spheres of life that allow democracy to grow.

Several of the political variables concern support for democracy. Respondents were asked if they always prefer democracy or whether another form of government might sometimes be better. It might be naively assumed that Africans, like people anywhere, would prefer to have more rather than less say in running the affairs of their governments. But some prefer the rule of the "big man" who can give them favors rather than the rule of a government selected by the majority of the people. Michael Bratton and Nicolas Van de Walle call this arrangement "neopatrimonial rule" (Bratton and Van de Walle, 1997: 61ff), while Mahmoud Mamdani speaks of "participation without representation" (Mamdani, 1996: 298), and Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz refer to "personalized and particularistic" power (Chabal and Daloz, 1999). Mamdani attempts to show that support for non-democratic paternalistic government comes mainly from rural areas.

The Afrobarometer data show, however, that political regime preferences arise from issues encapsulated in the Sen Scale. Mamdani is correct only to the extent that rural people tend to score slightly lower on the Sen Scale than urban people (though the difference is significant). In my view the underlying issue is not geographic location but the level of well-being. The correlation between the Sen Scale and level of support for democracy is highly significant at 0.18. Table 2 shows that higher scores on the Sen Scale correspond to higher level of support for democracy.

	lowest	lower middle	upper middle	highest	total
non-democratic rule may be better	38	28	22	16	26
democracy always best	62	72	78	84	74

The majority in all four quartiles support democracy over a non-democratic alternative, but support among the highest group is much stronger than among those at the bottom.

It is important to look closely at the implications of these results. The Sen Scale is a measure of overall well-being. People who rank low on such a scale may not be as willing to work for democracy as those higher on the scale. Moreover, the Sen Scale is built out of five separate factors. We find the same patterns in the relationship between support for democracy and each of these separate factors, though the contrast between top and bottom is less for each of the individual factors than for the combined Sen score. It is the combined score that makes the overall pattern most persuasive, consistent with Sen's assertion that the five factors are synergistic, and *together* focus energies on development for freedom.

Those who rank high on the political scale are persons who work for candidates, attend rallies, raise issues in public, and join development groups. Doing so presumably enhances their support for democracy, though the causal arrow may also run in the opposite direction, from support to participation. Failure to engage in such activities may incline people to consider alternatives to democratic governance. Seventy-seven percent of those in the top group on the political scale think democracy is always better than other forms of government, while only 69 percent of those in the bottom group hold this view.

Similarly, low access to food, water, health and education appears to weaken support for democracy with only 64 percent of those in the lowest group on the economic scale favoring democracy, compared to 79 percent in the top economic group. Lack of pride in citizenship and group identity leads to 60 percent support for democracy, while those with the strongest social ties have a 75 percent preference. Lack of interest in and discussion of politics, as well as low use of the radio, leads to a 63 percent level of support for democracy, while those who have access to information rate highest at 81 percent. Lastly, a feeling of insecurity and dissatisfaction with government handling of crime leads to a 65 percent level of democratic support, while the most secure favor democracy at the 81 percent level. Democracy, in short, appears to be the choice of the politically active, the economically well-off, those who are proud of their identity, those who are well-informed, and those who feel personally safe from crime and danger. Those at the poor end of all five scales are the ones most likely to turn to non-democratic alternatives.

In most cases, Afrobarometer surveys were conducted in countries that had recently undergone transitions to multiparty electoral democracy. Respondents were asked to rate the previous and present regimes on a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 representing the worst and 10 the best. A further indication of the support for democracy on the part of the well-off is their relatively high rating of the present regime and relatively low rating of the previous one. Those at the low end of the Sen Scale still favor the democratic regime, but by a much smaller margin than those at the high end.

Table 3 gives the mean rank on a scale of 0-10 of the previous government and the present government for the four Sen Scale groups.

	lowest	lower middle	upper middle	highest	total
Past (non-democratic) regime	4.2	3.5	3.2	2.9	3.5
Present (democratic) regime	5.6	6.5	6.9	7.3	6.6

The higher a person is on this scale of well-being in the countries included in this table (Lesotho, Mali, Malawi, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia), the more likely he or she is to see the new regime as a real improvement. Those at the bottom see democracy as a slight change for the better, but not to the same extent as those higher on the Sen Scale.

Further support for this finding is given by respondents' reactions to military, one-party and "strongman" presidential rule (whereby a president rules after abolishing parliament and elections). Table 4 shows that 23 percent of the lowest quartile are either neutral or would approve of rule by the army, but only 12 percent of the highest quartile take these positions.

	lowest	lower middle	upper middle	highest	total
disapprove strongly	50	59	66	71	62
disapprove	27	23	19	17	22
neutral	8	6	4	3	5
approve	9	7	6	5	7
approve strongly	6	5	4	4	5

Whereas half of the lowest group disapprove strongly of military rule, almost three-quarters of the highest quartile highly disapprove. Of course, additional factors such as national experience also affect reactions to military rule and other political attitudes. The highest levels of support for military rule are seen in Namibia and Mali, both of which have had relatively positive experiences with soldiers. The lowest scores for support of military government are in Tanzania and Zambia, which have never been ruled by soldiers.

Table 5 shows similarly that 33 percent of the lowest group are either neutral or would approve a one-party state, while just 23 percent of the highest group take these positions.

	lowest	lower middle	upper middle	highest	total
disapprove strongly	36	42	47	55	45
disapprove	31	30	27	23	28
neutral	10	6	5	3	6
approve	12	11	10	9	10
approve strongly	11	10	11	11	11

As in the previous table, only about one-third of the lowest quartile strongly disapprove of one-party rule, while more than half of the highest quartile feel the same. Uganda has the highest approval rating for one-party rule. Not far behind are Lesotho and Tanzania, both of which have experienced rule by strong political parties. Nigeria is least accepting of one-party rule, followed by Ghana and Zambia.

Table 6 shows a similar pattern, in that 25 percent of those in the bottom quartile either are neutral or would approve of strongman presidential rule, while only 15 percent of those in the top quartile would accept such a regime.

**Table 6: Approval of Rule by “Strongman” President, by Sen Scale Quartiles**  
(percentage of respondents)

	lowest	lower middle	upper middle	highest	total
disapprove strongly	43	50	56	63	53
disapprove	33	30	27	22	28
neutral	9	6	4	3	6
approve	10	9	7	7	8
approve strongly	6	6	6	5	6

Likewise, strong disapproval of strongman presidential rule ranges from 43 percent among the lowest quartile to 63 percent among the highest. Clearly, support for a democratic government, as opposed to military, one-party or strongman rule, increases with general well-being.

It is significant, however, that attitudes toward rule by experts or by traditional rulers show a much different pattern. There is no significant correlation between the Sen Scale and preferences about expert or traditional rule. The desire for technocratic rule is evident only among those high on the economic component of the Sen Scale, indicating that access to a good standard of living may motivate the desire for government by technocrats, while politics, group identity, information access and personal security do not.

The countries with the greatest interest in rule by experts are Nigeria, Tanzania, Mali and Ghana, while Zambia and Botswana are lowest. The only country with any real interest in traditional rule is Mali. Tanzania is at the bottom of the list.

People were asked about the extent of democracy in their country, as well as their own level of satisfaction with democracy as it is practised at home. Once again the Sen Scale proves a strong predictor of pro-democratic attitudes, as shown in Table 7.

**Table 7: Extent of Democracy, by Sen Scale Quartiles**  
(percentage of respondents)

	lowest	lower middle	upper middle	highest	total
Not a democracy	15	10	8	6	9
Democracy w/ major problems	35	35	32	26	32
Democracy w/ minor problems	30	32	35	38	34
Full democracy	21	23	25	30	25

Roughly half of those in the lowest quartile believe that their country is either not a democracy at all or is a democracy with major problems, while less than one-third of those in the high category are doubtful that their country is a democracy. It would appear that assessment of the quality of governance in a country depends on the individual's total capital, as composed of political participation, economic well-being, social status, information access and personal security. The relation between evaluations of the extent of democracy and the five component scales is not as strong as the relation with the overall Sen Scale, but the patterns are still similar. As before, what matters appears to be the combination of resources available to the respondent. Those

with less resources believe, as pointed out in Table 3, that democracy is no great improvement over non-democratic government, but they also appear to carry a vision of what a democracy should be by asserting the inadequacy of the present democratic regime.

Zimbabweans had the worst impression of the state of democracy in their country, on average almost a full level lower than those in any other country, while Batswana respondents had the best opinion of the extent of democracy in their country. The average evaluation in Botswana was half-way between having minor problems and being a full democracy. Average opinion in the other countries fell between having major and minor problems.

Table 8 gives a similar picture of respondents= satisfaction with the way democracy actually works in their country.

	lowest	lower middle	upper middle	highest	total
very dissatisfied	24	17	13	9	16
somewhat dissatisfied	23	20	17	12	12
somewhat satisfied	39	45	46	48	45
very satisfied	14	18	23	31	22

Almost half of those in the lowest quartile are dissatisfied with democracy as it is practised in their nation, while only one-fifth of the best off are dissatisfied. Clearly well-being as measured by Sen’s freedoms leads to satisfaction with the government. Once again, Zimbabwe is far below the other countries, with dissatisfaction with the government above 50 percent for all groups, from the poorest to the best-off. Nigeria, Botswana and Ghana top the list, but the other countries are not far behind.

Are people willing to act against anti-democratic abuses by their governments? The survey posed three hypothetical violations – shutting down newspapers, dismissing judges, and suspending both elections and the parliament – and asked how respondents would react to these actions by their government. These responses form a very reliable scale, with an alpha score of 0.81. These three variables have thus been combined into a single factor that measures willingness to defend democracy in the face of un-democratic actions by government. Table 9 reports the scores for supporting the government, doing nothing, and taking action.

	lowest	lower middle	upper middle	highest	total
support government	4	4	4	3	4
do nothing	56	50	46	39	48
do something	40	46	51	58	48

The lowest are the least willing to help out when democratic institutions are threatened, while those with substantial personal resources are more willing to work to defend a democratic system of government. The only deviation from this pattern among the five sub-scales is that those who feel personally insecure are more

likely to defend democracy than those who feel personally secure. Perhaps secure people feel they have nothing to lose by sitting on their hands when newspapers, judges and the electoral process are under attack.

Six questions concerned respondents' perceptions of the quality of democratic practice. We asked whether the following were better or worse than under the previous (in most cases un-democratic) government:

- Freedom of speech
- Freedom of association
- Freedom to vote as you choose
- Equal treatment of all citizens

We also asked how honest the last national elections had been, and whether the government represented the interests of all citizens, or of just one group.

These six variables form a scale with reliability coefficient (alpha) of 0.70, and thus a single factor measuring democratic practice can be formed by combining these variables. Table 10 shows the relation between the Sen Scale categories and this factor.

	lowest	lower middle	upper middle	highest	total
very poor	3	1	0	0	1
poor	20	15	12	8	14
fair	48	49	48	43	47
good	28	34	39	49	38

The least well-endowed respondents are the least impressed by the democratic practice in their country, with just over one-quarter thinking that democratic practice in their country is good. On the other hand, almost half of those in the top Sen Scale group believe that democracy in their country is being conducted well. Once again, Zimbabwe is at the bottom of the list and Botswana at the top.

Table 11 shows a very similar pattern when the performance of government officials is assessed by respondents in the different Sen Scale quartiles. This scale is composed from three variables, which assess the performance of the head of government, the respondent's member of parliament, and the respondent's local government representative. The three form a scale with reliability of 0.73.

	lowest	lower middle	upper middle	highest	total
strongly disapprove	17	11	8	6	10
disapprove	37	31	27	19	29
approve	38	47	48	49	46
strongly approve	9	11	16	26	16



The lower one falls on the Sen Scale, the more likely one is to feel that elected leaders are not doing their jobs correctly. More than half of the respondents in the lowest category disapprove of their representatives, compared to only one-quarter of those in the highest group. Namibia, Tanzania and Uganda have the highest ratings for the performance of the government officials, while Zimbabwe, as always, is at the bottom, far below the others.

Table 12 looks at the question of trust in public institutions. A scale was formed from six questions concerning trust in the president, the police, the courts, the army, the electoral commission and the government media. The scale is reliable at the 0.83 level.

	lowest	lower middle	upper middle	highest	total
not trusted at all	7	4	3	3	4
somewhat distrusted	34	30	25	17	26
somewhat trusted	44	47	48	46	46
trusted a lot	16	19	24	34	23

Similar to the pattern shown in Table 11, 41 percent of respondents in the bottom group of Table 12 do not trust public institutions, as opposed to only 20 percent of the top group. The same countries appear at the top, namely, Tanzania, Namibia and Botswana, with Zimbabwe at the bottom.

Table 13 considers the question of corruption. In this case the scale was created out of three variables that measure perceptions of corruption in the government, among elected officials, and among civil servants. The scale has a reliability coefficient of 0.71.

	lowest	lower middle	upper middle	highest	total
very common	23	17	14	13	17
fairly common	42	43	40	37	41
fairly rare	31	35	39	43	37
Very rare	5	5	7	8	6

Table 13 shows that 65 percent of the bottom group, but only 50 percent of the top group, think that corruption is common. Corruption is a serious problem in many African countries, and anger about corruption has been the putative reason for many military coups. Namibia, Lesotho and Botswana are seen as the least corrupt, while Zimbabwe is perceived as the most corrupt.

Respondents were also asked whether their constitution reflects the values and aspirations of all citizens. Table 14 explores how attitudes toward the national constitution relate to well-being. It might be expected that well-off people would also have the strongest level of agreement with their constitutions.

**Table 14: Agreement with the Constitution, by Sen Scale Quartiles**  
(percentage of respondents)

	lowest	lower middle	upper middle	highest	Total
strongly disagree	14	12	9	8	11
disagree	20	16	14	10	15
neutral	10	10	8	7	9
agree	40	41	42	40	41
strongly agree	16	21	26	36	25

Table 14 bears out this conjecture. Only 56 percent of the lowest group believe that their national constitution represents the values of all, while 76 percent of the highest group are happy with their constitution. The data show that the disadvantaged tend to look for alternatives to the status quo.

### Conclusion

Amartya Sen argues that development and freedom are intimately related. By freedom he means well-being in five categories: political participation, economic well-being, social integration, information access and personal security. I have developed quantitative definitions for each of these, and combined them into what I call the Sen Scale. This paper is an attempt to give empirical confirmation of Sen's thesis by showing that people who are well off are more likely to support democracy than those who are poor.

But the relation between development and freedom must not be interpreted as one of simple causality. There is a virtuous circle implied by the desire of the better-off respondents for a democratic society. They are well-off, which leads them to want a democratic society. Why is that? Surely the reason they want democracy is because the freedom which they experience in a democratic society gives rise to yet more development by enhancing the very political participation, economic assets, social networks, information access and personal security which make them like democracy in the first place.

The opposite of freedom, according to Sen's theory, is a low level of political activity, poor economic status, limited social interaction, lack of access to information, and personal insecurity. The respondents who fall into these social disabilities are statistically more likely than their better-off counterparts to hold the following views, according to the Afrobarometer survey.

- \$ Prefer a non-democratic government (Table 2)
- \$ Prefer the former, often non-democratic, regime (Table 3)
- \$ Look favorably on a military government (Table 4)
- \$ Approve a one-party state (Table 5)
- \$ Accept strongman presidential rule (Table 6)
- \$ Assess their nation as not democratic (Table 7)
- \$ Express dissatisfaction with democracy (Table 8)
- \$ Be unwilling to defend a threatened democracy (Table 9)
- \$ Give poor ratings for the practice of democracy (Table 10)
- \$ Disapprove of their leaders' performance (Table 11)
- \$ Distrust public institutions (Table 12)
- \$ Believe corruption is common (Table 13)

\$ Question the authority of the constitution (Table 14)

Dangers to government arise when the disaffected, who in this analysis include primarily those at the lower end of the Sen Scale, are roused to action. The findings listed above and documented in the tables show the difficulty of building democracy in countries where there is little opportunity for political participation, money and resources are inequitably distributed, social networks are limited, information flow is restricted, and insecurity is rampant.

Unfortunately, this describes the situation which prevails in all too many African countries today. Surely these features of life characterize – to name only a few nations that were not included in the Afrobarometer survey – Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Chad, Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of Congo. Conditions within the 12 countries that were included in the survey are uncertain at best, and many of these countries could easily fall into the vicious circle by which lack of development and non-democratic government feed on and enhance each other.

Before the twin goals of development and democracy can be more than a faint dream, the basic conditions for both must be met. In summary, these are:

- \$ Unrestricted access to the political process by all
- \$ Full employment and equitable distribution of entitlements
- \$ Enhanced social networks and mobility
- \$ Free availability of news and education
- \$ Personal security from crime and misfortune

Without attention to these prerequisites, democracy and development are only dreams. Instead poverty will remain chronic and endemic, and military coups and civil wars will further devastate the nations of Africa.

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