

Innovations

Empirical Investigation of the Political Determinants of Defense Expenditure: Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa

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Abstract : Problem: Sub Saharan Africa (SSA) is a region that is very young in terms of democratic practices. This is due to the fact that most SSA countries fought for their independence which was given to the countries in the region by the Colonialists who are mostly from the United Kingdom, Portugal, France, Belgium etc. This independence was gotten within the period 1960 to 1980. As a result, these new nations in SSA started forming political parties in order to form governments that will rule their country. However, SSA started witnessing large scale political instability since the reign of independence. This has led most SSA countries to have authoritarians as heads of state. In view of these problems, this research investigated the impact of political factors on defense expenditure in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). **Design/Methodology/Approach:** The study used data covering for the period 2000 to 2019. Variables used include previous defense expenditure, military in politics, ethnic conflict and external conflict. Descriptive statistics and unit root test were also carried out. The Generalized method of moment by Arrelano and Bond (1991) was used for estimation. **Findings:** The findings showed that apart from previous defense spending, other political factors determined defense expenditure remotely for the period of study. **Conclusion:** As a result of this, the study recommends that policy makers should always review previous military spending and their outcomes before carrying out any other expenditure on defense so as to avoid waste of scarce resources. Again, political factors should not be used as the only deciding factor when dealing with spending on defense so as to avoid arms importation which could be used to achieve political aims and for other negative purposes.

Keywords: Political, Determinants, Defense, Expenditure, Sub-Saharan Africa

JEL Codes: F52, H56, P26, P48

1. Introduction

Sub Saharan Africa (SSA) is a region that is very young in terms of democratic practices. This is due to the fact that most SSA countries fought for their independence which was given to the countries in the region by the Colonialists who are mostly from the United Kingdom, Portugal, France, Belgium etc. This independence was gotten within the period 1960 to 1980. As a result, these new nations in SSA started forming political parties in order to form governments that will rule their country. However, SSA started witnessing large scale political instability since the reign of independence (Dumitru and Hayat, 2007). This has led most SSA countries to have authoritarians as heads of state. Having authoritarians as leaders of most countries in SSA has led to having certain conflicts between the heads of states and rebel groups. Countries involved in this issue include Liberia, Sierra Leone, Congo, Uganda, Kenya, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Angola, Burundi, Chad etc. these countries have leaders who have ruled them for long periods of time and some other countries have been ruled by different rulers through coups. Such countries are Nigeria, Ghana, Burkina Faso etc.

These countries have had different rulers who rule without legitimacy. As a result, elections are rarely held in most of these countries. Political activities are not carried out regularly. About 70% of SSA citizens do not have access to basic civil liberties and human rights. Hitchcock (1993) traced these faults to colonial era where the Europeans were more interested in Africa's cash produce rather than developing Africa just as Europe is developed. Ethnic diversity is also another feature that is found in SSA countries. For example Nigeria alone has about 160 distinct ethnic groups. SSA countries are estimated to have over two thousand ethnic group. As a result of these large ethnic nationalities, it became very difficult to have just one state or nationhood and so conflicts arise in SSA countries especially within a country. African leaders though after independence, tried to provide national development as well as secure their territorial integrity by providing social services to the citizens; this was not enough to douse the growing tension of neglect within most countries in SSA. This may have also been supported by the extent of political ideology prevalent within the system within the period. Eriksen and Tedin (2003) as cited in Connolly and Mason (2016) observed that political ideology can simply be referred to as a well arranged belief system focused directly on a society's culture and the process through which beliefs are achieved. In explaining the meaning of political factors, Saez and Sinha (2009) includes phenomenon such as level of political competition, timing of election, margin of victory, the ruling party's political ideology or thought.

SSA has witnessed large levels of militarization as suggested by Mohammed (1999). During the cold war era, developed nations gave SSA large amounts of military weapons and aid. This led into serious violence within the African region such that over hundreds of thousands have lost their lives due to this violence. As a result, coups and counter coups have occurred as well as ethnic and tribal conflict.

Defense spending of SSA countries on the other hand, has been given a broader definition by UN as cited by Tekeoglu (2008) to including all expenditures done in purchase of military hardwares like AK49, Ak 49, gun trucks, heavy motor tanks, recruitment, boots etc, construction of barracks, daily operational expenses and continuous research and development. Mohammed (1999) identifies spending made on military equipment with sole aim of protecting the citizens both within and outside the country's territorial space. As captured by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI, 2017), defense spending can be attributed to three phases namely; the first phase (1960-1976) which was mainly driven by increase in price of petroleum products making a country like Nigeria have large revenue which enabled purchase of military weapons. The