Research Project Journal

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My research project under the sabbatical leave started practically in mid-September 2018, because the month of August was spent on getting the clearance to work on USC campus, getting office space within the Walker Institute, and getting access to the USC library and internet system.

## September 2018

* 9/16/2018: I started this research project with a new r project entitled “ELUSIVE QUEST” under the “AFRICAN POLITICS RESEARCH” in my dropbox.

This new r project was created with a new gitHub repository entitled “ElusiveQuestForPoliticalStabilitty” and a version control on git.

. I will start the data collection and cleaning this week, at the same time, I will take a new online course on this subject on DataCamp.

* 9/18/2018: completed the course on data importing and cleaning on DataCamp.
* 9/19/2018: I realized that I still need to learn how to download, read and save qualitative data (news, reports and analysis on conflicts) in r. So I decided to take another course on “Working with Web Data in R” on DataCamp. I plan to comoplete this course in 3 to 4 days. At the same time, I need to start collecting and cleaning the quantitative data from the Word Bank.
* 9/20&21/2018: I looked at different techniques to collect qualitative data available online. I was able to write a script on how to do that. See scriptForDownloadingQualitativeData and scriptForCollectingQualiativeData.
* 9/22/2018: I continued learning and refreshing memory about importing, cleaning, and manipulating data in base r and dplyr.
* 9/23/2018: I started downloading and cleaning data from the World Bank (WGI, GNIperCapita, HDI, etc.). WGI, devIneqPov and the joined file WGIdevIneqPov are available in the local repository.

. But I was not able to open the excel file on Freedom House data from Amanda Edgell (University of Florida). So I asked her to convert the file into csv.

* 9/24/2018: I was in the end able to download and read the “Stata Friendly Freedom House Data, 1973-2018” on political right and civil liberty maintained by Amanda B. Edgell, University of Florida (homepage: <https://acrowinghen.com/data/>)

. I am now attempting to merge the Freedom House data with the World Bank data and found out that Freedom House does not use any country code and some of the country names are different form those of the World Bank and the UN.

. Standardization of country names and codes.

. Step 1: I created the file WBcountryIso2c\_Iso3c\_M49Code.csv which combines the World Bank’s country name, iso2c, iso3c and M49code. This file will be used to join all World Bank dataframes with other data.

. Step 2: I reviewed Luke’s country names and codes on regions and subregions. I had to change or delete some country names and codes to make Luke’s country names and codes consistent with the World Bank’s country names and codes.

. Step 3: I verified that Freedom House country names correspond to the World Bank country names. I had to change or delete some country names and codes to make Freedom House’s country names and codes consistent with the World Bank’s country names and codes.

* 9/26/2018: I am done with the script to download the quantitative data.
* I will still need to clean the data before analysis.

CAMEROON RESEARCH PROJECT (with Ben Bongang, Professor of Political Science at Savannah State Univeristy)

* 9/28/2018: I am temporarily working on the Cameroon Case Study in prevision of my meeting with Ben Bongang on October 5, 2018.

. I downloaded the WGI for Cameroon

. I downloaded the economic and social indicators from the World Bank

. I downloaded the regime type indicators

. I rerun and verify the script on downloading the quantitative indicators on Cameroon

* 9/29/2018: I am back to the main project: I reviewed the script for downloading quantitative data and initiated a script for quantitative data analysis.

. the data analysis starts with the stability average and stability trend around the world for the period of 1996 to 2016.

. Next: the stability averages and trends by region

## October 2018

* 10/2/2018: I realized that the data on HDI and polity IV from the World Bank have a lot of missing values. Therefore, I decided to download directly the HDI data from the UNDP website and the data on polityScore directly from the Center for Systemic Peace. I took the whole day to do that and I couldn’t continue the data analysis.
* 10/4/2018: I have the complete dataset on political stability, econimic and social development, and regime types under the file **“WGIdevRegimeType.csv”** by joining the following dataframes:

1. the clean data on WGI: “WGIbyCountryAndRegion.csv”
2. the clean data on economic and social indicators: “WGIdevIneqPov.csv”
3. the clean data on regime type WGIregimeTypeByRegion: “WGIregimeTypeByRegion.csv”

* 10/5 to 10/14/2018: I read John Creswell’s textbook on mixed methods research (A Concise Introduction to Mixed Methods Research, 2015) and decided to write the introduction following his guidelines. I also completed some basic courses on machine learning with DataCamp, especially the Machine Learning Toolbox with Max Khun (the author of the caret package in r).
* Next: during the week of 10/15, I will start writing Chapter 1, following the guideline of John Creswell.

## November 2018

* Between 10/ and 11/15, I read the following books and articles:

1. Creswell, J. W. (2015). A Concise Introduction to Mixed Methods Research. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.
2. Woodward, S. L. (2017). The Ideology of Failed States: Why Intervention Fails. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
3. Ezrow, N. M., & Frantz, E. (2013). Failed States and Institutional Decay: Understanding Instability and Poverty in the Developing World. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic.
4. Kaufmann, D., Kraay, A., & Mastruzzi, M. (2011). The Worldwide Governance Indicators: Methodology and Analytical Issues (Policy Research Working Paper 5430 No. 1876–4053). Washington, DC: The World Bank. Retrieved from <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1682130>
5. Goldstone, J. A., Bates, R. H., Epstein, D. L., Gurr, T. R., Lustik, M. B., Marshall, M. G., … Woodward, M. (2010). A Global Model for Forecasting Political Instability. American Journal of Political Science, 54(1), 190–208.
6. Gates, S., Hegre, H., Jones, M. P., & Strand, H. (2006). Institutional Inconsistency and Political Instability: Polity Duration, 1800–2000. American Journal of Political Science, 50(4), 893–908. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2006.00222.x>

* 11/15/2018: I go back to writing Chapter 1, focusing particularly on literature review:
* on how “political stability” has been defined and operationalized by previous authors
* on why “political stability” is important for African political leaders and people, as well as for the international community, starting with the African Union, the United Nations, and the international donors
* 11/18/2018: I am now at the sections “Why Does Political Stability Matter?” and “The Argument of the book”
* 11/21/2018: writing the “approach and methodology” and “argument of the book”
* 11/23/2018: finished writing the draft of Chapter 1, and will start writing Chapter 2, which is now renamed “Political Stability Around the World Since the End of the Cold War: Descriptive Statistics”
* 11/24/2018: I finished the rough draft of chapter, mainly by transferring the text and figures from the paper “Understanding the conditions of political stability since the end of the Cold War”, presented at the SC Political Association in March 2018.
* 11/30 to 12/01/2018: I attended the African Studies Association annual meeting in Atlanta, GA, where I discussed with Benn Bongang a book project on the political stability in Cameroon.

## December 2018

This month I will travel to Madagascar, where I will complete the following tasks: - observation of the second round of the presidential election: look at the campaign stategies, people’s interest and participation,

* look also for possible collaboration on a book about the politics in Madagascar. This will include survey and elite interview on: the meaning of politics for the malagasy people, the objectives of participating in the political process, and the different stategies that can be used to achieve those objectives
* 12/4/2018: before I leave for Madagascar, I downloaded the “Comprehensive Machine Learning Workflow” by Gabriel Pierobon (which I will read on the plane and during my trip to Madagascar), and I also reviewed the online courses on “Machine learning toobox” by Max Kuhn.
* 12/10 to 12/12/2018: I applied Pierobon’s machine learning workflow in the analysis of the quantitative data in Chapter 2
* 12/13/2018: the application of Pierobon’s workflow lead me to reconsider my dataset and decide to include a new variable on development category using the World Bank’s latest economic classification
* I stopped at the identification of the unnecessary variables.