

# **Comparing the Gap Between Demand and Supply of Democracy in Benin and Ghana**

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## **Abstract**

This paper seeks to understand the gap between demand for democracy and supply of democracy that is occurring in some states, and the factors that contribute to the gap. It will look at two West African states, Benin and Ghana, to better understand what factors may lead to gaps between demand and supply of democracy.

Opinion survey results from the Afrobarometer were used to assess those who expressed a desire for democracy (demand) and those who were satisfied with democracy (supply). In Ghana, the percentages of people who desired democracy and those who were satisfied with it, were relatively the same. However, in Benin, a much lower percentage of people were satisfied with democracy, leading to a gap of more than 20 points. These two states were compared, not just for their differing scores, but also because they experienced relatively similar transitions to democracy, around the same time, and have generally been two of West Africa's most stable democracies in the last thirty years.

However, they also differ in significant ways and these differences were examined to see if they contributed to the gap between demand and supply of democracy. The categories of difference examined were economic performance, democratic institutions and political trust. After reviewing the literature on these factors, and examining the Afrobarometer data, along with data from the World Bank, it was concluded that the likely reasons for Ghana's higher satisfaction scores included higher economic growth, institutionalised political parties, a more independent national electoral commission, and lower perceived levels of corruption, among other factors. More research is required to determine if economic growth is the dominant factor affecting all other factors, or if the other factors relate to each other.

## Introduction

A quick glance at headlines around the world would tell us that democracy is in decline in Africa. In their 2019 January Issue, *Foreign Affairs* wrote about “The Retreat of African Democracy,”<sup>1</sup> and authors of various articles argue that “Democracy in Africa has witnessed a general decline....”<sup>2</sup> In addition to the obvious question that follows these statements - is democracy actually in decline in Africa? - this prompts questions about how this decline is being assessed. Do Africans desire democracy less? Are they less satisfied with their democracies? While there are many angles from which to examine this question on the status of democracy in Africa, this paper will focus on comparing the desire for democracy (demand) and the satisfaction with democracy (supply).

Before jumping directly into a focus on Africa, it is important to point out that this does not appear to be an issue that only Africa is facing. Based on various assessments, democracy appears to be in decline globally. The Economist’s Intelligence Unit releases a yearly Democracy Index which assesses the state of democracy around the world, and in 2019 the average global score fell to the lowest level since the Index began in 2006.<sup>3</sup> One of the factors that appears to be influencing this trend is an overall gap between the desire for democracy and the satisfaction with it. Boulianne, commenting on democratic trends around the world writes, scholars “acknowledge a gap between citizens’ expectations for democratic governance and their satisfaction with the performance of democratic systems.”<sup>4</sup> It appears that all over the world, governments are facing a citizenry that is unhappy with how democracy is performing, or at least feels that democracy is

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<sup>1</sup> Nic Cheeseman and Jeffrey Smith, “The Retreat of African Democracy”, *Foreign Affairs*, January 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Ndubuaku Kanayo, “Democracy in Africa Under Serious Threat,” *FairPlanet*, July 2019.

<sup>3</sup> “Democracy Index 2019,” *The Economist Intelligence Unit*, <https://www.eiu.com/topic/democracy-index>.

<sup>4</sup> Shelley Boulianne, “Building Faith in Democracy: Deliberative Events, Political Trust and Efficacy,” *Political Studies* 67, no. 1 (2019), 4-5.

not meeting their expectations. The reasons for these unmet expectations likely varies from state to state, and this paper will look to assess how this gap in demand and supply affects the growth and consolidation of democracy in Africa specifically.

While many may aggregate Africa into one region, it is important to remember that the continent encompasses 1.3 billion people who have vastly different ethnicities, cultures and languages, and that it has more states than any other continent (54). It is often divided into 5 broad regions: North Africa, West Africa, Central Africa, East Africa and South Africa. This paper will focus on the region of West Africa, which is made up of 16 states, 2 of which are flawed democracies, 9 of which are hybrid regimes and 5 of which are considered authoritarian regimes.<sup>5</sup> Of these 16 West African states, 13 are surveyed by the Afrobarometer,<sup>6</sup> which conducts public attitude surveys and will be used for this analysis (further detail will be given in the Methodology section). The most recent round of surveys, held from 2016 to 2018, demonstrated that support for democracy in these states remains high, ranging from a low of 63% in Burkina Faso to a high of 84% in Sierra Leone. These are the percentages of people who agree with the statement '*Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government*'. The average across these 13 West African states is 73%, and this has remained stable over time, even displaying growth. However the numbers around the levels of satisfaction with democracy are vastly different. Those who are '*very satisfied*' or '*fairly satisfied*' with the way democracy works in their state range from a low of 19% in Togo, to a high of 79% in Ghana. The average across all 13 West African states is 46%. That is a 27 point gap between the percentage of people who desire democracy and those who are

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<sup>5</sup> "Democracy Index 2019," *The Economist Intelligence Unit*, <https://www.eiu.com/topic/democracy-index>.

<sup>6</sup> Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast and Mauritania are not included.

satisfied with it. What accounts for this gap between the desire for democracy and the satisfaction with democracy?

This paper will seek to answer this question in two states - Benin and Ghana - in an attempt to determine which factors cause this gap between desire for, and satisfaction with, democracy. Benin and Ghana have long been considered two of Sub-Saharan Africa's best cases, being ranked 14th and 5th, respectively, out of 44 states<sup>7</sup> in the 2019 Democracy Index.<sup>8</sup> However, in Ghana the level of satisfaction with democracy (79%) is almost equal to the desire for democracy (81%), whereas in Benin the level of satisfaction with democracy (51%) is much lower than the desire for democracy (73%). What accounts for a gap of more than 20 points in Benin, as opposed to 2 points in Ghana?

This paper will attempt to answer the following research questions: What has led to the vastly different gap between the desire for democracy and the satisfaction with democracy in two West African states, Benin and Ghana? And what are the factors leading to this gap between demand and supply of democracy?

### *Case Selection*

Benin and Ghana were chosen as the focus states in this paper for several reasons. As mentioned above, their democracy rankings put them near the top of the list for Sub-Saharan Africa, and even more so if narrowing the focus down to West Africa (Ghana is 2nd and Benin is 5th, out of 16 states). Both states were considered flawed democracies (although in the last few

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<sup>7</sup> The Democracy Index includes North African states in the 'Middle East and North Africa' section, leaving Sub-Saharan Africa as its own section.

<sup>8</sup> "Democracy Index 2019," *The Economist Intelligence Unit*, <https://www.eiu.com/topic/democracy-index>.

years Benin has regressed to a hybrid regime) which the Democracy Index defines as states that have free and fair elections, and respect basic civil liberties, while also having governance problems and lower levels of political participation.<sup>9</sup> Both of these states are generally considered to have been consolidating their democracies over the last 30 years, allowing for power to peacefully exchange hands several times. They are practically neighbours, with only Togo, one of the narrowest states in the world (115km wide), separating them. Both states achieved independence around the same time, experienced a series of short lived democratic regimes and military coups, and then transitioned from military leaders who had taken over in coups, to unitary presidential republics, around the same time. Since they each developed a constitution and transitioned to democracy in the early 1990s, they have not experienced any military coups, or civil wars, unlike many of the states around them (Liberia, Ivory Coast, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone).

However, there are some significant differences as well. As noted above, and most relevant to this paper, there is a significant gap in their levels of satisfaction with democracy. They also had different colonizers - Benin was colonized by France and Ghana by Britain - which has led to different legal systems and different languages (French vs. English). Ghana has more than double Benin's GDP, and almost triple its population. These two states were chosen because they experienced relatively similar transitions to democracy (although with key differences that we will discuss below), and have had fairly stable political systems over the last 30 years. Yet they score very differently in the levels of satisfaction with democracy, and are dissimilar in several areas, particularly economic growth, which allows us to dive deeper into the potential factors leading to these lower levels of satisfaction.

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<sup>9</sup> "Democracy Index 2019," *The Economist Intelligence Unit*, <https://www.eiu.com/topic/democracy-index>.

## *Methodology*

All of the survey data used in this paper comes from the Afrobarometer. The Afrobarometer is a pan-African research network that conducts public attitude surveys in over 35 African countries.<sup>10</sup> Started in 1999, it is African-led and conducts surveys on democracy, governance, economic conditions, and related issues. To date, seven rounds of surveys have been conducted, with the most recent round taking place from September 2016 to September 2018. In both Benin and Ghana, round 7 of the survey was conducted in 2017. While Ghana has been surveyed in every round of the survey (1999, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017), Benin has only been surveyed in the last five rounds (2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017), therefore all of the analysis only considers the last five rounds of the survey (rounds 3 to 7). These five data points allow us to investigate potential trends and factors that may be related, however there are too few data points to make concrete conclusions.

The majority of the data analysis conducted in this paper uses data that comes in response to two questions. The first is in regards to demand for democracy and asks, *Which of these three statements is closest to your own opinion? Statement 1: Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government. Statement 2: In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable. Statement 3: For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have.* The second is in regards to satisfaction with democracy and asks, *Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [country]?* The responses to these two questions were then compared to other data to assess the three broad categories of differences that are examined in this paper. The first category, economic performance, examines World Bank data on GDP growth and then compares that to the Afrobarometer survey responses on desire for, and

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<sup>10</sup> "About Afrobarometer," *Afrobarometer*, <http://afrobarometer.org/about>.

satisfaction with, democracy. The World Bank GDP growth data was also compared to survey responses on perceptions of how the economy was doing. This category also examines income inequality, using World Bank data (Gini coefficient), as well as comparing World Bank data on Net Official Development Assistance (ODA) to the survey responses on desire for, and satisfaction with, democracy. The second category, democratic institutions, uses Afrobarometer data to determine the accuracy of the literature when looking at the impact of political parties and the national electoral commission in each state. It compares the data on desire for, and satisfaction with, democracy, with data on levels of distrust in the ruling party and opposing party, as well as in the national electoral commission. The third category, political trust, uses the Afrobarometer data to look at levels of distrust across many institutions in each state (police, president, army, etc.), as well as the perceived levels of corruption of each of these institutions. This category also looks at the Corruption Perception Index to compare internal perceptions with an external assessment of corruption in each state.

Part 1 of this paper will seek to define democracy, giving a historical overview as well as looking at democracy in the African context. Part 2 will give an overview of democracy in Ghana and Benin specifically, as well as looking at some similarities between the two states. Part 3 will analyze three categories of differences between Ghana and Benin, namely economic performance, democratic institutions and political trust. Each of these differences will be examined to see how they affect the demand for, and satisfaction with, democracy, over time. The conclusion will summarize the findings, which indicate that it is likely that some of the factors contributing to the large gap in demand and supply of democracy in Benin, but not in Ghana, include Ghana's higher GDP growth (and overall better economy), Ghana's more institutionalised

party structure and independent national electoral commission, along with Benin's higher levels of distrust in various government officials and higher perceived levels of corruption.

## **Part 1 - Defining Democracy**

### Overview of Democracy

As mentioned above, this paper seeks to look at the gap between desire for democracy and satisfaction with democracy, specifically in two West African states - Benin and Ghana. Such an analysis would be meaningless without first defining the term democracy. It is a term that is frequently used to describe many different ideas and concepts, due to its underlying definition still being contested.<sup>11</sup> Coming from the Greek words for 'people' (*demos*) and 'rule' (*kratus*), it is often summarized using Abraham Lincoln's words from the Gettysburg address: "government of the people, by the people, for the people."<sup>12</sup> Another way to describe democracy, as Claude Ake does very precisely, is as "popular power."<sup>13</sup>

However the democracy that most people living in Western states experience today, is quite different from its original conception. Democracy, as it was originally conceived in 6th century BC Athens, was what would now likely be referred to as participatory (or direct) democracy. Citizens, which encompassed only free, land-owning, adult males, came together to "debate, decide and enact the law."<sup>14</sup> People participated directly in the decisions made and in the creation of the laws that would affect their lives, and great pains were taken to ensure a rotation of those at the top of the decision-making echelon. It is interesting to note that many present definitions of democracy

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<sup>11</sup> David Held, *Models of Democracy 3rd Edition*, (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2006), x.

<sup>12</sup> Abraham Lincoln, "The Gettysburg Address," *Abraham Lincoln Online*, <http://showcase.netins.net/web/creative/lincoln/speeches/gettysburg.htm>.

<sup>13</sup> Claude Ake, *The Feasibility of Democracy in Africa*, (Senegal, Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, 2000), 7-8.

<sup>14</sup> Held, *Models*, 14.

include a level of political equality (not necessarily actual equality, but an acknowledgement of equality before the law) that is not seen in Athens, and would render it undemocratic in the eyes of many, for its exclusion of women, slaves and non-land owners.<sup>15</sup> Plato himself defined democracy as a form of society which treats all men as equal, whether they are equal or not, although he viewed this as a critique of democracy.<sup>16</sup> Political equality is a key concept because, as Marsilius points out, no one will create, or consent to, a law which will cause them harm or injustice.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, if a person wants to be treated justly and benefit from the law, they will make laws that, for the most part, benefit everyone, because the law will apply uniformly.

The modern day democracy that most people experience would fall under the category of representative (or liberal<sup>18</sup>) democracy. This is a system where citizens are elected to represent the will of the people - essentially, 'the people' delegate their decision making rights and responsibilities to an agreed upon person. Oft-quoted Nigerian political scientist Claude Ake argued that *liberal democracy* was quite different from *democracy*, as it replaced "government by the people with government by the consent of the people".<sup>19</sup> This leads us into one of the key concepts of liberal democracy, that a government's legitimacy comes from the consent of the people.<sup>20</sup> In a representative democracy, citizens do not participate in each decision that is made, but by choosing the person who will make these decisions, they give their consent, agreeing to follow the laws that are created. It is easy to understand why our large modern day states would choose representative democracy - how does one ensure that 300 million, or even 30 million,

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<sup>15</sup> Held, *Models*, 19.

<sup>16</sup> Plato, *Plato's The Republic*, (New York, Books, Inc., 1943), 375-376.

<sup>17</sup> Marsilius, of Padua, *Defensor Pacis*, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1951-56), 48-49.

<sup>18</sup> In *Models of Democracy*, David Held makes the distinction that although all liberals are not necessarily democrats (and vice versa), "the development of liberalism was integral to the development of liberal democracy", which is why he uses the term liberal democracy to define this concept (pg.4).

<sup>19</sup> Ake, *The Feasibility*, 10.

<sup>20</sup> Held, *Models*, preface.

people gather together to make collective decisions? This is not to say that participatory democracy, or aspects of it, could not be incorporated into our present liberal democracies, but rather to point out that even with only 30,000 or so citizens engaged in direct rule over themselves, Athenians still had to develop complex systems of governance, and in the end their democracy only lasted 200 years or so.<sup>21</sup>

This conception of the legitimacy of a government coming from the consent of those it is governing, has led to an emphasis on the process of consenting, or choosing. We see this in the heavy importance placed on elections. Elections are how liberal democracy ensures the 'will of the people' is heard, and their participation in the political process is counted. Citizens go to the polls and vote for their preferred representative. This has led to a significant focus on holding free and fair elections, using this as a marker for democratic societies. However, Ake argues that "liberal democracy repudiates popular power,"<sup>22</sup> because it stems from a fear of popular power (the 'will of the people'), particularly popular power that would pose a threat to private property ownership.<sup>23</sup> It appeals to elites because it "guarantees the rights of the individual, most significantly the right of property against even the will of the majority."<sup>24</sup> In this way, it places the individual above the collective, not as an accidental by-product but as an intentional political choice.<sup>25</sup> A system arguably designed to ensure collective, consensual decision-making, became one where citizens offered their consent to the decisions made, in exchange for the elected representative focusing on the voters' best interests - the problem being that very rarely do all voters choose the same person. This has led to some elections becoming a zero-sum game, with

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<sup>21</sup> "Ancient Greek Democracy," *History*, last modified August 19, 2019. <https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-greece/ancient-greece-democracy>.

<sup>22</sup> Ake, *The Feasibility*, 10.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

winners imposing their rule on the losers, rather than attempting to achieve a consensus or find a middle ground. However, the ability to regain power by playing by the established rules and winning the next election, allows for most states to maintain peaceful transfers of power, even among highly polarized groups of people.

Nigerian philosopher J.O. Oguejiofor outlines what a stable democratic system needs, in his essay *Democracy and Social Movements: In Search of the Democratic Ideal*. According to him, it requires “a stable means of changing the government”; participation of the population in this process, in terms of both choosing and running as candidates; and a sense among the population that they can identify or belong to the political system.<sup>26</sup> Having formal elections is essential to guarantee the participation of citizens in the political process, but it is not sufficient on its own.<sup>27</sup> Ake points out that “participation is not the occasional opportunity to choose, affirm or dissent. It is rather the active involvement in the process, not the acceptability of the end decision that satisfies the need to participate.”<sup>28</sup> With the above concepts of democracy in mind, it is important to take a look at democracy within the African context specifically.

### Democracy in Africa

Although many African states have attempted democracy since they first became independent, many of them reverted back to autocracies, or experienced civil wars and military coups, with some exceptions (namely Botswana). The present iteration of democracy in Africa came to life in

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<sup>26</sup> J.O. Oguejiofor, “Democracy and Social Movements: In Search of the Democratic Ideal,” *Current Viewpoint: A Review of Culture and Society* 2, nos. 1 and 2 (2000), 1.

<sup>27</sup> Dirk Kohnert and Hans-Joachim A. Preuss, “Benin’s Stealthy Democracide: How Africa’s Model Democracy Kills Itself Bit by Bit,” (2019), 17.

<sup>28</sup> Ake, *The Feasibility*, 184.

the 1990s, in the so-called 'third wave'.<sup>29</sup> It started in one of our focus states, Benin, in 1991, and spread across the continent, with almost every state introducing multi-party elections of some sort.<sup>30</sup> However, similar to the previous waves of democracy, this has been followed by coups, civil wars and a return to authoritarian rule in a large number of states. Nic Cheeseman, in his 2018 report on the state of democracy in Africa, titled *A Divided Continent*, reported that "half of all African states are autocracies (36% hardline, 14% moderate), while the other half are democracies (5% consolidating, 34% defective, 11% highly defective)."<sup>31</sup> The term consolidating will be elaborated on later in this section, but essentially only two states - Mauritius and Botswana - are considered consolidating democracies, while a further 15 states are considered defective democracies. Our two focus states, Benin and Ghana, fall into this category of defective democracies. If we were to take a more strict conception of participation, such as that laid out by Ake in the section above, the number of democratic states falls even further. In 2012, Uwizeyimana assessed that roughly 49 out of 54 independent African states fall into the category of pretend democracies, whose fundamental feature is "the exclusion of the citizens from meaningful participation in government besides the freedom of opposition parties to contest the ruling party in debate or elections."<sup>32</sup> The people may get to vote in elections, but they do not participate in any meaningful way in government. As Cheeseman says, in the last 30 years, "far from converging on a common experience it appears that the countries of Africa are becoming increasingly divergent."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, (London, University of Oklahoma Press, 1993).

<sup>30</sup> Nic Cheeseman, "Pathways to democracy," in Gabrielle Lynch and Peter vonDoepp (eds), *Routledge Handbook of Democratization in Africa*, (London, Routledge, 2019), 41.

<sup>31</sup> Nic Cheeseman, "A Divided Continent: Regional Report Africa," *Bertelsmann Stiftung* (2019), 5.

<sup>32</sup> Dominique Uwizeyimana, "Democracy and Pretend Democracies in Africa: Myths of African Democracies," *Law, Democracy and Development* 16 (2012), 152.

<sup>33</sup> Cheeseman, *A Divided Continent*, 5.

Many have made the point that democracy can, and perhaps should, vary from society to society, avoiding a one size fits all approach.<sup>34</sup> It would appear that transplanting liberal democracy into Africa, often at the behest of Western donor states, has not had the desired effect. In *Pathways to Democracy*, Nic Cheeseman outlines three processes that led to democratization in Africa. Broadly, these processes included: growing opposition to authoritarian rule, due to a variety of factors including the poor management of the economy and generational change; economic downturns reducing the ability of leaders to funnel funds to their patronage networks, and increasing the need for loans from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund; and the end of the Cold War, which led to donors beginning to hold back aid in an attempt to promote democratization.<sup>35</sup> As Rita Abrahamsen points out in her 2000 book, *Disciplining Democracy*, “recent transitions to democracy are profoundly influenced by Africa’s interaction with and place within the international system, and to explain these transitions with reference to domestic factors only is far too simplistic.”<sup>36</sup>

The states of Africa appear to have been led through a democratization process that was pushed forward both internally and externally, leading, in many cases, to multi-party elections. However, some argue that Western liberal democracy is at odds with African culture, because “African traditional values are humanistic and communitarian”.<sup>37</sup> Agbodike, Ewium and Igbokwe-Ibeto make an argument that because Western liberal democracy is a zero-sum game and focuses on individuals, it is at odds with these traditional African values - there is a winner, rather than an

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<sup>34</sup> Francis Ofor, “The Quest for Good Governance in Africa: What Form of Democracy is Most Suitable?,” *The Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies* 31, no. 3. (2006), 266.

<sup>35</sup> Cheeseman, *Pathways*, 41-42.

<sup>36</sup> Rita Abrahamsen, *Disciplining Democracy: Development Discourse and Good Governance in Africa*, (London, Zed Books, 2000), 7.

<sup>37</sup> Florence Agbodike, Ngozi Ewium and C. Justine Igbokwe-Ibeto, “Culture and Its Role in Promoting Democracy and Good Governance in Africa: Finding the Missing Link,” *Africa’s Public Service Delivery and Performance Review* 3, no 1 (2015), 81.

achieved consensus.<sup>38</sup> This is also pointed out by Uwizeyimana, who illustrates that many post-independence African leaders dismissed the concept of multi-party democracy, claiming that a system of one-party government was part of the African tradition, largely due to the importance of consensus (multi-party democracy is seen to be promoting competition, not consensus).<sup>39</sup> Beyond potential cultural roadblocks, others point to the challenges of overcoming colonial systems, as a reason liberal democracy may not be faring well. This system created “distance between the rulers and the ruled,”<sup>40</sup> something that arguably did not exist before colonial rule. Ake also points out that the initial push for democratization did not do much to transform the state and make it more democratic, it simply changed the process of deciding who would control the state and its resources.<sup>41</sup> He makes a case that “what has been gained in the end is only the right to choose between oppressors, not the right to choose between liberty and oppression,”<sup>42</sup> and argues that many post-colonial states are being used as a tool of oppression, even more so than when they were colonial states. Daima argues that introducing democracy in Africa is a massive challenge, as African states were specifically created by colonizers for the purpose of dominating the people of Africa and exploiting their resources, and that once these states gained independence, “these colonial structures remained intact and were, in fact, strengthened.”<sup>43</sup> In many cases African leaders were unaware that they needed to change and adapt the structures they had inherited, to the needs of Africa and Africans.<sup>44</sup> Others argue that the issue has been poor leadership in many African states, pointing out that African leaders often perceive themselves as colonial overlords, rather than servants who are being good stewards of the

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<sup>38</sup> Agbodike *et al*, *Culture and Its Role*.

<sup>39</sup> Uwizeyimana, *Democracy and Pretend Democracies*, 140.

<sup>40</sup> Agbodike *et al*, *Culture and Its Role*, 84.

<sup>41</sup> Ake, *The Feasibility*, 73

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>43</sup> Amani Daima, “Challenges for emerging African democracies,” *Peace Review* 10, no. 1 (1998), 59.

<sup>44</sup> Philippe J.C. Lassou, Trevor Hopper, Mathew Tsamenyi and Victor Murinde, “Varieties of neo-colonialism: Government accounting reforms in Anglophone and Francophone Africa - Benin and Ghana compared,” *Critical Perspectives on Accounting* 65 (2019), 3.

nation, its people and its resources.<sup>45</sup> A full discussion of the potential reasons for the failure or decline of liberal democracy in Africa is outside the scope of this paper, however, regardless of the reasons, according to many scholars and by several indicators, “the average African is worse-off today under democratic government than he or she was many years ago before the advent of ‘democratic’ regimes in Africa.”<sup>46</sup>

Earlier, it was highlighted that only two African states are considered consolidated democracies. Linz and Stepan consider a democracy to be consolidated when democracy has become the ‘only game in town,’<sup>47</sup> meaning that everyone involved understands that there is no other form of government or regime that has legitimacy. More empirically, Samuel Huntington, often quoted in the literature on this topic, proposed that democracies could be considered consolidated if governments changed hands twice, after the initial election.<sup>48</sup> Essentially, one party is willing to peacefully concede and hand over power to another party. If this happened two times (consecutively), a democracy could be considered consolidated. While there have been critiques of the rigidity of this analysis, it is a good starting point for considering consolidation. If we were using Huntington’s definition, both Benin and Ghana would be considered consolidated (more on why that is in their respective sections below). The Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index (BTI)<sup>49</sup>, which is what Cheeseman was referring to in his report *A Divided Continent*, measures the status of political transformation by looking at a variety of factors.<sup>50</sup> With a score of 8 required

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<sup>45</sup> Christopher Agulanna, “Democracy and the Crisis of Leadership in Africa,” *The Journal of Social, Political, and Economic Studies* 31, no. 3 (2006), 259.

<sup>46</sup> Offor, *The Quest for Good Governance*, 270.

<sup>47</sup> Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, “Toward Consolidated Democracies,” *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 2 (1996).

<sup>48</sup> Huntington, *The Third Wave*, 267.

<sup>49</sup> “Status Index,” Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index, <https://www.bti-project.org/en/data/rankings/status-index/>.

<sup>50</sup> These factors are stateness, political participation, rule of law, stability of democratic institutions, and political and social integration.

to be considered a consolidating democracy, our two focus states, Benin and Ghana, fall just shy of that, with a 7.85 and a 7.9, respectively, due to lower scores in the rule of law section.

Regardless of which definition of democratic consolidation is used, it is important to remember that democracy is not an end point, but rather is an ongoing process, one that takes many years, one which Ake calls the “process of struggle.”<sup>51</sup> However, as thinker Reinhold Neibuhr once wrote, “man’s capacity for justice makes democracy possible, but man’s inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary.”<sup>52</sup>

With the understanding that democracy is in various stages in different African states, though generally thought to not be consolidated in many states, the next section will take a look at the intertwining of democracy and economics, particularly in the context of poverty.

### *Democracy and liberal economics*

One of the biggest debates in the literature on democracy in Africa appeared to be on whether or not a certain level of individual wealth, or a reduction in income inequality, was required before democracy was feasible. As Ake succinctly wrote, “The rigours of subsistence farming, of scavenging for water and firewood leave them very little time for politics.”<sup>53</sup> In fact, many authors make similar statements, arguing that Africa “still lives under the dictatorship of material poverty,”<sup>54</sup> that “poverty-stricken people are too engrossed in the struggle for subsistence and survival to care much about political rights, elections and voting”<sup>55</sup> and that “it is difficult to preach ethics or morality to a hungry man,”<sup>56</sup> to quote a few scholars. Much of Ake’s argument in *The Feasibility of*

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<sup>51</sup> Ake, *The Feasibility*, 70.

<sup>52</sup> Reinhold Neibuhr, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness*, (New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1944).

<sup>53</sup> Ake, *The Feasibility*, 73.

<sup>54</sup> Offor, *The Quest for Good Governance*, 270.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Agbodike et al, *Culture and Its Role*, 88.

*Democracy in Africa*, centers around the need for democracy to serve the social needs of Africans and relate to their social experience, which is highly intertwined with material poverty.<sup>57</sup> He ties the success of democracy in Africa to economic development, arguing that the process of development itself needs to be democratized.<sup>58</sup>

Bratton and Mattes, in countering Ake's position, argue that he does not allow for political values to have inherent worth - being valued not as a means to an end, but as their own end.<sup>59</sup> They contend that his argument "cannot move beyond a static portrayal of African politics as a 'politics of the belly' that is driven mainly by material deprivation,"<sup>60</sup> and does not sufficiently acknowledge that humans are complex, desiring more than just food.<sup>61</sup> Abrahamsen is more nuanced in pointing out that for the poor, democracy cannot just be about civil and political rights but also about social and economic rights, saying "political equality, then, cannot be attained without a measure of economic equality, and without it democracy is likely to become a vehicle for the maintenance of elite dominance."<sup>62</sup> It is not political rights *or* economic rights, but rather political rights *and* economic rights. A measure of both are needed. Political rights can be a way of expanding the political space, giving the poor majority a voice to demand economic rights, and a better standard of living.<sup>63</sup> A study by Bratton and Mattes indicates that the level of satisfaction with democracy among African citizens will depend on how they assess the government's performance in terms of providing both political and economic goods, and they conclude that democracy is intrinsically valued.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ake, *The Feasibility*, 75.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 87.

<sup>59</sup> Michael Bratton and Robert Mattes, "Support for Democracy in Africa: Intrinsic or Instrumental?", *British Journal of Political Science* 31, no. 3 (2001), 452.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>62</sup> Abrahamsen, *Disciplining democracy*, 76.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, 84.

<sup>64</sup> Bratton and Mattes, *Support for Democracy*, 473-474.

But who is this democracy for? Scholars of African Studies, such as Ake and Abrahamsen, note that often, two diverging ideas of democracy were pursued. One type of democracy was pursued by the poor masses, and another type by the elites.<sup>65</sup> Ake claims that the elites were seeking to gain power, while the masses wanted empowerment and economic upliftment.<sup>66</sup> Abrahamsen contends that for the poor masses, democracy “was a demand for an end to poverty and suffering,”<sup>67</sup> while the elites simply wanted to find a way to get back in power and protect their wealth and lifestyles.<sup>68</sup> Those who did succeed in attaining power found themselves caught between the demands of their domestic audience and their external donors and creditors.<sup>69</sup> These external forces wanted economic liberalization, making demands that were quite at odds with the demands of the masses, however, these donors controlled the money. This has often led to what Abrahamsen (referencing Mkandawire)<sup>70</sup> calls ‘choiceless democracies’, where economic liberalism is presented as the only available option.<sup>71</sup> In some cases, the tension led to massive protests, and in a desire to continue to please their donors and retain their hold on power, ‘democratic’ states engaged in authoritarian tendencies, cracking down violently on dissent, and becoming pseudo-democracies in the process. Or as the BTI calls them, defective or highly defective democracies.

It is possible to go back and forth about how relevant economics, or ‘bread and butter’ issues, are in the desire for democracy, and subsequent satisfaction with it. However, it seems impossible to

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<sup>65</sup> Ake, *The Feasibility*, 51.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, 136.

<sup>67</sup> Abrahamsen, *Disciplining Democracy*, 102.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 117.

<sup>70</sup> Thandika Mkandawire, “Crisis Management and the Making of ‘Choiceless Democracies’ in Africa,” *Paper prepared for the Conference on African Renewal*, MIT, 1997.

<sup>71</sup> Abrahamsen, *Disciplining Democracy*, 145.

deny that economics plays a part in the desire for democracy, and what various constituencies hope to get out of democracy. This impact will be further explored in Part 3.

### *Dissatisfied Democrats*

When starting this research, the assumption was made that a gap between demand for democracy and satisfaction with democracy was undesirable, and that the ideal situation was for satisfaction with democracy to reach the same level as demand for democracy. However, the literature offered some differing perspectives on this issue, indicating that some levels of distrust, or scepticism, might actually increase public engagement with government.<sup>72</sup> The term given to this gap, and the people it represents, is 'dissatisfied democrats', citizens who "demand democracy but do not think they are getting it."<sup>73</sup> In his 2019 Afrobarometer report, Mattes argues that citizens who are "deeply committed to democracy but who also adopt a critical perspective toward their country's current leaders and institutions"<sup>74</sup> matter the most for democracy to survive. He points to evidence that demonstrates that democracy is the least likely to regress when a significant proportion of a state's citizens are dissatisfied democrats, which he found concerning as only 15% of Africans currently fall into this category.<sup>75</sup>

However, other scholars have pointed out the flaw in this thinking - the assumption that these dissatisfied democrats are more critical than satisfied democrats (or any other segment of the population).<sup>76</sup> Doorenspleet's research examines whether dissatisfied democrats are in fact more

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<sup>72</sup> Boulianne, *Building Faith in Democracy*, 6.

<sup>73</sup> Robert Mattes, "Democracy in Africa: Demand, supply, and the 'dissatisfied democrat'," *Afrobarometer Policy Paper no. 54* (2019), 2.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>76</sup> Renske Doorenspleet, "Critical citizens, democratic support and satisfaction in African democracies," *International Political Science Review* 33, no. 3 (2012), 282.

critical than the rest of the population and found that this is not the case.<sup>77</sup> While dissatisfied democrats tended to be more highly educated and more negative about the performance of the government, they were also more passive, being less likely to vote or meet with politicians.<sup>78</sup> The debate essentially comes down to whether dissatisfied democrats should be seen as a “democratic danger or democratic defence.”<sup>79</sup> One side of the argument says that high levels of dissatisfied democrats is a bad thing, as support and satisfaction are key elements for the stability of the system, while the other side perceives high levels of dissatisfied democrats as a good thing, arguing that they actually point to the healthy nature of the democracy.<sup>80</sup> To date, scholars do not seem to have reached a conclusion on this debate. For the purposes of this paper, the research will focus on why there is a gap in satisfaction between Benin and Ghana, and not on whether this is positive or negative.

Based on Mattes’ assessment of the most recent round of survey data,<sup>81</sup> in Benin, 12% of people are dissatisfied democrats, while 34% are satisfied democrats.<sup>82</sup> In Ghana, only 3% of people are dissatisfied democrats, while 49% of people are satisfied democrats.<sup>83</sup> From this assessment, and the gap observed and discussed in the introduction, rates of satisfaction with democracy are quite different in Benin, as compared to Ghana. The next section will give an overview of democracy in both Benin and Ghana, and look at some similarities between the two states.

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<sup>77</sup> Doorenspleet, *Critical Citizens*, 279.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, 292-293.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, 293.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, 281-283.

<sup>81</sup> It is important to note that Mattes uses DemandDemo for his numbers of those who desire democracy, which is the democracy index available in the most recent round of the survey.

<sup>82</sup> Mattes, *Democracy in Africa*, 24.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*.

## **Part 2 - Overview of Democracy in Benin and Ghana**

### Ghana

In 1957, the British colony of the Gold Coast became the Dominion of Ghana, making it the first sub-saharan African state to gain independence.<sup>84</sup> Under the leadership of Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah (who would go on to be the first President), a referendum was held in 1960 and the (first) Republic of Ghana was established. Nkrumah's administration was both nationalist and socialist, and he is credited with helping to start the Non-Aligned movement.<sup>85</sup> In 1964 he passed a constitutional amendment making Ghana a one-party state and making himself President for life.<sup>86</sup> However, Nkrumah's presidency did not last long - he was deposed in a military coup in 1966,<sup>87</sup> which led to a period of military rule from 1966 to 1969. This was followed by Ghana's Second Republic (1969-1972), which was also short lived, and was followed by another coup and period of military rule from 1972-1979. In 1979, Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings staged a coup on the ruling military powers, but then chose not to interfere with the civilianization process that was already underway,<sup>88</sup> which resulted in Ghana's Third Republic. This Republic was even more short lived than the previous Republics, being deposed by another military coup in December 1981, led once again by Rawlings. Rawlings would then lead Ghana for over 11 years as its unelected authoritarian leader before adopting a constitution in 1992 that led to the formation of the Fourth Republic of Ghana, which continues to exist today.

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<sup>84</sup> Jean Blondel, "The part played by Ghana's long-term president: Jerry Rawlings," in *African Presidential Republics* (New York, Routledge, 2019), 119-120.

<sup>85</sup> Anirudha Das Gupta and A.S. Shahid, "Ghana's Non-Alignment Under Kwame Nkrumah," *International Studies* 20, no. 1-2 (1981), 401-409.

<sup>86</sup> Seth Anthony, "The State of Ghana," *African Affairs* 38, no. 273 (1969), 337-339.

<sup>87</sup> Blondel, *The part played by Ghana's long-term president*, 119.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, 122.

What makes the case of Ghana so interesting, is that not only did Rawlings, the unelected leader, after being in power for more than 10 years, adopt a constitution, he also ran as a candidate in the first Presidential election - and won, with 58.3% of the vote.<sup>89</sup> Haynes argues that this was due to his record of “purposive, effective, dynamic and relatively uncorrupt rule.”<sup>90</sup> And not only did Rawlings step down as the authoritarian leader and resign from the military to run for election as President, he also upheld the constitution and stepped aside after his second term was up (he won a second term in 1996), allowing for the peaceful transfer of power. The 2000 election led to Ghana’s other main political party, the NPP (New Patriotic Party) taking over from the NDC (National Democratic Congress). The parties have now swapped control of government two more times, once in 2008 and once in 2016, bearing a resemblance to the U.S. political system which has two main political parties, with voters having the tendency of alternating between them every eight years, as a President’s second term comes to an end. Ghana did not start out with only two parties - in fact, five parties fielded presidential candidates in the first election in 1992<sup>91</sup> - but over time, support consolidated behind the two main parties.

Bob-Milliar, in his research on democratic ruptures, highlights that “the most significant democratic rupture in Ghana’s electoral process was the presidential election challenge in 2012, mounted by the losing opposition party.”<sup>92</sup> This challenge occurred after the election of John Mahama, who had replaced John Atta Mills five months earlier, when Atta Mills died in office. This democratic rupture, because it used institutional means to challenge the election results and make adjustments, led to further democratic consolidation.<sup>93</sup> It allowed for more citizens to

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<sup>89</sup> Jeff Haynes, “Sustainable democracy in Ghana? Problems and prospects,” *Third World Quarterly* 14, no. 3 (1993), 462.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, 455.

<sup>91</sup> Bofo-Arthur, *Democracy and Stability*, 27-28.

<sup>92</sup> George M. Bob-Milliar and Jeffrey W. Paller, “Democratic Ruptures and Electoral Outcomes in Africa: Ghana’s 2016 Election,” *Africa Spectrum* 53, no. 1 (2018), 28.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, 29.

participate and understand how the political system worked, and it allowed the opposition party to reassess and expand their support. This led to an election in 2016, where the incumbent, Mahama, was voted out (a rare occurrence in Africa), in a process that most Ghanaians thought was fair and accurately represented the will of the population.<sup>94</sup> The election further consolidated Ghana's democracy as it showed the willingness of the political elites to adhere to the rules and the ability of the electorate to remove a government it thought was doing a poor job.<sup>95</sup>

In November 2020, Ghana will hold its eighth Presidential election, a remarkable feat for a state that spent almost half of its first 45 years under military rule. Encouragingly, the government has already peacefully changed hands, from one rival party to the other, three times now. Blondel points out that Ghana had a history of multi-party democracy, even if it was short-lived, and that the need for legitimacy through an electoral result seemed "to be the consequence of the early development of political life in the country."<sup>96</sup> Scholars may not all agree on the exact status of Ghana's democracy, for example Abdulai argues that Ghana's democracy is not yet consolidated, largely due to a significant amount of power being centralized in the national government,<sup>97</sup> while Boafo-Arthur's accounting reflects positively on Ghana's first four elections and demonstrates how democratic processes have been adjusted and improved upon over time,<sup>98</sup> however it is possible to see that power has continued to peacefully change hands in Ghana and that the ongoing struggle for democracy continues.

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<sup>94</sup> Nic Cheeseman, Gabrielle Lynch, and Justin Willis, "Ghana: The Ebbing Power of Incumbency," *Journal of Democracy* 28, no. 2 (2017), 93.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Blondel, *The part played by Ghana's long-term president*, 130-131.

<sup>97</sup> Abdul-Gafaru Abdulai and Gordon Crawford, "Consolidating democracy in Ghana: progress and prospects?," *Democratization* 17, no. 1 (2010), 26-67.

<sup>98</sup> Boafo-Arthur, *Democracy and Stability*.

## Benin

The state presently known as the Republic of Benin, then known as the Republic of Dahomey, gained full independence from France in 1960. The first 12 years of independence were tumultuous to say the least, which Bierschenk neatly summarizes as “eleven Presidents (five civilian, six military men), six different constitutions and twelve coups d'états, of which five were successful.”<sup>99</sup> Ethnicity played a large part in the instability of those years, with leadership alternating between three regional/ethnic leaders (referred to as the triumvirate<sup>100</sup>), so that once Lieutenant Colonel Mathieu Kérékou overthrew the triumvirate in a military coup in 1972, one of his stabilizing moves was to rename the Republic of Dahomey to the People's Republic of Benin in 1975.<sup>101</sup> The term Dahomey held ethnic significance due to the fact that it not only referred to the ancient kingdom of Dahomey (which existed from around 1600-1900), but also to the Fon people, who are the largest ethnic group in Benin<sup>102</sup> and also inhabit parts of Togo and Nigeria. The renaming of the state was accompanied by a declaration that the state's official ideology and form of government was now Marxism.<sup>103</sup> Kérékou ruled the state as an authoritarian leader for 18 years, eventually leading the state into bankruptcy.

Much has been written about Benin's transition to democracy, as Kérékou was essentially removed from power through a civilian coup,<sup>104</sup> with Benin holding the continent's first National Conference,<sup>105</sup> which led to many more across the region. Decalo underlines the importance of

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<sup>99</sup> Thomas Bierschenk, “Democratization without Development: Benin 1989–2009,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 22 (2009), 348.

<sup>100</sup> Samuel Decalo, “Benin: First of the New Democracies,” in John F. Clark and David E. Gardinier (eds), *Political Reform in Francophone Africa* (New York, Routledge, 1997), 44.

<sup>101</sup> Decalo, *Benin: First*, 46.

<sup>102</sup> Those who identified as Fon in the most recent survey round (2017) made up 34.7% of people, with the next closest group being the Adja at 15.8%.

<sup>103</sup> Decalo, *Benin: First*, 46.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid*, 55.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid*, 43.

this event saying, “The maverick Benin thus became the first African state in which the army was forced out of power by civilians.”<sup>106</sup> Blondel attributes much of the transition to democracy “as a result of the empty finances of the State and of foreign pressure,”<sup>107</sup> which Decalo also emphasizes saying that the 1989 strikes were “not over ‘democracy’ but bread-and-butter issues—payment of salary and benefits arrears.”<sup>108</sup> Blondel also believes it likely that Kérékou realized that his military rule was coming to an end either way, with regimes not usually lasting more than 20 years, and was seeking a way to remain in power.<sup>109</sup> Additionally, Decalo attributes this democratic transition to the power of civil society, which is traditionally thought of as quite strong in Benin.<sup>110</sup> Gazibo argues that foreign aid was one of the main factors in allowing Benin’s democracy to be successful as it enabled the government to stabilize its budget and pay its civil servants (its inability to do so is much of what led to the massive strikes in 1989 - many civil servants went months without being paid).<sup>111</sup> Likely all of these factors contributed to the gathering of diverse members of Beninese society who came together to develop a new constitution, which led to the renaming of the state to the Republic of Benin, and to elections in 1991. Kérékou ran in these elections, in which 79 political parties registered, and lost the presidency to Nicéphore Soglo, which marked the first time in Francophone Africa that an opposition candidate won a free election. Interestingly, Kérékou chose to challenge Soglo in the following election and proceeded to win in both 1996 and 2001, leading the state for another 10 years after its transition to democracy (Benin has five year presidential terms). He then upheld the constitution, handing over power in 2006 at the end of his second term.

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<sup>106</sup> Decalo, *Benin: First*, 55.

<sup>107</sup> Jean Blondel, “The part played by Benin’s long-term president: Mathieu Kerekou,” in *African Presidential Republics* (New York, Routledge, 2019), 92.

<sup>108</sup> Decalo, *Benin: First*, 51.

<sup>109</sup> Blondel, *The part played by Benin’s long-term president*, 97.

<sup>110</sup> Decalo, *Benin: First*, 51-55.

<sup>111</sup> Mamoudou Gazibo, “Beyond Electoral Democracy: Foreign Aid and the Challenge of Deepening Democracy in Benin,” in Danielle Resnick and Nicolas van de Walle (eds), *Democratic Trajectories in Africa: Unravelling the Impact of Foreign Aid* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013), 2.

Kérékou was succeeded by Thomas Boni Yayi, who had previously worked in the Soglo administration and for the West African Development Bank, who then led the state as President from 2006 to 2016, after winning a second term in 2011. Boni Yayi ran as an independent candidate and garnered an astounding 75% of the vote in the 2006 election. While Benin does not have two clear ruling parties the way Ghana does (in fact, it has a rapidly changing proliferation of parties), Boni Yayi's desired successor (and his Prime Minister) Lionel Zinsou, was defeated in the 2016 election by businessman Patrice Talon (listed by Forbes as the 15th richest man in sub-saharan Africa in 2015)<sup>112</sup>. In this way, it can be said that Benin has successfully transferred power between different parties at least four times since it became a democracy in 1991. However Bierschenk points out that while the population has internalized democracy, and there have been no political prisoners or political violence (at the national level), Benin's "basic problem of development has not yet been resolved by its democratic transition,"<sup>113</sup> with a poverty rate of 49.5% in 2015.<sup>114</sup> This means that half of the population of Benin is living on less than \$1.90 a day (at 2011 international prices). In contrast, Ghana's poverty rate, measured in 2016, was down to 13.3% of the population.<sup>115</sup>

While the last 25 years of democracy in Benin have been encouraging and showed increasing signs of democratic consolidation, the 2019 Parliamentary elections brought some cause for concern. After President Talon tried, and failed, to change the presidential term limits to one 6-year term,<sup>116</sup> some other changes were made to the constitution regarding the rules for party

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<sup>112</sup> Kohnert, *Benin's Stealthy Democracide*, 15.

<sup>113</sup> Bierschenk, *Democratization without Development*, 355.

<sup>114</sup> "World Bank Open Data," *The World Bank*. <https://data.worldbank.org/>

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> "Benin's parliament rejects one-term limit on presidency," *BBC*, April 5 2017. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-39502177>.

registration, which included increasing the costs of registration significantly.<sup>117</sup> In the end, only two parties were allowed to participate, both of them having ties to President Talon, with five of the main opposition parties rejected from participating.<sup>118</sup> The internet was also shut down on the day of the election, and voter turnout was an incredibly low 23%.<sup>119</sup> This has left many wondering what will happen in the 2021 Presidential election - will President Talon run for another term? Will more parties be allowed to participate? It remains to be seen.

### Similarities

Before diving into the differences between Ghana and Benin, it is important to point out two areas where they share similar backgrounds, as this may have had an impact on their present democratic leanings. These two areas of similarity are their previous experiences with some form of socialism and the fact that the leaders in both states (leading up to democracy) came from minority groups, with both of these factors leading to a pre-democracy reduction of ethnic divisions which was then carried over into the democratic iterations of these states.

In his paper *Legacies of Leftism: Ideology, Ethnicity and Democracy in Benin, Ghana and Mali*, JT Dickovick makes the argument that both Benin and Ghana (and Mali) have experienced the unintended consequences of having previously been 'soft' socialist states.<sup>120</sup> Due to political elites attempting to "mobilise masses using class ideology,"<sup>121</sup> and specifically trying to gain support

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<sup>117</sup> Tyson Roberts, "Why did many voters boycott Benin's April 28 elections?," *The Washington Post*, May 10 2019.  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/05/10/why-did-many-voters-boycott-benins-april-elections/>

<sup>118</sup> Kohnert, *Benin's Stealthy Democraide*, 2.

<sup>119</sup> "Record low turnout at Benin polls with no opposition," *France 24*, May 1 2019.

<https://www.france24.com/en/20190501-benin-election-record-low-turnout-no-opposition-boycott>.

<sup>120</sup> J Tyler Dickovick, "Legacies of Leftism: ideology, ethnicity and democracy in Benin, Ghana and Mali," *Third World Quarterly* 29, no. 6 (2008), 1120.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*, 1122.

along non-ethnic lines, this has helped democracy persist in these states. As Dickovick says, “where ethnicity’s salience is cross-cut through functional and non-ethnic political incorporation, democratic persistence is likelier.”<sup>122</sup> Essentially, because they had previously been divided and mobilized along non-ethnic lines, once democracy was introduced, it was easier for the public to vote along non-ethnic lines and thus avoid ethnic tensions, something that is a major issue in many African states. As Boafo-Arthur says, “Untamed ethnic proclivities pose a threat to almost all democratic governments in Africa,”<sup>123</sup> pointing out that when politicians use ethnicity to win elections and maintain power, they jeopardize the state’s stability.<sup>124</sup> Dickovick cites work by Cheeseman and Ford, and by Magnusson, in identifying low levels of importance for ethnicity as a political division in Benin and Ghana.<sup>125</sup> Lodge also points out that what separates Benin and Ghana (amongst other states) from the ‘worst cases’, is the “inability of their political parties to win elections *only* on the basis of ethnic mobilisation.”<sup>126</sup>

While this is not to say that Benin and Ghana do not experience any ethnic voting or ethnic tensions, it appears to be greatly reduced, particularly in comparison to other African states. This leads to the second, related, similarity. Both Rawlings (Ghana) and Kérékou (Benin), were members of ethnic minorities when they led their military coups, and subsequently had to downplay the importance of ethnicity in order to remain in power.<sup>127</sup> Kérékou was a northerner, who seized power after watching the 12 years of “debilitating and ineffective, ethnically skewed, musical-chair regimes punctuated by short bouts of military rule.”<sup>128</sup> As mentioned above, it was

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<sup>122</sup> Dickovick, *Legacies of Leftism*, 1128.

<sup>123</sup> Kwame Boafo-Arthur, “Democracy and Stability in West Africa: The Ghanaian Experience,” *Claude Ake Memorial Papers No. 4* (2008), 61.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*, 65.

<sup>125</sup> Dickovick, *Legacies of Leftism*, 1133.

<sup>126</sup> Tom Lodge, “Alternation and Leadership Succession in African Democracies,” *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 24 (2013), 40.

<sup>127</sup> Dickovick, *Legacies of Leftism*, 1125.

<sup>128</sup> Decalo, *Benin: First*, 44.

Kérékou, in an attempt to reduce ethnic tensions, who renamed the Republic of Dahomey, to the People's Republic of Benin, largely due to the high level of ethnic polarization in Dahomey.<sup>129</sup> Similarly, Rawlings had a Scottish father and a mother who was from the Ewe ethnic group, which only makes up about 15% of the population in Ghana (as opposed to the Akan tribe which makes up 50%).<sup>130</sup> This, in combination with his socialist ideology, led to a de-emphasizing of ethnic divisions in Ghana. Both of these states appear to have benefited from ideologies that emphasized class divisions and de-emphasized ethnic divisions, and from leaders who were among the ethnic minority and needed to de-emphasize ethnicity to remain in power.

### **Part 3 - Key Differences between Benin and Ghana**

In examining the research on Benin and Ghana, three broad categories of differences emerged. The first category is economic performance, encompassing not only the growth of the economy, but also its potential for industry and its reliance on aid. The second category is democratic institutions, including both the strength of political parties and the independence of the national electoral commission. The third category is political trust, looking at levels of distrust in government officials, as well as at levels of corruption. Each of these categories will be examined and contrasted in Benin and Ghana to determine if they impact the gap between Benin and Ghana's demand and satisfaction scores.

#### **Economic Performance**

As outlined in the section on democracy and liberal economics, there is an ongoing debate about how the state of the economy, and material needs, plays into the desire for democracy. The Ghanaian scholar Kwame Boafo-Arthur makes the case that it is possible that the crucial element

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<sup>129</sup> Decalo, *Benin: First*, 46.

<sup>130</sup> "The online data analysis tool," *Afrobarometer*.  
<http://afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis/analyse-online>.

needed for the stability and the growth of democracy lies not with civil and political freedoms but rather with the economic status of the masses.<sup>131</sup> As he points out, “Sustained poverty may undermine the trust people have and the legitimacy they grant to the democratic system of government in general and the ruling class in particular.”<sup>132</sup> Certain schools of thought make the case that stability is needed for economic growth and that democracy provides stability through knowing that changes in government will be within boundaries that have been agreed upon and set by the constitution.<sup>133</sup> Many of these concepts appear to be closely linked. The state of the economy, leading to increases in the standard of living, along with material well-being and perceptions of income inequality, all appear to affect the desire for, and satisfaction with, democracy. It appears that democracy provides stability, which allows for economic growth, and that an increase in the standard of living also increases the trust people have in government and its legitimacy. This section will look at various economic factors and see how they tie into the desire for democracy, as well as satisfaction with it.

In the early 1990’s, when Ghana and Benin once again became democracies, their GDP per capita was at \$398 and \$393, respectively (all amounts in USD).<sup>134</sup> Essentially, they were starting at about the same place. In 2018, after more than 25 years of democratic rule, Ghana’s GDP per capita was at \$2202, while Benin’s was less than half of that, at \$901 (see **Figure 1** in the **Appendix**). In the last several years both states have experienced similar GDP growth rates, with both dropping down to 2% in 2014-15, and then climbing back up to around 6% in 2018 (see **Figure 2** in the **Appendix**). The exception to this is a spike in Ghana’s growth rate in 2011, however this is due to the fact that GDP was revised by the Ghana Statistical Service in

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<sup>131</sup> Bofo-Arthur, *Democracy and Stability*, 72.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid*, 71.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

<sup>134</sup> “World Bank Open Data,” *The World Bank*. <https://data.worldbank.org/>

November 2010, increasing by more than 60%, from \$550 to around \$1100.<sup>135</sup> This was a significant change because it upgraded Ghana's status from a low income state to a lower-middle-income state.<sup>136</sup> While this does make it more difficult to compare states over time, as Jerven points out, "the upward revision did have a factual grounding and that it was done according to the book."<sup>137</sup> The adjustment was necessary and occurred largely due to an increase in data, as well as an adjustment of the base year used to calculate GDP, and it was a change that ultimately took over 8 years to complete.<sup>138</sup> Jerven concludes that "the revision is 'good news', particularly for Ghana,"<sup>139</sup> however it does indicate that "African development statistics tell us less than we would like to think about income, poverty, and growth on the continent."<sup>140</sup> In 2014, Nigeria also rebased its GDP, leading to an increase in GDP of 89%, making it Africa's biggest economy,<sup>141</sup> which leads to questions about whether or not Benin's GDP data is also undervalued.

Considering the uncertainty around GDP as a reliable, comparative metric, it is important to look at other economic factors as well. One way that Benin and Ghana differ is in the composition of their economies, in particular the contrast in natural resource wealth. Ghana has abundant natural resources - it recently surpassed South Africa to become Africa's largest gold producer,<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Morten Jerven and Magnus Ebo Duncan, "Revising GDP estimates in sub-Saharan Africa: lessons from Ghana," *African Statistical Journal* 15 (2012), 14.

<sup>136</sup> Morten Jerven, "Briefing: For richer, for poorer: GDP revisions an Africa's statistical tragedy," *African Affairs* 112, no. 446 (2013), 138.

<sup>137</sup> Jerven, *Briefing: For richer*, 138.

<sup>138</sup> Jerven, *Revising GDP estimates*, 20.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid*, 21.

<sup>140</sup> Jerven, *Briefing: For richer*, 146-147.

<sup>141</sup> "Step Change: Revised figures show that Nigeria is Africa's largest economy," *The Economist*, April 12 2014. <https://www.economist.com/finance-and-economics/2014/04/12/step-change>.

<sup>142</sup> Felix Njini, "The African Nation Built on Gold Loses its Crown to a Rival," *Bloomberg*, June 2019. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-06-09/nation-built-on-gold-loses-its-african-crown-to-rival-ghana>

and it has the 5th largest petroleum reserves and 6th largest natural gas reserves in Africa,<sup>143</sup> along with many other minerals. In comparison, Benin has relied largely on its export of cotton, fruits and nuts (making up 40% of exports in 2017),<sup>144</sup> although it's export of precious metals and stones has been growing. Ghana has expanded its manufacturing sector, manufacturing consumer electronics, automobiles and ships, as well as being the world's 2nd largest producer of cocoa,<sup>145</sup> and also has several hydroelectric dams providing hydropower. Outside of cotton production, Benin relies largely on its service industry, which makes up more than 50% of GDP,<sup>146</sup> due to its prime location allowing for trade, tourism and transportation. Decalo makes the case that Benin is "one of Africa's least economically viable states,"<sup>147</sup> with Blondel agreeing that it is a very poor state, and pointing out that it is hard to climb out of that level of poverty.<sup>148</sup> Due to their varying locations and differing natural resources, it appears that their economic paths have diverged over the last 25 or so years. However, this is not to say that natural resource wealth determines a states' economy or growth on its own - many other factors play a part, such as how the economy is managed, internal corruption, levels of aid, and so on.

While the above analysis has given us a macro-level assessment of the economies of Benin and Ghana, it is possible to zoom in to a micro-level by examining how the citizens in each of these states feel about the state of their economies. In comparing GDP growth (as an annual

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<sup>143</sup> "International," *U.S. Energy Information Administration*.

<https://www.eia.gov/international/overview/world>

<sup>144</sup> "What did Benin export in 2017?," *The Atlas of Economic Complexity*.

<http://atlas.cid.harvard.edu/explore?country=19&product=undefined&year=2017&productClass=HS&target=Product&partner=undefined&startYear=undefined>

<sup>145</sup> "Is Ghana Entering A Sweet, Golden Era?," *African Business Magazine*, 2011.

<http://africanbusinessmagazine.com/special-reports/country-reports/ghana-celebrates/is-ghana-entering-a-sweet-golden-era>

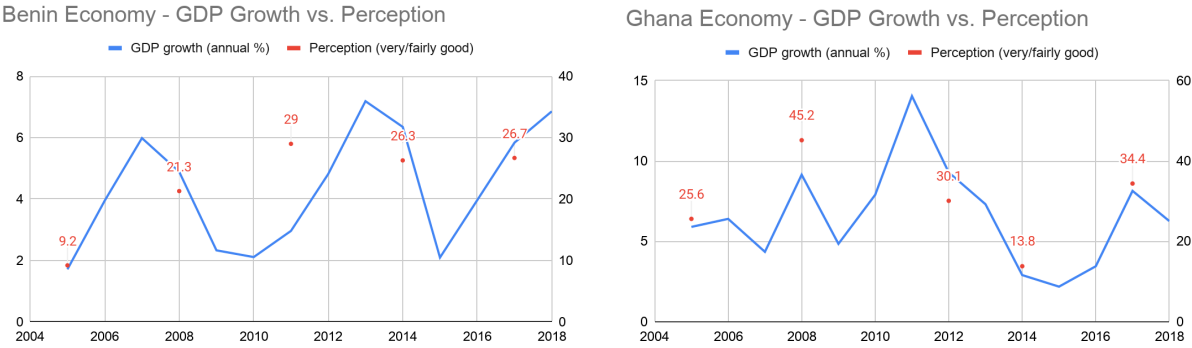
<sup>146</sup> "The World Factbook," *Central Intelligence Agency*.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/214.html>

<sup>147</sup> Decalo, *Benin: First*, 45.

<sup>148</sup> Blondel, *The part played by Benin's long-term president*, 102.

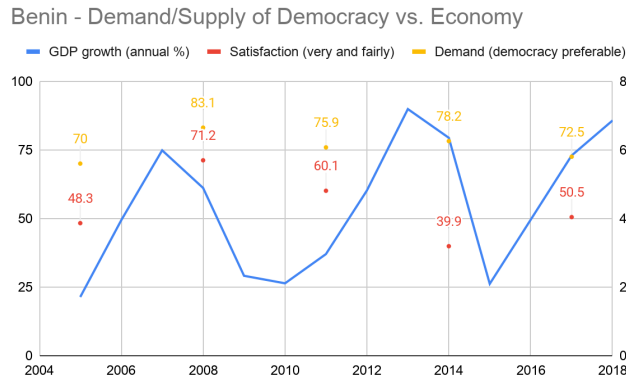
percentage), with the perception of Beninese and Ghanaians, from 2005-2018, it is clear to see that they are acutely aware of the state of the economy (see **Figures 3 and 4**). The question asked by Afrobarometer was, *In general, how would you describe: The present economic condition of this country?* This question was first asked in both Benin and Ghana in round 3 of the surveys (2005), allowing for only 5 data points, but when compared with the GDP growth for that time period (2005-2018), they follow similar trends, in both Benin and Ghana. It is clear that the average person on the ground, at least those surveyed, had a fairly accurate sense of how the economy was faring, as compared to the World Bank’s GDP data.



**Figures 3 and 4.** Comparing GDP growth (annual %) with the survey responses of those who perceived the state of the economy as ‘very good’ or ‘fairly good’, in Benin (left) and Ghana (right), from 2005-2018. (Data sourced from the World Bank and the Afrobarometer).

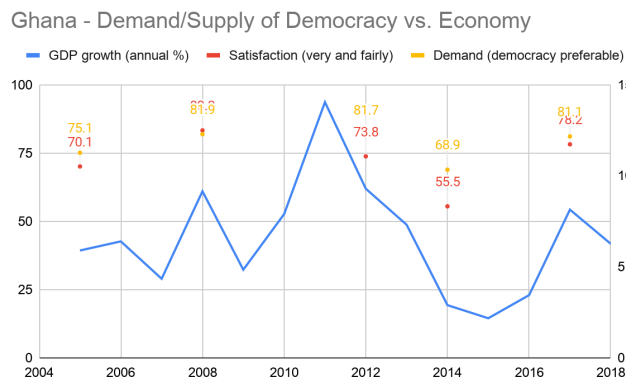
This first section has established that Benin and Ghana’s economies have fared very differently over the life of their most recent democracies, and that, at least in the last 15 years or so, based on surveys, citizens have an accurate perception of how their economy is doing. How does this tie into their desire for, and satisfaction with, democracy? In comparing the data on GDP growth, with responses regarding the desire for, and the satisfaction with, democracy, it appears that satisfaction with democracy goes down when economic growth slows (see **Figures 5 and 6**). Demand for democracy has remained fairly stable, and high, in both states, over the span of the surveys. However, while satisfaction with democracy has remained fairly high in Ghana (always

over 70%, except for during a drop in economic growth in 2014), in Benin, satisfaction has been consistently lower.



President:	Kérékou (1996)	Boni Yayi (2006)	Talon (2016)
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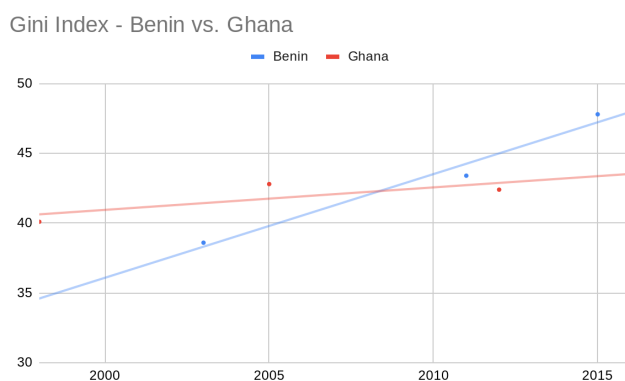
**Figure 5.** Demand and supply of democracy (those who said they were very and fairly satisfied with democracy; and those who said democracy is preferable to any other type of government), compared to GDP growth (annual %), from 2005-2018, in Benin. GDP growth data encompasses all years from 2005-2018, while demand/supply numbers represent the years the survey was conducted in Benin (2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017). Bottom table indicates the president at that time period (year they were elected). (Data sourced from the World Bank and the Afrobarometer).



President:	Kufuor (2001)	Atta Mills (2009)	Mahama (2012)	Akufo-Addo (2017)
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**Figure 6.** Demand and supply of democracy (those who said they were very and fairly satisfied with democracy; and those who said democracy is preferable to any other type of government), compared to GDP growth (annual %), from 2005-2018, in Ghana. GDP growth data encompasses all years from 2005-2018, while demand/supply numbers represent the years the survey was conducted in Ghana (2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017). Bottom table indicates the president at that time period (year they were elected). (Data sourced from the World Bank and the Afrobarometer).

Another significant factor, when discussing the economy, is income inequality. GDP may be rising, but if only a few people are getting rich, standards of living may not be increasing at all for the average person. One way to measure this is with the Gini index, which measures income distribution among a population.<sup>149</sup> The closer to zero a society is, the more equal it is. Looking at data from the World Bank (see **Figure 7**), we can see that while Ghana started off more unequal, with a score of 40.1 in 1998, as compared to 38.6 for Benin in 2003, Benin's inequality has increased at a much faster rate than Ghana's (Benin was at 47.8 in 2015, while Ghana was at 43.5 in 2016).<sup>150</sup>



**Figure 7.** Gini Index, Benin and Ghana, from 1998-2016. (Data sourced from the World Bank).

This indicates that not only is Benin's economy growing at a slower rate than Ghana's, but also that the gains from that growth are being distributed less equally in Benin, compared to Ghana. If this growing income inequality is noticeable to the average citizen, it is possible to conclude that this is contributing to lower levels of satisfaction with democracy in Benin, particularly if those demanding democracy are expecting increases in the standard of living for all. The Afrobarometer survey does not ask any questions about income levels or perceptions of income

<sup>149</sup> Jim Chappelow, "Gini Index," *Investopedia*. Last modified February 3, 2020.

<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/g/gini-index.asp>

<sup>150</sup> It is important to note that this is a relatively difficult measure to use as the World Bank has fairly limited data points on each of these states (3 for Benin, 4 for Ghana).

inequality, making it difficult to determine if the average citizen perceives there to be growing income inequality.

At the beginning of this research, another factor that was thought to be relevant was the level of aid being received. Various scholars pointed out the impact of aid on both of these economies. Gazibo made the case that, “Benin has become heavily dependent on foreign aid,”<sup>151</sup> arguing that foreign aid has allowed Benin to pay its civil servants and have a stable budget, which is one of the main reasons that its democracy has persisted.<sup>152</sup> Abdulai points out that aid affects decision-making in Ghana, arguing that donor influence makes it difficult for the Ghanaian population to exercise popular control over government policies.<sup>153</sup> In terms of raw amounts, according to World Bank data, for the last ten years, Ghana has received between \$1.1 billion and \$1.8 billion (all in USD) in Net Official Development Assistance (ODA) per year, while Benin has received somewhere between \$475 million and \$690 million a year.<sup>154</sup> The amount of aid received has grown significantly in both states, starting in 2002, with no sign of decreasing.<sup>155</sup> From 1990-2017, the average Net ODA Received (as a % of GNI) was 9.55% for Benin and 8% for Ghana. While Ghana receives far more aid, it receives less aid as a percentage of its GNI, which likely results in more independent decision-making. However, a deeper analysis showed that the levels of foreign aid received were entirely unrelated to the desire for, and satisfaction with, democracy (see **Figures 8 and 9** in the **Appendix**).

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<sup>151</sup> Gazibo, *Beyond Electoral Democracy*, 12.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

<sup>153</sup> Abdulai, *Consolidating Democracy*, 43-44.

<sup>154</sup> “World Bank Open Data,” *The World Bank*. <https://data.worldbank.org/>

<sup>155</sup> Looking at this data as a percentage of GNI is largely unhelpful, because as their economies grow, the amount of aid they receive, as a percentage of GNI, goes down (even if they are receiving more aid overall). On a per capita basis, both states have fluctuated somewhere between \$40-\$75 of ODA a year, with a recent downward trend.

In comparing the economies of Benin and Ghana, it is noticeable that the economies of these two states have diverged in the last 25 years, with Ghana experiencing much higher rates of GDP growth, which helps to measure standards of living, while Benin has been deemed one of the least viable states. Using the last five rounds of the Afrobarometer survey as the data points, it appears that satisfaction with democracy is linked to economic growth, as in both states, when economic growth slowed, satisfaction dropped.

### Democratic Institutions

#### *Political Parties*

As discussed in the section on democracy, liberal democracy revolves largely around holding multi-party elections. Essentially, voting as choosing, although this approach to democracy is disputed by many, including by Claude Ake.<sup>156</sup> Ofori makes the argument that for a democracy to be effective, “citizens are supposed to be critical of their governments, and governments as well are supposed to be tolerant of opinions that may depart sharply from their own,”<sup>157</sup> while also noting that most African ‘democratic’ regimes say they agree with this but do not actually apply it in practice.<sup>158</sup> Part of being tolerant of diverging opinions, includes having active political parties who profess different views, giving voters a choice other than the status quo. Lipset and Rokkan make the argument that “political parties play a critical role”<sup>159</sup> in ensuring a state experiences democratic consolidation. Lodge, in quoting work by Mainwaring and Scully,<sup>160</sup> also suggests that “a well-organised institutionalised party system is an important condition for democratic

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<sup>156</sup> Ake, *The Feasibility*, 150.

<sup>157</sup> Ofori, *The Quest for Good Governance*, 272.

<sup>158</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-national Perspectives*, (New York, The Free Press, 1967).

<sup>160</sup> Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully, “Introduction”, in Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully (eds), *Building democratic institutions: party systems in Latin America*, (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1995), 4-5.

consolidation.”<sup>161</sup> They point out that institutionalised party systems have four features: “stable patterns of competition, the parties themselves are socially rooted, the parties project consistent ideologies and they are well organised in such a way that leaders cannot impose purely personal concerns on the party.”<sup>162</sup> David Held points out that Machiavelli reached an unconventional conclusion for his time: “the basis of liberty may not just be a self-governing regime and a willingness to participate in politics, but may also be conflict and disagreement through which citizens can promote and defend their interests.”<sup>163</sup> He argued that it was very likely that dissension and opposing social forces may in fact be a condition of effective laws.<sup>164</sup> Whitfield agrees, stating that “a credible opposition must exist in order for elections to be competitive, a situation that does not exist in several African countries.”<sup>165</sup>

If political parties, particularly critical ones, are necessary for democracy to function, what does this look like in Benin and Ghana? This is an area where these two states differ greatly. Very broadly, Benin has many different parties, none remaining consistent for a long period of time, none representing the official opposition,<sup>166</sup> and very few representing consistent ideologies. In contrast, Ghana is undeniably a two-party state,<sup>167</sup> with two parties who take turns leading, present different ideologies and play the role of official opposition when not in power. Lodge points out that much of this goes back to how their democracies were originally constituted and how the transition to democracy happened.<sup>168</sup> In Benin, “the incumbent ruling party fragmented,”<sup>169</sup> and

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<sup>161</sup> Lodge, *Alternation and Leadership*, 22.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid*, 26.

<sup>163</sup> Held, *Models*, 42.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>165</sup> Lindsay Whitfield, “Change for a Better Ghana’: Party Competition, Institutionalization and Alternation in Ghana’s 2008 Elections,” *African Affairs* 108, no. 433 (2009), 627.

<sup>166</sup> Gazibo, *Beyond Electoral Democracy*, 20.

<sup>167</sup> Boafo-Arthur, *Democracy and Stability*, 40.

<sup>168</sup> Lodge, *Alternation and Leadership*, 26-27.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid*, 26.

the constitutional conference that was held in 1990 made the decision to “adopt the most minimal party registration requirements.”<sup>170</sup> This led to the registration of 79 parties during the first election, held in 1991.<sup>171</sup> In Ghana, due to the terms of the transition to democracy, the conditions set around the formation of parties were very demanding.<sup>172</sup> The fact that Rawlings led a very controlled transition to democracy was helpful in this case, as “initially very restrictive conditions for party registration ensured the establishment of a strong aggregated opposition party in Ghana.”<sup>173</sup> Additionally, Whitfield points to political traditions dating all the way back to the 1950s, as the reason Ghana has a stable two party system.<sup>174</sup> She makes the case that “both the NDC and NPP embody the ideological ideas and political styles of these political traditions established during decolonization, the Nkrumahist and Danquah/Busia traditions respectively.”<sup>175</sup>

As noted above, in Ghana there are two main parties, the NDC and the NPP, and the ruling party has alternated back and forth, with the NDC winning the first two elections (Rawlings), followed by the NPP winning the next two (Kufuor), then back to the NDC (Mills/Mahama), and now back to the NPP (Akufo-Addo). For parliamentary elections, these two parties have candidates running in every constituency, and while there were other parties running for some seats, in the last election (2016), no other party picked up even a single seat. In Benin, the last three presidential elections have been won by independents, and the list of parties looks vastly different each year. With the exception of the 2019 parliamentary elections (explained above in the Benin section), the last several parliamentary elections have seen at least 8 parties gain seats (typically more), with no parties running candidates in every constituency. In short, Benin’s political environment is

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<sup>170</sup> Lodge, *Alternation and Leadership*, 26.

<sup>171</sup> Blondel, *The part played by Benin’s long-term president*, 98.

<sup>172</sup> Lodge, *Alternation and Leadership*, 27.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid*, 37.

<sup>174</sup> Whitfield, *Change for a Better Ghana*, 627.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid*.

highly fragmented and, as Gazibo points out, “the lack of competitive political parties is a critical weakness of Benin’s democracy.”<sup>176</sup> He takes this one step further and argues that this leads to political parties being a poor channel for representation and results in the parties having a lack of legitimacy.<sup>177</sup> This is fairly common in Africa, where parties often form around leaders, with two of the dominant features of political systems being ethnicity and clientelism,<sup>178</sup> both of which are seen as negatively affecting democratic stability. Elischer notes that “African party politics is dominated by powerful individuals, not by ordinary party members,”<sup>179</sup> and that “informal elite arrangements are the key to becoming the leader of a party.”<sup>180</sup> While this is certainly something Benin seems to struggle with, Ghana appears to be a positive outlier in this regard, where the support bases are loyal to a party and not to a person.<sup>181</sup>

With all of this in mind, what do the surveys tell us? When looking at the question *How much do you trust [xxx]?*, the percentage of people who responded with ‘Not at all’, were evaluated to determine which bodies were least trusted among the population. Levels of distrust, ie. ‘Not at all’ responses were used, as opposed to trust, because it was the most definitive answer, as compared to ‘just a little’, ‘somewhat’, and ‘a lot’. In Ghana, the level of distrust in the ruling party and the opposition parties, from 2005 to 2017, remained at, or below, 25% (see **Figure 10**). The exception to this is in 2014, where we see a spike in the level of distrust in the ruling party. A similar spike in levels of distrust in the ruling party is seen in Benin, during the same years (see **Figure 11**). This corresponds with the drop in satisfaction with democracy that occurred the same

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<sup>176</sup> Gazibo, *Beyond Electoral Democracy*, 20.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

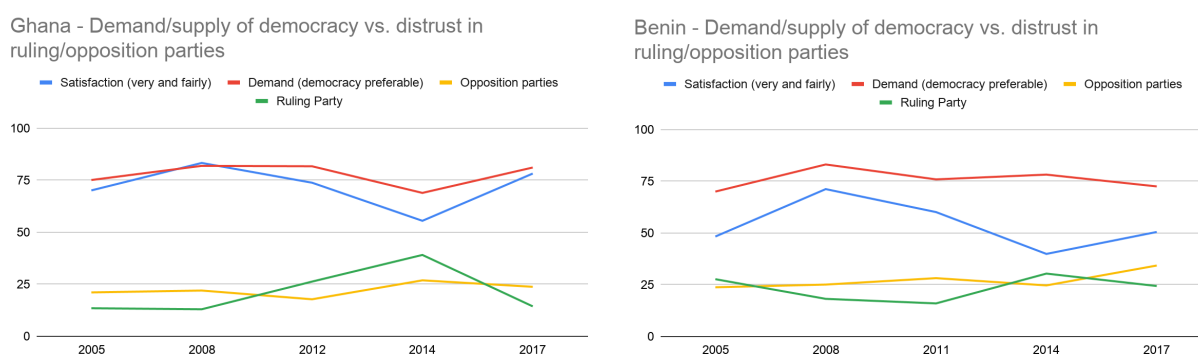
<sup>178</sup> Sebastian Elischer, “Do African Parties Contribute to Democracy? Some Findings from Kenya, Ghana and Nigeria,” *Africa Spectrum* 43, no. 2 (2008), 180-181.

<sup>179</sup> Sebastian Elischer, *Political Parties in Africa: Ethnicity and Party Formation*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013), 266.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Whitfield, *Change for a Better Ghana*, 630.

year, and is likely related to a fear that the governing party would not relinquish power in the upcoming presidential elections to be held in 2016, particularly in Benin.<sup>182</sup> From the limited data points available, it appears that when satisfaction with democracy decreases, distrust in the ruling party increases (or vice versa, when distrust in the ruling party increases, satisfaction with democracy decreases). Although there is not enough data in this analysis to explain why this is, or how the variables are related, there does appear to be a relationship between them.



**Figure 10 and 11.** Comparing the demand/supply of democracy (those who said they were very and fairly satisfied with democracy; and those who said democracy is preferable to any other type of government) with the level of distrust in ruling and opposition parties (those who responded 'Not at all' when asked if they trust the ruling party and the opposition parties), in Ghana (left) and Benin (right), 2005-2017. (Data sourced from the Afrobarometer).

On average, levels of distrust in political parties appear to be lower in Ghana. Across all of the years surveyed, the average levels of distrust in Ghana were 22% (opposition parties) and 21% (ruling party), while in Benin they were 27% (opposition parties) and 23% (ruling party). In the most recent round of the surveys (2016-18), across all African states surveyed, the level of distrust in opposition parties was 34%, and the level of distrust in the ruling party was 28%, which demonstrates that both Benin and Ghana have lower levels of distrust in their ruling and opposition parties than many other African nations. From all of this it could be argued that Ghana's entrenched two-party system has led to lower levels of distrust among the population, in

<sup>182</sup> Cheeseman, *Pathways to democracy*, 46.

regards to how they feel about the ruling and opposition parties, helping to further consolidate democracy and provide stability, as the parties have established ideologies and the electorate gives them alternating opportunities to lead the state.

### *National Electoral Commission*

Another key difference between Benin and Ghana's democratic institutions is that Benin's national electoral commission is not yet non-political, while Ghana's is very much considered independent. As Boafo-Arthur highlights, Ghana's "comparatively transparent mode of election management"<sup>183</sup> has contributed to its stability and democratic dividends.<sup>184</sup> He outlines the progression of the Electoral Commission, which responded to an arguably undemocratic election in 1992 and made several adjustments, gathering the inputs of the various parties and working hard to gain the trust of the electorate and the participating parties.<sup>185</sup> Due to the Electoral Commission continuously working to improve elections and educate the public, along with help from civil society, it has contributed greatly to the stability of democracy and the legitimacy given to those elected. As Cheeseman, Lynch and Willis point out, "while Ghana's EC has not eliminated malpractice, it has emerged as one of the most respected commissions on the continent."<sup>186</sup>

In Benin, the organization of elections falls to the Autonomous National Electoral Commission (CENA), which was created in 1994.<sup>187</sup> Although the Commission is technically autonomous, "it is the government that ultimately supplies the budget resources,"<sup>188</sup> which tempts the incumbent to modify the rules every cycle, causing disputes among parties.<sup>189</sup> This is another area where

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<sup>183</sup> Boafo-Arthur, *Democracy and Stability*, 9.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-25.

<sup>186</sup> Cheeseman, Lynch, and Willis, *Ghana: The Ebbing*, 99.

<sup>187</sup> Gazibo, *Beyond Electoral Democracy*, 16.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

foreign aid has had an impact, as donors often have to provide funds to ensure that free and fair elections happen. During the 2006 presidential elections, many people were concerned that, even though he was at the end of his two terms, Kérékou would not step down.<sup>190</sup> This concern was deepened by the governments' lack of commitment to transferring the requested funds to CENA.<sup>191</sup> Several donor states gave funds specifically to the electoral commission, giving the government no excuse for blocking election preparations, which allowed CENA's members to be appointed and the elections to be organized on time.<sup>192</sup> CENA also was at the centre of the contentious 2019 parliamentary elections outlined in the Benin section above, as they are the ones who determined that five opposition parties were to be excluded from the election, allowing only two pro-Talon parties to participate.<sup>193</sup> Gazibo concludes that one of the ways to improve the quality of democracy in Benin is by "transforming the CENA into a non-political body,"<sup>194</sup> which would help to provide stability, ensure that the rules are not changed every election, and stop the constant fighting over the electoral process.

When looking at the data (see **Figures 12 and 13**), we can see that the trend we saw in our previous section also applies to the distrust of the national electoral commission. In both Benin and Ghana, the same year that satisfaction with democracy dropped (2014), distrust in the electoral commission went up, however it did so far more significantly in Ghana than in Benin. On average there is more distrust of the electoral commission in Benin, at 22%, compared with 18% in Ghana, over the surveyed years. In both states, the electoral commission is trusted more than the ruling party and the opposition party. Across African states surveyed, the level of distrust in

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<sup>190</sup> Gazibo, *Beyond Electoral Democracy*, 17.

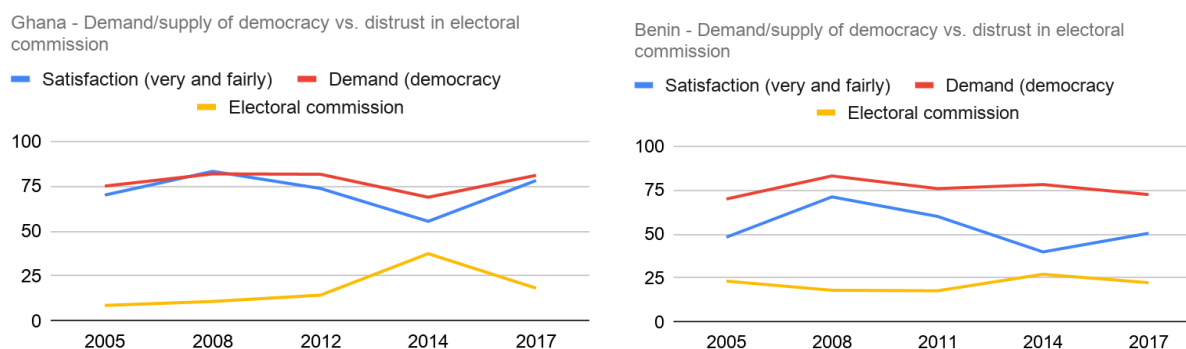
<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid, 17-18.

<sup>193</sup> Kohnert, *Benin's Stealthy Democracide*, 2.

<sup>194</sup> Gazibo, *Beyond Electoral Democracy*, 24.

the electoral commission, in the 2016-18 survey, is 26%, meaning that the electoral commissions are more trusted in Benin and Ghana than in many other African states.



**Figures 12 and 13.** Comparing the demand/supply of democracy (those who said they were very and fairly satisfied with democracy; and those who said democracy is preferable to any other type of government) with the level of distrust in the national electoral commission (those who responded 'Not at all' when asked if they trust the electoral commission), in Ghana (left) and Benin (right), 2005-2017. (Data sourced from the Afrobarometer).

While Ghana's highly independent, constantly adjusting Electoral Commission has contributed to the stability and legitimacy of democracy there, it appears that due to Benin's electoral commission being too closely managed by government in power, it has often been used to help the incumbent and has in fact contributed to disputes and a lack of legitimacy in the electoral process. It is interesting to note that in the last presidential election in each state, both having taken place in 2016, the voter turnout was 68% in Ghana and 66% in Benin, while during the last parliamentary elections, voter turnout in Ghana was 63% (2016, held the same day as the presidential election) and in Benin it was 23% (2019, as noted above).<sup>195</sup> It appears that the exclusion of several political parties by the electoral commission led to severely reduced voter turnout in Benin (in the 2015 parliamentary election, voter turnout was 66%). It is likely that the perceived independence of the national electoral commission plays a large part in whether or not

<sup>195</sup> "Countries," *Election Guide*. <http://www.electionguide.org/>.

elections are considered fair and legitimate. It will be interesting to see what the trust levels in the national electoral commission look like in Benin, in the next round of the survey.

In comparing democratic institutions in Benin and Ghana, we can see some significant differences in the number of political parties and in the independence of the national electoral commissions. Ghana has an entrenched two-party system, while Benin has a wide array of changing parties, none holding the place of the official opposition. Based on responses of trust in these various institutions, Beninese appear to have higher levels of distrust in both ruling and opposing parties, and in their national electoral commission, as compared to Ghanaians. When comparing these levels of distrust with levels of demand for, and satisfaction with, democracy, both the levels of distrust in the ruling party, and in the national electoral commission appear to be related in some way to a drop in satisfaction with democracy (which may in turn be linked to levels of economic growth).

### Political Trust

The third and final category of difference between Benin and Ghana that this paper will cover is the impact of political trust, examined through levels of distrust in government officials and perceived levels of corruption, and how this affects the demand and supply of democracy in each of these two states.

While it is outside the scope of this paper to dive deeply into the issue of political trust, it is worth saying a few words on it. Political trust comes when citizens can trust their elected officials and institutions to act in their best interest,<sup>196</sup> “an expectation that government will do ‘what’s right’.”<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Jeffrey Abramson, “Trust and Democracy,” *Knight Commission on Trust, Media, and American Democracy*, (The Aspen Institute, 2008), 4.

<sup>197</sup> Boulianne, *Building Faith in Democracy*, 5.

There are many opposing theories about political trust - one says that when citizens trust the government, they want to be involved and participation will increase (deliberative democracy); another posits that when citizens trust the government, they do not want to be involved, and participation will decrease (stealth democracy); while another says that when citizens are dissatisfied with the government, that will lead to higher participation (distrust theories).<sup>198</sup>

Regardless of the theory, studies seem to show that political trust is associated with government performance and efficiency,<sup>199</sup> where higher institutional capacity increases trust in government,<sup>200</sup> along with anti-corruption measures and protections against arbitrary rule.<sup>201</sup> As Catterberg points out, in many new democracies, “basic needs of vast segments of the population have not yet been met - partly due to the distributional effects of dramatic economic transformations,”<sup>202</sup> and that there has been a decrease in political trust, which is linked to “disillusionment and disaffection,”<sup>203</sup> as opposed to a more critical citizenry.

### *Distrust in Government Institutions*

One way to assess political trust is to look at the data on levels of distrust in various government institutions. In both Benin and Ghana, the institution with the highest levels of distrust, on average, is the police (see **Table 1**). In contrast, religious leaders have the lowest levels of distrust, on average. With the exception of the army (and the courts of law which is even), Ghanaians exhibit higher levels of distrust in all of their institutions than Beninese. These higher levels of distrust would seem to indicate that Ghanaians are less content with the performance of

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<sup>198</sup> Yunsoo Lee and Hindy Lauer Schachter, “Exploring the Relationship between Trust in Government and Citizen Participation,” *International Journal of Public Administration* 42, no. 5 (2019), 407.

<sup>199</sup> Gabriela Catterberg and Alejandro Moreno, “The Individual Bases of Political Trust: Trends in New and Established Democracies,” *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 18, no. 1 (2006), 31.

<sup>200</sup> Marc L. Hutchison and Kristin Johnson, “Capacity to trust? Institutional capacity, conflict, and political trust in Africa, 2000-2005,” *Journal of Peace Research* 48, no. 6 (2011), 737.

<sup>201</sup> Abramson, *Trust and Democracy*, 5.

<sup>202</sup> Catterberg and Moreno, *The Individual Bases*, 33.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

their government, which is interesting considering that the economic data shows Ghana growing more rapidly than Benin.

Average level of distrust (2005-2017)	Benin	Ghana
President	17%	19%
Parliament/national assembly	17%	18%
Local government council	17%	24%
Traditional leaders (R4, 6, 7)	14%	19%
Police	19%	29%
Army (R3, 5, 6, 7)	16%	13%
Courts of law	18%	18%
Religious leaders (R6, 7)	11%	12%

**Table 1.** Average levels of distrust in various institutions (those who responded 'Not at all' when asked if they trust [xxx]), in Benin and Ghana, from 2005-2017 (the numbers in brackets indicate which rounds of the survey data came from, as not all of the categories had survey data for all five rounds). (Data sourced from the Afrobarometer).

Levels of distrust in the president and in members of parliament were also compared to the data on demand and supply of democracy (see **Figures 14 and 15** in the **Appendix**), and similar to the trend seen in the previous section, distrust in the president spiked in 2014, in both states, at the same time that a drop in satisfaction with democracy was observed. In Benin, this likely tied into the worries that President Boni Yayi would not step down at the end of his second term, during the upcoming 2016 elections, as mentioned above. While in Benin there was very little change in the levels of distrust in members of parliament, Ghana also saw a spike in distrust in their members of parliament during this time period. Across all African states surveyed in 2016-18, the average is 21% who distrust the president and 25% who distrust parliament, which indicates that once again Benin and Ghana experience lower levels of distrust than many other African states.

While this data shows us that a dip in satisfaction in democracy is accompanied by (or perhaps is somehow related to/caused by) an increase in distrust in the presidency, the fact that over time, average levels of distrust in the Ghanaian president are higher than levels of distrust in the Beninese president is somewhat surprising (although the percentages are relatively close). Further research would be required to determine if this is positive or negative for their democracies. What can be concluded is that while Ghanaians have higher levels of distrust in almost every institution, they are more satisfied with their democracy than Beninese.

### *Corruption*

Another factor likely tied to political trust is corruption. While the Afrobarometer does ask a question about the general perception of the level of corruption in a state,<sup>204</sup> this question has only been asked in the last two rounds of the survey, making it difficult to examine over time. However, in comparing this limited data to GDP growth during the same period, we can see that in both Benin and Ghana, percentage GDP growth increased from 2014 to 2017, and at the same time those who said corruption was increasing more than halved. However, it is difficult to tell what the baseline amount is in this data (ie. if 2014 was an unusual spike). In the 2019 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), Benin and Ghana tied, both scoring 41/100 (with 0 being very corrupt and 100 being not corrupt at all).<sup>205</sup> However, while Benin's score has been increasing (from 37 in 2015), meaning it is becoming less corrupt, Ghana's score has been decreasing (from 47 in 2015), indicating it is becoming more corrupt.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> *In your opinion, over the past year, has the level of corruption in this country increased, decreased, or stayed the same?*

<sup>205</sup> "Corruptions Perception Index 2019," Transparency International.  
<https://www.transparency.org/cpi2019>

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*

Another measure of corruption that has more data points comes from the question: *How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say?* When looking at average perceived levels of corruption (see **Table 2**), it can be noted that Ghanaians appear to believe that less of their various officials are corrupt. With the exception of traditional leaders and the police (and religious leaders which is even), more Beninese said 'All of them' or 'Most of them' when asked which of these members were corrupt. Ghanaians appear to believe there is significantly less corruption in politics (office of the presidency, members of parliament, government officials) and in business (business executives), than Beninese. In Benin, the groups perceived as the most corrupt are business executives and police. In Ghana, the group by far perceived as the most corrupt is the police. In comparing this data to the data in the previous section (levels of distrust), it appears that although Ghanaians have higher levels of distrust (slightly) in government officials than Beninese, this does not appear to be due to perceptions of corruption.

Average perception of corruption (2005-2017)	Benin	Ghana
Office of the presidency	40%	28%
Members of parliament	41%	32%
Government officials (R3, 7)	48%	32%
Local government councillors	39%	28%
Traditional leaders (R4, 6, 7)	25%	30%
Religious leaders (R6, 7)	21%	21%
Business executives (R6, 7)	58%	33%
Police	51%	57%
Judges and magistrates	49%	37%

**Table 2.** Measuring corruption in various institutions (those who responded 'All of them' or 'Most of them' when asked if how many [xxx] were corrupt), in Benin and Ghana, from 2005-2017 (the numbers in brackets indicate which rounds of the survey data came from, as not all of the categories had survey data for all five rounds). (Data sourced from the Afrobarometer).

When assessing perceived levels of corruption over time, specifically in the office of the presidency and members of parliament (see **Figure 16** in the **Appendix**) we can see that both states experienced an increase in 2011/12 and 2014 in those who thought the office of the president and members of parliament were corrupt, followed by a decrease in the most recent round of surveys, which corresponds to the decrease in satisfaction with democracy that we have seen in earlier sections. Similar to trends seen in other sections, when a decrease in satisfaction with democracy (and a drop in GDP growth) occurs, we can also observe an increase in the number of people who perceive the office of the presidency and their members of parliament as corrupt.

This section attempted to examine the levels of political trust in Benin and Ghana, based on levels of distrust in government, as well as perceived levels of corruption. While Ghanaians had higher levels of distrust in their president than Beninese, more Beninese thought that the office of the presidency and their members of parliament were corrupt, as compared to Ghanaians. However when looking at data not based on opinion polls, namely the Corruption Perception Index, it appears that Ghana is becoming more corrupt and Benin is becoming less corrupt. Based on these two factors, it appears inconclusive as to which of these states has higher political trust. It does appear that distrust in the president and perceived levels of corruption in the office of the president and in members of parliament are affected by the state of the economy, with an increase in distrust and in the perception of corruption occurring at the same time as a drop in economic growth and a drop in satisfaction with democracy.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has sought to examine why the gap between the desire for, and satisfaction with, democracy is much larger in Benin than in Ghana. It has looked at three main categories of differences - economic performance, democratic institutions, and political trust. Based on the literature, it was clear that the perception was that economic performance played a significant part in the success or failure of democracies around the world, particularly in Africa. Looking at the data, it appears undeniable that economic performance is a large factor in the satisfaction with democracy in Benin and Ghana. Ghana, whose GDP has been growing much more quickly than Benin's, has a much higher average level of satisfaction with democracy amongst the population. As well, when the economy experienced a downturn in 2014-2015, levels of satisfaction with democracy decreased significantly, in both states, before climbing again as the GDP growth rates recovered and increased.

Another area where Benin and Ghana had stark differences were in their democratic institutions. Ghana has an entrenched two-party system, while Benin has a high number of constantly changing parties, none providing the official opposition to the government. On average, Ghanaians had less distrust of their ruling party and opposition parties than Beninese did, and both states saw a spike in distrust in the ruling party when economic growth slowed, aligning with the drop in satisfaction with democracy in both states. Ghana also has a much more independent national electoral commission than Benin, which was reflected in the fact that Ghanians have lower levels of distrust in their national electoral commission than Beninese. However, there was a much sharper increase of distrust in the national electoral commission in Ghana in 2014 when economic growth slowed and satisfaction with democracy dropped, compared to Benin, possibly due to greater sensitivity in Ghana about the independence of their electoral commission. While it

is difficult to assess which factor affects which, it is possible to conclude that at the same time that economic growth slowed and satisfaction with democracy decreased, distrust in the ruling party and in the national electoral commission (particularly in Ghana) spiked.

The final category that was examined was political trust. This is an important concept, however there is no agreed upon definition, or even understanding of how people react when they have more or less trust. This paper looked at the levels of distrust in a variety of institutions, as well as at perceived levels of corruption in those same institutions. The data demonstrated that levels of distrust in most institutions, including the president and members of parliament, are slightly lower in Benin than in Ghana, indicating that Ghanaians are more distrusting of their government officials than Beninese. While both states received identical scores in the most recent Corruption Perceptions Index, a much higher number of Beninese thought that their government officials were corrupt, compared to Ghanaians. Both levels of distrust in the president, and perceptions of corruption in the office of the presidency, and of members of parliament, spiked in 2014, during the slowdown in economic growth, at the same time that satisfaction in democracy dropped in both states.

From this research, it appears that economic performance likely remains the best indicator of levels of satisfaction with democracy, both when comparing across states, and comparing within states, over time. When economic growth slowed (which happened at the same time in Benin and Ghana), satisfaction with democracy dropped by 20 points in both states. However, across time, levels of satisfaction with democracy remained higher in Ghana than in Benin, likely due to higher economic growth, institutionalised political parties, a more independent national electoral commission, and lower perceived levels of corruption, among other factors. While it is not clear

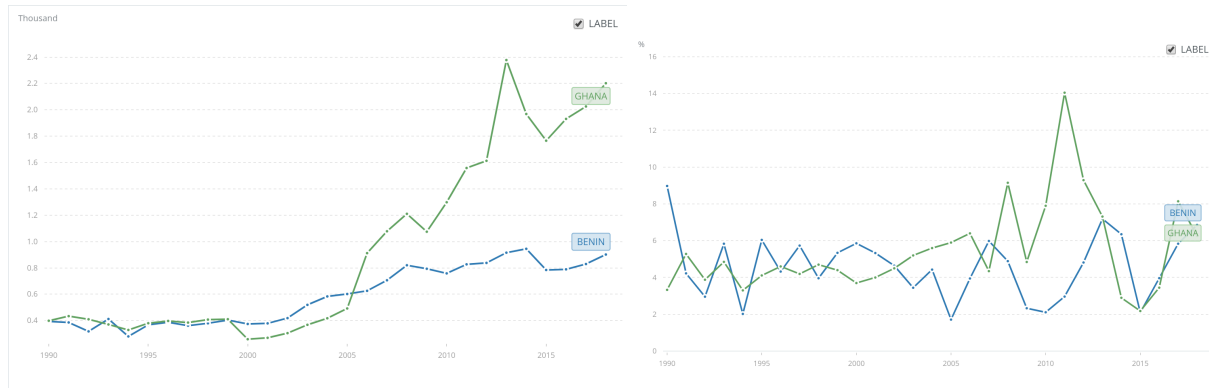
exactly how they are related (which factor affects which), it could be argued that when citizens have higher levels of distrust in the political elite - the president, members of parliament, the ruling party and the national electoral commission - they are less satisfied with democracy. This also applies to perceived levels of corruption in the president and in members of parliament. The higher they perceive corruption to be, the less satisfied they are with democracy. Over time, as more survey responses are collected, it will be possible to make more conclusions about how these factors are linked to a decrease in satisfaction with democracy.

As a final note, two policy recommendations arise from the data. The first is that, while governments should always be working on reducing corruption and improving levels of trust, this seems particularly important during times of slowed economic growth. In an effort to continue to consolidate democracy during economic downturns and to improve stability, governments should attempt to have high levels of communication and transparency with citizens during these periods. It is important that citizens continue to perceive the government as legitimate and trustworthy, even in periods of economic hardship. While this recommendation may be applicable to all governments, it is especially relevant in the context of states that continue to have a large number of citizens living in poverty, where a slowdown in economic growth and a weakened job market can be the difference between living in poverty or living in extreme poverty, attempting to survive from one day to the next.

The second recommendation follows from the literature that indicates that for many people living in conditions of poverty, desires and expectations of democracy are closely tied to material well-being and increases in standards of living. During times of economic growth, the benefits from this growth should be distributed equally amongst the population, as much as possible, to

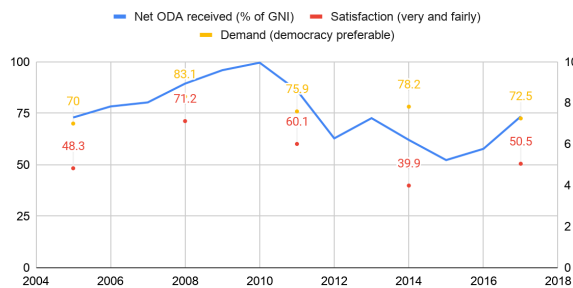
help increase standards of living for all and build trust. This will require strong moral leadership, with leaders who view their roles as being good stewards of the state, its people and its resources. Governments should not be seen as enriching themselves, but rather as working to improve the standards of living of all of their citizens. This will build up trust that will remain during periods of economic slowdown, helping to maintain stability, and satisfaction with democracy, until growth increases once again. Keeping these policy recommendations in mind will help to provide a bulwark during periods of economic fluctuation, keeping satisfaction with democracy stable, and ensuring that various actors do not turn to other non-democratic means of government in times of difficulty.

Appendix

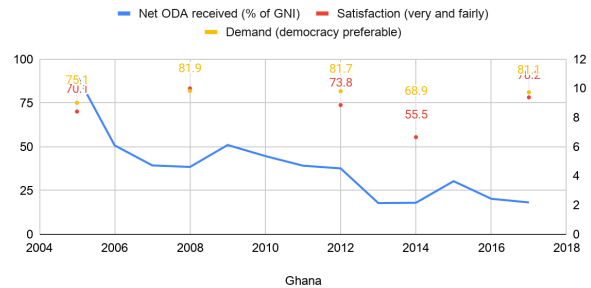


**Figures 1 and 2.** GDP per capita (left) and GDP growth (annual %) (right), 1990-2017, in Benin (blue) and Ghana (green). (Data sourced from the World Bank).

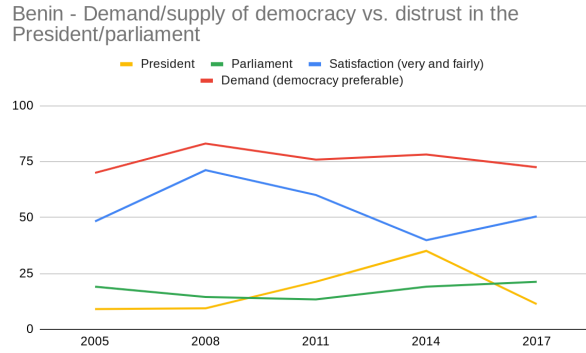
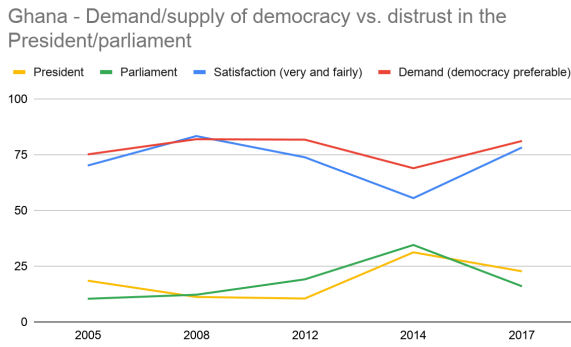
Benin - Demand/Supply of Democracy vs. Development Assistance Received



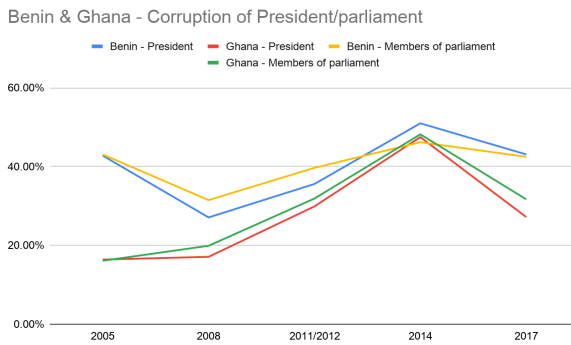
Ghana - Demand/Supply of Democracy vs. Development Assistance Received



**Figures 8 and 9.** Demand and supply of democracy (those who said they were very and fairly satisfied with democracy; and those who said democracy is preferable to any other type of government), compared to Net ODA received (% of GNI), from 2005-2017, in Benin and Ghana. Net ODA received encompasses all years from 2005-2017, while demand/supply numbers represent the years the survey was conducted (2005, 2008, 2011 (Benin)/2012(Ghana), 2014, 2017). (Data sourced from the Afrobarometer and the World Bank).



**Figures 14 and 15.** Comparing the demand/supply of democracy (those who said they were very and fairly satisfied with democracy; and those who said democracy is preferable to any other type of government) with the level of distrust in the president and parliament (those who responded ‘Not at all’ when asked if they trust the president and parliament), in Ghana (left) and Benin (right), 2005-2017. (Data sourced from the Afrobarometer).



**Figure 16.** Percentage of people who responded ‘all of them’ or ‘most of them’ when asked if ‘The President and his officials in office’ and ‘Members of parliament’ were corrupt, in Benin and Ghana, 2005-2017. (Data sourced from the Afrobarometer).

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