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Freda Asante
Department of Political Science, Ohio University, 1 Ohio University, Athens, OH, 45701, United States

Corresponding Author:
Freda Asante
Department of Political Science, Ohio University, 1 Ohio University, Athens, OH, 45701, United States

Developing Democracy: Alternations between autocracy and democracy in Ghana

Freda Asante

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Abstract
This review essay explores the complexities of democracy and authoritarianism in Ghana, the first Sub-Saharan African nation to achieve independence in 1957. It examines Ghana's transition between military and democratic governments, focusing on three key periods of elected leadership and three instances of military rule prior to the establishment of the Fourth Republic in 1993. The study emphasizes the critical prerequisites for democratization, such as economic development, institutionalization, and the role of political elites, while drawing on pertinent ideologies like modernization and authoritarianism. Despite Ghana's status as an African beacon of democratic peace, challenges such as corruption, weak state institutions, and limited political participation persist, implying that the country's democratic framework, while stable, is paradoxically linked to underlying issues that threaten its integrity. This analysis affirms the necessity of a balanced approach to mobilization and institutionalization, as well as the importance of elite negotiations in avoiding political instability, ultimately posing significant questions about the future of democracy in Ghana.

Keywords: Democratization, authoritarianism, economic development, political elites, military coup, institutionalization

Introduction
The first nation in sub-Saharan Africa to achieve political independence was Ghana, prior to other West African nations. After gaining independence in 1957, Ghana experienced a series of transitions between authoritarian and democratic rule, with three periods of elected governments and three of military rule between 1957 and 1992, except for the first republic under Kwame Nkrumah, the interludes of civilian government under the second (1969-1972) and third (1979-1981) republics have been short lived, enduring for no longer than 30 months. However, in 1993, the military government of Jerry John Rawlings gave way to the fourth Republic of Ghana after presidential and parliamentary elections in the late 1992.
In relation to some studies by other authors, this study focuses on how some pre-requisites such as economic development and modernization theory, institutionalization, authoritarianism, and the role of actors or elite affect the democratization process of Ghana. Even though, Ghana is considered a model of democratic peace in Africa, Ghana's exalted democratic image appears to cover up some hidden fuss that lie behind its democracy. Ghana's system of governance is considered a paradox rather than a model because, despite having achieved democratic stability and peaceful power changes, it nevertheless faces issues including corruption, military rule, a weak state apparatus, and conflicts resulting from the persistent political interference with chieftaincy institution by state elites, clientelism and limited participation or mobilization to marginalized groups.

Economic Development and Mobilization
Huntington (1965) [7] noted that when too many groups within a society become highly mobilized and politically active, it can lead to social and political instability. Excessive mobilization can result in frequent protests, demonstrations, and conflicts between different groups, which can undermine the stability of a democracy. He believed that the consolidation of democracy is a delicate process that requires a balance between mobilization and institutionalization. Excessive mobilization, he argued, can hinder the development of stable democratic institutions because it creates a climate of constant political upheaval (Huntington, 1965) [7].

His argument support Ghana's transition to Democracy to some extent. Less participation and mobilization of citizens contributed to Ghana's democratization process; this was because citizens as at then were not highly educated to participate or initiate in order to fight for their rights. This affirms what Lipset said that; the more well-to-do a nation, the greater the chances that it will sustain democracy (Lipset, 1959) [14]. Contrarily to Huntington SP (1965) [7] argument, Wood (2001) [15] argues that the democratization processes involve a coexistence of elite-driven negotiations and popular mobilization, to him, this plays a central role in shaping the transition to democracy. To him also, mobilization is key.

Again, according to Lipset, a nation's level of economic growth and its likelihood of establishing and maintaining a democracy are strongly positively correlated. He contends that countries with a strong economy are more likely to maintain democratic institutions in the long run. The foundation of Lipset's argument is modernization theory, which holds that when civilizations progress economically, they also go through social and political transformations that are favorable to democracy. This includes a rise in urbanization, improved educational attainment, and a varied, wealthy middle class that may demand political participation and rights (Lipset, 1959) [14]. Since 1992, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) have dominated the political scene in Ghana. According to Mills (2018) [9], neither the NPP nor the NDC receive any support from recognizable socioeconomic group. In reality, organizations of well-known people and their fans appear to be all that party supporters are. Economic development is important but not necessarily so important or the sole condition for the emergence of democracy. The economy is simultaneously plagued by crippling debt and unemployment. The distribution of income is horrifyingly skewed. The financing for social initiatives is insufficient. The majority of the people is getting poorer and poorer. Social unrest has increased. Every eight years, the populace reliably votes for "change" then bitterly complains about broken promises.

The situation in Ghana shows that economic growth is not necessarily the only pre-requisite for democracy, as (Przeworski & Limongi, 1997) [5] contends that economic development does not necessarily cause the emergence of democracy. In fact, if the options are all unappealing (e.g., six of one vs half a dozen of the other), democracy is certain to make a mistake. Ghana has to implement a reform program that combines political, regulatory, and economic initiatives. To get rid of cronyism, influence peddling, and "pay to play," campaign finance regulations need to be changed. Contracts are only given to party financiers, party adherents, and family members, which is an insult to economic efficiency and justice.

Transition to Democracy: Military Coups and Regime Types

Ghana was not endowed with a particularly favorable starting position: the nation is ethnically diverse, has a history of military coups and political instability, and at the outset of the multi-party period, it reported a low GDP and significant unemployment, Therefore, it makes intuitive sense that an actor-centric perspective could be more appropriate for interpreting Ghana's democratic consolidation. After the Gold Coast gained independence from Britain in the 1940s and 1950s, Kwame Nkrumah served as the country of Ghana's president from 1957 to 1966. However, He was overthrown by the National Liberal Council because some of his initiatives strained Ghana's economy which brought about food shortages and increased in corruption which affected the standard of living of citizens. This is considered a political weakness; According to (Bunce & Wolchik, 2009) [3], a collection of weaknesses may lead to the weakening of a regime. These weaknesses include public discontent with the regime, the leader's falling popularity, growing anger, and growing confidence about the likelihood of a different regime taking its place (p.9). This also affirms the notion that economic development is a pre-requisite for sustainable democracy (Lipset, 1959) [14]. He was overthrown because of his inability to develop Ghana's economy. According to Lipset, a democratic government's legitimacy in the eyes of its people can be increased through economic prosperity. People may perceive democracy as a more desirable and efficient form of government if their standard of living and economic prospects rise. Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings who ruled Ghana with a military regime on the other hand was more concerned about the standard of living of the people and worked towards achieving that. Rawlings became the symbol of hope and deliverance for the people of Ghana. After Kwame Nkrumah's regime were some other regimes which also took Ghana down a road of economic ruin. On 31st December 1981, Rawlings ousted President Hilla Limann in a coup d'état, claiming that Civilian rule was weak, and the country's economy was deteriorating. Rawlings used democratic structures to legitimize military rule, this is to say not all cases of transition would end up as consolidated democracies. A number of successful democracies exist alongside surviving autocracies and hybrid regimes that are neither fully democratic nor autocratic (Osei, 2017) [8]. The defense committees were a tool utilized by Rawlings to win over politicians. They were also employed to prevent widespread unrest, intimidate opponents of the dictatorship, and give his government legitimacy. Essentially, they served as tools of governmental authority and power. Corruption and the capture of state institutions by powerful interest groups can erode the legitimacy of regimes; when citizens perceive that government officials are corrupt and self-serving, it can lead to disillusionment and protest (Bunce & Wolchik, 2009, p.11) [3]. According to (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018) [13], democracy require strong institutions that can act as checks on the abuse of power. They also talk about the role of a populist leaders who often claim to represent the will of the people against established institutions; populist leaders are not necessarily anti-democratic but can exploit democratic processes to consolidate power and undermine democratic norms and institutions; these are some of the features of Rawlings regime. At some point he was seen as a populist. His government was called the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC). Rawlings goal was to ensure freedom and justice, and to restore the nation's pride and infrastructure through hard work, determination, and mass inclusion, but still in a military rule or regime. Politics in Ghana was then being driven very much by ordinary people, youth, and students. In the early 1990s the African continent began to experience a new wave of political structure that is the return of multi-party politics. Rawlings then changed his government from military to civilian; so, the constitution

was written from 1992 to present, and Ghana has had one of the most stable democracies in Africa. At this point, democracy was attained, the right to participate in a political system is an important aspect of democratization, and in the absence of the right to oppose, the right to participate is stripped of a large part of its significance. Free and fair elections is a relevant aspect of democracy just as citizens being able to participate in the political process and having access to their representatives (Dahl, 1971) [4].

Elite Structures and Cultural Diversities

Elite integration and unity promote stability. Important elites must have access to central decision-making, but they must also share fundamental political beliefs and conventions, as well as regard bargaining as a legitimate method of conduct. In other words, elites must be willing to agree to disagree for there to be a consensus on values. In contrast, divided elites are intensely distrustful of one another and split along racial, ethnic, or cultural lines. Their communication networks do not span factional lines, which results in a lack of structural integration to a sufficient degree. Therefore, a transformation in elite structures and behavior is necessary for a regime change towards democracy.

A star-like network would be anticipated under authoritarian regimes, where the most central actor, who is typically the leader controls the flow of information and all other resources. Levitsky & Way (2010) [12] argue that incumbents in competitive authoritarian regimes often use their control over key economic and financial resources to manipulate the political playing field. This control allows them to allocate resources to loyal supporters, including influential business interests and regional power brokers. By ensuring that key economic players depend on their favor, incumbents can build a network of support that bolsters their political power. Ghanaian elites were sharply split during most of the country's history. Two significant camps can be distinguished from an overly simplistic and generic viewpoint. On the one hand, there is the Busia-Danquah heritage, which has long been connected to the prosperous professional and business elites of the country's south, the majority of whom are Akan ethnic people. In opposition to this group is a leftist tradition that has always supported a political stance that is anti-elite. This custom got its start with Kwame Nkrumah and the CPP (Convention People's Party), who were praised for their hostility to urban elites and support for mass politics. Subsequently, the social-democratic National Democratic Congress (NDC) served as a representative of the leftist viewpoint. However, party formation perpetuated the split between the two political traditions. Under the charismatic leadership of Jerry John Rawlings, the military government of the Provisional National Defense Council declared a revolution in 1981 to defend the common person. Rawlings first made an effort to position himself as an alternative to the two more established political traditions. However, he and the Nkrumah's shared a strong anti-elite and socialist ideology, and his government also utilized some of the former CPP networks and personnel to strengthen its own power base. In the 1990s, the initial moves toward broader elite unification were made, this is to affirm what (O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986) [10] said that there should be negotiations and agreements among various elite groups during a democratic transition. These bargains can involve compromises on key issues and are often necessary to establish democratic institutions. Bermeo (1997) acknowledges that elite-driven democratization often involves negotiations and bargains among political elites. These negotiations can lead to the establishment of democratic institutions and processes. Elites may recognize the need for compromise to protect their interests and avoid protracted conflict. Rawlings understood that his government would not be able to defy the demands for political liberalization in the face of mounting reform pressure from both international funders and domestic parties. The reform process started very slowly and did not involve much opposition consultation. Wolchik and Curry emphasize that the division and competition among political elites can weaken regimes, as different factions vie for power and influence. This fragmentation can hinder the development of stable and effective governance, therefore a need for elite unification.

Argues that one may be tempted to think in terms of a "tipping equilibrium" in which each actor's support for democracy depends on the number of other actors who support it. It should be noted that the likelihood of successful subversion and the cost associated with its failure depend on the willingness of other political forces to defend the democratic institutions (p.1). He also makes the case that political forces' willingness to cooperate depends on their chances of succeeding within democratic systems. The likelihood of an actor complying increases with their level of assurance that the relationship between political forces would not change negatively within democratic institutions, the less hazardous the subversion, the less likely it is that potential antidemocratic forces will cooperate.

Conclusion

This study has reviewed the process of democratization in Ghana; taking into consideration how some methodologies and discussed literatures about modernization, economic development, authoritarianism, competitive authoritarianism, political actors, role of elites and the mass, either support or does not support the process of democratization in Ghana.

Ghana's system of governance from the beginning has been alternations between democracy and autocracy and has however faced some uncertainties, such as military coups and economic crises, nonetheless, the country is undeniably considered a democratic one in Africa.

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