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Governance quality and popular support for democracy in Africa

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Through this journey, God has been my source of strength and refuge. When I thought I reached my capacity, You reminded me that there is more.

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Abstract

The stability of democracy depends on citizens' support for and satisfaction with democracy as a form of government. Yet the past decade has seen a public backlash against democracy worldwide, and Africa is no exception. This study aims to clarify the determinants of public perceptions of democracy, in particular how the quality of governance in African democracies affects public perceptions of democracy as a preferred system of government. Are citizens more likely to be supportive of and satisfied with democracy in countries that score higher on indicators of political and economic governance quality? This thesis addresses this question using a mixed methods approach. The study harnesses multi-level statistical analysis, incorporating national-level governance indicators from the Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG), Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem), and Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI), alongside individual-level survey data from Afrobarometer covering thirty-four African countries. The statistically selected case studies of Sudan, Botswana, South Africa, and Zimbabwe probe more deeply by capturing various experiences with democracy. The central finding is that public support for democracy in Africa depends significantly on the quality of governance. However, support for democracy is not based purely "instrumentally" on the receipt of material benefits, as citizens also value the practical provision of political freedoms and protections "intrinsic" to democracy. These findings challenge existing assumptions about the transactional nature of democratic support, highlighting the critical role of governance quality in fostering a deep-rooted commitment to democratic ideals. By foregrounding the lived experiences of African citizens within democratic systems, this thesis contributes to the discourse on democracy in Africa. It shifts the analytical lens from abstract institutional performance metrics to the tangible democratic encounters of individuals, providing a richer, more textured understanding of democratic resilience and support on the continent. Through this approach, the study not only responds to the existing gaps in literature but also offers fresh insights into the complex dynamics that underpin public attitudes towards democracy in Africa, thereby enhancing our understanding of the factors that promote or hinder democratic engagement and support.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Democracy derives from the Greek word "demo" which means people and "kratos" meaning rule (Fleck and Hanssen 2006). The persistence of rigged elections, the monopolisation and centralisation of power, corruption, poverty, the repression of opposition parties and civic engagement are features that have arguably become interwoven in Africa's democratic processes. These features contradict the very meaning of democracy, which is centred on the rule of and by the people. Ordinary citizens should be part of the democratic process and should be able to decide who rules them. However, evidence gathered for this thesis suggests that in several African countries, those appointed to office do not govern, instead they rule. This is largely because they are not held accountable by and to citizens. From this perspective, one has to grapple with the question of why ordinary Africans support democracy when it appears that it is not largely producing its intended outcome. More specifically, what informs public attitudes towards democracy?

This thesis draws from the dichotomy of democratic attitudes into demand for democracy and supply of democracy as derived from Bratton and Mattes' (2001) efforts to assess the attitudes of African citizens towards democracy. Bratton and Mattes note that Africans support democracy despite being dissatisfied with the performance of the elected government. This argument implies that intrinsic support for democracy exceeds instrumental consideration. This was the first attempt to capture attitudes towards democracy in new African democracies. In essence, democracy and governance quality are assessed at an individual level. Following this key finding, Rod Alence (2004) advanced this discourse by being the first to use statistical analysis to examine the impact of political institutions on governance quality in sub-Saharan Africa. Alence found that despite the various shortcomings among Africa's emerging democracies, democratic institutions systematically improve developmental governance in African states. In this case, democracy and governance quality are examined at a country level, shifting the focus from an individual level. This thesis uses the contributions by Bratton and Mattes (2001) and Alence (2004) as a point of departure to further advance the discourse. In doing so, I place democratic attitudes as the intercept between the quality of democracy and the quality of governance.

If democracy is for and by the people, then regardless of what think tanks, analysts, and institutions may rank countries, there is a ceiling to the reasonableness of these rankings and indexes if they are accepted in isolation to public perspectives. It is citizens who defend and uphold democracy and its principles.

For the purpose of the arguments made and conclusions drawn in this thesis, democratic and governance quality are assessed, understood, and identified by using theoretical measures such as human rights, political liberties, active participation, safety and rule of law, free and fair elections, and economic growth. In other words, democratic governance is assessed based on whether it fulfils its institutional mandate. But how do ordinary Africans experience these measures of democratic governance? Are ordinary Africans' opinions of democracy aligned with institutional trends? What are the expectations associated with democracy? In a continent where conflict remains the norm in some countries, where GDP per capita is low - despite contestations on whether it can be used as a measure for development, and where poverty and inequality remain a serious threat, do citizens still support democracy? These are some of the questions that I explore and unpack in this thesis.

Public perceptions of democracy can provide an in-depth insight into the health, stability, and future of democracy in Africa. Although research on democracy and governance in Africa is voluminous, surprisingly little empirical work has been devoted to understanding what aspects of and how public experiences with democratic governance influence how citizens value democracy (Davids 2010; Krawczyk and Sweet-Cushman 2017; Mattes and Bratton 2007).

Citizens are not only at the receiving end of decisions made by governments, but it is citizens who defend democracy. In considering public perceptions, we place locality on whose democracy is being advanced and whose democracy is at stack. I argue that a lack of insight into the public experience of democratic governance may result in misinformed policies and a populace that feels detached from its government.

Where democracy is concerned, the debate on the stability, health, and durability of democracy in Africa remains hotly contested (see Asunka 2023; Colliers 2021; Khannenje 2021). Early research primarily attributed governance to the health and stability of democracy (Rivera-Batiz 2002; Ndulu and O'Connell 1999). Although these discussions have advanced our understanding of what strengthens democracy, they do not specify what upholds it. Moreover,

the discussion on the association between democracy and governance can lack specificity as governance is either discussed holistically or the focus is placed on a specific aspect of governance (see Cillers 2021; Ake 1993; Cejudo 2011; Bauhr and Grimes 2021; Osaghae 2004). There is also a lack of consensus on the nature of the correlation between governance and democracy (Fosu 2006; Diamond 1999; Colliers 2021).

Some argue that democracy and governance are independent of each other (Ishiyama 2019; Emmerson 2012), and then others argue the two depend on each other (Stockemer 2014; Mamaghani and Saha 2015). Prominent scholars like Claude Ake (1993) argue that Africans view democracy in terms of prevailing economic conditions. Jakkie Colliers (2021) argues that democracy is not the solution to Africa's lack of development. This is primarily because democracy tends to only contribute to growth in more advanced levels of development where competitive political systems reinforce a competitive economic system. Larry Diamond (1999) on the other hand argues that support for democracy is primarily driven by political factors.

All three perspectives capture an aspect of democracy and its processes in Africa. Ake's (1993) argument is speaking to the social and economic conditions that Africans are subjected to. More importantly, his argument captures what neoliberalism either overly simplifies and/or underexplores – the dichotomy between political and economic rights. Arguably, no other continent has had to choose between economic or political rights as the two have not been achieved simultaneously - especially in more advanced democracies. Furthermore, history indicates that economic rights and stability were pursued at the expense of political rights. The rise of Britain, the United States of America, Germany, and Spain; and during the 1960s and 1970s, the rise of Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea, China, and as of the mid-2000s' Ethiopia and Rwanda are examples of rapid growth without democracy. The Asian Tigers democratised after achieving middle-income status (Cilliers 2021). While Ake's (1993) argument remains important in addressing some of the myths around the relationship between democracy and economic development, it does however fall short of capturing the emerging trend in African perceptions that being – even with poor economic conditions, on average the demand for democracy exceeds satisfaction with democracy.

The latter supports the idea that Africans are good judges of the quality of democracy and governance. The gap between support and satisfaction as well as the gap between economic and political governance highlights the difference between a political system versus the

performance of the elected government. I argue that the fact that most Africans continue to support democracy despite the presence of various factors that justify Africans not supporting democracy, is an indication that when Africans are assessing political systems they prefer, their assessment is based on the distinction between the values and principles that characterise the political system, and not the actual government's performance as asserted by some scholars.

This thesis pursues this argument by outlining how the quality of governance impacts the government's capacity to deliver and meet the needs of citizens. Elements like crime rates, quality of service delivery, interactions with law enforcement and security personnel, availability of and access to human rights, and the liberty to speak and express oneself shape the everyday perceptions of democracy among the public. The fulfilment of these aspects influences how citizens perceive their democratic experience.

In addition to the main question, a critical aspect of the inquiry involves determining the implications if there is a widespread belief that democracy is not being adequately provided. This is an important question if we are to understand the relationship between governance and the governed. Employing both qualitative and quantitative analysis, this thesis establishes that in Africa, the consequence of poor political governance on support is more costly and consequential. Evidence from the analysis identifies pseudo-democracy, coups, rigged elections, corruption, low support from Africa's youth, poor service delivery and violent protests – as some of the consequences of poor democratic governance.

Why Africa?

As previously mentioned, the foundation of democracy lies in enabling citizens to elect their leaders through free and fair elections. Consequently, its stability hinges on the degree to which ordinary citizens view it as the sole legitimate political framework. Yet, the question arises again: Why should Africans support democracy when it appears to yield minimal benefits? As noted by many scholars, the African continent is characterised by many contradictions and is a meeting ground of complexities (Ake 1993; Leon 2010; Aderibigbe and Ojo 2022). It is a continent where, despite the vast presence of human and mineral resources, millions continue to live in poverty. It is a land blessed with lakes and extensive rivers, yet numerous regions still grapple with obtaining clean water, leading to situations where its inhabitants suffer from thirst. Furthermore, despite having fertile land capable of feeding multiple continents, Africa faces

challenges in ensuring food security for its population (Leon 2010). Furthermore, the continent is marked by persistent inter-ethnic power conflicts and a corruption crisis that has become so normalised that election choices often boil down to selecting the lesser of two evils. It is a continent with the youngest demographic yet governed by some of the oldest leaders. Despite being the poorest continent, it is home to some of the world's wealthiest leaders.

These contradictions within the continent attest to what The Economist (2000) once described as a hopeless continent. Notably, the issue of poor governance is not exclusive to Africa however, what sets the continent apart from those that are both democratically and economically affluent is that the repercussions of such governance hinder any potential for political and economic advancement. Moreover, these challenges have the effect of regressing the continent's progress by decades. Thus, any efforts to kickstart sustainable economic and political growth and stability have a minimal impact. In such cases, it is not necessarily an issue of the political system, but a structural and leadership issue. Where leadership is concerned, it is not enough to acknowledge that there is a leadership crisis, however, it is also necessary to identify the type of leadership that is needed to guide each respective country in attaining democratic stability.

Similar to other continents that experienced colonialism, it is challenging to separate Africa's current economic and political developments from its colonial experience. The aftermath of colonialism in Africa has created a complex and intertwined web of economic, political, cultural, social, ethnic, religious, and racial issues. Arguably, this legacy is unique and unprecedented, such that no leader, institution, policy, initiative, or state has been able to provide a sufficient response. Given the varying durations, intensities, and characteristics of colonial rule across the continent, Africa's experience with democracy was inevitably going to be distinct. This underscores the importance of context-specific analyses and understandings of democracy within the African setting. Most Africans experience or have experienced the absence of good democratic governance outcomes and therefore understand and recognise what alternatives to democracy cannot produce. This demystifies the idea that democracy can only find root and thrive in the presence of certain conditions – more specifically, favourable economic conditions.

Given that Africa is the poorest continent, characterised by the lowest GDP per capita, minimal income rates, limited educational opportunities, and prevalent human rights violations, it would

be reasonable to anticipate that support for democracy would be more closely linked with economic governance. Contrary to such expectations, the main argument pursued in this thesis is that support for democracy is more significantly associated with political governance than with economic governance, compared to satisfaction with democracy. Generally, elected governments do not meet the expectations for high-quality democratic governance. However, the analysis reveals that in Africa, democracy is appreciated more for its intrinsic values than for its practical benefits.

Currently, the future of democracy in advanced democracies is fragile. The rise of populism in the West and elsewhere (Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) 2021); rise in terrorism; declined voter turnout; new coups and other attempts to destabilise representative governments in countries like Brazil, Peru, Turkey, Thailand, and others (Gorokhovskaia, Shahbaz, and Slipowitz 2023; Derpanopoulos et al. 2016); and the increasing influence of authoritarianism – are threats to democracy (EIU 2021). This observation, coupled with increased global dissatisfaction with democracy (Wike, Silver, and Castillo 2019) fosters limited optimism regarding the state and prospects of democracy. This observation is further supported by Freedom House noting that global freedom has been on the decline for 17 consecutive years up to 2022 (Gorokhovskaia, Shahbaz, and Slipowitz 2023).

In contrast to the global decline in freedom, democratic trends in Africa offer a more hopeful narrative. In 1988, Freedom House reported that only 17 out of 50 African countries were classified as ‘free’ or ‘partially free’ (Gastil 1989). By 2018, this number had risen to 32 out of 54 African countries being categorised as either ‘free’ or ‘partially free’. Additionally, the continent has witnessed popular protests that have led some scholars to suggest that these movements might signal the beginning of a fourth wave of democratisation (Howard and Hussain 2013; Abushouk 2016).

One of the most popular waves of protests was the 2010/11 Arab Spring that started in the Middle East and North Africa. Although there was great enthusiasm and expectation for what this would birth, the impact of this movement appears to have had a short fuse as signified by Tunisia being the only country that has undergone a democratic transition (Howard and Hussain 2013). In 2018 and 2019, there were other significant waves of protests across Africa, where citizens rallied for political change and challenged longstanding parties and leaders as noted by Shaban (2019). Starting from Ethiopia, and spreading to Sudan, and then Algeria,

these movements reflected a growing demand for democratic reforms and governance accountability on the continent. Similar protests were observed in Zimbabwe, Guinea, Liberia, Cameroon, Nigeria, and others (Shaban 2019).

This trend highlights two critical points. Firstly, as Claassen (2019) finds, while support for democracy is more strongly and positively correlated with the endurance of democracy, its impact on the initial emergence of democracy is less pronounced. The experience of Tunisia, the only North African country to democratise, highlights that even strong public support for democratic ideals may not be sufficient to overcome obstacles such as historical legacies, economic challenges and entrenched authoritarian regimes to achieve democratic emergence.

Secondly, the third wave of democratisation (a term coined to describe the surge of democratic transitions since the 1970s), continues to persist on the continent. This indicates a sustained commitment among ordinary Africans to democratic principles. However, despite this commitment, the quality of democracy and governance across the continent remains predominantly weak, highlighting the need for significant improvements in institutional strength and democratic practices.

Furthermore, the findings from this thesis indicate that public opinions are aligned with expert-based surveys and indexes on democratic governance such as Freedom House, Varieties Democracy, the World Governance Index, and the Ibrahim Index of African Governance. The positive correlation between citizen and expert evaluations reinforces the assertion made in this thesis that Africans are adept at assessing the quality of democracy in their respective countries. This finding is encouraging as it indicates that citizens are discerning observers of their governments' performance and cannot be easily misled by political rhetoric. It further highlights the critical and informed stance that citizens take regarding governance and democratic practices.

This thesis also emphasises that intrinsic support for democracy in Africa does not stem from a lack of critical analysis and understanding of democratic principles. However, it originates from the citizens' daily experiences with democratic governance. This perspective suggests that African citizens' support for democracy is grounded in their practical interactions with and observations of how democracy functions in their everyday lives, shaping their perceptions and commitment to democratic values. For most African states, post-independence was met with

the embrace of socialism, communism, and/or authoritarian rule. The shift towards democracy, which became more prevalent in the late 1980s and 1990s, did not eliminate the historical and structural challenges that were deeply embedded within these societies. This transition to democratic systems was, therefore, not a panacea for the complex issues inherited from previous regimes and colonial legacies. Thus, even though states adopted democracy as a political system, the institutions and social fabric were still largely characterised by the previous political system. This observation necessitates the argument that democracy was a window dressing, and not necessarily a foundation for most African states.

It is however important to keep in mind that democracy is an ongoing process and experiment. The evidence presented thus far on the African case suggests that the democratic process is significantly shaped by the historical, political, and socioeconomic context. Analysing regional trends and patterns offers valuable insights into the present state of democracy and governance health, providing a basis for understanding stability and potential future trajectories.

Regional trends can be limiting as they do not provide insight into country-level performance and can also primarily focus on outlier countries. In a continent such as Africa which is characterised by various complexities at different levels, country-level analysis is needed for a more concrete and holistic understanding of the type of democracy that is emerging on the continent. Employing the Afrobarometer data on satisfaction with, and support for democracy, this thesis establishes the type of democrat that is emerging in Africa. In Chapter 2, I identify and discuss four types of democrats: critical democrats, satisfied democrats, dissatisfied non-democrats, and satisfied non-democrats. I argue that these types of democrats also provide insight into the quality of democracy.

Findings from the analysis suggest that 20 countries are categorised as having critical citizens, indicating a population that is actively engaged and discerning in their assessment of democracy. Additionally, 11 countries are classified as satisfied democrats, suggesting a level of contentment among the citizens with the democratic governance structures in place. On the other hand, 3 countries are identified as dissatisfied democrats, indicating a degree of discontentment or dissatisfaction with democratic practices. Notably, none of the countries falls into the category of satisfied non-democrats, suggesting that there are no nations where citizens are content with non-democratic forms of governance.

This contribution of this thesis lies in its pioneering effort – as the first to use statistics in utilising multilevel models to evaluate the three-way association under consideration. The study focuses on analysing democratic and governance trends spanning from 1990 to 2018. This timeframe is significant as it coincides with the onset of the third wave of democratisation, which emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Furthermore, the analysis incorporates data from the Afrobarometer round 7 survey, which was released in October 2019, providing a comprehensive and up-to-date dataset for examination.

The thesis employs a mixed-methods approach using qualitative and quantitative methodologies that combine multilevel modelling, descriptive statistics, and nested case study methods. Quantitative methodology is essential for showing the variation in democratic and governance trends in Africa. This association is depicted using various figures. Through regression models, the study ascertains whether support for and satisfaction with democracy are predominantly influenced by economic or political governance factors. The cross-national findings indicate a higher level of statistical significance between political governance and support for democracy. Based on this association, the selection of case studies was determined. Furthermore, the cross-national findings highlight several significant associations: fractionalisation and former British colony status are positively correlated with political governance and support for democracy, whereas oil rents exhibit a negative correlation. Additionally, compared to urban/rural disparities, there is a smaller gap in support for democracy across gender and education levels. These findings shed light on the multifaceted dynamics influencing democratic support and governance perceptions across different contexts.

The qualitative approach is equally important for understanding subjective experiences of democracy and democratic systems as understood and perceived by Africans from different contexts. Through case studies, I explore potential explanations for the variation in support for democracy and political governance. More specifically, I analyse how political governance affects democratic governance outcomes and how this in turn affects popular support for democracy in Africa. I also analyse other components of democracy such as the rejection of non-democratic alternatives and perceptions on the extent of democracy to clarify support for democracy. The time trends explain governance quality outcomes alongside public perceptions and hint at case-specific questions - about governance quality trends and public perceptions –

that need further elaboration. The four case studies, therefore, derive from the correlation between support for democracy and political governance. These case studies each represent a diverging trend between political governance and support for democracy.

Evidence from the case studies suggests differences in the quality and stability of democracies and the extent to which political and democratic governance contribute to the quality and support for democracy. For instance, in Sudan and Zimbabwe, support for democracy is based on dissatisfaction with not having it. However, in Zimbabwe, the gap between support for democracy and perceptions of the extent of democracy is greater. Despite higher levels of support for democracy in Zimbabwe, a close analysis of civic engagement trends reveals that Zimbabweans are classified as satisfied non-democrats rather than critical democrats. This suggests that while they may express a general preference for democracy, they harbour significant discontentment with the current state of democratic governance in their country. Conversely, in Sudan, where support for democracy is lower, citizens demonstrate a higher level of political engagement, indicating active citizenship despite dissatisfaction with democratic governance. This implies that Sudanese citizens are actively involved in political processes and discourse, despite not being fully satisfied with the democratic system in place. These contrasting dynamics highlight the nuanced relationship between support for democracy, civic engagement, and levels of satisfaction with democratic governance in different contexts.

Interestingly, Botswana and South Africa have had the same ruling party since their first multi-party democratic elections and both have relatively high governance scores. In contrast to South Africa, where there is a divergence between political and economic governance trends, Botswana exhibits high levels of support for and satisfaction with democracy, classifying its citizens as satisfied democrats. However, trends in Botswana suggest a decline in governance and public perceptions since 2008, despite overall satisfaction with democracy. Conversely, in South Africa, while political governance has not experienced a significant decline, economic governance has been on a downward trajectory since 2010. This decline in economic governance has been accompanied by a corresponding decrease in public perceptions regarding governance. These trends emphasise the complex interplay between political and economic factors in shaping citizens' perceptions of democracy and governance. While high levels of support for democracy may exist in certain contexts like Botswana, challenges in governance performance can still impact public perceptions and satisfaction over time.

Overall, the case studies of Sudan, Botswana, South Africa, and Zimbabwe highlight how governance quality (or lack thereof) affects democratic governance outcomes and experience differently. In turn, satisfaction with and support for democracy also varies. Additionally, the case studies highlight that the diverging democratic and governance trends in Africa yield different consequences on support for democracy and the future of democracy in Africa. The durability and stability of democracies in Africa are strongly dependent on the demand for democracy by ordinary citizens. However, if there is a widespread belief that democracy is not being effectively delivered, the consequences can be severe and far-reaching. These may include economic and political instability, public disengagement from the political process, increased likelihood of violent conflict, polarisation within society, widespread protest actions, voter apathy, and the emergence of what some may term as 'pseudo-democracy,' where democratic principles are undermined or circumvented. Moreover, known as the youngest continent, if Africa's youth do not support democracy, then the future of democracy is at stake. Such challenges highlight the importance of ensuring that democratic systems are not only in place but are also functioning effectively to meet the needs and expectations of citizens.

Additionally, the analysis of the case studies also suggests that in the absence of strong institutions and disregard for democratic principles, it is citizens and civil society at large that defend and uphold democracy - this explains why democracy is resilient in Africa. While the narrative is that African states are only subjects of democracy, each case study in this thesis points out that there are valuable lessons about democracy in Africa. There are lessons on how to build a democracy, how to avoid the collapse of democracy, and how to consolidate democracy.

This thesis consists of 9 chapters, arranged in a well and coherent manner. *Chapter one* introduces the study, presenting an overview of the thesis by highlighting the main argument pursued throughout the thesis, the research problem and background to the study; gaps in the literature and how this thesis is poised to address the identified gap; the relevance of the study; and an outline of how the case studies address the aim of the thesis. In *Chapter Two,* I provide a theoretical discussion situating and positioning the study within the main debates in the field of international relations and political economy. The chapter also outlines the hypotheses and types of democrats that are further explored and analysed throughout the thesis.

Chapter three outlines the concepts and measures. This chapter is divided into two sections: section one outlines and focuses on defining, disaggregating, and dichotomising governance. In this section, I outline how governance is measured as well as how and why governance is dichotomised into economic and political governance. The second section discusses the individual level of analysis by outlining how support and satisfaction with democracy are measured using the round 7 Afrobarometer data.

In *Chapter Four*, I present the statistical results on the association between governance (political and economic) and democracy (support and satisfaction). This association is also measured alongside the control variables. The regional trends and patterns are also discussed. A more focused process tracing of the four nested cases is presented in *Chapters five, six, seven, and eight. Chapter nine* summarises the main argument and clarifies the main findings of the thesis.

Chapter 2: The Theoretical Approach

There are numerous pieces of literature on democratic trends and patterns in Africa, and each wave of literature has advanced our understanding of democracy in Africa. Notably, since the adoption and institutionalisation of democracy in Africa approximately 30 years ago, we have witnessed various waves in the literature. Each wave represents an endeavour to comprehend the democratic process in Africa. This section will outline the two waves in literature which capture key democratic trends and patterns in the 1980s-1990s and the 2000s. This will be followed by a discussion of the emerging trends in current literature.

The first wave of literature

The first wave of democracy can be traced back to the period between the 1820s and 1926, during which 29 countries transitioned to democratic governance. However, by 1942, the number of democracies had decreased to only 12. The post-World War II era ushered in the second wave of democracy, leading to an increase in democratic countries to 36 by 1962, as noted by Huntington (1991). However, between 1960 and 1975, there was a democratic recession, resulting in a reduction in the number of democratic countries to 30 (Huntington 1991).

During the same period, many African, Asian, and Latin American countries were either under colonial rule or subjected to various forms of military governance. In Africa by 1989, out of 45 African countries, 30 were governed by military or one-party regimes (Simensen 1999). However, by 1991, 31 African countries had transitioned to multiparty democracies. Although not occurring at the same pace, Asia also witnessed similar democratic reforms during this period. The first free elections were held in South Korea and Taiwan in 1987, followed by the overthrow of the Marcos regime in the Philippines in 1986 and the democratic transition in Thailand in 1992 (Simensen 1999). This period of democratic transformation is what Samuel Huntington (1991) referred to as “the third wave of democratisation”.

Osaghae (1996) notes that the process of transitioning into a democracy was characterised by the following factors:

- The process was part of a larger global movement that saw non-democratic countries transitioning into democracies (if other developing countries could become democracies, why not Africa?)
- Democracy was primarily understood and institutionalised within the context of economic and political liberalisation – these factors were seen as necessary and important in the reconstruction of civil society.
- There was pressure from Western powers and the international donor community to somewhat ensure that Africa was democratised.
- Before democracy, there were waves of revolts from students, women, urban dwellers, and social movements across Africa. This suggests that African citizens were not satisfied and did not support the political system/s at the time.

The revolts seen across Africa were fuelled by socio-economic conditions and political turmoil. The lack of transparency and accountability and the general absence of good governance were some of the underlying factors that exacerbated frustration amongst Africans and further increased an appetite for democracy. With this in mind, many Africans believed that the new wave of democracy would bring about the changes that the previous political systems had failed to achieve (Osaghae 1999).

About 30 years later, it is widely argued that the enthusiasm and expectations associated with democracy have not been fulfilled. Furthermore, there is a prevalent argument that democracy in Africa lacks depth (Patel 2020; Cheeseman 2021), and as a result, its implementation has regressed (Freedom House 2021; Abramowitz 2018; EIU 2021).

What is democracy?

When discussing democracy and governance in Africa, one should be mindful when measuring the term ‘democracy’. As noted in Chapter 1, democracy derives from the Greek word demos (the people) and kratia (to rule). In essence, democracy revolves around the principle of governance by and for the people, providing citizens with the freedom to determine their aspirations. Joseph Schumpeter (1976) defines democracy as political competition among political parties. He further argues that democracy is a method of no intrinsic value, and its sole function is to select leaders. On the other hand, Przeworski (1999) defines democracy as a system where political parties lose elections. Importantly, both definitions focus on elections and do not consider civil liberties such as freedom of speech, expression, association, and other broad guarantees.

Giovanni Sartori (1987) asserts that democracy is a political system in which power resides with active people. Robert Dahl, who has written extensively on democracy, defines and associates democracy with concepts such as institutions and procedures (Dahl 1999). In his early work, Dahl (1989) expands these procedural definitions by identifying four basic elements of democracy: extensive competition by political parties or candidates, a political system that gives the electorate the choice to select and replace the government in free and fair elections; the protection of the human rights of all citizens; and lastly, the rule of law, in which the rule of law applies to all citizens equally; civil and political liberties that allow citizens to express themselves without fear of punishment.

Expanding on this comprehensive definition, Larry Diamond (1999) delineates democracy not only as a civilian, constitutional, multiparty regime with regular free and fair elections but also emphasises a system characterised by organisational and informational pluralism, effective empowerment of elected officials, extensive civil liberties, and functional autonomy for legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government. Additionally, Dahl (1989, 322) regards democracy as “the most reliable political system for protecting and advancing the good and interests of all the persons subject to collective decisions.”

In an interesting study, Dalton, Shin and Jou (2007) surveyed 49 countries across different continents, and one of the central findings is that most citizens associate democracy with freedom and civil liberties. Definitions that cited elections, majority rule, institutions and democratic procedures were only half as frequent as those that referenced freedom and liberty. Approximately ten percent of individuals in countries such as South Africa, South Korea, Mongolia, and Chile define democracy in terms of its social benefits, encompassing concepts such as social equality, justice, and equal opportunities. Notably, when expressing their understanding of democracy, only a small percentage of people in the study made minimal to no reference to institutional elements or social benefits.

Despite the variations in definitions of democracy, two common elements remain prevalent: free elections and equal civil liberties for all citizens. It is widely acknowledged that certain conditions, including the separation of powers, opportunities for choice and participation, adherence to the rule of law, and respect for human rights, must be met for a political system to be considered democratic.

Before and post-independence, there was a lack of consensus - at the national and regional level among African governments on the ideological and structural framework that would inform the construction of political and economic structures. Between the early 1960s and 1980s, democracy was largely rejected by African governments. Those on the right, like Kamuzu Banda, Jomo Kenyatta, and Felix Houphouet-Boigny, rejected democracy on the premise that it is a Western divisive concept and, therefore, misaligns with the African spirit (Zack-Williams 2001). Those on the left rejected democracy on the premise that it equated to capitalism, which merely institutes class divisions (Zack-Williams 2001). Leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, and Sekou Touré perceived and advocated for African socialism to address political and economic governance issues (Zack-Williams 2001).

From a scholarly perspective, there was (and still is) contesting positions and debates on the effects of democracy. Some scholars argue that democracy is bad for development and governance (Pozuelo, Slipowitz, and Vuletin 2016; Barro 1996; Friedman 2009). Former Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew once suggested that the perceived lack of discipline in democracies could lead to a chaotic democratisation process and hinder economic growth

(The Economist 1991). Others argued that democracy is a prescription for irresponsible economic policies (Zack-Williams 2001). Despite these pushbacks, during the 1990s, the dominant and widely accepted narrative was that democracy promotes and substantially improves economic development and the quality of governance (Rivera-Batiz 2002). As The Economist (1994) once argued, democracy does not inhibit but promotes economic growth.

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, in the 1960s and 1980s, East Asian countries like South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and contemporary China achieved economic success outside of the democratic framework. However, despite differing contexts, a shared characteristic among these nations was political stability. Notably, Rwanda stands out as a country where, despite the absence of institutional transparency and democratic accountability, there is ongoing economic growth. Furthermore, scholars like Lee (2019) contend that, based on the criteria for good governance, leading democracies and economies like the United Kingdom, United States, and Germany did not demonstrate effective governance during their phases of rapid economic development.

Adding to the debate on the relationship between economic development and democracy, Claude Ake (1993) argues that African democracy needs to be fundamentally different from liberal democracy in the sense that it needs to focus more on economic rights. Ake asserts that democracy is an essential condition for development. Echoing Ake's sentiments, Nyong'o (1987) posits that there is a clear link between the absence of democratic practices and the decline of economic development in Africa. He further suggests that governments that lack accountability to their citizens are less inclined to pursue socio-economic policies that cater to the needs of their people. Although Claude Ake argues that more emphasis should be placed on attaining and advancing socio-economic well-being, he acknowledges the indispensable role of ordinary citizens' energy, creativity, and support for democracy, along with their participation in the political and economic spheres of a country, as crucial for national growth (Ake 1993). Similarly, Osaghae (2004) argues that for democracy to effectively foster and facilitate development, a transformation at the institutional level is essential. This transformation involves embedding participation, empowering citizens, and ensuring accountability within the institutional framework (Osaghae 2004). These perspectives highlight the interconnectedness of democratic governance, citizen engagement, and socio-economic

development, emphasising the need for institutional reforms that promote inclusive participation and accountability.

Consequently, the presence and highly active role of African elites often complicate efforts to enhance broader participation, as such inclusivity may not align with the interests of the general population. This is primarily because a society which mirrors the preferences and needs of its wider social base would necessitate a reallocation of social resources. These resources are, in theory, intended to elevate the living standards of ordinary citizens. However, when elites dominate the political landscape, their priorities may skew the distribution of these resources, potentially side-lining the broader needs and interests of the majority, thus making increased and meaningful participation by ordinary citizens more challenging.

The second wave of literature

On a theoretical level, democracy, democratic governance, and governance reinforce each other. Quality governance promotes political stability, mitigates conflicts, facilitates social and economic development, and creates a cohesive environment that promotes and protects human rights and the rule of law. The association between poor governance and lack of economic growth and development in Africa can be traced back to the 1981 Berg Report, which led to significant shifts in international policy towards African nations. The Berg Report, officially known as "Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Agenda for Action," was commissioned by the World Bank and pinpointed governance issues as a central hurdle to economic progress in the region. Following the Berg Report, the Bretton Woods Institutions, primarily the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), advocated for the adoption of economic liberalisation policies in African countries. This approach, often encapsulated in the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), called for a range of reforms aimed at opening up African economies to the global market. These reforms included reducing government intervention in the economy, privatising state-owned enterprises, liberalising trade to encourage exports, and deregulating markets to foster competition (Akokpari 2004).

However, the implementation of these policies has been met with mixed outcomes across the continent. While some countries experienced periods of economic growth and improved efficiencies in certain sectors, others faced challenges such as increased poverty, widening

inequality, and diminished social services, which were often a result of reduced government spending as mandated by the SAPs (NEPAD 2004, 5; Akokpari 2004, 243). The debate on the effectiveness and impact of these policies continues, highlighting the complex interplay between governance, economic policies, and development outcomes in Africa.

Amongst other reasons, these programmes failed because there were cracks in existing governance structures (Akokpari 2004; Zack-Williams 2001). They provided economic solutions and formulas that were not context-specific. When a country has a weak political and institutional foundation marked by corruption, lack of accountability, and ineffective policy formation, any economic policy introduced is likely to face significant challenges, yielding limited impact. Additionally, there existed a notable gap between the encouragement for Africa to liberalise its markets and integrate into the global economy and the absence of significant reforms in the global economic system. Consequently, the steadfastness of global institutions to maintain their existing structures naturally led to policies that achieved only marginal success. By the late 1980s, the adoption of democratic governance emerged as a prerequisite for SAPs, which, as previously mentioned, often led to worsening economic conditions and, in turn, contributed to political instability.

The adverse economic impact of SAPs in the global South sparked widespread demands for political reform, evidenced by protests in countries such as Argentina, Tunisia, Egypt, Sri Lanka, Haiti, and Pakistan (Reinsberg, Stubbs, and Bujnoch 2023; Zack-Williams 2001). In some instances, such as in Ecuador and Jordan, public outcry over escalating costs of living led to governmental resignations (Reinsberg, Stubbs, and Bujnoch 2023). During the early 1980s, Africa witnessed approximately 26 instances of protest action, a number that surged to 86 by 1991, spreading across thirty countries (Bratton and van de Walle 1997). Worth noting, the increase in protests was followed by the embrace of a multiparty system, though this embrace was not linear. There were backslides and reversals to military or one-party rule in countries like the Ivory Coast and Sierra Leone (Reinsberg, Stubbs, and Bujnoch 2023). In essence, while authoritarianism was rejected, democracy was not yet fully embraced (Bienen and Herbst 1996). These events underscore the notion that economic growth, without accompanying political reform, is essentially ineffective. Crucially, they bring to light the essence of democracy - its ordinary citizens. How citizens experience democracy greatly shapes their engagement with the political process.

However, what remains less clear from these developments is the effect of the quality of governance on democratic practices and, more significantly, the everyday democratic experiences of ordinary citizens. In Africa, the sequence began with the attainment of independence, followed by economic restructuring, and then the pursuit of democratic aspirations. This sequence saw a shift in the mid-1990s with efforts to institutionalise governance quality as a strategy to promote economic development.

The failure of SAPs, accompanied by an array of domestic challenges such as increased resistance towards authoritarian regimes and a growing civil society (Zack-Williams 2001), highlighted the need to not only provide economic remedies but to do so alongside political reform. This situation presented African states with a critical dilemma: deciding whether economic or political reforms should take precedence. Kwame Nkrumah insightfully captured this challenge, stating, "We cannot tell our peoples that material benefits and growth and modern progress are not for them. If we do, they will throw us out and seek other leaders who promise to do more. And they will abandon us, too, if we do not in a reasonable measure respond to their hope" (Nkrumah 1958, 52). Over and above, the failure of these policies unintentionally provoked the need to re-evaluate how we understand and engage with democracy, democratic governance, and good governance in Africa. One of the responses to the democratic and economic challenge was the formation of pivotal regional institutions and initiatives that institutionalised governance.

Following some of the challenges faced by the continent, the launch of the African Union (AU) in 2002 and its socio-economic flagship programme, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), was established in 2004. This initiative stemmed from the recognition that long-term sustainable growth and development can only be achieved through good governance (NEPAD 2003/4). The objectives outlined by NEPAD identify both economic and political governance as necessary conditions for sustainable development. Furthermore, the establishment of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and its successor, the African Union, aims to promote cooperation, development, and good governance through mechanisms such as the African Peer Review (APR), now known as the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) (Akokpari 2004). NEPAD established the APRM in 2003 to monitor the progress of member states towards achieving the dual goals of good governance and development (NEPAD 2003/4). The establishment of the APRM reinforced broader governance approaches by

incorporating the more ambitious objective of fostering political responsiveness and accountability. Great expectations were therefore pinned on the potential political benefits that democracy was anticipated to bring about, particularly in terms of enhancing governance.

Drawing from the arguments presented thus far, the prevailing consensus, both in academic circles and among institutions, is that democracy is conducive to better governance. Rod Alence's work marks a pivotal shift in focus from the traditional discourse on the impact of democracy on economic performance to a more nuanced exploration of the relationship between political structures and governance quality. In his 2004 study, Alence delves into how democratic frameworks in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) contribute to governance that fosters development. Through his analysis of political institutions and their influence on governance across 38 SSA nations, Alence broadens the conversation about Africa's development challenges by moving beyond purely economic considerations. He posits that irrespective of the form of the political system in place, the presence of effective political institutions and sound governance is crucial for the success of development strategies (Alence 2004). A key insight from Alence's (2004) work is that the synergy between democratic competition and institutional checks on the discretionary power of executive authorities consistently enhances the quality of governance.

Although Alence's study tackles crucial issues regarding political institutions and developmental governance in Africa at a broad, macro level, it does not delve into the micro-level nuances concerning the impact of democracy on individuals or specific groups within society. This leaves an open question about the implications of democracy from a more personal or localised perspective. From an institutional level, the complex socio-economic and political challenges were ones that institutions such as the OAU were not prepared for. Arguably, the strategies and thought process behind the formation of the OAU did not have solutions for post-independence challenges. This is primarily because the main goal of the OAU was to achieve independence and sovereignty for African nations. Beyond achieving sovereignty, the consideration of democratic participation by both international and regional institutions often overlooked the most crucial stakeholders. It is not the IMF, the WB, the AU, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), or the African elite who are most impacted by these decisions, but rather the ordinary citizens who bear the consequences of policy and decision-making processes.

The first wave of literature on democracy and governance, alongside the adopted policies and initiatives during the first decade of democracy in Africa, attempted to capture democratic trends in an evolving global system. The 1980s and 1990s simultaneously marked both the beginning and end of an era. This is to say, the period marked the beginning and end of the Cold War, the end of widespread communism and socialism in Africa, the embrace of democracy, and deepened globalisation.

From a micro-level perspective, Africa was grappling with multifaceted economic, political, and social challenges. Socio-economically, many African countries were mired in an economic crisis characterised by high debt levels, pervasive poverty, and difficulties in integrating into the global financial system (Akokpari 2004, 245). Politically, the continent was beset by internal conflicts, failing states, weak institutions, and a tenuous rule of law, presenting significant national and regional challenges. These issues complicated the understanding and identification of the emerging forms of democracy within the region. Moreover, these regional democratic trends and patterns sparked new discussions and debates regarding ways in which the impact and influence of democracy should be evaluated. Thus calling for the need to promote and strengthen democracy and governance in Africa.

Furthermore, primary focus was placed on the association between democracy and economic outcomes. While democracy was anticipated to enhance development, the absence of development was often attributed to economic factors such as internal structural rigidities and unfavourable global market conditions. However, while these factors did contribute to poor economic performance, they alone were insufficient to fully explain the lack of development and stagnant economic growth.

Consequently, scholars like Bratton and Mattes (2001) and Alence (2004) introduced two new ways of assessing and understanding how democracy works in Africa by examining the public attitudes towards democracy and the impact of political institutions on governance quality. This level of analysis will be discussed more elaboratively in the subsequent sections.

From an academic standpoint, the exploration of democracy during the 1980s and 1990s extended beyond mere understanding of democracy to encompass its potential outcomes. This inquiry was specific to the distinct challenges and prevailing trends, leading to a concentrated examination of the interplay between democracy, good governance, and development. The aim was to discern how democratic principles could foster effective governance and socio-economic progress within the context of the specific dynamics of the period.

In the initial phase of embracing democracy, Western statesmen were more infatuated with the birth of democracy in Africa. However, the socio-economic (such as education, population dynamics, and gender issues) and cultural aspects (including ethnic fractionalisation, cultural norms, and values) that significantly influence the democratic experience at both national and regional levels were often overlooked in the process of democratisation. This oversight in incorporating socio-cultural realities into the institutionalisation of democracy means that the theoretical ideals of democracy and its anticipated benefits do not always align with the practical experiences of its citizens. As Ottaway (1998) notes, there is a split between an ideological climate and a dysfunctional political climate.

From the evidence presented thus far, it can be argued that early enthusiasts of democracy mistakenly saw democracy as the sole solution to the challenges that newly independent African countries faced. They did so without taking into account that the very same leaders who were elected were the same leaders who led liberation movements. Thus, they had their framework of leading, and the introduction of democracy was not going to nullify this or the challenges that were inherited from colonialism. I argue that the limited success in the first decade of democracy in Africa can be largely attributed to the lack of synchronisation between the solutions and the pre-existing conditions. The failure of these programmes prompted the need and interest in understanding the association between democracy, economic and political governance, as well as the extent to which this impacts public perceptions.

Two things are apparent when assessing democratic trends in the 1980s and 1990s. Firstly, there was a recognition that political leaders were less committed to democracy and saw it as a strategy to attain and maintain power. Secondly, citizens recognised that politics often exacerbated rather than mitigated issues of underdevelopment. In this context, democracy was

anticipated to improve development and enhance human rights protections. This expectation was reinforced by international human rights-focused NGOs, which increasingly highlighted the intrinsic link between democratic governance and safeguarding human rights. As mentioned earlier, international financial institutions, especially the WB and the IMF, established a link between democracy and the operations of market forces, suggesting a complex interplay between governance, economic policies, and human rights within the democratic paradigm.

Amid these different trends, for most African countries, it became confusing which aspect of democracy to pursue. More importantly, it was difficult to determine the type of democracy that was emerging in Africa – as Ake (1993, 239) puts it: "What unique features will give [democracy] its depth and sustainability in African conditions?". To address this question effectively, it is crucial to pose two fundamental questions: Whose democracy is under consideration/or at stake, and how do these individuals experience and perceive the value of democracy? These questions, while straightforward, are pivotal to the discourse this thesis aims to explore. They prompt a deeper investigation into the subjective experiences and assessments of democracy by different groups, thereby providing nuanced insights into the multifaceted nature of democratic governance and its impact on various stakeholders.

While evolving democratic trends and the quest to deepen understanding of democracy in Africa, the work of Bratton and Mattes stands out as pioneering in its focus on the perspectives of ordinary citizens. By centring their analysis on the lived experiences and perceptions of ordinary citizens, Bratton and Mattes significantly contributed to shedding light on the actual state and potential of democracy on the continent. In their comparative analysis of Ghana, Zambia and South Africa, Bratton and Mattes (2001) shifted the discussion on democracy by assessing the attitudes of African citizens towards democracy. The central question of analysis is whether democracy is valued intrinsically (as an end in itself) or instrumentally (as a means to improving material well-being). Their work provided critical insights into how democracy is experienced, understood, and valued by those it aims to serve, offering a clearer picture of the challenges and opportunities for democratic governance in Africa.

One of their central findings is the existence of widespread support for democracy across Africa, juxtaposed with a lower level of satisfaction regarding the performance of elected governments. This suggests that, despite prevailing dissatisfaction with democratic outcomes, there exists a foundational level of support for democracy that exceeds instrumental considerations. Another significant observation is that support for democracy is more deeply influenced by the government's success in upholding basic political rights than by its efficacy in providing economic benefits.

Claassen builds on this by arguing that intrinsic support for democracy is more robustly associated with the endurance of democracy once established rather than with its initial emergence. Using a dataset covering numerous countries over several decades, Claassen demonstrates that democracies with higher levels of public support are less likely to experience breakdowns.

Both Claassen, Bratton and Mattes emphasise the importance of public support for democracy, though from slightly different angles. While Bratton and Mattes focus on how public attitudes toward democracy—whether valued intrinsically or instrumentally—can strengthen and stabilise regimes, Claassen extends this by highlighting that intrinsic public support is crucial for the long-term sustainability of democracy. This shared focus reinforces the idea that public support is fundamental to democratic stability. Moreover, both analyses agree that the protection and promotion of political rights are crucial for maintaining public support and ensuring the stability of democratic regimes.

These insights underscore the critical role of public perceptions in the consolidation of democratic regimes, emphasising that the legitimacy and stability of these systems hinge not just on economic performance but, perhaps more importantly, on the protection and promotion of fundamental political freedoms.

My thesis builds on these insights by examining how governance quality—both economic and political—impacts democratic governance and, in turn, influences public support for and satisfaction with democracy, using data from the Afrobarometer. By analysing whether it is economic or political governance that drives satisfaction with democracy or support for it, my

research delves into the complexities of public perceptions. Unlike Claassen, who focuses on the link between public support and democratic endurance, and Bratton and Mattes, who analyse general attitudes towards democracy, my approach explicitly investigates the impact of governance quality on these attitudes. This underscores the importance of public support by demonstrating that the effectiveness and quality of governance are crucial determinants of how democracy is perceived and valued by ordinary citizens.

The consolidation of democracy

The concept of consolidation of democracy was introduced to address the question of when a democracy is secure from a breakdown. The main challenge with this concept, however, is its widespread misapplication, particularly in discussions surrounding political challenges faced by 'third wave' democracies. This misuse often oversimplifies complex political dynamics and can obscure the nuanced realities of democracies that emerged during this period, potentially leading to a misunderstanding of their stability and the nature of the obstacles they encounter. This most likely stems from a conceptual conflation as well as the lack of clarity on the meaning of democratic consolidation. The consolidation of democracy encompasses a range of processes, from enhancing the depth of full liberal democracies to preventing democratic breakdown. Additionally, it involves preventing the collapse of both new and longstanding democratic systems (Schedler 2001). This broad scope highlights the multifaceted nature of democratic consolidation, recognising that the path to a fully stabilised democracy can differ significantly based on the starting point and specific challenges each system faces.

The most widely accepted definition of a consolidated democracy is one that is unlikely to break down. Schedler (1998) defines consolidation as the likelihood or prospects of democracy enduring over time. He argues that the study of consolidation needs to shift away from estimating the life expectancy of democracies, the main reason being that scholars have not advanced beyond survival prospects. This definition emphasises the forward-looking aspect of consolidation, focusing on the stability and sustainability of democratic institutions and practices into the future. Across his works from 1998 and 2001, Schedler contends that the criteria commonly employed to gauge democratic consolidation are fraught with ambiguity, and the indicators used are unreliable. As indicated earlier, this ambiguity and unreliability stem from a prevalent conceptual conflation within the discourse on democratic consolidation, which ultimately impedes the formulation of clear, agreed-upon conclusions regarding what

precisely constitutes a consolidated democracy. This critique highlights the challenges in establishing universally accepted benchmarks for assessing the maturity and stability of democratic systems.

A different view on democratic consolidation is offered by Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi (2004). They postulate that democratic consolidation involves the equilibrium between the demand for democracy and its supply. In their book (2005) they propose a measure of democratic consolidation that hinges on two critical thresholds: when 70 percent of the population expresses demand for democracy; and when an equivalent percentage perceives that democracy is being effectively supplied or implemented. This dual criterion emphasises not only the citizens' desire for democratic governance but also their assessment of its realisation in practice. This thesis adopts Bratton, Mattes, and Gyimah-Boadi's (2004) framework as its measure of democratic consolidation, utilising this approach to evaluate the extent and depth of democracy within the African context. This position highlights the importance of both public opinion and perceived performance in assessing the consolidation of democratic institutions and practices.

The consolidation of democracy relies on citizens who support not only the regime's foundational principles, recognising democracy as the most suitable form of governance, but also the regime's performance, referring to the practical functioning of democracy. Larry Diamond (1999) recommends caution when evaluating support for democracy, suggesting that judgments should not solely depend on this metric. In practice, while individuals might endorse democracy as the ideal political system in principle, they may still favour other, more familiar alternatives in reality. This distinction emphasises the complexity of democratic consolidation, highlighting the need to differentiate between theoretical support for democratic ideals and practical preferences for governance models.

In their study, Bratton and Houessou (2014) found that while 71 percent of Africans express a desire for democracy, only 46 percent reject all alternative forms of autocratic rule. This finding underscores a critical aspect of democratic consolidation: it is contingent upon a broad consensus rejecting non-democratic options and the recognition that, despite its imperfections, democracy is preferable to its alternatives. Linde and Ekman (2003, 392) articulate this notion by suggesting that for democracy to be truly consolidated, it is essential that only a small minority of the population support non-democratic alternatives and that democracy is not

perceived as more flawed than its alternatives. This perspective highlights the nuanced relationship between the theoretical support for democracy and the practical rejection of autocratic alternatives as a fundamental component of democratic consolidation.

Like Diamond (1999), Qi and Shin (2011) offer further caution against using one-dimensional measures of support for democracy. They argue that equating citizen demand for democracy solely with mass support for democracy as a regime and the rejection of its authoritarian alternatives is overly simplistic and provides a weak explanation for the substantial differences in the aggregate levels of democratisation.

Qi and Shin propose that democratic demand is a two-dimensional phenomenon that encompasses both support and dissatisfaction. They assert that support alone does not constitute genuine democratic demand; support must be considered alongside how citizens perceive the performance of the existing democratic regime, whether they are satisfied or dissatisfied. It is dissatisfaction that drives political engagement and ultimately, democratic demand. In essence, political engagement is essential for consolidating and strengthening democracy.

However, it can be argued that Qi and Shin overemphasise dissatisfaction, as not all political engagement is driven by discontent. Some citizens participate in democratic processes because they believe in the system and want to contribute positively, even if they are relatively content with the performance of the democratic regime. It is also important to note that while some citizens may become politically active, others might become apathetic or resort to non-democratic means of expressing their discontent.

This thesis avoids a one-dimensional measure of democratic support by distinguishing between support for and satisfaction with democracy and using this classification to identify four types of democrats. The case studies further examine how the different types of democrats engage with the democratic political process. This nuanced approach acknowledges that while individuals may support democracy in principle, they may simultaneously express dissatisfaction with its practical implementation.

Additionally, this thesis emphasises that partaking in democratic political processes is essential for consolidating and strengthening democracy. Such engagement is not merely a reflection of

support for democratic principles but a practical means through which citizens hold their governments accountable and push for democratic reforms. Active participation, such as voter turnout, protest actions, and civic engagement, are identified as crucial indicators of a healthy democratic process and are examined in the case studies.

Measuring support for democracy: intrinsic or instrumental?

Do attitudes about the government's performance influence how citizens value democracy, and if so, what are the explanatory factors – intrinsic or instrumental values? This section discusses the intrinsic versus instrumental debate. I begin by providing a brief background on literature - outlining limitations, followed by this thesis's approach to measuring intrinsic and instrumental support for democracy.

It is imperative to unpack and provide clarity on key concepts to avoid conceptual conflation as well as the misuse of terms and concepts. For example, when discussing democracy, concepts such as support and satisfaction tend to be misused, and this can result in the misinterpretation of findings and implications thereof.

The extent to which citizens support democracy and their level of satisfaction with its functioning can reveal whether their valuation of democracy is intrinsic, valuing democracy for its own sake, or instrumental, valuing democracy for the outcomes it produces. Individuals might endorse principles of democracy yet remain dissatisfied with its practical implementation. This dichotomy raises critical questions about the threshold of dissatisfaction: At what point does dissatisfaction transition into outright non-support for democracy? It is worth noting that there is a lack of empirical evidence on how to understand democratic support and satisfaction, and this is particularly evident in African democracies.

In trying to distinguish between support for democracy and satisfaction with democracy, there is a tempting simplicity in using these terms interchangeably. However, this approach oversimplifies the nuanced relationship between the conceptual endorsement of democratic principles (support) and the critical evaluation of the effectiveness of democracy or performance in practice (satisfaction). Distinguishing between these aspects is essential for a

deeper understanding of public attitudes towards democracy and for assessing the health and stability of democratic systems. This thesis explores the limits of democratic tolerance among citizens and seeks to identify the tipping point at which the functional shortcomings of a democratic system might lead individuals to reconsider their support for the democratic ideal.

As noted earlier, individuals may support democracy but may be dissatisfied with the elected government's performance. Although this is true, it still does not shed light on what support for democracy is and what satisfaction with democracy means. On an individual level, what does support and satisfaction mean? How do we know if individuals support democracy, and how can we measure satisfaction?

Qi and Shin (2011) critique the demand-supply model by highlighting a common misconception: equating democratic demand with regime support. They argue that it is not the mass embrace of democracy that advances democratisation but the support of democracy-in-principle. According to their analysis, understanding the distinction between different types of support is crucial. Support for democracy-in-principle reflects a normative commitment to democratic values such as participatory governance, political freedoms, and equal rights. It indicates an endorsement of democracy independent of its current performance. Support for democracy in practice is contingent on the perceived effectiveness of the democratic system in practice. It is based on assessments of how well democratic institutions function, the extent to which democratic processes deliver desired outcomes, and the quality of governance.

Qi and Shin's distinction between support for democracy-in-principle and support for democracy-in-practice helps us better understand what support for democracy truly means and how it can be measured. It also emphasises the importance of normative commitment to democratic values in driving and sustaining democratisation beyond mere satisfaction with the current performance of elected governments. While Qi and Shin's distinction helps clarify the measurement of support for democracy, Welzel and Inglehart (2006) provide a complementary perspective by arguing that democracy thrives not merely on procedural satisfaction but on the active participation of citizens motivated by emancipative values - values that emphasise individual autonomy, freedom, equality, and self-expression. This intrinsic form of support,

deeply rooted in a commitment to democratic principles, is what ultimately sustains and consolidates democratic governance, as also reflected in the work of Bratton and Mattes.

Arguably, satisfaction can be linked to tangible outcomes and benefits that democracy yields, such as effective governance, economic prosperity, and the safeguarding of human rights (Bratton and Mattes 2001). This perspective evaluates democracy based on its performance and the extent to which it meets the expectations and needs of citizens.

On the other hand, support for democracy is more fundamentally linked to the resonance of democratic values with citizens, reflecting a deeper, intrinsic belief in democracy as the preferred mode of governance (Bratton and Mattes 2001; Mattes and Bratton 2007). This form of support views democracy as an ideal political system that fundamentally shapes and structures societal functioning, emphasising principles such as participation, equality, and freedom. Support for democracy, in this sense, is about endorsing the philosophical underpinnings of democracy and embracing it as a way of life beyond its immediate outputs or services.

Existing literature and discussions that seek to identify and examine the factors influencing public support for democracy in Africa vary in analysis. For example, Claude Ake argues that Africans view democracy in economic and instrumental terms. According to Ake (1993), African democracy has to deemphasise abstract political rights and place more emphasis on economic rights because, for him, the demand for democracy in Africa is directly linked to its prevailing economic conditions. Ake further argues that Africans recognise the absence of democracy as a major cause of chronic underdevelopment in Africa (as argued at the Africa Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation at the 1990 Arusha conference).

Countering Ake's view, Dalton, Shin and Jou (2007, 147) found that relatively few people associated democracy with social benefits. This finding is consistent with findings from the Afrobarometer. In the Afrobarometer Round 6 survey, a notable 6.1 percent of African respondents linked democracy primarily with social and economic benefits. In specific

countries like Morocco, Egypt, and South Africa, a majority of participants particularly associated democracy with its potential to deliver socio-economic benefits. This highlights a perspective among many African citizens where democracy is valued not just for its political and civil liberties but also for its capacity to improve living standards, reduce poverty, and enhance overall well-being, showcasing the diverse expectations and interpretations of democracy across the continent – emphasising the importance of lived experiences.

Osaghae (2004) argues that democracy holds no value unless it can foster an environment conducive to socio-economic transformation, effectively addressing pervasive challenges such as poverty, unemployment, insecurity, disease, and illiteracy. He further argues that for Africans, the pursuit of democracy is a matter of survival, emphasising that the democratic movement on the continent should prioritise tangible economic and social rights. This perspective challenges the notion that people desire democracy for its inherent qualities. Instead, it views democracy as a crucial tool for promoting and facilitating development (Ake 1993). According to this viewpoint, democracy is appreciated not for its intrinsic values but for its instrumental capacity to effect change and improve people's conditions.

However, Ake's perspective might be seen as somewhat reductive, suggesting that African political dynamics are primarily driven by material and immediate needs, a concept sometimes referred to as the 'politics of the belly.' If the momentum for democratisation in Africa is indeed propelled by socio-economic well-being, it implies that the viability of democracy on the continent hinges on social conditions and economic performance.

Contrastingly, Richard Rose (1998) argues that the formation of political regimes is more significantly influenced by the assurance of basic political rights than by their ability to provide material benefits. This divergent view suggests a more nuanced understanding of the appeal for democracy, where the emphasis on political freedoms and rights holds precedence over economic deliverables, highlighting the complex interplay between the intrinsic and instrumental values of democracy in different contexts.

According to Bratton and Mattes (2001), intrinsic demand for democracy is based on an appreciation of political freedoms and equal rights – it is valued as an end in itself. Instrumental support for democracy is, on the other hand, understood as a means to improve material living standards (Mattes 2002). The challenge with instrumental support for democracy is that its support is conditional, whereas intrinsic support for democracy has the potential to sustain fragile political regimes. This means that support for democracy can waver or diminish if the system fails to meet these expectations. This kind of support can provide enduring backing for democratic regimes, even in times of difficulty or when the system struggles to deliver immediate material benefits. Intrinsic support is thus seen as crucial for the resilience and sustainability of democracies, particularly those that are emerging or facing challenges.

What influences public satisfaction with democracy?

The uniqueness of instrumental support for democracy is that it provides insight into what influences satisfaction with democracy. As mentioned before, instrumental support is associated with socio-economic outcomes. The key distinction with intrinsic support lies in the fact that the evaluation of democracy is based on outputs rather than input. David Easton's (1975) framework delineates two streams of support for political systems: object-specific support, which focuses on the performance of specific leaders or authorities, and diffused support, which is directed toward the political system and its institutions at large. The object-specific support, or instrumental support, is essentially a reaction to the performance of individual authorities and does not directly reflect on the functionality or effectiveness of democracy as an overall political system. It highlights a more immediate, performance-based evaluation of political figures instead of a broader, principle-based commitment to the democratic system itself. This distinction is crucial in understanding the nuances of public support for democracy and the different factors that can influence citizens' satisfaction with their political environment.

However, it should be noted that this awareness is not a given but is dependent on an individual's ability to identify what their needs, wants, and demands are about what they perceive as responsibilities of the state to provide through various authorities, which include, but not limited to policemen, local city clerks, health officials, courts, and legislators.

According to Easton (1975), the perceived outputs from authorities, encompassing decisions, policies, actions, and leadership styles, are interpreted by citizens in relation to their own identified needs, wants, and demands. This process establishes a causal relationship where the support of citizens for the political system and its leaders is influenced by how well they perceive these outputs align with and satisfy their personal and collective expectations. The awareness of the two enables citizens to measure the extent to which their perceptions are being fulfilled. Without this established causation, citizens cannot assess the performance of the authorities. Thus, the performance of authorities cannot influence support for and satisfaction with democracy. Given these assumptions and definitions, the significant impact that instrumental support has on support for and satisfaction with democracy becomes noticeable. In essence, citizens evaluate the performance of their political authorities based on the extent to which actions and decisions of leaders meet the needs of the citizens, leading to either increased support and legitimacy for the system or dissatisfaction and potential withdrawal of support.

Apart from economic and political governance factors that may highly influence individual satisfaction and support for democracy, the type of democracy that people live in also influences their satisfaction with how the political system works. In a study which analyses the extent to which political institutions affect citizen support for democracy in Western Europe, Anderson and Guillory (1997) found that individuals who voted for a party that made it into government (winners) tend to show higher levels of satisfaction with democracy if their country's political institutions are that of a majoritarian government. Conversely, those that vote for a political party that does not make it into government (losers) show lower levels of satisfaction. 'Losers' who live in a democratic system that is more consensual tend to display higher levels of satisfaction with the way democracy works than losers who live in a majoritarian system.

Linde and Ekman (2003) expanded on Anderson and Guillory's findings by arguing that losers of democratic competitions tend to be less satisfied with the way democracy works. Their comparative analysis revealed notable differences in attitudes towards democracy across various regions in Europe, particularly between Central, Western, and Eastern Europe. In Eastern Europe, the findings indicated that individuals who perceive themselves as 'losers' in

the democratic process are significantly more likely to express dissatisfaction with democracy. Conversely, in Western Europe, those considered 'losers' are more inclined to be satisfied with the functioning of democracy.

Building on this observation, Aarts and Thomassen (2008) found that an individual's satisfaction with democracy is less influenced by the degree of accountability within the system and more by their perception of how well the system represents their interests and values. This finding suggests that the subjective feeling of being heard and represented in the democratic process plays a crucial role in shaping the overall satisfaction of citizens with democracy, highlighting the importance of perceived representation over procedural aspects like accountability.

From a regional perspective, Mattes (2002) highlights that in South Africa, support for democracy is predominantly based on socio-economic well-being, a perspective deeply shaped by the historical context of structural oppression perpetuated by the apartheid regime. Similarly, Bratton and Mattes (2001) identified the approval of the national government's job performance as the most significant factor influencing satisfaction with democracy in South Africa. This element of satisfaction ranked second in Zambia and third in Ghana, underscoring the performance-driven nature of support for democracy across these African nations. According to these observations, the ability of elected governments to meet the needs and expectations of their citizens, particularly in delivering tangible socio-economic benefits, is crucial for sustaining democratic support.

Contrastingly, in other African contexts such as Ghana and Zambia, political factors play a more prominent role in shaping satisfaction with democracy. For instance, in Ghana, a significant 85 percent of satisfaction is attributed to the freedom of speech, while in Zambia, 74 percent value democracy for providing 'real choice,' indicating a more politically driven appreciation for democratic governance. These variations suggest that while socio-economic performance is a pivotal driver of democratic support in places like South Africa, political freedoms and the quality of democratic choice are equally important in other regional contexts, reflecting the diverse bases of democratic legitimacy in Africa.

Despite the insightful findings from various studies, pinpointing the specific elements noted above – whether economic or political, that citizens value most in their assessment of democracy remains a complex challenge. This complexity is compounded by the evolving democratic landscape in Africa, with an increase in democratic governance since Bratton and Mattes' initial study over two decades ago. A key question arises: to what extent do current attitudes regarding the role of government continue to shape both support for and satisfaction with democracy? Moreover, is it political or economic governance that predominantly influences how ordinary citizens perceive and value democracy today?

In essence, the concept of instrumental support hinges on the assumption that citizens possess a certain level of political awareness, allowing them to evaluate democracy based on the outputs of the political system. This perspective suggests that satisfaction with democracy is largely contingent upon these political outputs, and overall support for democracy is significantly influenced by how satisfied citizens are with the performance of their political authorities. Understanding the dynamic interplay between these factors is crucial for grasping the multifaceted nature of democratic support and satisfaction in the contemporary African context.

What influences democratic values – economic or political governance?

Support for democracy is indeed multifaceted, as noted by Katz and Levin (2017), encompassing both specific and diffuse dimensions. Specific support for democracy arises from the direct observation and evaluation of the conduct and decisions of particular officeholders or governmental institutions. This form of support is contingent upon the perceived performance and actions of these specific actors within the democratic framework, making it more immediate and variable, potentially fluctuating with changes in leadership or policy outcomes (Katz and Levin 2017). On the other hand, diffuse support for democracy is based on the attachments to democratic norms and values. This type of support reflects an intrinsic appreciation for the principles underlying the democratic regime itself, such as freedom, equality, and the rule of law, independent of the performance of any particular leader or institution at a given time (Katz and Levin 2017).

Thus, specific support for democracy is inconsistent as implemented policies and outcomes can result in varying responses over time. Diffuse support for democracy on the other hand, is more stable and consistent when faced with political and economic hardships (Katz and Levin 2017). On a general level, the inability of a political system to respond to the demands of citizens may not only undermine trust in politicians and institutions but may also erode confidence in democratic ideals (Katz and Levin 2017). Katz and Levin classify individuals with high levels of diffuse support but low specific support as dissatisfied democrats. In contrast, those who have high levels of perceptions for both diffuse and specific support are satisfied democrats.

A study from Bratton and Mattes (2001) indicates that there is popular support for democracy in Africa but less satisfaction with the performance of elected governments. This finding suggests that regardless of being dissatisfied with the performance of the elected government, there is a measure of intrinsic (diffuse) support for democracy that exceeds instrumental (specific) perceptions. However, this finding is inconsistent with each surveyed country – reflecting the importance of local contexts and their specific historical experiences. As noted earlier, in South Africa for example, individual support for democracy is rooted in socio-economic well-being – reflecting perhaps the complex history of apartheid and the subsequent emphasis on redressing socio-economic disparities in the democratic era.

Furthermore, Bratton and Mattes (2001) also highlight that in Ghana, the perception of democracy is almost exclusively framed in political terms. This could be attributed to Ghana's historical democratic transitions and the value placed on political freedoms and rights, which have been central to the democratic evolution of the country. In Zambia on the other hand, the preference for democracy is principally associated with the existence of competitive multi-party elections. This may be largely influenced by their experience of elections with no choice under Kenneth Kaunda's one-party state. These variations read together, illustrate how the specific historical, socio-political, and economic contexts of each country influence the way democracy is understood and valued by its citizens, leading to a diverse array of democratic support bases across the continent that is shaped by context-based lived realities.

Types of democrats

One of the core interests of this thesis is to not only clarify the type of democracy emerging in Africa but also identify the unique features that characterise it. To achieve this goal, this thesis adopts Bratton and Mattes' framework for understanding support for and satisfaction with democracy. I classify four types of democrats: satisfied democrats, satisfied non-democrats, critical democrats, and dissatisfied non-democrats.

The classification of four types of citizens makes it more pronounced on who is more engaged in politics, who is more committed to democracy and who has attitudes that are more democratic. I can also identify where there is growing dissatisfaction and distrust with political institutions and elected leaders.

The four types of democrats:

- Type 1: Satisfied democrats refer to those who do not only support democracy as an ideal but are also satisfied with its performance in their country.
- Type 2: Satisfied non-democrats refers to people who are not supportive of the abstract idea of democracy but are satisfied with how it is working in their country.
- Type 3: Critical democrats refer to those who are not satisfied with how democracy works in their country but are supportive of democracy as an ideal.
- Type 4: Dissatisfied non-democrats are citizens who are neither supportive nor satisfied with democracy.

The concept of 'dissatisfied democrats' has attracted varied interpretations among scholars. Linde and Ekman (2003) refer to this group as 'critical democrats,' emphasising their role in maintaining a healthy democracy through their constructive criticism and high expectations for democratic governance. Similarly, Norris (2011) argues that critical democrats support democratic principles but are often sceptical or dissatisfied with the performance and functioning of democratic institutions. They may perceive these institutions as inefficient, corrupt, or unresponsive to public needs and demands. Critical democrats are typically well-

informed, engaged, and advocate for greater accountability, transparency, and reforms, driving improvements in the democratic process (Norris 2011).

Qi and Shin (2011) also address the concept of critical democrats, defining them as individuals who support democratic principles but are dissatisfied with the current implementation of democracy. They argue that it is not the wide embrace of democracy that advances democratisation but rather support for democracy-in-principle and criticism of the implantation of democracy. Unlike general supporters of democracy, not all of whom are politically engaged or demand more democracy from elites, critical democrats are distinct in their active engagement and demand for greater democratic accountability. They are committed to democracy in principle and respond more critically to democratic deficiencies revealed by democracy in practice. They further contend that a commitment to democracy-in-practice and criticism of democratic practices is a more powerful measure of democratic demand than general support for democracy. Qi and Shen highlight that the demand for democracy arises from the gap between citizens' aspirations and their current realities, driving them to act as democratic reformers. As a result, regimes with a larger share of critical democrats are expected to achieve more significant democratic advancements than those with a smaller proportion of these citizens.

On the other hand, Doorenspleet (2012, 280) describes these individuals as “confused and disillusioned”, highlighting the disconnect between their democratic ideals and the disappointing realities of democratic governance they observe. This perspective highlights the risk of political instability when there is a disconnect between citizens’ high expectations and the perceived shortcomings of democratic institutions.

Empirical findings from Doorenspleet’s study show that in comparison to satisfied democrats, critical democrats are more politically active. It is worth noting that dissatisfaction with the performance of elected officials is not necessarily synonymous with support or preference for an authoritarian alternative. In other words, an individual may acknowledge and support democracy and how it functions, however, they may feel that their own country is not ready for democracy. In times of economic hardship, corruption, or poor living conditions, some individuals might temporarily entertain the notion of a non-democratic regime as a potential

solution, as observed in historical instances like Nigeria in 1983 and Peru in 1992 (Linde and Ekman 2003). This perspective underscores the complex and sometimes contradictory attitudes toward democracy among citizens, driven by the interplay between idealistic beliefs and pragmatic assessments of the quality of governance.

Satisfied democrats, perceiving their democratic system as well-functioning, have no motivation to push the incumbent leadership for reforms (Qi and Shen 2011). In contrast, dissatisfied non-democrats may have reasons to protest but are more likely to demand a reduction in democratic elements rather than an increase. Their protests could be seen as a threat to the stability of democracy, as they may favour authoritarian rule over democratic governance.

Additionally, Bratton and Mattes' study highlights the challenge of separating confidence in individual leaders, such as the president, and confidence in broader state institutions, as well as differentiating support for the ruling party from support for the democratic system. This conflation suggests that ordinary citizens often interpret their democratic experience through the lens of government performance and, to a lesser extent, the democratic system. Ordinary citizens are also more likely to learn about democracy and its consequences through the experience of the performance of government and to a lesser extent the economy (Bratton and Mattes 2001). The fact that most Africans in the three surveyed countries based their evaluations of democracy on political performance rather than economic performance, suggests that the supply of democracy is judged according to how democracy works as opposed to what it produces. Does this finding still stand 22 years after the study? Additionally, how does governance quality influence democratic governance experience?

Over two decades after Bratton and Mattes' original study, it would be essential to reassess whether this emphasis on political performance continues to predominate in citizens' evaluations of democracy in Africa. Given the dynamic nature of the continent's political, social, and economic developments, shifts in perceptions and priorities are likely. Revisiting these questions in the current context would provide valuable insights into the evolving nature of democratic governance in Africa and the factors that influence public support and satisfaction with democracy.

Despite challenges experienced by individual citizens from different countries, it would seem there continues to be substantial support for democracy around the world and at the same time there is considerable dissatisfaction with democracies within democracies. In his research paper titled "The past and the future of democracy" Robert Dahl makes note of the fact that although many citizens appear to have lost confidence in democracy and political institutions, this has not however eroded citizen's support for democracy (Dahl 1999). Dahl's perspective aligns with Norris' findings in "Democratic Deficit: Critical Citizens Revisited," where she challenges the prevalent claim that most established democracies have experienced a continuous decline in political disaffection since the early 1970s. Both scholars highlight that criticism from citizens reflects a desire for better governance and more effective democratic practices rather than a rejection of democracy itself.

This raises the question of whether this paradox is a result of shallow and simple-mindedness from citizens, or whether it reveals a deeper nature of democracy. If so, what does this tell us about the present and future of democracy, particularly in Africa? Moreover, when people continue to support democracy, what exactly do they wish to support? These are some of the questions central to this thesis and I unpack them later in Chapters 5 – 8.

Emerging governance and democratic trends in Africa

We have witnessed uneven progress towards democratisation in Africa. Countries such as Ethiopia and Angola have demonstrated significant progress in political reforms and democratic practices. Ethiopia, in particular, has taken notable steps to reform previously restrictive laws, enabling political groups that were once banned to now operate freely. Similarly, Angola has also made notable strides with a peaceful change of leadership in late 2017 (Freedom House 2021). These changes in both countries suggest a possible growing trend toward democratisation and political liberalisation in some parts of Africa. However, while this is remarkable progress, we have simultaneously witnessed democratic backslide in several African countries. In Nigeria, the 2019 general elections were marred by intimidation, violence, and major procedural irregularities. Similarly, in Guinea, civic groups that opposed President Alpha Condé's bid for a third term faced harassment, reflecting a concerning trend towards authoritarian practices (Freedom House 2021).

Furthermore, we have also witnessed backsliding from top-performing countries like South Africa, and Botswana. These countries were once celebrated for their stable democratic institutions and adherence to the rule of law however, they have faced challenges that raise questions about the robustness of their democratic systems. In South Africa, issues such as corruption scandals, governance failures, and political infighting (BTI 2022b) have tarnished the image of its post-apartheid democratic success. Botswana, known for its longstanding democratic traditions and political stability, has also encountered criticism over eroding democratic norms, including concerns over the centralisation of power, media restrictions and free expression (BTI 2022b). These developments indicate that democratic backsliding is not confined to traditionally fragile democracies but can also affect well-established democratic states. However, it is worth noting that Mauritius is the only African country considered a full democracy (Repucci and Slipowitz 2022). This uneven progress indicates that each country is faced with unique challenges, thus an individual level of analysis is required to better understand the democratic deficit at the national and regional levels. In addition, this suggests that democratic governance influences public perceptions differently.

Is dissatisfaction with democracy a result of too much expectation? Is democracy seen as a magic solution to the mounting challenges that the continent is faced with? Dissatisfaction with democracy in Africa, and perhaps globally, can indeed stem from overly optimistic expectations of democracy as a panacea for a multitude of complex challenges. It is a popular belief that amongst other factors, economic growth is what sustains democracy. Countries that are considered strong democracies are mainly Western countries which also happen to have strong and stable economic growth and development. These countries, however, do not face the unique conditions that African democracies encounter. Factors such as deep-rooted colonialism, ethnic fractionalisation, rapid population growth, extreme poverty, high unemployment, controlled state news media, low literacy levels, poor infrastructure, and violent conflict. A comparison between Western and African states can be misleading due to these distinct contexts. Therefore, understanding and evaluating the progress and challenges of democracy in Africa requires a nuanced approach that considers the continent's specific historical, cultural, and socio-economic dynamics. In this context, one may expect support for democracy to be 'shallow' and primarily based on material outcomes.

What makes Africa an interesting case study is the fact that despite most citizens being dissatisfied with the supply of democracy, they continue to demand it. Moreover, this demand is amid a low[er] supply of material well-being. It can be argued that this makes Africans good judges of the quality of democratic governance. The challenges faced by Africa are many and there are no readymade solutions. These challenges have heavily influenced and will continue to influence the democratic experience in Africa. The task of simultaneously addressing the economic and political transformation has proven to be difficult as it appears as though one comes at the expense of the other. Furthermore, there seems to be a widely accepted misconception that the existence of either economic or political progress can only fully exist in the absence of the other. The support, satisfaction, democratic governance, and consolidation of democracy will depend on how fast African states effectively address these challenges as well as the extent to which ordinary Africans are 'allowed' to participate in this process.

As noted above, despite the absence of sustainable economic growth and development, ordinary citizens continue to support democracy. This adds a layer to the discussion on the relationship between democracy, governance, and development. Once again, this suggests that the association between democracy and economic development is not linear.

This highlights two points:

1. There is a popular belief that Africans do not have a concrete understanding of democracy. There is also criticism among Africans that democracy in Africa is failing because it is a Western concept (Adejumo-Ayibiowu 2019). However, despite the absence of factors that 'sustain' and 'ripen' democracy (or factors that make it easier to classify the performance of democracy as successful) there is a continued increase in the level of support for democracy as a preferred political system.

This suggests that not only do Africans have a concrete understanding and appreciation for the essence of democracy but the same measuring stick used to analyse and understand support for democracy in America, Europe, South America, and Asia cannot be the same measuring stick used to analyse and understand democratic perceptions in Africa. This also suggests that there is a unique and distinct aspect of democracy that makes democracy in Africa quite particular. To put it differently, far beyond the obvious benefits of democracy there is an intrinsic aspect

of democracy that is particularly appreciated among Africans. Based on this, it can be argued that economic development does not guarantee quality democratic governance or support for democracy; nor does democracy ensure economic development.

An additional factor that makes Africa an interesting case study is that even though all, but one African country was colonised, the colonial experience differed, thus the experience of democracy also differs. As a result, the factors that help explain support for and satisfaction with democracy vary greatly at the national level.

2. Several countries that are considered to be strong democracies globally have not necessarily been 'tested' the same way that African democracies have been tested. In the absence of high levels of human development, economic development, and ethnic cohesion, would democracy still 'thrive' in countries such as the United States, Great Britain, and Germany?

More than anything, these factors can be identified as factors that strengthen and facilitate the democratic process. Theoretically, democracy promotes economic growth, human development, and peace (Papaioannou and Gregorios Siourounis 2008; Naidu, Restrepo, and Acemoglu 2014). This is primarily because leaders are forced to worry more about their citizens as they are the ones who have a strong hand in determining who gets power. It should be noted that one of the flaws in this argument is that it insinuates that democracy cannot be established in the absence of these factors.

Irresponsible economic policies not only exacerbate existing conditions but also blur the distinction between democracy as a political system and the socio-economic performance of a country, leading to a conflation where the two are perceived as indistinguishable.

This is all to say, in examining democracy in Africa the cultural, historical, and economic history of the continent should not be underestimated or be discussed in isolation. These experiences are not mere footnotes in the story of African democracy; they are the very fabric that shapes the present experience of democratic governance across the continent. The legacies

of colonialism, the impact of ethnic diversity, the challenges of post-colonial state-building, and the economic trials faced by many African countries are all integral to understanding how democracy is perceived, practised, and valued in Africa. This is to say, insight into the stability and future of democracy in Africa can only be understood through African experience. While democratic models from outside can offer valuable lessons and frameworks for enhancing democratic institutions and practices within the continent, the ultimate responsibility for nurturing and sustaining democracy lies with Africa itself. This approach emphasises the importance of African agency in the evolution of its democratic landscapes, ensuring that solutions are not only imported but are also homegrown, reflecting the aspirations and realities of African societies.

The aforementioned stance can be challenged by posing the following question: are there specific pre-conditions required for democracy to gain momentum? Is the lack of sound economic and political policies a result of democracy not gaining momentum or does democracy produce sound economic and political policies? If our analysis is based on the former argument, does this suggest that the democratic stronghold is struggling to solidify and spread because African countries did not have the required conditions for democracy to thrive?

Osaghae (1999, 6) argues that evaluating the effectiveness of democracy based on its capacity to address and resolve Africa's economic and political issues is a flawed approach. He elaborates that although Africa is faced with endless economic and political challenges, and the significant role democracy plays in addressing them, it is important to define what we mean by the "performance" of democracy, and what are the indicators of effectiveness. Once again this raises the fundamental question: where does the boundary lie between expectations and actual performance? Simultaneously pursuing economic and political reform in Africa has proven to be rather difficult, setting the continent apart, as no other region has been forced to choose between fostering economic growth and nurturing democratic governance.

Lee Kuan Yew, the former Prime Minister of Singapore argued that the economic achievements in Singapore would not have been possible without the imposition of strict limitations on political freedoms (Allison 2015). This supports the argument that new democracies need to choose between political and economic rights.

The questions that have been posed do not attempt to undermine post-independence progress in Africa, these questions merely seek to examine the depth and nature of democracy in Africa. Unpacking these questions will serve as a guide to discern which version of democracy is being promoted and whose interests are at risk.

While it is tempting to conclude that quality political governance leads to economic governance and vice versa, this would not be an accurate conclusion as countries like Rwanda, Ethiopia, China, and South Africa (particularly under Jacob Zuma's presidency) challenge this conclusion. The political and economic developments in these countries add complexity to the discussion on whether democracy leads to better governance and economic outcomes. In countries like Rwanda where democratic practices may be limited but economic governance is strong, and in places like South Africa, which upholds democratic principles but faces challenges in economic management, public perceptions of democracy can be complex. In such contexts, where the typical expectations are not met, the decision between supporting democracy or considering an alternative becomes more nuanced. This begs questions about public sentiment when their country excels in either political or economic governance but falls short in the other.

In countries that defy the expected trend, the choice between support for democracy and an alternative to democracy is more difficult. Are citizens still willing to support democracy when the country is failing economically? Are they willing to tolerate authoritarianism if the country's economic performance is good? These are some of the central questions that this thesis seeks to provide clarity on. As part of a broader endeavour to understand the role of subjective experiences in fostering democracy, this thesis seeks to explore whether citizens remain committed to democratic ideals in the face of economic hardships, or whether they are inclined to accept authoritarian regimes if it means better economic outcomes. These questions are at the heart of the investigation, seeking to shed light on the intricate relationship between governance models and public support in Africa.

As outlined afore, extensive literature in the first decade of democracy was dedicated to the relationship between democracy and economic development – with the underlying assumptions that democracy leads to economic growth and development. The rise of emerging economies

(both at a regional and international level) disrupts these almost conclusive assumptions. China is a prominent example in this discussion because it has been able to attain and maintain sustainable economic growth and development outside of the liberal democratic model (Li 2015). Though the Chinese populace is kept from choosing leaders and even though there are isolated calls for greater freedoms, a widespread regime change is yet to emerge (EIU 2021).

Another case worth noting is Rwanda. Located in East Africa, Rwanda is often described as an authoritarian regime. This description stems from the tremendous control that the government has over the economy, which largely controls the private and public sectors (Umuhoza 2022). This control reduces the consultative process to a small group of individuals and creates a singular source of power, thus bringing the consolidation of power into question (Umuhoza 2022). In recent years, arguably, both Rwanda and Ethiopia have achieved more development than any other African country. With an average growth rate of about 10 percent per year, Ethiopia's GDP has surpassed countries like China, Rwanda, and Qatar – which are largely referred to as big economies (Cilliers 2021).

Like China, Rwanda is classified by the Freedom House as "Not free" and is considered an authoritarian regime. The government has been criticised for tightly controlling the economy and civic participation. According to the Transparency International Report, in 2022 Rwanda was the 4th least corrupt country in Africa. This coupled with Paul Kagame's ability to attract significant private Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), adds nuance to the political economy and democracy nexus.

Democratic and governance trends in Africa reflect global trends. The Freedom House (2021) notes that democracy has been on the decline for 14 consecutive years. In previous decades, authoritarian regimes had some form of incentive or pressure from the international 'community' to reform – even if this incentive and pressure resulted in governments putting on a democratic facade to maintain a democratic image and or ensure foreign aid. It can be argued that to a certain extent, there was some level of democratic consciousness. At present, more authoritarian regimes are banning opposition groups, eliminating term limits, and placing tighter restraints on media and freedom of speech (Freedom House 2019).

Additionally, we have also witnessed a rise in populist movements and increased resistance towards the separation of powers. One of the self-proclaimed long-standing democracies - the United States - has a democratic score of 83 and falls behind its traditional peers such as Denmark, Germany, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom (Repucci and Slipowitz 2022). China – alongside countries like Russia have gained more power in the international system, is shifting global incentives, and is indirectly proposing alternative paths to development and security. As such, it has a heavy influence on current democratic trends. Notably, China does not hold a good human rights record as digital authoritarianism, and the policing of opinions remains at the centre stage of Chinese politics (Freedom House 2019). On a global level, there is a noticeable gap between setbacks and improvements. Not only have democratic countries regressed, but authoritarian regimes are increasingly solidifying their authoritarian tendencies. In other words, they are increasingly no longer trying to portray a democratic facade.

At the same time, exploring factors that qualify as 'evidence' that democracy is yielding its intended theoretical outcomes is crucial. This inquiry aligns with the core objective of this thesis, which examines the interplay between governance quality and democratic governance, and how this relationship shapes public perceptions of democracy. This three-way casual analysis does not only enable one to identify whose democracy is at stake, but it also enables one to identify the specific political and economic factors that citizens are responding to. This can provide clarity on how democracy works in Africa, offering valuable insights to various stakeholders about how to effectively participate in and support the democratic process on the continent.

As outlined earlier, democracy in Africa appears to be regressing. The struggle for democracy continues to characterise the democratic process in Africa. This is evident through the resurgence of military coups in countries like Sudan, Chad, Guinea, and Mali Niger (Repucci and Slipowitz 2022); and the 2023 coup d'état in Niger (Yabi 2023). Similarly, political and civil liberties have been on the decline for 14 consecutive years (Repucci 2020). According to Repucci (2020), out of 41 democracies in Africa, 21 have encountered setbacks, indicating a troubling trend for the continent's democratic landscape. Factors contributing to this decline include increased social unrest, a diminishing commitment to pluralism by governments, widespread corruption, and a disregard for public accountability institutions. The entrenchment

of power, as observed in countries like Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Uganda, alongside state violence against citizens, exemplified by Zimbabwe, further substantiates the argument that the health and prospects of democracy in Africa are deteriorating (Mattes and Bratton 2016). These developments underscore the challenges facing democratic governance in Africa and highlight the need for renewed efforts to address these issues and rejuvenate the democratic process.

Democracy is also under threat in promising democracies such as India as well as in established democracies like the United States. India has experienced the biggest decline in freedom score – this is primarily due to their repressive policies against Muslims (Freedom House 2019). Repucci (2020) highlights significant concerns regarding democratic backsliding in different parts of the world. In India, the government's decision to revoke the autonomous status of Jammu and Kashmir, the country's only Muslim-majority state, raised critical questions about federalism and minority rights. In the United States, the introduction of rule changes that undermine the rights of asylum seekers, along with evidence of election interference, poses serious threats to the integrity of the democratic process. These developments in two of the world's largest democracies underscore the global challenges facing democratic norms and institutions, signalling a need for vigilance and corrective measures to uphold democratic principles.

Despite instances of democratic regression, democracy continues to be the preferred political system among the majority of Africans. The demand for democracy remains strong, with Africans advocating for enhanced democratic governance. The 2017/18 protest action in Zimbabwe, the 2011 Arab Spring in North Africa, in Guinea, the 2020 presidential elections were put on hold due to protesters who blocked President Alpha Condé's attempt to extend his term limit by running for a third term (Freedom House 2020), and the 2019 Sudanese revolution. These are indications of the demand for increased democratic governance, and accountability from the government by citizens. This enduring support emphasises the widespread recognition of the value of democratic principles and the desire for systems that effectively embody these ideals, ensuring accountability, transparency, and inclusivity in governance.

Thesis approach

As indicated earlier, this thesis adopts Bratton and Mattes' measure and definition of intrinsic and instrumental support for democracy. Before Bratton and Mattes' article, democratic governance was primarily analysed and understood at an institutional level. Bratton and Mattes' article was the first to incorporate public perceptions of democracy. This introduced an unexplored angle to the discussion on democratic governance. A notable limitation of their study is the omission of an in-depth analysis of democratic governance at the institutional level. While the research provided valuable perspectives on public understanding and experiences of democratic governance, it offered limited insight into the role and impact of governance quality and political institutions. This gap highlights the need for further investigation into how institutional dynamics and the quality of governance contribute to the functioning and perception of democracy, emphasising the importance of a comprehensive approach that includes both public sentiment and institutional analysis in understanding democratic systems. As discussed in the subsequent sections, Alence's article fills this gap by examining the impact of political institutions on developmental governance. A limitation of Alence's paper is that it does not include public perceptions.

This thesis is a building block to the foundational work established by Alence (2004) and Bratton and Mattes (2001), by not only evaluating democratic governance at both the country and individual levels but also by disrupting the initial causal relationships posited in earlier studies. Significantly, this thesis distinguishes itself as the first to employ statistical methods to empirically analyse the relationships between governance quality, the experience of democratic governance, and the levels of support and satisfaction with democracy. This innovative approach provides a more nuanced understanding of how governance quality impacts democratic experiences and, in turn, influences public perceptions and attitudes towards democracy, contributing valuable new insights to the field of political science and democratic studies.

One of the primary aims of the thesis is to better understand how democracy is understood amongst Africans and how this in turn influences satisfaction with and support for democracy. All things being equal, democracy shapes how one understands and experiences it. In trying to

unpack this, I will compile a dataset from the 2018 Afrobarometer round 7 surveys and use multilevel regression models to determine which governance variables influence support for and satisfaction with democracy.

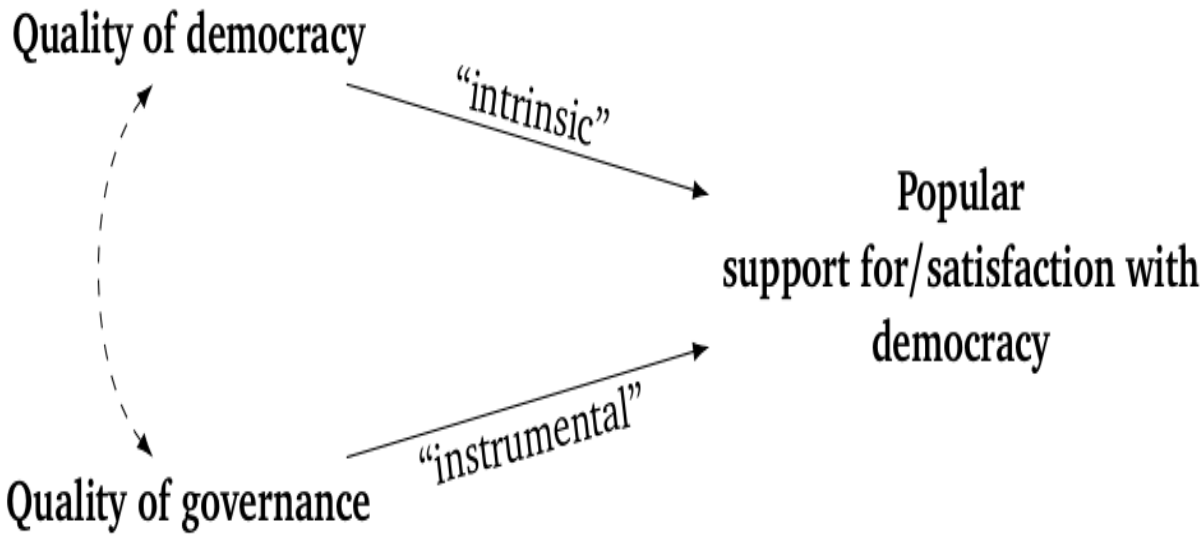
Prior research on support for democracy sheds insight into what influences public support for democracy however, there is a lack of consistency in these findings (see Bates, Fayad, & Anke 2012*)*. Moreover, as opposed to examining the nature of support for democracy from a multi-variable and individual level, most studies focus on a single variable and its effect on public support for democracy (see Li et al. 2015). To address this shortcoming, I will develop a governance framework that dichotomises governance into political and economic governance. This is to identify what specific aspects of governance citizens respond to. Bratton and Mattes' paper examined democratic attitudes in three African countries – I expand this analysis by examining democratic perceptions in 34 African countries.

This thesis will focus on the period between 1990 and 2018. The reason is that the late 1980s and early 1990s are commonly referred to as the third wave of democratisation – this is when most African countries transitioned into democracies. It has been over three decades since the "wave" of democracy in Africa and several significant events that have and continue to take place make it difficult to discern the unique characteristics that will give African democracy sustainability. Moreover, there seems to be a prolonged disequilibrium between the demand for and satisfaction with democracy. This is evident in the rise of social unrest, lack of accountability, and the disregard for term limits. Identifying the variables and conditions that influence support for democracy enables one to better understand the type of support for democracy that is emerging among citizens. This also sheds greater insight into the state of democracy on a national and continental level. If ordinary citizens feel detached from their government, then it is not necessarily democracy that people are dissatisfied with but the institutionalisation (or lack thereof) of democracy.

This thesis comprises of three aspects: identifying how governance quality affects the public experience of democratic governance and how that in turn influences public support for and satisfaction with democracy – see Figure 2.1.

Governance quality is dichotomised into economic and political governance (this is discussed in detail in Chapter 3). The primary aim is to analyse how democracy is performing and how it is identified as a preferred political system in Africa. In testing the main question, it is imperative to ask the following sub-questions: what are the consequences if the popular perception is that democracy is not being supplied – instability, protests, voter apathy? If the majority of citizens have a negative perception of democracy, is this synonymous with the deconsolidation of democracy? What influences popular support for democracy in Africa? These are key questions in which this thesis is organised.

Figure 2.1: Three-way causal diagram



The causal diagram depicts and breaks down how the three-way causal relationship is measured. If the effect of political governance has a more positive effect than economic governance, then this is evidence of intrinsic support. If the positive effect of economic governance dominates political governance, then this captures instrumental support. The dotted arrow captures the empirical question of this thesis: can the quality of political and economic governance be distinguished? If so, what is the potential association – positive or negative, weak or strong?

The relationship between economic development and democracy can be understood and discussed from two perspectives: on the one hand some see democracy as the political framework to cultivate economic development. And others argue that democracy further exacerbates an already impoverished and alienated people.

As previously stated, in trying to understand public support for democracy, it is important to identify and understand the factors that influence ordinary citizens' perceptions of democracy and why these factors result in the demand for democracy. This is primarily because public perceptions and support for democracy are crucial to the process of political legitimation. It also provides insight into the broader challenges of democratic consolidation. The consolidation of democracy is dependent on the majority of citizen's support for democracy and their seeing democracy as "the only game in town" (Bratton and Mattes 2001). To actualise sustainable democracy, citizens need to demand democracy – this is a feature that can be measured in public attitude surveys.

The institutionalisation of democracy enables citizens to consider whether political institutions produce an acceptable degree of democracy. Also, the degree of democratic governance determines the supply of democracy. Regardless of how good or bad academic think tanks, scholars or international donors may rate democratic performance in a particular country, without public support and demand for democracy, it can never be consolidated.

Based on the theoretical outline, I hypothesise that economic governance primarily influences satisfaction with democracy (H1) and political governance primarily influences support for democracy (H2). Although instrumental support for democracy can result in constraints and opportunities to consolidate democracy, it does not serve as a predictor for the fate of political regimes.

Support for democracy is also highly influenced by how developed a state's democracy is. In countries with more developed democratic institutions, individuals are more likely to perceive their governments to be more corrupt and less likely to assess their government based on their perceptions of economic conditions (Li et al. 2015). In a study examining the extent to which democracy influences citizens' perceptions of government corruption, Li et al. (2015) found

that in comparison to authoritarian regimes, citizens in democratic systems are less likely to attribute the improvement of their economic well-being to government performance.

Satisfaction with economic trends, approval of government and economic performance, generally increases the perceived supply of democracy. Yet on the other hand, if citizens feel that economic adjustments have worked to the detriment of most people, they are less likely to say that their country is democratic (Mattes and Bratton 2001). Citizens who associate support for democracy with economic performance tend to be more satisfied with democracy (H3).

Based on the various arguments mentioned afore, it can be argued that both economic and political performance play an instrumental role in shaping public perceptions of democracy. It is evident that economic performance either increases or decreases the perceived supply of democracy, it does however have a perceived limit on the demand for democracy. As economic growth expands and development occurs, countries can afford to allocate more money and resources to the public sector. A good case in point is Botswana, the country's economy is heavily dependent on diamonds however a good portion of the revenue generated from the extraction of diamonds is allocated to social services (education, health, and water) (Kaboyakgosi and Marata 2012). The African Union (AU) acknowledges that there is an inescapable link between economic growth in Africa and political participation. It lists better governance as a primary requisite for economic growth in Africa.

Democracy in Africa does not need an economic miracle to survive. However, to actualise sustainable democracy in Africa and possibly consolidate democracy, African governments need to engage with their citizens more.

Chapter 3: Measuring the country level and individual level of analysis

In Chapter 2, I outlined the theoretical approach and highlighted the central aim and questions for this thesis. Chapter 3 outlines key variables and concepts, and also highlights how the quality of governance (independent variable) and democracy (dependent variable). It also establishes the relationship between these variables, aiming to answer whether governance quality can be dichotomised into political and economic dimensions, and whether this distinction influences public perceptions of democracy—specifically, support for and satisfaction with democratic governance.

As outlined in Figure 2.1, this thesis categorises governance into political and economic dimensions and classifies public perceptions into support for and satisfaction with democracy. This chapter explores the reasons behind these dichotomies and explains the methodology for measuring these distinct yet interconnected categories. This nuanced approach provides a clearer understanding of the specific governance factors to which citizens are most responsive. Moreover, it reveals the attributes that sustain democratic systems in Africa, shedding light on the overall health and stability of democracy across the continent.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section examines country-level analysis. It focuses on the methodologies employed by the World Governance Indicators (WGI), Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem), and the Mo Ibrahim Foundation's Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG). These are the three sources that will be used to measure political and economic governance. This is followed by an analysis of the association between political and economic governance. By exploring these diverse approaches to governance measurement, this section provides a more nuanced understanding of how governance relates to democratic processes and outcomes. The second section shifts to the individual level of analysis, where public perceptions of governance are analysed using Afrobarometer data. Here, I outline the two-by-two classification of individuals based on their support for and satisfaction with democracy, offering a deeper insight into how citizens' evaluations of governance influence their democratic attitudes.

Measuring the country level of analysis: governance quality

This section aims to answer two central questions established in Chapter 2: Is it possible to distinguish the quality of political governance and the quality of economic governance? If so, what is the association between the two? To address the first question, I employ a Principal Components Analysis (PCA) to identify the correlation between political and economic governance and to expand on the significance of this correlation. To address the second question, I visualise the association through the use of a scatterplot.

Governance has long been identified as an impediment to African economic development and political stability. As discussed in Chapter 2, this assumption gained traction in the late 1970s when African economies suffered major setbacks in their democratic endeavours. As highlighted in the 1981 Berg report, poor governance has been identified as the primary cause of the poor state of economic health in many African countries. To address this challenge, the report identified various economic reforms. These included, but were not limited to private sector-driven policies, severely limiting government subsidies for social services and consumption of goods, and strict debt management. These proposed reforms refer to economic governance.

These economic reforms were subsequently met with political reforms. This was influenced by two key factors. Firstly, external aid by donors and the conditions attached to this aid were an incentive. Secondly, the introduction of economic and political reforms in Africa, partly as a response to proposed economic changes, has played a pivotal role in delineating the distinction between economic and political governance. Political reforms, in particular, have emphasised the aspects of political governance, formalising the separation between the mechanisms and objectives of governing economic and political spheres. Despite this formal distinction, the intricate relationship between economic and political governance remains underexplored.

Notably, in many instances where governance has been discussed, it is discussed in totality (see Ahmad and Saleem 2014; Fayissa and Nsiah 2013), or only one dimension of governance is discussed (see Maclin 1997; Altun 2016), that is, either political or economic governance (The 1981 Berg report). Very few studies dichotomise and discuss economic and political governance (Latkovska and Bila-Tiunova 2019).

Governance is a multidimensional concept that incorporates institutions, principles, and traditions that are exercised in a given country. As such, some dimensions may be stronger

driving factors than others in a particular space and time. Discussing governance as a unified concept or focusing solely on one dimension poses the risk of oversimplifying its impact. This approach can lead to conflating various aspects of governance, resulting in the development of policies that are not adequately tailored to address specific governance challenges. The complexity of governance, encompassing multiple interrelated dimensions such as political, economic, and social governance, necessitates a nuanced understanding to ensure that policies are well-informed and targeted. Additionally, the use of one index provides a limited understanding of what happens to governance on the ground level. To address this limitation the World Governance Indicator and the IIAG adopt a broader and more descriptive approach by relying on interviews in each country (IIAG 2018; Kraay, Kaufmann, and Mastruzzi 2010).

There seems to be a consensus among scholars, policymakers, and international development organisations that quality governance is a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable economic growth and development. Good governance can be seen as a framework that shapes the formation, implementation, and execution of sound policies (UN 2000). Poor economic growth can therefore be associated with the assumption that the mechanisms and processes that facilitate economic performance are ineffective. Moreover, when discussing the impact of the quality of governance, there is a tendency to generalise the concept of governance, which can inadvertently obscure the nuances and complexities involved. Such an oversimplification risks limiting our understanding of the precise elements that influence public perceptions of democratic governance and support for democracy. For example, when arguing that good governance positively affects development, it remains unclear which aspect of governance is the main driver for support.

What is governance?

Before discussing the two indexes that will be used to measure governance quality, it is necessary to conceptualise what constitutes governance. Despite its frequent use among scholars and policymakers, there remains no unanimous agreement on a singular definition of governance. This lack of consensus reflects the multifaceted nature of governance, encompassing various dimensions and interpretations depending on the context—ranging from the mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which authority is exercised and decisions are made, to how public resources are allocated and how society's interests are mediated.

Fukuyama (2013) defines governance as the ability of the government (regardless of the type of political system in operation) to provide its citizens with certain services. This definition is closely related to the definition of governance as used by the IIAG. The IIAG defines governance as the provision of political, social, and economic goods and services that every citizen not only has the right to but that the state has the responsibility to deliver. In a similar vein, the United Nations (1997) contends that governance is how power is exercised in the management of a country's social and economic development. These definitions embody an instrumental approach to governance. Moreover, they assess the degree to which the state can produce outcomes.

Contrastingly, the WGI offers a broader definition of governance, emphasising the processes involved in selecting, monitoring, and replacing government officials; the government's capacity to devise and implement sound policies, and the mutual respect between citizens and the state for institutions governing economic and social interactions (Kraay, Kaufmann, and Mastruzzi 2010). This definition aligns with an intrinsic approach to governance, highlighting the importance of the processes and institutions themselves, rather than just the outcomes they produce. Similarly, Hope (2005) defines governance as how power and responsibility are exercised, further reflecting an intrinsic view that focuses on the quality and nature of governance mechanisms and institutions. These definitions underscore the complexity of governance, acknowledging both the processes and the outcomes as integral to understanding and assessing governance quality.

Varieties of Democracy

Distinguishing between strong and weak democracies can indeed seem straightforward when considering clear-cut cases. For example, Finland is widely recognised as a strong democracy, characterised by high levels of political participation, robust protections for civil rights, effective governance, and a transparent legal framework (OECD 2021). On the other hand, North Korea is not considered a democracy; it is a highly centralised, authoritarian state where political power is concentrated in the hands of a single party and leader, with little to no room for political pluralism, civil rights, or democratic governance (Abramowitz 2018). However, it is less clear whether Finland is more democratic than Switzerland or the United States, if Rwanda is less democratic today than last year, or whether democracy in Botswana has strengthened in certain aspects while weakening in others, this requires a detailed and

multidimensional approach. The Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project offers such a nuanced framework by measuring democracy through five distinct models: electoral, liberal, participatory, deliberative, and egalitarian democracy. Each model captures different facets of democracy, from the fairness of elections and the protection of individual liberties to the level of public participation and the emphasis on equality. This comprehensive approach allows for a more detailed comparison and analysis of democratic practices and changes within and across countries, providing insights into the complex and multifaceted nature of democracy.

As noted above, V-Dem's data collection relies on expert assessments but does so in a way that mitigates some biases typically associated with such methodologies. Over 3,500 country experts around the world contribute to the V-Dem, providing assessments on specific indicators for each country. These experts are typically academics, professionals, or practitioners with extensive knowledge of the political context of the country they assess. To ensure reliability and validity, each country is assessed by multiple experts – typically five per indicator. This multiple-coder approach allows V-Dem to gather a wide range of perspectives and reduce the influence of any single expert's biases or errors.

Like governance, there is a lack of consensus on how to measure and conceptualise democracy. By employing a multidimensional measure of democracy, V-Dem avoids omitting features of democracy that matter to some users. As the name suggests, it measures the varieties of democracy that matter. There is no single principle that encompasses democracy in its totality however, an analysis of each principle offers a comprehensive concept of democracy (Coppedge et al. 2018, 4).

Worth noting, V-Dem scores range from a scale of 0 to 1 with 0 indicating highly undemocratic and 1 indicating highly democratic.

The five principles of democracy:

- Even though the ***electoral*** component of democracy is not the sole measure of democracy, without it a state cannot be considered to be democratic. The electoral component of democracy measures whether elected officials are responsive to citizens. V-Dem measures this component by capturing the extent to which political leaders are elected under an environment characterised by comprehensive voting in free and fair elections, the guarantee of expression, and freedom of expression and association.

- The ***liberal*** component of democracy is characterised by the intrinsic value of protecting individual and minority rights against potential oppression and or dictatorship from the government. This assessment is based on measuring voting rights, freedom of expression and association, the freedom of fairness of elections, civil liberties, and executive constraints.

- The ***deliberative*** index of democracy measures if public reasoning is inclusive and focuses on the common good. According to this principle, there should be respectful dialogue on all levels. The assessment is based on measuring the extent to which citizens and leaders can discuss different views and seek the public good, as well as voting rights, freedom of association and expression and fairness of elections

- The ***egalitarian*** component of democracy holds that the unequal distribution of resources inhibits citizens from exercising their civil rights and liberties. It is only through the equal redistribution of resources, education, and health care across the population that citizens can attain political equality. This component measures the extent to which the protection of rights, access to power, and distribution of resources are equal.

- The ***participatory*** component of democracy emphasizes the participation of ordinary citizens. This component combines information on voting rights, freedoms of association and expression, fairness of elections and the extent to which citizens can participate in local and regional government, civil organisations, and direct democracy. Citizens can actively participate through civil society organisations, public decision making and mechanisms of direct democracy.

Within these dimensions, V-Dem further disaggregates into hundreds of indicators, allowing for a fine-grained analysis of different democratic practices and institutions. This disaggregation helps researchers and policymakers to examine specific elements of democracy in isolation as part of broader trends.

Apart from egalitarian democracy which emphasises equality in terms of economic and social resources and opportunities these components of democracy measure intrinsic democracy

(Coppedge et al. 2018). These components centre on political freedoms and equal rights, aligning closely with Bratton and Mattes' definition of intrinsic democracy (Bratton and Mattes 2001). Egalitarian democracy on the other hand, takes a different approach by placing focus on the social aspect of democracy – this is more in line with instrumental democracy. Based on these classifications of democracy, V-Dem data will be employed to measure the political governance index. This index will incorporate the various dimensions of democracy identified by V-Dem – to provide a comprehensive measure of political governance. Each of these components contributes to understanding the quality and nature of democratic governance, offering insights into how effectively political rights and freedoms are upheld; the extent of citizen participation in the political process; and the degree of equality and inclusiveness in political and social institutions. The following section expands on this discussion.

World Governance Indicators

The concept of governance is widely used in policy-making and by institutions, government officials and scholars. Despite its wide use, there is a lack of clear consensus around a single definition of governance, thus, the concept is open to different meanings and interpretations. It is defined and understood along the lines of the enforcement of the rule of law and or is understood in relation to public sector management issues. This dual perspective on governance highlights its multifaceted nature, encompassing both the mechanisms of authority and control as well as the administrative and operational capacities of the state and its institutions.

The WGI seeks to provide a holistic understanding of governance by drawing on a range of existing notions of governance to define governance as the traditions and institutions by which the authority in a country is exercised (Kraay, Kaufmann, and Mastruzzi 2010). This definition is characterised and comprises aspects such as the process by which government officials are selected, monitored and replaced (Kraay, Kaufmann, and Mastruzzi 2010); the government's capacity to formulate and implement sound policies; and the level of respect that citizens and the state have for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them (Kraay, Kaufmann, and Mastruzzi 2010).

The WGI has data on over 200 countries and territories in the world and compiles data from over 30 sources, including surveys of households, firms, non-governmental organisations, and

public sector institutions (Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi 2010). The indicators are aggregated into percentile ranks, allowing for cross-country comparisons over time. The WGI's broad approach provides a high-level view of governance but has been critiqued for its reliance on perception-based data, which may not fully capture on-the-ground realities.

The WGI features six aggregate governance indicators: voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence/terrorism, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption (Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi 2010). The use of various sources strengthens the reliability of data. Importantly, the WGI does explicitly account for the margins of error for each country estimate, enabling one to avoid over-interpreting small differences between countries.

The unobserved components are used for each of the clusters of governance to (1) standardise the diverse data into comparable units, (2) construct an aggregate indicator of governance as a weighted average of the underlying source variables, and (3) construct margins of error which may reflect unavoidable imprecision in measuring governance (Kraay, Kaufmann, and Mastruzzi 2010).

As mentioned, the three areas that constitute the concept of governance, comprise of six indicators:

- **Voice and accountability (VA)** captures the extent to which citizens can participate in the process of selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and free media.
- **Political stability and absence of violence/terrorism (PV)** measures the probability that the government will be overthrown or destabilised by unconstitutional or violent means.
- **Government effectiveness** places focus on the inputs that are required for the government to produce and implement sound policies. This indicator uses a combination of perceptions of service delivery, the quality of bureaucracy, and the government's ability to commit to sound policies.
- **Regulatory quality** measures market-unfriendly policies as well as the burdens imposed by excessive regulation on foreign trade and business development. In essence, this index measures the policies themselves.

- **Rule of law** measures the extent to which agents adhere and abide by the rules of society. This entails measuring perceptions of the occurrence of violent and non-violent crime, the effectiveness and predictability of the judiciary, and the enforceability of contracts.
- The sixth indicator **Control of corruption** is measured by using the conventional definition of corruption: The exercise of public power for private gain. This index also measures the impact of corruption in the business environment.

Ibrahim Index of African Governance

The Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG) is published every two years and is a comprehensive tool that measures and monitors governance performance in African countries. The IIAG provides a regional assessment of governance and is assessed regularly and consistently (Foresti, Wild and Norton 2014, 6). The IIAG provides an annual statistical assessment of governance for 54 African countries. The governance indicators measure different aspects of governance for the period from 2008 to 2019. The IIAG is more concerned with measuring the outputs and outcomes of policy as opposed to the inputs. The definition of governance comprises of four main pillars: Safety and Rule of law, Participation and Human rights, Sustainable economic opportunity, and human development (IIAG 2018). Each indicator comprises of 14 subcategories. The overall governance score comprises the unweighted average of the four indicators.

Each category is composed of multiple indicators, drawn from over 30 data sources, including African national statistics, international organizations, and expert assessments. The IIAG is unique in its African focus and aims to reflect the continent's specific governance challenges and opportunities. It provides scores and ranks for each country, enabling comparisons within the continent and tracking progress or decline over time. The IIAG's emphasis on African contexts makes it a crucial tool for understanding governance in the region, although it may lack comparability with global governance frameworks like the WGI.

The IIAG defines governance as the provision of political, social, and economic goods and services that every citizen not only has the right to but that the state has the responsibility to deliver to its citizens (IIAG 2018).

IIAG governance indicators (IIAG 2018, 63)*:*

- **Safety and Rule of Law**: The IIAG measures safety and the rule of law by measuring the government's ability to not only protect its citizens but also its ability to provide a safe and secure environment. The rule and safety indicator also measures whether the government has a monopoly over violence.

- **Participation, Human Rights, and Inclusion:** This indicator measures civil and political rights and freedoms by assessing the level of participation in the political and electoral process, respect for basic rights, as well as the absence of gender discrimination in all categories.

- **Human Development:** The human development indicator is measured using the following three components: Poverty alleviation and mitigation, education, and health. This is the only category where Africa has been able to improve every year over the past 10 years.

- **Foundations for Economic Opportunity:** This indicator measures the extent to which the government can create an environment that enables its citizens to pursue economic goals and the opportunity to prosper. This category comprises of the following subcategories: public management and business environment, infrastructure, and the rural sector. The outcomes of these subcategories measure and assess national and personal wealth creation.

On the one hand, the IIAG's definition of governance orientates around the government's ability to provide both economic and political services to the public, placing less focus on the role of institutions. This perspective foregrounds the tangible outcomes of governance in terms of service delivery and public welfare, assessing how effectively governments meet the needs and expectations of their citizens in both economic and political domains. On the other hand, the WGI places primary focus on the role of institutions and government performance, with less focus on the individual and socio-economic outcomes, instead of assessing governance quality through the lens of institutional strength, effectiveness, and integrity. These differing emphases reflect distinct conceptual approaches to understanding governance: one that is more outcome-oriented, focusing on the direct impacts of governance on the public, and another that is more process-oriented, emphasising the quality and performance of governance institutions.

However, both perspectives contribute valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of governance, highlighting the importance of both effective institutions and positive outcomes in assessing governance quality.

Because the three datasets are highly correlated (see Figure 3.1), their combination gives a more reliable and accurate measure of political and economic governance quality. As it has been reiterated in this section, governance quality encompasses and speaks to multiple aspects of a political system and its stability. Thus, to understand its effect, it is useful to break down the components of governance. This breakdown allows for a more nuanced understanding of how different governance dimensions contribute to overall governance quality and effectiveness, providing clearer insights into the mechanisms through which governance influences development, stability, and public welfare.

One key factor that makes the IIAG unique, is the fact that it assesses governance by primarily measuring outcomes. In other words, it is more interested in capturing the extent to which the government can actualise its established objectives (IIAG 2018). Additionally, the IIAG distinguishes itself from other sources such as the WGI by including details on how governance and its sub-indicators are operationalised. By elucidating the specific criteria and processes used to evaluate governance dimensions, the IIAG enables a deeper understanding of governance dynamics within the African context, facilitating more informed analyses and comparisons. As mentioned afore I will make use of all three indicators however, only the indicators that 'best' measure political and economic governance will be used.

Together, these three frameworks offer complementary perspectives on governance, with the WGI providing a broad global view, V-Dem offering detailed democratic analysis, and the IIAG focusing on the unique governance dynamics within Africa. Each framework's methodological differences highlight the complexity of governance measurement and the importance of selecting the appropriate tool depending on the specific context and research question.

Selection of economic and political governance clusters

As noted elsewhere, governance is a system concerned with the structure and processes for accountability, decision-making, and the behaviour of an actor. These actors include the role of the state, citizens, the private sector, and civil society organisations (Blatter 2012).

Moreover, democracy cannot be understood outside of governance and its pillars as governance provides a framework to understand the behaviour of actors in society. Over and above this, governance organises and reforms the state and public administration. It informs and provides a measuring tape on the performance of the state. It further shapes the actions taken by the state and in turn how actors respond to this. Governance can, therefore, also serve as an indicator to diagnose a change in political steering and the political system.

Figure 3.1 below provides insights into the logic and thought process behind the selection of the governance clusters. Figure 3.1 is a correlation matrix[1] that depicts the correlations between various governance indicators drawn from the three major governance indices (V-Dem, WGI, IIAG) - the 'most political' clusters are placed first, and those that are 'most economic' are placed last.

The correlation between the indicators ranges in the blue shade meaning that there are no weak or negative (red) correlations. The darker the shade of blue, the stronger the correlation. Figure 3.1 also indicates that there is a strong and positive correlation between the political and the economic clusters. The positive and significant correlation between the clusters substantiates the selection and combination of the economic and political governance clusters. This interconnectedness substantiates the approach of examining economic and political governance together, offering a more comprehensive understanding of their collective impact on overall governance quality and societal outcomes.

[1] The correlation matrix is a pairwise complete observation for 50 countries as 3 countries were missing values in either of the three indexes

Figure 3.1 | Correlation between governance clusters

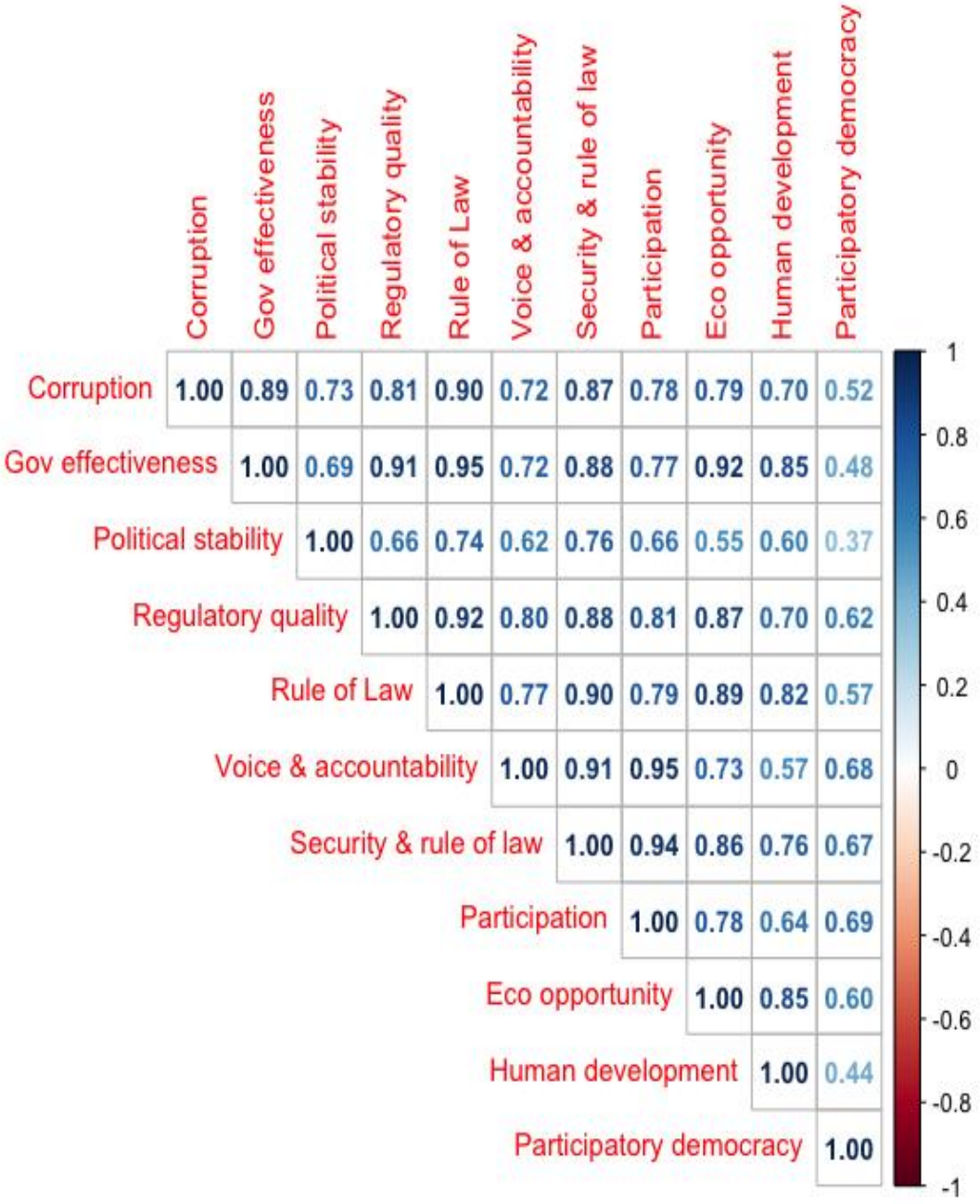


Table 3.1 is a principal components table that indicates the linear combinations of the governance quality and democracy indicators. The principal components explain a large portion of the variation from the dataset.

Principal components analysis

Figure 3.2 | scree plot

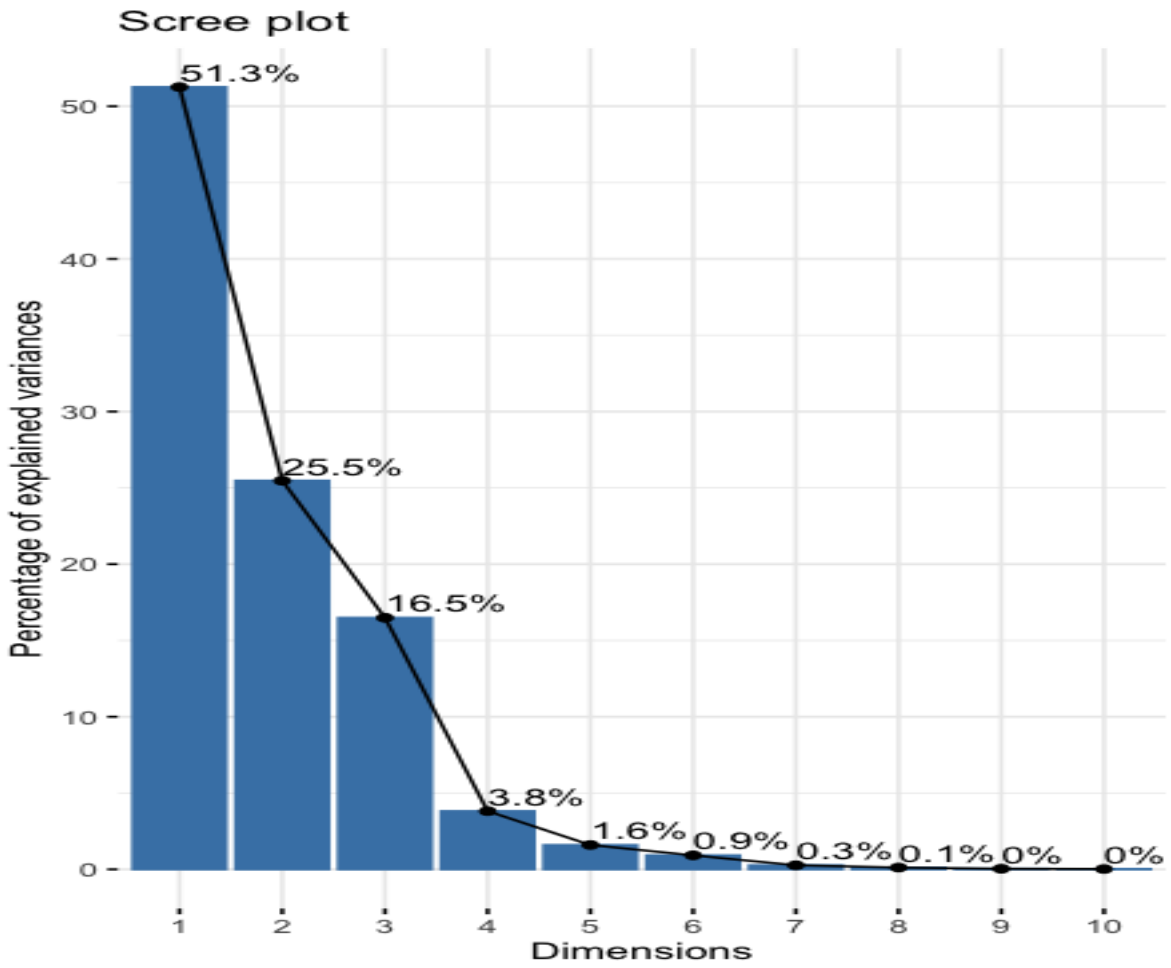


Figure 3.2 is a Scree plot of eigenvalues ordered from largest to smallest. Eigenvalues measure the amount of variance captured by each principal component. The first principal component accounts for 51.3 percent of the variation in the dataset, the second for 25.5 percent, and the third for 16.5 percent. Together, these three components explain 92.3 percent of the variance, making them the primary focus for the subsequent analysis.

PCA is employed to reduce the dimensionality of the dataset by identifying the most significant variables that account for the variation in governance quality and democracy indicators. This dimensionality reduction helps to uncover underlying structures and patterns, ensuring that the most important components are retained for further analysis.

Table 3.1 | Principal component table

Variable	1	2	3
Corruption	0.34	0.08	0.17
Government effectiveness	**0.45**	0.04	- 0.11
Political stability	0.22	**- 0.25**	**0.67**
Regulatory quality	0.27	0.27	- 0.04
Rule of law	**0.36**	0.07	- 0.02
Voice & accountability	0.01	0.54	0.26
Safety & rule of law	0.18	0.28	0.16
Participation	0.05	0.46	0.22
Economic opportunity	0.33	0.18	- 0.39
Human development	**0.39**	**- 0.19**	- 0.38
Participatory democracy	-0.36	0.45	- 0.26

Within the three datasets from the WGI, IIAG, and V-Dem, variables with the highest variance indicate a greater measure of either political or economic governance. These variables will be selected to measure political and economic governance.

Interpreting the Principal Components:

The first principal component: This component is strongly correlated with government effectiveness, human development, and the rule of law, indicating that these variables tend to vary together. Since these variables are central to political and economic governance, the first principal component represents a blend of these governance dimensions, suggesting that improvements in one are likely accompanied by improvements in the others.

Second Principal Component: This component increases with voice and accountability, participation, and participatory democracy while decreasing with political stability and human development. The contrasting directions suggest a trade-off between political inclusivity and stability, implying that regions with higher participation might experience more political fluctuations or slower human development growth.

Third Principal Component: This component is largely driven by political stability and stands out as a distinct measure from the other components. It highlights political stability as a unique aspect of governance that might operate independently of other governance variables.

Figure 3.3 | Variable Correlation Plot

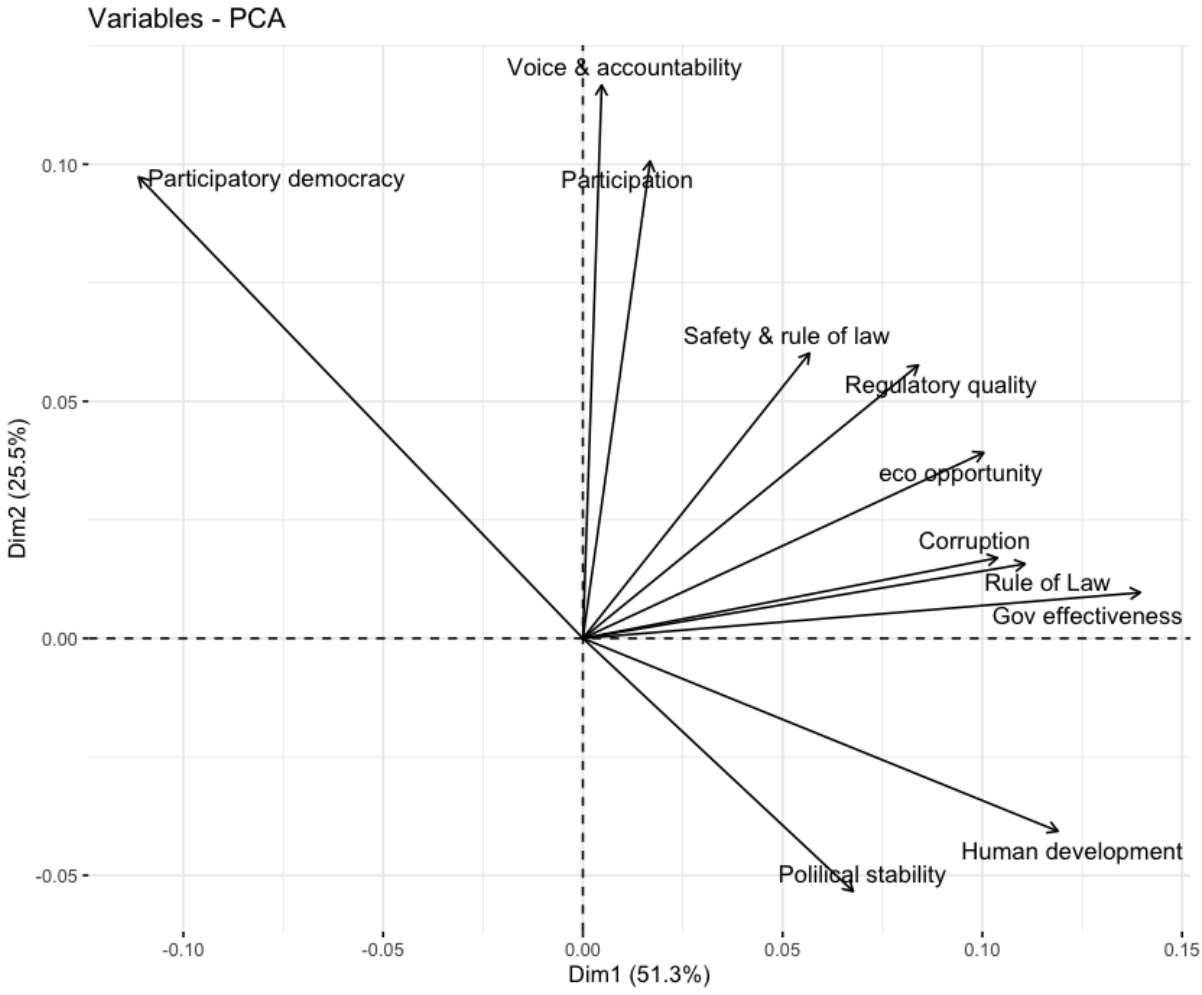


Figure 3.3 visualises the correlations between the governance variables across the first two principal components. The angles between the variables in the plot indicate the strength of their correlations; smaller angles denote stronger correlations. Governance indicators that are close

together are highly correlated and represent a significant dimension of either political or economic governance.

Key observations:

- **Dim1 (51.3% variance):** The horizontal axis (Dim1) is strongly associated with variables like Government Effectiveness, Rule of Law, Human Development, Corruption, and Regulatory Quality. These variables cluster together, suggesting a strong positive correlation and indicating that they collectively contribute to a significant dimension of governance. This dimension can be interpreted as representing Economic Governance and Institutional Effectiveness.
- **Dim2 (25.5% variance):** The vertical axis (Dim2) primarily aligns with variables such as Voice & Accountability, Participation, and Participatory Democracy. These variables are distinct from those correlated with Dim1, suggesting that Dim2 captures a different aspect of governance, likely related to Political Inclusivity and Democratic Participation.
- **Participatory Democracy** is positioned far from the other variables, indicating it is relatively uncorrelated with economic governance indicators and is instead a unique measure of political governance.
- **Political Stability and Human Development** lie in opposite directions along Dim1 and Dim2, highlighting a potential trade-off between these governance aspects, as regions with high political inclusivity may experience variability in stability.

This plot confirms that the PCA effectively distinguishes between dimensions of governance, with Dim1 capturing aspects related to economic performance and institutional integrity, while Dim2 highlights political participation and inclusivity. These dimensions are crucial for understanding the multifaceted nature of governance quality and its impact on democratic support.

The selection of the political governance cluster

Political governance provides a framework characterised by a constitution, laws, and civil liberties that are aimed at facilitating political stability (Lee 2019). The UNDP defines political governance as the decision-making process in formulating policy (UNDP 1997). Political governance does not equate to democracy nor does democracy lead to economic development. The rise of the East Asian Tigers from the 1960s to the 1980s shows the importance of political stability in achieving sustainable economic growth and development. The rise of the East Asian Tigers also drew attention to the clear distinction between political governance and democracy as well as the distinction between economic development and democracy. This remarkable transformation highlighted the importance of cohesive and stable governance frameworks. It also illuminated the nuanced distinctions between political governance, economic development, and democracy. In essence, a country may have democratic deficits while achieving economic progress.

Figure 3.1 indicates that there is a high correlation between the political clusters. Apart from the participatory democracy indicator, corruption strongly correlates with all economic and political clusters – with the highest correlation being between government effectiveness (0.89) and rule of law (0.90). Similarly, government effectiveness and the rule of law are highly correlated with all the political clusters. The correlation of 0.94 between Participation, Rights and Inclusion, safety and rule of law further indicates the high correlation between the political clusters.

Compared to the other clusters, participatory democracy has the weakest correlation with all the clusters. Unsurprisingly, participatory democracy has a relatively high correlation of 0.68 with Participation, Rights, and Inclusion (participation). Participatory democracy assesses the participation of ordinary citizens in civil society organisations, public decision making and mechanisms of direct democracy. Participation as a governance measure typically encompasses perceptions of electoral processes, freedoms (such as speech and assembly), inclusion, equality, and the representation of women in leadership roles. It assesses the broader framework within which individuals and groups can engage in the political process and influence decision-making, reflecting the inclusivity and fairness of democratic institutions. Government effectiveness has a correlation of 0.88 with security rule of law, a correlation of 0.91 with regulatory quality, and a correlation of 0.77 with Participation.

Political stability and absence of violence/terrorism (political stability) have a correlation of 0.76 with security and the rule of law and a correlation of 0.74 with the rule of law. The political stability indicator captures perceptions of the likelihood that the government will be destabilised or overthrown by unconstitutional means. Security and rule of law (SRL) on the other hand measures public perceptions of rule and law, accountability, security and safety, and anti-corruption, as well as the government's ability to provide a secure environment. Given the slight overlap in measurement, SRL is used as an indicator to measure political governance instead of corruption and the rule of law.

Given the strong correlations observed among these indicators, the political governance cluster for this thesis will include:
Participation and Rights and Inclusion + Security and Rule of Law + Political stability and absence of violence/terrorism + Government Effectiveness

These indicators collectively represent the essential dimensions of political governance, ensuring a comprehensive analysis of its impact on governance quality

The selection of the economic governance cluster

The lack of accountability, transparency and sound economic policies impedes economic development (Carothers and Brechenmacher 2014). In turn, this can result in negative perceptions about government performance and the political system. It is necessary to note that governance is not solely the state's prerogative. The state plays a vital role in facilitating its efficiency; however, governance can be exercised by non-state actors and institutions such as the private sector and civil society (UN 2000). If ordinary citizens perceive they have a voice in the decision-making process, they are more likely to have favourable assessments of the government's performance.

As Figure 3.1 indicates, the Foundations for Economic Opportunities (eco opportunity) indicator is highly correlated with Regulatory Quality (0.87), and Human Development (0.85). This high correlation is expected as all three indicators assess and measure an aspect of economic well-being; be it the government's ability to create sound policies (Regulatory quality); the extent the government can create a conducive environment that enables citizens to pursue economic goods and opportunities (foundations for economic opportunities); or an

assessment of improvements in health, education, social protection and a sustainable environment (Human development).

The economic governance cluster comprises of the following indicators:
Foundations for Economic Opportunities + Regulatory Quality + Human Development[2]

How governance quality is measured

To account for the different methods and weightings used by various sources to measure governance indicators, I standardised the data by calculating the z-scores for each indicator. This approach allows for the comparison of data points drawn from different distributions by placing them on a common scale.

A z-score represents the number of standard deviations a data point is from the mean of its distribution. Positive z-scores indicate that a data point is above the mean, while negative z-scores indicate it is below the mean. For instance, a z-score of +3.5 means the data point is 3.5 standard deviations above the mean, whereas a z-score of -3.0 indicates it is 3 standard deviations below the mean.

In analysing governance, both political and economic clusters are vital. By linking governance inputs (such as policy decisions) to outcomes (like healthcare quality or education levels), a more comprehensive understanding of governance is achieved. This approach also sharpens the analysis of how political and economic governance aspects individually and collectively influence public attitudes towards democracy, offering insights into which dimensions of governance are most critical in shaping democratic perceptions and experiences. Addressing whether the quality of education or healthcare can be assessed based on the efficiency of those in office, or if prioritising one measure over another offers a more effective gauge of governance, requires nuanced analysis. Simply put, no single measure can fully capture the multifaceted nature of governance quality. Thus, the challenge lies in establishing connections between diverse governance measures. One way that this can be done is by dichotomising governance into political and economic governance. Highlighting the interdependence of these clusters, as illustrated in Figure 3.3, provides a clearer understanding of how various

[2] The PRI indicator was selected over VA as it has a stronger correlation with the economic and political indicators

governance aspects interact, emphasising the necessity of a holistic view in governance analysis.

Figure 3.5 | The association between political and economic governance

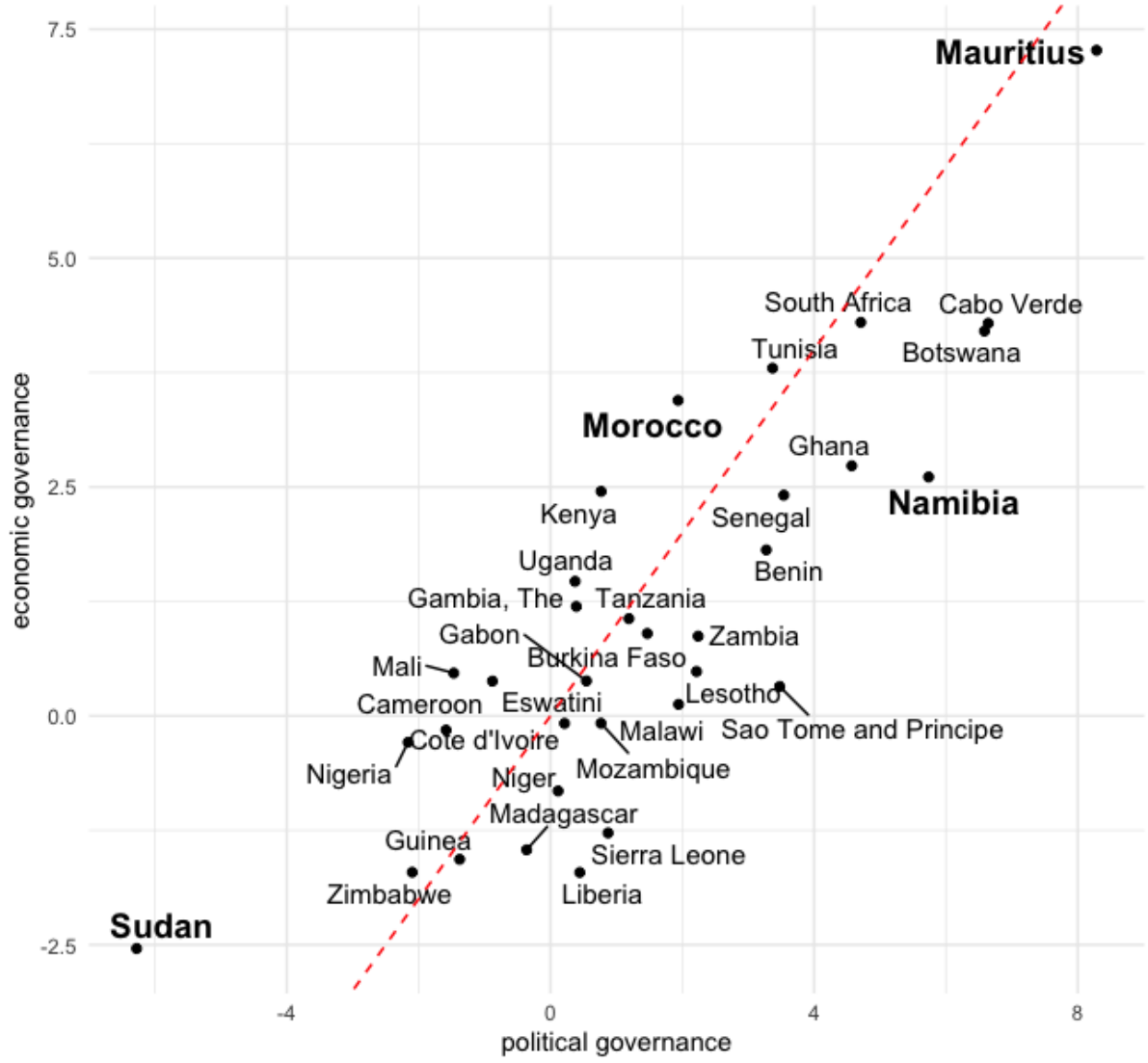


Figure 3.5 illustrates the association between political and economic governance across 50 African countries between 2010 and 2020. Governance scores are standardised z-scores and not absolute values. A score of 8 for example, does not mean 8 out of 10, it does however indicate that the country is 8 standard deviations above the mean. Similarly, a score of -8 indicates a country is 8 standard deviations below the mean. The plot ranges from approximately -8 to 8, where higher positive values indicate significantly better governance relative to the mean, and lower negative values indicate significantly worse governance.

The figure reveals a generally strong positive correlation between political and economic governance, with countries scoring higher in political governance tending also to perform well economically. However, the relationship is not uniform across the continent, as evidenced by significant variations in governance quality.

Most countries cluster in the lower-middle quadrant, indicating generally low scores in both dimensions. However, outliers such as Sudan, Zimbabwe, and Liberia, with particularly low scores in both political and economic governance, reflect the profound challenges faced by countries with unstable or undemocratic regimes. These outliers reinforce the importance of strong democratic institutions in fostering overall governance quality.

Countries like Namibia, Kenya, Benin, and Morocco, which score higher in either political or economic governance but not both, illustrate the complex, non-linear relationship between these governance dimensions. This variation suggests that improvements in one area do not automatically translate to advancements in the other, challenging the notion that political and economic governance are always mutually reinforcing. Instead, these cases highlight the importance of context-specific factors and the need for nuanced governance strategies that address the unique challenges and opportunities within each country.

In comparison, countries with high scores in both dimensions, such as Mauritius, Cabo Verde, Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa, exhibit strong political governance but lag somewhat in economic governance. These patterns suggest that while democratic governance can promote better economic outcomes through transparency and effective public administration, this is not guaranteed. Conversely, Morocco, Kenya, and Uganda, where economic governance surpasses political governance, highlight that economic success can sometimes be achieved despite weaker political governance. This underscores that the relationship between political and economic governance is influenced by various external and internal factors and is not strictly linear.

Overall, while there is a general trend linking strong political governance with better economic performance, the relationship is complex and context-dependent. Effective governance strategies must therefore be tailored to the specific conditions of each country, rather than assuming a one-size-fits-all approach.

As discussed in Chapter 2, political and economic factors have distinct effects on democratic attitudes, making these impacts evident at the national level. To understand the concepts of intrinsic and instrumental democracy, it is important to pinpoint specific governance aspects that may shape attitudes towards democracy. This involves examining how various political and economic governance elements – such as the rule of law, transparency, participation, economic stability, and public service delivery- contribute to public perceptions and support for democratic principles. Understanding which facets of governance influence democratic attitudes can provide valuable insights into the mechanisms through which governance quality affects the broader democratic landscape.

Critiques

It can be argued that when making their analysis, there is no guarantee that scholars may categorise countries based on the perceptions they hold. Some scholars argue that identifying lack of accountability, corruption, poor management, and the like does not provide relevant policy solutions on how to address these challenges (Charles and Christiane 2006; Thomas 2010). On the contrary, it can be argued that this is a flawed argument as it is nearly impossible to formulate a generalised solution for these deficiencies. It is also beyond the scope of these projects to address these deficiencies. Indexes merely provide insight into trends and patterns. In addition, they allow us to not only compare trends and patterns over time and space; but they also allow us to make future predictions.

When analysing and making use of measures of governance, it can be tricky to distinguish and separate the failure of policies from the influence of external factors that may influence governance outcomes. This begs one to ask: can the performance of the government and policy outcomes be fully separated from other contextual factors such as economic growth and poverty? In totality, these indicators measure governance from different angles, thus the use of both clusters provides specificity to the discussion on governance quality. As mentioned earlier, dichotomising governance assists in identifying specific factors that influence support and satisfaction with democracy. Both clusters are based on subjective and objective perceptions of governance.

Individual level of analysis

The first section of this chapter outlined and discussed the country level of analysis by defining, disaggregating, and dichotomising governance. Through the use of a correlation matrix and a PCA, it is possible to distinguish between economic and political governance. Moreover, there is a strong positive association between economic and political governance. In this section, I assess the individual-level measures from the Afrobarometer (AB). In doing so, I outline how support for and satisfaction with democracy is measured.

This section seeks to respond to the following questions: What is the association between support for and satisfaction with democracy? Is more democracy being demanded than supplied or is it the inverse, and what does this association suggest about the stability and quality of democracy in Africa? In establishing the individual trends and patterns in democratic attitudes and governance quality, a clearer assessment can be established of the association between the two.

The first section discusses how support and satisfaction are measured using round 7 AB data. Afrobarometer data provides insight into ordinary African's understanding and attitudes toward democracy, as well as how these attitudes change over time. This also gives insight into the stability of democracy at a national and regional level. I also address the limitations and how these limitations are addressed. This is followed by a discussion on the association between support for and satisfaction with democracy. The last section establishes an empirical association between democracy and governance.

As outlined in Chapter 2, counter to popular belief, attitudes towards democracy are not linear. It is therefore necessary to unpack some of the covert nuances in this discussion. Data from the Afrobarometer gives room for this discussion. The AB data will help provide an understanding of some of the more complicated opinions held by ordinary Africans to identify the implications that this has on democratic governance in Africa.

Dependent variable: Measuring support for and satisfaction with democracy

Economic dissatisfaction, anxiety about social changes, and general anger with political performance fuel political discontent among ordinary citizens around the world (Gyimah-Boadi and Asunka 2021; Wike, Silver, and Castillo 2019). These sentiments are often met with the rise of challenger parties, anti-establishment leaders and movements that aim to influence change and challenge fundamental norms, institutions, and political behaviour. What is apparent is that public opinions on democratic performance influence the health of democracy significantly. Organisations such as the V-Dem, Freedom House, and the Economist Intelligence Unit have documented declines in the health of democracy globally. The documentation of these trends by reputable sources underscores the importance of public sentiment in sustaining democratic norms and practices, indicating that the vitality of democracy is closely linked to the perceptions of citizens and experiences of democratic governance, thereby emphasising the importance of factoring individual experiences in understanding democracy within the African context.

Additionally, public opinion surveys like the Pew Research, the Euro, and Afrobarometer have illustrated that commitment to democracy is weakening. Perceptions of how well democracy is performing, the level of socioeconomic wellbeing, security, and corruption are some of the factors that contribute to the lack of commitment. Assessments on support and satisfaction with democracy do however vary across nations. To gain a deeper understanding of how democracy is perceived in Africa, this research uses the Afrobarometer survey, a comprehensive public opinion survey that captures the views of African citizens on various aspects of democracy, governance, and societal conditions. By analysing Afrobarometer data, insights into the nuances of democratic perceptions across the continent can be obtained, offering a detailed picture of the factors that influence public attitudes towards democracy in Africa. This approach allows for an exploration of the complex interplay between governance quality, public services, and democratic satisfaction among African populations.

When using public opinion surveys, several factors can discredit these surveys. An example would be the use of language. When conducting surveys on public opinion, particularly regarding perceptions of democracy, the phrasing and structure of the questionnaire are critical. An illustrative example is the Central and Eastern Eurobarometer (CEEB) survey during the 1990s, which posed the question to respondents: “On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly

satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied with the way democracy is developing in your country?" (Kuzma 1998).

In 1997, the question was modified to, "On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in your country?" Both of these questions are not accurate measures of support for democracy or the legitimacy of democracy. The main reason is that responses may be interpreted as "all or nothing". If respondents say that they are dissatisfied with the way democracy is working or developing, this does not imply that they are dissatisfied with democracy as a political regime, or that dissatisfaction equates to a preference to some authoritarian alternative.

Another limitation of public opinion surveys is that they may not always capture the nuanced views of respondents, such as distinguishing between dissatisfaction with specific institutions and overall support for democratic principles. Pippa Norris addresses this shortfall in her book "Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Governance." Norris (1999) integrates data from various international surveys, such as the World Values Survey, European Social Survey, and Eurobarometer survey, among others, to provide a broad and nuanced perspective on public support and satisfaction with democratic governance. By integrating measures and cross-validating findings, she provides a more reliable and holistic reflection of public sentiment, highlighting the distinction between institutional dissatisfaction and support for democracy.

In essence, public opinion surveys do not fully capture democratic attitudes, but may instead, capture temporary attitudes. The wording and response options provided are instrumental in capturing the complexities of public opinion, underscoring the necessity of careful questionnaire design in obtaining accurate and meaningful insights into democratic perceptions.

Additionally, several opinion survey polls similar to the one mentioned earlier, often inquire whether respondents favour or dislike democracy, rather than questioning their beliefs about the permanence or resilience of democracy in their country (Schedler 2001). This distinction in questioning can lead to different insights, as preferences for democracy may not directly correlate with perceptions of its durability or stability within a given political context. By asking about preferences, surveys capture immediate sentiments towards democratic

governance, but probing beliefs about democracy's longevity could reveal deeper convictions about the institutionalisation and prospects of democratic systems.

Opinion surveys that measure democracy (and other related topics) indicate that globally, there is a clear majority of the population that supports democracy. The concept of 'support for democracy' is used to measure how the governed engage with the political system. It is also used to measure the conditions under which attitudes towards democracy fluctuate. But what exactly does it mean to support democracy?

Easton (1975) defines support as how an individual orients himself to an object either through his behaviour or action, whether positive or negative. This orientation is based on an evaluation of some sort of (Easton 1975). On the other hand, satisfaction with democracy is one of the common measures to understand political behaviour and public opinions. According to Singh and Mayne (2023), the concept of satisfaction with democracy has been extensively explored in academic literature, featuring in over 400 publications. Quite often, satisfaction with and support for democracy are used interchangeably. However, it is important to note that while related, these two concepts can encapsulate different dimensions of public sentiment towards democratic governance. For example, levels of satisfaction can be used as an indicator of political support and the political health of a democratic system. While both support for and satisfaction with democracy are related to the citizens' relationship with their democratic system, they measure distinct aspects and offer different insights into its condition. With this in mind, it is useful to make a distinction between support (intrinsic) and satisfaction (instrumental) with democracy.

As previously discussed, discontentment with the policies and performance of political authorities within a political system can lead to significant social or political change. However, it is important to recognise that dissatisfaction with political leadership or government performance does not invariably lead to a loss of confidence in the political regime or system as a whole. Citizens may express dissatisfaction with current leaders or policies while still fundamentally believing in the principles and structure of their political system. Thus, in trying to understand democratic trends (more specifically support for and satisfaction with democracy), it is useful to keep in mind that a decline in support and satisfaction with democracy is not synonymous with a call for a change in political regime.

In assessing findings from public opinion surveys, it is imperative to question the degree of knowledge and understanding that respondents have towards democracy. Are respondents more concerned about economic needs and have little understanding of democracy and its key principles? This is because respondents may primarily define democracy in terms of its outcomes and less on its institutional/procedural performance.

Cross-national opinion surveys are the most common method used to measure public attitudes towards democracy. These surveys provide valuable insights into how citizens across different countries perceive democratic principles, practices, and institutions. They provide insight into people's views and how attitudes change over time. Furthermore, they also provide insight into democratic stability, as well as the potential discrepancies in policy approaches at the state level and or the quality of democracy in a given country. For a focused analysis of Africa, this thesis employs data from the Round 7 Afrobarometer survey. This allows for a nuanced understanding of the complexities and variations in democratic attitudes within African nations, contributing valuable empirical evidence to discussions on democracy in the African context.

The Afrobarometer is a pan-African research network that conducts public opinions on democracy, governance, economics and related issues in Africa, providing a comprehensive overview of public opinion across the continent. The latest Afrobarometer round 7 survey was released in 2018 and conducted surveys in 34 out of 54 African countries. This extensive coverage provides valuable insights into the variations and commonalities in public opinion across a significant portion of Africa, contributing to a deeper understanding of the continent's democratic landscape and the challenges and opportunities it faces.

It is important to be mindful that survey data solely measures citizen's perceptions of governance, rather than actual government performance. Support for an opposition political party, may for example result in citizens disapproving of the government in power and therefore expressing a negative attitude toward the government while continuing to support democracy. One way that the Afrobarometer survey manages potential bias is by asking individuals questions about democracy in different ways.

Measuring support for democracy

The Afrobarometer survey measures support for democracy with the following questions:
Which of these statements is closest to your own opinion?

1. Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.
2. In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable.
3. For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have.

In the statistical analysis using R Studio, the responses were recoded into binary variables (1s and 0s) for simplicity and clarity:

Responses indicating "Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government" were assigned a value of 1, indicating support for democracy. Responses for "In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable," "For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have," and "Don't know" were recoded as 0, indicating either a preference for non-democratic governance or indifference towards the type of government.
By assigning 0 to "Don't know" responses, I avoided losing valuable observations, ensuring a more comprehensive analysis.

This binary recoding simplifies the analysis and makes it easier to interpret the levels of support for democracy. The use of 1 and 0 helps identify clear distinctions between those who explicitly support democracy and those who do not, including those who are indifferent or undecided.

Measuring satisfaction with democracy

The same approach was used to measure satisfaction with democracy.
Satisfaction with democracy was measured using the Afrobarometer question:
Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [this country] today?

1. [Country] is not a democracy.
2. Very satisfied.
3. Fairly satisfied.
4. Not very satisfied.
5. Not at all satisfied.
6. Don't know.

Responses were dichotomised to simplify the analysis:
"Very satisfied" and "Fairly satisfied" responses were assigned a value of 1, indicating satisfaction with democracy. Responses of "Not very satisfied," "Not at all satisfied," and "Don't know" were recoded as 0, indicating dissatisfaction with democracy or uncertainty. Responses indicating "[Country] is not a democracy" were coded as NA (missing values) to exclude them from the analysis, as they do not fit within the scope of measuring satisfaction with democracy in a democratic context.

The decision to dichotomize satisfaction responses into satisfied (1) and not satisfied (0) allows for a clear and focused comparison between those who express contentment with democracy and those who do not. Coding "[Country] is not a democracy" as NA ensures that the analysis remains relevant to the context of democratic governance.

While the statistical analysis in this thesis primarily focuses on quantifiable measures of support and satisfaction with democracy, it is equally important to consider indicators that provide additional context and depth to these attitudes. The Afrobarometer survey includes two measures: perceptions of the extent of democracy and the rejection of non-democratic alternatives. Though these indicators are not included in the statistical analysis, they offer valuable insights explored in the case studies presented in this thesis.

Measuring the extent of democracy

The measure of the extent of democracy provides insight into how citizens perceive the current state of democracy in their country. While support for democracy indicates a preference for the democratic system, perceptions of the extent of democracy reveal how well citizens believe their country adheres to democratic principles. This distinction is crucial because high support for democracy does not necessarily mean that citizens view their country as fully democratic. By including this measure, the gap between democratic ideals and democratic realities is captured.

To measure the extent of democracy respondents were asked the following question:
In your opinion, how much of a democracy is [this country] today?

1. Is it a full democracy, a democracy with minor problems,
2. A democracy with major problems, or

3. Not a democracy?

Responses for "Is it a full democracy" and "a democracy with minor problems" were selected and considered positive responses that the country is a democracy.

In the case studies, this measure helps to contextualise statistical findings by providing a richer narrative of how democracy is perceived on the ground. For instance, a country with high support for democracy may still have significant portions of its population perceiving it as "a democracy with major problems." This discrepancy highlights potential areas where democratic institutions or practices may be falling short despite overall public support. By observing these perceptions in each case study, the thesis can explore how different nations interpret and experience democracy, shedding light on the complexities of democratic consolidation in varied contexts.

Measuring the rejection of non-democratic alternatives

The questions regarding the rejection of non-democratic alternatives provide a critical assessment of the depth of democratic commitment among the population. While support for democracy is important, the rejection of non-democratic alternatives (like military or one-party rule) provides more understanding of how resilient this support is under challenging conditions. High rejection levels of alternatives suggest a strong normative commitment to democracy, which can coexist with low satisfaction if citizens are committed to democracy despite recognising its flaws.

Being cognizant of potential bias, i.e., some respondents may only be paying “lip service”, the Afrobarometer probes the depth of popular democratic commitment by also asking respondents to evaluate alternative types of non-democratic regimes, by asking the following question:

There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives?

1. Only one political party is allowed to stand for election and hold office
2. The army comes in to govern the country
3. Elections and Parliament are abolished so that the president can decide something

In the case studies, this measure is instrumental in identifying whether citizens' support for democracy is merely rhetorical or if it reflects a deeper, more resilient commitment. For example, a country where a significant portion of the population rejects non-democratic alternatives is likely to have a more stable democratic culture, even in the midst of challenges or dissatisfaction with current democratic practices.

These qualitative measures contribute to the case studies by offering insights into the broader socio-political environment that shapes democratic attitudes. They help in understanding the complexities and contradictions that might exist in a country's democratic journey, such as high support for democracy alongside significant discontent with its current implementation.

By integrating these additional measures into the case studies, this thesis provides a more comprehensive analysis of democratic attitudes, highlighting the importance of both quantitative and qualitative approaches in understanding the full spectrum of democratic commitment and satisfaction.

The types of democrats in Africa

In Chapter 2, I outlined how support for and satisfaction with democracy were treated as binary responses. Support for democracy was assigned a value of 1 for respondents who chose "Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government." Non-support for democracy was assigned a value of 0 for respondents who chose either "In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable" or "For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have." Similarly, satisfaction with democracy was coded as 1 for respondents who chose "Very satisfied" or "Fairly satisfied." Dissatisfaction with democracy was assigned a value of 0 for respondents who chose "Not very satisfied" or "Not at all satisfied."

Table 3.2 captures the classification of the types of democrats and table 3.2 indicates the type of democrats that each Afrobarometer country falls under.

Table 3.2 | Conceptual map of the types of democrats

High		
Support	critical democrats	satisfied democrats
	dissatisfied non-democrats	satisfied non-democrats
Low	**Satisfaction**	

In Table 3.2, the y-axis represents support for democracy and the x-axis represents satisfaction with democracy and there are four sections called quadrants. These quadrants are based on both positive and negative coordinates of satisfaction and support. The quadrants are divided as follows: critical democrats (low satisfaction - high support); satisfied democrats (high satisfaction – high support); and dissatisfied non-democrats (low satisfaction - low support); satisfied non-democrats (high satisfaction – low support).

Excluding missing data, there are 51,982 individual responses in the Afrobarometer dataset, which provides a rich source for analysis. By classifying each respondent as a specific "type" of democrat based on their expressed support for and satisfaction with democracy, I can aggregate these responses to gain a clearer picture of the types of democrats that are emerging within each country.

This approach moves beyond the limitations of a national aggregate, allowing for a more granular analysis. For example, at the individual level, I can identify patterns and trends in the distribution of "satisfied democrats," "satisfied non-democrats," "critical democrats," and "dissatisfied non-democrats" within each country. This detailed insight reveals not only how a country performs on average but also the diversity of experiences among its citizens when it comes to democracy. By focusing on individual responses, this methodology captures the complexity and nuances of democratic support and satisfaction, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the various types of democrats across the continent.

Measuring the types of democrats

As noted afore, I recoded responses for satisfaction and support into a binary variable. Based on the combined responses, I classified respondents into four distinct categories:

- **Satisfied democrats** are respondents who support democracy and are satisfied with its functioning. These individuals perceive the system and its implementation positively (satisfaction = 1, support = 1).

- **Satisfied non-democrats** are respondents who are satisfied with the governance in their country but do not explicitly support democracy. These individuals might favour the current political system, even if it is non-democratic (satisfaction = 1, support = 0).

- **Critical democrats** support democracy in principle but are dissatisfied with its current functioning. These respondents may advocate for reform and improvement of the democratic system (satisfaction = 0, support = 1).

- **Dissatisfied non-democrats** are respondents who neither support democracy nor are satisfied with how governance functions in their country. This group reflects discontent with the system and its practice (satisfaction = 0, support = 0).

This typology allows for a more nuanced analysis of democratic attitudes. It captures not only whether individuals support democracy but also whether they are satisfied with its current implementation. The distinction between satisfied democrats and critical democrats is particularly important, as the latter group may signal a desire for democratic reform despite overall support for the system.

To further explore the distribution of these types of democrats across countries, I calculated the proportion of each type within the survey sample for each country. This approach provides insights into national-level trends while preserving the richness of individual-level variation, enabling a more granular analysis of emerging democratic trends across the continent.

Figure 3.4 captures the level of satisfaction with and support for democracy as well as the type of democrat for each country surveyed by the Afrobarometer.

Figure 3.4 | Types of democracies

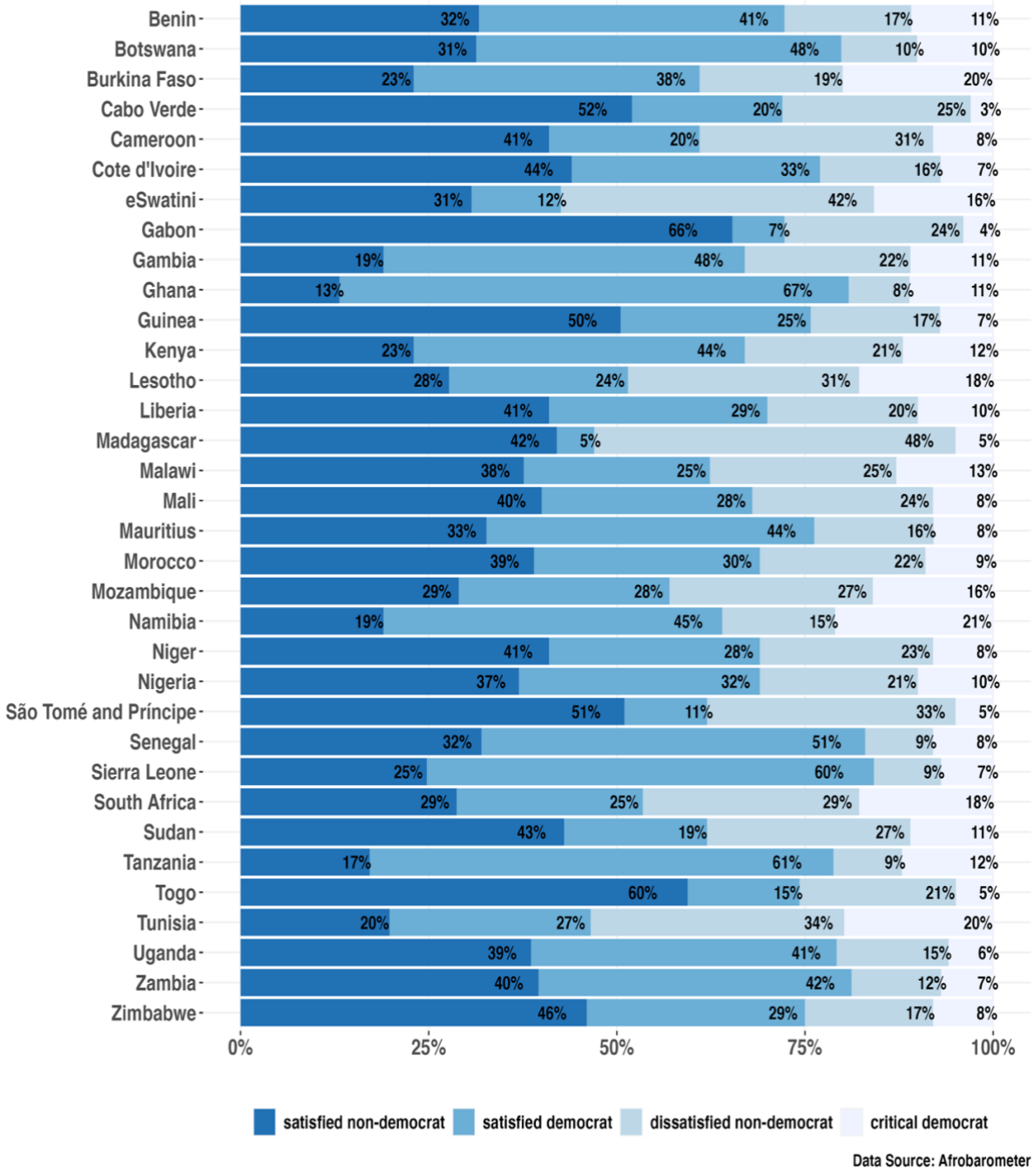


Figure 3.4 is a stacked bar plot, and each bar is subdivided based on the four types of democrats established in Chapter 2. At a regional level, critical democrats are the least type of democrats that are emerging in Africa followed by dissatisfied non-democrats.

From Figure 3.4, out of 34 Afrobarometer countries, on average no African country largely classifies as critical democrats. Interestingly, out of the 5 countries (Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, South Africa, and Tunisia), where the dominant type of democrat is dissatisfied non-democrats, except for Tunisia, the second dominant democrat in these countries is satisfied non-democrats. This indicates that satisfaction, or lack thereof, does not always affect support for democracy. This suggests that underlying institutional governance factors and lived experiences shape the lack of democratic support.

Furthermore, the findings also indicate that low satisfaction with democracy can negatively affect support for democracy, but satisfaction does not equate to support. With satisfied democrats being the emerging type of democrat in 13 countries, this indicates that satisfaction with democracy can not only have a positive impact on support for democracy but in the eyes of these citizens, their demand for democracy is being supplied. In contrast, satisfied non-democrats are the dominant type of democrat emerging in 17 countries. The 2020 Freedom House ranking indicates that out of the 17 countries, 3 (Cabo Verde, South Africa and São Tomé and Principe) classify as "free", 4 classify as "not free", and 10 classify as "partly free". It is therefore unsurprising that although these citizens are satisfied with certain democratic governance outcomes, they do not support a political system that they have minimal to no exposure to. This is suggestive of one of two things: firstly, Africans may be more concerned with the supply of democratic governance as opposed to the type of political system that governs them. Secondly, non-support for democracy may reflect minimal to no exposure to democracy. This further indicates that most Africans can differentiate governance quality from the political system.

This is intriguing as it suggests that on average, more democracy is being supplied than demanded. This probes an important question: does non-support for democracy reflect the rejection of democracy or the government? The subsequent chapters clarify this question.

It is worth noting that in countries like South Africa, Zambia, and Mozambique there is no great variation in the type of democrat that is emerging. South Africa and Malawi are the only countries where two types of democrats are simultaneously emerging. In South Africa, both types of democrats (satisfied non-democrats and dissatisfied non-democrats) do not support democracy and in Malawi, one type is democratic (satisfied democrats) and the other is not (dissatisfied non-democrats) – this indicates a more complex relationship between satisfaction

and support for democracy. Similarly, in Mozambique, there is a 1-point difference in the classification of satisfied non-democrats, satisfied democrats, and dissatisfied non-democrats. In Zambia, there is a 2-point difference between satisfied non-democrats and satisfied democrats.

These countries encapsulate the non-linear association between support for and satisfaction with democracy – support for democracy is not synonymous with satisfaction with democracy, the inverse also holds. In addition, these countries do not only reflect the complex nature of democracy in Africa but also highlight the challenge of identifying and responding to the different democratic governance factors that citizens respond to.

These distinctions highlight the importance of going beyond broad classifications to understand the subtleties and degrees of public opinion on democracy within each context, recognising that similar labels can mask significant intra-category differences. It is also worth noting that satisfaction with democracy changes over time and perceptions are influenced by factors other than the presence or absence of democracy. In comparison to the findings from the Afrobarometer Round 6 survey which was conducted between 2014 and 2015, satisfaction with democracy has decreased from an average of 44 percent to 42.5 percent

In all 34 African countries surveyed by the Afrobarometer, support for democracy exceeds satisfaction. However, the level of satisfaction is worrisome. The variation in democratic support calls for an individual-level analysis of democratic trends. For example, Botswana and South Africa have relatively healthy democratic governance backgrounds, however only 53 percent of South Africans support democracy whereas 80 percent of Batswana support democracy. Zimbabwe, on the other hand, has been experiencing political and economic instability for almost three decades yet 75 percent of Zimbabweans support democracy. Findings from Zimbabwe support the argument that economic performance is not the sole driver for democratic support, and at the same time, citizens may only be paying lip service out of fear – either case is worth exploring. Thus far, the established trends and patterns indicate that on average, political developments are key in understanding African perceptions and evaluation of the quality of democracy.

From a sub-regional perspective, South Africa, Kenya, and Nigeria (the three sub-regional hegemons) score relatively higher than most African countries as far as human development and GDP per capita are concerned. This does not however translate to greater support for democracy. This finding indicates that demand for democracy is high when ordinary citizens associate the regime with 'essential' elements such as free speech, regular elections, and multiparty completion – and less so with the performance of the national economy and personal finances. This indicates that while economic factors are important, they are not the sole or even the primary drivers of democratic support; instead, the core principles and practices of democracy play a crucial role in shaping public attitudes towards the system.

In summary, the findings indicate that regardless of being dissatisfied with the performance of the elected government, there is a measure of intrinsic support for democracy that exceeds instrumental support for democracy. This is significant as it further indicates that ordinary Africans can differentiate the performance of government officials from the political system. This also demystifies the idea that democracy is primarily supported by affluent and well-educated individuals and that developing countries are more inclined to support democracy based on its material gains. The findings also indicate that the supply of democracy in Africa is continuously decreasing, this is worrisome and is a threat to democratic stability. Addressing this decline and understanding the structures and practices that promote democracy is crucial for ensuring the long-term stability and resilience of democratic systems in Africa.

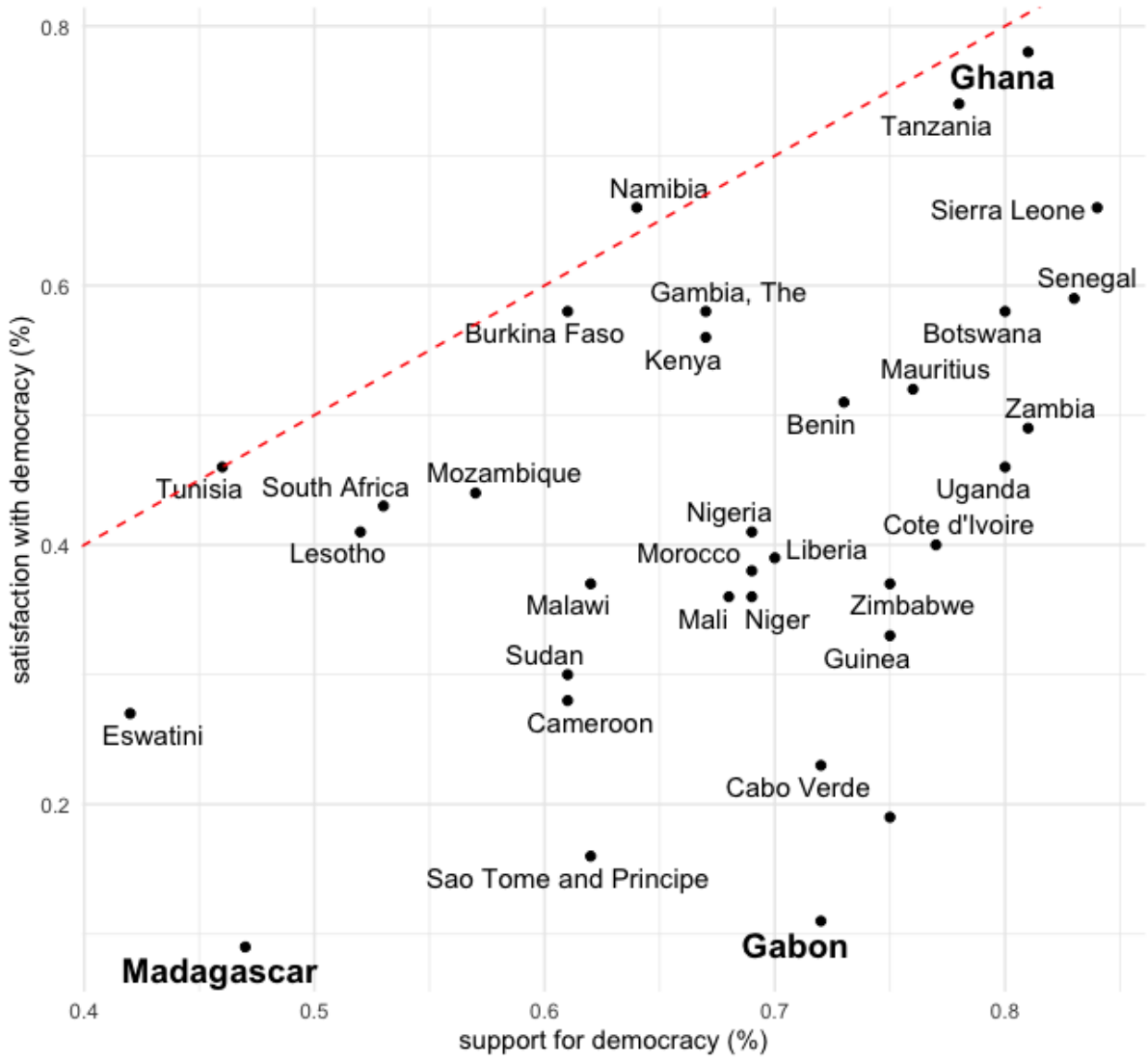
As outlined in the previous section, economic and political governance varies across both democratic and non-democratic countries. Now that the clusters of governance have been established, to what extent do they influence democratic governance and support for/satisfaction with democracy? Recall that the primary goal is to examine the three-way causal association between (1) governance quality → (2) public experience of democratic governance → (3) public support for/satisfaction with democracy. In Chapter 4 I discuss the empirical association between governance quality, democratic governance, and support for/ satisfaction with democracy.

Support for and satisfaction with democracy

The 2018 Afrobarometer round 7 data indicates that on average 42.5 percent of Africans are satisfied with democracy and 68 percent of Africans prefer democracy as a political system.

Figure 3.6 indicates a steep positive slope between satisfaction with and support for democracy, and therefore indicating that support for democracy is higher in countries with higher satisfaction with democracy. Given that support and satisfaction are of equal theoretical footing, the plot scales are in percentage. The x-axis for support ranges from 40 to 80 percent and because satisfaction is lower than support, the y-axis ranges from 10 to 80 percent. In the plot, most countries fall below the regression line.

Figure 3.6 | The association between satisfaction with and support for democracy



The figure above indicates that satisfaction with democracy is the lowest in Madagascar, Tunisia, Eswatini, Lesotho, and South Africa. Similarly, support for democracy is also relatively low in these countries. Contrastingly, satisfaction is the highest in Sierra Leone,

Senegal, Botswana, and Ghana, while support for and satisfaction with democracy are both high in countries like Tanzania and Ghana. Interestingly, in Gabon and Cabo Verde satisfaction is high but support is very low. The important question then becomes: on average, if the demand for democracy exceeds its supply, and if democracy is not producing the intended economic, political and/or material improvement, why do Africans continue to choose democracy as the preferred political system?

The relatively high gap between satisfaction with and support for democracy can perhaps be attributed to the idea that Africans can make a distinction between the political system and the government's performance. Unfavourable expressions are therefore primarily directed more towards the government and not the political system. This suggests that there is a lack of democratic governance that is being supplied, which can threaten the stability and consolidation of democracy. Moreover, at first glance, public support for democracy is mostly shaped by the performance of political authorities rather than the political system itself. Based on this distinction, separating intrinsic and instrumental support allows for the identification of the different consequences of democratic instability. The dichotomisation of support for democracy will enable one to verify whether indeed ordinary Africans do make a distinction between the performance of the government versus the political system in informing their attitudes and perceptions.

Table 3.3 | Descriptive statistics

Measures	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max
Democracy					
Support	0.68	0.70	0.11	0.42	0.84
Satisfaction	0.42	0.41	0.17	0.09	0.78

Table 3.3 summarises the descriptive statistics for support for and satisfaction with democracy. The table presents the mean, the median, the standard deviation (SD), minimum and maximum values for democracy. The distribution of democracy is measured in percentage. The minimum and maximum scores for support indicate that African countries are quite spread out in terms of support for democracy. In some countries like Eswatini, Madagascar, and Tunisia, support for democracy is below 50 percent. In others such as Senegal, Sierra Leone, Zambia, Botswana,

Ghana, and Uganda, support for democracy is 80 percent or above. Whereas others like São Tomé and Príncipe, The Gambia, Sudan, and Malawi have moderate levels of support.

On average, 42 percent of Africans are satisfied with the supply of democracy in their country – and this is 26 percent less than the demand for democracy. The minimum and maximum values for satisfaction range from 9 percent to 78 percent. As Figure 3.6 illustrates, satisfaction with democracy is the lowest in Madagascar (9 percent), followed by Gabon (11 percent) and São Tomé and Príncipe (16 percent). Satisfaction is the highest in Ghana (78 percent), Tanzania (78 percent), Namibia and Sierra Leone (66 percent). This gap is quite significant and suggests that there is a rather vast experience of democratic governance in Africa.

Furthermore, the gap between support and satisfaction with democracy also suggests that there is a discrepancy between democratic ideals and how these ideals are experienced and perceived by ordinary citizens. Satisfaction with democracy is generally low across all African countries. Satisfaction is highest in countries like Ghana, Tanzania, Sierra Leone, and Namibia. Satisfaction is the lowest in Gabon, São Tomé and Príncipe, Togo, and Madagascar. Support for democracy is the lowest in Eswatini, Tunisia, Madagascar, Lesotho, South Africa, and Mozambique - and the highest in Sierra Leone, Senegal, Zambia, Ghana, and Botswana.

Diverging trends in support for democracy

The notion that democracy is experiencing a global recession reflects concerns over the observable decline in democratic principles and practices in various parts of the world. For instance, the presidential election of Donald Trump, the rise of the far left and right in France, the near election of a far-right candidate in Austria and the growing extremists in more stable democracies like Germany and Sweden are all examples of a global democratic crisis (Abramowitz 2018; Repucci and Slipowitz 2022).

The West's support for non-democratic leaders does nothing to aspire to or advance democracy, particularly in non-democratic regimes. Britain sells arms, provides security training, and or has troops deployed in at least 36 countries that are classified as "not free" (Miller 2021). In 2021, Britain signed a £200 million trade deal with Cameroon – which is led by Paul Biya, who has been in power since 1982 (Miller 2021). Bahrain is a repressive regime

accused of various human and political rights violations, yet it is supplied with British-made sniper rifles (Freedom House 2020; Miller 2021). In the US, promoting democracy abroad appears to be less of a priority, particularly during Trump's presidency. This coupled with low voter turnout, the 2013 shutdown of the Federal government, the 2021 capital riots, and growing mistrust with the government (Repucci and Slipowitz 2022). These are trends that the rest of the world takes note of. Moreover, they contribute to a weak democratic culture that provides no democratic incentive and are used to justify autocratic practices by autocratic leaders.

From a regional perspective, the recent coups in Mali, Sudan, Chad, and Guinea, the ongoing crisis in Mozambique and South Sudan support the argument that democracy is declining in Africa. However, contrary developments provide a different perspective to this analysis. The peaceful transition of power in the 2017 elections in Liberia; the 2021 indictment of South Africa's former president Jacob Zuma; the 2016 ousting of The Gambia's long-standing president Yahya Jammeh; and the successful peaceful transfer of power in Ghana provide caution to pessimistic outlooks.

Thus, support for democracy in Africa should not be taken as a given. Intrinsic support for democracy in most African states stems from lived experience under one-party rule, one-man and or military rule. Most Western states have not been subjected to this kind of repression. At best, we can reference the Cold War and the fight against fascism. Africa's experience with repression and authoritarian rule is vastly different in severity, impact, and duration.

On a regional level, support for democracy is relatively stable, but the same cannot be said about national-level trends. On average, 64 percent of Africans support democracy. However, a closer look indicates that there is a 42-point difference between the country with the highest support for democracy (Sierra Leone - 84 percent) and the country with the lowest - Eswatini (42 percent). Support for democracy is higher in more established democracies such as Ghana (81 percent), Senegal (83 percent), Botswana (80 percent) and Mauritius (76 percent). It also remains high in countries that have actively tried to suppress democratic spaces such as public participation and civil society organisations, such as Zimbabwe (75 percent), Uganda (81 percent) and Zambia (81 percent). On the contrary, less than half of the citizens in Eswatini (42 percent), Tunisia (46 percent), and Madagascar (47 percent) support democracy.

While democracy does not inherently ensure economic growth, the eradication of corruption, or the elimination of instability, it establishes the foundational structures, tools, values, and principles needed to address and mitigate these challenges. It is important to note that countries with higher governance scores tend to be democracies, suggesting a correlation between democratic governance and overall governance quality. Despite the preference for democracy expressed by many Africans, as indicated by the Afrobarometer survey, there remains a gap between the demand for democratic governance and its actual supply and institutionalisation across the continent. This discrepancy highlights the challenges in fully implementing and embedding democratic principles and practices in some African countries.

Comparing long-term democratic trends from 2002/2003 (round 2) to 2016/2018 (round 7) reveals significant variation in satisfaction with and support for democracy across countries surveyed by the Afrobarometer. As illustrated in Figure 3.6, fewer countries have seen long-term increases in satisfaction with democracy compared to those experiencing long-term declines. Notably, Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Tanzania have exhibited the largest and most sustained increases in satisfaction.

Tanzania's satisfaction with democracy fluctuated sharply. In 2003 (round 2), 63 percent of Tanzanians expressed satisfaction, which dropped rapidly to 37 percent in 2005, but by 2008 (round 4), it rebounded to 71 percent. Between 2008 and 2017 (round 7), satisfaction stabilised at an average of 70 percent. Ghana followed a similar upward trajectory, with 46 percent of citizens satisfied in 2002 (round 2), rising to 70 percent in 2005 (round 3) and peaking at 80 percent in 2008 (round 4). Although satisfaction declined to 55 percent by 2014 (round 6), it recovered to the second-highest average in 2017 (round 7).

In contrast, countries such as Cabo Verde, Botswana, Mali, and Mozambique experienced continuous declines in satisfaction with democracy. In Kenya, satisfaction plummeted from 78 percent in 2005 (round 2) to 53 percent in 2008 (round 3) and further to 42 percent in 2011. Despite a modest recovery from 48 percent in 2014 to 56 percent in 2016, satisfaction has not returned to its 2005 peak.

These contrasting trends indicate that while some countries have managed to foster sustained improvements in democratic satisfaction, many others have struggled, with significant declines in satisfaction levels.

Figure 3.6 | Long-term trends in Satisfaction with democracy 2002-2018

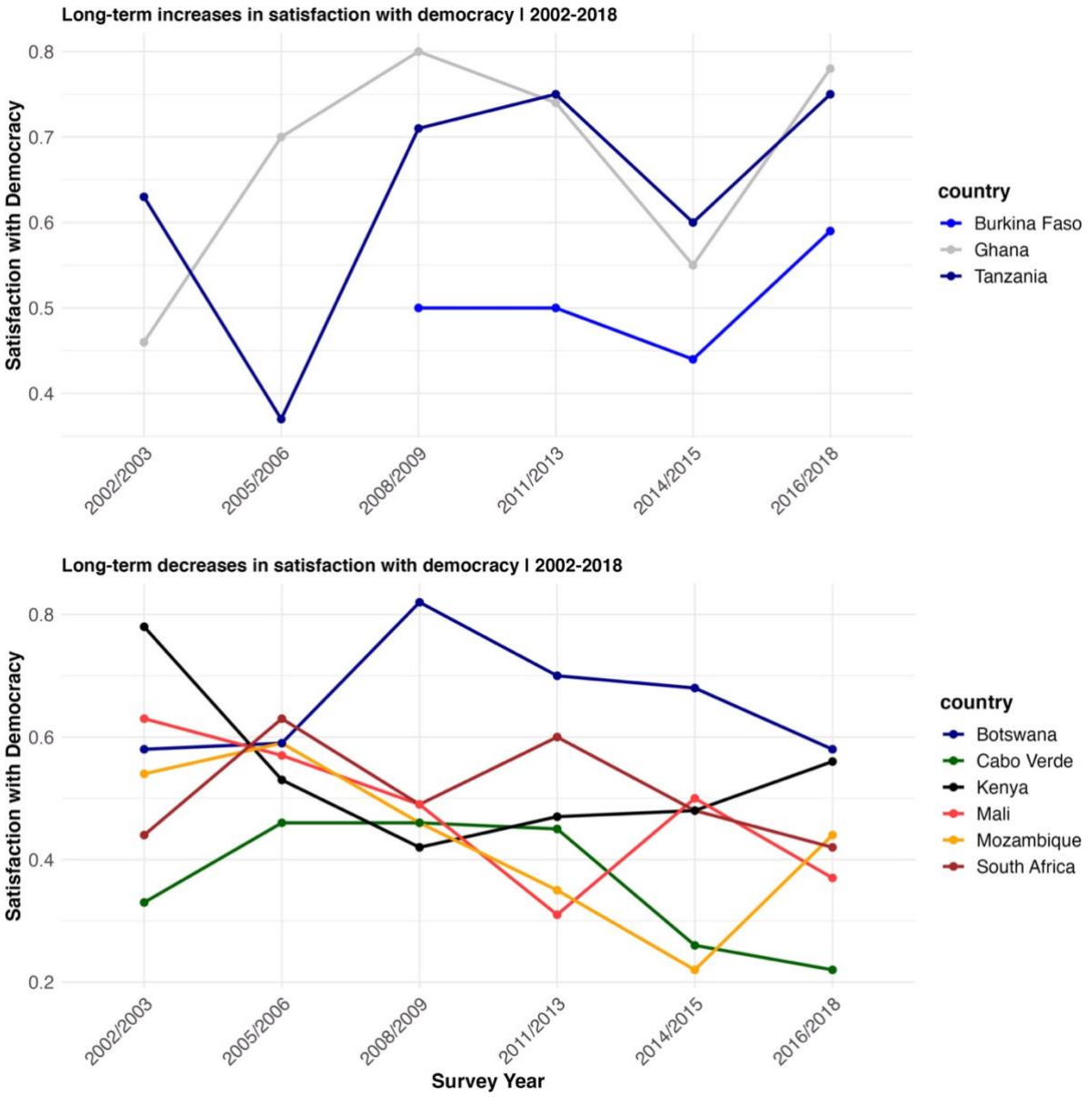
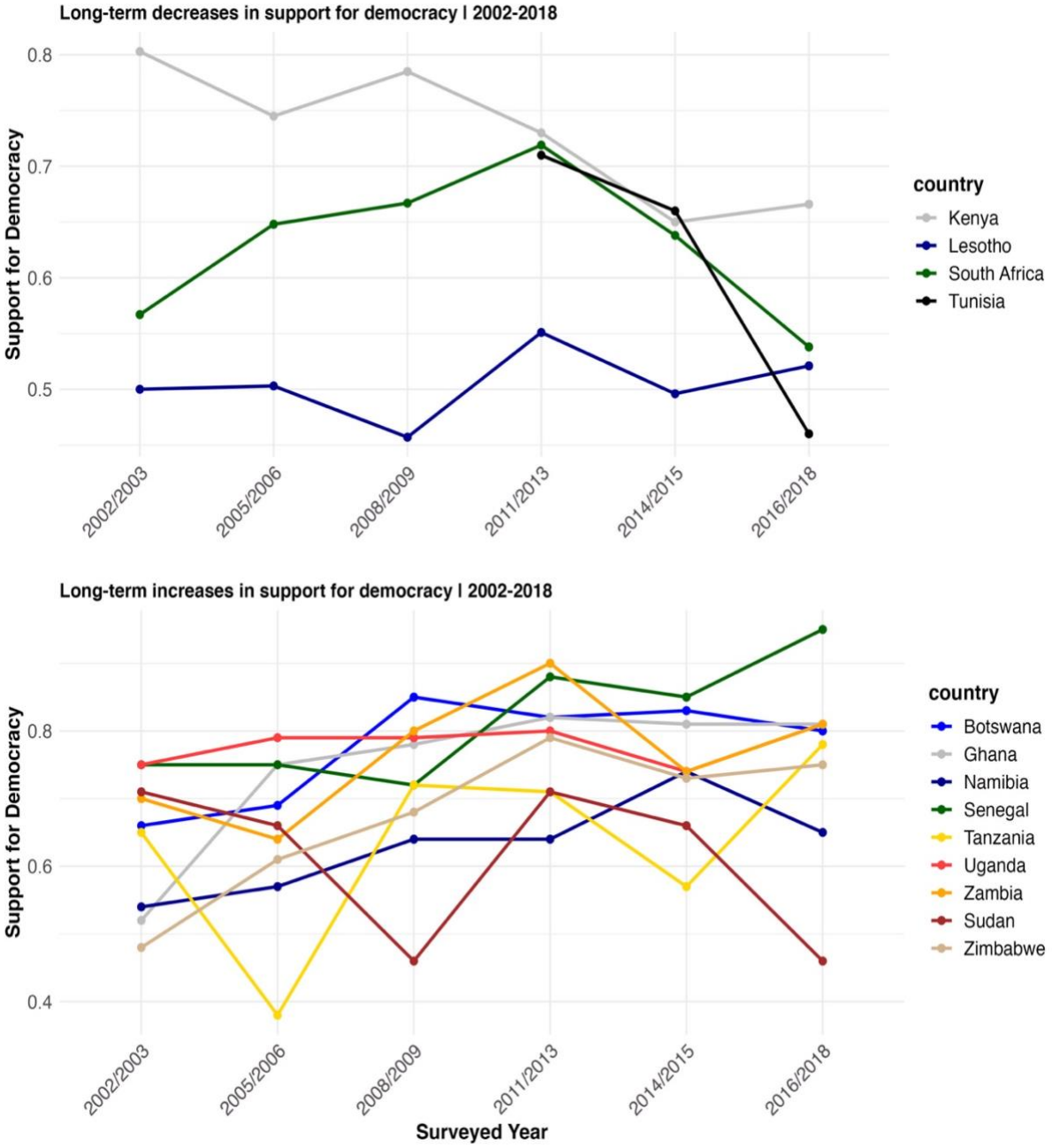


Figure 3.7 highlights long-term trends in support for democracy across eight Afrobarometer countries that have experienced the largest increases in public backing for democratic governance. Notably, Botswana, Namibia, Senegal, and Uganda have either maintained consistently high levels of support or have been on an upward trajectory.

Figure 3.7 | Long-term trends in democratic support 2002-2018



All of the surveyed countries, despite their varied political histories, have faced significant democratic challenges. Known as a coup laboratory, in July 2020, Sudan was the first African state to put an African leader on trial for conducting a successful coup (Fabricius 2020). In Zambia, the police and courts are losing their independence, political expression is increasingly being shrunk, and the quality of elections is deteriorating (Bratton, Dulani and Nkomo 2017). Yet, despite a decrease in satisfaction with democracy, which declined from 68 percent in 2012 to 49 percent in 2017, 8 in 10 Zambians are committed to democracy.

Namibia has made significant gains since its independence in 1990. Support for democracy has consistently remained above 70 percent since the first Afrobarometer survey in 1999. In 2008 (round 3), support was at 70 percent, the lowest recorded, but it peaked at 88 percent in 2012 (round 5), reflecting the strides Namibia has made over the past three decades. Legislative advances, such as the enactment of the Whistle Blower Protection Act and Witness Protection Act in 2017, as well as the passage of the Combatting of Trafficking in Persons Bill, further demonstrate the country's commitment to democratic governance (Freedom House 2018b).

Noteworthy, positive democratic governance trends are not scarce across the continent. In 2019, Malawi had a re-run of its flawed presidential election, The Gambia and Sudan have experienced the ousting of long-serving autocrats, and in Zambia, we have witnessed a ruling party transition (Gyimah-Boadi and Asunka 2021). In 2021, Zambia's increasingly autocratic leader, Edgar Lungu, was ousted through a democratic transition of power and ensured a peaceful transition of power to President-elect Hakainde Hichilema (EIU 2022). In Tanzania, President Samia Suluhu reversed the ban on all opposition rallies imposed by her predecessor John Magufuli (Mugabi 2023; Fisher 2021). Ghana continues to make great strides in undertaking governance reforms. This includes the design and adoption of a new democratic constitution during the early 1990s, which promotes and places great emphasis on the separation of powers with checks and balances (Mbaku 2020). These examples reflect a broader trend of democratic persistence and reform in various parts of Africa despite challenges. They underscore the ongoing efforts to enhance democratic governance, promote political participation, and safeguard democratic norms and institutions across the continent.

While there are positive trends in democratic governance in some parts of Africa, other countries are experiencing significant democratic backsliding. According to the Afrobarometer survey data depicted in Figure 3.8, the period between 2002/2003 and 2016/18 saw notable declines in support for democracy in countries such as Kenya, Lesotho, and South Africa. Although Tunisia transitioned into a democratic government in 2011, the initial optimism appears to be decreasing rapidly. Between 2013 and 2018, support for democracy decreased from 71 percent to 46 percent.

Africa is indeed not a country however, diverging trends make it difficult to determine the health, shape, and stability of democracy on the continent. Despite the considerable obstacles the continent continues to face, including autocratic governments clinging to power,

susceptibility to Islamic extremism, food insecurity, and financial volatility – democracy has shown a remarkable degree of resilience and endurance in Africa. This resilience is a testament to the aspirations and efforts of African citizens, civil society, and some political leaders who continue to advocate for democratic principles, governance reforms, and the protection of civil liberties.

Following the Arab Spring in 2011, Tunisia underwent a contentious political transition, but one filled with enthusiasm and great expectation. By 2014, this enthusiasm was met with caution as the escalating security situation, bloated bureaucracy and a flagging economy slowed the reform process (BTI 2018a). In 2015, Tunisia faced three Islamist terrorist attacks, and in 2016 the Islamic State (IS) militia attempted to unsuccessfully seize a territory in a Tunisian Town (BTI 2018a). In response, on 25 July 2015, the government implemented an anti-terrorism Act (Mekki 2015), which is feared to undermine freedoms protected by the 2014 constitution, highlighting the growing threat of extremism in the region and the challenges it posed to national security and stability. Following widespread protest action against the Tunisian government, on 25 July 2021, President Kais Saied suspended parliament and dismissed Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi (Marzouki 2022). This contravened the 2014 constitution, which prohibits unchecked concentration of powers. Moreover, it dramatically increased Saied's executive powers.

As mentioned above, support for democracy varies, with relatively high support in Botswana, Ghana, Senegal, and Zambia, moderate to low support in Namibia and low support in South Africa and Lesotho. Between 1960 and 2000, there have been 20 coups in Africa (EIU 2021), particularly across West Africa. Additionally, between 1960 and 2012, African states experienced 200 military takeovers (Sibeko 2022). These include the May 2021 overthrow of the civilian government in Mali, the 2021 military takeover in Guinea, the 2017 coup in Zimbabwe, and the 2021 attempted coup in Niger (Sibeko 2022). Most recently, the February 2022 failed ousting of Guinea Bissau's current president, Umaro Sissoco Embaló and Burkina Faso's January 2022 ousting of President Paul-Henri Damiba by the army (Sibeko 2022).

Amid these negative trends and a rather bleak landscape of democracy lies exceptions and defiance among Africans. Though the aforementioned trends and patterns are not unique to Africa, the frequency, and consequences they carry make them more costly. Most Africans support and demand democracy because most Africans live in and with the fruits of its absence.

Poverty, food insecurity, displacement, insecurity, episodes of violence, corruption, abuse of power, disregard for term limits and so forth are by-products of poor political and economic governance. Poor governance creates spaces for and maintains grievances. It can be argued that any threat to the democratic system sparks a greater urgency and intrinsic need among Africans to defend democracy. Africans understand the consequences of backsliding from past and present lived experiences. This means that democracy may be receding regionally and nationally, however, it is still the people's choice.

Chapter 3 has successfully established a clear distinction between economic and political governance, demonstrating that these two dimensions, while different, are closely interconnected. Furthermore, the chapter highlighted a significant positive association between economic and political governance, indicating that improvements or declines in one area often correlate with similar trends in the other. This chapter has also established the significance of not only differentiating between support for and satisfaction with democracy, but it has also established that levels of support and satisfaction give insight and specificity into the type of democrat that is emerging in each respective country. Based on the level of satisfaction with democracy in relation to the level of support for democracy, four types of democrats have been established: satisfied democrats, satisfied non-democrats, critical democrats and dissatisfied non-democrats.

Building on the distinctions and associations between economic and political governance established thus far, this thesis seeks to assess the nature of democratic support that is emerging in Africa and to identify what is influencing attitudes and perceptions of democracy. The central questions being explored include whether support for democracy is predominantly influenced by economic or political governance factors and whether satisfaction with democracy is primarily driven by political governance aspects or economic performance. By exploring these questions, the thesis contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics between governance quality, economic conditions, and public support for and satisfaction with democratic systems in Africa.

Using multilevel regression analysis, Chapter 4 outlines the empirical association between governance quality (economic and political governance) and democracy (support for and satisfaction with democracy).

Chapter 4: Cross-National Evidence

The previous chapter presented the measures, sample, and data. Specifically, it examined whether it is possible to distinguish the quality of political governance from the quality of economic governance. Using a scatterplot and principal components analysis, the chapter established that these two dimensions of governance, while distinct, exhibit a strong positive association. Importantly, the analysis created composite indicators for both types of governance, addressing potential issues of multicollinearity that arise from using highly correlated variables in regression models.

In this chapter, I build on that groundwork by presenting the control and categorical variables using multilevel regression models. Through these models, I aim to clarify the empirical relationship between governance quality (political and economic) and satisfaction with and support for democracy. One of the key decisions in this analysis was to exclude governance perceptions from the Afrobarometer data. Although the Afrobarometer offers valuable insights into citizens' views of governance, these measures showed overlap with the macro-level governance indicators (from the V-Dem, WGI, and IIAG). Including both would have introduced collinearity, complicating the interpretation of results without adding explanatory value. As such, I focused on the Afrobarometer's measures of democratic perceptions rather than their governance perceptions, ensuring a clearer distinction between governance quality and democratic satisfaction or support.

Using composite measures of political and economic governance helps avoid redundancy and multicollinearity, which would have otherwise obscured the unique effects of each type of governance. This is crucial because even in a sample of 34 countries, the risk of overfitting and multicollinearity is high if both types of governance are treated as predictors in the same regression. Therefore, the decision to create distinct yet correlated governance indicators is theoretically sound and methodologically necessary.

The models also control for key variables such as fractionalisation, colonial history (British colony), and oil rents while accounting for individual-level attributes like education, gender, and area. This approach ensures that I can focus on the central question: is satisfaction with and support for democracy primarily driven by economic or political governance? Specifically, I investigate whether democratic perceptions are higher in former British colonies, whether

fractionalisation negatively affects the democratic experience, and whether oil rents diminish support for and satisfaction with democracy.

The intention is to establish the nature of the association between governance and democracy and identify which aspect of governance (political or economic) primarily drives support for and satisfaction with democracy. In doing so, a more holistic insight is provided on the type of democrat that is emerging as well as the factors that sustain democracy in Africa. Moreover, in identifying the factors that influence democratic perceptions, I shed clarity on the stability, quality, and future of democracy in Africa, as well as the unique characteristics that sustain democracy in Africa.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section provides an overview of the research statement and objectives. The second section discusses the control and random effects variables. In the third section, I present the main regressions, clarifying the rationale behind using composite governance indicators to avoid collinearity and indicate whether fitting the regression models for governance quality on democratic perceptions supports the hypotheses. To test the hypotheses at the cross-national level, I adopted the alpha level of 0.05 as the standard for establishing statistical significance and rejecting the null hypotheses. The final section discusses the findings, establishing whether support and satisfaction are primarily driven by economic or political governance and identifying which association holds the strongest correlation. The strongest correlation will inform the subsequent focus of the thesis.

Overview and restatement of purpose

This study adopts a quantitative analysis to examine the effect of governance quality on the public experience of democratic governance and the effect that this has on public support for/satisfaction with democracy in Africa. This thesis utilises exploratory multilevel regression models to statistically test this association. Despite the various factors that justify a lack of support for democracy in Africa, it remains widely regarded as the most preferable and legitimate form of political system. The thesis establishes the variables that can explain this paradox.

Research objectives

To effectively address the purpose of this study, it is important to restate the overarching research objectives. These research objectives guide the methodology of this study and are aligned with the hypotheses that were foreshadowed in Chapter 2. To recap, the research objectives for this study are as follows:

1. To determine how governance outcomes affect democratic governance and how this influences support for/satisfaction with democracy
2. To clarify how democracy works in Africa
3. To identify the type of democrat that is emerging
4. To clarify why democracy is identified as the preferred political system in Africa.
5. To identify the consequences if the popular belief is that democracy is not being supplied.

The hypotheses are as follows:

- H1: Economic governance drives satisfaction with democracy
- H2: Political governance drives support for democracy
- H3: Citizens that associate support for democracy with economic performance tend to be more satisfied with democracy
- H4: Support for democracy and political governance is lower in oil rent countries
- H5: Support and satisfaction with democracy is higher among those with lower levels of education
- H6: Support and satisfaction with democracy are higher among citizens living in rural areas.
- H7: Support for democracy is higher among males than females
- H8: There is no significant difference in governance quality and support for democracy between former British colonies and non-British colonies.

Methodology

Research methodology is a detailed blueprint that shapes the research process, credibility, and impact of the study. It outlines the steps the researcher follows to solve the research problem, along with the justification for those steps. Additionally, the research methodology provides clear insight into why certain research techniques are adopted and their relevance to the study (Kothari 2004).

This thesis adopts a mixed-methods approach, employing both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Quantitative research relies on numerical data, while qualitative research deals with words and meaning. The advantage of the former is that it can identify trends and patterns over time and space, whereas the latter provides in-depth insights into concepts, experiences, or thoughts (Kothari 2004). The first three chapters are largely qualitative, while this chapter focuses on quantitative analysis. The case study chapters (5, 6, 7, and 8) will use a mixed-methods approach. Using case studies, the analysis extends beyond the quantitative statistical results, focusing on the behavioural conditions that inform the actor's perspectives. This mixed-methods approach allows for a more contextualised understanding of the dynamics at play in democratic governance and perceptions of democracy.

Multilevel modelling

Multilevel modelling is used to analyse the effect that grouped data for education, gender, and area has on democratic perceptions. Multilevel modelling—also known as mixed effect model, nested data model, or random coefficient model—provides a useful framework for handling grouped data. Compared to other statistical techniques like multiple regression, multilevel modelling does not ignore clustering in the sample. This is advantageous because the standard errors and confidence intervals from these models are more realistic, increasing the validity of conclusions about the random effects. Additionally, multilevel modelling can analyse repeated measures of data, such as education levels within individual countries (Buxton 2008). The flexibility of multilevel models allows for the inclusion of varying measurements across different subjects.

Using the computational software R Studio, I apply Generalized Linear Models (GLMER) to determine the relationships between independent, dependent, and control variables. This allows for a deeper understanding of the trends and patterns between countries and the three-way

causal relationship between governance quality, democratic governance, and democratic attitudes.

The central question this thesis aims to address revolves around understanding how the quality of governance impacts the public's experience with democratic governance and how this, in turn, influences satisfaction with and support for democracy. To explore this relationship, regression models measure attitudes towards democracy against distinct clusters representing different dimensions of governance quality. These clusters are analysed alongside sociodemographic control variables to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the factors that shape public attitudes towards democracy.

Nested analysis approach

I also employ a nested analysis approach, a mixed-method strategy that integrates cross-national statistical analysis with in-depth case studies. This approach, as outlined by Lieberman (2005), allows for the combination of broad quantitative methods with more detailed qualitative analysis, providing a more nuanced understanding of complex relationships between variables. In this study, I use multilevel regression and related estimation techniques to test the empirical relationship between governance quality, democratic governance, and public perceptions across a sample of Sub-Saharan African countries based on data from the Afrobarometer. Following this broad analysis, I conduct in-depth case studies on four selected countries: Sudan, Botswana, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. These cases were chosen based on the statistical analysis of key independent and dependent variables, reflecting diverse governance and democratic trajectories across the region.

Nested analysis, as proposed by Lieberman (2005), is a methodological approach that aims to bridge the gap between quantitative and qualitative research. It allows researchers to leverage the strengths of both approaches by conducting statistical analysis first to identify patterns and then using qualitative case studies to explore these patterns in greater depth. This method provides a way to cross-validate findings and develop a richer understanding of the phenomena under study. The nested approach also ensures that case study selection is not arbitrary but rather grounded in systematic, empirical analysis.

The subsequent qualitative case studies seek to confirm or refine the patterns observed in the quantitative analysis. By diving deeper into the political contexts and governance structures of Sudan, Botswana, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, I aim to uncover the mechanisms driving shifts in support for and satisfaction with democracy.

Within each case study, I employ process tracing to identify and analyse the sequence of events that led to specific shifts in public support for and satisfaction with democracy (Collier 2011). Process tracing is a qualitative method that involves a detailed examination of how specific events or sequences of events contribute to an outcome (Collier 2011). In this context, I trace key political, social, and economic developments in each country to understand how they influence public perceptions of democracy.

By analysing these country-specific dynamics, I aim to present plausible causal arguments that explain the observed shifts in democratic support and satisfaction. This process allows me to validate the broader trends identified in the quantitative analysis and offers deeper insights into the contextual factors that drive democratic attitudes in Africa.

Control variables

There are other competing explanations for the varying levels of support and satisfaction with democracy in Africa. The empirical association between economic/political governance and support for/satisfaction with democracy is estimated by controlling for fractionalisation, oil rents, and colonial type. The variation categorial variables for gender, education, and area are also accounted for. I selected these variables based on the expectation that they are empirically associated with governance quality and democratic perceptions.

Ethnic fractionalisation

Fractionalisation ranges from ethnic, linguistic, racial, religious, and cultural divisions. These divisions manifest in various combinations and intensities across different nations, influencing social dynamics and governance. For instance, the United States is characterised by linguistic homogeneity. However, it is also marked by significant racial diversity and divisions, which have profound implications for social cohesion and political life. Conversely, Tanzania is largely racially homogenous but is home to a vast array of ethnic groups, making ethnic fractionalisation a more prominent feature of its societal landscape. South Africa exemplifies

a case where multiple forms of fractionalisation intersect, including ethnic, linguistic, and racial divisions, reflecting the country's history, particularly the legacy of apartheid that left deep racial divides. These examples illustrate the varied manifestations of fractionalisation and their potential impacts on national identity, social cohesion, and governance.

Ethnic fractionalisation affects governance quality, economic growth, and political stability (Osaghae 1999). Ethnic diversity may also increase polarisation, government inefficiency, and the distribution of public goods. Empirical evidence shows that in low-income and/or Sub-Saharan African countries, ethnic fractionalisation negatively impacts economic growth by increasing political instability (Karnane and Quinn 2019). This evidence emphasises the importance of addressing ethnic divisions and fostering inclusive governance and social cohesion as essential components of strategies aimed at promoting economic growth and stability in low-income and Sub-Saharan African countries.

These effects have a negative influence on citizens' experience with democratic governance and presumably with support and satisfaction with democracy. Moreover, if individuals perceive that the country's political system is dominated and/or favours a particular ethnic group, citizens are more likely to assess the government's performance negatively. I use Alesina et al.'s (2002) measure of ethnic fractionalisation to assess its effect. Alesina and associates compiled a fractionalisation dataset set for 215 countries and measured the degree of ethnic, linguistic, and religious heterogeneity (Alesina et al. 2002). The fractionalisation index is particularly valuable for its broad applicability and the depth of its coverage, allowing for nuanced comparisons and analyses across a wide range of contexts. By employing this dataset, the research systematically analyses how the diversity and division among different ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups within a country influence factors such as economic growth, political stability, and social cohesion.

Oil rents

The rentier state theory states that countries with national incomes that are dependent on natural resources rarely become democracies (Sandbakken 2006). In these states, the government is the principal recipient of wealth. González (2018) argues that oil rents turn democratic countries into authoritarian regimes and in authoritarian regimes, it consolidates authoritarian rule. This thesis uses oil rents per capita to assess its impact on support and satisfaction with

democracy. Oil rents per capita is the difference between the value of crude oil production at regional prices and the total cost of production minus the cost of production from the commodity price (World Bank 2023a). This measure, sourced from the World Bank Group, offers a quantifiable means to examine how the concentration of oil wealth within a country influences public support for and satisfaction with democracy. Through analysing oil rents per capita, the study aims to provide empirical insights into the broader debate on the effects of natural resource wealth on democratic governance and political regimes.

British colony

It is widely argued that British colonial rule promoted post-independence democracy and that former British colonies were considerably more democratic than other countries (Olsson 2009; Bernhard, Reenock, and Nordstrom 2004). Lee and Paine (2019) do however establish that post-Cold War, there is no variation in democratic levels. One of Britain's prerequisites for gaining independence was the commitment to competitive democratic elections (Lee and Paine 2019). Naturally, this led to higher initial democratic levels. This pre-requisite did not however address underlying and deep-rooted political and socio-economic challenges that would hamper democratic consolidation. To put it differently, independent states that inherited democratic institutions, experienced minimal social transformation during colonialism. Consequently, many British colonies experienced democratic reversals.

I control for former British colonies to estimate the impact of colonial legacy on support for and satisfaction with democracy. This thesis hypothesises that there is no significant difference in political governance and support for democracy between former British colonies and non-former British colonies (H8). This hypothesis challenges the notion that the colonial legacy of British rule, often associated with the promotion of democratic institutions and governance practices, results in a lasting and measurable impact on political governance and democratic attitudes in post-colonial states. By examining this hypothesis, the study seeks to explore the extent to which historical colonial relationships influence contemporary political governance structures and citizens' support for democratic principles. This may provide insight into the long-term effects of colonialism on political development and democratic sentiment.

Categorical (random effects) variables

Gender

Several studies observed that support for democracy is higher among males than females (Konte 2014; Logan and Bratton 2006; Klasen, O'neill, and Vargas 2017). García-Peñalosa and Konte 2014) find that individual characteristics such as education, employment, age, and geographical location have minimal explanatory power to account for this gap. Instead, they find that the gender gap in Africa is affected by high levels of human development and political rights.

In their comparative analysis, Hansen and Goenaga (2021) examine how conceptions of democracy differ between men and women in 29 European countries. The authors find that women base their support for democracy on how democratic institutions have advantaged or disadvantaged their influence over political processes. The authors also find that men and women prioritise different aspects of democracy. Women are less likely to consider aspects such as political parties and the media less important. Instead, they place more importance on aspects of democracy that are less likely to reproduce gender inequalities. This includes the protection of social rights and public justification.

Similarly, Konte and Klasen (2016) establish that although there is a significant gender gap in support for democracy in Africa. This gap is no longer significant when controlling for gender discrimination (Klasen 2016). Similar to trends in Europe, the study finds that differences in support are greater in countries where gender inequality in social institutions is large. Women in Africa are also more likely to support democracy in countries with favourable institutions toward women (Klasen 2016). In Burundi, 36 percent of women say that democracy is not their preferred political system compared to 61 percent in Eswatini (Konte and Klasen 2016). Burundi has one of the highest levels of gender discrimination, while women in Eswatini face greater discrimination than other African countries.

This thesis hypothesises that the gender gap is lower in countries with higher political governance scores (H7). This hypothesis is grounded in the understanding that state institutions play a crucial role in shaping gender dynamics within society. They can either undermine or support women's economic, political, and social autonomy, both within domestic settings and

in the public sphere. By investigating this hypothesis, the study aims to interrogate the relationship between the quality of political governance and the extent of the gender gap, contributing to a deeper understanding of how governance impacts gender equality.

Education

There is a consensus that there is a positive association between education and support for democracy. However, there is no clear consensus on whether this association is independent of the effects of economic development (Evans and Rose 2007). Boix and Strokes (2003) argue that the effect of education on support for democracy can be explained by factors such as increases in GDP and equality. They contend that while education does play a role in shaping attitudes towards democracy, its impact is comparatively less significant than that of economic factors. This assertion challenges conventional assumptions about the role of education in fostering democratic support. The conventional view, as echoed by de Aquino (2015), posits that formal education enhances individuals' cognitive abilities, such as abstract thinking, which is crucial for understanding complex concepts like democracy and its functioning. Education is often seen as a pathway to increased political awareness and engagement, equipping individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary to participate effectively in democratic processes and to critically evaluate democratic governance. This perspective underscores the importance of considering economic conditions and educational outcomes when examining the foundations of democratic support.

Formal education plays a pivotal role in fostering a democratic culture by equipping individuals with the necessary tools to critically assess political, economic, and social developments. Through education, individuals learn to form well-informed opinions about the performance of political systems and develop a vested interest in the survival and thriving of democracy. This educational grounding not only enhances individuals' understanding of democratic principles and practices but also encourages active participation in democratic processes. In Africa, research has found that poorly performing leaders are often accorded highly positive evaluations from citizens (Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi 2004). In their study, Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi (2004) found that although educated Africans are more sceptical about the quality of democracy, education induces support for democracy (H5).

It has also been argued that neither education nor economic factors are causally related to support for democracy (Acemoglu et al. 2008). Counter to these findings, Evans and Rose (2007) demonstrate that the impact of education on democratic attitudes far outweighs other variables such as religion. Similarly, de Aquino (2015) found that education has a positive effect on democratic support. However, the number of years lived under a democracy (exposure to democratic institutions) has a more significant impact. In addition, the national economic performance has no relevant impact on support for democracy.

Counter to these findings, several research (Przeworski et al. 2000; Barro 1999) observe that although education is a sufficient condition for democracy, it is not a necessary condition.

This thesis posits that an individual's level of education is expected to have a positive association with support for democracy. Specifically, it anticipates that individuals across all education levels, including those with no formal education, as well as those who have completed primary and secondary schooling, are likely to demonstrate support for democratic principles and governance. The underlying assumption is that education at any level can improve one's understanding and appreciation of democracy by fostering critical thinking, awareness of political rights, and a sense of civic responsibility. This hypothesis aligns with the broader notion that education contributes to political socialisation and engagement, thereby nurturing support for democracy among citizens regardless of their educational attainment.

Urban-Rural

Support for democracy is often higher in rural compared to urban areas. Harding (2010) argues that because most Africans live in rural areas, competitive elections make African leaders more responsive to rural interests. However, this incentive comes at the expense of the urban minority. As a result, support for and satisfaction with democracy is lower in urban areas (Harding 2020). Another explanation is that there is greater clientelism in rural areas. Additionally, while urban areas in many African countries are experiencing improvements in economies and development, urban poverty and inequality are concurrently escalating at a faster pace (Obeng-Odoom 2017). This paradox highlights the complex dynamics of urbanisation and economic growth, where the benefits of development are not evenly distributed among the urban population.

Major differences between urban and rural demographics, such as the average urban population being younger, more educated, and wealthier (Gutheil 2022), contribute to variations in satisfaction levels. These demographic characteristics play a significant role in shaping individuals' expectations, experiences, and perceptions of their living conditions and governance. Urbanites often have heightened expectations for service delivery due to their exposure to better infrastructure and the availability of diverse services in cities. However, when these expectations are not met due to inadequate or inefficient public services, the urban middle class may increasingly turn to the private sector to fulfil their needs (Gutheil 2022). This shift towards private solutions can lead to disengagement from politics, as individuals may perceive less personal stake in the effectiveness of public governance when their immediate needs are met through private means. Interestingly, Gutheil (2022) observes that despite urban residents being more critical of government performance, the difference in support for democracy between urban and rural populations is marginal. This finding suggests that critical views of government among urbanites do not necessarily translate into diminished support for democracy.

Building on this observation, this thesis hypothesises (H6) that satisfaction with and support for democracy is higher among those living in rural areas. This hypothesis is informed by the notion that rural residents, possibly due to lower expectations for service delivery or different experiences with government services, may exhibit higher levels of satisfaction with the existing democratic framework and support for democratic principles, compared to their urban counterparts. This hypothesis aims to explore the nuanced dynamics of democratic support across different geographical and demographic contexts.

Methodological considerations and model refinement

Recall in Chapter 3, I sought to determine whether it is possible to distinguish between the quality of political governance and economic governance, and if so, what the association between the two might be. To address this, I employed Principal Components Analysis (PCA) to identify the correlation between political and economic governance. Additionally, I visualized this correlation using a scatter plot. Upon establishing that it is possible to distinguish between political and economic governance, I proceeded with the selection of governance clusters. The correlation matrix (Figure 3.1) revealed a strong and positive correlation between the indicators, substantiating economic and political governance clusters.

This chapter outlines the empirical association between governance quality (economic and political governance) and democracy (support for and satisfaction with democracy). Initially, I attempted to examine the relationship between support for and satisfaction with democracy with political and economic governance simultaneously. However, this approach resulted in a convergence warning: “boundary (singular) fit.” This warning typically indicates the presence of multicollinearity or near-perfect linear dependencies among predictors.

Multicollinearity can distort results, making it challenging to discern the individual effects of highly correlated variables. Therefore, to ensure more reliable estimates, I decided to run separate models for political and economic governance, isolating their individual effects on support for and satisfaction with democracy.

The correlation matrix confirmed strong positive correlations between the political and economic governance indicators, reinforcing the presence of multicollinearity. This finding necessitated the decision to analyse political and economic governance separately, allowing for a clearer and more accurate interpretation of their respective impacts on democratic attitudes.

Limitations and considerations

It is important to acknowledge that individual-level data from Afrobarometer offers valuable insights into citizens' perceptions of governance quality. Questions on governance perceptions could have been incorporated as control variables to provide a more nuanced understanding of how governance is perceived. Questions about citizens' views on government effectiveness, transparency, and accountability are especially relevant in assessing their satisfaction with democracy. Such views may differ from expert assessments, highlighting the potential disconnect between expert reports and lived experiences.

However, one of the key advantages of using aggregate governance indicators is that they provide a more neutral and objective assessment of governance quality, independent of individuals’ biases. This approach mitigates the risk of endogeneity— where citizens’ evaluations of governance may be influenced by their overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the government or democracy. Aggregate data, therefore, enables a clearer, less biased

analysis of governance performance and its impact on democracy, which is central to this thesis.

By incorporating both individual-level Afrobarometer data and country-level governance indicators, this thesis addresses limitations associated with using either approach in isolation. The combination of these data sources allows for a more comprehensive analysis, acknowledging the complex interplay between institutional governance quality and citizens' subjective evaluations. This multi-level perspective provides a more holistic understanding of how governance performance influences democratic support and satisfaction, thereby contributing to ongoing debates in the field of governance and democratisation.

Regression models

Table 4.1 presents a simple multilevel regression model for the association between governance (the average for political and economic governance) and satisfaction with democracy. There is a total of 51,982 observations and 34 countries. In the presentation of the research findings, variables are organised in rows, while different statistical models used for analysis are represented in columns. Two key measures accompanying each variable's effect size are the standard error and the p-value, which are essential for interpreting the statistical significance of the results.

The standard error provides an estimate of the variability or uncertainty around the effect size of a variable, indicating how precise the effect size is measured. The p-value, on the other hand, helps determine the statistical significance of the effect size, essentially indicating the probability that the observed effect could have occurred by chance under the null hypothesis (which typically posits no effect or no difference). The standard error and p-value measure how statistically significant the values are, and the asterisk next to the p-value flags the level of significance. If a p-value is less than 0.05, it is flagged with one asterisk, two asterisks flag a p-value less than 0.01, and three asterisks flag a p-value less than 0.001. Worth noting more asterisks do not mean more significance, and if a p-value is less than 0.05, it means it is statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level.

Table 4.1 | Simple regression table for satisfaction with democracy

	Dependent variable:		
	Satisfaction		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Governance	0.10***		
	(0.03)		
Political governance		0.07*	
		(0.04)	
Economic governance			0.15***
			(0.05)
Constant	-0.30***	-0.35***	-0.42***
	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.12)
Observations	44,809	51,982	51,982
N	30	35	35

Significance levels: p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: values are rounded off to two decimal places

The coefficient represents the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. In this case, the dependent variable is satisfaction with democracy, and governance is the main predictor, with country-specific intercepts as the random effect. The model can be summarised by the formula:

Satisfaction ~ governance + (1| country)

In the first column, the estimate for governance is 0.10 and is statistically significant at the 1% level (indicated by ***), meaning governance is positively and significantly associated with satisfaction with democracy. However, this model does not differentiate between the effects of political and economic governance.

To address this, the second column replaces the general governance predictor with political governance. The estimate for political governance is 0.07, significant at the 10 percent level (indicated by *), showing that political governance does influence satisfaction with democracy. However, its effect is weaker compared to the general governance predictor. The third column adds economic governance with an estimate of 0.15, statistically significant at the 1 percent level (indicated by ***). This result suggests that economic governance has a stronger and more significant impact on satisfaction with democracy compared to political governance.

Table 4.2 is a regression table for satisfaction with democracy and economic governance. Control variables are included to consider the possibility that the association between satisfaction and governance is driven by other factors. There are 49 858 observations and 34 countries. Table 4.2 takes the best governance predictor from Table 4.1 (economic governance) and adds education, area (rural/urban), and education levels for the random effects.

Table 4.2 | Multilevel regression model for satisfaction

	Dependent variable:			
	Satisfaction			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Economic governance	0.16***	0.15***	0.15***	0.17***
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.06)
Fractionalisation		0.23	0.21	0.24
		(0.51)	(0.50)	(0.53)
British colony			0.15	0.18
			(0.24)	(0.25)
Log (oil rents per capita)				-0.06
Random Effects	variance (SD)			
Intercept	0.53 (0.73)	0.49 (0.70)	0.51 (0.71)	0.54 (0.73)
Education	0.08 (0.30)	0.08 (0.70)	0.08 (0.30)	0.08 (0.30)
Females	0.04 (0.21)	0.05 (0.21)	0.05 (0.21)	0.05 (0.22)
Rural	0.12 (0.34)	0.12 (0.35)	0.12 (0.35)	0.12 (0.35)
Constant	-0.57***	-0.67**	-0.70**	-0.53
	(0.14)	(0.30)	(0.30)	(0.41)
Observations	51,982	49,585	49,585	49,585
N	35	34	34	34

Significance levels: *p<0.01; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: values are rounded off to two decimal places

Column 1 contains estimates of a regression of satisfaction with democracy on economic governance. The coefficient estimate shows a strong positive association between economic governance and satisfaction with democracy, indicating that economic governance is linked with higher democratic satisfaction. This finding is consistent across models. Column 2 adds

fractionalisation to the model. The coefficient for economic governance remains positive, while the coefficient for fractionalisation is positive and significant. However, the coefficient for fractionalisation is positive but not statistically significant, suggesting that fractionalisation does not significantly impact satisfaction in this dataset. Column 3 adds the British colony and oil rents per capita. The coefficient for the British colony is positive but not statistically significant, while oil rents per capita have a negative and insignificant effect. The coefficient for economic governance remains positive and increases slightly, while the coefficient for fractionalisation remains positive but not significant.

For the random effects, education was divided into four levels (primary schooling, secondary schooling, post-secondary schooling, and post-graduate). The variable was squared to allow for non-linear effects. The coefficient for education indicates that those with primary schooling are 0.08 points more likely to be satisfied with democracy. Contrary to hypothesis 7, which suggested different outcomes regarding gender and satisfaction with democracy, with a standard deviation of 0.21, the findings indicate that females are 0.05 points more likely to be satisfied with democracy compared to their male counterparts. This result highlights an interesting gender dynamic in democratic satisfaction that warrants further exploration. Furthermore, the analysis provides support for hypothesis 8, revealing that individuals residing in rural areas are 0.12 points more likely to express satisfaction with democracy than those living in urban areas. This finding confirms the hypothesis that satisfaction with democracy is higher in rural regions, suggesting that rural residents may have different expectations, experiences, or levels of engagement with democratic processes compared to urban dwellers.

Discussion | The association between economic governance and satisfaction with democracy

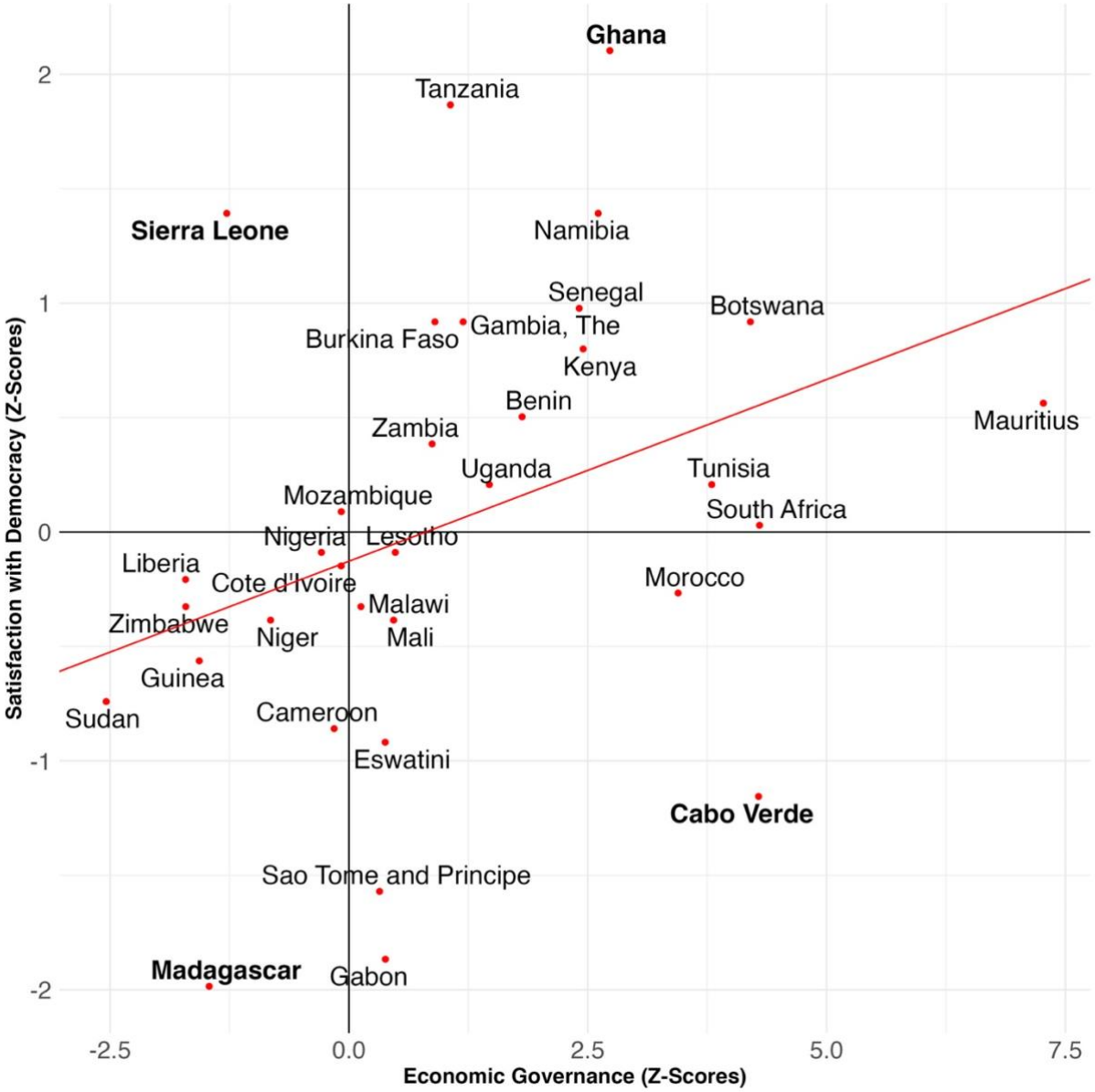
Figure 4.1 is a quadrant chart for regression estimates presented in Table 4.2, visualising the association between economic governance and satisfaction with democracy across 33 countries. The chart is divided into four quadrants:

- **Top-left**: Low economic governance, high satisfaction.
- **Top-right**: High economic governance, high satisfaction.
- **Bottom-right**: High economic governance, low satisfaction.
- **Bottom-left**: Low economic governance, low satisfaction.

Of the 33 countries, 2 are situated in the top-left quadrant, 14 in the top-right, 9 in the bottom-left, and 8 in the bottom-right.

Interestingly, countries like Sierra Leone and Tanzania show high democratic satisfaction despite low economic governance, challenging the assumption that better governance always leads to higher satisfaction. Conversely, countries with high economic governance, such as Mauritius and Botswana, demonstrate varying levels of satisfaction, suggesting that economic performance alone does not fully capture public contentment with democracy.

Figure 4.1 | Correlation between economic governance and satisfaction with democracy



Countries like Sierra Leone, Tanzania, and Burkina Faso stand out with high satisfaction levels despite low economic governance scores. In Tanzania, satisfaction reaches 78 percent, significantly above the regional average of 42.5 percent, illustrating that strong economic governance is not always correlated with high democratic satisfaction. Conversely, countries like Mauritius, Botswana, and Namibia have high economic governance paired with high satisfaction. However, even within this group, there's variation. For instance, Botswana shows strong democratic satisfaction, while South Africa and Tunisia present lower satisfaction levels despite good governance. This discrepancy could point to other underlying issues, such as political disillusionment or social inequality.

In the bottom-left quadrant, where countries like Guinea, Zimbabwe, and Madagascar are located, low economic governance aligns with low democratic satisfaction. This alignment might reflect a broader trend where poor governance negatively impacts public contentment, reinforcing the idea that economic mismanagement often leads to democratic disillusionment.

The plot reveals a complex relationship between economic governance and democratic satisfaction. While a general trend indicates that better governance can lead to higher satisfaction, the outliers and borderline cases highlight that this relationship is not straightforward. For instance, South Africa's slightly above-average satisfaction suggests that strong governance doesn't necessarily translate into high public contentment, possibly due to historical or socio-political factors.

Moreover, the variation within quadrants, especially in the top-right and bottom-right, underscores that economic governance alone does not fully account for public satisfaction with democracy. Factors such as political stability, social equity, and public trust in institutions likely play significant roles.

Overall, the figure highlights that while economic performance is a crucial factor in shaping attitudes towards democratic governance, it is not the sole determinant. Satisfaction with democracy is a complex phenomenon influenced by multiple, often interrelated factors and cannot be fully understood through economic governance metrics alone. The findings suggest that public satisfaction with democracy may be more closely tied to government performance rather than democracy as a political system itself.

Regression analysis: Support for democracy and governance quality

The regression estimates in Table 4.3 follow the same format as in Table 4.1, but satisfaction is replaced with support for democracy as the dependent variable. The first model shows that with an estimate of 0.03, the general governance predictor has a positive but not statistically significant association with support. This suggests that while there is a positive relationship, governance alone does not significantly affect satisfaction with democracy. The second model focuses on political governance by excluding the general governance predictor. Here, the coefficient for political governance is 0.07 and is statistically significant at the 5 percent level. This indicates that political governance has a meaningful impact on satisfaction with democracy, suggesting that citizens' perception of political governance plays a role in shaping their satisfaction. The third model includes economic governance while excluding the other predictors. The coefficient for economic governance is 0.08 and is statistically significant at the 10 percent level. This suggests that political governance plays a more crucial role in influencing citizen's satisfaction with democracy than economic governance.

Table 4.3 | Basic regression model for support

	Dependent variable:		
	support		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Governance	0.03		
	(0.02)		
Political governance		0.07**	
		(0.03)	
Economic governance			0.08*
			(0.04)
Constant	0.71***	0.66***	0.67***
	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)
Observations	44,809	51,982	51,982
N	30	35	35
*Note: p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01*			

However, the question remains whether this relationship holds when other explanatory variables are considered. To address this, Table 4.4 aims to compare the explanatory power of political governance against a set of control variables. This subsequent analysis will further clarify the relative influence of political governance on democratic support by considering additional factors that may affect public attitudes towards democracy.

The regression estimates in Table 4.4 follow the same format as in Table 4.2. Column 1 contains political governance, which is positively associated with support. Column 2 includes fractionalisation, which has a strong and positive association with support. Column 3 includes the British colony, which is negatively associated with support and does not affect political

governance however, the coefficient for fractionalisation increases. As seen in column 4, oil rent has a negative association with support but increases the political governance coefficient slightly.

Table 4.4 | Multilevel regression model for political governance and support

	Dependent variable:			
	Support			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Political governance	0.08***	0.08***	0.08***	0.08***
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Fractionalisation		0.16	0.26	0.22
		(0.36)	(0.37)	(0.36)
British colony			-0.21	-0.20
			(0.17)	(0.17)
log (oil rents per capita)				-0.05
				(0.06)
Random Effects	variance (SD)			
Intercept	1.65 (1.30)	1.62 (1.30)	1.52 (1.23)	1.60 (1.25)
Education	0.35 (0.60)	0.35 (0.59)	0.35 (.059)	0.35 (0.60)
Females	0.18 (0.43)	0.19 (0.44)	0.19 (0.43)	0.19 (0.43)
Rural	0.05 (0.23)	0.05 (0.22)	0.05 (0.22)	0.05 (0.23)
Constant	0.80***	0.70**	0.70***	0.90**
	(0.19)	(0.30)	(0.30)	(0.40)
Observations	51,982	49,585	49,585	49,585
N	35	34	34	34

The table also indicates that those with primary and no education are more likely to support democracy. Contrary to hypothesis 7, the table shows that females are more likely to support democracy. The finding for rural/urban areas confirms the hypothesis that, despite higher satisfaction with democracy in rural areas, there is a (slight) marginal difference in support between urban and rural populations.

The positive association between support for democracy and political governance, as identified in the regression analyses, reinforces the primary argument made in Chapter 2: that support for democracy in Africa is not predominantly influenced by perceptions of a country's economic performance. Instead, it is the quality of political governance that plays a more significant role in shaping public support for democratic systems. Findings from the regression estimates show that there is intrinsic support for democracy in Africa. This challenges the perception that democracy in Africa is seen as a magic solution to the various challenges that the continent is faced with.

Given the unique and intricate challenges that the continent is faced with, democracy has and continues to be tried and tested, demonstrating a remarkable degree of resilience in the face of adversity. The empirical findings indicate that support for democracy among African populations is not superficial and does not solely hinge on material outcomes. Instead, it is rooted in a deeper appreciation for the intrinsic values and principles of democratic governance. The evidence suggests that Africans are discerning judges of the quality of democracy, valuing aspects such as political freedoms, the rule of law, and the accountability of public officials over mere economic gains.

Discussion | Political governance and support for democracy

The correlation between high political governance scores and the status of being among the top democracies on the continent is exemplified by the cases of Mauritius, Botswana, Cabo Verde, Namibia, and South Africa. According to The Economist Intelligence Unit 2021 report, these five countries not only boast the highest political governance scores but are also recognised as the leading democracies in Africa. This alignment suggests that the quality of political governance is a critical determinant of a country's democratic standing. The Economist Intelligence Unit classifies countries according to four types of regimes – full democracy, flawed democracy, hybrid regime, and authoritarian regime. The continent only has one full

democracy (Mauritius), six flawed democracies (Botswana, Cabo Verde, South Africa, Tunisia, Ghana, and Lesotho), 14 hybrid regimes, and 23 authoritarian regimes (EIU 2021). This correlation supports the argument that political governance promotes and strengthens democracy.

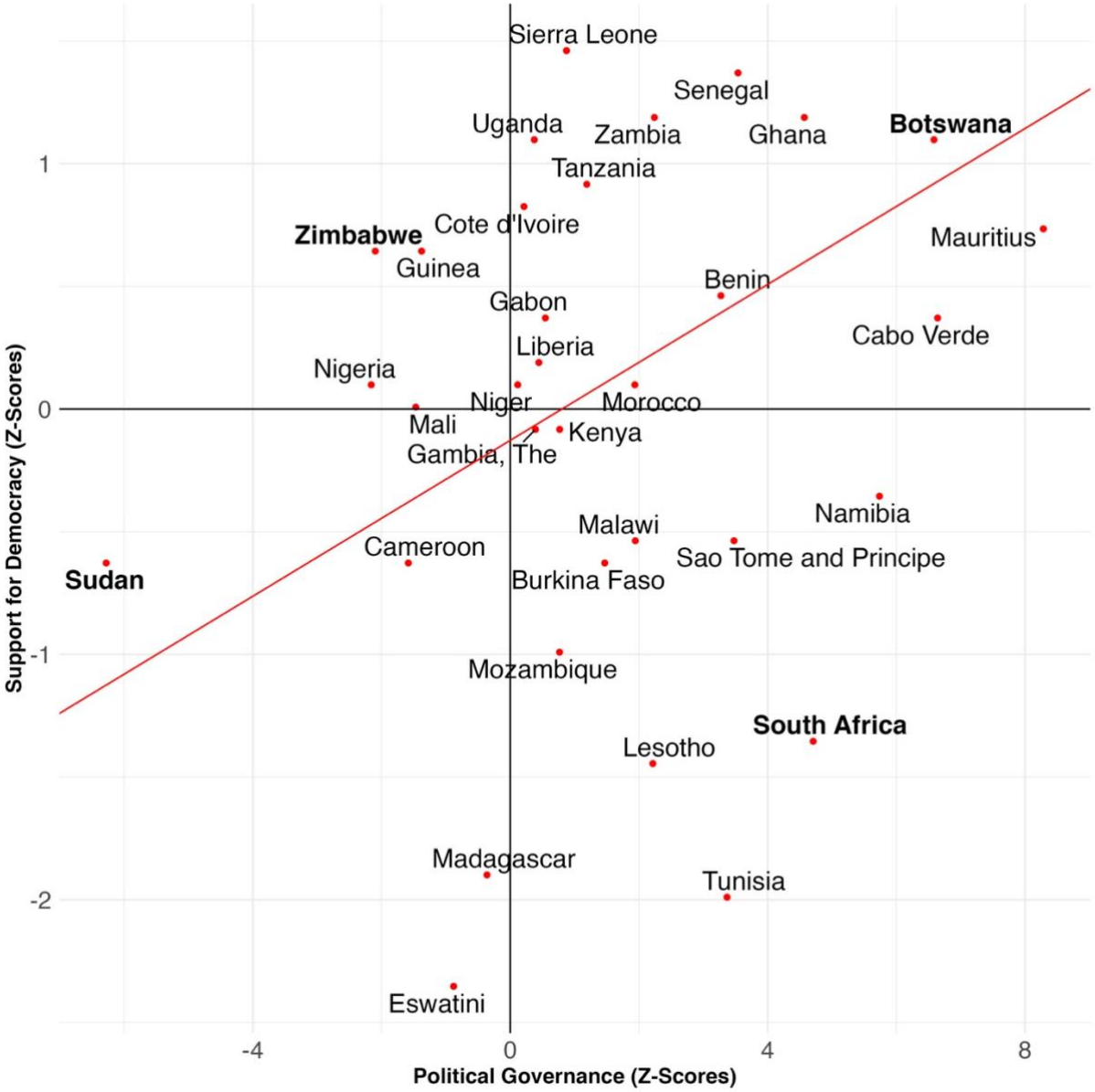
Figure 4.2 represents a quadrant chart based on the regression estimates from Table 4.4, illustrating the association between political governance and support for democracy across various African countries. The chart is divided into four quadrants, each representing different combinations of governance quality and democratic support:

- **Top-left**: High support for democracy, low political governance.
- **Top-right**: High support for democracy, high political governance.
- **Bottom-right**: Low support for democracy, high political governance.
- **Bottom-left**: Low support for democracy, low political governance.

The quadrant chart indicates that 10 countries are situated in the top left quadrant; 8 countries are situated in the top right quadrant; 9 countries are situated in the bottom left quadrant; and 6 countries are situated in the bottom right quadrant.

The countries are dispersed across the chart, with some lying above and others below the regression line, which indicates a positive correlation between support for democracy and political governance. Most countries fall into the top-right and bottom-left quadrants, suggesting that African nations generally either exhibit high support for democracy coupled with high governance quality or low support with low governance quality.

Figure 4.2 | Correlation between political governance and support for democracy



Sudan, Cameroon, and Tunisia stand out with low support for democracy and low political governance scores. These countries are characterised by significant reliance on oil rents, though the extent of this reliance varies. The contribution of oil rents to the overall GDP varies among them, with Tunisia standing out for the substantial role that oil rents play in its economy compared to Sudan and Cameroon. Contrary to the challenges often associated with oil wealth and democratic support, as seen in countries like Sudan, Cameroon, and Tunisia, Nigeria, and Gabon, both leading oil-producing countries, show high levels of support for democracy. According to the data abstained for this thesis, support for democracy in Nigeria stands at 69

percent, while Gabon's support stands at 72 percent. This high democratic support in major oil-producing countries presents an interesting counterpoint to the resource curse theory, which posits that reliance on natural resources like oil can hinder democratic development due to the centralisation of wealth and power.

The political freedom status of these two countries, as classified by Freedom House in 2021 shows that Nigeria is considered "partially free," reflecting a mix of democratic elements and challenges in its political system. Gabon, on the other hand, is classified as "not free," indicating significant restrictions on political rights and civil liberties. The cases of Nigeria and Gabon suggest that while oil wealth can pose challenges to democratic governance, it does not uniformly lead to low democratic support among the populace. Furthermore, Nigeria classifies as a hybrid regime whereas Gabon classifies as an authoritarian regime (EIU 2021) with both countries having the lowest political governance scores. Following Sudan, Nigeria has the second lowest governance score (-2.16) whereas Gabon's political governance score is positive but is below the regional average of 1.50. This supports the hypothesis that oil rent countries score lower on democracy and governance.

Another interesting trend observed in countries like South Africa and Namibia, despite having high political governance scores, they show relatively low support for democracy. Conversely, countries like Zimbabwe, Côte d'Ivoire, and Guinea are also interesting because they have high support but low political governance scores. Botswana, Mauritius, and Cabo Verde have high support but also have high political governance scores. These countries are often cited as models of democratic governance in Africa, illustrating the potential for democratic systems to thrive when supported by strong institutions and positive public sentiment.

Figure 4.2 further complicates the narrative by showing that support for democracy is not straightforwardly related to political governance scores. Support for democracy is not only lower in countries with lower political governance scores, but it is also lower in countries with high political governance scores. This suggests that there are underlying democratic governance factors (at the country level) that influence support for democracy. Understanding these underlying factors is crucial for comprehensively addressing the challenges and opportunities for democracy in Africa, emphasising the need for a multifaceted approach to fostering and sustaining democratic support.

What are the consequences of poor governance on support for democracy?

On average Africa is 60 years old and since independence, the region has made great strides and significant economic and political transformations. This includes the fall of many military and civilian dictators; the strengthening of the rule of law; and the establishment of key institutions and initiatives such as the African Union, NEPAD, the African Governance Architecture, and more recently the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). These are mechanisms designed to address the continent's structural vulnerabilities, democratic and governance issues.

In some African countries, the primary challenge lies in establishing the foundational elements of democratic governance. This involves building robust institutions, ensuring the rule of law, and setting up mechanisms for free and fair elections, among other initial steps towards a democratic system. In other countries, the focus shifts towards strengthening and deepening existing democratic structures, including enhancing transparency, accountability, and inclusivity. Therefore, the consequence of poor governance varies in intensity, duration, and nature.

Countries like Ghana, Liberia, and Kenya exemplify adherence to democratic norms, where presidents have respected the two-term limit, signifying a commitment to democratic principles and the rule of law. This respect for term limits helps prevent the entrenchment of power and encourages political renewal and accountability. Conversely, in countries such as Uganda, Togo, Rwanda, Cameroon, Egypt, and Burundi, leaders have manipulated constitutions to remove or extend term limits, enabling prolonged tenures in office. This tampering with constitutional provisions often occurs in contexts characterized by relatively weak institutions and a limited democratic culture.

Conversely, in countries like Uganda, Togo, Rwanda, Cameroon, Egypt, and Burundi, presidents have tempered with constitutions to eliminate the two-term limit. In these countries, common features are relatively weak institutions and the large absence of a democratic culture. Even more stable democracies like Senegal, known for their democratic traditions, are not immune to governance challenges. Such challenges can manifest in various forms, including tensions around elections, debates over term limits, and public dissatisfaction with governance

practices. These issues underscore the complex and ongoing nature of democratic governance, highlighting the need for vigilance, engagement, and reform to sustain and deepen democracy.

Africa's contemporary democratisation has been characterised by diverging trends. In 1989, only three African countries were considered democratic (Joseph 1997). Over 30 years later, only Mauritius ranks as a full democracy. In 2018, the average democratic score for 16 African countries improved from the previous year, while 24 countries recorded a decline (Abramowitz 2018). These diverging trends reflect the complex nature of Africa, the difficulty in identifying a singular type of democracy that is emerging across the continent and the unique characteristics that sustain democracy.

Between 2001 and 2010, Africa demonstrated significant economic potential, with six of the world's ten fastest-growing economies located on the continent (Shimeles and Nabassaga 2017). This period of sturdy economic expansion highlighted the continent's burgeoning economic dynamism and the potential for sustained growth. However, the benefits of this economic growth have not been evenly distributed across or within African countries, leading to increased economic disparities. According to the World Inequality Database, Africa exhibits the highest national income inequality, with a significant chasm between the earnings of the top 10 percent and the bottom 50 percent of the population (Chancel et al. 2019). The data reveal that the average incomes of the top 10 percent are approximately 30 times higher than those of the bottom 50 percent, underscoring the extent of income inequality on the continent (Chancel et al. 2019). The concentration of economic gains among a small segment of the population can fuel social discontent, undermine trust in institutions, and hinder efforts to achieve inclusive growth.

Another impediment is polarization. In most African countries, polarisation comes in the form of ethnic and or religious fractionalisation. Even in relatively homogenous countries like Ghana and Botswana, polarisation presents itself through class divisions. In countries like South Africa where ethnicity and religion do not necessarily play a central role in politics, polarisation finds an expression through class, racial, and gender divisions. The consequence of such polarization is a political environment where debates and electoral contests are increasingly framed around identity issues, potentially overshadowing discussions on substantive policy matters and governance principles. Moreover, bad governance can exacerbate these consequences by failing to address the underlying issues that fuel polarisation, leading to

neglect of marginalised communities, inadequate provision of public services, and lack of accountability, all of which can deepen societal divisions and erode trust in democratic institutions.

Africa's coup culture is another consequence of poor governance. Military institutions, designed to safeguard the state against external threats, can become sources of instability when they intervene in domestic politics or when the perceived threat emanates from within the state apparatus itself. According to the Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS 2021) as of 2021, 16 African countries are experiencing sustained armed conflict. Out of these 16 countries, 12 either have autocratic or semi-authoritarian governments; and 9 are experiencing armed conflict (ACSS 2021). In addition, 7 of the 9 autocracies facing violent conflict, have leaders who either came into power through coups or by prolonging their term limit. Additionally, 9 of the 10 African countries facing acute food poverty are autocratic or semi-authoritarian regimes (ACSS 2021).

Even more worrisome is the future of democracy in Africa. With 60 percent of Africa's population under the age of 25 and 70 percent under the age of 30, Africa has the youngest population in the world (Rocca and Schultes 2020). Thus, it is not the older generation that will inherit the prolonged consequences of bad governance but the youth. With an average age of 72, African leaders are 4 times older than regular Africans (Powell 2016), yet young Africans are less visible in politics and have limited presence and influence at the decision-making table.

The older generation is more likely to be less educated than the younger generation. Thus, older citizens (35 years and above) are more likely to demand and support democracy. Especially if they have been exposed to democracy for a longer time. Contrary to this, Afrobarometer data shows that the demand for democracy across 34 African countries is the highest among middle-aged respondents (46-55 years), and among those in the 36-45 age category; demand for democracy is lower among younger citizens in the 18-25 age category (39 percent) and those aged 66 and over (38 percent).

Those under the age of 40 constitute 14 percent of the continent's lawmakers. This highlights the youth's limited role in social, political, and economic development (Asiamah et al. 2021). The youth has however played a leading role in political protest, resistance, and revolt in Tunisia, Senegal, Nigeria, South Africa, and many other countries. Notable examples of youth-

led political activism include the 2011 Arab Spring, which saw significant youth participation in countries like Tunisia; Nigeria's 2020 #EndSARS movement, which mobilised against police brutality; the 2019 Sudanese uprising that led to the overthrow of Omar al-Bashir, widely recognised as a youth-driven revolution (Ahmed 2023; Maganga 2020); and Tunisia's Jasmine Revolution, which set a democratic transition in motion (Reguly 2019).

Further instances of youth activism are observed in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi, where young people protested against constitutional amendments aimed at extending presidential term limits. In 2021, student groups in Eswatini spearheaded campaigns against the country's constitutional monarchy (Cheeseman 2022), showcasing the youth's readiness to challenge the status quo and advocate for democratic reforms and good governance. These movements, among others, highlight the significant potential of Africa's youth as agents of political and social change. They highlight the need for inclusive governance structures that provide space for youth participation and address the aspirations and challenges of young people.

Only 27 percent of Africans across all age groups see their government as doing a "fairly" or "good" job at meeting the youth's needs (Asiamah et al. 2021). Young Africans continue to struggle with high unemployment and poverty. Youth unemployment is exuberantly high with 60 percent of Africa's youth being unemployed (Asiamah et al. 2021).

There is a global decline in young civic and political engagement. Compared to the older generation, youth who are eligible to vote are less likely to vote (Barrett 2018), and the youth of Africa fall within this global trend. In Africa, the youth is 34 percent less likely to have voted in the last national election (Asiamah et al. 2021). The characterisation of a young continent with old leaders means several Africans have only experienced one leader. This does little to inspire the youth to occupy spaces in political or public service. This therefore forces the youth to resort to demonstrations to participate in the political system. Nonetheless, regardless of the various setbacks, democracy is still the preferred political system among the youth.

Summary

The major findings in this chapter are that the correlation between satisfaction with democracy and political governance is positive but weak, whereas the correlation between support for democracy and political governance is more positively correlated. This indicates that on average, democracy in Africa is valued for its intrinsic value more than its instrumental value. Meaning, factors such as human rights, the rule of law, justice, participation, safety and security, inclusion and equality, and anti-corruption among other factors inform support for democracy in Africa.

As this chapter has outlined, Africa's democratic experience and progress are not homogenous. The consequence of the perceived lack of supply of democracy and poor political governance is instability, violence, and the future of democracy. This explains why in Africa democracy is mostly valued for its intrinsic value, the cost of its absence is far more severe. Africans do not only want democracy but call for it to be institutionalised. If elected leaders choose to disregard and manipulate the democratic system for the maximisation of self-interest and power, Africans will continue to adopt alternative forms of political expression to defend and participate in the democratic process.

While the findings presented suggest a positive correlation between political governance and support for democracy, the intricacies of this relationship warrant further exploration. The extent to which political governance influences support for democracy remains a complex issue, subject to various interpretations and contextual factors. Claassen (2019, 119) highlights that one of the major limitations of cross-sectional designs is their inability to account for unobservable, country-specific factors such as historical "critical junctures". These junctures can significantly influence the paths of democratisation and the development of a democratic political culture.

Since the history and socio-political fabric of a country cannot always be quantified, case studies provide a more in-depth analysis that may either complement or reveal the limitations of statistical analysis. Given this complexity, there is a compelling need for in-depth case studies that examine the nuances of how political governance impacts democratic governance and, subsequently, how these dynamics affect support for democracy at a more granular, micro-level.

Case selection

The findings of this study must be seen in light of some limitations. The case study selection and period were dependent on the availability of the Afrobarometer data. Upon the write-up of this study, round 7 of the Afrobarometer data was available. The round 7 survey was conducted in 34 countries between September 2016 and September 2018. Although country-level data was available for more than 50 countries, the regional focus was reduced to 34 African countries. Additionally, a lot has happened between 2018 and 2022 which is accounted for in the qualitative analysis but not in the quantitative analysis. Thus, this study largely accounts for democratic and governance trends before key global events such as Covid-19, and new and attempted coups which have and continue to affect the democratic governance experience.

I analysed the same independent and dependent variables for all case studies. The period was dependent on when the first Afrobarometer survey was conducted for each country, hence, the same period was analysed for political governance (1998 – 2018). Although I focused on the same variables, this did not prevent one from identifying country-specific trends and questions. The following chapters present evidence for Sudan, Botswana, South Africa, and Zimbabwe.

The selection of the four cases is guided by the results of the initial quantitative analysis. Each case represents a different trajectory in terms of governance quality and democratic trends:

- **Sudan**: A country marked by political instability and authoritarian rule, with fluctuating support for democracy amidst regime changes.
- **Botswana**: A stable democracy with modest levels of satisfaction and relatively high governance quality, is often seen as an African success story.
- **South Africa**: A complex case where strong democratic institutions coexist with low support and growing dissatisfaction due to governance challenges.
- **Zimbabwe**: A country experiencing severe governance deficits but high support and low satisfaction with democracy, often associated with prolonged authoritarian rule.

These cases allow for a robust examination of the factors that influence democratic support and governance quality. By focusing on these diverse contexts, I aim to provide a comprehensive analysis that accounts for both the general patterns identified in the quantitative phase and the specific historical, political, and social conditions that shape democratic governance in these countries.

Chapter 5: Political governance and support for democracy in Sudan

In Chapter 4, which focuses on statistical analysis, the research aimed to ascertain whether there exists a statistical association between political/economic governance and support for/satisfaction with democracy while controlling for potentially confounding variables such as oil rents, fractionalisation, and colonial legacy. The findings from this analysis revealed that economic governance has a strong and positive association with satisfaction with democracy, indicating that improvements in economic management and performance can significantly enhance citizens' satisfaction with their democratic systems. This suggests that while economic governance can influence satisfaction levels, its impact on overall support for the concept of democracy is less straightforward.

These findings contribute valuable insights into the complex interplay between governance, economic conditions, and democratic attitudes, emphasising the multifaceted nature of support for and satisfaction with democracy. By examining these relationships in a controlled statistical framework, the research enhances our understanding of the factors that underpin democratic engagement and satisfaction, offering important implications for policymakers and stakeholders working to strengthen democratic governance. On the contrary, there is a positive but weak association between political governance and satisfaction with democracy, juxtaposed with a strong positive correlation between political governance and support for democracy, which sheds insights into the nature of democratic attitudes in Africa.

The strong correlation between political governance and support for democracy strengthens the argument that Africans' support for democracy is primarily driven by intrinsic values associated with democratic governance, such as political freedoms, the rule of law, and the accountability of political institutions. These findings suggest that Africans are discerning judges of democratic quality, able to differentiate between the principles of democracy and their implementation. Furthermore, the research findings present a nuanced picture of the relationship between political governance scores and support for democracy across various African countries. Notably, countries like Namibia and South Africa have low support for democracy, suggesting that factors beyond the quality of political governance might influence public support for democratic principles, possibly including economic conditions, social inequalities, or perceptions of government performance.

Conversely, other countries like Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Zimbabwe have low political governance scores but high support for democracy, indicating a strong desire for democratic governance among the citizens. Political governance and support for democracy are high in countries like Mauritius, Cabo Verde, and Botswana, reflecting a more aligned relationship between effective governance and public endorsement of democratic principles. The research also highlights demographic and socio-economic factors associated with support for democracy. Notably, I also found that support is higher among females, individuals living in rural areas, and those with primary and no education. This suggests that demographic characteristics and life experiences play a significant role in shaping attitudes towards democracy.

Furthermore, fractionalisation is found to be strongly associated with support for democracy, indicating that in more diverse societies, there might be a greater appreciation for democratic governance as a means of managing social complexity and ensuring representation. The British colony indicator is negatively associated with support for democracy, reflecting historical grievances and the lasting impact of colonial governance structures. Similarly, the negative association of the non-oil rent indicator with support for democracy suggests that reliance on non-oil natural resources might have complex implications for democratic attitudes.

This chapter is the first of four chapters to present case study evidence. It explores how political governance has impacted democratic governance outcomes and how this, in turn influences popular support for democracy in Sudan. In addition to the statistical analysis, I also look at the impact of other possible explanations that might not be fully captured by quantitative data, such as the role of civic engagement and public perceptions of the extent of democracy. These qualitative factors provide essential context and clarity, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play.

Sudan presents an interesting case study because of its unique positioning in the context of political governance and support for democracy. With an average political governance score of -8.86, one of the lowest, put against a relatively high level of support for democracy at 61 percent. This distinctive combination places Sudan in the bottom-left quadrant of the quadrant plot (Figure 4.4), indicating a low political governance score alongside high support for democracy. Sudan's situation is further compounded by its economic governance challenges, as highlighted by one of the continent's lowest economic governance scores at -2.45. This poor

economic governance is reflected in the level of satisfaction with democracy among Sudanese citizens, with only 30 percent expressing satisfaction. This places Sudan 8th out of 34 African countries in terms of the lowest level of satisfaction with democracy, indicating a significant disconnect between the aspirations for democratic governance and the perceived realities on the ground.

Given Sudan's tumultuous experience with democracy, it is surprising that 61 percent of the population supports democracy. This surpasses countries like Cabo Verde, South Africa, and Lesotho, which have had longer experiences with democracy. Interestingly, Sudan and Tunisia transitioned to democracies around the same time however, only 46 percent of Tunisians support democracy. This is suggestive of a more intricate democratic trend in Sudan. Furthermore, despite the large absence of democracy, Sudan has made some democratic gains over the years, including deepened civic participation, which has played a crucial role in the country's political landscape. This heightened level of civic engagement among Sudanese citizens has been instrumental in facilitating four significant political transitions. These transitions, despite being significant milestones toward democratisation, have unfortunately not led to sustained democratic governance.

A major contributing factor to the failure of these transitions is the profound impact that decades of military rule have had on Sudan's political culture. The support for democracy among the Sudanese population, despite these setbacks, can be understood as a reflection of the widespread desire for a political system that better aligns with their aspirations for freedom, justice, and accountable governance. The gap between the political reality and the expectations of the Sudanese people highlights the persistent demand for democratic reforms and the need to overcome the legacy of military rule to build a more democratic society.

The central aim of this chapter is to explore the potential explanations behind the paradoxical phenomenon in Sudan, where there is a notable support for democracy among its citizens despite the country's significantly low scores in political governance. This exploration seeks to understand the underlying factors and dynamics that drive the Sudanese to favour democratic principles and systems, even in the face of governance challenges and historical setbacks in democratic transitions. In general, the chapter analyses the three-way interaction between political governance, the supply of democratic governance in Sudan and the impact that this had on democratic perceptions and attitudes in Sudan. The evidence provided in this chapter

and subsequent case countries include time-series graphs to present governance quality and democratic trends between 1998 and 2018 and literature on democratic governance outcomes of the country.

The first section focuses on the descriptive analysis of the data on the quality of governance and public perceptions of democracy. This section also focuses on unpacking time trends in the key political and economic variables and democratic perceptions; it presents changes in governance quality, support for / satisfaction with democracy and perceptions of the extent of democracy. The second part explores the country-specific question foreshadowed in the introduction. The last section provides a summary of the findings of the chapter.

Trends in political governance, democratic governance, and support for democracy

Located between Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, Sudan shares borders with seven countries: Libya, Chad, the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Eritrea (World Bank 2022a). It is also located where the White and Blue Nile Rivers merge and is home to more than 60 percent of the Nile River Basin (World Bank 2022a). Its neighbouring state Egypt, is 90 percent dependent on the river for its water supply, while Ethiopia relies on the Blue Nile mega dam for its electricity production (Al Jazeera 2022). Sudan is also strategically located at the Red Sea, which accounts for about 10 percent of global trade (Dunne 2021) and is the third largest African nation (UNDP 2022).

Additionally, Sudan has major oil reserves and is the third largest producer of gold in Africa (Elbagir et al. 2022), it is also the largest producer of the gum Arabic (UNCTAD 2018). On the contrary, Sudan is one of the world's poorest countries. According to the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI) in 2018, Sudan ranked 180 out of 193 countries, this ranking improved to 172 out of 191 countries in 2021 (UNDP 2022). Beyond being one of the poorest nations in the world, Sudan is a geographically strategic and economically important state.

Attempting to fully grasp the genesis of Sudan's instability would be a meticulous task as its instability is the result of multiple conflicts which range from the threat from al Qaeda, tensions with Egypt, a humanitarian crisis, contestation over scarce resources (mainly water), lack of cooperation between political leaders, and abuse of power by the ruling party (Dowie and

Kennedy 2011). Moreover, divisions are rooted in ethnic, religious, and geographic lines - all of which cannot be understood in isolation.

Furthermore, Sudan is a geographically strategic country. Situated as a historical bridge between Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa, Sudan occupies a crucial position that has historically facilitated cultural, economic, and political exchanges across these regions. Additionally, its location along the Red Sea coastline enhances its strategic importance, given the role of the Red Sea as a vital corridor for international trade and its proximity to the Middle East. Given this strategic positioning, the happenings in Sudan have implications that extend beyond its borders, influencing regional stability, security, and economic dynamics. The country's political developments, particularly its efforts towards democratisation and governance reforms, are of interest not only to its immediate neighbours but also to the broader international community.

Sudan's strategic location is at the nexus between Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa, coupled with its significant geographical importance, means that instability within the country has the potential to affect neighbouring nations, particularly those like Chad and South Sudan, which are grappling with internal conflicts. Consequently, instability in Sudan could exacerbate existing tensions that can contribute to cross-border displacements, disrupt trade and economic activities, and potentially provide a breeding ground for transnational criminal and militant groups. This could further destabilise an already fragile region, compounding the challenges faced by neighbouring countries and undermining efforts towards regional peace and security. Moreover, instability in Sudan goes beyond the region – Gulf countries, Western states, China, and Russia also have key interests in Sudan.

Since independence, Sudan has been faced with long periods of instability, including two of the longest civil wars in Africa (Dowie and Kennedy 2011), and short stints of stability which has severely weakened its ability to assume any leadership role in the region. The high frequency of conflict alongside multiple economic shocks has led to mass demonstrations and has further stifled any attempts at kickstarting democracy.

A Brief History of Sudan

1955 – 1972: The rise of fractionalisation as a way of politics

Sudan's complex history of colonial rule has left a lasting mark on its political, social, and cultural landscape, making it a particularly interesting case study. The country has been subjected to three distinct forms of colonial domination, each contributing to the divisions and challenges Sudan faces today. First under the Turko-Egyptian (which lasted from 1820 to 1882), the Mahdiya, the Anglo-Egyptian conquest (1896 - 1899), and the post-independence northern regime - though the nature of this dominance varies greatly (Kebbede 1997). The tri-colonial rule is each responsible for implementing some form of division. The Turko-Egyptian colonial rule secured the present-day borders of Sudan and made a clear distinction between the non-Islamic and non-Arab in Southern Sudan, as well as the trade route (Kebbede 1997). Following the end of the Turko-Egyptian occupation in 1882, Sagig el Mahdi (also known as the Mahdi) became Prime Minister in 1966. Mahdi's primary objective was to Islamize the whole country and the rest of Africa, with Southern Sudan being the beginning of that mission (Kebbede 1997; Barbour 1980).

Under British rule, the North and South were distinguished as "Christians" and "Islamists" (Barbour 1980). Due to perceived Islam ideologies, Southerners were barred from entering, working, and participating in the political affairs in the North (Warburg 1986).

The separation between North and South Sudan did not emanate from the first civil conflict. However, it can be traced back to when the British made a distinction between the North and South (the Arab and African) and subsequently ruled them as separate entities, with most economic activity and social development concentrated in the North (Downie and Kennedy 2011). Under British control, railroads to link important areas of economic interest, schools, agricultural schemes, urban areas, and almost all economic infrastructure and development projects were built in the agriculturally endowed Northern region (Kebbede 1997). This separation was institutionalised in 1922 when Britain adopted a separate system of administration (Kebbede 1997).

Like most ethnically diverse African states, colonisation conscientized Africans to what existed but was not the basis and framework of existence. Colonialists, in addition to conscientizing Africans on ethnicity, also institutionalised, politicised, socialised, and economised it. There is

no shadow of doubt that deconstructing and un-conditioning ethnicity as a social construct would be a complex and multifaceted task. However, maintaining the social construct prevents and makes it more challenging to deal with the root cause of conflict and division. Consequently, in Sudan ethnicity is a vice for conflict.

Post-independence, the leadership dynamics in the country were significantly influenced by Northern elites, particularly under the regime of Omar al-Bashir and the National Congress Party (NCP). This post-independence governance structure continued some of the divisive practices established during the colonial period, albeit in a different context. The NCP and the broader Northern elite leadership focused on consolidating power and resources around the "core" Arab tribes of the Northern riverine states, perpetuating the centralisation of wealth and political influence that marginalised Southern Sudanese and other minority groups (Downie and Kennedy 2011).

Omar al-Bashir assumed power following a coup in 1989. National Unity was not a pressing objective of the NCP moreover, there was a lack of vision for Sudan. This lack of vision was replaced with focusing on how to maintain power. This short-sighted aspiration created space for self-enrichment, corruption, the maximisation of self-interest, economic speculation, and skilful manipulation of the Islamic banking system (Downie and Kennedy 2011). The experiences of Sudan emphasise the importance of inclusive governance and the recognition of diversity as central to building a cohesive and stable nation, particularly in post-colonial contexts where historical divisions have been entrenched by former ruling powers.

1983 to 2005: The Divide of North and South Sudan

The second civil conflict lasted for 22 years, from 1983 to 2005. The conflict was between the central government and SPLA, and the war cost millions of lives and left thousands of others displaced. The conflict broke out in 1983 when the Sharia Law was imposed. The Sharia law mostly targeted Christians in the Southern region. In response, rebels from the Southern region formed the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLA), and by 1985, a coup had occurred (HRW 2004; Crisis Group 2008). The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2005 was signed by the NCP and the SPLA (Crisis Group 2008).

Apart from the conflict between the NCP and SPLM, there were other unresolved conflicts such as the Darfur war. The Darfur war exploded in 2003, and while engineered by the NCP, it was implemented by hired militia groups (HRW 2004). Although a peace agreement was forged, it did not mitigate the conflict. This is largely because the agreement was not context-specific and did not incorporate the concerns of local communities. It also failed to win the support of most of the fragmented rebel groups (Crisis Group 2008). This once again emphasises the fact that without public support and participation in decision-making, there is a limitation to political systems, national vision, initiatives, agreements, and policies.

2005 to present: The role of citizens in promoting democracy

The Sudan conflict ended in 2005 and has subsequently led the country to the path of separation. Once the biggest country on the continent geographically, in 2011 the government of Sudan and South Sudan split into two independent states (Grewal 2021). The formal separation included multiple rounds of negotiations between the NCP and SPLM. These negotiations aimed to equitably divide the nation's assets, liabilities, and, critically, its oil wealth. While an agreement was eventually reached, it left several critical issues unresolved, particularly regarding border demarcation and the allocation of shared oil reserves, which have significant implications for both countries' economies (Grewal 2021). Given the historical division and tensions between the Christians and Muslims, Christians were mainly located in South Sudan, and Muslims were primarily located in the North.

The autocratic leadership of al-Bashir was characterised by the monopolisation of positions of power, weak rule of law, and militarisation. This made it nearly impossible to establish and maintain a democratic system. The militarised government and political instability in Sudan remain a looming threat. The mutual mistrust between North and South Sudan continues to threaten and undermine upholding negotiations, peace, and stability. Conflict is unfortunately a common and reoccurring feature in Sudan and is something that most Sudanese have come to know as the norm. The two rounds of civil conflict between South and North Sudan cost the lives of millions of people (Humanity House 2017), and the ongoing conflict in the Darfur region continues to cause mass displacement.

Furthermore, there have been opportunities and attempts to kick-start democracy however, these have fallen short. The most notable attempt was the December 2018/19 popular uprising, which was sparked by escalating food prices. This eventually led to calls to topple long-time leader Omar al-Bashir (who led the country between 1989 and 2019) (Grewal 2021). After mounting pressure from citizens, the military and civil society, al-Bashir stepped down in April 2019 (Dabanga 2020).

Several factors made the 2019 transition more pronounced than other democratic attempts. This includes the collaboration between the military and civilians. During the 2019 protests, civilians chanted slogans such as "the army and the people are one" (Grewal 2021, 104). This declaration influenced the military's decision to defect and facilitate the arrest and overthrow of al-Bashir. Secondly, the protests were characterised as "leaderful" (Dabanga 2020), indicating that rather than being driven by a single individual or a small group of leaders, the movement was marked by a broad base of leadership, allowing for a more decentralised and resilient protest movement, where leadership was distributed among many participants, making the movement less vulnerable to repression and more adaptable to changing circumstances.

The Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA) played a critical role in providing leadership and mobilising civilians. The SPA was an unlicensed umbrella of labour unions in response to the economic deterioration (Grewal 2021; Dabanga 2020). The SPA unified Sudanese demands and organisation into a common political vision that was articulated in the Declaration of Freedom and Change (Dabanga 2020). The decentralised leadership not only enhanced the movement's coordination but also provided a clear entity with whom the regime could negotiate. The movement was successful in converting its people power to political power. This highlights the central role that civil society plays in upholding democratic ideals. In Sudan, public participation went beyond protest action, but the public was included in the democratic transition and decision-making process.

History has shown that removing a dictator does not guarantee the establishment of democracy. Protesters realised that ousting al-Bashir was just the beginning; achieving institutionalised political and systemic change was the ultimate objective. Consequently, demonstrations persisted until a power-sharing agreement between a joint military-civilian sovereignty council was reached on August 17, 2019 (Dabanga 2020). With UN economist Abdalla Hamdok

appointed as Prime Minister, the military-civilian sovereignty council aimed to guide the nation towards democratic governance (Grewal 2021; Dabanga 2020).

Sudan's democratic transition was an opportunity for the state to establish what is yet to take root, i.e., a firm democratic foundation. This transition was short-lived when the military seized power in October 2021, including suspending the constitution and arresting government officials, including Abdalla Hamdok (Stigant 2022). This military coup cost Sudan a democratic election that was supposed to be held in 2022 (Dabanga 2022) and further plunged the country into a deepened economic and political crisis. Following mass violent protest action and resistance from Sudanese political parties, civil organisations, and civilians, the military agreed and signed a political framework deal that will pave the way for a two-year civilian-led transition (UN News 2022).

The role and commitment of civil society in creating conditions that foster and protect democracy gives clarity on why most Sudanese support democracy in the absence of quality governance and democratic governance. What political system do Sudanese prefer? Is support for democracy based on the government's performance or aspirations of becoming a democratic state?

Table 5.1 summarises the descriptive statistics for the quality of governance and perceptions of democracy from 2011 to 2018. Sudan was first surveyed by the Afrobarometer in 2013 and separated from South Sudan in 2011. The table presents the minimum, the mean, maximum, and standard deviation values. The minimum and maximum scores for support indicate that support for democracy has varied in Sudan. More specifically, at some point support for democracy increased.

Table 5.1 | Descriptive statistics | Sudan

	Support	**Satisfaction**	**Extent**	**Political governance**	**Economic governance**
Minimum	0.42	0.22	0.21	-9.31	-2.65
Mean	0.51	0.28	0.25	-8.86	-2.45
Maximum	0.63	0.32	0.27	-7.72	-2.28
SD	0.09	0.04	0.03	0.51	0.11

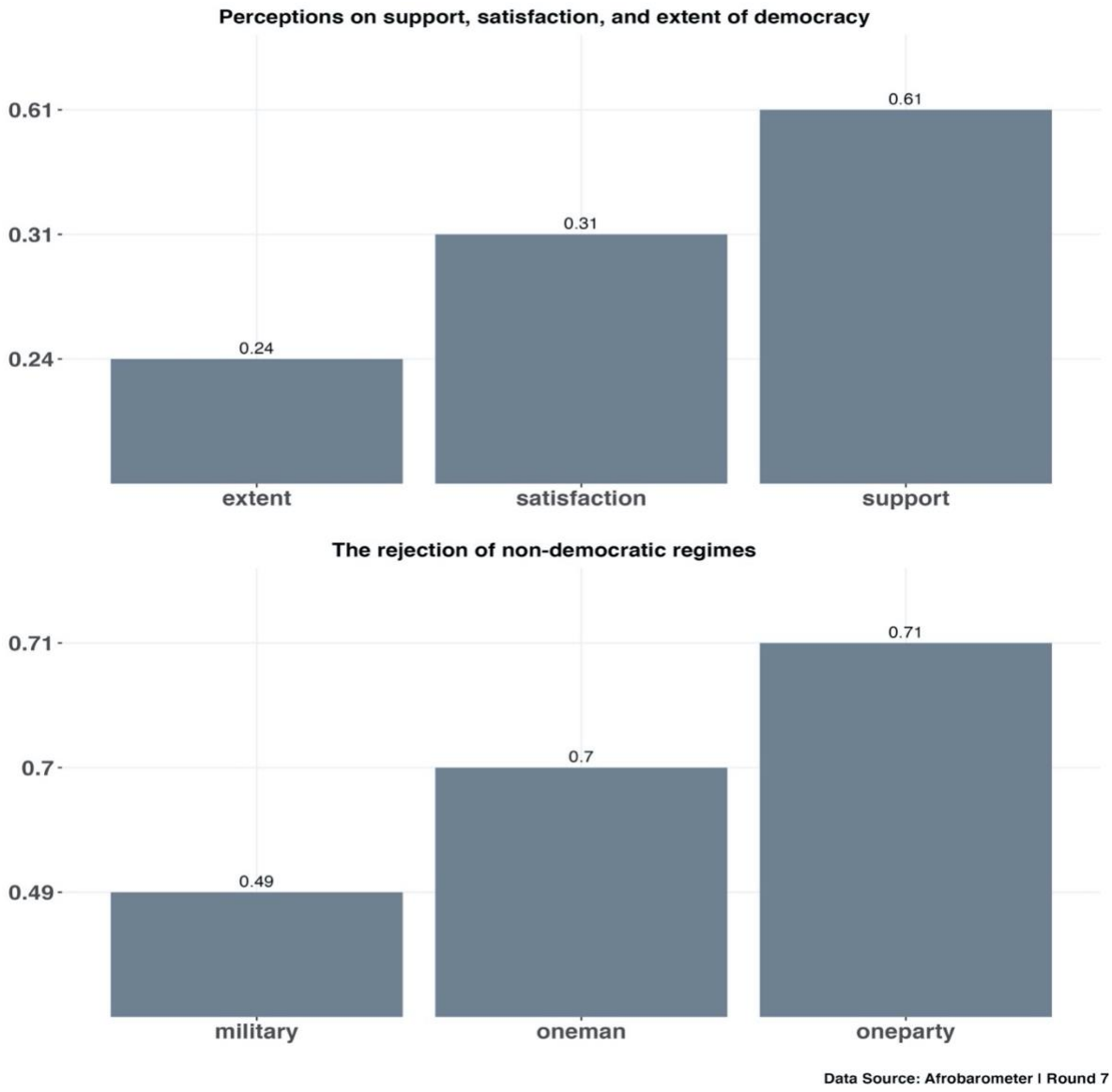
The maximum and minimum values for satisfaction with democracy and perceptions of the extent of democracy indicate that between 2013 (this was when the first AB survey was conducted in Sudan) and 2018, perceptions of the extent of democracy have remained low. A similar trend is observed for political and economic governance. Since separating from South Sudan in 2011, governance quality has remained significantly low. In comparison to economic governance, political governance is pronouncedly low. There is no significant difference in the maximum and minimum scores for political governance, therefore indicating that over the years, political governance has not significantly improved.

Democratic trends: Do Sudanese want democracy?

A closer analysis of democratic perceptions can provide more clarity on democratic perceptions in Sudan. On average, 61 percent of Sudanese support democracy, 30 percent are satisfied with democracy (see Figure 5.1), and only 24 percent of Sudanese believe that Sudan is either a full democracy or a democracy with minor challenges. The figure also indicates that about 70 percent of Sudanese reject one-man and one-party rule. These findings suggest that while there is a strong foundational support for democracy among Sudanese citizens, there is also a critical need for improvements in the democratic process and governance to align with the public's expectations and to enhance satisfaction with democracy.

Interestingly, about half (49 percent) of Sudanese reject military rule. In comparison to the Round 6 Afrobarometer (2014/15) survey, 10 percent more Sudanese reject presidential dictatorship, and 3 percent more reject military rule. The rejection of military rule is below the regional average of 71 percent and is the third lowest. The rejection of military rule is lowest in Burkina Faso (43 percent), followed by Tunisia (47 percent). Worth noting, interviews for the round 7 survey were conducted before the ousting of Omar al-Bashir from office in 2019 and before the unsuccessful coup attempt in 2021 by Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok.

Figure 5.1 | Public Perceptions of Democracy in Sudan



The round 8 survey conducted in 2021 indicates that the rejection of presidential dictatorship has increased by 1 percentage point (71 percent), while the rejection of one-party rule increased by 3 percentage points, and the rejection of military rule increased by 6 percentage points. However, there has been a significant decrease in support for democracy, which decreased by 11 points down to 50 percent. This major decrease coincides with the major political changes that have taken place in Sudan since 2018.

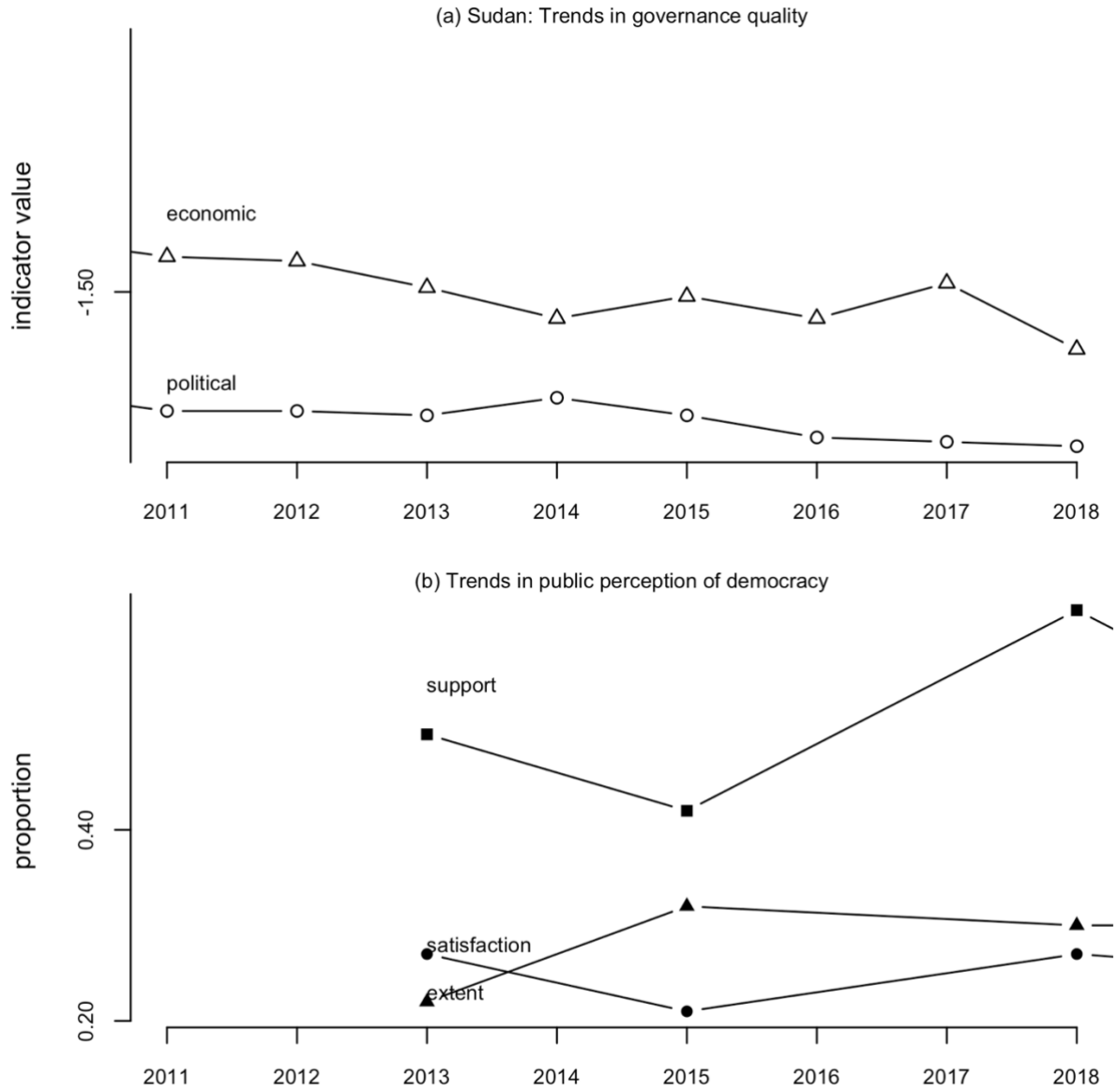
Between 2014 and 2018, the perception that Sudan is a "full democracy" or a "democracy, but with minor problems" increased by 8 percentage points, moving from 16 percent to 24 percent, but is well below the regional average of 50 percent. Out of the three alternatives to democracy, there is less resistance to military rule. Since independence, Sudan has largely been governed under one-man rule and has had several stints under military rule. The recent transition to democracy has been led by a hybrid military-civilian government. Thus, compared to more stable democracies where opposition parties contest for leadership, Sudan does not have a vibrant political system.

Notably, both perceived supply and satisfaction with democracy in Sudan have significantly increased since 2014. In 2014, only 41 percent of Sudanese supported democracy, and 16 percent perceived Sudan to either be a full democracy or a democracy with minor challenges. These trends mirror the internal economic and political climate during this period. In 2013, there was heightened inter-communal fighting between Sudanese forces and rebel groups (HRW 2014). These clashes further displaced tens of thousands within the Blue Nile and surrounding areas. The security forces responded by arresting anyone who was suspected to be associated with rebel groups (HRW 2014). Media was censored by authorities, which also heavily monitored movements by civil society. Other challenges faced by the state include a food crisis, displacement, conflict, human rights violations, and communal violence, these challenges are mere by-products of deep-rooted economic and political dysfunction. As a result, they serve as a vice that sustains instability and the result of a lack of democratic governance. It is therefore unsurprising that in 2015 only 16 percent of Sudanese perceived their country as a democracy.

Political governance trends

Figure 5.2 represents changes in governance quality and democratic perceptions from 2011 to 2018. I use the time trend to provide a structure to the descriptive background and unpack the dynamics and trends. The basic logic is that the governance quality (political and economic governance) is on the top panel, and democratic perceptions (support, satisfaction, and extent) are at the bottom panel.

Figure 5.2 | Sudan time trend graph| 2011 - 2018



Political and economic governance has continuously declined, with a more significant decline in political governance. It is worth noting that a decline in political governance over the years coincides with an increase in support for democracy. There is a noticeable decline in political governance from 2014 to 2018. With a political governance score of -6.28 in 2018, Sudan has the 3rd lowest political governance score on the continent. As noted in Chapter 3, political governance is measured by assessing the average of government effectiveness, security and rule of law, political stability and absence of violence/terrorism, and participation, rights, and inclusion. For security and the rule of law, Sudan ranks 50th regionally, with an average of 24.1 percent (IIAG 2018). Rule and law is used as a tool to attain and maintain personal interests and political power, and al-Bashir successfully demonstrated this. The rule of law

established by Nimeiri is another example. Three laws were established under Nimeiri: the Evidence Act of 1983, the Penal Code of 1983, and the Civil Transactions Act of 1984 (Strey 2017). These laws were not only used to advance the power of Shari's law in the regime, but these laws were the first to be based on religion (Strey 2017).

Between 2010 and 2018, political governance improved by -1.1, and political governance has always been negative. This negative trend sustains Sudan's fragility. Instead of rules, laws, accountability and regulations, Sudan is ruled through fractionalisation, lack of accountability and transparency, abuse of power, and weak institutions. Historically, Sudan has largely been accountable to the Arabs and has disregarded minority ethnic and religious groups as equal citizens. This has subsequently created inequalities that have become vices for conflict. Sudan's estimate of political stability and absence of violence/terrorism estimate (WGI) declined from -1.41 in 2017 to -1.82 in 2018.

Efforts made to institute governance include the establishment of local governments to decentralise participation and power (World Bank 2022a). These local governments do, however, rely on centralised planning and financing from the national government. This centralisation significantly limits the autonomy of local governments, constraining their ability to make independent decisions that reflect the unique needs and preferences of their local constituencies. As a result, non-governmental actors, such as civil society organisations, community groups, and individual citizens, may find themselves with limited influence in the decision-making process, leading to policies and initiatives that are not fully aligned with local needs and priorities. Nonetheless, there is continued hope for the actualisation of democracy. The role of civil society plays a central role in relentlessly calling for better performance and accountability by the government.

Democratic trends

Sudan's limited exposure to democracy makes it difficult to accurately assess its effectiveness or preference as a political system. This lack of experience likely contributes to a limited understanding of democratic principles. Furthermore, given the constraints on political rights, the rise in support for democracy could be interpreted as superficial, driven by fear or coercion.

Between 2013 and 2018, support for democracy increased from 22 percent to 63 percent, respectively. However, this growth has not been continuous. As Figure 5.2 indicates, support for democracy decreased by 8 points between 2013 and 2015, followed by a 21-point increase from 2015 to 2018. While support for democracy has significantly risen, satisfaction with democracy and perceptions of its extent has slightly decreased. Satisfaction with democracy dropped from 22 percent in 2013 to 32 percent in 2015 and only dipped by 2 percentage points in 2018. Similarly, perceptions of the extent of democracy fell from 27 percent in 2013 to 21 percent in 2015 but rebounded to 27 percent in 2018. When questioned about whether citizens believe democracy is provided, 24 percent of Sudanese stated they receive democracy. This stands as the lowest score among the 34 Afrobarometer surveyed countries.

After al-Bashir's ousting, Prime Minister Abdulla Hamdok invited the UN to help facilitate Sudan's transition. The UN's Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITMAS) involved consultations primarily with the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC), excluding many Sudanese voices. International stakeholders like the United Kingdom, UAE, and the US also played a role in shaping the Framework Agreement, which alienated much of the population, who felt the process lacked homegrown input and served foreign interests (Ahmed 2023).

The trends in perceptions of democracy indicate a clear awareness among Sudanese citizens that they live under an undemocratic regime. Their support for democracy appears rooted in a genuine desire for change. Interestingly, as shown in Figure 5.1, support for democracy has grown alongside a decline in political and economic governance, suggesting that dissatisfaction with the current system fuels the desire for democratic governance.

These trends raise two central questions: why do Sudanese support a political system they have had limited exposure to, and why has support for democracy increased despite worsening governance? The responses to these questions will be explored in the following sections.

Understanding democratic perceptions in Sudan

Why do Sudanese support a political system that they have had minimal exposure to?

Sudanese support for democracy can be attributed to two main factors: the lack of democratic governance and long-standing exposure to authoritarian rule. While democratic transitions mark significant milestones, new democracies are more prone to political violence compared to consolidated democracies (Cook and Savun 2016). Since gaining independence, Sudan has endured over 52 years of authoritarian rule, with each attempt at democratisation interrupted by coup d'états (Liyew 2023). Sudan has undergone four failed transitional periods, with the latest, which began in 2019, being halted by the 2021 coup d'état and the 2023 armed conflict.

Sudan's extensive history of authoritarianism has shaped its political landscape and undermined efforts toward sustained democratic transitions. The military rule first took root in 1958 when General Ibrahim Aboud came to power through a coup (Ahmed 2023). Although his regime was toppled in 1964, democracy was short-lived as General Jafaar Nimeiry seized power in 1969, ushering in another 16 years of authoritarian rule - from 1969 to 1985 (Liyew 2023). It is the Sudanese who succeeded in effecting change through public uprising, and once again democratic elections were held. A similar trend occurred in the 2019 revolution. At present, the military regime sustains undemocratic practices. Thus far, the transitions replace one military regime with better-resourced military affiliated forces or with a better organised former regime political cadre.

The recurring cycles of short-lived democracy have hindered the development of a democratic political culture. Each military regime's involvement in transitional periods has deepened divisions, complicating efforts to consolidate democratic governance and increasing the risk of conflict. As a result, authoritarianism remains the dominant system experienced by Sudanese citizens. Additionally, the lack of tangible political and economic benefits from the current political system provides little incentive for change. This is particularly true for rural populations, who feel excluded from governance and powerless to influence policy decisions (International IDEA 2022).

Interestingly, the gap in support for democracy between rural and urban populations is minimal. In 2018, 64 percent of urban respondents supported democracy compared to 61 percent in rural areas supported democracy. As noted, beyond saying that they support democracy, Sudanese display their commitment to democracy through civic engagement. Civic participation is vital in reinforcing democratic principles. Robert Mattes (2016) argues that active political participation leads citizens to value and defend democracy. In a context like Sudan's, where formal political institutions may not fully address citizens' needs, civic engagement is crucial. It enables citizens to influence governance, hold leaders accountable, and contribute to the gradual consolidation of democratic norms.

This civic engagement at the individual level is further amplified when citizens organise collectively through civil society movements. These movements not only embody the democratic participation of the populace but also extend their influence by shaping public policy and advocating for systemic change.

Civil society movements play a crucial role in influencing policy and expanding democratic participation beyond voting. These movements act as vital conduits for citizen engagement with the state, shaping governance quality and democratic stability in both democratic and non-democratic settings. They have been pivotal in political transitions across various countries, including Russia, China, Sudan, Zimbabwe, and Tunisia (Bratton 1993). Through advocacy, mobilisation, and demands for accountability, civil society promotes transparency, inclusiveness, and democratic reforms, making it a significant force in the political landscape.

For example, in 2014, the association Le Balai Citoyen, composed of musicians, magistrates, journalists, and students, played a major role in the regime transition in Burkina Faso (OECD 2016). Similarly, in Tunisia, civil society organisations were key to the establishment of a pluralist democracy (OECD 2016). Civil society also expresses dissent or advocates for change through public protests, which serve as a platform to influence policy and mobilise public opinion on political, economic, or social issues.

Protests, particularly economically motivated ones, are more common in rural areas, while politically motivated protests are often more prevalent in urban centres (OECD 2016). Elections are another essential mechanism through which citizens voice their concerns. However, as they only occur every four to five years, there is often a long interim period during

which unresolved issues may build up. This gap underscores the importance of having strong, responsive institutions that can continuously address public grievances beyond electoral cycles.

While elections are a significant means to express public will, the presence of robust institutions and active civil society movements ensures that democratic engagement is sustained between election cycles. Effective governance relies on these institutions to channel public concerns and deliver accountability and reform.

Civic engagement in Sudan: Sudanese are not complacent

A common factor in Sudan's transitions is the active role of Sudanese citizens in removing authoritarian regimes and initiating democracy through elections. This repeated success signifies the deep desire, capacity for, and commitment to democracy. It is important to note that this commitment is against the backdrop of a crisis that has displaced millions, deprived citizens of food, healthcare, and housing, and has left many living in frustration and fear (Ahmed 2023). This context further supports the argument that the moderate support for democracy in Sudan reflects a genuine willingness among Sudanese to embrace and defend democratic principles.

It has only been 4 years since the ousting of al-Bashir, and given the four failed democratic transitions, it is difficult to discern Sudan's democratic trajectory. However, these transitions give key insights into why democracy has struggled to take root and who its key defenders are. More importantly, these periods represent critical junctures in Sudanese politics. If the government continues to fail to cultivate and secure a genuine inclusive democratic environment, and if the Sudanese people become despondent in their democratic efforts and increasingly unwilling to defend democracy, the consequences for Sudan's political future could be severe.

Despite the lack of democratic governance and poor governance quality, the enduring commitment of Sudanese to the democratic ideal reflects a deep-seated belief in the principles of freedom, justice, and equality as the best path forward for Sudan.

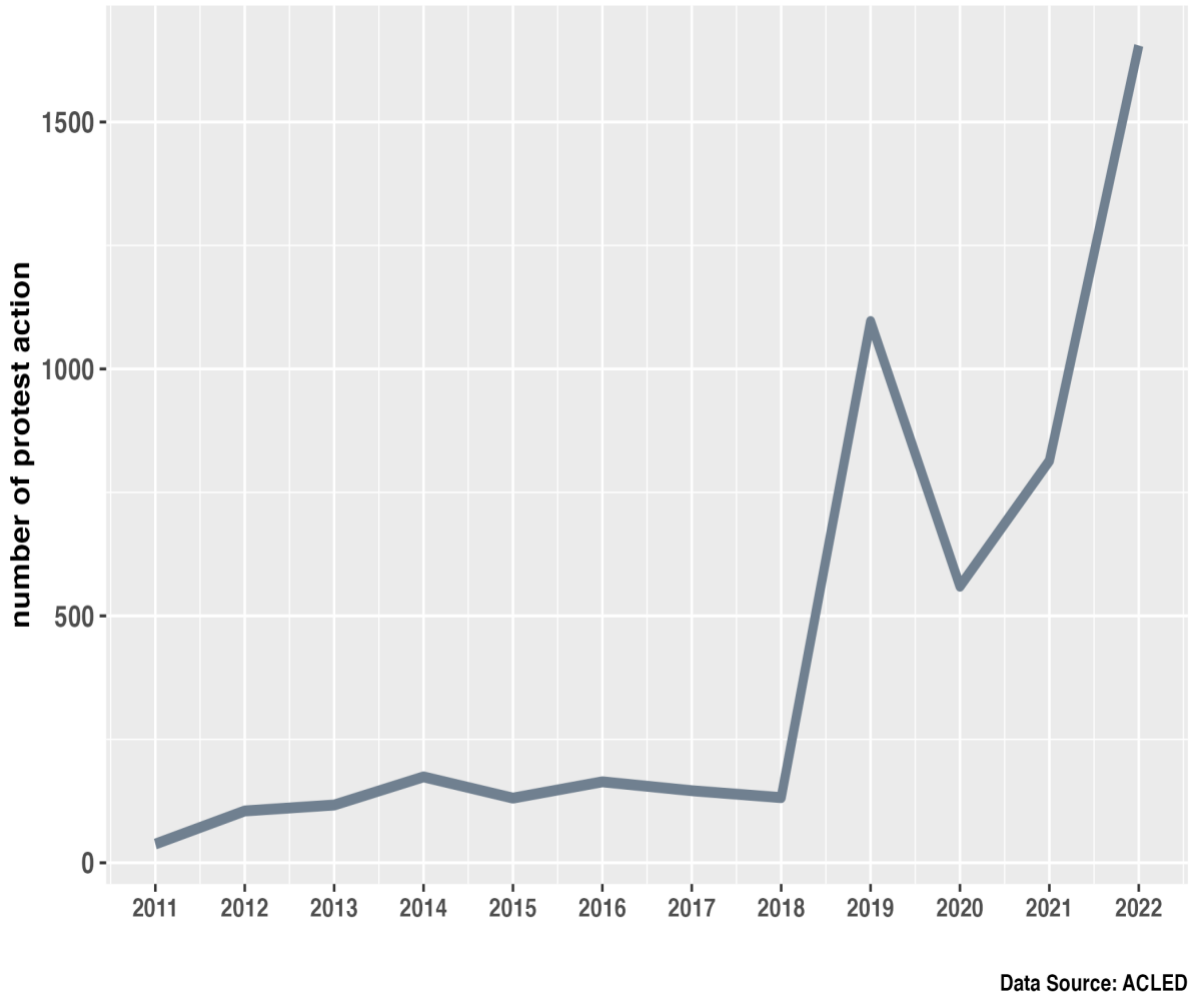
Anti-government protests: The people of Sudan are not complacent

As previously discussed, civilian structures have played a critical role in keeping democratic aspirations alive in Sudan. Beyond the electoral process, it is essential to foster strong and open civic spaces where citizens can engage and express their interests and values (Diamond 2003). Civic participation not only creates opportunities for political engagement but also helps to promote tolerance and cultivate a vibrant political environment. In countries like Sudan, where there are high levels of ethnic fractionalisation and where elites derive their legitimacy from controlling economic and political resources, the decentralisation of power is often viewed as a threat to their dominance. This dynamic is particularly reflective of Sudan's political experience.

Protest action is another avenue for democratic participation. Economically motivated protests tend to be more common in rural areas, while politically motivated protests are often concentrated in urban centres (OECD 2016).

Figure 5.2 illustrates the frequency of protest actions in Sudan from 2011 to 2022, based on data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED). As Figure 5.2 shows, there was a steady increase in protest activity between 2011 and 2013. Notably, in 2018, there were 152 reported protests, which dramatically surged to 1,096 in 2019. According to Morgan (2019), between December 2018 and January 2019, over 300 anti-government demonstrations occurred across Sudan. During these protests, security forces killed dozens of demonstrators. The protests culminated in the ousting of Omar al-Bashir in April 2019 (Morgan 2019).

Figure 5.3 | Protest action in Sudan| 2011 – 2018



December 2018 marks a pivotal moment in Sudan's history, often seen as a blueprint for its political transformation. The revolution in 2018 ended the longest autocratic rule in Sudan's history, culminating in the signing of a Constitutional Charter on 17 August 2019 and the establishment of the Sudan Transitional Government (Davies 2022). This period ignited hopes for democracy and initiated the country's path toward democratisation.

Since the ousting of Omar al-Bashir, protest actions have escalated, many of them characterised by non-violent mobilisation. For example, in July 2020, 14 sit-ins were reported across Sudan (Dabanga 2020) alongside 814 protests. Post-al-Bashir activism has taken on a highly localised character, moving beyond national politics to address issues at the grassroots level. This shift reflects a broader engagement with the democratic process, with citizens increasingly advocating for change within their communities.

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Despite relatively low overall support for democracy in Sudan, there are encouraging trends. One particularly hopeful sign is the involvement of youth in politics and civic engagement. In many African countries, support for democracy among the youth is low (Cheeseman 2022). This is largely due to their underrepresentation in formal governance and exclusion from decision-making processes. As a result, governance decisions and policies fail to reflect and keep pace with the needs and expectations of young people (Ibrahim 2019). However, Sudan’s youth present a different narrative.

Youth between the ages of 15 and 30 make up 60 percent of Sudan's population (Aalen 2020). For many, leadership under al-Bashir was the only political experience they had before 2019. Most young activists are sceptical of multi-party democracy, as it has been dominated by elderly leadership (Aalen 2020). Despite this, youth in Sudan have remained engaged, showing a unique trend of political involvement.

In 2018, support for democracy across different age categories in Sudan revealed only minor variations. Among youth aged 18 to 25, 53 percent expressed support for democracy, slightly higher than other age groups. This figure was 6 percentage points higher than those aged 26 to 35. Support for democracy among the 36 to 45 and 46 to 55 age categories stood at 50 percent for both groups. The oldest surveyed group, those aged 56 and above, showed the lowest support, with 43 percent in favour of democracy. Despite these variations, the data shows that

support for democratic governance is consistent across all age groups, with youth showing a particularly strong endorsement of democratic principles.

These statistics suggest that while younger individuals in Sudan demonstrate slightly more support for democracy, the democratic ideal garners considerable endorsement across all age groups. This broad support highlights the cross-generational appeal of democratic values and indicates a collective aspiration toward democratic governance despite differences influenced by varying life experiences, historical contexts, and expectations among the age groups.

Civic engagement in Sudan is also relatively vibrant. In 2018, 24 percent of Sudanese reported being active members or leaders in voluntary associations or community groups (Logan, Sanny, and Han 2021). This figure aligns with the regional average of 24 percent and exceeds participation in more established democracies like Mauritius (9 percent), Cabo Verde (12 percent), Botswana (22 percent) and Namibia (18 percent). Additionally, 56 percent of Sudanese reported attending community meetings, just 2 percent below the regional average, while 15 percent said they contacted local government councillors about important issues (Logan, Sanny, and Han 2021).

Civic engagement across age groups shows only slight variation. For instance, 43 percent of Sudanese aged 26–35 attend community meetings regularly, which is similar to 43 percent in the 36–45 age group, 48 percent in the 46–55 age group, 44 percent of those aged 56 and above, and 34 percent of those between 18–25. These statistics illustrate that Sudanese citizens of all ages actively participate in civic life, with only minor divergences, particularly among younger people. This pattern emphasises a tradition of civic involvement, which complements the country's ongoing democratic aspirations.

Are Sudanese satisfied non-democrats?

Sudan’s history and current economic and political dynamics present significant challenges for the future of democracy. The cycles of military rule, autocratic governance, and prolonged conflict have hindered democratic development, leaving little optimism in traditional political spheres. However, the resilience of Sudan's civil society and the acts of defiance from its citizens suggest a potential for democratic revival. This active civic engagement, despite the hardships, offers a glimmer of hope.

According to the four types of democrats discussed in Chapter 2, Sudanese citizens primarily fall into the category of satisfied non-democrats. This classification reflects the reality that while they may express some contentment with stability or improvements, it does not necessarily indicate deep-rooted support for democratic governance. In Sudan, poor governance quality has had a detrimental effect on democratic institutions, and this, in turn, has negatively influenced public support for democracy. However, this lack of support is not based on the government's performance but rather its persistent failures and absence of effective governance.

The consistent decline in political and democratic governance correlates with increased protest action and civic mobilisation. This is evident in the decreasing support for democracy between rounds 7 and 8 of the Afrobarometer survey, which signals that poor democratic governance has led to a lack of democratic supply. Civic engagement alone, without corresponding improvements in governance, risks fostering "democratic fatigue," where citizens become disillusioned with the democratic process due to repeated governance failures and short-lived democratic transitions. This underscores the critical link between governance quality and civic engagement, emphasising how governance failures can weaken public trust and democratic commitment over time.

The consequence of poor democratic governance on support for democracy in Sudan

When citizens demand democracy, but the government does not supply it, a fundamental disconnection arises between popular aspirations and the political system's ability to meet those expectations. Governance, which encompasses the management of a country’s affairs and the exercise of power and authority (Weiss 2000), plays a crucial role in shaping this dynamic. The quality of governance is particularly important in democratic systems, as it affects the daily lives of citizens, especially the poor and vulnerable. Good governance, facilitated through strong democratic institutions, can mitigate conflict, uphold the rule of law, promote accountability, and ensure service delivery (Mbaku 2020; Maclin 1997; Ahmad and Saleem 2014). When governance is poor, however, these benefits are absent, leading to frustration and demands for change.

Citizens' participation is a cornerstone of democracy, and active engagement often increases when there is a failure to deliver public services. These failures highlight deeper issues within the political economy, the distribution of power, and governance inefficiencies. Poor democratic governance is often the product of ill-informed reforms, uneven power distribution, and weak accountability. In Sudan, issues such as the absence of independent governing structures, high levels of patrimonialism, and the conflation of state and ruling party functions create significant barriers to effective democratic governance. These factors obstruct the institutionalisation of democracy and deepen the gap between governance and citizens' expectations.

One of the most significant impediments to democratic transition is the suppression of independent institutions, which often serve as symbolic displays of state control. Under al-Bashir's regime, for example, trade unions, syndicates, and professional associations—historically powerful forces for change—were dissolved and replaced with state-affiliated organisations (Dabanga 2022). The regime's strategy was to neutralise these organisations as potential threats to its power, recognising these organisations played an instrumental role in the October 1964 overthrow of Ibrahim Abboud's dictatorship and the 1985 uprising against Jaafar El Nimeiri (Dabanga 2022).

Despite these efforts to suppress civic activism, grassroots movements and alternative structures have emerged in response. Citizens, distrustful of both the government and opposition parties, have found new ways to engage politically. This has led to a paradox: while there is disillusionment with political institutions, there is also a short-term increase in democratic support, particularly from non-state actors and local movements. For example, the protests between 2012 and 2014 against military dictatorship reflected not only frustration with the regime but also a renewed belief in democratic principles (Elamin and Mampilly 2018).
In these instances, democracy is perceived as being supplied from the grassroots level rather than the state. The rise of youth movements, independent workers' and farmers' organisations, and innovative forms of protest reflect a vibrant form of civic engagement. These actions indicate that while the government may fail to supply democracy, citizens remain committed to pushing for it from below. This bottom-up pressure can foster political change, even in the absence of formal democratic governance. However, sustaining this momentum in the long term requires improvements in governance quality to prevent democratic fatigue and ensure lasting reforms.

During the 2018 protests, despite Sudan's political instability and the state's attempts to suppress demonstrations, Sudanese citizens remained relentless in their pursuit of democracy. This period was marked by heightened creativity, strategy, and organisation among civilians, who adapted to the regime's protest-proofing efforts, particularly in Khartoum.

A key feature of the 2018/19 mobilisations was that they did not originate in the capital, where the regime had concentrated resources to demobilise protests (Elamin and Mampilly 2018). Instead, the protests began in smaller cities and spread, gaining momentum and national significance. This decentralised approach allowed the movement to evade initial state repression, and its strength grew as opposition parties like the Umma Party, the Democratic Unionist Party, and the National Consensus Forces rallied behind it, calling for international intervention and an investigation into the deaths of demonstrators (Elamin and Mampilly 2018).

What made these protests distinct was the leadership of civilians rather than traditional opposition parties, which ultimately led to the establishment of a transitional government in 2019. This government represented a fragile balance between military and civilian rule but was disrupted by growing tensions, culminating in a military coup in October 2021 (CFR 2022).

Sudan's political and economic fragility, rooted in decades of corruption, mismanagement, and an absence of the rule of law, was fully exposed during this coup. Key government structures were dissolved, and the terms outlined in the 2019 constitutional charter were suspended (CFR 2022), leaving the country in a state of uncertainty. The resignation of the Prime Minister in January 2022, following the failure of unsuccessful political negotiations, marked a pivotal moment in the ongoing crisis. Current peace talks between the military and various stakeholders offer a critical opportunity to stabilise Sudan and pave the way for democratic governance.

The issue of poor governance in Sudan is at the heart of the state's inability to institutionalise democracy. Without robust structures to promote checks and balances, the state struggles to uphold democratic principles, leaving democratic optimists increasingly disillusioned. Afrobarometer round 8 data indicates that as of 2021, support for democracy has declined to 50 percent, and 28 percent of Sudanese think non-democratic systems of governance are preferable (Elawad and Elsafi 2021). Despite this decline, 74 percent of Sudanese reject one-

party rule, 71 percent reject strongman rule, and 55 percent oppose military rule. This 10-point decline in support for democracy coincides with an increase in protest action (from 500 in 2020 to 814 in 2021 – Figure 5.3). This suggests that while there is a decline in explicit support for democracy as an ideal, there remains a strong commitment among the citizens to advocate for democratic principles and hold authorities accountable through civic engagement.

This paradox reflects a population still deeply invested in democratic governance but frustrated by its absence. As citizens increasingly turn to protest action in response to the state's failure to deliver democracy, the persistence of civic mobilisation indicates that the democratic spirit in Sudan remains strong. However, without substantive improvements in governance and political stability, there is a risk that democratic optimism could eventually give way to apathy and disillusionment.

Conclusion

The modest support for democracy in Sudan, as observed in a recent survey, can be seen as more than just an indication that democratic principles are not fully embraced by the Sudanese people. This perspective might stem from the fact that Sudan has had limited and fragmented experiences with democratic governance, with long periods of authoritarian rule and military dominance overshadowing any potential for democratic consolidation. The country has not had an opportunity to establish a sustained democratic culture, making it difficult for citizens to fully assess the benefits of a democratic political system.

However, attributing the moderate support for democracy solely to a lack of acceptance of democratic principles oversimplifies the situation. Instead, this moderate support may reflect a cautious optimism toward democracy, shaped by the country’s complex historical and political context. As this thesis argues, Sudanese views on democracy are likely influenced by their experiences of governance—marked by instability, conflict, and unfulfilled promises of reform—rather than an outright rejection of democratic ideals. The failure of past transitions to deliver on democratic promises, combined with cycles of authoritarian resurgence, may have fostered scepticism about the viability and effectiveness of democracy in Sudan.

The notion that moderate support reflects a limited understanding of democracy also warrants consideration. For many Sudanese, democracy might be associated with transitional periods that were ultimately cut short by coups or military rule, creating doubt about whether democracy can truly take root. Nonetheless, this scepticism is more about the challenges of sustaining democracy in Sudan than a fundamental opposition to democratic governance.

The statistical findings in this chapter further clarify the relationship between democratic perceptions and governance performance in Sudan. While support for democracy has increased over time, satisfaction with democracy and perceptions of the extent of democracy have declined. This suggests that Sudanese citizens do not misunderstand democracy; rather, they desire it but are frustrated by the lack of democratic governance. Sudan remains an unconsolidated democracy, weakened by its fragile economic base and persistent military rule, which hinders any substantial progress toward a democratic foundation.

Sudan's case serves as a critical reference for understanding the long-term consequences of poor democratic governance. It highlights the dangers of continued authoritarian rule for countries attempting to transition to democracy, as well as the resilience of citizens and civil society in pursuing democratic aspirations. Sudan's history—characterised by military interventions, coups, and authoritarianism—has undoubtedly compromised its ability to build a stable democratic foundation. Despite these challenges, Sudan also exemplifies the resilience of democratic aspirations among citizens and civil society. The lessons from Sudan's journey are valuable for other states facing similar challenges, emphasising the importance of governance quality and the vital role of citizen activism in shaping democratic futures.

Chapter 6: Political governance and support for democracy in Botswana

Introduction

This chapter investigates the relationship between governance quality and democratic governance in Botswana and examines how this interplay has contributed to the country's high support for democracy. Unlike Sudan, which has had a tumultuous journey with democracy, Botswana stands out as a beacon of democratic stability in the region, with a longstanding tradition of democratic practices. This distinction provides a unique context to explore how effective governance can bolster democratic values and citizen engagement. The core of this investigation centres on understanding how Botswana's high governance quality, particularly in terms of political governance, has influenced the functioning of democratic institutions and processes. The analysis seeks to unpack how these governance dynamics have shaped public perceptions and support for democracy. In Botswana, the evident correlation between quality governance and positive democratic outcomes suggests that the citizens' support for democracy is not merely aspirational but is grounded in their experiences and observations of democratic governance in action.

In this chapter, I extend the analysis beyond the statistical findings to explore additional factors that influence democratic support. This analysis aims to provide insights into how governance quality and democratic practices interact to foster or hinder democratic support, drawing on Botswana's experience as a case study of successful democratic governance. In addition, a review of the literature on Botswana's democratic governance quality will be undertaken to provide context and depth to the statistical analysis. Additionally, the chapter employs a comprehensive analytical approach, incorporating a time-series graph to illustrate the trends in governance quality and democratic perceptions from 1998 to 2018.

The first section focuses on the descriptive analysis of the data on the quality of governance and public perceptions of democracy. This section also unpacks time trends in the key political and economic governance variables and democratic perceptions. It presents changes in governance quality, support for / satisfaction with democracy and perceptions of the extent of democracy. The second part of the chapter explores the country-specific questions foreshadowed in the introduction to shed light on the complexities of Botswana's political and economic landscape and how these elements interplay to shape public perceptions of democracy. The last section provides a summary of the findings of the chapter, offering insights

into the association between governance quality, democratic governance, and support for democracy in Botswana. Overall, this chapter aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of Botswana's democratic resilience and the challenges it faces, providing a nuanced perspective on the factors that underpin its democratic achievements and areas where further consolidation is needed.

Trends in political governance, democratic governance, and support for democracy

As Africa's oldest continuous democracy, Botswana is often considered Africa's miracle (Molutsi and Holm 1990; Ojo and Duyile 2020; Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson 2001; Holm 1994), and has become one of the world's development success stories. When Botswana gained independence in 1966, it had a GDP Per Capita of $89.5 (World Bank 2023b). By 2018, GDP Per Capita stood at $6947 and $7244 in 2021 (World Bank 2023b). From a global context, its GDP increased 10 times faster than the global average. Characterised as an upper middle-income country with sound economic management, a stable political environment, good governance, and mineral wealth, Botswana appears to be getting it right.

Located in Southern Africa and positioned between Zambia, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, Botswana has transitioned from being one of the world's poorest nations in 1966 to becoming one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. Botswana is a mineral-based country and has enjoyed economic growth and development because of the discovery of minerals post-independence (Tlou 1984). In comparison to other African countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and others, Botswana has managed to avoid what is known as the resource curse (Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson 2003). It is worth noting that it is not solely the discovery of natural resources that has yielded economic success, but the discovery was accompanied by good governance and economic management (Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson 2001).

Like most Southern African states, Botswana (formally known as Bechuanaland) is a former British colony, and the difference in colonial experience partially explains the diverging economic and political trends and patterns (Tlou 1984). There are key factors that differentiate Botswana's colonial experience. Firstly, the presence of relatively few white settlers in Botswana meant that the territory was administered as a protectorate rather than a settler colony. This form of administration typically involves less direct interference in the local

governance structures and societal norms, which in Botswana's case, allowed for a degree of continuity in traditional governance practices.

Secondly, the British colonial influence in Botswana had minimal impact on ethnic divisions to the extent seen in other African contexts. The relatively minimal impact on ethnic relations has been a crucial factor in maintaining national cohesion and stability in the post-colonial period. Thirdly, there was a perception that Botswana was an unproductive country that provided little return for foreign investment (Molutsi and Holm 1990). This lack of investment meant that there was less economic exploitation and disruption than in colonies deemed more economically valuable. Lastly, dikgosi (traditional Tswana leaders) played a central role in governing Botswana under British rule investment (Molutsi and Holm 1990). The British administration's reliance on these traditional leaders for local governance allowed for the preservation and continuation of indigenous political structures and practices that later played a central role in shaping Botswana's political landscape, contributing to its stable governance and democratic practices post-independence.

Under the Protectorate government, the Tswana royals and colonial officials dominated government structures. However, a growing number of Christian-educated elites urged the government to broaden participation by allowing them to participate in government affairs (Tlou 1984). Although they were not granted active participation, non-royals sat in Advisory Councils such as the Joint Advisory Council (JAC) and the African Advisory Council (Tlou 1984). Because Bechuanaland was considered an unproductive country, the British neglected production, which kept economic development at low levels (Molutsi and Holm 1990; Tlou 1984). This resulted in increased labour migration to South Africa (Tlou 1984).

When Botswana gained its independence in 1966, Botswana was one of the poorest African states, with a GDP Per Capita of about $90, minimal infrastructure, and poor levels of literacy (Mogalakwe and Nyamnjoh 2017). At 57 years, Botswana has changed its economic trajectory and is one of the most politically stable countries in Africa. As such, it presents an ideal case study for valuable lessons on democracy.

Figure 6.1 represents changes in governance quality and economic perceptions from 1998 to 2018. I use the time trend to provide a structure to the descriptive background and to unpack the dynamics in trends in Botswana over the past 20 years. Table 6.1 summarises the

descriptive statistics for the quality of governance and public perceptions of democracy from 1998 to 2018. Noteworthy, Botswana was first surveyed by the Afrobarometer in 1999. The table presents the minimum, the mean, maximum, and standard deviation values. The minimum and maximum scores for support for democracy indicate that support has not significantly decreased, and on average, support has been relatively healthy.

Table 6.1: Descriptive statistics | Botswana

	Support	**Satisfaction**	**Extent**	**Political governance**	**Economic governance**
Minimum	0.66	0.58	0.59	9.44	3.88
Mean	0.77	0.67	0.76	10.40	4.36
Maximum	0.83	0.83	0.91	10.91	4.87
SD	0.07	0.1	0.1	0.53	0.31

On the other hand, the values for satisfaction tell a different story. The difference between the maximum and minimum values suggests that at one point, satisfaction with democracy was very high, but at a different period, it decreased significantly. A similar trend is evident in perceptions of the extent of democracy. At one point, 91 percent of Batswana perceived the extent of democracy in Botswana to be high, and at another period, only 59 percent held this perception. Economic and political governance quality has remained relatively consistent over the past 20 years.

Overall, the descriptive statistics suggest that while governance trends have remained relatively stable, the same cannot be said for democratic perceptions, especially for satisfaction with democracy and the extent of democracy. The lack of synchronisation between democratic perceptions and governance quality is something worth exploring as this may provide more defined insight and understanding of the democratic experience in Botswana.

Democratic trends

Since gaining its independence in 1966, Botswana has been recognised for its enduring peaceful democracy, a rarity in the context of post-colonial African states. The journey to independence and the subsequent establishment of a democratic governance structure was significantly influenced by the leadership and vision of Seretse Khama, who founded the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) in 1962 (Tlou 1984). Under Khama's guidance, the BDP became the driving force behind Botswana's peaceful transition to independence. While both the BDP and the Botswana People's Party (BPP) shared the overarching goal of achieving independence through democratic means, namely a one-man/one-vote election system, their methodologies and political ideologies diverged (Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson 2001). The BDP, under Khama's leadership, advocated for a more moderate and pragmatic approach to achieving independence, focusing on building a broad-based movement that included various segments of Botswana's society (Mogalakwe & Nyamnjoh 2017; Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson 2001). On the contrary, the BPP adopted a more 'radical' stance in its push for independence. This approach was emblematic of the leadership style of Seretse Khama, the party's president, and Quett Masire, a former journalist and farmer, who were instrumental in drafting the BDP's constitution (Mogalakwe and Nyamnjoh 2017).

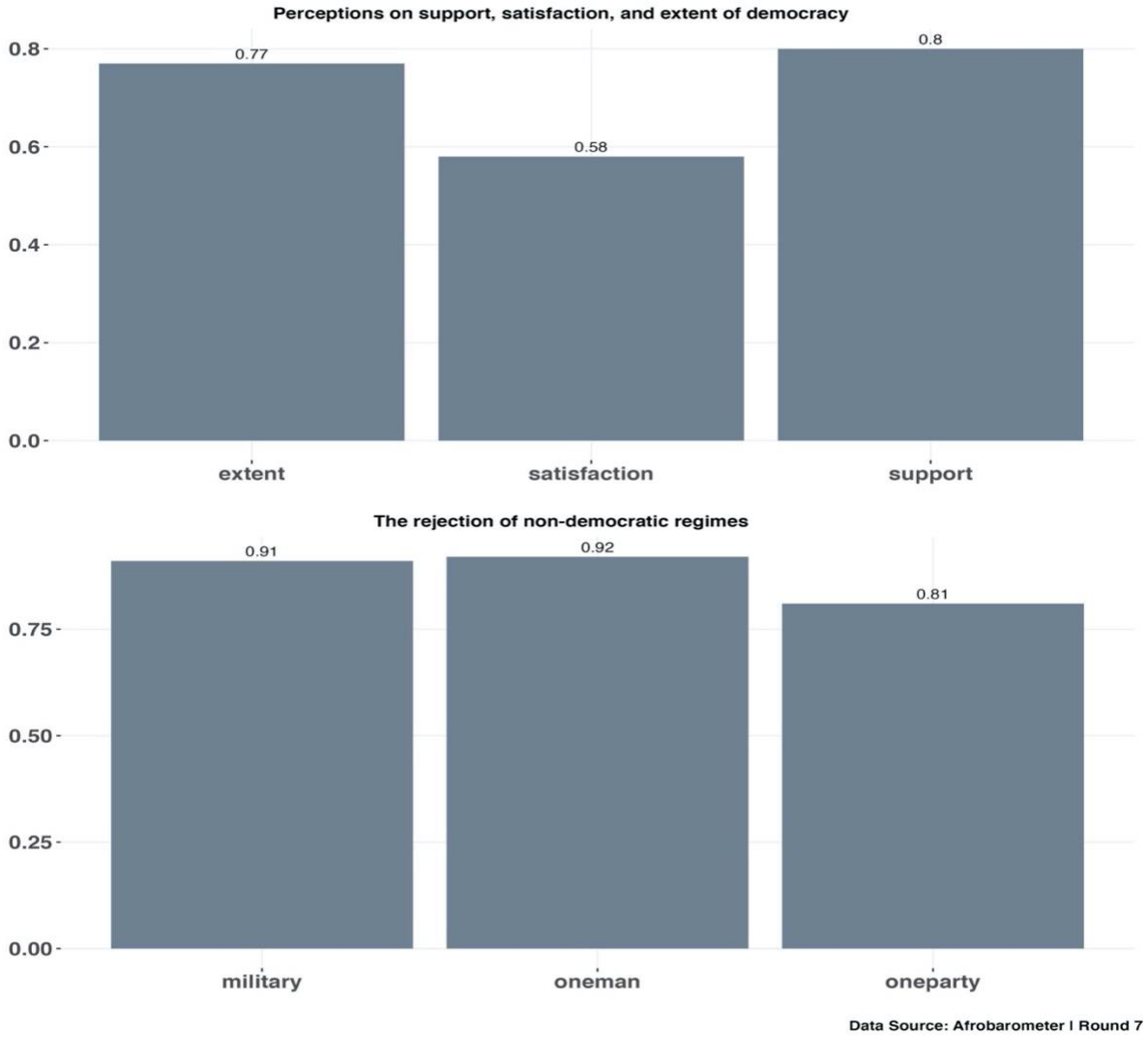
This involvement of experienced leadership helped the BDP minimise internal conflicts and maintain a united front, contributing to its effectiveness as a well-organised political entity with widespread support across Botswana. The party's ability to draw on the experience of its leaders and strategically position itself as a moderate, inclusive force played a key role in its success in leading Botswana to independence and setting the foundation for the country's democratic governance. The involvement of the new elites, including Khama and Masire, in the Advisory Council and the Legislative Council (LegCo) proved to be highly advantageous for the BDP (Mogalakwe and Nyamnjoh 2017). The experience and skills gained from their participation in these colonial-era governance structures significantly influenced the BDP's organisational structure and operational strategies (Mogalakwe & Nyamnjoh 2017).

The first election was held in March 1965, with the BDP winning 28 of the 31 seats and 3 seats to the BPP (Tlou 1984). Botswana's independence was proclaimed on the 30th of September 1966, with Seretse Khama as Prime Minister. One key factor was the relatively amicable relations that existed between the British colonial administration and the local Tswana chiefs.

This cooperative relationship facilitated a smooth transition process, characterised by negotiations and mutual respect between the colonial powers and the indigenous leadership (Tlou 1984).

Although the late 1950s and early 1960s saw a wave of new political parties (Mogalakwe and Nyamnjoh 2017), Botswana does not have a vibrant multiparty system. The BDP has dominated the electoral multiparty system (Kebonang and Kaboyakgosi 2017). Trends and patterns in satisfaction with democracy suggest that Batswana are troubled by developments in their democracy. While Batswana are more likely to express strong support for democracy, they are less likely to express satisfaction with the way democracy is working in their country (Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1 | Views on democracy | Botswana | 2017



By and large, Batswana support democracy as the preferred political system. About 80 percent of Batswana endorse democracy as the best form of governance, and a similar percentage, 78 percent, perceive their country to embody democratic principles. However, there is a noticeable dip when it comes to satisfaction with democracy, with only 58 percent expressing contentment. The strong democratic orientation of Batswana is further evident in their overwhelming rejection of non-democratic forms of governance. A notable 91 percent of Batswana oppose military rule, and 81 percent reject the idea of one-man rule, figures that stand well above the regional averages. The aversion to one-party rule is particularly striking, with 92 percent of Batswana rejecting it. This sentiment has seen a significant increase over the years, growing from 68 percent in 2003 to 92 percent in 2017. Similarly, the rejection of military rule has risen from 79 percent in 2003 to 91 percent in 2017, highlighting a growing consensus against autocratic governance forms.

Since its independence, Botswana has experienced continuity in political leadership under the BDP despite having had five different presidents. This political landscape provides context to the relatively high rejection of one-party rule, albeit lower than the opposition to one-man or military rule. The consistent disapproval of strong-man rule has remained above 80 percent since the first survey in 1999; this emphasises a deep-rooted preference for democratic governance and the rule of law among Batswana. This strong democratic ethos, coupled with the nuanced views on governance forms, reflects the complex relationship between democratic ideals and political realities in Botswana.

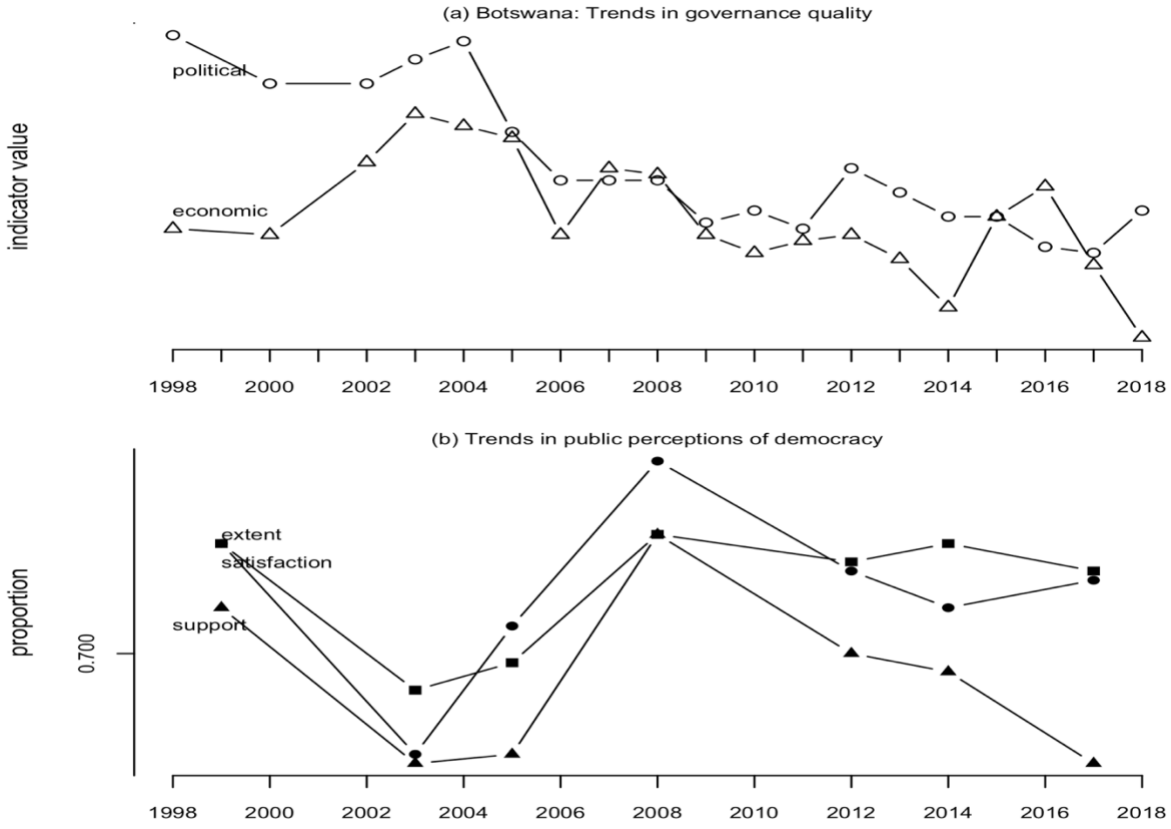
In juxtaposing these trends with support and satisfaction, perceptions of the extent of and support for democracy are significantly high. However, satisfaction with democracy is significantly lower. This implies that although Botswana has largely institutionalised democracy, it faces several democratic challenges that Batswana are aware of. Similarly, between 2008 and 2017, the number of Batswana who say people often or always have to be careful of what they say about politics increased from 28 percent to 49 percent respectively.

Botswana has yet to experience a change in government since the attainment of independence. Research on Botswana's dominant party system attributes the BDP's dominance to weak opposition (Osei-Hwedie 2001), lack of state funding, factionalism within opposition parties, and the BDP's past economic performance (Seabo and Molebatsi 2017). In 2014, 44 percent of Batswana agreed that opposition parties provided a viable alternative to the ruling party

(Lekalake 2016). This, combined with a rise in competitive elections - with the most noticeable being the October 2014 election, suggests that more Batswana are willing to embrace an alternative political party and leadership in office. Support for multiparty competition has also significantly increased over the years – from 59 percent in 2003 to 75 percent in 2017 (Isbell and Seabo 2018).

Worth noting, the trend in Botswana reveals an interesting dynamic where increased support for democracy coexists with a decline in satisfaction with the democratic process. Satisfaction with democracy, which stood at 68 percent in 2015, saw a decrease to 58 percent by 2017. This pattern is not new; back in 1999, satisfaction with democracy was at a high of 75 percent, but it experienced a significant drop to 58 percent by 2003. However, there was a notable rebound in 2008, when satisfaction increased to 83 percent. This fluctuation in satisfaction levels, despite consistent support for democracy, suggests a complex relationship between the citizens' aspirations for democratic governance and their perceptions of how democracy is being practised in reality.

Figure 6.2 | Botswana time trend graph| 1998 – 2018



Between 1999 and 2014, on average 78 percent of Batswana perceive the country as a "full democracy" or "a democracy with minor problems". However, the perceived supply of democracy (a combination of respondents' level of satisfaction with democracy and assessment of the extent of democracy) is less stable. Since 1999, the perceived supply of democracy in Botswana experienced notable fluctuations, reflecting changes in public perception over time. In 1999, a substantial 71 percent of the population perceived that democracy was being adequately supplied, indicating a strong belief in the effectiveness of democratic governance shortly after the turn of the millennium. However, by 2003 this perception saw a decline to 46 percent, suggesting a growing disenchantment or emerging challenges in the democratic processes within the country.

Interestingly, the perceived supply of democracy experienced a partial recovery to 54 percent in 2005, but it was in 2008 that a significant resurgence was observed, with the perceived supply rising to 80 percent. Despite the high in 2008, the perceived supply of democracy saw a decline in subsequent years, dropping to 58 percent by 2017. The period between 2014 and 2017 was particularly notable for a decrease in perceived supply, from 63 percent in 2014 to 55 percent in 2017. This decline brought the perceived supply of democracy to its lowest level since the initial survey, highlighting a period of increased scepticism or critical evaluation of democratic governance in Botswana.

Political governance trends

The top panel in Figure 6.2 visualises political and economic governance trends from 1998 to 2018. Both political and economic governance have continuously declined, with a more significant decline in economic governance. As noted, Botswana has the third-highest political governance score in Africa. However, a closer look indicates that apart from 2015, political governance has declined since 2012. In comparison to other case studies, Botswana's political governance score is nonetheless far higher. In 2010, Botswana's political governance score was 4.36, meaning the raw score was +4.36 higher than the regional average. Between 2010 and 2017, political governance declined by 1.19. This indicates a governance backslide which has largely gone unnoticed by mainstream media.

On the surface, a decline in Botswana's political governance does not appear alarming as the decline is slow but continuous. There also appears to be a correlation between political governance and the perceived supply of democracy. The decline in political governance coincides with a decline in the perceived supply of democracy. This is an important finding as the decline in satisfaction with democracy and the proportion of respondents who consider their country not to be a democracy may provide early signs of democratic governance backslide.

Over the years, there has been a decline in the power of elected political representatives to govern (BTI 2018b). There has also been growing mistrust of the electoral system and the continued undermining of fundamental elements of democratic procedures and institutions (BTI 2018b). This includes the Directorate on Intelligence and Security (DIS), the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Crime (DCEC), the Botswana Unified Revenue Services (BURS), a weak parliament, and a growing lack of separation of power between the executive presidency and the state (BTI 2022a).

In Botswana, concerns about the intolerance of political opposition have been notable during the tenures of both former President Ian Khama and the current President Mokgweetsi Masisi. This perceived intolerance has manifested in various ways, notably in the harassment of opposition leaders, which became particularly evident in the lead-up to the October 2019 elections and during the Covid-19 state of emergency (BTI 2022a). Incidents of harassment and the broader treatment of political opposition have been more prominently reported by private media outlets, highlighting the crucial role that independent media plays in ensuring transparency and accountability in governance. In contrast, state media outlets have been less likely to report on these incidents, raising concerns about media censorship and the independence of state-affiliated media in Botswana (BTI 2022a).

Respect and upholding the rule of law are still highly regarded in Botswana. In 2020, the World Justice Project ranked Botswana 43 out of 128 countries and jurisdictions worldwide (BTI 2022a). However, the appointment of judges and magistrates by the president remains a threat to the rule of law. This was evident in April 2019 when Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi's case to suspend an elective special congress of the ruling party was disregarded by the appointed judges, who happened to be appointed by the president (BTI 2022a).

Notably, there is growing dissatisfaction with the BDP. The 2014 general elections saw the BDP popular vote drop from 53 percent in 2009 to 48 percent. Ironically, this decline in voter share coincides with a steep increase in support, satisfaction, and perceptions of the extent of democracy in 2008 (Figure 6.2). However post-2008, public perceptions of these three indicators have failed to revert to peak levels. A similar pattern is evident with governance quality.

Furthermore, governance and democratic trends raise important questions about the declining support for democracy since 2008. On average, governance has declined slightly and is well above the regional level. However, the continuous decline in satisfaction with democracy in Botswana, despite high levels of support for democracy and a broad perception of the country as a democratic state, presents a paradox that warrants closer examination. This discrepancy raises critical questions about the nature of democratic governance in Botswana and the factors that contribute to the growing dissatisfaction among its citizens.

Firstly, exploring why Batswana support democracy and largely perceives Botswana as a democracy yet expresses increasing dissatisfaction requires an analysis of the expectations versus the realities of democratic governance. Secondly, understanding why democracy has not been fully consolidated in Botswana, despite high levels of support and positive perceptions of democratic extent, demands examining the structural, institutional, and cultural dimensions of Botswana's political landscape. These guiding questions form the basis for a deeper investigation into the complexities of democracy in Botswana.

Understanding democratic perceptions in Botswana

The question of interest is not whether democracy exists but the quality of democracy in Botswana. Regardless of how think tanks and institutions may rank the quality of Botswana's democracy and governance, without insight into public perceptions and attitudes toward democracy, this is an incomplete assessment. Insight into civil liberties may perhaps provide clear insight into the gap between governance quality, democratic governance, and satisfaction with democracy.

Botswana is a rather interesting case as the declines in supply and demand for democracy between 1999 and 2003 do not coincide with any major event in the country. Nor does it coincide with changes in support. In taking a closer look into the political governance indicators, there have been noteworthy declines in control for corruption. In 2006, Botswana's WGI control for corruption estimate was 0.97 - this increased to 1.03 in 2010. Between 2011 and 2015, the control for corruption estimate declined to 0.85 and further down to 0.79 in 2017. Political stability and absence of violence/terrorism estimate has remained stable, scoring just above 1 on a scale of -2.5 to 2.5. The V-Dem data has also recorded a decline in participatory democracy since 1999.

In 1999, Botswana's participatory democracy score was 50 percent, this slightly decreased to 49 percent between 2000 and 2004 and further decreased to 44 percent in 2017. On average, 22 percent of Batswana are active members or leaders in a voluntary association or community group (Logan, Sanny, and Han 2021). Seven in ten (71 percent) Batswana attend community meetings, 29 percent contact local government councillors, and 33 percent get together with others to raise an issue. Noteworthy, this is below the regional average of 48 percent (Logan, Sanny, and Han 2021). Nonetheless, there has been a modest increase in the average civic engagement that saw an increase from 14 percent in 2012 to 22 percent in 2017. Worryingly, Botswana is showing a gender gap in civic engagement, with a 7-point gap between males and females.

The shifts in public opinion regarding freedom of speech in Botswana over the last decade highlight growing concerns among the citizens. Between 2008 and 2017, there was a significant decline in the proportion of Batswana who felt either "somewhat free" or "completely free" to express their opinions, dropping from 93 percent to 73 percent. This decline suggests a perceptible contraction in the civic space and a potential increase in self-censorship among citizens when discussing political matters (Isbell and Seabo 2018). Furthermore, nearly half of the respondents, 49 percent, reported feeling the need to be cautious about expressing their political views "often" or "always."

The increase in those feeling "not very free" or "not at all free" to speak their minds from 5 percent in 2008 to 26 percent in 2017 highlights a significant shift towards a more constrained environment for free expression. Interestingly, this apprehension is more pronounced among younger Batswana, aged 18 to 35, and those with post-secondary education, with 54 percent

and 60 percent respectively, expressing caution in discussing politics. These trends point to a growing need for introspection and possibly reform within Botswana's democratic framework, particularly in fostering an environment where citizens feel safe and empowered to engage in open and critical political discourse.

The employment statistics in Botswana, with a significant portion of the population employed by the government, provide context to the apprehensions around freedom of speech. According to Statistics Botswana (2018), 22.6 percent of citizens are employed by the local government and 25.6 percent by the central government. Additionally, 4.7 percent are employed by parastatals, with the private sector accounting for 47.1 percent of employment. This means that nearly half of the employed population is directly linked to government employment, either at the local or central level. This could contribute to a cautious approach to political discourse among individuals employed by the government having concerns about potential repercussions on their employment status if they were perceived to be critical of government policies or actions. Worryingly, this hesitance to speak out against "the hand that feeds you" could explain, at least in part, the decline in perceived freedom of speech and the increase in self-censorship when it comes to political matters.

The impact of low satisfaction on democratic consolidation

From an institutional level, democracy in Botswana is largely consolidated. However, the consolidation is also dependent on democracy being identified as the only game in town. This suggests that the consolidation of democracy does not only rely on institutional and procedural conditions but it also relies on a supportive political culture. As previously noted, democracy in Botswana faces several challenges, which include low levels of civic engagement, voter apathy - particularly among the youth, the absence of a strong civil society, and relatively weak political opposition.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the consolidation of democracy requires the institutionalisation of its rules and procedures (Bratton and Mattes 2003). The consolidation of democracy is also measured as a combined index of respondents' assessment of the extent of democracy and their level of satisfaction with its institutionalisation. As Figure 6.2 indicates, there is a continuous gap between assessments of the extent of democracy accounting for 77 percent and satisfaction with democracy sitting at 58 percent. Perceptions of the extent of democracy have remained

significantly high, except for 2003, but have only gone beyond 80 percent twice, i.e. in 1999 and 2008. However, satisfaction with democracy has fluctuated since 1999. For example, in 1999, 75 percent of Batswana were satisfied with democracy. This perception decreased to 58 percent in 2003 and increased to 83 percent in 2008. However, satisfaction has been declining since 2012. Worth noting during the same period, perceptions of the extent of democracy and support only decreased by one percentage point, dipping from 80 percent in 2012 to 79 percent in 2017. This further raises the question of why Batswana are dissatisfied with a political system they prefer and perceive to be a democracy.

Declines in satisfaction do not align with high levels of support or the extent of democracy. Instead, they correlate with the quality of political governance and the provision of democratic governance. This means that, although Botswana is perceived to be a democracy by most Batswana, there is still a lack of perceived institutionalisation/supply of democracy. Since 2008, the perceived supply of democracy has decreased from 80 percent to 63 percent in 2017. Continued declines in the supply of democracy may indicate early signs of regime instability (Lekalake 2016).

Political challenges

The early stepdown of former presidents Quett Masire, Festus Mogae, and Ian Khama has been criticised for manipulating, controlling, and partially giving new BDP leaders the advantages of incumbency before elections (Puddington and Dunham 2018). Ian Khama's successor, President Mokgweeti Masisi, who was handpicked and mentored by Ian Khama, is accused of reversing gains made both in the BDP and Botswana. Critiques against Masisi include the use of threats and intimidation to protect his position in the BDP (Allison 2019).

Quite ironically, during his 10-year presidency, Khama's security forces were accused of intimidation and torture by opposition parties and independent journalists (Allison 2019). Fearing for his life, journalist Edgar Tsimane fled to South Africa (Allison 2019). Masisi's actions and posture can be seen as an extension of the tone set by his predecessor, Ian Khama, who in the lead-up to the 2014 elections, was also accused by opposition parties and independent journalists of using security forces to torture and intimidate.

Interestingly, Khama is highly critical of Msisi. The ongoing battle between Khama and Msisi escalated when Khama fled to South Africa in November 2021 (Sithole 2023). This follows the raiding of Khama's home following allegations that he had obtained illegal firearms (Sithole 2023). Khama critiques this as the misuse of law enforcement structures by Masisi to get rid of his political opponents.

Masisi has also been accused of unlawfully detaining BDP party members. Internal fractions within the BDP have led some to believe that the 2024 elections may introduce a regime change (Ndebele 2022). Opposition parties receive no funding, and increased fees for candidates contesting elections give the BDP an additional advantage (Puddington and Dunham 2018). The growth and expansion of the Umbrella Democratic Change (UDC), internal disputes within the BDP, and the BDP's voter decline, which fell below 50 percent during the 2014 elections (Puddington and Dunham 2018), threaten the BDP's political dominance.

As mentioned elsewhere, television and broadcasting are dominated by state-run media. Media in Botswana is guilty of running propaganda on behalf of the ruling party. Stories that are considered to conflict with government interests are frequently censored (Freedom House 2018a). This includes stories on opposition rallies and corruption allegations. The 2018 Freedom House report highlights that in the past, foreign academics have been deported for writing or expressing critical views about the government. As a result, many academics choose to practice self-censorship.

Although Masisi's actions are not new or exclusive to his presidency, he is more overt in his position. 'Authoritarian-like' seeds have been sown over the years - we are merely witnessing their watering. Masisi has also been criticised by BDP senior members for his 2021 cabinet reshuffle, which saw the removal of Member of Parliament (MP) Tshepo Matsheka as Minister of Finance and Economic Planning (Tiro 2021). The voluntary resignation of senior government officials, such as former Director of Financial Intelligence Abraham Sethibe in 2021 (Tiro 2021), are indications of deepening internal fractions. The intimidation and harassment of Pelomi Venson-Moitoi is another overt display of Masisi's intolerance of his opponents. When Venson-Moitoi expressed her intent to challenge Masisi as party president in April 2019, he prevented her from doing so freely by harassing her and using state media to vilify Venson-Moitoi (BTI 2022a). As a result, Venson-Moitoi withdrew from competing for the position when her supporters were disqualified from voting as delegates (BTI 2022a).

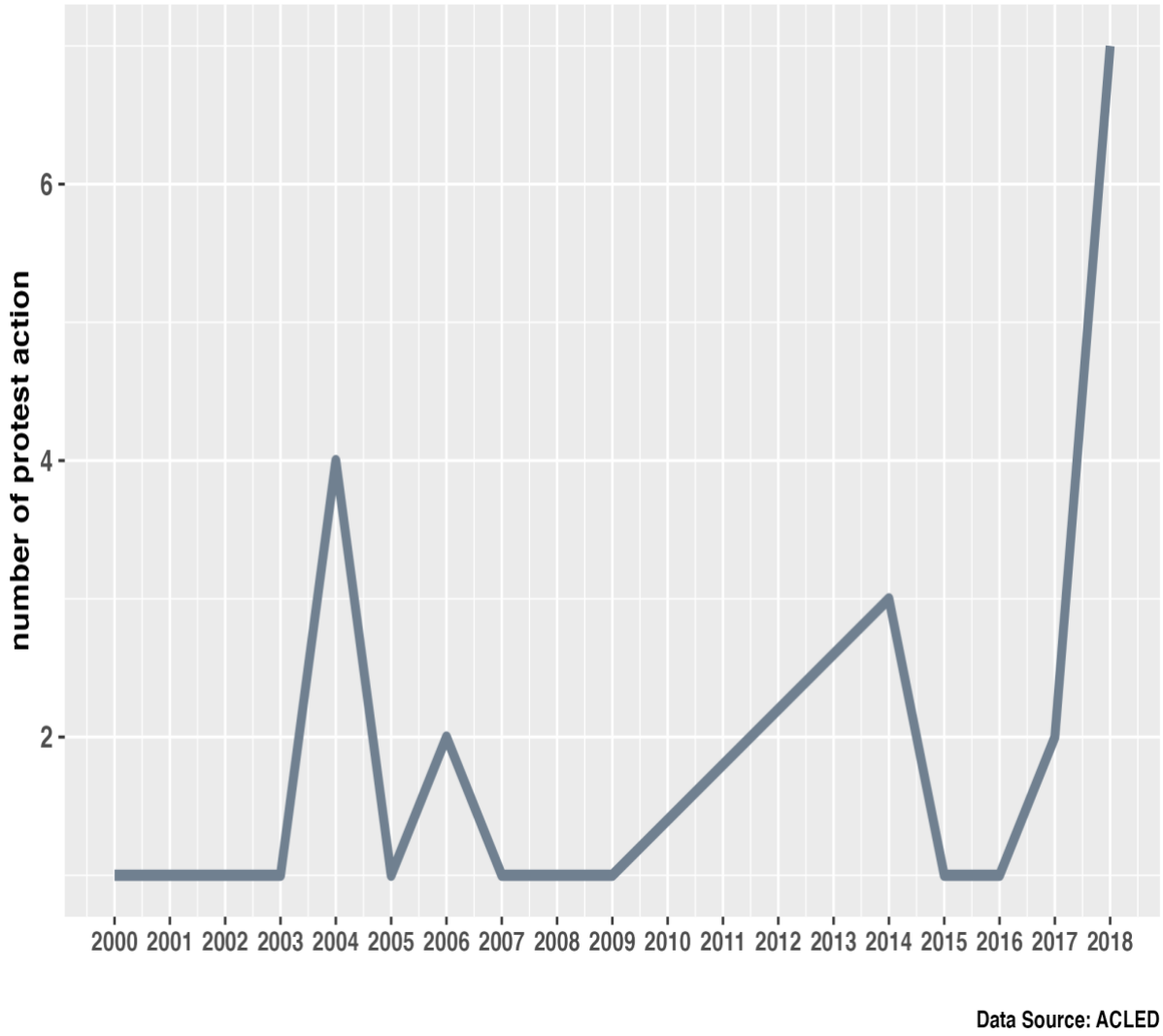
Internal fractions were further solidified in October 2019 when Khama formalised his separation from the ruling party and publicly announced his support for a new political party, the Botswana Patriotic Front (BPF), which also works with the UDC (Fabricus 2019). The BDP won the 2019 elections, and only time will tell if Khama's breakaway will have a major impact on the BDP's electoral support. However, the 2019 election results were unsuccessfully petitioned by the High Court in November 2020 since there was no violence for rigging (BTI 2022a). In a continent where violence during election cycles is common, this is praiseworthy and speaks to political tolerance and respect for democratic institutions and processes in Botswana. Instead of resorting to violence, opposition parties have raised their concerns about the unfairness of the electoral process, accusing the Directorate of Intelligence and Security Services (DISS) and the Botswana Unified Revenue Service (BURS) of influencing the 2019 election results (BTI 2022a).

How committed are Batswana to democracy?

There is a general low protest culture in Botswana. As Figure 6.3 shows, there has been significantly low protest action in Botswana. This corresponds with only 4 percent of Batswana who say that they organised or attended a protest.

Between 2000 and 2018, the level of protest action in Botswana generally remained low, with occasional peaks that do not represent significant shifts in public activism. However, the early 2000s witnessed a notable decline in public perceptions of democracy, coinciding with minimal protest activity. Specifically, between 2000 and 2003, a period during which only one protest action was reported, there was a marked decline in democratic support and satisfaction, as well as in perceptions regarding the extent of democracy in Botswana. Support for democracy saw a decrease from 82 percent in 1999 to 66 percent in 2003, while satisfaction with democracy fell from 75 percent to 58 percent over the same period. Additionally, perceptions of the extent to which Botswana was a democracy dropped from 82 percent to 59 percent.

Figure 6.3 | Protest action in Botswana | 2000 – 2018



Interestingly, the period between 2003 and 2008 saw a significant rebound in support for democracy, which surged from 58 percent to 83 percent. This increase in support, however, was accompanied by a growing disinterest in public affairs among Batswana, with those expressing a lack of interest rising from 14 percent to 30 percent. This rise in political disengagement continued, reaching 33 percent in 2014. The increase in democratic support juxtaposed with the rising disinterest in public affairs suggests a complex relationship between public perceptions of democracy and civic engagement. It indicates that while support for the principles of democracy remained strong, there was a notable decline in active participation and interest in the political process.

There has been a noticeable decline in the interest of Batswana in public affairs, which decreased from 85 percent in 2003 to 67 percent in 2014, indicating a growing disengagement from political life. This disengagement extends to personal spheres as well, with fewer citizens discussing politics with family and friends. Interestingly, this reduction in civic engagement is paralleled by a decrease in political partisanship. Between 1999 and 2003, the proportion of Batswana identifying with any political party fell from 75 percent to 62 percent, coinciding with a period of increased political competition, as evidenced by the number of opposition parties contesting national elections – five in 1999 and seven in 2004. Despite a temporary increase in partisanship to 78 percent in 2008, which might have been influenced by specific political events or campaigns at the time, this uptick was not sustained. By 2017, partisanship had once again declined to 62 percent, reinforcing the notion of a persistent or deepening disconnection between Batswana and the political parties. This trend poses significant implications for the democratic process in Botswana, suggesting challenges in maintaining an active and engaged citizenry.

Notably, contact with local government officials also remains low. Between 2003 and 2017, the proportion of Batswana who say they contacted local government officials has only improved by 4 points - from 24 percent to 29 percent, respectively. Similarly, contact with their member of parliament increased from 14 percent in 2003 to 15 percent in 2017. These trends show that there is a low level of participation by citizens in dealing with political issues. This low participation can be linked to how Botswana gained its independence. As mentioned earlier, Botswana was a protectorate state, meaning the British had no control over Botswana's internal affairs, and this status was extended by the request of dikgosi (Molutsi and Holm 1990). Furthermore, dikgosi played a central role in politics, hence why there is still an appetite for the attendance of kgotla meetings because this platform has always been available and easily accessible. Moreover, its status as a protectorate state exempted Botswana from going through an armed struggle. The nature of this transition has shaped the political psyche of Batswana. Given the central role that dikgosi and elites played during colonialism, there was arguably little need for large-scale civic mobilisation. In essence, the nature of colonialism in Botswana has influenced the current absence of civic engagement culture. Civic engagement culture is characterised by song, language, and civic mobilisation that is passed to the next generation. This cultural heritage shapes how citizens interact with the government and political system.

Furthermore, those who speak against the government are not only ostracised but are also used as subtle examples by the government of what happens when you speak against the government. For example, in 2011, the government fired essential health workers who joined a month-old indefinite strike over salaries that had not increased in three years (News24 2011). The constitution and the centralisation of power protect the government and not citizens. As noted, 48 percent of Batswana are either employed by the local government or by the central government and according to section 2 of Botswana's constitution, public / civil servants are prohibited from striking (National Legislative Bodies / National Authorities 1966). Botswana's constitution was institutionalised in 1966 and has not progressed to reflect the current political landscape. In 2005, Kenneth Good, an Australian national and former professor of political science at the University of Botswana, was expelled on grounds of national security by former president Festus Mogae. This follows Good's article in which he stated that Botswana was a poor example of presidential succession in Africa (BBC News 2005).

Moreover, there has also been the suppression of freedom of expression. In 2015, an independent newspaper, *Mmegi* experienced a cyberattack, leading to the loss of a substantial portion of its archived material (Mguni 2015). This attack follows the publication of an investigation that implicated Isaac Kgosi, who is the Directorate on Intelligence and Security Services (DISS), for the misuse of large funds in 2012 (Mguni 2015). Such actions by the government ostracise those who speak and act against the government and discourage participation in political affairs.

Overall, low civic engagement raises questions about how interested Batswana are in political issues that impact them and the country, as well as whether their democratic evaluations are grounded in critical analysis. Furthermore, this does little to strengthen Botswana's democracy.

Batswana are satisfied democrats

Governance quality and democratic trends and patterns in Botswana indicate that there is intrinsic support for democracy. As noted above, governance quality has an impact on experience with democratic governance, but it does not have a significant negative influence on popular support for democracy. This further indicates that Batswana are largely able to differentiate democracy as a political system versus the performance of government. To put it

differently, the weak performance of the government is largely assessed in isolation to a preference for democracy. Amongst other key factors, the lekgotlas play a key role in advancing democracy from the grassroots level. Botswana's political stability and democratic development have been attributed to the role of traditional institutions and chieftainship (Oageng et al. 2020).

A significant majority of Batswana, nearly eight out of ten, recognise the influence of traditional leaders, or "dikgosi" in resolving local disputes and governing local communities, with 77 percent acknowledging their role in dispute resolution and 60 percent in community governance (Oageng et al. 2020). However, when it comes to the realm of formal politics and elections, the perspective shifts significantly. Only 24 percent of Batswana view traditional leaders as influential in electoral processes. This distinction is further emphasised by the fact that a substantial 78 percent of the population expresses a preference for traditional leaders to remain apolitical, staying out of politics altogether. The data highlights the importance of maintaining a balance between respecting and preserving traditional governance mechanisms and ensuring the integrity and autonomy of modern democratic processes.

Kgotlas decentralise decision-making and provide an additional platform for citizens to participate in the democratic process. These meetings interact and consult with local community members on matters of public interest. There is still an appetite for democracy among citizens however, there is growing indication that the BDP-led government takes this and Botswana's democratic status as a guarantee. Out of the various forms of civic engagement, attendance at a community meeting is the highest and the preferred civic engagement. Declines in the participation of lekgotlas (Molokwane and Lukamba 2018) are an indication of democratic fatigue. Botswana should identify the role of Kgotlas as one of the avenues to strengthen public participation and governance. This will require tweaking structural issues in Kgotlas.

Democracy is consolidated if the demand and supply of democracy are above 70 percent over a sustained period. There have been teases of consolidation however, these have not been sustained. For example, in 1999, 2008, and 2012, support for and satisfaction with democracy was above 70 percent. Although support for democracy has remained high, perceived satisfaction appears to be regressing with each round, thus indicating weakened institutionalisation of democracy and a regime that is yet to consolidate. The widening gap

between satisfaction and support is an indication of the failure of the government to strengthen procedural democracy coupled with a decline in public participation. In other words, there is a growing gap between expectation and performance.

Scholars such as Sebududu and de Jager (2017) attribute the authoritarian nature of the traditional *Kgotla* system, dominated by the BDP, as well as outdated powers vested in the president, who essentially has immunity from accountability. For example, civil proceedings against the sitting president are prohibited and executives who are at liberty to shape policy. It is interesting to note that despite the centralisation of power around the head of state, corruption is relatively low in Botswana. Low levels of corruption in Botswana are the culmination of informal values such as the moral value of *botho* and the ability of the Botswana Directorate on Corruption and Economic Crime (DCEC) to deal with elite corruption (Sebududu and de Jager 2017).

Although Batswana classify as satisfied democrats, between 1999 and 2017, satisfaction with democracy declined by 17 points (Figure 6.2). Moreover, perceptions of the supply of democracy have declined from 71 percent in 1999 to 51 percent in 2017. This declining trend is not necessarily a threat to the democratic system as it may indicate that citizens value democracy. However, they are dissatisfied with the performance of core institutions and systems, and citizens may be willing to be more critical. This trend, coupled with low levels of public participation, is a sign of an unhealthy democracy.

Furthermore, low civic participation is an indication of disengagement from politics and, in the long run, a lack of faith in the political system. In Botswana's case, the visible gap between support and satisfaction puts democratic consolidation at stake. If citizens do not demand or pressure the government to improve and/or reform core institutions of representative government, there will be little to no reform and improvements in democratic processes and structures.

Nonetheless, very little has been written on satisfied democrats in Africa, and the case of Botswana provides valuable insights. Moreover, Botswana is one of the few cases in Africa where democracy is attached to more than the need for survival but the need to consolidate. Although there are several cracks in Botswana's democracy, the country has defied many odds, such as avoiding a resource curse and violent conflict. This is highly commendable and is an

example to other African and non-African countries on how to establish a firm democratic foundation and what the process for consolidation entails. Additionally, satisfaction with democracy stems from the government's ability to steer Botswana's trajectory to that of economic success and governance quality. For the most part, democratic principles have become part of Botswana's social and political fabric. However, declining civic participation suggests that satisfied democrats are disengaging with the democratic process. This is worrisome and is also a reflection of declines in democratic governance.

Conclusion

Botswana has long been considered a democratic and governance leader, ranking among the best performers in Africa and beyond. But in recent years, the same experts that have ranked and held Botswana's democracy and governance in high regard also downgraded the country's freedom status and governance score. Moreover, the country is credited for maintaining a multiparty system and conducting free and fair elections, and it is also considered one of the least corrupt African countries. On paper, democracy in Botswana appears healthy and stable, often cited as an African success story. This finding is supported by the high support for democracy and perceptions of the extent of democracy. However, satisfaction with democracy and governance quality are on the decline. This prompted the question: why do Batswana support a political system that they are dissatisfied with, and why is Botswana's democracy not yet consolidated?

Investigating the impact of governance quality on democratic governance and support for democracy in Botswana is important as the country is Africa's oldest continuous democracy. Moreover, democratisation has been an explicit national policy and for the most part, democracy and governance are largely institutionalised. This is evident in its high rankings on international benchmarks such as Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, which ranks Botswana as the least corrupt country in SSA and Freedom House, which has classified the country as "Free" since 1973 (Lekalake 2016). In juxtaposing this with public perceptions of support for democracy, Botswana is a textbook example of an African success story. This suggests that in Botswana, the choice to choose democracy is less complicated. However, it also raises questions on whether this argument holds when zooming closer to the lived experiences of Batswana.

Lekalake (2016) notes that there have been declines in public assessments of freedom of expression and accountability in the country. This raises questions on Botswana's commitment to democratic principles and if these declines have had any long-term bearings on democratic sentiments. Despite decades of peaceful multipartyism since independence and the endurance of its socioeconomic and political development, democracy has yet to consolidate. Botswana may perform and rank well at an institutional level. However, if Batswana themselves do not believe that democracy is being supplied, democracy will not consolidate.

Furthermore, the support for democracy among Batswana raises important questions about their commitment to and engagement with the democratic process, as well as the implications for Botswana's democratic future. While there is evident support for democratic principles, the depth of this support in terms of active participation and engagement in democratic processes is crucial for the consolidation and strengthening of democracy in Botswana.

Moreover, the level of commitment to democracy can be gauged by various factors, including participation in elections, involvement in civic activities, engagement in public discourse, and the extent to which individuals are willing to uphold democratic norms and values in the face of challenges. The declining interest in public affairs, as noted in recent years, along with a decline in political discussions among friends and family, suggest a waning engagement with the democratic process. This disengagement poses significant challenges to the vibrancy and the resilience of Botswana's democracy, as active and informed citizen participation is fundamental to the health and sustainability of democratic governance.

Despite these concerns, the continued high support for democracy in Botswana indicates that there are underlying factors contributing positively to the public's democratic orientation. Furthermore, the cultural values of Botho, emphasising mutual respect and responsibility, arguably also reinforce democratic ideals by promoting a sense of community and collective well-being.

However, the question remains as to why democracy has not been fully consolidated in Botswana despite the high levels of support. Findings from this thesis suggest that challenges to democratic consolidation stem from a variety of sources, including the centralisation of power, limitations on freedom of speech, and the perceived influence of traditional leaders in politics. Additionally, the lack of strong opposition and the dominance of a single party for an

extended period contribute to a democratic environment that, while stable, may lack the vibrancy and competitiveness characteristic of fully consolidated democracies.

Addressing these weaknesses and fostering greater citizen engagement and participation in the democratic process are essential steps toward consolidating democracy in Botswana. Furthermore, the case study of Botswana emphasises the importance of enhancing the accountability and transparency of political institutions, expanding the civic space for free expression and debate, and encouraging a more competitive political landscape which can contribute to a more vibrant and resilient democracy. Ultimately, findings from the analysis suggest that the future of Botswana's democracy will depend on the collective commitment of its citizens and leaders to nurture and defend democratic principles, ensuring that democracy in Botswana is not only supported but also deeply rooted and flourishing.

Chapter 7: Political governance and support for democracy in South Africa

Introduction

This chapter investigates the paradox of South Africa's political landscape, where relatively high governance quality and democratic governance coexist with low levels of support for and satisfaction with democracy. Despite significant achievements in building democratic institutions and enhancing governance quality, public sentiment towards democracy appears to be waning, as indicated by decreasing support and satisfaction levels. This chapter seeks to understand the underlying causes of this democratic discontent and to explore the extent to which governance quality influences public perceptions and attitudes towards democracy.

I also consider the impact of civic engagement, such as protest action, attendance of community meetings and contact with local councillors, as well as voter turnout trends. By investigating the impact of governance quality in a young democracy, this chapter seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing democratic consolidation in the country. Through this analysis, the chapter promises to offer insights into the factors that sustain the stability of democracies and identify strategies to address the threats that undermine democratic progress in Africa.

A recent analysis of public opinion from the 2018 Afrobarometer survey in South Africa shows significant declines in support for and satisfaction with democracy. This is despite South Africa's political system being well-regarded by international experts and being one of nine African countries that Freedom House classifies as "free" (Freedom House 2018a). South Africa is one of the youngest democracies in Africa. While a latecomer in international affairs, the country holds multiple identities, i.e., its membership in the AU, United Nations (UN), the International Criminal Court (ICC), BRICS, and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

South Africa also has one of the wealthiest, largest, and most diverse economies on the continent. Alongside Nigeria and Algeria, it has played an instrumental role in establishing and sponsoring key democratic and governance institutions and initiatives such as the African Union, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the Pan-African parliament, and has sponsored various peacekeeping missions across the continent. Although South Africa has limited powers in international affairs, it is one of the most influential countries on the continent and is arguably a symbolic hegemonic state.

Despite its successes, South Africa has faced mounting political and economic turmoil, corruption scandals, the forced resignation of Thabo Mbeki, the ousting of former president Jacob Zuma, nationwide student protests, social unrest, and a combative atmosphere in parliament. The 2018 data indicates that South Africans are increasingly dissatisfied with how democracy is working in their country, and a growing number are less resistant to non-democratic alternatives. Outright democratic support has also declined since 2011, with a majority willing to forgo elections in favour of a non-elected government that would provide basic services.

This is a rather unique trend, as governance quality is often expected to translate to positive democratic governance outcomes and support for democracy. In South Africa's case, there appears to be a gap between governance quality and democratic governance and, therefore, support for democracy. The gap between the institutionalisation of democracy and governance and the experience of democratic experience is a threat to the health and stability of democracy in South Africa. It is therefore, of interest to examine what accounts for this gap as well as identifying what value South Africans attach to democracy.

Between 1998 and 2018, South Africa averaged a political governance score of 7.8 and an economic governance score of 4.26, ranking it fifth and third highest in Africa, respectively. On the other hand, 54 percent of South Africans support democracy, which makes support the fifth lowest in Africa. Furthermore, support for democracy in South Africa is lower than in countries like Sudan, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Mali, which have all experienced periods of authoritarian rule. Given South Africa's long and complex history under authoritarian rule, it would not be naïve to expect a much higher support for democracy and rejection of alternatives to democracy.

This raises questions on whether South Africans are still committed to democracy and why support is low despite high governance scores and rankings. Thirty years after the democratic transition, the initial euphoria has simmered, and the real test of democracy and its ability to withstand the current climate marred by socioeconomic and political instability will shape South Africa's democratic trajectory. Moreover, the government's ability to narrow the gap between the institutionalisation of democracy and its experience will determine citizens' commitment to democracy.

Although, on average, South Africa has good governance scores, a closer look indicates that over the years, South Africa has maintained a good political governance score. However, the same cannot be said about economic governance, as there has been a gradual decline in economic governance. This coincides with the continuous decline in support and satisfaction with democracy. Nonetheless, South Africa is a unique case as the political and economic governance trends alongside democratic perceptions indicate that South Africans are pressed to make a harder choice about whether to support democracy when it is failing economically or are willing to tolerate authoritarianism if economic performance is good.

Moreover, the growing trend of declining support and satisfaction with democracy in South Africa, accompanied by growing institutional mistrust and political disengagement, points to a critical challenge facing the country's democratic situation. This suggests that in times of economic hardship, the legitimacy of democracy as the preferred political system declines in the public view. As a result, democracy becomes illegitimate as it is perceived as being unable to deliver socioeconomic goods. This chapter aims to investigate and explore this concerning trend, exploring the relationship between economic performance and democratic legitimacy and examining how economic downturns or stagnation can lead to disillusionment with democratic governance.

This exploration proceeds in two parts. The first part focuses on the descriptive analysis of the data on the quality of governance and public perceptions of democracy in South Africa. This section aims to lay the groundwork for understanding the current state of democracy by examining how these perceptions have evolved over twenty years - from 1998 to 2018. Through the analysis of time-series trends, key indicators of governance quality and democratic perceptions will be closely examined to identify significant patterns and shifts. This quantitative analysis will be complemented by a review of the literature that looks into South Africa's democratic history and culture, providing a nuanced backdrop against which these trends can be interpreted.

The second part explores country-specific questions foreshadowed in the introduction. The focus is on understanding the specific challenges that South Africa faces in maintaining democratic support and legitimacy amidst economic difficulties. This part of the analysis will seek to uncover the underlying causes of declining democratic satisfaction and support,

exploring potential links to institutional performance, policy effectiveness, and the broader socioeconomic landscape.

Trends in political governance, democratic governance, and support for democracy

As one of the youngest democracies in Africa, South Africa has long been considered one of the countries where the transition to democracy was unlikely. When the National Party (NP) realised the unsustainability of some of the apartheid policies pursued for more than 40 years, they had no option but to pave the way for democracy (Graham 2012). The transition began in the late 1980's and manifested in the early 1990's. During this transition, the National Party unbanned and negotiated with previously banned movements such as the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) (Graham 2012). This paved the way for the country's first democratic election in April 1994, which saw the African National Congress (ANC) winning the elections and has since driven the policy agenda from 1994 to 2016 (World Bank 2022b). However, the transition goes beyond 1994 because during the 1st term of Nelson Mandela's presidency, there was a government of national unity.

When a government is elected to or removed from power, the alternative leadership always prepare themselves to govern. In South Africa, it was clear that the ANC would be the ruling party. As such, there were preparations made to govern the country locally, but preparations were also made to govern the country internationally once the ANC assumed power. For the ANC, it was clear that it was virtually unprepared for the exigences of Foreign Policy (FP) formulation and implementation (Graham 2012). Nonetheless, South Africa's political transition is regarded as one of the most significant political feats in the past 21st century. Yet, the country continues to face immense challenges. Some of the prominent challenges include the triple threat of poverty, inequality, and unemployment. High crime rates and a dualistic economic and social structure are other pressing challenges that stifle socio-economic gains. The resilience of the South African democracy will be tested against the government's ability to address these challenges.

From a political perspective, South Africa's domestic politics has been dominated by the governing ANC, which has won the largest voter share in the past six national elections. However, the 2019 parliamentary elections saw the ANC's voter share dropping down to 58 percent, making it the lowest margin of victory since 1994. Nonetheless, its dominance makes

South Africa a dominant party state. Dominant party states are often characterised by weak opposition parties with limited to no chance of replacing the dominant party in government (Chipkin et al. 2018; Seabo and Molebatsi 2017).

Secondly, because of weak opposition, dominant parties are expected to exert their dominance in the foreseeable future (Chipkin et al., 2018; Brooks 2004). Despite its dominance, severe economic shortfalls, intensified power shortages and the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic might see a decline in the ANC's dominance in the 2024 national elections. Nonetheless, one would expect disgruntlement with the ANC to result in increased support for opposition parties, but counter to this, there is a continued decline in voter turnout nationally. Alongside this, perspectives from South Africans indicate low support for democracy.

Data from round 7 of the Afrobarometer indicate that 53 percent of South Africans support democracy, 43 percent are satisfied with how democracy is working, and 46 percent perceive South Africa as a democracy. These perceptions, alongside political and economic trends, are worrisome. Moreover, this presents a unique trend and suggests a gap between the institutionalisation of political and economic governance and democracy and the public experience of democracy. Unlike Sudan, where support for and dissatisfaction with democracy are in response to a lack of democracy and democratic governance outcomes, and Botswana, where there is a positive correlation between governance quality, democratic governance, and support for democracy, in South Africa, there is a negative association between governance quality and support for/satisfaction with democracy. This suggests a lack of democratic governance.

Table 7.1 summarises the descriptive statistics for the quality of political and economic governance and public perceptions of democracy from 1998 to 2018. Democratic perception trends are from 1999 to 2018, as South Africa was first surveyed by the Afrobarometer in 1999. The table presents the minimum, mean, maximum, and standard deviation values. The maximum and minimum scores for democracy indicate that support for democracy has varied in South Africa. At one point, support was relatively low, with only 53 percent supporting democracy, and at another point, support reached 73 percent. But on average, since 1999, 63 percent of South Africans support democracy.

Table 7.1 Descriptive statistics | South Africa

	Support	Satisfaction	Extent	Political governance	Economic governance
Minimum	0.53	0.42	0.45	7.34	3.72
Mean	0.63	0.51	0.54	7.8	4.26
Maximum	0.72	0.63	0.68	8.41	4.49
SD	0.06	0.08	0.1	0.37	0.27

The table also indicates that on average, satisfaction with democracy has been lower than support for democracy. Over the years, the minimum, mean, and maximum values have been about 10 percentage points lower than support. Additionally, satisfaction has been as low as 43 percent. Similarly, perceptions of the extent of democracy have averaged the same as satisfaction. The governance quality scores indicate that political governance has averaged higher than economic governance. Moreover, on average political governance has not varied greatly however, variations in democratic perceptions are far greater than variations in governance quality.

Democratic trends

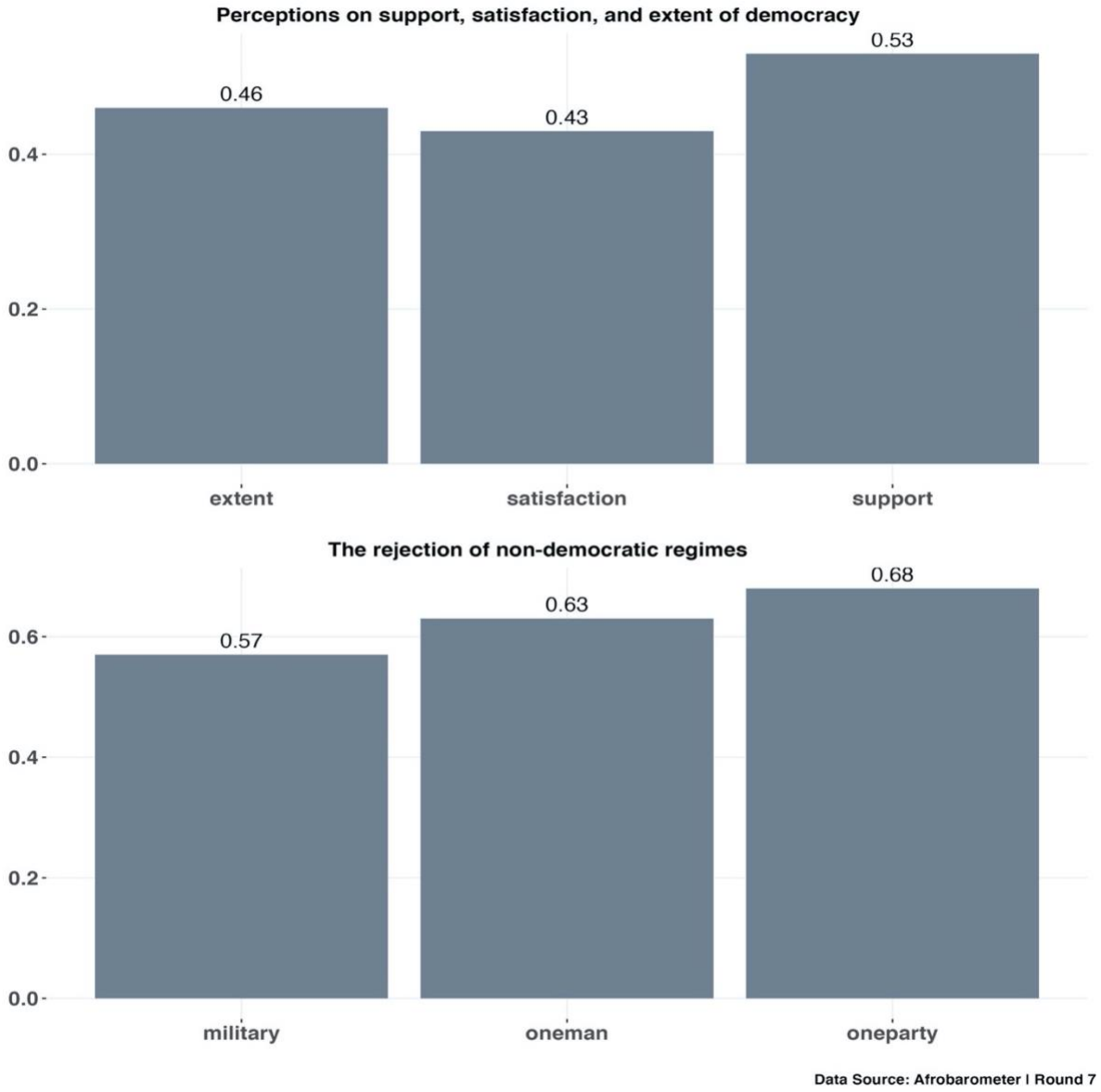
It has been 30 years since the democratic transition in South Africa. However, the country continues to experience some challenges. The country has been faced with various economic challenges even before the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, it has also faced multiple economic recessions in a short period. Since 1961, South Africa has experienced eight economic recessions. In 2017, South Africa moved into a recession (Stats SA 2017). A year later, there was a recession over two quarters of 2018 (Stats SA 2019). Two years later, South Africa slipped into another recession, which was exacerbated by power outages and the Covid-19 pandemic (Stats SA 2020). The recessions have also been exacerbated by failing State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) including Eskom, South African Airways (SAA), Transnet, and Denel (Business Tech 2023).

These economic trends have inspired little confidence in the government. Democratic trends suggest that South Africans are giving up on democracy as a way of distributing public goods and services. Public opinion data from the 2018 Afrobarometer survey in South Africa show that there has been a significant decline in support for democracy. The 2018 data also indicate

that South Africans have grown more dissatisfied with democracy in general. The decline in the belief in South Africa's democratic status is indicative of a deeper crisis of legitimacy and confidence in the democratic process and its ability to serve the needs and aspirations of South Africans. Furthermore, there have also been corresponding declines in the proportion of citizens who think South Africa is a democracy. This shift in perception reflects broader concerns about the state of democratic institutions and practices in the country. This decline in democratic support, accompanied by increased dissatisfaction, suggests that a significant portion of the population is questioning the value and effectiveness of democratic governance in their daily lives.

On average, 53 percent of South Africans support democracy, 43 percent are satisfied with the way democracy is working in the country, and 46 percent perceive South Africa as a democracy (Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1 | Views on democracy | South Africa



In comparison to other African countries, South Africa has a relatively healthy and strong constitutional democracy, and since the adoption of democracy, it has consistently been ranked in the top 4 for political and economic governance regionally. Moreover, although it is recognised by many international analysts as one of the region's democratic leaders, its citizens do not share the same democratic sentiments. Support for democracy in South Africa is below the regional average of 68 percent, is the fourth lowest and is parallel to Lesotho (52 percent), Madagascar (46 percent), Tunisia (46 percent), and Mozambique (57 percent). It is worth noting that 25 percent of South Africans say it makes no difference what kind of system they have. This suggests some level of indifference and despondency.

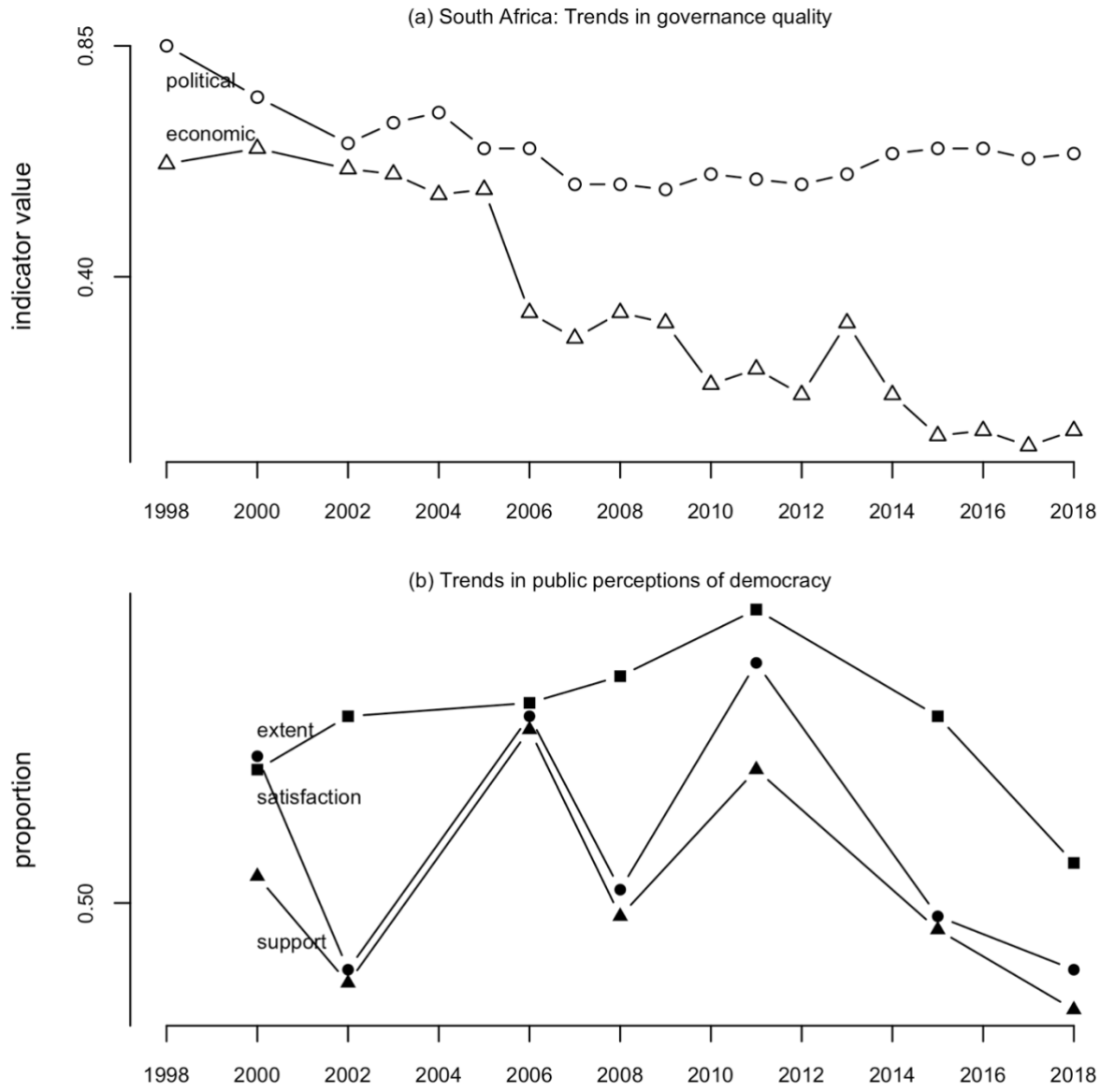
Moreover, support for democracy varies between races, with 67 percent of black citizens being more supportive of democracy yet more willing to give up regular elections for a non-elected government that will provide basic services (Lekelake 2016). This is followed by 57 percent of coloured people, 56 percent of Indians, and 49 percent of white South Africans who are willing to forgo elections. Compared to other African countries, the decline in democratic perceptions in South Africa is quite pronounced and mostly negative.

While support for democracy in South Africa may be staggering, it is important to note that the majority of South Africans still reject non-democratic alternatives. Specifically, 68 percent of South Africans reject the idea of one-party rule, 63 percent are against one-man rule, and 57 percent oppose military rule. These figures, while significant, are below the regional averages of 78 percent, 74 percent, and 72 percent, respectively, for rejecting these non-democratic forms of governance. This indicates a certain level of democratic resilience among South Africans, who, despite their reservations about the current state of democracy, still prefer it over authoritarian alternatives. Interestingly, the rejection of apartheid as a political system stands at 74 percent, indicating a higher level of consensus against this form of non-democratic governance. These statistics reveal a complex picture of democratic sentiments in South Africa. While there is a clear preference for democracy over non-democratic systems, there is also a discernible level of dissatisfaction with how democracy is currently functioning.

In 2011 and 2018, the rejection of military rule declined by 9 points, making 2018 the lowest level ever recorded. A drop in the rejection of military rule can be linked to the increased presence of the South African Defence Force (SANDF). The SANDF was particularly evident during the strict COVID-19 lockdown in 2020 and the deployment of SANDF troops in 2019 in parts of Cape Town, specifically in Townships that faced a surge in gang violence (Githahu 2019). Calls for SANDF's deployment by residents and political leaders from the DA, in particular, highlight the police force's limitations and the government's inability to adequately deal with crime. However, through time it desensitises citizens to the (symbolic) presence of the SANDF. For citizens, particularly those living in crime-infected areas, the presence of SANDF is less alarming as it provides a sense of security.

Long-term democratic trends also indicate that since 2011, support, satisfaction, and perceptions of the extent of democracy have been declining. Between 2011 and 2015, support dropped by 18 points (from 74 percent to 64 percent) and dropped to its lowest level in 2018 (see Figure 7.2).

Figure 7.2 | South Africa time trend graph | South Africa 1998 - 2018



According to the Freedom House rankings in 2021, nine African countries are classified as "free," including São Tomé and Príncipe, Seychelles, Ghana, Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa, Tunisia, Botswana, and Cabo Verde. Within this group of countries recognised for their

freedom, there is a notable variation in public support for democracy. Tunisia and South Africa stand out for their lower levels of democratic support, both falling below the regional average of 68 percent. This is significant because it highlights a disconnect in these countries between the classification of political freedoms by international observers and the public's satisfaction or support for their democratic systems. In contrast, the other "free" countries listed by Freedom House demonstrate higher levels of support for democracy, with figures remaining above 70 percent. This discrepancy raises important questions about the factors that contribute to varying levels of democratic support, even within countries that share a classification of being "free". It suggests that the label of "free" as determined by external assessments may not fully capture the complexities of democratic sentiment within a country or the public's perception of how well democracy is functioning to meet their needs. This highlights the importance of considering citizens' lived experiences with their encounters with specific democratic systems.

The decline in support for democracy in South Africa by 21 points between 2011 and 2018 marks a significant democratic recession, highlighting a period of increasing public disillusionment with the democratic process and the government's inability to address the underlying causes effectively. The decrease in the number of South Africans who view their country as either a "full democracy" or "a democracy with minor problems" from 61 percent in 2011 to 45 percent in 2018 further emphasises this trend of waning democratic faith. The period between 2008 and 2011 saw a temporary improvement in democratic perceptions, suggesting a brief phase of optimism or the impact of specific political, economic, or social developments during that time. However, the subsequent steady decline in perceptions post-2011 raises critical questions about the factors contributing to this negative trajectory.

Notably, the ANC, which has been the ruling party since the end of apartheid in 1994, has experienced a gradual erosion of its voter base since 1999, except for a slight increase in 2006. As noted earlier, the decline in the ANC's voter share from 66.35 percent in the 1999 national elections to 57.5 percent in the 2019 elections reflects a broader trend of political disillusionment among South Africans. These trends in democratic support and voter share highlight a critical juncture for South Africa's democracy, where public confidence in the democratic process and the ruling party's ability to govern effectively is diminishing.

Interestingly, perceptions on the extent of democracy have been in proportion with, but slightly higher than satisfaction with democracy. While both have been declining, perceptions of the extent of democracy have consistently been slightly higher than satisfaction levels, a trend that contrasts with observations in Sudan and Botswana. From 2011 to 2018, there was a notable decline in the proportion of South Africans who are either 'fairly satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the functioning of democracy in the country, dropping from 60 percent to 43 percent. This level of satisfaction, although low, aligns with the regional average of 42.5 percent, pointing to a broader regional trend of democratic discontent.

Moreover, satisfaction with democracy also varies by race, with 43 percent of Black Africans reporting satisfaction, compared to 39 percent of Coloured respondents and 33 percent of White respondents. Interestingly, variations in satisfaction levels are not as pronounced when considering factors such as education, age, and geographic area. This highlights the significant role that racial identity continues to play in shaping political attitudes in post-apartheid South Africa, despite the country's progress toward racial equality and reconciliation. The growing frustration among South Africans with the state of their country is reflected in the declining pro-democracy perceptions, which fall below the regional average. This indicates a disconnect between the formal institutionalisation of democracy and governance and the lived experiences of its citizens. Since 1994, despite significant advancements, the decline in both political and economic governance has contributed to this gap, with economic governance experiencing a particularly sharp decrease. Addressing these challenges requires a nuanced understanding of the diverse needs and expectations of South Africa's population and a concerted effort to bridge the gap between democratic ideals and the everyday realities of its citizens.

Political governance trends

When juxtaposing democratic perceptions with governance quality, it is quite evident that a steady drop in economic governance coincides with declines in support, satisfaction, and extent of democracy. This defends the argument that in South Africa, support for democracy is primarily driven by its instrumental values. Moreover, South Africa is the only country that has one of the highest governance scores (4th highest), yet about half the population prefers democracy.

The top panel of Figure 7.2 indicates that since 2005, there has been a sharp decline in economic governance – with 2018 recording the lowest governance score. A closer look indicates that over the years, there has been a decline in the government effectiveness indicator. In 1998, South Africa scored 0.62, this further declined to 0.33 in 2008, and by 2018 it scored 0.10. A similar trend is evident with regulatory quality. The WGI scored South Africa 0.51 in 1998, this significantly increased to 0.75 in 2006 but has since dropped to 0.45 in 2011 and further down to -0.04 in 2018. Furthermore, in 1996, South Africa's WGI's control of corruption score ranking was similar to Southern European countries and was well above other middle-income countries (Levy et al. 2021). Similarly, the WGI's measure of government effectiveness ranked South Africa in the 83rd percentile (a score of 0.88). This was on par with countries such as France and Italy (Levy et al. 2021). By 2008, this dropped to 0.43 and further down to 0.28 in 2018.

A closer look indicates that between 2011 and 2015, political governance in South Africa declined from 8.21 to 7.34, with 2015 recording the lowest score. This period coincides with deep-rooted state capture and is part of the "lost decade" (Mkhabela 2018). Notably, events such as the early resignation of Thabo Mbeki in 2008, the resignation of Jacob Zuma in 2018, and the formation of various breakaway political parties have inspired very little confidence in most South Africans. The ideological differences within the ANC and its broader alliance have led to significant internal contradictions, especially regarding economic policy. For instance, the debate over the nationalisation of mines showcases these ideological rifts. Economic conservatives within the business sector who are associated with the ANC have shown support for nationalisation, while communists within the alliance criticise this stance as opportunistic, arguing that it does not align with a genuine socialist or communist agenda aimed at broader societal transformation (Chipkin et al. 2018). The spill-over effect of these ideological clashes complicates the party's governance and policy-making processes as it challenges the party's coherence and unity, making it difficult to present a unified front on key national issues.

According to the Auditor General of South Africa's 2022 report, out of 257 municipalities, 64 municipalities are dysfunctional, and 33 municipalities are under administration or provincial intervention (AGSA 2022). Local governance is in a dire state and has been characterised by financial mismanagement, dilapidating infrastructure, and dysfunctional municipalities. This results in poor standards of living and inadequate service delivery that have culminated in service delivery protests and businesses disinvesting from municipal areas with poor service

delivery (AGSA 2022). At the root of poor local governance are issues of accountability, good governance, political instability, and poor performance.

The impact of poor governance at the local and national level is also evident in dwindling ANC support. Although the ANC has maintained its dominance and won the sixth successive free and fair elections in 2019, its support and majority declined from 62 percent in 2014 to 58 percent in 2019 (BTI 2022b). As noted elsewhere, since its peak of 70 percent of the voter share in 2004, the ANC's voter share has declined as citizens have become increasingly frustrated with state corruption, waning service delivery, and slow socio-economic development.

Moreover, ANC factional disputes have created a lot of uncertainty and have had implications on governance. Factional divisions are not new to the ANC, however, compared to previous years, the divisions have gone unresolved, and the implications have become more severe. Although political governance has not decreased at the same pace as economic governance, there are worrisome trends, most notably within the realm of Rule of Law. According to the World Governance Indicator, the Rule of Law decreased from 0.16 in 2018 to -0.01 in 2005. However, there was a slight improvement to 0.13 in 2011, but it has shown a further decline to -0.22 in 2018.

More importantly, governance and democratic trends raise important questions such as: since 2011, why has there been a significant drop in economic governance and democratic perceptions? In contrast with economic governance, political governance has remained constant. The question, therefore, becomes: what accounts for this discrepancy? In the remaining sections of this chapter, I unpack these questions and their implications for the prospects of democracy in South Africa.

Understanding democratic perceptions in South Africa

Since coming into power in 1994, the ANC has largely shaped South Africa's political landscape. Upon attaining 70 percent of the voter share in 2004, this did not only classify South Africa as a dominant party system but further cemented the ANC's dominance as the governing party. This also cemented the gap between the ANC and opposition parties. While the ANC

obtained 10 million votes in 2004, the strongest opposition party, the Democratic Alliance (DA), only received 2 million votes (BTI 2008). Thirty years later, South Africa is still characterised by a dominant system, although the ANC's dominance has weakened over the years. There is also a growing presence of opposition political parties within the South African political landscape.

However, South Africa's political system is still polarised along racial and ethnic lines where the DA is largely perceived as a white party, while the IFP's voter share is mostly Zulu voters from KwaZulu-Natal (BTI 2008). Like other countries, politics has a direct impact on economics. When Thabo Mbeki resigned in 2008, eleven key cabinet members and three deputy ministers, including Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, followed suit. Fears of former finance minister Trevor Manual also resigning saw stocks on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) tumbling by 18 percent (S&P Global 2008). This also saw former ANC dissidents founding a new political party - Congress of the People (COPE) in December 2008. Former ANC veteran politician and defence minister Mosiuoa Lekota became the first party president (BTI 2008). At the time, COPE was seen as the ANC's first real competition since the democratic transition, primarily because COPE had the potential to become an alternative for Black South African voters (Booysen 2011). This potential was short-lived, as judged by the significant decline in votes in the 2011 local elections as well as internal struggles within the party (Booysen 2011).

Before these developments, South Africa enjoyed high economic growth rates. Between 2006 and 2007, the GDP growth rate hovered around 4.6 percent and per capita income grew up to $5833 (PPP) (World Bank 2021). During the same period, the V-Dem scored South Africa 0.53 on the Participatory democracy index, and the BTI transformation index ranked South Africa 31 out of 128 countries for democracy and 36 out of 126 for the market economy index (BTI 2008). Moreover, data indicated that 65 percent of South Africans supported democracy, 63 percent were satisfied with the way democracy was working, and 64 percent perceived South Africa as a democracy. When Mbeki was forced to resign before the end of his term, with Zuma taking up his position in 2009, the economic growth rate was reduced to 3.1 percent (World Bank 2021). The election and ascendance of Zuma to the presidential office prompted questions of political and good governance.

Zuma's presidency was filled with many controversies, which included various cabinet reshuffles. In November 2010, the president announced a major cabinet reshuffle that saw seven cabinet ministers being replaced with 12 new ministers (Pillay and Webb 2010). This trend exacerbated leadership instability and enabled appointments that facilitated corruption. For example, when the minister of public enterprises, Barbara Hogan resigned in 2010 and was replaced with the appointment of Malusi Gigaba, this marked a significant shift in the governance of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs).

According to the 2016 *State of Capture report* issued by the former Public Protector, Advocate Thuli Madonsela, Hogan's resignation comes after Zuma and ANC Secretary General Gwede Mantashe repeatedly attempted to interfere in the appointment of board members of Eskom and Transnet (Republic of South Africa 2016). The shift was also evident when there were disagreements on whether South African Airways (SAA) should give up on a potentially profitable route from Johannesburg to Mumbai. In 2015, there were critiques that the controversial Gupta family influenced SSA's decision to relinquish this to Indian airline Jet Airways, owned by the Gupta family (Wasserman 2020). To further highlight the shift, Eskom went from being named "power company of the year" in 2001 at the Financial Times Global Energy Awards in New York (Chipkin et al. 2018), and ten years later, Gigaba dismantled the long-standing Eskom board (Godinho and Hermanus 2018). Additionally, he mandated that Eskom work with a specific audit firm and refused to sign off on an R4 billion tender to replace six steam generators at the Koeberg nuclear power station (Godinho and Hermanus 2018).

Worth noting economic governance began declining from 2006 to 2007 and made small gains between 2008 and 2009 (see Figure 7.2). This decline coincides with the period of the 2007/8 financial crisis. Arguably, Zuma inherited a fundamentally sound but strained economy. In the initial years of Zuma's presidency, which included the hosting of the 2010 soccer World Cup, there was an expectation that post-2007/8, the country would continue a positive trajectory. In essence, after 2009, politics within the ANC was seen as a vocation and state-owned enterprises were also regarded as a lucrative area by well-connected and Zuma-centered power elites to engage in systematic looting. Between 2009 and 2018, economic transformation transitioned from traditional Black Economic Empowerment (BEE), which had the aim of transforming a white-dominated economy, to radical economic transformation driven by power-hungry elites (Chipkin et al. 2018).

Notably, even though Zuma disrupted state institutions and South Africa's political fabric by inserting his supporters in key positions, he caused limited damage to the judiciary and other key institutions that had checks and balances as they were largely able to retain their integrity. When Zuma appointed Mogoeng Mogoeng as Chief Justice in 2011, there were fears that Judicial independence would be compromised (Siyo and Mubangizi 2015). However, these fears were unfounded as the constitutional framework provided a mechanism for his removal as per provisions of section 102 (2) of the constitution. This section states that if the National Assembly passes a motion of no confidence in the president, then the president and his cabinet must resign (Chipkin et al. 2018; SA Constitution 1996).

Additionally, the office of the Public Protector is another institution that withstood the Zuma effect. Upon launching investigations and reports in 2016, with *the State of Capture* being the best-known report, former Public Protector advocate Thuli Madonsela found that Zuma had misused certain state funds in his private residence, Nkandla (Masondo 2016). Based on this finding, Madonsela recommended that he pay back a portion of the expenditure. In response to this, Chief Justice Moegeng ruled that Zuma failed to uphold, defend, and protect the constitution of the land and his oath of office as president (Masondo 2016). This judgment was significant as it was a strong reminder of the separation of power between the government and the state. Moreover, for South Africans, these judgments instilled hope and pride in the highest court in the land, as it also demonstrated that the state was prepared to act robustly against any individual who acted against the Constitution.

Alongside the judicial and Public Protector, the Auditor General's office also played a key role in reporting on abuses of state funds and institutions for personal gain (Chipkin et al. 2018). Furthermore, the role of various NGOs and media played a critical role in amplifying and bringing attention to State Capture. According to the Media Freedom Index, behind Namibia, South Africa is second in Africa but ahead of free countries like Italy, France, the United States, and the United Kingdom (RSF 2023). During the unravelling of the State Capture, whistle-blowers helped the media and other investigators through private testimonies, documents, and memory sticks containing confidential emails (Chipkin et al. 2018).

As mentioned elsewhere, Zuma's presidency was marked by deep-rooted corruption. As indicated from the data analysed for this thesis, under his nine-year tenure, public perceptions of corruption also shifted. Public perceptions on whether people think that "most" or "all" of

the president and officials in his office are involved in corruption increased from 13 percent in 2002 to 35 percent in 2011; and increased by another 19 points in 2018, accounting for 55 percent. This trend is also in line with the decrease in support and satisfaction with democracy. In South Africa, support for democracy is based on instrumental values, and this can be alluded to the country's historical background of the apartheid rule as well as the economic consequences of political decisions and choices.

Interestingly, over the years, South Africans have expressed trust in the courts of law. The court of law plays a central role in ensuring that the rule of law is upheld and is regarded as the third arm of the state. In every Afrobarometer round, most South Africans have expressed trust in the courts, however, similar to support and satisfaction, trust has been weakening since 2011. In 2018, 51 percent of South Africans said they have "a lot" or "somewhat" trust in the courts of law. This is a 6-point drop from 2015 but a smaller decline compared to declines in the president and parliament. Overall, this explains why there is a sharp decrease in economic governance while political governance remains relatively stable.

While the election of Cyril Ramaphosa as leader of the ANC in December 2017 and subsequently as president of South Africa in February 2018 signalled a speedbump to political entrepreneurship, this has not completely transformed the economic and political outlook of the country. Often criticised for his lack of decisiveness, Ramaphosa's presidency has been defined by the aftermath of state capture and the country's deep-rooted and underlying challenges that have been exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic.

Why public perceptions have been declining since 2011?

Interestingly, support for democracy increased from 67 percent in 2008 to 72 percent in 2011. Similarly, satisfaction with democracy increased from 49 percent to 60 percent, while perceptions of the extent of democracy increased from 51 percent to 68 percent. Additionally, support for democracy reached its highest level in 2011 against the backdrop of cabinet reshuffles and economic downturns. It would be interesting to understand this sense of support despite the economic and political challenges faced by the country. This could be explained by the significance of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, as South Africa became the first African country to host this prestigious tournament. The World Cup initiated various investments, particularly in public transportation, infrastructure, and road networks (BTI 2012). Despite the increase in

democratic perceptions, for the first time, South Africans perceived corruption as one of the top five problems in the country – increasing from 15 percent in 2008 to 26 percent in 2011.

The Afrobarometer survey data from 2015 highlighted a significant decline in public support for democracy in South Africa, with support dropping 12 percentage points from 72 percent in 2011 to 64 percent in 2015. This period also saw a reduction in satisfaction with democracy, from 60 percent to 48 percent, and a decrease in the perception of South Africa as a democracy, from 68 percent to 49 percent. These trends suggest that the initial optimism and positive democratic outlook associated with the 2010 FIFA World Cup and its economic impacts had begun to fade, failing to translate into long-term democratic satisfaction or significantly influence democratic perceptions.

This waning democratic enthusiasm is mirrored in the electoral performance of the ANC. The party experienced a noticeable decrease in voter support, as evidenced by the results of the 2016 municipal elections, where its voter share declined from 61.95 percent in 2011 to 53.91 percent (IEC 2019). This downward trend continued into the national elections, with the ANC's voter share decreasing from 62.15 percent in 2014 to 57.5 percent in 2019. These electoral outcomes reflect growing public disillusionment with the ANC's governance and its ability to address the country's pressing socioeconomic challenges. The decline in democratic support and satisfaction, coupled with the drop in ANC voter share, underscores the challenges facing South Africa's democracy, highlighting the need for more enduring and substantive democratic and economic reforms.

In the medium to long term, the World Cup did not yield economic and political gain, nor did it erase political uncertainty. In the years following the World Cup, South Africa grappled with continued political uncertainty, marked notably by Zuma's controversial cabinet reshuffles. In 2017, one of Zuma's reshuffles led to the dismissal of Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan, a decision that sent shockwaves through the economy (Shipalana 2017). This move, along with other reshuffles, had an immediate and detrimental impact on the country's financial markets, particularly affecting the Rand and the banking sector's stock values.

The consequences of these reshuffles and the ensuing political turmoil were profound. In the first quarter of 2017, South Africa entered a technical recession, underlining the fragility of its economic recovery. Furthermore, the country faced significant international financial

repercussions, with Standard & Poor's (S&P) and Fitch downgrading South Africa's credit rating to "junk" status (Shipalana 2017). Another major credit rating agency, Moody's, placed the country on its lowest investment grade, signalling serious concerns about South Africa's economic prospects and governance stability (Shipalana 2017). The aftermath of the World Cup and subsequent political events reveal South Africa's challenges in leveraging high-profile international events for long-term benefit and the critical importance of stable, transparent governance in securing economic prosperity.

Are South Africans giving up on democracy?

If South Africans were looking to political leaders for answers, they did not do so through elections. Voter turnout trends are worrisome. Local government voter turnout decreased from 57.94 percent in 2016 to 45.86 percent in 2021. Similarly, at the national level, the 2019 voter turnout of 66 percent, marked the lowest in the last six general elections. Growing dissatisfaction with the ANC has not always translated into the support for the political opposition. This is because South Africa's political system is still polarised along racial lines. Additionally, because of its historical fight for freedom and democracy, there is a spoken and unspoken loyalty to the ANC among the black majority, particularly among the older generation (56+). According to the Afrobarometer, the ANC's support has weakened among citizens between the ages of 18 to 25, dropping to 43 percent. Moreover, even though there has been a steady increase in opposition parties, there has been a simultaneous decrease in voter turnout and partisanship. This is suggestive of a change in voter behaviour that political parties are largely oblivious to.

Furthermore, elections are seen to be a bridge between politicians and citizens (Berganza, 1998). If this is true, a continuous decline in voter turnout suggests a disconnection between the two. Individuals choosing not to vote could indicate disinterest but also dissatisfaction with the political party they have previously supported (Schulz-Herzenberg, 2009). In 2019, the IEC recorded the highest number of registered voters since 1994, with the number climbing from 18.1 million to 26.7 million registered voters (IEC 2019). However, the 2019 elections also saw the lowest voter turnout to date. In 1999, the voter turnout was 89.3 percent, which declined to 76.73 percent in 2004, slightly increased to 77.3 percent in 2009 and then dropped to 66.05 percent in 2019 (IEC 2019). This general decline in voter turnout suggests growing voter fatigue among South Africans. This means that the political terrain is no longer inspiring

confidence in those who are deprived of basic services, thus making protest action a means of political expression.

Nonetheless, one would expect a decline in the ANC's voter share to result in a significant increase in the opposition party's voter share. Despite opposition parties presenting themselves as viable alternatives to the ANC, data indicates that the electorate does not share the same sentiment. There are over 200 political parties expected to contest in the 2024 elections (Mongae 2023). This is a significant increase from the 48 political parties that contested in the 2019 elections and the 29 that contested in the 2014 elections (Mongae 2023). Of those that contested in the 2019 elections, the ANC, DA, and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) emerged as the dominant parties. However, the voter share varies greatly between the parties. As noted elsewhere, the ANC obtained 57.5 percent of the votes, the DA 20.77 percent, and the EFF 10.8 percent (IEC 2019). In the 2019 election, the DA experienced its first decline in vote share recording about 21 percent of votes from the previous 26.9 percent in 2016, while the EFF's voter share increased from 6 percent in 2014 to 11 percent.

Strikingly, trust in the ruling party is higher than trust in opposition parties. Afrobarometer data indicates that 43 percent of South Africans trust in the ruling party "somewhat" or "a lot" compared to 36 percent who trust in opposition parties. Nonetheless, there has been a continued drop in trust for the ruling party and opposition parties. Since 2006, trust in the ruling party dropped from 62 percent to 43 percent in 2015 and trust in opposition parties increased from 29 percent in 2006 to 36 percent in 2015 but dropped to 27 percent in 2018. This suggests that in the eyes of South Africans, there is no strong alternative opposition party and opposition parties are largely failing to present themselves as viable alternatives.

In 2018, 45 percent of South Africans indicated that they feel close to a political party. This is a sharp reversal from 2015, when 76 percent of respondents said that they felt close to a party. Of those who felt close to a political party, 29 percent said that they felt close to the ANC, 6 percent to the EFF, 4 percent to the DA, and 1 percent felt close to the IFP. Furthermore, of those who said they voted for the DA or EFF, 54 percent and 52 percent respectively, said that they do not feel close to either party. Furthermore, the growing gap between voter turnout and increased opposition parties suggests that voting-age South Africans do not resonate with political parties. Once again, this implies that political parties are out of touch with their voter base.

There has also been a rapid increase in opposition parties that position themselves as the solution to the country's mounting socio-economic challenges. However, given the growing dissatisfaction and decline in support, it would be important to interrogate the reasons behind South Africans giving up on democracy. Additionally, it would be important to understand why new political parties are finding difficulty in resonating with the population at large. Understanding why South Africans may be losing faith in democracy, and why new political parties are struggling to gain traction is essential for addressing the underlying issues and revitalising the democratic process in South Africa.

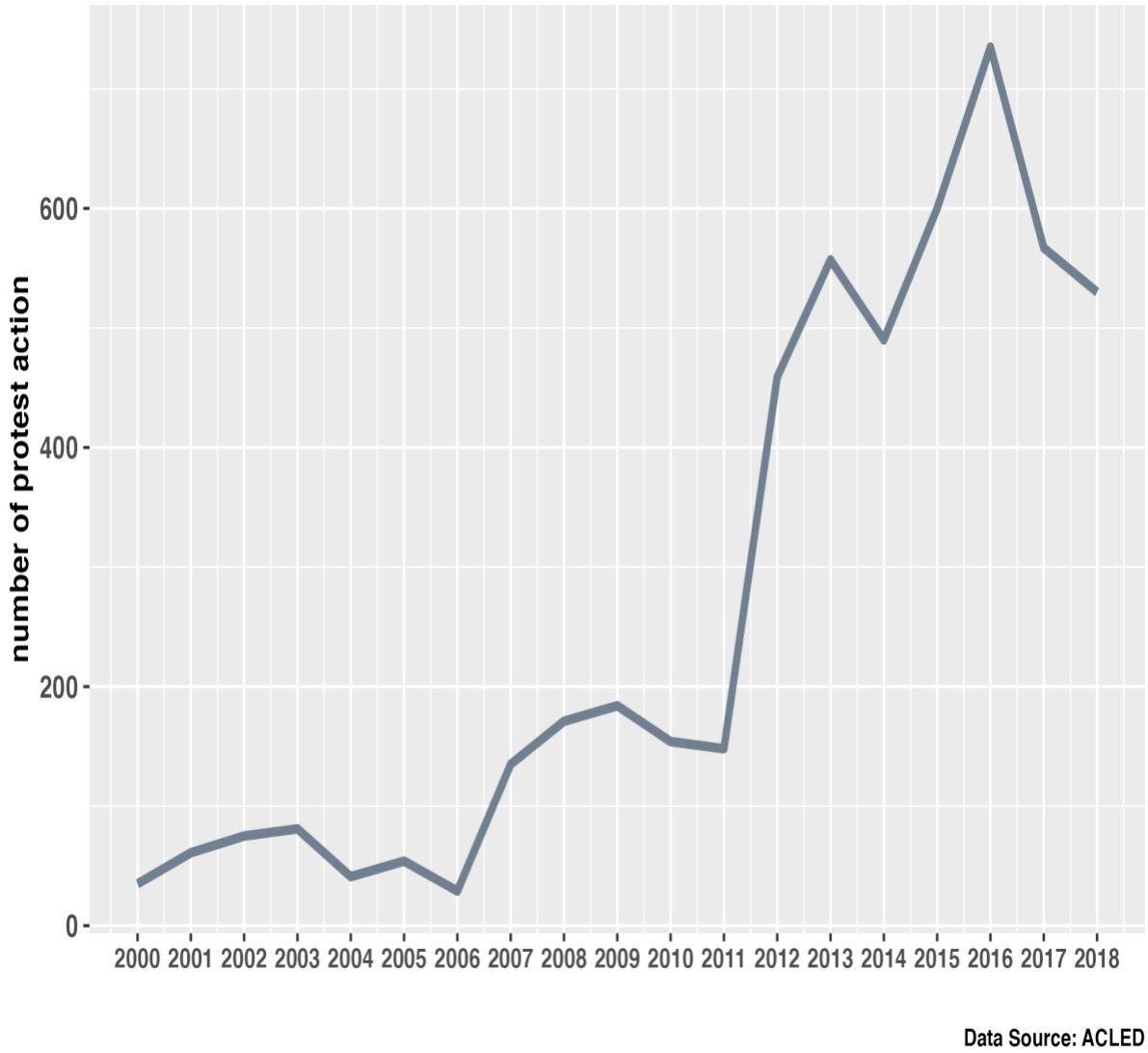
When juxtaposing partisanship with voter turnout and support for democracy, we see a simultaneous decline in all three. This is alongside 62 percent who are willing or very willing to forgo elections if a non-elected government or leader were able to enforce law and order and provide basic services. These findings reaffirm the observation that the current political terrain is no longer inspiring confidence in the average South African (Mongae 2023). Furthermore, South Africans appear to be more concerned about which party can govern them and not which party can obtain the most seats (Mongae 2023). The growing gap between partisanship, voter turnout, support for/satisfaction with democracy, and economic governance appears to be the reason for voter apathy. However, it is not a reflection of South Africans giving up democracy. It is also indicative of / response to the government's poor performance and the limited ability of political parties to formulate and map out a long-term vision and strategy for the country.

Protest action trends

Protest action has deep historical roots in South Africa as a form of political expression, dating back to the struggles against colonialism and apartheid. These protests have often served as pivotal moments in the country's history, catalysing significant social and political changes. However, the legacy of protest in South Africa is complex, with such actions sometimes leading to more harm than solutions, particularly when they result in violence or destruction. In the post-apartheid era, protests have frequently been sparked by frustrations with poor governance, service delivery failures, and socio-economic inequalities that continue to plague many communities. The South African government's response to these contemporary protests has often involved an increased use of forceful policing, a tactic that has been critiqued for exacerbating tensions rather than addressing the root causes of public discontent (Burger 2014).

Post-1994, disruptive and violent protests have become more prevalent. This may be because more South Africans think that violent protest action yields more successful results. Once again, this reflects growing public dissatisfaction deeply rooted in high levels of poverty, unemployment, and poor service delivery. This also reflects the inefficiency and corruption in local government. According to the 2011-2012 Auditor-General local government outcome, out of 278 local municipalities, only 17 (14 percent) had clean audits (AGSA 2011). In 2015 – 2016, the Auditor General recorded an improvement as 49 of the 263 local municipalities obtained clean audits (AGSA 2017). The audit outcomes for 2018-19 indicate that the financial health of 79 percent of municipalities is concerning or in need of urgent intervention (AGSA 2019). Furthermore, these municipalities spend more than they earn and cannot pay their debt. Vast amounts of money are wasted and as a result, they are highly dependent on grants from the government to pay the salaries of employees (AGSA 2019). These financial irregularities impede service delivery hence the increased resort to protest action.

Figure 7.3 | Protest action in South Africa | 2000 – 2018



Sharp increases in protests do not only coincide with dips in local governance, economic governance, and support for democracy. However, this trend is particularly evident during the state capture years (2010 – 2018). As Figure 7.3 indicates, protests spiked from 154 in 2010 to 735 in 2016 but steadily decreased to 567 in 2017. During this period, support for democracy dropped from 72 percent in 2011 to 64 percent in 2015, and satisfaction decreased from 60 percent to 48 percent. As noted elsewhere, voter turnout has declined in every national election. This indicates that dissatisfaction with the government was not expressed at the poll but on the streets. High protest action and low voter turnout are also indicative of a loss of faith in political parties and the provision of service delivery.

It is important to note that protest action is not only in response to service delivery. Other factors include but are not limited to dissatisfaction with representation, migration, demand for a wage increase, taxi disputes, and high crime rates also form part of sources of protest action (SALGA 2015). In their study, the South African Local Governance Association (SALGA) found that between 2009 and 2013, 10.8 percent of protest actions were attributed to local service delivery-related issues. An additional 1.2 percent was related to community dissatisfaction with representation. Thus, service delivery-motivated protests are a primary motivator. SALGA also found that between 2002 and 2013, the top motivations for protest at the local level were service delivery, housing, water and sanitation, and representation.

Worth noting, an increase in protest action is also indicative of growing mistrust in institutions of democracy as citizens would rather protest than use state institutions to resolve their grievances. Afrobarometer data shows that there has been a decrease in trust in state institutions. Trust in parliament has decreased from 41 percent in 2015 to 32 percent in 2018. Trust is particularly weak among those between the ages of 18 – 25 (19 percent) compared to 43 percent in the over-65 age group. Once again, this highlights cracks in the legitimacy of the democratic processes and procedures, hence why more South Africans are resorting to protest action.

In addition to protest action, South Africans participate in various other forms of civic engagement, reflecting a multifaceted approach to political expression and activism within the country. Notably, South Africa stands out in terms of direct engagement with local government, with a higher percentage of individuals contacting their local government councillors compared to other African nations. According to Logan, Sanny, and Han (2021), 33 percent of South Africans reported having contacted their local government councillor, highlighting a proactive stance in seeking to address community issues and grievances through formal channels.

In its 2015 report, the SALGA further illuminates the relationship between protest action and other forms of civic engagement. The findings suggest that individuals who engage in protests are also more likely to have reached out to their councillors or government officials. This indicates that those who protest do not solely rely on public demonstrations to voice their concerns but also engage with governmental structures in a bid to effect change. Moreover, the SALGA report sheds light on the attitudes of these engaged citizens, revealing that individuals who actively contact their councillors or government officials tend to believe that their voices

are being heard (SALGA 2015). Such findings highlight the importance of open and responsive communication channels between the government and its citizens. This suggests that when people feel heard and acknowledged by their representatives, they are more likely to pursue constructive, non-violent methods of engagement.

Additionally, South Africa has witnessed a notable increase in civic engagement, marking it as one of the countries with the most significant rise in overall participation levels across the continent. From 2011 to 2018, the rate of civic engagement increased by 10 percentage points, moving from 13 percent to 23 percent (Logan, Sanny, and Han 2021). This increase positions South Africa just behind Lesotho and Uganda, which saw the highest jumps in civic engagement rates. Furthermore, community meeting attendance is particularly high, with 68 percent of South Africans participating, substantially surpassing the regional average of 58 percent. Additionally, South Africa ranks fifth in terms of citizens joining together to raise an issue, with 58 percent participation, which is also well above the regional average of 48 percent.

Despite this active civic engagement, South Africa is experiencing a general decline in voter turnout, indicative of a growing voter fatigue. This trend suggests a disillusionment with the formal political process, especially among those who feel neglected by the system and deprived of basic services. For many, protest action has become an alternative avenue for political expression, reflecting a deep-seated dissatisfaction with the government's performance rather than a wholesale rejection of democratic principles. The distinction between dissatisfaction with government performance and outright rejection of democracy is crucial. The high levels of civic engagement and participation in community initiatives reflect a commitment to democratic processes and a desire for effective governance. However, the decline in voter turnout and the reliance on protest action signal a critical need for the government to address the underlying issues of service delivery and governance that fuel public discontent.

As Mattes (2016) argues, while sustained public support is vital for the survival and consolidation of democracy, democracies can sometimes endure with only moderate levels of public support if other factors, such as strong institutions and vibrant civil society, are in place. This implies that despite the decline in formal political participation, South Africa's democratic system may still be resilient, provided that its institutions and civil society continue to function effectively.

What type of democrat is emerging in South Africa?

Based on the four types of democrats established in Chapter 2 and the stacked bar plot (Figure 3.4), satisfied non-democrats and dissatisfied non-democrats are the emerging democrats in South Africa. Based on the analysis of the findings, I argue that South Africans lean more towards dissatisfied non-democrats, as only 53 percent support democracy. Trends and patterns in protest action and voter turnout are two primary mechanisms used by South Africans to express dissatisfaction with the government but are also the primary forms of public participation and political expression in South Africa. This challenges the idea that South Africans are passive citizens. South Africa has had six free and fair national elections since it transitioned to democracy. However, over the years, there has been a significant decline in voter turnout, which is an obvious indication of a shift in citizens' political behaviour and political disengagement. Support for democracy may be dwindling, but most South Africans still value aspects of democracy. On average, 61 percent of South Africans say the country needs many political parties to ensure real choices. The same number of respondents indicated that leaders should be chosen through elections. And the proportion that prefers a government that is accountable over one that is efficient increased from 44 percent in 2011 to 51 percent in 2018. Nonetheless, in 2018, 44 percent of South Africans perceived their country to be a democracy with major problems.

Like the other case studies examined, South Africa offers valuable insights into the dynamics at play when contrasting country-level analysis with individual-level perspectives. This dual analysis allows for a nuanced understanding of democratic sentiments and engagement, revealing complex attitudes towards democracy and governance. Firstly, the noticeable declines in support for and demand for democracy in South Africa suggest a growing sense of disillusionment among the citizens. This erosion of hope raises critical questions about the nature and focus of this hope: Is it hope vested in the democratic system itself, or is it hope placed in the government's ability to deliver on the promises of democracy? This distinction is crucial, as it sheds light on whether the root of the disillusionment lies in the concept of democracy as a governance model or in the current government's performance and its policies.

Despite South Africa's relatively stable and healthy political governance quality, as evidenced by its consistent classification as a "free" country by international democracy indices, the anticipated economic benefits of this governance quality seem insufficient. The lack of an

adequate economic trickle-down effect points to a disconnect between political governance and economic outcomes. While the political structures may be sound and the democratic processes robust, these have not led to tangible economic improvements for the wider population. This gap highlights a critical challenge: aligning the political advancements in democracy with economic progress to enhance the quality of life for all citizens.

This could be primarily due to two factors: firstly, South Africa does not necessarily have a policy issue. There are several progressive and strong policies in place that aim to address the various challenges faced by the country. However, the implementation of these policies is where the clog occurs; this leads to the second point. The gap between policy formation and its trickledown effect is structural. Structural issues can be traced to a corruption pandemic that the country is faced with, cadre entrepreneurship, a leadership vacuum, and ideological discrepancy. All of this severely impedes the government's ability to adequately address South Africa's socio-economic challenges, all the while impatience and fatigue continue to ripen among citizens.

Based on this observation, one may conclude that declines in economic governance, which has a direct impact on democratic governance and the institutionalisation of democracy, alongside continued declines in support for/satisfaction with democracy and the rejection of alternatives, indicate a general rejection of democracy. A closer look into national trends and patterns contests this analysis and provides a clearer distinction between the rejection of democracy and dissatisfaction with the government's performance.

Overall, South Africans may be critical democrats, but prolonged socio-economic challenges will continue to threaten their commitment to democracy. The various trends in democratic perceptions and civic engagement show warning signs of democratic fatigue, which are steering towards the emergence of dissatisfied non-democrats who are willing to forgo democracy. This poses a threat to the country's democratic lifeline.

Conclusion

South Africa's democratic system is the product of public camaraderie, allegiance, participation, and collective political imagination. At present, the democratic system is hardly functioning and is weakening the democratic commitment of South Africans. Trends and patterns between governance quality and popular support for/satisfaction with democracy reflect the tenuous connection between citizens and their government. Deep-seated corruption, poor service delivery, high unemployment, inequality, poverty, and generally poor economic governance are the primary reasons for growing dissatisfaction, dwindling support and the willingness to forgo elections. Moreover, negative trends in democratic perceptions raise an important question of whether South Africans are giving up on democracy and if they are indeed becoming dissatisfied non-democrats.

Furthermore, partisanship levels provide clearer insight into voter attitudes and behaviour. With 53 percent of South Africans who do not feel close to any political party and half of DA and EFF supporters who vote for but do not feel close to either party is indicative of a political terrain that is largely disconnected from the average South African. The growing number of opposition parties is also failing to address this gap. Nonetheless, protest action trends and general civic engagement challenge the idea that South Africans are passive citizens.

For the average South African, the current political landscape does not inspire much confidence. As a result, civic engagement through protest action is the primary mechanism that attracts attention from the government. This suggests that the more violent the protest, the louder your voice. Due to a lack of accountability, corruption, weak local governance, and the government's lack of adequacy, citizens are increasingly resorting to protest action as a form of political expression.

If the country's socio-economic challenges go unaddressed and if South Africans continue to feel left behind from the democratic process, the country runs the risk of dealing with various forms of nationalism, which can ultimately drive calls for national unity further away. Moreover, democratic aspirations will continue to decline, and this runs the risk of the wrong political party taking advantage of this despondency.

The building blocks are meant for South Africa to not only strengthen democracy but to consolidate it. With the democratic experience of almost three decades, South Africa's democracy is being tried and tested. The resilience of South Africa's democratic institutions, particularly in the face of challenges such as state capture, highlights the strength and robustness of the country's democratic framework. Evidence from the literature reviewed suggests that while these institutions have remained firm against various adversities, they are not impervious to the detrimental effects of poor leadership, corruption, and efforts to undermine state institutions.

Despite these challenges, South Africa's rich history of democratic culture, active citizen engagement, and a legacy of activism provide a solid foundation for optimism. These elements should be viewed as beacons of hope and essential building blocks in the ongoing defence and promotion of democracy within the country. The active involvement of citizens in the democratic process, combined with a strong tradition of challenging undemocratic practices, serves to reinforce the resilience of South Africa's democratic institutions.

The perceived lack of democratic supply, however, poses significant implications for the future of democracy in South Africa, as well as for the country's economic and political stability. When citizens perceive that the democratic system is failing to deliver on its promises, particularly in terms of economic opportunities and transparent governance, it can lead to disillusionment and erode trust in democratic processes. This perception can weaken the foundations of democracy, making it crucial for South African leaders and institutions to address these gaps in democratic supply proactively. Strengthening the link between democratic governance and tangible improvements in the lives of citizens will be key to maintaining faith in the democratic process and ensuring the long-term stability and prosperity of the country.

Chapter 8: Political governance and support for democracy in Zimbabwe

Introduction

This chapter explores the potential explanations for high support for democracy in Zimbabwe despite steep declines in economic and political governance. Central to this inquiry is the question of whether the enduring support for democratic ideals is a consequence of the absence of democratic governance or the result of democratic misconceptions. Generally, I analyse the interaction between Zimbabwe's governance quality, democratic outcomes, and support for democracy since 1998. To unpack this complex question, the analysis systematically examines the interplay between the quality of governance in Zimbabwe, the tangible outcomes of its democratic processes, and the citizens' endorsement of democratic principles by tracing developments from 1998 onwards. This exploration proceeds in two parts.

The first part of the chapter offers a detailed examination of the available data on the quality of governance and public perceptions of democracy in Zimbabwe. Through descriptive statistics, this section aims to establish a clear picture of the current governance landscape and how democracy is perceived by Zimbabweans. The analysis is further deepened by a time-series review, spanning from 1998 to 2018, which tracks the evolution of governance quality and democratic sentiments over two decades. This longitudinal perspective is crucial for identifying trends and understanding how significant events have shaped the governance and democratic landscape in Zimbabwe. Complementing this statistical approach, the chapter also integrates insights from the literature on Zimbabwe's democratic history and cultural context, offering a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing governance and democratic perceptions.

Subsequently, building on the groundwork laid in the initial analysis, the second part of the chapter focuses on exploring specific questions introduced at the outset. This section aims to unpack the complex dynamics between governance quality, democratic outcomes, and public support for democracy in Zimbabwe. By tackling these targeted questions, the chapter seeks to uncover the underlying reasons behind the enduring support for democracy among Zimbabweans despite the ongoing governance challenges. This in-depth exploration promises to shed light on the implications of these findings for Zimbabwe's democratic trajectory and offers insight into the critical role of public sentiments in shaping the country's political landscape.

Zimbabwe's journey towards independence is marked by parallels with South Africa, including a history of British colonialism and the imposition of apartheid-like laws. Independence, like many other African states, was met with great expectation and celebration of what was expected to be a new era. Elected prime minister Robert Mugabe echoed these expectations when he called for forgiveness for past wrongs and reconciliation with former enemies (Mlambo 2014).

The political culture of a country shapes the country's democratic practice. As such, democratic decay and violence are prominent features in Zimbabwe's political landscape, and it has also shaped its political fabric. Political violence, lack of rule of law, institutionalised intimidation, and the blurred distribution of power between the state and government have negatively impacted its ability and prospects for consolidating democratic governance in Zimbabwe.

Economically, there have been high levels of inflation, an increase in poverty levels, a shortage in skilled labour, and an overall decline in the standard of living (BTI 2018c; Wigmore-Shepherd 2016). These economic and political factors are shaping the democratic experience in Zimbabwe. The mismanagement of the economy and a political elite that misuse state resources for self-interest have left the country depending on food aid such that 72 percent of the population is living below the national poverty line of $1.25 per day (BTI 2018c). The unemployment rate is estimated to be in the range of 60 percent to 95 percent (BTI 2018c). According to the World Bank, in 1981, Zimbabwe had an economic growth rate of 12.5 percent, by 1990 this dropped to 7 percent (World Bank 2022c). Within two years, this rapidly declined to -9 percent in 1992. This forced Mugabe to adopt the structural adjustment program in the 1990s (BTI 2022d).

Zimbabwe's transition from being celebrated as the "jewel of Africa" (Chikowore 2017) and boasting one of the world's fastest-growing economies to experiencing significant decline is a complex process marked by a series of political and socio-economic challenges. About two decades into its democracy, the country faced multiple setbacks that severely impeded its progress. One of the pivotal events was the violent invasion of white-owned commercial farms in 2000, which not only disrupted the agricultural sector, a cornerstone of the economy, but also led to international condemnation and a series of sanctions that isolated Zimbabwe economically (Chikowore 2017). The 2008 elections, marred by allegations of rigging and violence, further eroded confidence in the democratic process and the rule of law.

Between 2000 and 2007, Zimbabwe experienced a steep economic decline that Senge (2018) characterised as a period of significant contraction. This economic downturn was exacerbated by hyperinflation, which peaked in 2008, rendering the Zimbabwean dollar virtually worthless and decimating savings and incomes. The collapse of the social sector, including health and education, compounded the hardships faced by the population and led to the deterioration of the quality of life and public services.

The economic turmoil and instability also triggered an exodus of skilled workers as professionals sought opportunities abroad, further depleting the country's human capital and exacerbating the economic challenges (Senge 2018). These socio-economic challenges were paralleled by notable declines in political governance, as democratic institutions weakened and political freedoms were restricted. The combination of economic collapse, governance failures, and political repression has significantly derailed Zimbabwe's trajectory, shifting its narrative from a beacon of potential to a cautionary tale of decline.

It is however, worth noting that declines in economic governance exceed political governance. This trend indicates that democratic governance is not being supplied sufficiently. This trend also suggests that both economic and political governance negatively affect each other. One would expect a downward spiral in governance quality to be met with low support for democracy. However, there is high support for democracy in Zimbabwe.

The 2018 Afrobarometer data indicates that despite 75 percent of Zimbabwean's support for democracy, 37 percent are satisfied with the way democracy is working in the country, and 39 percent think that Zimbabwe is a democracy. Support is above the regional average of 68 percent, while perceptions of the extent of democracy and satisfaction are below the regional averages of 50 percent and 42 percent respectively. It is also interesting to note that while support for democracy has increased over the years, so have perceptions of the extent of democracy and satisfaction with democracy.

In contrast with trends in governance quality, there is a downward trend in political and economic governance, satisfaction, and the extent of democracy, however, not for support. This trend raises important questions about the nature of this support. One must consider whether the support for democracy emanates from its perceived absence and a desire for its implementation or if it is based on the belief among citizens that democratic principles are, to

some extent, being upheld. This distinction is crucial for understanding the depth of democratic values within the society. Moreover, the question of whether support for democracy equates to a genuine commitment to democratic principles is equally significant.

The case of Zimbabwe offers important lessons on the consequences of divorcing principles of democracy from the principle of sovereignty. The country may be a democracy on paper, however, it lacks legitimacy and credibility. The case study further highlights the importance of a democratic foundation and the separation of power.

In Zimbabwe, the role of the government and the state are intertwined. This arrangement has significantly compromised the quality and stability of democracy and further perpetuates a system where change in leadership does not necessarily translate to meaningful democratic reform or improvement in governance. Hence why the removal of Robert Mugabe from power was significant, yet the deep-rooted structural issues within the political system have meant that this change in leadership has not led to significant improvements in democratic governance or the lives of ordinary Zimbabweans.

The dismissal of Mugabe brought about a wave of excitement and euphoria across Zimbabwe, marking the end of an era that many hoped would pave the way for democratic renewal. However, it can be argued that this optimism was largely misplaced, as the removal of a single leader does not inherently lead to the eradication of undemocratic practices ingrained within the political system. Democracy is an ongoing process, deeply rooted in institutions, legal frameworks, and cultural norms, thus the mere departure of Mugabe could not instantly instil a democratic culture that had been eroded over decades. However, the nature of his removal would significantly influence the politics post-removal. Ceteris paribus, the removal of Mugabe was unconstitutional and was a smart coup. As such, the democratic transition was stillborn. Importantly, this episode highlights the challenges of fostering democracy in contexts where undemocratic practices are deeply entrenched, highlighting the need for comprehensive and inclusive approaches to building democratic institutions and culture beyond the removal of authoritarian figures.

Under the leadership of Emmerson Mnangagwa, the post-Mugabe era has largely been seen as a continuation of the repressive tactics that characterised the previous administration. This is primarily because – as noted earlier, a change in leadership was not synonymous with a change in political culture. The Mnangagwa-led ZANU-PF government has been described as "new wine in old skins" (Mhandu and Ojong 2022), indicating that while the leadership faces have changed, the underlying governance practices and approaches remain the same. Accusations against the current regime include rigging elections, employing military force, and resorting to police brutality and harassment against dissenters, echoing the repressive tactics used during Mugabe's tenure (Mhandu and Ojong 2022). Given this backdrop of continued political repression, the question arises: Why is support for democracy still high in Zimbabwe? The following section seeks to respond to this question by exploring trends in political governance, democratic governance, and support for democracy in Zimbabwe.

Trends in political governance, democratic governance, and support for democracy

Between 1980 and 1990, Zimbabwe's political transformation was characterised by the centralisation of power concentrated to the ZANU-PF and the presidency. The elections in 1980 yielded a voter turnout of 84 percent, and at the time, there were three main political parties: the ZANU-PF, the Rhodesia Front Party, and the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU) (Mlambo 2014). Like other African countries, the abolition of colonial rule, more specifically, the Rhodesian system of racism in 1980, was met with the expectation of political transformation(BTI 2018c). These expectations were partially reaffirmed with the signing of the Unity Accord with the largest opposition party, the ZANU-PF, in 1987 (BTI 2018c). This was seen as an attempt to foster national reconciliation.

However, several political developments undermined such attempts. The political evolution of Zimbabwe has been characterised by a troubling trend towards the concentration of power in the hands of the presidency and top ZANU-PF officials. As noted in the previous section, this centralisation of authority has been accompanied by the abuse of executive and administrative powers, undermining the democratic principles that many had hoped would guide the new Zimbabwe (BTI 2022c). This had significant implications for Zimbabwe's political transformation, often side-lining the democratic aspirations of its citizens and stifling political

pluralism. Importantly, the challenges highlight the complexities of transitioning from a colonial regime to a fully democratic governance system.

Economically, the country's economic transformation has always taken the back seat to politics. Upon independence, one of Mugabe's objectives was to expand the state's control over the economy (BTI 2018c). This move was aligned with the broader socialist ideologies that influenced many liberation movements across Africa at the time. Over time, the control of economic resources allowed Mugabe and his ruling party, ZANU-PF, to maintain power by rewarding loyalists and creating a patronage network that entrenched the position of the party (BTI 2018c).

From an electoral perspective, every election has widened the distribution of power between ZANU-PF and opposition parties as well as between ZANU-PF and the state. The 1980 elections generated a voter turnout of 84 percent, by 1990, this dwindled to 54 percent (African Elections 2005). This period also marks a rise in civil engagement, with the most evident being the formation of the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), which played a critical role in Robert Mugabe's historic 2000 defeat to the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) formed in 1999 (BTI 2018c).

More significantly, the defeat enabled the rejection of a proposed constitutional amendment, which would have given the president more power (BTI 2022c; Mlambo 2014). Despite the defeat in the referendum, the 2000 parliamentary elections saw Mugabe's ZANU-PF claiming victory amidst widespread accusations and charges of fraud and vote-rigging (BTI 2022c). The discrepancy between the referendum result and the parliamentary elections outcome highlights the complexities and challenges facing Zimbabwe's democratic processes and the growing significance of civil society and opposition movements in challenging entrenched political power and advocating for democratic principles and governance reforms in Zimbabwe.

The violent invasion of white-owned farms in 2000 is another key historical political event with economic ramifications for Zimbabwe. In 2000, two decades into independence, ZANU-PF organised and mobilised hundreds of thousands of unemployed youths, war veterans, and landless peasants to invade white-owned commercial farms (BTI 2022c). In the same year, elections were expected to take place in June. The MDC, as the main opposition party, had garnered significant support from thousands of Zimbabweans, including white commercial

farmers and businesspeople (Mlambo 2014), posing a serious threat to the ruling party. In response, ZANU-PF identified the unresolved land issue as an avenue to avoid defeat at the polls. The violent invasion of farms was seen as the only viable way for ZANU-PF to gain political support to stay in power. At least 150 people and 10 white commercial farmers are reported to have lost their lives (Mlambo 2014).

Zimbabwe's economic, social, and political challenges are the culmination of 30 decades of all-round shrinkage - democratically, economically, socially, and politically. These challenges are unlikely to be fully resolved in the near future. Nevertheless, Zimbabweans demonstrate strong support for democracy despite receiving little of its benefits. Data from round 7 of the Afrobarometer indicates that 75 percent of Zimbabweans support democracy, 37 percent are satisfied with the way democracy is working in the country, and 39 percent perceive Zimbabwe as a democracy. The gap observed between satisfaction with democracy, the extent of democracy, support for democracy, and the trends in economic and political governance in Zimbabwe provides critical insight into the quality of democracy and governance within the country. This gap suggests that while there may be general support for the idea of democracy among Zimbabweans, this support does not necessarily translate into satisfaction with how democracy is currently being implemented or perceived to function in the country.

Table 8.1 summarises the descriptive statistics of political and economic governance and public perceptions of democracy from 1998 to 2018. Democratic perception trends are from 1999 to 2018, as the first Afrobarometer survey in Zimbabwe was conducted in 1999. The table presents the minimum, mean, maximum, and standard deviation values. The maximum and minimum score for support indicates that support has varied greatly over the years. On average, support for democracy has been relatively healthy. The minimum and maximum scores do, however, indicate that there has been great variation in support. At one point, support was below 50 percent and at another point, almost 80 percent of Zimbabweans supported democracy.

Table 8.1 | Descriptive statistics | Zimbabwe

	Support	Satisfaction	Extent	Political governance	Economic governance
Minimum	0.47	0.14	0.14	-4.72	-3.47
Mean	0.68	0.31	0.30	-3.81	-1.91
Maximum	0.79	0.41	0.43	-2.62	-0.73
SD	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.70	1.03

The table also indicates that satisfaction and extent of democracy are notably lower than support for democracy. Interestingly, variations and scores for satisfaction and the extent of democracy are very similar. Satisfaction with democracy has been as low as 31 percent. However, the minimum score indicates that in one Afrobarometer survey, only 14 percent of Zimbabweans were satisfied with democracy. A similar trend is evident in public perceptions of the extent of democracy. Moreover, political and economic governance trends indicate that on average, between 1998 and 2018, governance has been in the negative territory. Although political governance scores are lower, the minimum and maximum scores for economic governance indicate that there has been greater variation in economic governance.

Democratic trends

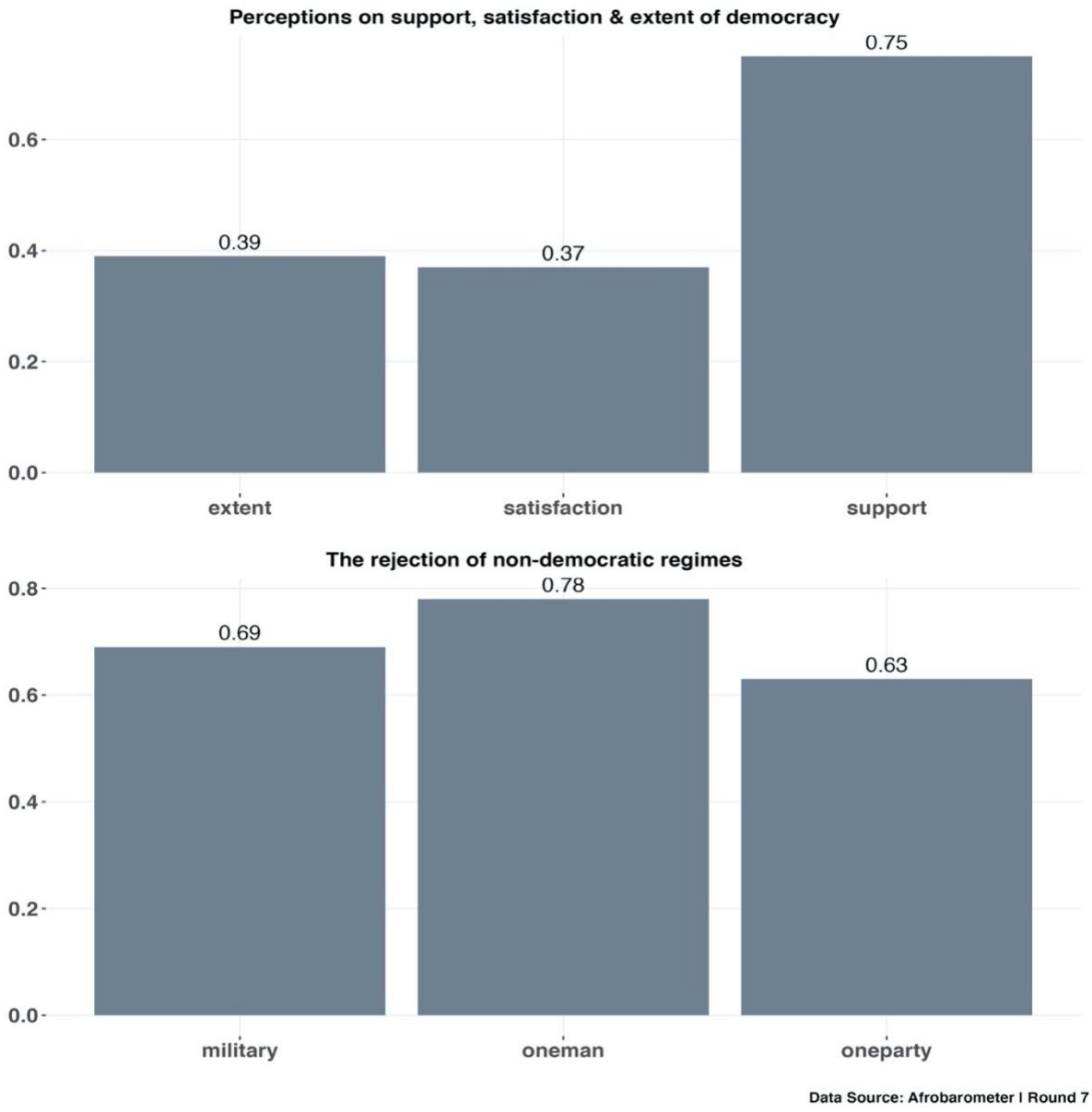
The classification of Zimbabwe as a pseudo-democracy largely stems from the government's apparent inability and unwillingness to fulfil its core responsibilities, such as providing justice, security, and basic services, particularly to the poor. This shortfall in governance is worsened by the harsh economic conditions faced by Zimbabweans, characterised by economic mismanagement that has led to widespread poverty, unemployment, and inflation. The situation is further compounded by an autocratic government that has, at times, resorted to using force against its citizens to suppress dissent and maintain control. The combination of economic hardship, governance failures, and autocratic tendencies not only challenges the quality of democracy in Zimbabwe but also highlights the disconnect between the democratic ideals that many Zimbabweans aspire to and the political reality they experience.

The state of democracy in Zimbabwe is weakened by many factors, including the blurring lines between the roles of the state and the government, the presence of a weak opposition, and the increasing involvement of the military in politics. These elements, combined with a regressive

political culture, significantly undermine democratic efforts and dilute the effectiveness of any attempts to rejuvenate democratic governance. Addressing Zimbabwe's democratic challenges, therefore, requires a comprehensive approach that tackles both the political and economic root causes of its democratic failures. The intertwined nature of these challenges means that neither political nor economic reforms alone can fully restore democratic integrity; both aspects must be addressed simultaneously to foster a conducive environment for democracy to flourish.

Moreover, a lack of confidence among Zimbabweans regarding their country's democratic future is reflected in public opinion trends. Data from the 2017/18 Afrobarometer survey indicate a growing dissatisfaction with the functioning of democracy in Zimbabwe compared to previous surveys. Despite this dissatisfaction, there remains a high level of rejection among Zimbabweans towards non-democratic alternatives, highlighting a persistent belief in the ideals of democracy despite the current challenges. This complex situation suggests that while Zimbabweans yearn for democratic governance, the prevailing conditions have led to scepticism about the potential for meaningful democratic progress.

Figure 8.1 | Views on democracy | Zimbabwe | 2017



Interestingly, Zimbabwe falls under the top 10 countries in Africa with the highest level of democratic support and is well above the regional average of 68 percent. In 2017, 75 percent of Zimbabweans supported democracy - this is a 2 percent increase from 2015.

This is intriguing given that support for democracy outweighs countries such as Namibia, South Africa, and Cabo Verde, which have relatively stronger democratic governance, governance quality and democratic institutionalisation. Although 75 percent of Zimbabweans prefer democracy, 69 percent reject military rule, 64 percent reject one-party dominance, and 78 percent reject one-man rule (Figure 8.1). Additionally, most Zimbabweans (64 percent) say

they trust in the army "somewhat" or "a lot". Worth noting, since 2012, there has been a continuous but small decrease in those who "strongly disapprove" and "disapprove" of military rule. Before this, the rejection of military rule was 80 percent or above (except for 1999 – 79 percent). In 2012, 78 percent of Zimbabweans rejected military rule; this dropped to 74 percent in 2014 and further declined to 70 percent in 2017.

It is interesting to observe the variations in attitudes towards military and one-man rule across different age groups in Zimbabwe. Notably, the rejection of military rule is lowest among the older population, those aged 56 and above, at 55 percent. In contrast, the rejection of military rule peaks at 74 percent among the middle-aged population in the 36–45 age category, followed closely by those in the 46–55 age group. The pattern suggests a stronger desire for democratic governance among these age groups, possibly influenced by their experiences during Zimbabwe's more recent political history. Similarly, the pattern of rejecting the one-man rule also varies by age, with the lowest level of rejection again found among those aged 56 and above, at 65 percent. The highest level of rejection is observed among those in the 46-55 age category at 83 percent, suggesting a pronounced preference for democratic practices and a rejection of autocratic leadership among this group. Following this, those in the 26-35 age category also show a high level of rejection for one-man rule. These differences emphasise the complex interplay between age, historical experiences, and political attitudes in Zimbabwe, highlighting how generational experiences can shape perceptions of governance and authority.

Since 1980, Zimbabwe's military establishment has worked closely with the ruling party. This highly politicised role can be traced through four key events that have each solidified its growing role. First, between 1980 and 2001, against the perceived threat of political opposition parties. Secondly, in January 2002, when military personnel appeared before international media houses to redefine the criteria of the presidency (Rupiya 2020). Third, the post-2008 election results saw the Movement for Democratic Change – Tsvangirai (MDC-T) outpull ZANU-PF by 48 percent to 43 percent. Upon the declaration of a run-off by the electoral commission, it was speculated that with the help of the top brass of the military, police, and intelligence, Mugabe would spoil the election rerun (Rupiya 2020). These speculations were followed by countrywide violence orchestrated by ZANU-PF militia, war veterans, and security force members (HRW 2008). Lastly, on November 21, 2017, *Operation Restore Legacy* saw the military play a leading role in ousting Robert Mugabe (Rupiya 2020). The

ousting of Mugabe saw the military working closely with ZANU-PF and, in essence, solidified the military establishment in Zimbabwe.

As mentioned elsewhere, militarisation tactics in Zimbabwe were used to oust Robert Mugabe in 2017. Though deemed a victory at the time, this further desensitised the use of military force in dealing with an unfavourable political environment. Since the ousting of Mugabe, there has been continued and intensified use of military force against citizens, journalists, and opposition parties. For example, in 2019, the government used force to respond to protests over poor living conditions (BTI 2022d). In 2020, following prominent journalist Hopewell Chin'ono's exposé on government corruption, Chin'ono was arrested and detained. In the same year, there were cases of sexual abuse, abduction, torture, and arrest of four female opposition leaders (BTI 2022d). For most Zimbabweans, violence has been the pillar of governance.

Although the round 7 survey was conducted in 2017, the Afrobarometer conducted a pre-election baseline survey between April and May 2018 (three months before the elections). This is helpful as it enables one to capture democratic governance sentiments before and after the Mugabe era. When asked if the 2017 military intervention was right or wrong, 41 percent of Zimbabweans said that it was the right thing to do; 40 percent said it was wrong but necessary, and 12 percent said it was the wrong thing to do. These perceptions are in line with 71 percent of Zimbabweans who reject military rule, 68 percent that said armed forces must not be involved in politics and 55 percent who trust the army. It is important to note that trust in the army ranks second highest, following 67 percent who trust in religious leaders. This implies that in the eyes of Zimbabweans, there was no other suitable alternative other than the military to remove Mugabe and invoke a change in government.

Interestingly, there is no great variation between MDC-T Chamisa and ZANU PF supporters who say that the military intervention was the right thing to do, with scores of 39 percent and 43 percent, respectively. However, while 50 percent of MDC-T Chamisa supporters say that it was a wrong thing but necessary, 36 percent of ZANU-PF supporters share this sentiment. And 10 percent of MDC-T Chamisa supporters say that it was the wrong thing to do compared to 14 percent of ZANU-PF supporters.

It is also worth noting that only 13 percent of Zimbabweans say that it does not matter what kind of democracy they have. This perception, alongside the 30 percent who are satisfied with how democracy is working in their country, is suggestive of an awareness that democracy is not being supplied. This further suggests that after decades marked by limited democratic practices and significant political challenges, the support for democracy among Zimbabweans can be seen as an aspirational stance - a collective yearning for a political system that upholds democratic principles.

The pattern of support for democracy in Zimbabwe presents an interesting deviation from regional trends, with relatively uniform levels of support across different age groups. Notably, the variation in support is minimal, with the lowest level of support observed among the older demographic, those aged 56 and above, at 71.2 percent. This suggests that, despite the historical and political challenges Zimbabwe has faced, the value placed on democracy transcends generational divides to a considerable extent. Interestingly, the highest support for democracy is found within the 36 – 45 age group, followed closely by the 26 – 35 age category, both hovering around 76 percent. This indicates a strong inclination towards democratic governance among the middle-aged population.

When examining support for democracy based on employment status, an interesting pattern emerges. Support for democracy is consistently above 70 percent across different employment groups but dips slightly among those who are unemployed or actively seeking work, at 72 percent and 74 percent, respectively. Conversely, those employed part-time or full-time demonstrate the highest levels of support, at 80 percent and 82 percent, respectively. These findings illustrate the complex interplay between demographic factors, economic status, and political attitudes in Zimbabwe, highlighting how various aspects of individuals' lives and experiences can influence their support for democracy.

Unsurprisingly, satisfaction is highest among those unemployed, at 44 percent, closely followed by those working full time, at 42 percent. On the other hand, those working part-time or unemployed but actively seeking work show lower levels of satisfaction, at 33 percent and 32 percent, respectively, possibly reflecting concerns about job security and the effectiveness of democratic governance in addressing their economic needs. Moreover, the demand for democracy among Zimbabweans stands at 44 percent, indicating a significant portion of the population still values democratic governance despite the challenges. However, there has been

a notable decline in the demand for democracy from 2012 to 2017, decreasing from 55 percent to 50 percent. Despite this decline, the current demand for democracy remains significantly higher than in 2002, when it was at 28 percent, and is above the regional average of 42 percent. This fluctuation in demand for democracy over the years, with periods of increase and decrease between 2004 and 2009, reflects the complex and evolving relationship between Zimbabweans and their democratic aspirations, influenced by both domestic and regional political dynamics.

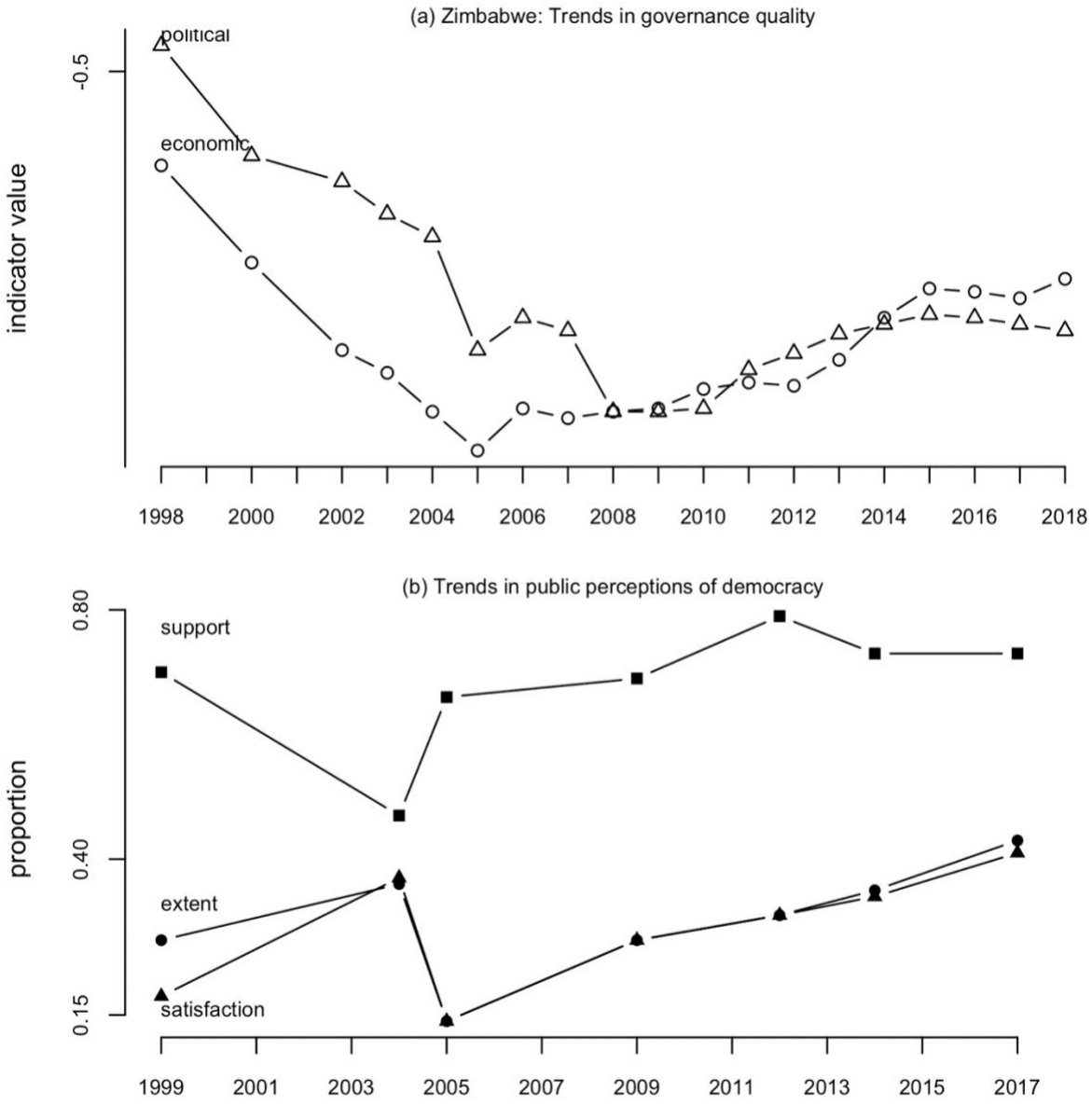
Contrary to the decline in demand for democracy in Zimbabwe, there has been an interesting upward trend in the perceptions of the supply of democracy since 2005. In 2004, only 27 percent of Zimbabweans felt that democracy was being supplied, which significantly dropped to 10 percent in 2005. However, this perception began to shift in the subsequent years; by 2009, the percentage increased to 16 percent and saw a further rise of 9 percentage points by 2012. Between 2012 and 2017, the perceived supply of democracy continued to grow from 25 percent to 33 percent. Zimbabwean's experience with the perceived supply of democracy, showing long-term increases, places it alongside countries like Ghana, Botswana, and Namibia. These countries have similarly experienced improvements in the perceived supply of democracy over time. This increase suggests a gradual improvement in how Zimbabweans view the functioning of democracy in their country, possibly influenced by political developments, changes in governance practices, or shifts in the socio-political environment.

These findings are perplexing and once again raise the question of what informs public evaluations of democracy. For example, round 4 of the Afrobarometer was surveyed in 2009. This is a year after the contentious and post-election violence in 2008, yet there was a 9-point increase from the previous round in perceived supply. Also, between 2004 and 2005, demand for democracy increased from 29 percent to 53 percent, yet in the same period, perceptions of supply decreased from 27 percent to 10 percent. The inconsistent gap between demand and supply suggests that other underlying factors are influencing public perceptions of democracy. The following section will explore this gap by examining long-term democratic and governance trends.

Long-term democratic trends indicate that there have been long-term inconsistent fluctuations between support and extent/satisfaction with democracy. Between 1999 and 2004, support dropped from 70 percent to 47 percent (Figure 8.2). Intriguingly, during the same period,

perceptions of the extent of democracy increased from 18 percent to 37 percent. While satisfaction with the way democracy is working increased from 27 percent to 36 percent.

Figure 8.2 | Zimbabwe time series graph | Zimbabwe 1998 – 2017



Between 2005 and 2009 support increased from 66 percent to 69 percent. This is perplexing, especially in light of the post-election violence in 2008. The March 2008 elections were historical, as under the leadership of Morgan Tsvangirai, the MDC defeated ZANU-PF (BTI 2022c). However, a six-week delay in releasing the results by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) was criticised as an attempt to manipulate the results in Mugabe's favour (BTI 2022c). Leading up to the run-off election (3 months after the initial elections), ZANU-

PF unleashed a wave of countrywide violence which saw the displacement of more than 50, 000 people, the death of about 100 MDC supporters, and homes being burnt down by ZANU-PF militia (BTI 2022c; HRW 2008). Following the run-off election, ZANU-PF won the majority vote. State-owned media prohibited campaign adverts by the MDC; Tsvangirai was arrested five times in the space of two weeks; and on the day of elections, 29 March, MDC supporters were harassed and even killed for supporting the MDC. In response to the political violence and repression, Tsvangirai pulled out of the election race, leaving the ZANU-PF with an 'uncontested' win (HRW 2008; BTI 2022c).

Alongside targeted violent acts, ZANU-PF supporters prevented people from accessing medical treatment, blocking access to villages targeted by ZANU-PF violence (Hodgkinson 2019). Hospitals were warned by party allies not to provide medical treatment to victims of political violence; measures were also put in place to prevent local and international electoral monitoring (Hodgkinson 2019).

In the same year, Zimbabwe experienced the second most severe hyperinflation in the world. In November 2008, annual inflation reached 231, 000 000 percent (McGreal 2008). Hyperinflation further exacerbated poverty levels and food insecurity. In 2008, the World Food Programme (2010) reported that 5 million Zimbabweans faced hunger, and more than 80 percent of the population were living on less than $1 a day. In addition, Zimbabwe experienced a cholera outbreak in late 2008, putting an estimated 13 million of the already vulnerable population at risk (WFP 2010).

Nonetheless, post-2008, Zimbabwe witnessed a remarkable yet short-lived surge in support for democracy, with figures climbing from 69 percent in 2009 to a peak of 79 percent in 2012. However, this heightened support began to wane, dropping to 73 percent by 2014, a level that remained unchanged in 2017. Conversely, satisfaction with democracy and perceptions regarding the extent of democracy in Zimbabwe have experienced more volatility, generally following a downward trend until 2005. Despite some improvements post-2005, the overall perceptions of democracy's extent remain relatively low, indicating a persistent gap between the ideals and realities of democratic governance in the country. The marginal difference observed between support for democracy and perceptions of its extent highlights a critical disconnect; many Zimbabweans express a desire for democracy yet feel that it is not being fully realised in their country. This analysis, supported by the long-term trends in the demand and

supply of democracy, suggests a collective awareness among Zimbabweans of the shortcomings in their country's democratic practices. The prevailing sentiment indicates a recognition of living in what can be described as a pseudo-democracy, where democratic principles are nominally upheld but are not effectively translated into practice. This awareness highlights the complexities of Zimbabwe's political situation, where aspirations for genuine democracy persist amidst challenges in achieving true democratic governance.

Political governance trends

The top panel of Figure 8.2 indicates that between 1998 and 2005, there was a steep decline in political and economic governance. Despite governance remaining in the negative territory, there have been modest improvements since 2005. A more detailed observation indicates that except for the Foundations for Economic Opportunity and Human Development indicators, all indicators for economic and political governance have had a negative annual average. Control for corruption, Voice and Accountability, and Government Effectiveness are the worst-performing indicators. There have, however, been significant improvements in Foundations for Economic Opportunity, especially between 2016 and 2018. The Human Development Index has also been on a positive trajectory since 2011.

When juxtaposing public perceptions with governance quality, it is evident that fluctuations in political and economic governance correspond with satisfaction and the extent of democracy. The notable improvement from 2005 corresponds with improvements in satisfaction and extent in the same period. On the contrary, declines and modest improvements in economic and political governance are met with improvements in support for democracy. While all the indicators dip in 2005, support is the only indicator that does not. Once again, this suggests that support for democracy is primarily driven by its absence. This also indicates that governance quality has a significant impact on public evaluations of democracy.

Figure 8.2 also indicates that, although there have been small improvements in political governance, political governance is still negative. Since independence, Zimbabwe's constitution has been amended 17 times (International IDEA 2013). Most of these amendments were to reverse judicial rulings, and others were to undermine liberties espoused in the Constitution. This includes the amendment of the Constitution Amendment (2) Bill in 2021, which seeks to allow the president to appoint judges without subjecting them to public

interviews and to extend the age limit from 70 years to 75 (National Legislative Bodies 2021). This amendment gives Mnangagwa Mugabe-era powers, and for civil society, it is a sign of deepening authoritarianism in Zimbabwe. This indicates that contrary to the constitution being a lively document that promotes and improves the lives, rights, and freedoms of Zimbabweans, it is used to sustain power, maintain the political status quo, and subvert the separation of powers.

When Zimbabweans were asked: "What are the most important issues facing this country that the forthcoming election campaign should address?" unemployment emerged as the top concern, cited by 64 percent of respondents. Following closely were other economic issues, with 39 percent of respondents pointing to the management of the economy and 25 percent highlighting wages and salaries as significant concerns. Health and corruption were also notable areas of concern, mentioned by 19 percent and 17 percent of respondents, respectively. It is worth noting that eight out of the ten most cited problems were related to economic challenges, indicating that economic issues dominate the public's priorities and concerns. According to the World Bank (2022c), Zimbabwe's economic growth was at 14.4 percent in 1980 but declined to 7 percent by 1990. This downward trend continued, with growth dropping to -3.1 percent by 2000 and further plummeting to -17.7 percent in 2008. A slight recovery was observed in 2015 with a growth rate of 2.3 percent, but this was short-lived as it fell to 0.5 percent in 2016 amidst widespread company closures and job losses.

Notably, the unemployment situation in Zimbabwe during this period has been a subject of debate, with reported figures varying significantly. In 2017, estimates of the unemployment rate ranged from 80 percent (Burke 2017) to as high as 90 percent, as stated by The Zimbabwean (2017), and even 95 percent, according to former finance minister Tendai Biti (Mwiti 2017). These figures starkly contrast with the World Bank's 2016 estimate of a 4.2 percent unemployment rate, which is based on a broader definition of unemployment that includes individuals who have given up on looking for work. This discrepancy in unemployment figures and the severe economic downturn illustrate the impact of political and economic governance on the country's economic health and labour market.

Regardless of the actual figure, the challenge is not necessarily unemployment but the quality of employment. It is estimated that between 80 and 90 percent of Zimbabweans are employed in the informal sector, which accounts for 40 percent of the country's GDP (Kedem 2020).

Souring inflation does, however, have a direct and immediate impact on the value of income. As of 2020, salaries in Zimbabwe were worth 10 percent of what they were in 2018 (Kedem 2020). The liquidating crisis, which forced the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) to impose limits on cash withdrawals of $50 per day and $150 per week, is another key event faced by Zimbabwe in 2016 (BTI 2018c). In the same year, Zimbabwe ranked 20 out of 20 countries with the highest unemployment rate (BTI 2018c).

As mentioned elsewhere, Zimbabwe is a constitutional democracy that provides for the separation of powers. However, as illustrated thus far, the separation of powers remains blurred. On occasion, the executive has expressed dissatisfaction with judicial decisions, such as in 2016 when a court ruling permitted protests advocating for electoral reforms. The president holds significant influence over the judiciary, evidenced by the authority to appoint and dismiss the Attorney General at will (BTI 2018c). Moreover, in consultation with the Judicial Services Commission, the president has the prerogative to appoint key judicial figures, including the Chief Justice and the Judge President of the High Court, along with all other judges (BTI 2018c). This concentration of appointment powers in the executive branch raises concerns about the independence and impartiality of the judiciary, which are essential for upholding the rule of law and democratic principles.

Moreover, Section 61 of Zimbabwe's constitution states that "every person has the right to freedom of expression [...]" and "Every person is entitled to freedom of the media which includes protection of the confidentiality of journalists' source of information" (National Legislative Bodies 2013). However, in reality, there are consequences to exercising freedom of speech, as is evident with the arrest and detention of journalist Hopewell Chin'ono in 2020 and many others, as well as that of opposition leaders.

Furthermore, the militarization of institutions continues to undermine political governance. Even post-Mugabe era, Mnangagwa relies on the same military that served Mugabe to stay in power. Public media is one of the tools used by ZANU-PF to maintain power through publicity and propaganda. It is also used to undermine the opposition party's electorate appeal (Sengere 2018; BTI 2018b). A 2018 poll by the Voice of Zimbabwe established that 52.3 percent of Zimbabweans get their news from WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter (Sengere 2018). The same poll established that social media is regarded as a more reliable source of information compared to the radio, newspapers, and television, indicating the extent to which the

government undermines democratic principles such as the freedom of expression and access to information.

Moreover, social media has been used by the government and citizens to pose a national threat. For example, in 2013, a Facebook character known as Baba Jukwa shared several posts encouraging rebellion against the government if the 2013 elections were rigged (Sunday News 2014). By 2014, the page had amassed half a million followers, leading to its classification as a threat to national security and governance. Several suspects, including two high-profile politicians from ZANU-PF and journalists, were brought in for questioning, but no convictions were made nor was the case solved (Charles 2014).

Zimbabwe also witnessed the militarisation of its judiciary in 2000, a notable instance being when the late former ZANU-PF MP and deputy minister, Chief Justice Godfrey Chidyausiku, along with other judges who had military backgrounds, replaced judges that were unfavourable to ZANU-PF (News24 2001). As Zimbabwe's longstanding ruling party, ZANU-PF continues to manipulate electoral processes to maintain its grip on power. Examples of such manipulation include the amendment of voting eligibility criteria through the 2001 Citizens Act, the removal of observers in the 2002 elections, and exerting control over the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (Hodgkinson 2019). These actions have contributed to questions about the fairness and transparency of electoral processes in Zimbabwe, highlighting the challenges faced in ensuring democratic governance and the rule of law.

The various conflicting findings raise important questions such as: which perceptions best capture real democratic attitudes among Zimbabweans? And how committed are Zimbabweans to democracy?

Understanding democratic perceptions in Zimbabwe

The previous section outlined conflicting findings in trends and patterns between governance quality and public perceptions. Since 1998, Zimbabwe has experienced clear declines in economic and political governance. Notably, Zimbabwe is officially a constitutional democracy, with an executive presidency separate from the legislature, a structure that theoretically supports democratic governance (Makumbe 2009). Against this backdrop, one would associate poor governance quality with low support for democracy. However, the

situation in Zimbabwe presents a paradox where, despite persistent governance issues, there remains a notable level of support for democratic principles among the population. This observation suggests a distinction between the citizens' aspirations for democratic governance and their experiences with the current state's governance quality, indicating a resilient hope or demand for genuine democratic reforms and governance improvements.

What accounts for the gap between support for democracy and the extent of democracy?

A closer look into perceptions on the extent of democracy and satisfaction with democracy provides nuance to the observation as the trends indicate that Zimbabweans want democracy and simultaneously recognise that they are not receiving it. This is also illustrated in perceptions of the country's direction. In the lead-up to the 2018 elections, 62 percent of Zimbabweans indicated that the country was going in the wrong direction, and 63 percent blamed the government for the country's direction. This is a 4-point increase from the previous year and a 20-point increase from 2012.

During 2009, while support for democracy in Zimbabwe saw an increase, the demand for democracy experienced a decline, dropping from 53 percent in 2005 to 46 percent in 2009. Concurrently, perceptions regarding the supply of democracy rose modestly from 10 percent to 16 percent. In 2009, a significant portion of Zimbabweans, 66 percent, expressed minimal trust ("not at all" or "just a little") in the ruling party, which, despite being a slight improvement from 2005, revealed a notable rise in those expressing "not at all" trust, jumping from 35.5 percent in 2005 to 49.5 percent in 2009. During the same period, trust in opposition parties fell sharply from 51 percent to 30 percent, and trust in the president also declined from 66 percent to 60 percent. This followed an earlier trend where trust in the president had already decreased from 74 percent in 1999 to 41 percent in 2004. These trends suggest a nuanced public sentiment towards democracy in Zimbabwe, indicating broader challenges and shifts in political trust and democratic engagement in the country.

Following the wave of violence in 2008, respondents may be paying lip service. This may be out of fear of being punished for not expressing favourable sentiments towards the government. When asked about perceived survey sponsorship, 43 percent of Zimbabweans thought that the surveyors were sent by the government or a political party. This is a 1-point decrease from

2014 and a 3-point increase from 2009 (45 percent). The implications of perceived sponsorship from the government or political party are that respondents are more likely to report favourable sentiments to the government.

In the surveys conducted in 2014 and 2017, a significant portion of Zimbabwean respondents, 76 percent, indicated that individuals often or always need to be cautious about expressing their political views, highlighting concerns about freedom of speech. By 2017, this sentiment intensified, with 78 percent of Zimbabweans feeling restricted in their ability to criticise the president (Moyo-Nyede 2020). It is worth noting that the round 7 survey was conducted between 28 January and 10 February 2017, the last year of Mugabe in office. Lack of freedom of speech, lack of trust in the president, and fear of appearing anti-government may have also contributed to responses. In addition, trust in Mugabe and Mnangagwa was higher among those who said they felt unfree to criticise the president and feared intimidation and victimisation (Moyo-Nyede 2020).

However, despite these concerns about political expression, an average of 64 percent of Zimbabweans reported trust in their government, a figure surprisingly higher than in countries like Mauritius, Namibia, and Ghana. Trust in the presidency saw an uptick following the elections in 2008 and 2013 and maintained its momentum even after Robert Mugabe departed from office. From 1999 to 2017, trust in Mugabe significantly increased from 19 percent to 64 percent. Following Mugabe, Emmerson Mnangagwa also enjoys high levels of trust, particularly among older citizens aged 56 and above, at 60 percent, whereas the younger demographic, those aged 18-35, indicate lower trust levels at 49 percent. These findings illustrate a complex relationship between Zimbabweans and their political leadership, where high levels of governmental trust coexist with significant reservations about political expression and criticism, thereby raising questions about perceptions of the extent of democracy and satisfaction with democracy.

How committed are Zimbabweans to democracy?

Zimbabwe has been presented with various opportunities to kick start/initiate a democratic foundation. These opportunities include the 2008 elections – which should have introduced a change in government, the 2017 ousting of Mugabe, and the 2018 elections. These missed opportunities also provided more political space for democratic regression.

The post-Mugabe administration has not displayed any commitment to reform the political culture and landscape. This is demonstrated by examples such as the deployment of the army on the streets, the suppression of opposition parties (HRW 2008), and alleged vote rigging. For example, in January 2019, Zimbabwean security forces used force to disperse widespread protest action against the 150 percent fuel price hike (HRW 2019). Social media was shut down for four days as security forces and military units conducted a major crackdown, fired live ammunition, killed 17 people, and raped at least 17 women (HRW 2019; Hodgkinson 2019).

Despite the challenges cited above, the commitment of Zimbabweans to democracy is evident in their expressed preferences and behaviours. As of May 2018, a substantial 83 percent of Zimbabweans expressed a preference for selecting their leaders through regular, open, and honest elections (Bratton and Masunungure 2018). This strong inclination towards democratic processes, coupled with 75 percent of the population believing in the importance of using their voting power to elect leaders who can positively impact their lives, suggests foundational support for democratic principles despite past electoral disappointments.

Furthermore, voter turnout trends provide further insight into this commitment. Historically, Zimbabwe has seen varying levels of electoral participation, with a notably low turnout of 31.7 percent in the 1996 presidential elections. This figure fluctuated in subsequent elections, peaking at 54.33 percent in 2002, then dipping to 47 percent in 2005 and further to 42.7 percent in 2008 (CIASA 2022). However, the 2018 presidential elections marked a significant shift, recording the highest voter turnout in decades at 85 percent, with the parliamentary elections also seeing a high turnout of 83.10 percent (International IDEA 2022). This surge in voter participation in 2018 reflects a renewed engagement with the democratic process and suggests a strong commitment to democracy among the Zimbabwean populace, indicating optimism and a desire for change through democratic means.

Only time will tell if this renewed appetite remains. However, if the 2022 by-elections are anything to go by, then Zimbabweans - the youth, in particular, have lost their appetite. Voter turnout is higher among men, those with lower income, lower education, rural voters, members of an organisation, middle-older voters, and blue-collar workers (CIASA 2022). Those under the age of 35 constitute 70 percent of Zimbabwe's population of 16 million (CIASA 2022). In 2018, 39 percent of Zimbabwe's 1.9 million young (18-34) did not register to vote because

they perceived that the election was already rigged (CIASA 2022). Apathy from the youth may stem from the idea that they have nothing to gain from voting and/or do not identify with any political party. Overall, the case of Zimbabwe highlights that elections alone are not an abracadabra for democratic and governance challenges. Elections need to be accompanied by a change in the institutionalisation of democratic principles and political culture.

These observed trends also show that one of the consequences of poor governance quality is growing apathy and discontent among Zimbabweans. Despite the entrance of a new party – the Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC), the March 2022 parliamentary and local government by-elections recorded a voter turnout of 35 percent (CIASA 2022), suggesting that Zimbabwe's political environment is disconnected from the interests of citizens. This appears to be contributing to the lack of personal responsibility, passivity, and indifference to political affairs. Although Zimbabwe is a hostile environment for civic engagement, Zimbabweans cannot afford to disengage from the political process.

Protest action trends

Protest action is another indicator for measuring democratic apathy and commitment to democracy. Globally, protests have helped to consolidate new democratic governments and to advance economic and political reform. In the case of Zimbabwe, protest action could be used to hold the government accountable and, if need be, to destabilise the weak democracy.

According to data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), there was a noticeable increase in reported protest events in Zimbabwe, from just 1 in the year 2000 to 68 by 2018. This upward trend indicates a growing willingness among Zimbabweans to engage in protest actions to voice their concerns and demands. However, when compared to countries like Sudan and South Africa, the level of civic engagement through protest in Zimbabwe remains relatively low. This discrepancy can be explained by various factors, including differences in political, social, and legal environments that influence the feasibility and effectiveness of public demonstrations as a form of civic engagement.

Figure 8.3 | Protest action in Zimbabwe | 2000 – 2018



Figure 8.3 indicates that protest action in Zimbabwe increased from 14 in 2004 to 30 in 2005 and again between 2006 (27) and 2007 (56).

There was another increase between 2013 (42) and 2015 (97). This increase – especially in 2015 can be attributed to mass mobilisation by trade unions, taxi drivers, and workers over the mismanagement of the economy (Wigmore-Shepherd 2016). Protest action against high levels of corruption by ZANU-PF also contributed to the increase in protest action. Despite a slight drop in protest action in 2016, the economic crisis deepened as the country faced cash shortages, the retrenchment of workers, and unpaid salaries (Wigmore-Shepherd 2016).

Additionally, in 2016 unemployment in the formal sector was about 90 percent. As economic instability intensified over the years, so has protest action. Following protests over poor living conditions in 2015, these protests intensified in 2016 and gained traction on social media through a campaign #ThisFlag, #tajamuka, #ZimShutDown2016 (Kademaunga 2019) and Shona slogans #hatichada #hatichatya meaning "we've had enough" and "we are not afraid" (Aucoin 2016). What began as protests against economic mismanagement quickly morphed into a social movement. This movement gained momentum online and through the streets of Harare and other big cities. These waves of protests challenge the perception that Zimbabweans are passive (Sithole 2004; Ncube 2011; Chikereme 2013).

Most of the protests are by demonstrators hardest hit by economic mismanagement, government policy and corruption. Before the intensified protests in 2015/16, Zimbabwe had not witnessed demonstrations of this intensity (Wigmore-Shepherd 2016). The protest action that spilled into 2017 significantly contributed to the denouncement of Mugabe in August 2017, which shook ZANU-PF's stiff grip on power. Above all else, they demonstrated the impact of collective and continuous action. Between 2004 and 2005 the demand for democracy increased from 29 percent to 53 percent, while perceived supply decreased from 27 percent to 10 percent. Satisfaction with democracy also decreased from 37 percent to 14 percent and perceptions of the extent of democracy also decreased from 36 percent to 14 percent. The increase in protest action and decrease in public perceptions are suggestive of growing mistrust in institutions. As noted elsewhere, trust in the local government councillor, president, court of law, and the National Electoral Commission have continued to decline.

The reported protests in Figure 8.3 are a modest and partial reflection of activism and political engagement in Zimbabwe. Given Zimbabwe's socio-political environment, other explanatory variables affect protest trends and patterns such as the regime's control over media (underreporting), fear of participating in protests, growing apathy, harassment, and intimidation from security forces. Protest action in Zimbabwe is often met with an iron fist. In the three years that Mnangagwa has been in power, there have been mass arrests, abductions, murders, and threats by the regime against trade unions, opposition parties, and activists (Heywood 2020).

Alongside protest action, Zimbabweans participate in other forms of civic engagement. This participation can be traced back to independence. The economic and political crisis of the late 1980s and 1990s saw widespread disapproval of ZANU-PF's political articulation. This disapproval was particularly evident in civil engagement. Several NGOs came together in 1997 to form the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) (Makumbe 2009). Through widespread grassroots campaigns, the NCA played a central role in policy advocacy, with one of the most noticeable cases being pressure placed on Mugabe's government to institute the abortive constitutional reform process (Makumbe 2009). Founded in 1992, ZimRights also plays a key role in organising and mobilising around political issues (Hodgkinson 2019).

In comparison to other African countries, public participation in Zimbabwe is moderate but is declining. In 2018, about 1 in 10 (13 percent) of Zimbabweans were either leaders or active members of voluntary associations or community groups (Logan, Sanny, and Han 2021). This is well below the regional average of 24 percent. Contact with local government councillors is however the second highest in the region at 32 percent. In their paper which assesses factors that hinder the active participation of citizens in local governance in the Murewa district in Zimbabwe, Nyama and Mukwada (2022) found that 50 percent of residents felt that local government leadership side-line them in development planning and that local councillors use planning meeting for their political agendas. The aim for local government councillors should be to seek ways to decentralise participation and to identify local government structures as platforms for promoting public participation and socio-economic development.

Additionally, nearly 61 percent of Zimbabweans attend community meetings. Participation is particularly low among those living in poverty, urban areas, and those between the ages of 18 and 25 years (Logan, Sanny, and Han 2021). Between 2009 and 2017, overall civic engagement decreased from 21 percent to 13 percent. The combination of the lack of donor funding, the regime's attempt to restrict expression and participation, and the lack of civil society engagement has weakened the role of CSOs. Furthermore, a decrease in civic engagement and voter turnout is an indication of a lack of political interest by citizens. Given the country's political landscape, government repression and the general restrictive political context contribute to this lack of interest and commitment. This challenges the simplification of what constitutes a critical democrat and level of political interest.

Are Zimbabweans satisfied non-democrats?

Zimbabwean's civic engagement and commitment to democracy matters for the adoption, institutionalisation, quality, and strengthening of democracy. Are Zimbabweans committed to democracy in the face of an authoritarian form of rule? As noted earlier, a large portion of Zimbabweans is dissatisfied with democracy (37 percent), yet 75 percent support democracy. In theory, this classifies Zimbabweans as critical democrats, also known as dissatisfied democrats. However, a closer observation indicates that satisfied non-democrats are the emerging democrats.

The assessment of satisfied non-democrats in Zimbabwe and the extent of their civic engagement is aligned with trends and patterns in protest, voter turnout and civic engagement. Figure 3.4 shows that only 8 percent of Zimbabweans classify as critical democrats. Sudan is not a democratic country and is also faced with a repressive regime. Compared to Zimbabwe, support for and satisfaction with democracy is low, but civic engagement is higher. Sudanese may be satisfied non-democrats but they are politically active.

This calls for the need to re-evaluate how we assess critical democrats and prompts the call for a change in language to pose questions such as: are critical democrats still critical if they are not politically engaged and are satisfied non-democrats who are politically active still non-democrats?

As Doorenspleet (2012) points out, critical democrats are not only dissatisfied but are also well-informed, interested and involved citizens who want to improve the political system. In making a critical assessment between critical democrats and dissatisfied democrats, Doorenspleet assesses support for democracy alongside satisfaction with the performance of the regime. In doing so, she examines the likelihood of satisfied and dissatisfied democrats having critical behaviours and attitudes such as voter apathy, political interest (political participation) and information. In her study, Doorenspleet found that in comparison to dissatisfied democrats, satisfied democrats are more likely to take an interest in politics and vote in elections.

Conclusion

The independence of Zimbabwe was a historical watershed. The journey has been marked by the enduring dominance of a single party, which has significantly influenced the country's democratic landscape. Over four decades post-independence, the reluctance to lay down a firm democratic foundation has paved the way for power abuses and the misallocation of state resources, detrimentally affecting democratic governance.

This chapter explored Zimbabwe's limited democratic experience, probing into the roots of popular support for democracy and the depth of Zimbabweans' commitment to democratic ideals. Through an examination of political and economic governance trends and various democratic components, a complex picture emerges. Findings from the analysis suggest that despite a high preference for democracy among Zimbabweans, there is a pervasive sense of dissatisfaction and pessimism regarding the country's direction and economic conditions. Interestingly, periods of political and economic stress often coincide with either improvements or sustained high levels of democratic support, raising questions about the basis of this support.

A detailed analysis of the case study of Zimbabwe reveals a consistent decline in political and economic governance quality since 1998, with a notable downturn from 2005 onwards. This decline has been met with a steady increase in support for democracy, yet perceptions of democracy's extent and satisfaction levels have not mirrored this trend. I argue that the widening gap between democratic support and perceived supply suggests that Zimbabweans yearn for democracy but feel underserved.

Furthermore, voter turnout and trust in institutions shed light on Zimbabwean democratic perceptions. The preference for elections as a means to choose leaders, paralleled with diminishing trust in the electoral commission, highlights the recognition of democratic principles and their insufficient institutionalisation, contributing to a progressive decline in voter turnout. This voter apathy is further compounded by a widespread distrust in state institutions, particularly the judiciary's failure to hold the executive accountable. The reluctance to engage actively in civic activities when democratic principles are undermined, coupled with limited protest action, points to an underdeveloped culture of civic participation. The findings of the chapter suggest that despite a slight uptick in protest action, especially around Mugabe's ouster, the overall level of civic engagement remains low.

I also argued that the cumulative effect of poor governance, low civic engagement, and institutional distrust is an eroding legitimacy of the state and its regime, posing ongoing risks to Zimbabwe's democratic and economic stability. While Zimbabweans express a clear preference for democracy and reject its alternatives, their outlook on the country's future remains bleak. However, their attentiveness to political developments, even amid democratic backsliding, suggests the potential for cultivating deeper civic and political engagement.

The comparative analysis of Sudan, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Botswana presents a nuanced picture that challenges simplistic associations between satisfaction with democracy and levels of political engagement. In South Africa, citizens lean towards the category of dissatisfied non-democrats, reflecting concerns with the democratic process and outcomes. Despite this dissatisfaction, South Africans demonstrate a high degree of political engagement, arguably more so than in the other case studies mentioned. Conversely, in Botswana, the population generally falls into the category of satisfied democrats, appreciating the functioning and results of their democratic system. However, despite this satisfaction, Batswana's level of political engagement appears lower, especially when compared to the more politically active Sudanese population. These observations suggest that the relationship between democratic satisfaction and political engagement is not straightforward. Factors such as historical context, cultural norms, socio-political dynamics, and the specific challenges faced by each country play a significant role in shaping these patterns of political engagement and attitudes toward democracy.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

This thesis addresses a significant gap in the existing literature by focusing on how Africans experience democracy and how these experiences influence their valuation of democratic principles. While there is considerable research dedicated to understanding the functioning of democracy in Africa and identifying the factors that sustain it, there is a notable scarcity of studies that delve into the lived democratic experiences of African citizens.

The thesis posits that democratic experience acts as a crucial intervening variable, perhaps even the primary one, in sustaining democracy in Africa. While institutional performance and global rankings provide valuable insights into the state of democracy, they may not fully capture the nuances of how democracy is perceived and valued at the grassroots level. By examining the relationship between governance quality, Africans' democratic governance experiences and their democratic perceptions, this research offers a deeper understanding of the dynamics that underpin democratic support and resilience on the continent. This approach emphasises the importance of not just identifying, but comprehensively understanding the subjective experiences of democracy among African citizens and assessing how these experiences shape their democratic values and preferences.

This research builds upon the foundational analyses conducted by Bratton and Mattes (2001) and Alence (2004), which explored the public's experience with democratic governance and the impact of political institutions on governance quality in Sub-Saharan Africa. Advancing this discourse, the present study evaluated the causal relationship previously established, positioning governance quality as the independent variable and support for and satisfaction with democracy as the dependent variable, while considering democratic governance as an intervening variable.

By integrating public perceptions into the country-level analysis, the study identified the determinants of popular support for and satisfaction with democracy. This approach allowed for a nuanced understanding of how governance quality, as perceived and experienced by the public, influences their attitudes towards democracy. The reversal of the initial causal association, coupled with the inclusion of public perceptions, provided a comprehensive framework for examining the complex interplay between governance quality, democratic governance processes, and the resultant democratic support and satisfaction among citizens in Africa. Through this methodology, the study offers fresh insights into the dynamics that

underpin popular attitudes towards democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa, contributing to a more detailed understanding of the factors that foster or hinder democratic engagement and satisfaction in the region.

This study also set to clarify how democracy works in Africa by examining how the institutionalisation of democracy and governance - or lack thereof, affects democratic governance and support for and satisfaction with democracy.

This inquiry was prompted by the underexplored association between governance and democracy, both at the national and individual levels. While there is a consensus among scholars on the importance of governance quality in enhancing democracy, the discourse predominantly situates this relationship within a macro or country-level analysis. Historically, discussions on governance within the context of democracy have tended to treat governance as a monolithic entity or have examined political and economic governance as distinct and isolated components (Ake 1993; Diamond 1999). This research transcended these conventional approaches by considering the multifaceted nature of governance and its composite influence on democratic governance and public attitudes towards democracy.

Moreover, within this discussion and observation, minimal studies have examined how ordinary citizens do not only experience democratic governance but how this experience informs their support for and satisfaction with democracy. Moreover, studies that have observed the link between democratic governance and public perceptions overlook the effect of governance quality (Bratton and Mattes 2001). Additionally, no studies have comprehensively explored the three-way association between governance quality, democratic governance, and support for or satisfaction with democracy through statistical analysis. This gap in the literature represents a missed opportunity to empirically assess the complex interdependencies between these critical aspects of political life. By employing statistical methods to examine these relationships, this research set to fill this gap, offering empirical insights into how governance quality influences democratic governance and, in turn, affects public support and satisfaction with democracy.

One of the central arguments pursued in this thesis is that the primary driver behind support for democracy is the quality of political governance. This argument is based on the premise that political governance, encompassing elements such as the rule of law, political freedoms, and the effectiveness of political institutions, directly influences citizens' appreciation for and

commitment to democratic principles. I also suggest that satisfaction with democracy is more significantly influenced by economic governance. This perspective stems from the understanding that economic policies, stability, and growth impact citizens' day-to-day lives and their overall satisfaction with the governing system, including its democratic aspects. While British colonial rule might have laid some foundations for post-independence democratic governance, various factors, including the absence of substantial social transformation during the colonial period, have likely led to a democratic convergence, diminishing any initial advantages or differences attributable to colonial legacies.

I further argued that support for democracy and the quality of political governance tend to be lower in countries heavily reliant on oil rents. The "resource curse" theory suggests that the wealth derived from oil can lead to less democratic governance structures, as it provides autocratic regimes with the financial means to maintain power without needing to tax or seek the consent of their citizens. Lastly, I contended that in countries with high levels of ethnic fractionalisation, satisfaction with democracy is likely to be lower. This is due to the negative effects of ethnic diversity on economic growth and political stability, which can exacerbate governance challenges and diminish citizens' satisfaction with the democratic process and outcomes.

In exploring the complex three-way causal association, this study sought to clarify the underlying factors that shape popular support for and satisfaction with democracy in Africa. Specifically, the investigation focused on discerning the extent to which economic and political governance influence democratic governance outcomes and how, in turn, these outcomes affect democratic attitudes among African populations. A key aspect of this exploration was to determine whether support for democracy is predominantly motivated by the instrumental benefits associated with economic governance or by the intrinsic values upheld by political governance.

Furthermore, the research aimed to address why, despite widespread dissatisfaction with the performance of democratic systems, there remains a substantial base of support for democracy among African citizens. This paradox prompted a deeper examination of the resilience of democratic values and the factors that sustain commitment to democratic principles even in the face of governance challenges. Additionally, the study explored the consequences of poor governance on the health and stability of democracy, analysing how deficiencies in economic and political governance could undermine democratic institutions, erode public trust, and

impact the overall democratic landscape. Lastly, the research aimed to identify the emerging profile of democrats in Africa, considering the diverse and evolving democratic attitudes across the continent. This involved assessing whether new forms of democratic support are emerging, shaped by the unique political, economic, and social contexts within African countries. By addressing these questions, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between governance quality, democratic governance outcomes, and public attitudes towards democracy, offering insights into the challenges and opportunities for strengthening democracy in Africa.

In addressing the gaps identified in the existing literature on the relationship between governance quality, democratic governance, and public support for and satisfaction with democracy, this study employed two distinct methodological approaches. The first approach involved an in-depth examination of the possibility to distinguish between the quality of political and economic governance. This was achieved by disaggregating governance indicators from prominent sources such as the World Governance Indicators (WGI), the Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG), and the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem). Employing analytical tools such as correlation matrices, scatterplots, and principal components biplots, the study successfully demonstrated that not only is it feasible to differentiate between political and economic governance, but there also exists a strong positive association between the two. This finding highlights the interlinked nature of economic and political governance, suggesting that improvements or declines in one area are likely to be mirrored in the other.

Building on this foundation, the second methodological approach adopted in the study was the use of multilevel regression techniques. This statistical analysis aimed to establish an empirical association between the quality of political/economic governance and the levels of support for and satisfaction with democracy among the public. By quantifying the influence of governance quality on democratic attitudes, this approach sought to provide empirical evidence to complement the theoretical discussions surrounding the impact of governance on democracy. To address the inherent limitations of cross-national analysis and to explore the role of democratic governance as an intervening variable, the study also included case study research. This component focused on countries exhibiting divergent trends in governance and democratic attitudes, offering a more nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics at play. Together, these methodological approaches provided a comprehensive analysis of the factors that shape

support for and satisfaction with democracy in various contexts, contributing valuable insights to the discourse on democracy and governance.

To test the hypotheses, this study employed a "nested" analysis approach, combining cross-national statistical analysis with in-depth case studies of four countries exemplifying divergent trends in democracy and governance. This methodological strategy enabled a comprehensive examination of the hypotheses across different contexts and scales, providing a an in-depth analysis of the factors influencing democratic attitudes.

The cross-national statistical findings revealed that political governance, encompassing aspects such as the rule of law, political freedoms, and the effectiveness of political institutions, holds a stronger association with support for democracy than economic governance. This suggests that the intrinsic values and principles underpinning democratic systems, such as political participation and civil liberties, are crucial determinants of public support for democracy. Interestingly, among the control variables considered, ethnic fractionalisation emerged as the only control variable with a positive and significant effect on support for democracy. This finding challenges conventional narratives that often portray ethnic diversity as a barrier to democratic cohesion and stability. Instead, it suggests that in diverse societies, the value placed on democratic governance might stem from its potential to accommodate and manage ethnic pluralism through inclusive and participatory institutions.

The case study findings from this research illuminate the emergence of different types of democrats in Africa, offering nuanced perspectives on how citizens interact with and respond to various political systems. These insights are crucial for understanding the complex landscape of democratic attitudes across the continent.

In Sudan, the case study revealed that poor political governance adversely affects both democratic governance and support for democracy. The low support for democracy in Sudan can be attributed to the recognition of inadequate democratic governance, coupled with the acknowledgement that the country does not fully embody the principles of democracy. This case highlights how negative experiences with political governance can directly dampen public support for democracy when citizens perceive that democratic ideals are not being met.

Conversely, in Zimbabwe, despite similar poor political governance and low perceptions of democracy, support for democracy remains high. This paradoxical finding suggests that the desire for democratic governance can persist even in the face of governance challenges. In Zimbabwe, the high support for democracy appears to stem from a collective aspiration towards democratic ideals, emphasising a hopeful perspective that democracy, despite its current shortcomings, represents a preferable alternative to the existing political regime.

These case studies from Sudan and Zimbabwe illustrate the diverse dynamics that underpin support for democracy in contexts of low political governance. They demonstrate that the relationship between governance quality and democratic attitudes is not straightforward, but are influenced by a range of factors, including citizens' recognition of current governance realities and their aspirations for democratic governance. Understanding these intricate relationships is key to comprehending the evolving nature of democratic support in Africa.

The case studies of South Africa and Botswana further elaborate on the complex relationship between political governance quality, democratic governance outcomes, and support for democracy, showcasing contrasting trends despite both countries being recognised for their commitment to democratic principles and governance quality. In South Africa, the scenario presents a paradox where good political governance quality does not necessarily translate into positive democratic governance outcomes or heightened support for democracy. This discrepancy can be attributed to various factors, including persistent socio-economic inequalities, issues of corruption, and public disillusionment with the political process, which may overshadow the strengths of the country's democratic institutions and governance practices. Conversely, Botswana stands as an example where effective political governance has promoted democratic governance outcomes, subsequently reinforcing support for democracy. The success of Botswana in this regard can be linked to its stable political environment, sound economic policies, and a strong tradition of democratic governance, which have collectively contributed to positive perceptions and support for democracy among its citizens.

The contrasting experiences of Botswana and South Africa, despite their similar accolades for democratic commitment and governance quality, highlight that the dynamics influencing democratic outcomes and public support for democracy are multifaceted. These case studies highlight that while good political governance is a crucial component, it must be accompanied by other factors such as equitable economic policies, social justice, and effective public service

delivery to fully realize positive democratic governance outcomes and garner strong support for democracy.

My arguments and empirical findings add to the extensive and evolving literature on democracy in Africa. First, I contribute to the literature on public perceptions of democracy by exploring what informs public perceptions at a country (institutionalisation of democracy) and individual level (experience of democratic governance). A vast literature on democracy in Africa primarily focuses on the effect of democracy on development and stability but rarely accounts for public perceptions. Placing democratic governance as the intervening variable does not only specify whose democracy is at stake, but it also reveals citizen's commitment to democracy. In essence, by focusing on democratic governance as the intervening variable, the research provides insights into the complexities of democratic support, highlighting the factors that motivate or deter citizen engagement and commitment to democracy.

In highlighting the gap between the institutionalisation and public experience of democracy, the study highlights the limitation of international assessments of democratic and governance performance. These global indices and assessments often focus on quantifiable aspects of institutions, policies, and legal frameworks, while overlooking the nuanced and subjective experiences of individuals living within these systems. While international assessments provide valuable overviews of the state of democracy and governance based on standardized criteria, they may not fully capture the lived realities of individuals, including the day-to-day implications of governance practices on their rights, freedoms, and well-being. This limitation suggests a need for a more holistic approach to evaluating democratic and governance performance, one that incorporates both institutional analyses and the subjective experiences of citizens.

In the cross-national analysis, the study found that political governance is more positively associated with support for democracy than economic governance. This suggests that factors related to political governance, such as the rule of law, political freedoms, accountability, and transparency, are more influential in shaping citizens' support for democratic systems than economic factors like GDP growth or economic policies. Further insights emerge from the case studies, which indicate that there is a notable gap between the demand for democracy and its actual supply within the countries examined. This discrepancy points to a situation where citizens' aspirations and expectations for democratic governance exceed what is currently being provided by their political systems. This gap between demand and supply offers

important insights into the challenges and opportunities for enhancing democratic governance and fulfilling citizens' democratic aspirations.

Furthermore, findings from the case study suggest a high rejection of alternatives to democracy in all case studies. Although support for democracy is low in South Africa and Sudan, this does not equate to the rejection of democracy in itself, however, the rejection of poor democratic governance. The case of Zimbabwe presents an interesting paradox where there is a high level of support for democracy among its citizens, yet satisfaction with democracy and perceptions regarding the extent of its implementation remains low. This reveals that Zimbabweans are aware that democracy is not being supplied. This awareness does however have a limited expression in political engagement. In contrast, Botswana, known for its relatively stable democratic governance and high support for democracy, has experienced a noticeable decline in political governance quality. This decline has been accompanied by declines in satisfaction with democracy, indicating that Batswana are aware of decreases in the quality of governance and democratic governance and thereby highlighting the sensitivity of public perceptions to changes in governance standards.

The lack of commitment to democracy by citizens poses a greater threat than institutional rankings. Furthermore, though international rankings provide important insight into the state of countries, they do not provide insight into citizen's political psyche. As mentioned, by examining both country and individual levels of analysis, I was able to identify the bottlenecks. In Sudan, military rule, ethnic-based politics, weak state institutions, coups, high poverty, and food insecurity are some of the consequences of bad governance. Despite these consequences, Sudanese are politically active citizens.

Counter to the international and regional trend of a largely politically inactive youth, young Sudanese are politically engaged. This active engagement comes in the form of anti-government protest actions, membership in community or voluntary groups, and attendance of community meetings. These political engagements have yielded meaningful change with the most evident being the ousting of al-Bashir in 2019. This event marked an important historical moment in Sudan's political history, demonstrating the power of collective action and the potential for citizens' engagement to effect meaningful change. This can be seen as a direct consequence of the Sudanese people's refusal to remain passive in the face of governance

failures, highlighting the critical role of public engagement in the quest for democratic governance and accountability.

In Zimbabwe, the lack of separation of power between the president and state, high inflation, high unemployment, the suppression of freedom of speech and expression, flawed elections, and violence against citizens are some of the consequences of poor governance. Despite these significant governance issues, there is a notable discrepancy in the political landscape of Zimbabwe. While there is a high level of support for democracy among the population, this support contrasts sharply with low satisfaction levels regarding the current state of democracy and perceptions of its extent within the country. However, unlike the case of Sudan, where political activism has led to substantial political change, Zimbabweans demonstrate lower levels of political activism. This relative lack of political engagement could be attributed to various factors, including constrained political space and the history of electoral and political suppression. The experiences may deter active engagement, leaving citizens with few avenues to express their dissatisfaction or effect change.

Interestingly, Botswana is the only case study that has high economic and political governance as well as high perceptions on the extent of democracy and support for democracy, yet satisfaction is modest. For Botswana, the continued decline in political governance specifically, declines in trust in state institutions, weak opposition parties, state censorship, the lack of separation of power between the presidency and the state, and low participatory democracy prevent the consolidation of democracy. Like Zimbabweans, there is low civic engagement in Botswana. Apart from the attendance of community meetings, other components of civic engagement in Botswana are below the regional averages. Understanding the reasons behind the limited civic engagement in Botswana is crucial for identifying strategies to encourage more active participation in the democratic process, ensuring that governance remains responsive to the needs and aspirations of all citizens.

Like Sudan, civic engagement is high in South Africa, yet support, satisfaction, and perceptions of the extent of democracy are low. Afrobarometer survey data have consistently shown a decline in support for democracy across multiple rounds, reflecting a concerning trend on the African continent. Among the case studies examined, South Africa presents a unique case where support for democracy is closely tied to economic governance, indicating that in South Africa, support for democracy is primarily driven by instrumental values. Additionally, South Africa is also the only country where political governance has remained stable over the years,

whereas economic governance has sharply declined. These sharp declines in economic governance have been met with significant declines in support for democracy and the increased willingness to embrace non-democratic alternatives.

The findings of this study also reveal that, on average, Africans tend to reach the same evaluations and conclusions about the extent of democracy in their countries as experts. This challenges the perception that because of low levels of formal education, development, and economic growth, Africans do not have a good understanding of democracy and are therefore not good judges of the state of democracy.

This thesis suggests that the discussion on democracy and governance in Africa needs to move beyond the question of whether or not it is relevant. Consequently, democracy in Africa also needs to move beyond the quest for survival. There are valuable lessons from each case study on democratic resilience and commitment to democracy in the absence of conditions that facilitate the strengthening of democracy. Each case study also provides valuable lessons on the bottlenecks that restrain democracy – as highlighted by findings from individual case studies.

Overall, this study establishes that it is not easy to summarise the type of democracy that is emerging in Africa or the state of democracy. On the one hand, it appears that Africans are increasingly resorting to alternative forms of political expression. Growing dissatisfaction and poor political governance coincide with a rise in authoritarian regimes, protests, violent conflict, and coups. At present, 16 African countries are facing sustained armed conflict. Of the 16 armed conflicts, 12 are with authoritarian-leaning governments, and 8 are political or civil wars.

On the other hand, the peaceful transition of power in the 2017 elections in Liberi, the 2021 indictment of South Africa's former president Jacob Zuma, the 2016 ousting of Gambia's long-standing president Yahya Jammeh, and the successful peaceful transfer of power in Ghana provides caution to the pessimistic outlook. Moreover, democracy in two of the continent's strongest and oldest democracies – Botswana and Mauritius are still stable and healthy, and most Africans are still committed to democracy and its principles.

The findings on public attitudes towards democracy give rise to both deep concern and optimism. Most Africans support democracy, are committed, and are willing to defend democracy. The preliminary findings of Round 8 of the Afrobarometer survey reveal that support for democracy increased from 64 percent in Round 7 to 69 percent. However, satisfaction with democracy is lower and is experiencing sharp, long-term declines. Between 2016/2018 and 2019/2021, satisfaction with democracy declined from 42 percent to 43 percent. Long-term gaps show that, despite most Africans being committed to democracy, most governments are not fulfilling citizens' democratic aspirations.

Notably, bad governance is not unique to Africa. However, given the fragile institutions and democratic foundation, its consequences are prolonged and more severe. Thus, the will and commitment to democracy by Africans should not be underestimated.

Overall, the third wave of democratisation in Africa is still in process and needs significant resources and time to mature. As Africa navigates the complexities of sustaining and deepening democracy, a critical step is the delinking of the democratic process from the mere quest for survival. For democracy to thrive and be meaningful, it must transcend being seen as a mere mechanism for addressing basic survival needs. Instead, democracy should be understood and valued as a system that upholds principles such as justice, equality, and the rule of law while also effectively managing the diverse needs and aspirations of its citizens.

The health, stability, and future of democracy in Africa are dependent on the state's capacity and commitment to both supply and enrich democratic governance. This involves not only maintaining democratic institutions and processes but also ensuring that these systems are inclusive, accountable, and responsive to the citizens. Ultimately, for democracy to be sustainable and resilient in Africa, it must be anchored in a genuine commitment to democratic principles at both the institutional and societal levels. This requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders, including governments, civil society, and the international community, to nurture and reinforce democratic governance that truly serves the interests and upholds the dignity of all citizens.

Contribution

The thesis contributes to the study of democracy in Africa broadly. One of the primary contributions is the introduction and emphasis on the democratic experience as a crucial, potentially primary, intervening variable in sustaining democracy in Africa. By shifting the focus from institutional performance and global rankings to the lived experiences of African citizens, the thesis provides a more nuanced understanding of how democracy is perceived, valued, and supported at the grassroots level. This approach highlights the importance of considering the subjective experiences of citizens and how these experiences shape their democratic values and preferences. This contribution is significant because it adds depth to the discourse on democracy in Africa, suggesting that the strength and resilience of democracy on the continent may be more intricately tied to the everyday democratic experiences of its citizens than previously acknowledged.

Secondly, the thesis builds on the works of Bratton and Mattes (2001) and Alence (2004) and contributes to experiences of democracy in Africa by re-evaluating the established causal relationship, positioning governance quality as the independent variable and support for or satisfaction with democracy as the dependent variable. This reversal, coupled with the inclusion of public perceptions and the examination of democratic governance as an intervening variable, offers a fresh perspective on the interplay between governance quality and democratic support. This methodological innovation enables a more comprehensive analysis of how governance quality, as perceived by the public, influences attitudes towards democracy. Furthermore, it enriches the existing literature by providing empirical insights into the dynamics underpinning popular attitudes towards democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa, thereby enhancing understanding of the factors that foster or hinder democratic engagement and satisfaction in Africa.

Finally, the thesis makes a methodological contribution by employing a “nested” analysis approach, combining cross-national statistical analysis with case studies of countries demonstrating divergent trends in democracy and governance. This methodological approach allows for a robust examination of the hypothesis that political governance is more strongly associated with support for democracy than economic governance. The findings from this analysis contribute to the literature by providing empirical evidence that supports the argument that intrinsic values associated with political governance, such as political participation and

civil liberties, are crucial determinants of public support for democracy. This empirical contribution is significant as it challenges conventional narratives and provides a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing democratic support in diverse African contexts.

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