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## **A Critique of Democracy and Development in Ghana: Any Symbiotic Relationship?**

**Bernard Okoampah Otu**

Lecturer, Department of Liberal Studies, Koforidua Polytechnic, Ghana

**Ferdinand Otibo Owusu**

Lecturer, Department of Liberal Studies, Koforidua Polytechnic, Ghana

**Kwasi Amoako Ohene**

Lecturer, Department of Liberal Studies, Koforidua Polytechnic, Ghana

### ***Abstract:***

*Ghana since independence has enjoyed some level of democracy but had seen stability in its democratic dispensation from the Fourth Republic (1992 – present) where there has been a smooth transition from one democratic elected government to the other. The return to democracy was premised on the fact that the country will be inundated with development. The paper is guided by the qualitative paradigm using exclusively reports of the Ghana Statistical Survey on poverty 6 (2005 – 2013) and the Ghana health and demographic survey reports (2014) to analyse the relationship between democracy and development in the context of Ghana. The article argues that democracy over the period has not tremendously improved development in Ghana but however has shown a slow and gradual process as indicated in the various variables as contained in the reports used. The article therefore makes a case for strict adherence to the principles of democracy and good governance so as to deliver socio economic goods to the citizenry.*

***Keywords:*** Democracy, development, Ghana, symbiotic, relationship.

### **1. Introduction**

The new wave of democratization as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union has led to the placement of emphasis on democracy to provide the basic requirement of good governance and development (Ardo 2000). Largely since 1976, most African countries have since return to the democratic dispensation as a result of both internal and external pressures. The democratic aspiration of the African is not only confined to the arena of political democracy (of elections and granting of civil and political rights) but involves the demand for economic empowerment, better living standards and adequate social welfare (Adejumobi 2000). Such optimism according to Oslon (1993) is predicated on the realisation that democracy stimulate development.

Ghana since the inception of independence has seen military interruptions in its governance process except for the 4<sup>th</sup> (fourth) Republic in 1992 till now which has enjoyed stability and seen a transfer of power from one democratically elected government to another. The country has been alluded to as the gateway to Africa and in its recent history has been applauded for its democratic credentials. The various democratic regimes in Ghana have development as a key part of their slogan. The First Republic under Dr. Kwame Nkrumah and his Convention People's Party had "work and happiness as its slogan. Under the Second Republic of the Progress Party the slogan was "progress, prosperity and being your brother's keeper". The Third Republic under Dr. Limann of the People's National Party had "rehabilitation and rededication as its slogan. The Fourth Republic under Jerry John Rawlings had as its slogan "development, stability, probity, accountability and integrity and under President John Kuffour the slogan was "development in freedom and positive change". For president John Mills and John Mahama the same slogan "building a better Ghana was used.

With development as a key agenda of the various democratic regimes in Ghana, each and every Ghanaian expected that a return to democratic rule will spur rapid development. This situation is somehow bleak as Ghana is still left behind in the sphere of human development. This has led many people (citizenry) to hold doubts on whether development is achievable under democratic dispensation. The idea of development today stands like a ruin in the intellectual landscape. Delusion and disappointment, failures have been the steady companions of development.

The paper takes a look at the nexus between democracy and development in Ghana from the Fourth Republic (1992 to present) using indicators such as poverty, unemployment, continuity of governance, and the human development index.

### **2. The Concept of Democracy**

The concept of democracy is an old age concept. The termed is coined from the Greek words; demos (people) and Kratos (rule) which in simple terms means rule by people. Schmitter and Karl (1999) observed that there is no one form of democracy. In some jurisdictions it is democracy by consensus and in others it is by competition. Yet in some power is shared by the majority and minority (Sri lanka) whereas in some democracies there is more public authority action (Sweden)and in others there is more private action

(USA). Sisk (1992) makes a case that it is not appropriate to simply categorise countries as “democratic” and “authoritarian”. He asserts that there are many “hybrid” regimes that combine elements of both. For those in the Pacific Islands, competitive political systems are not based on traditional political parties but on competing family group and individuals (Freedom House 1993).

Diamond (2005) defined democracy as a system of government in which people choose their leaders and representatives, and replace them in regular, free and fair elections. Democracy therefore in the view of Malan (2009) involves popular participation in the process of governance, equality among citizens, sovereignty of the people, promotion and protection of human rights and essential freedoms and supremacy of the rule of law. The element of democracy is inherent in the good governance discourse which holds that a government should legitimately come to power by virtue of being elected (Sabina 2003).

Over the past two decades the concept of good governance has become fundamental to both private and public sector management and now occupies center stage in development thinking. As a concept governance has ancient roots. Confucius, an experienced official and philosopher wrote that a well ordered society requires government based on superior morality. John Locke grappled with the questions on the evolution of good governance and of society’s relationship with authority. Jean – Jacques Rousseau argued the idea of a social contract between rulers and the ruled. Max Weber discussed the evolution of good governance in Western Europe. His analysis of modern, rational states, written in the C19th, foreshadowed modern western ideas of good governance (Brautigam 1991).

The World Bank (1989) noted “underlying the litany of Africa’s development problem is the crisis of governance”. The study linked good governance to leadership, authority, legitimacy, accountability, management and use of information and the failure to observe the rule of law.

Good governance is thus participatory, transparent, and accountable. It is effective, equitable, promotes rule of law and ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on a broad consensus in society, and that “the other voices” of the citizenry are heard in decision making more especially with regard to the allocation of public resources for sustainable development. The major objective of good governance is to achieve sustainable development through meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generation.

### **3. The Concept of Development**

The concept of development is nebulous as it is used in relation to different phenomenon. Various scholars including Cowen and Shetton (1996) have tried to situate the origin of the concept of development from two historical epochs. The first related to the emergence of capitalism in C18th Europe and the other the post-world war two (2) period. Amanor (2013) postulated that development is a process of immanent historical and social change that characterises all societies as they grow and transform themselves. Historical epochs of change and transitions of societies in this instance create attendant social problems that need to be interpreted, analysed and solved by interventions.

Historically the process of capitalist industrial revolution in C18th Europe resulted for example in social problems of unemployment, surplus population, poverty among others that needed to be solved by planned interventions. These problems constitute what the concept of development arose to solve.

Eventually, as a result of colonialism and imperialism these problems in Europe were exported to other continents resulting in the need to initiate a process of social and economic planning to contain the social dislocations brought by this change. The discourse of development is implicated in power relationships and serves to perpetuate international relations of dominance and subordination. Abrahamsen (2000) posits that contemporary development discourse aims to show how the so called good governance agenda, which emerged as the cold war came to an end, is an intrinsic part of the technologies of power employed in international politics and one of the many ways in which the “North” legitimises its continued power and hegemony

During the post-world war two the discourse of development was traced to the speech given by Truman (33<sup>rd</sup> president of USA) when he stated that “we must embark on a bold new programme making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas. It was in this light that development was measured in terms of growth of the economy over the year (Amanor 2013). However, in Africa where most people are employed in the informal sector, it is difficult to make meaning out of such measurement. Sen (1989) questioned the notion of development based on economic efficiency without considerations of social welfare and well – being.

He advanced the case that concepts of fundamental human rights, human entitlements and capabilities should be outmost concern in defining what development is – thus to Sen (1989) development should be concerned with creating structures which enable people to develop their own solution to problems and which encourages them to develop the capabilities to achieve this. The UNDP (1990) thus defines development as a process of enlarging people’s choices that leads to a long and healthy life, better education, a decent standard of living, political freedom, guaranteed human rights and self-respect.

### **4. The Nexus between Democracy and Development**

The nexus between democracy and development remains contestable even in our present dispensation. There are scholars who are of the view that liberal democracy provides the basic foundation for economic development. Stockemer (2009) and Lewis (2008) are two key scholars who hold such view that democracy promotes sustainable development because inherent in democracy are ideals which increases transparency and accountability.

Other values they postulated like freedom of speech and association, the rule of law, multi-party and elections, protection of human rights and separation of powers creates institutional context and processes for economic development to take place. Pel (1999) argued that the linkage between democracy and development rest on the central idea that, political institutions critical to economic development exists and function effectively under democratic rule.

Among these institutions he argued include the rule of law, which protects property rights, individual liberty which fosters creativity and entrepreneurship, the freedom of expression which ensures the production and unimpeded flow of information, and institutional checks and balances that prevent massive theft of the public purse. This study was based on comparative analysis using 115 countries from 1960 – 1980 using institutional approach to analyse the level of development in these countries.

The argument of Leftwich (1993) and Przewoski (1993) counter such claims by stating that democracy is not a key pre requisite to development. Their argument is anchored on the fact that the foundations of most modern advance economies were laid under non democratic or highly limited democratic conditions example Britain, Bismarckan Germany and Miji Japan. The bureaucratic authoritarian model of Latin America in the 1970's and 1980's and the developmental authoritarian regimes in East Asia in 1980's and early 1990's according to Adejumobi (2000) are instructive in this regard.

Przeworski (1990) in linking democracy to development stated that democratic governments may not have the political will to undertake certain key development if that has the capability of affecting a group or population negatively for fear of losing elections. This situation could either slow development or hinder it entirely.

These two scholarly positions have not really resolve the issue as to whether there is a relationship between democracy and development although they have used cross countries empirical studies to support their argument. This current article will focus specifically on Ghana and use development indicators such as unemployment, poverty, continuity in governance and the HDI to see the extent to which democracy imparts on development if there is any from 1992 to present.

### **5. Unemployment and Development in Ghana**

Unemployment figures in any given country are a key indicator of measuring development. A developing country is one that has its unemployment rates declining. A country with higher employment rate translates into increase in the rate of purchasing power, increase in savings and financial security which will invariably lead to an enhancement in economic activities.

In Ghana, over the years the rate of unemployment has been increasing at an alarming rate since the country returned to democratic rule. In 1992/93 the rate of unemployment was 4.7%, in 1998/99 the figure shot to 8.2% and in the year 2000 it rose to 10.4%. In the year 2005, the unemployment figure picked the highest at 12.5% and between 2006 and 2010 the figure has declined to 5.9%. Although there is a sharp decline in unemployment rates in Ghana, a lot more of the youth in the country are struggling to find meaningful employment after school. This situation is therefore a cause of concern and as such pragmatic interventions must be introduced to address the situation.

### **6. Continuity in Governance and Development in Ghana**

Democratic governance is a continuum and so a truncation in the policies and programmes of one democratically elected government to another impacts negatively on the citizenry. In Ghana since 1992 through to 2000 and 2012 the country has enjoyed a peaceful democratic transition from one democratically elected government to the other. These transitions had come with its own programmes and policies curtailing what were initiated by previous governments.

In the education sector, the three (3) year Senior High School was changed to four (4) years in the year 2000 when the New Patriotic Party in Ghana took over the mantle of democratic governance. This situation was reversed when the NPP lost power to the National Democratic Party in 2008. The four-year Senior High School was reversed to three (3) years. These frequent changes in programmes and policies in the education sector which is the bedrock of knowledge does not inure to the benefits of the students and the country at large. These change in policies and programmes are as a result of political expedience and nothing else.

The estimated housing deficit in Ghana today is about 1.7 million units. The New Patriotic Party under President Kuffour initiated the affordable housing project when they came to power in the year 2000. Areas in Ghana that had these projects included Kpone and Borteman in the Greater Accra Region, Asokore Mampong in Ashanti Region, Koforidua in the Eastern Region, Tamale in the Northern Region among others. The intent of these projects was to bridge the housing deficit in the country.

However, upon the change or transition in government in 2008, the housing units, at various levels of completion has stalled and currently at a varying degree of deterioration. A number of capital intensive projects such as roads, bridges etc have been left at a deplorable uncompleted stage just because there is a change in government from one democratic elected government to the other. When a succeeding government has continued the projects of previous governments it has taken that government quiet a long time to do so. This situation cannot be said to be development as the citizenry do not ripe from the completion of such developmental projects. A policy can therefore be more useful and predictable to the citizenry if it is not overly politicised by contesting democratic political regimes.

### **7. Poverty and Development in Ghana**

One major indicator of measuring the presence of development or otherwise of a particular state is the poverty incidence. Ghana is Africa's biggest miner after South Africa and the world's second largest producer of cocoa after Ivory Coast, yet the country is engrossed in poverty most especially in rural locations of the country. The poverty line beneath which one is regarded as poor was set at 1,314 Ghana Cedis (\$1.83) and that of the extreme poverty was set at 792.05 Ghana Cedis (\$1.10) (GLSS. 2012). In 1998/1999 the poverty incidence in Ghana was 39.5% and fell to 31.9% in 2005/2006. In 20012/2013 the figure further declined to 24.2%. For extreme poverty the figure was 16.5% in 2005/2006 and fell to 8.4% in 2012/2013.

The implication of these figures is that in Ghana today about a quarter of the population are poor whilst under a tenth of the population are in extreme poverty. Although the level of extreme poverty in the country is relatively low and that Ghana is the first country in Sub Saharan Africa to meet the MDG 1 target of halving extreme poverty by 2015, the incidence of poverty is concentrated in the

rural savannah with more than a quarter of the people being extremely poor. In the Upper West Region 70.7% are poor, in the Upper East the poverty incidence is 44.4% and in the Northern Region it is 50.4%. The level of poverty disparity between the South and North in Ghana needs to be breached to ensure an even development agenda of the country.

### 8. Human Development Index

The human development index is a composite measure of health; education and income which helps assess the standard of living of a particular country. Key indicator of health include the infant and under five (5) mortality rates which according to UNDP (2007) are basic indicators of a country socio economic situation and quality of life. Infant mortality over Ghana's democratic dispensation has declined from 76.7 to 51.3 per 1000 live births in 1990 to 2009 respectively. In relation to under five (5) mortality rates there has been a decline from 111 per 1000 live birth in 2003 to 80 per 1000 live birth in 2008. The figure further decreased to 60 per 1000 live birth in 2014 (GHDS 2008 and 2014). This decline in child mortality however shows that one (1) in every thirteen (13) Ghanaian die before reaching age five (5yrs). On maternal health, the Ghana Health Demographic Survey (2008) showed that by 2008, 95% of mothers received antenatal care for their most recent birth compared to 82% in 1988. Another health indicator of HDI is the life expectancy rate. The life expectancy of Ghanaians has seen a remarkable rise from 1990 to 2013. In 1990 it rose to 56.8yrs, it further increased in 1995 to 57.5yrs, 57.0yrs in 2000, 60.6yrs in 2010, and 61.1yrs in 2013.

For education, Adult literacy is the population of age 15 and above who can read and write short statement in their everyday life which includes numeracy. In the year 2000, the population of adult literacy in Ghana was 58%, in 2009 the figure rose to 66.6% and in 2010 it stood at 71%.

All these indicators are a reflection of the country's Human Development Index. The composition of Ghana's HDI has varied values and positions with respect to other countries. In 1990 Ghana's HDI stood at 0.502 and place 102<sup>nd</sup> position. The figure dropped to 0.487 (116<sup>th</sup>) in the year 2000, while in 2010 the figure increased to 0.556 to occupy 140<sup>th</sup> position. Currently the HDI of Ghana is 0.588 and ranked 138<sup>th</sup> position out of 187 countries. Currently Ghana's HDI of 0.588 is below the average of 0.614 for countries in the medium development bracket but it is above of 0.502 for countries in Sub Saharan Africa.

### 9. Conclusion

The practice of democracy as a system of governance is most popular globally but its relationship with development is complex and varied even though inherent in the former are institutions that support development. The reality of fact is that the nature of a political regime may not necessarily determine the rate of development in a country thus democracy although important for development, it is not a prerequisite for development.

Using various indicators from the democratic dispensation from 1992 to present, it is obvious that democracy has not tremendously improved development in Ghana although a slow and gradual progress is the case as the various indicators point out. For economic development to take place in a country, the State must be a "developmental state". A developmental state is that which is essentially nationalistic in orientation and sets as its primacy the task of development. The state must therefore be able to facilitate rapid process of capital accumulation and industrialisation, while not compromising on the goal of social welfare of the people (Adejumobi 2000).

This article therefore makes a case for strict adherence to the principles of democracy and good governance. Democracy is meaningful if only it delivers socio economic goods to the citizenry.

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