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“The World Bank Made Me Do It?” International Factors and Ghana’s Transition to Democracy

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“The World Bank made me do it”?

Domestic and International factors in Ghana’s transition to democracy*

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Abbreviations

BNI	Bureau of National Investigations
CBC	Catholic Bishops' Conference
CCG	Christian Council of Ghana
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CSO	civil society organisation
DA	District Assembly
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
GBA	Ghana Bar Association
CHRAJ	Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice
GJA	Ghana Journalists Association
GNAT	Ghana National Association of Teachers
IEA	Institute of Economic Affairs
IFI	international financial institutions
IPAC	Inter-Party Advisory Committee
MFJ	Movement of Freedom and Justice
NCCE	National Commission for Civic Education
NCD	National Commission for Democracy
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NDM	New Democratic Movement
NPP	New Patriotic Party
NUGS	National Union of Ghanaian Students
ODA	Overseas Development Administration (British)
PNDC	Provisional National Defence Council
SAP	structural adjustment program
TUC	Trades Union Congress
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Ghana is widely regarded as a signal success story in the African “wave” of democratizations of the 1990s. Moreover, since the country’s return to constitutional rule in 1992, Ghana’s transition to democracy appears to be steadily consolidating as the country re-establishes a long-standing two-party tradition and continues to maintain high levels of political competition and contestation within a stable and relatively free political environment.¹ What drove that transition then, is a question of vital interest.

This paper considers the role of domestic and international factors respectively in shaping the direction and pace of Ghana’s transitions. There are two distinct phases in that transition. In the first phase, dated from 1988–1992, there was significant pressure from below (from pro-democracy forces operating within Ghana) but political change was primarily directed from the top down. In this phase then it was the executive decision to embark on political liberalization that was consequential, and explaining this decision is key. I argue that liberalization in this instance was not a result of weakness, nor was it the case that agitation by domestic political activists forced President JJ Rawlings into reform. Instead, liberalization in Rawlings’ Ghana represented a controlled, pragmatic response to an area of key (financial) vulnerability by an otherwise remarkably successful regime. This is not to say that the move was undertaken voluntarily; rather, consistent pressure from the international financial institutions (IFIs) and associated donors motivated Rawlings to consider liberalization of the political regime and a return to

¹ One should, of course, not be too complacent about the outcomes in Ghana. While there has been remarkable political and economic progress in that country over the last 20 years, there are still considerable obstacles to the full realisation of democracy. As Jeff Haynes points out “structural and institutional logics [that are profoundly anti-democratic] – such as embedded structures and processes of patronage and clientelism... - often remain... at the heart of political competition.” Jeff Haynes, “The Possibility of Democratic Consolidation in Ghana,” *Democratization* 6, no. 1 (1999): 49. Moreover, the process of political competition in Ghana remains one that is dominated by local and regional elites, and the full participation of the country’s poorest citizens in political decision-making continues to be constrained.

constitutionalism. This pressure was likely reinforced by evidence that, if he did hold elections, he was likely to win them.

The second phase of the transition followed from 1992-2000; in this phase the transition was strengthened and consolidated as growing political freedoms and rising levels of competition began to allow a more even-handed contest of power. Here the dynamics of liberalization took on a power of their own; opposition political parties grew more organized and astute, and the popularity of the ruling PNDC waned, ultimately affecting its re-electability. Again, in this second phase, international support for democracy was important, this time helping to strengthen the electoral process and to facilitate the reassertion of a longstanding if somewhat latent two-party system. Here the key moment was not the holding of any particular election, but rather Rawlings' willingness to step down in 2000 when the third successive national election handed power to his political opponents. In this phase, it is this decision to step down then that must be explained. Here I argue that Rawlings was essentially trapped by the logic of earlier decisions and by the unacceptable trade-offs he would have faced if he had chosen to overrule the electorate.

In short, over the entire period of the transition, domestic and international factors interacted and reinforced each other in important ways. In particular, international factors were most potent where they keyed into the core vulnerability of the Ghanaian regime – namely its weak financial condition - and these pressures served to strengthen existing (domestic) dynamics.² As I intimated earlier however, what is striking about the

² As Jeff Herbst has noted, this might be described as an instance of the mobilisation of bias. Certainly, one can see in the Ghanaian transition “a set of predominant values, beliefs, rituals, and institutional procedures (‘rules of the game’) that operate[d] systematically and consistently to the benefits of certain persons and groups at the expense of others.” Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz, *Power and Poverty: Theory and*

Ghanaian transition was that it was not initiated by a particularly insecure or fragile regime. On the contrary, while the PNDC regime was vulnerable financially, in most respects it was a remarkably strong regime. After decades of severe economic and political crisis, Rawlings and his government had successfully reestablished a baseline level of security for the country and overseen the recovery of the economy. As a result of these achievements, Rawlings' government was popular with a broad stratum of the society and likely, in any case, to win a national ballot. This background context was crucial to the initial decision to liberalise for two reasons. First, it is almost unthinkable that local activists could have successfully pursued a sustainable political transition amidst the chaos and economic collapse of the early 1980s. Second, the PNDC government, nudged from without by the IFIs and from within by those activists, chose in the end to move down the path of democracy because it promised tremendous rewards and threatened few unacceptable costs for the incumbents.

This paper draws on primary and secondary documents concerning the transition as well as detailed interviews and correspondence with over twenty actors, many directly involved in the transition, including international diplomats, pro-democracy activists and high ranking members of the PNDC (much of the key evidence comes directly from Rawlings himself). For those unfamiliar with the Ghanaian case, I summarize the modalities of the transition in section one. Sections two and three consider the role of domestic and international factors respectively. The final section analyses the interaction between the various factors and considers the wider implications of the argument.

Practice (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 43. In this case, it can be argued that there was an important set of convergences around the value and importance of Western –style democracy and the need to hold multi-party elections, both from international and domestic actors.

Section 1: The Ghanaian transition

Rather than a single, decisive moment of “democratic breakthrough,” Ghana experienced instead a gradual transition to democracy, stretched out over at least a dozen years (see table one, overleaf). The background was that the PNDC, under the leadership of Flight Lieutenant Rawlings, had come to power by means of a military coup in 1981. After initial, failed attempts to repair the country’s economic crisis by means of heterodox measures, the PNDC turned to the World Bank and adopted instead a structural adjustment program (SAP) in 1983. These reforms and the renewed access to international finance that they permitted enabled the country’s economic recovery.

Major landmarks in Ghana’s transition to democracy		
1988-9	District Assembly elections; contested on a no-party basis	<u>Phase 1:</u> Political liberalization
1991-2	Consultative Assembly meets to draft new constitution	
April 18, 1992	Referendum to ratify draft constitution	
November 3, December 29, 1992	First multiparty national elections for both the parliament and the presidency; some dispute re how free and fair they are. NDC, led by Rawlings, wins	<- First election (disputed)
1996	Second multiparty presidential and parliamentary elections; widely regarded as free and fair. NDC, led by Rawlings, wins again.	<u>Phase 2:</u> <- Second election (free and fair)
2000	Third set of elections result in an alternation in power: Opposition NPP, led by Kufuor, wins the election and takes office	<- Third election (alternation in power)

Table 1

Political liberalization began with the launch of the so-called “Blue Book”³ in 1987, paving the way for the holding of no-party but nonetheless contested District Assembly (DA) elections in the late 1980s and for regional consultations hosted by the National Commission of Democracy (NCD) on the future direction of the political process.

In late August 1991, the Consultative Assembly was inaugurated to draft a new constitution and by the end of March, 1992, a revised draft constitution was submitted to Rawlings. This proposed constitution was the subject of a referendum a month later and was approved by over 90 percent of voters.

In the decade that followed, government lifted the ban on political activity (mid-May 1992) and went on to mount three rounds of nationwide, multiparty elections at regular, four-year intervals. In the first election, Rawlings and his ruling party, reorganized and renamed as the National Democratic Congress (NDC) triumphed, winning close to 60 percent of the votes. Some in the opposition cried foul but most election observers felt that the election results *did* fairly reflect popular sentiment.

From this point on, a series of incremental, behind the scenes electoral reforms significantly improved the conduct of elections. The results of the second elections in 1996, although they were won once again by Rawlings and the NDC, were not disputed.⁴ Political liberalization continued too with growing freedom of the press and of association.

³ The full and less mellifluous title is Unattributed, "District Political Authority and Modalities for District Level Elections," (Accra, Ghana: National Commission for Democracy, 1987).

⁴ Instead, the leader of the opposition, John Agyekum Kufuor, graciously conceded defeat and congratulated Rawlings on his victory. Mike Oquaye, "Government and Politics in Contemporary Ghana (1992-1999): A Study," (Accra, Ghana: African Governance Institute, 2000), 6.

Four years later, the third set of elections, was won by John Agyekum Kufuor and the liberal opposition party, the New Patriotic Party (NPP). A peaceful, constitutionally sanctioned change in government in Ghana followed in December 2000.

Despite the long lead-in and gradual process of democratization, we should not underestimate what a milestone this 2000 “turnover” election was: it was, after all, “the first time in Ghana’s history that a democratically elected government ha[d] seen out its term of office and handed over power to another party in a constitutionally approved way.”⁵

It is difficult then to identify the Ghanaian transition with a single, defining moment; there was instead a gradual and contested process of liberalization and democratisation, characterized initially by high levels of uncertainty (among democratic activists, that is) about the course of the reforms and the intentions of government, and much skepticism about how fundamental the changes that ensued would be. Nonetheless there is no question that, over the course of a dozen years or so, Ghana shifted decisively away from “politics-as-war” (or violent conflict, at least) to “politics-as bargaining.”⁶

Section 2: Domestic factors

Background

As indicated above, Jerry Rawlings' PNDC took power in the early 1980s, in the midst of devastating political and economic crises – a situation in which even Ghana’s

⁵ Antoinette Handley and Greg Mills, "From Military Coups to Multiparty Elections: The Ghanaian Military-Civil Transition," in *Working paper series* (The Hague, The Netherlands: Conflict research unit, Netherlands Institute of International Relations, 2001), 9.

⁶ I cite Joseph Ayee here, using Sartori’s famous formulation. Joseph R A Ayee, "Introduction," in *The 1996 General Elections and Democratic Consolidation in Ghana*, ed. Joseph R A Ayee (Legon, Ghana: Department of Political Science, University of Ghana, Undated), 4.

so-called elites occasionally had trouble finding enough food to eat.⁷ Many felt that the country had touched rock bottom. This dire context is why the PNDC's subsequent, successful restructuring of the economy would win so much support for that regime. After initial failed heterodox attempts to right the economy, Rawlings' government, led by Finance Minister Kwesi Botchwey, turned to the World Bank and IMF and began to implement one of Africa's earliest and most rigorous SAPs. Whether as a result of the reforms themselves, or of the huge inflows of foreign capital that the program facilitated is hard to say, but Ghana's economic crisis moderated over the course of the 1980s and some semblance of normality began to return to the country's markets.⁸

Any account of Ghanaian politics in this period must start with Rawlings himself who is a remarkable figure, not least because of his ability to carve a semblance of order and stability - even economic recovery - out of a situation of terrifying chaos. Tremendously charismatic, Rawlings articulated a strong, inspiring vision of Ghana, and demonstrated in his politics a close affinity with the poor and hitherto marginalized in Ghanaian life. He vowed to revolutionize the structure of Ghanaian politics by demolishing the structural barriers that had long prevented meaningful participation by ordinary Ghanaians in political decisionmaking. Throughout his political career, he situated himself as a formidable opponent of the existing political elites, professionals and intellectuals. Especially in the 1980s, he often found himself siding with Leftists and Marxists, but he was himself not particularly ideologically hidebound. Instead, one of

⁷ For an excellent account of this period and its difficulties, see Douglas Rimmer, *Staying Poor: Ghana's Political Economy 1950 -1990* (Oxford, UK: Pergamon Press, 1992).

⁸ Jeffrey Herbst, *The Politics of Reform in Ghana, 1982-1991* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

Rawling's most admirable characteristics was his ability and willingness to seek solutions wherever they presented themselves.

However, Rawlings was also possessed of a ruthless streak. He is not and has never been a friend of Western liberal democracy, and this too shaped the nature of his regime, especially its first decade. In describing the atmosphere of the late 1980s and early 1990s, Gyimah-Boadi described how Ghanaian civil society and its leadership had been "systematically harassed, chased into exile, targeted with pernicious legislation and forcibly infiltrated," such that "[t]he most politically vigorous elements of Ghana's normally strong civil society ha[d] been largely subdued through systematic political repression."⁹ Much of this was the work of Rawlings' supporters.

The PNDC established its repressive capacity principally via the Bureau of National Investigations (BNI), used to monitor and control sources of dissension and opposition in the broader Ghanaian population.¹⁰ Opposition figures (even those within the PNDC) and pro-democracy activists could be punished for opposing the direction adopted by the core leadership; many were detained and others chose to flee into exile. There were documented instances of the arrest and torture of opponents¹¹ and the use of political violence (including murder), although it was not always clear that the latter occurred entirely under the control of the state, especially in the somewhat anarchic

⁹ E Gyimah-Boadi, "Ghana: Adjustment, State Rehabilitation and Democratization," in *Between Liberalisation and Oppression: The Politics of Structural Adjustment in Africa*, ed. Thandika Mkandawire and Adebayo Olukoshi (Dakar, Senegal: CODESRIA, 1995), 226. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the British Human Rights Commission played an important role in keeping a spotlight on political detainees and hence helping to protect them to some degree at this time.

¹⁰ Gyimah-Boadi describes the use of the state security apparatus, most especially the BNI "to intimidate and harass those perceived to be 'enemies' of the PNDC regime and its policies." Ibid., 224.

¹¹ Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the British All Party Parliamentary Human Rights Group played an important role in keeping a spotlight on political detainees and hence helping to protect them to some degree at this time. Akoto Ampaw, Personal interview with author, 17 December 2007, Kwesi Jr. Pratt, Personal interview with author, 12 December 2007.

period immediately after the coup; nonetheless, these measure contributed to generating a “culture of silence.” This was the background then in which the liberalization process began.

Phase one

As he was for so much else that went on in Ghana under the PNDC, President Rawlings was central to the country’s shift in political direction. As argued above, Rawlings was no believer in Western-style, multi-party democracy. Nonetheless by his own admission he allowed the Ghanaian political system to move in this direction because he understood that political liberalization would secure ongoing access, via the IFIs and donors, to the international funding that was crucial for the country’s continued economic recovery -- and hence to his own government’s popularity and solvency. Progress towards the other goals that he cared about therefore depended on his permitting political reform. The Ghanaian transition then represented a pragmatic response to a critical set of international pressures. As with the economic reform that had preceded it, when it came to political reform the PNDC proved to be a surprisingly clear-eyed regime, albeit one motivated “by a high degree of self-interest.”¹²

Under the PNDC, pro-democracy voices within the media and civil society were initially constrained by repressive measures (both legislated and others). In this period, Boafo-Arthur describes “feeble but persistent calls... to return the country to constitutional rule” by various civil society organizations (CSOs) and reminds us that these were “not backed by any sustained public agitations...strong enough to compel the

¹² Handley and Mills, "From Military Coups to Multiparty Elections: The Ghanaian Military-Civil Transition," 19.

PNDC to concede..."¹³ As the transition moved forward, Ghanaian civil society, opposition political parties and pro-democracy activists were emboldened by growing political freedoms; they did receive some modest support from donors and the international community (see below) but, for the most part, this followed rather than preceded the liberalization of politics in phase one.¹⁴

This first phase was characterized also by severe restrictions on the freedom of information and the freedom to contest the political process. State newspapers hewed closely to the official line and it was difficult for the unofficial press to survive. Press restrictions were enacted via legislative measures, (for example licensing requirements) as well as by exploiting structural advantages accorded to state controlled newspapers and radio stations. The independent press came in for some decidedly nasty forms of harassment, such as the dumping of human excrement at the offices of the *Free Press*.¹⁵

The late 1980s brought the first rustles of potential change. In February 1988 Prof Adu Boahen courageously delivered a set of public lectures that was highly critical of the status quo. A defence of liberal values and democracy, Boahen's lectures were regarded as defying the culture of silence and rejecting the model of no-party, people's democracy favoured by Rawlings and the PNDC.

¹³ Kwame Boafo-Arthur, "Prelude to Constitutional Rule: An Assessment of the Process," in *Ghana's Transition to Constitutional Rule*, ed. Kwame A Ninsin and Francis K Drah (Accra, Ghana: Ghana Universities Press, 1991), 42-3.

¹⁴ Having said that, the prospect of adverse international publicity along with ongoing pressure from donors may well have constrained a government that might otherwise have had little compunction about unleashing further repression. Activists sought to cultivate connections with international media who could spotlight their situation, such as journalists with the BBC. Pratt.

¹⁵ Oquaye, "Government and Politics in Contemporary Ghana (1992-1999): A Study," 40.

Later in the same year, the government staged no-party elections for District Assemblies (DAs) across the country.¹⁶ It was not at all clear at the time but this was probably the beginning of the liberalization process. Rawlings contended that multi-party democracy had failed Ghana in the past and that it would do so again; what he championed instead was a populist model of grass-roots politics, and the creation of non-partisan fora (like the DAs) for popular political participation.¹⁷ The DA elections then were no model of multi-party democracy. Nonetheless, they did create very important fora for the representation of ordinary people and their views in previously underrepresented regions across the country and they confirmed for the government that there was a strong swell of popular support for the ruling PNDC – alongside a demand for continued reform.

The DA elections began to generate a sense of potential political reawakening particularly as they were followed, in 1990, by a series of seminars held in each of the regions to assess the role of the DAs and debate the future of the Ghanaian polity. Because they were organized by a state organ (the National Commission on Democracy (NCD)), the seminars were regarded with suspicion by opposition-minded Ghanaians. There were significant constraints on who could speak in these fora and what views could

¹⁶ The prohibition on parties aside, these bodies were far from democratic as 1/3 of their membership was appointed by the state. The PNDC defended these appointments on the grounds that they used these appointments to ensure that underrepresented minorities, including women, as well as those with important technical and administrative skills, would serve on such bodies. Kwamena Ahwoi, Personal interview with author, 11 December 2007, Jerry John Rawlings, 15 December 2007.

¹⁷ One of the measures introduced by the PNDC for example was to scrap the requirement that those elected should be fluent in English. The concern was, correctly, that such measures automatically excluded large numbers of ordinary Ghanaians and instead limited political participation to a small educated elite. See also Rawlings' speech at Sunyani which launch the regional consultations: J J Rawlings, "Address by the Chairman of the P.N.D.C, Flt. Lt Jerry John Rawlings, at the Opening Session of the Seminar for Presiding Members and Assemblymen and Women, District Secretaries C.D.Rs Etc, Organized by the N.C.D at Sunyani on Thursday, 5 July 1990," in *Ghana's Political Transition: 1990-1993 Selected Documents*, ed. Kwame A Ninsin (Accra, Ghana: Freedom Publications, 1996). These views are also articulated in the so-called "Blue Book": Unattributed, "District Political Authority and Modalities for District Level Elections," 3.

be openly expressed there. Nonetheless, opponents of the regime did manage to use them to make their opposition to the “no-party” system clear.¹⁸

Rawlings was increasingly being pressurised, both domestically and from abroad to democratize. He could probably have ignored the domestic voices for some time. However, if he was going to democratise at all, there were at least two pragmatic reasons to do so in the early 1990s.¹⁹ First, the economic recovery of the 1980s, along with Rawlings’ own considerable personal popularity made it likely that Rawlings and his associates would win even a genuinely free contest of the popular vote. Sandbrook and Oelbaum cite two important surveys undertaken by the government in mid 1990 and late 1991. The very fact that these were commissioned is a significant indication that government was thinking hard about the possibility of democratizing. And, crucially, the surveys found that the PNDC would probably win an election, were one to be held.²⁰ Politically then, the position of Rawlings and his team seemed relatively secure in terms of the popular vote. Second, Rawlings “had fashioned security guarantees for himself and his fellow coup plotters by legislating immunity for the PNDC from prosecutions – reinforced by the likelihood of electoral victory.”²¹ These two factors made the prospect of multi-party elections seem less risky than previously.

¹⁸ A variety of civil society organisations spoke in favour of multi-party democracy including the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT), the Ghana Registered Nurses Association, the Ghana Medical Association and the churches. For a critical review of the idea of civil society and how it is deployed in Ghana, see Lindsay Whitfield, "Civil Society as Idea and Civil Society as Process: The Case of Ghana," *Oxford Development Studies* 31, no. 3 (2003).

¹⁹ Handley and Mills, "From Military Coups to Multiparty Elections: The Ghanaian Military-Civil Transition," 21-22.

²⁰ Richard Sandbrook and Jay Oelbaum, "Reforming the Political Kingdom: Governance and Development in Ghana's Fourth Republic," *Critical Perspectives*, no. 2 (1999): 11.

²¹ It is hard to overstate the collapse of the Ghanaian economy in the late 1970s and early 1980s. On top of a particularly harsh drought and the repatriation of large number of Ghanaians from Nigeria, Ghanaians were experiencing real hardships and even middle class Ghanaians struggled to feed their families. While far from a panacea, the adoption of structural adjustment reopened access for Ghana to international streams of capital and began the recovery of the state and of the economy.

The decision to liberalise was not entirely without risks, of course. There were, for example, costs as well as benefits that had flowed from the World Bank sponsored SAP. Students, for example “complained bitterly” about the inadequacy of their government stipends and the commercialization of their university accommodation and food services.²² Having originally been allies of Rawlings and his revolutions, the student body began to turn against the PNDC. Henceforth, students would become a key component of an emerging constituency for political reform.

In the mid 1990s, a group of leftist activists, formerly associated with the Kwame Nkrumah Revolutionary Guards (KNRG) began to try to organize a wide democratic front that would encompass a range of ideological perspectives and unite Ghanaians behind the call for a return to constitutional rule and multiparty elections.²³ They successfully persuaded a number of key liberal figures from the ranks of their former political rivals to join with them; indeed, Prof Adu Boahen agreed to head the new movement. Their efforts culminated in the launch, in early August 1990 of the Movement for Freedom and Justice (MFJ).

The regime did not greet these developments with equanimity. Indeed, the day before the launch of the MFJ, four leading members of the Movement were ordered to report to the BNI headquarters and it was widely feared that they were to be arrested. As a precaution, executive members of the MFJ were dispatched to meet with a range of international actors including the BBC, USIS, the British High Commission and the German embassy to brief them on the launch and its importance.²⁴ The hope was that

²² Gyimah-Boadi, "Ghana: Adjustment, State Rehabilitation and Democratization," 223.

²³ Hon. John Ndebugre was a key proponent of this idea. A Owusu Gyimah, Personal interview with author, 14 December 2007, John Akparibo Ndebugre, Personal interview with author, 13 December 2007.

²⁴ Owusu Gyimah, Unpublished mimeo 2007, Ndebugre.

high-level international support would discourage punitive action by the government. As it turns out, that hope appears to have been justified. The following day, a number of diplomats attended the launch event and sat in the front row, complicating the ability of the police to act against the gathering. Movement activists had also selected a launch venue that was in the heart of the busiest part of town, again making it difficult for the police to quietly arrest activists or disperse the gathering.²⁵ And the four leaders who had been summoned to appear at BNI headquarters were ultimately not detained.²⁶

How are we to assess the role of the MFJ in Ghana's ultimate transition? There is no question that, in the early 1990s, the MFJ successfully, publicly, and persistently articulated a coherent set of arguments in defence of multi-party democracy, in an environment where Rawlings' government continued to be hostile to that project. Moreover, MFJ reiterated a wide range of political demands, calling unequivocally for a referendum on the country's future, for the repeal of repressive legislation, the release of political prisoners²⁷ and amnesty for exiles, making use of a series of press releases and public symposia around the country.²⁸ This is all very impressive given the circumstances, especially as the MFJ functioned on a tiny budget, mostly operating on the volunteer services offered by its own members. Movement activists received very little outside funding, if any at all, although they did set up committees among their supporters in London and in the US.²⁹

²⁵ Ndebugre.

²⁶ Ampaw, Akoto Ampaw, Speech delivered at symposium organised by Movement for Freedom and Justice at the Y.M.C.A, 27 August 1990, Gyimah.

²⁷ At one point, the MFJ published a comprehensive list of the names of all those being held as political prisoners and being detained without trial, to serve as added pressure for their release.

²⁸ Owusu Gyimah, Unpublished, handwritten mimeo Undated.

²⁹ Ndebugre, Pratt.

Moreover, the MFJ's formation was part of growing agitation for multi-party rule from a range of civil society actors including NUGS, the Trades Union Council (TUC), professional associations such as the Ghana Bar Association (GBA) and the churches (especially the Christian Council of Ghana (CCG) and Catholic Bishops' Conference (CBC)). In September of 1990 for example, NUGS released a press statement calling for the repeal of particular repressive laws. This was followed in 1991 by similar calls from GBA.³⁰ In December 1990, the CCG called on the government to "return the country to civilian rule," lift the ban on political activity and promulgate legislation that would facilitate multi-party politics,³¹ and in February 1991 CBC called for a return to constitutional rule.

Despite all of this however at no point did the MFJ and the forces of civil society ever pose a real threat to the continued viability of the PNDC regime. If one considers the relatively modest scope of these organizations and the relatively small number of people who were ever drawn into their core operations, especially by comparison with democratization movements elsewhere around the world, it is clear that this was not a particularly formidable opposition movement. At no point was there any credible threat, for example, that the opposition might shut down either the government or the economy. Instead, the domestic balance of forces continued to lie with the regime.

On New Year's Day in 1991, Rawlings announced that the NCD would submit its report on Ghana's political future by the end of March and that this would feed into a process of drafting a new constitution for Ghana.³² This was a process of reform that was

³⁰ Thomas Maxwell Aidoo, "The Context and Provenance of Democratization in Ghana, 1990-1992," *Historia Actual Online* 9 (2006): 10.

³¹ *Ibid.*: 10-11.

³² *Ibid.*: 11.

clearly directed by a secure and confident regime, rather than one being forced on a weak government by a resurgent civil society. This dynamic is evident too, in the responses by democratic activists to the activities of the NCD, which were driven by fear that they would be unable to control or even monitor the reform process. Few doubted that government was in charge and would do as it thought fit. MFJ supporters were accordingly skeptical that the NCD would be allowed to hear, let alone itself make, any meaningful recommendations for political reform. Few trusted that the government was sincere in its willingness to accommodate conflicting views about the country's future political direction, or that it had any intention of giving up power, should it be required to do so.³³

At first this scepticism seemed justified. MFJ activists experienced great difficulty in participating in the Commission hearings as did members of other opposition-minded organizations such as NUGS, GBA and CCG. Not only was the NCD a state-appointed body, but its national chairman (Justice Annan) was a leading member of the PNDC. In the end however, whatever his partisan loyalties, Justice Annan was both prudent and scrupulously fair-minded, as reflected in the Commission's report to the PNDC.³⁴ While it expounded the virtues of "popular democracy," the report also made it clear that there was in fact significant support for a return to multi-party

³³See for example Kwame A Ninsin and Francis K Drah, *Ghana's Transition to Constitutional Rule* (Accra, Ghana: Ghana Universities Press, 1991), 35. See also Aidoo, "The Context and Provenance of Democratization in Ghana, 1990-1992.", Gilbert K Bluwey, "Obstacles to an Orderly Transition to Constitutional Rule under the P.N.D.C.", in *Ghana's Transition to Constitutional Rule*, ed. Kwame A Ninsin and Francis K Drah (Accra, Ghana: 1991), 12, Movement for Freedom and Justice, "Statement by the Movement for Freedom and Justice on the P.N.D.C's Statement on the N.C.D Report and the "Constitutional Proposals", (Accra, Ghana: 1991).

³⁴Civil society organizations (CSOs) had continued to call for the repeal of repressive legislation, the unbanning of political parties, freeing of political prisoners and return of exiles. Luckham has argued that this ongoing agitation "emboldened the NCD, its constitutional drafting committee and the Consultative Assembly to be more independent than anyone had expected them to be." Robin Luckham, "Crafting Democratic Control over the Military: A Comparative Analysis of South Korea, Chile and Ghana," *Democratization* 3, no. 3 (2007): 236.

elections. With masterful understatement, it concluded that “[t]he general opinion was that the generality of the population is **not** against political parties as an ideal instrument that may give the fullest expression to the freedom of association [sic].”³⁵

And so the reforms continued. In May 1991, Rawlings confirmed that he would allow a return to multiparty elections³⁶ and in June, granted amnesty to all political exiles. Yes, civil society actors played an important watchdog role during this process, contesting the government’s dominance over of the reform process³⁷ but they were largely unable to play a more dynamic role, for the most part reacting to an agenda (apparently) set by government.

Events surrounding the Consultative Assembly (CA), established to draft a new constitution, demonstrate these domestic-level dynamics yet again. Initially representatives of the GBA and NUGS boycotted the CA’s proceedings because the government had allocated a large number of CA seats to its own sympathisers and it was far from clear how much real freedom of deliberation the Assembly would be given.³⁸ Activists feared that their own participation might consequently serve to legitimise a rigged process. Nonetheless it became clear over time that the PNDC was actually going to allow the reforms to run their course: that it would permit Assembly delegates to work unhindered, that it would respect the population’s affirmation of that constitution in the

³⁵ National Commission for Democracy, "Evolving a True Democracy: Summary of N.C.D's Work Towards the Establishment of a New Democratic Order," (Accra, Ghana: National Commission for Democracy, Undated), 36.

³⁶ Aidoo, "The Context and Provenance of Democratization in Ghana, 1990-1992," 14.

³⁷ They pressed for a more thoroughgoing transition to democracy; for the replacement of the NCD with a non-partisan electoral commission; for the dropping of all conditions for return of exiles; and for an end to government’s unilateral control over the composition of the proposed Consultative Assembly. Political developments were not uniformly positive however. Activists reported, for example, the intensification of military patrols and prohibition of public activities in Accra and Tema at the time of the Non-Aligned Movement meeting in late August, 1991.

³⁸ The Armed Forces for example were given eight seats, the National Council on Women and Development (dominated by the 31st December Women’s Movement), ten; and the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution also received ten seats.

referendum that followed, and subsequently that it would go on to permit multi-party elections. None of this meant that the PNDC was capitulating to the opposition. Far from it. Instead, PNDC partisans had decided that their position was strong enough that they could contest - and win - multi-party elections.

To this end, the ruling PNDC transformed itself into a political party, renaming itself the NDC in order to contest the forthcoming elections. Arguably, the previously banned and defunct opposition parties faced an even tougher challenge: they had to start rebuilding themselves and campaigning from scratch, with little name recognition or access to the media to assist them. Most crucially perhaps, they had very little time to organize and they remained divided amongst themselves all the way up to the elections. (Party politics was legalized just six months before the election date.)³⁹

The NDC by contrast enjoyed the advantages of an already established “brand” and organizational structure, as well as incumbency. Rawlings’ government pressed into service many of the tools at the state’s disposal - including the budget - as part of its electoral campaign.⁴⁰ To be fair, it should also be said that one of the NDC’s strongest advantages was the government’s record of successful economic reform, economic recovery and broader political stabilization. This is not to suggest that the SAP was an unequivocal success and that there were no losers; rather it was the case in Ghana – as in many other places – that the losers from SAPs could not be effectively mobilized as a potent political opposition force.⁴¹ Moreover, while the independent media was slowly

³⁹ Haynes, "The Possibility of Democratic Consolidation in Ghana," 112.

⁴⁰ Richard Sandbrook and Jay Oelbaum, "Reforming Dysfunctional Institutions through Democratisation? Reflections on Ghana," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 35, no. 4 (1997), Sandbrook and Oelbaum, "Reforming the Political Kingdom: Governance and Development in Ghana's Fourth Republic."

⁴¹ Kwame Boafo-Arthur, "Ghana: Structural Adjustment, Democratization, and the Politics of Continuity," *African Studies Review* 42, no. 2 (1999): 61, Herbst, *The Politics of Reform in Ghana, 1982-1991*.

beginning to reemerge, there was still some repression of opposition-minded media, even at this late stage.⁴²

The results of that first set of elections vindicated those within the ruling party who had advocated political reform. The NDC won the poll handily and Rawlings was duly elected president, becoming “the first sub-Saharan African military ruler to transform himself into the head of a civilian government through genuinely contested multi-party elections.”⁴³ By contrast, the elections were a mixed blessing for pro-democracy formations. In the aftermath of the 1992 elections, the MFJ slowly fell apart, demobilizing along with a number of other CSOs.

Phase two

The 1992–2000 period was marked, if anything, by an absence of any dramatic developments. Instead, this second phase provided an extended opportunity for behind-the-scenes reforms and processes that laid the groundwork for the consolidation of Ghana’s electoral democracy – and was significant for what did not occur viz. the absence of any political turmoil when, in 2000, the national poll removed Rawlings’ PNDC from power.

Some of the most significant reforms in this period were undertaken under the judicious guidance of the director of Ghana’s Electoral Commission, Dr. Afari-Gyan.⁴⁴

⁴²For example, the jailing of the editor of the *Christian Chronicle*. Conditions for the press did improve markedly over the course of the 1990s however. Chris Ogbondah, “Democratization and the Media in West Africa: An Analysis of Recent Constitutional and Legislative Reforms for Press Freedom in Ghana and Nigeria,” *West Africa Review*, no. 6 (2004): 6.

⁴³ Luckham, “Crafting Democratic Control over the Military: A Comparative Analysis of South Korea, Chile and Ghana,” 237.

⁴⁴ The Commission is highly regarded by a wide range of observers. See for example Daniel A Smith, “The Structural Underpinnings of Ghana’s December 2000 Elections,” in *Critical Perspectives* (Legon, Ghana: Ghana Center for Democratic Development, 2001), 26. Gordon Crawford, “Democratisation in

He proposed, for example, the establishment of an Inter-Party Advisory Committee (IPAC) as “a forum for debating issues pertaining to implementation of the electoral program, electoral reform, [and] propose regulations designed to ensure an equitable and transparent election.”⁴⁵ It was a stroke of genius: by involving high level party officials in key decisions about the conduct and administration of the elections, IPAC secured not only their input on how to improve those processes, but also their consent to the outcomes - and hence the legitimacy of those elections. These and other reforms paved the way for the second and successful set of elections, held in 1996, that would be widely regarded as free of significant unfairness.⁴⁶

Beyond the electoral process itself, progress on other markers of democracy was patchy but notable. The political space for opposition continued to open up, albeit slowly and not without some reverses. In a 1994 march to protest the harassment of one of the private radio stations, marchers were beaten by police. Demonstrations in early March 1995 to protest the introduction of Value Added Tax (VAT) also evoked a violent reaction. Four demonstrators in Accra were shot and killed, allegedly by government supporters. However, as VAT protests continued around the country, “police were ... seen for the first time in the history of Ghana, *protecting* persons demonstrating against the Government.”⁴⁷

Ghana: Assessing the Impact of Political Aid (1997-2003)" (paper presented at the ECPR Marburg conference, 18-20 September 2003), 4.

⁴⁵ Ernest Dumor, "Keynote Address: The 1996 Elections and Democratic Consolidation," in *The 1996 General Elections and Democratic Consolidation in Ghana*, ed. Joseph R A Ayee (Legon, Ghana: Department of Political Science, University of Ghana, Undated), 26.

⁴⁶ The Electoral Commission did not accomplish all of this entirely on its own. As I will outline below, the Commission was supported by international donor funding (for the 1996 elections, for example, the donors pledged close on \$10 million dollars).Ibid., 28.

⁴⁷ Italics added. Oquaye, "Government and Politics in Contemporary Ghana (1992-1999): A Study," 55.

While the constitution guaranteed the freedom of the press, private newspapers continued to face structural disadvantages, namely higher printing and distribution costs than the state-run newspapers; they also found it harder to attract advertising because of nervousness by firms that to patronize the opposition newspapers would incur government disapproval.⁴⁸ In 1995, government took the important step of deregulating broadcasting. This permitted a sudden proliferation of private radio stations, many of which were vitriolic (and occasionally quite inventive) in their coverage of the ruling NDC and its performance.⁴⁹ The state itself was being restructured too: the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) was established to protect the rights of ordinary Ghanaians and provide an institutionalized means of redress against abuses by the state.

By the 1996 elections then, the environment for opposition-minded actors was significantly more open than it had been even four years earlier. The polls were energetically contested in a atmosphere that was markedly freer than it had been even four years earlier and there was an almost 80 percent turnout of voters on election day.⁵⁰

The electoral process did receive some external financial support: \$23 million was donated by international donors to ensure the smooth running of the elections.⁵¹ Domestic poll observers were supported by international donors and by a coalition of Ghanaian actors, including many of those CSOs that had been active in the struggle for democracy such as the churches, NUGS, GJA, GNAT, and the TUC, reflecting a higher

⁴⁸ Ibid., 42-4.

⁴⁹ Ogbondah, "Democratization and the Media in West Africa: An Analysis of Recent Constitutional and Legislative Reforms for Press Freedom in Ghana and Nigeria," 9-10.

⁵⁰ Joseph R A Ayee, "The 1996 Elections: An Overview," in *The 1996 General Elections and Democratic Consolidation in Ghana*, ed. Joseph R A Ayee (Legon, Ghana: Department of Political Science, University of Ghana, Undated), 46.

⁵¹ Haynes, "The Possibility of Democratic Consolidation in Ghana," 116.

levels of participation by Ghanaian civil society in the electoral process than previously.⁵² And, as in the 1992 poll, international observers once again monitored the elections.⁵³

Ghana's Electoral Commission continued to draw praise for its conduct and oversight of the elections. For the 1996 poll, they had carefully overseen the development of a new voters' roll, a huge undertaking, intended to eliminate a large number of "ghost" voters. By involving all of the parties in the process (through IPAC) and introducing as much transparency as possible, the Commission ensured that there were few challenges to the legitimacy of the new voters roll. Ayee describes other innovations of the 1996 poll, including the introduction of voter identity cards, transparent ballot boxes (to deal with suspicions that ballot boxes were "pre-stuffed"), and cardboard voting screens for polling day (to give voters some privacy while ensuring that voters could not themselves stuff the ballot box).⁵⁴ In addition, the counting of votes in the 1996 poll now took place at each individual polling station and results were publicly posted there before being sent on to the election headquarters for the compilation of the national figures. This way, by texting these results to party headquarters, party

⁵² Properly recruited and trained domestic observers can be a very important tool in election monitoring as they are usually able to spend much more time on the ground than international missions are. They may also be alert to local nuances in a way that international observers are not. Oquaye, "Government and Politics in Contemporary Ghana (1992-1999): A Study," 8.

⁵³ Haynes, "The Possibility of Democratic Consolidation in Ghana," 116. Moreover, both the electoral commission and IPAC were supported by funding from USAID, IFES and the British Government. Smith, "The Structural Underpinnings of Ghana's December 2000 Elections," 5.

⁵⁴ Joseph R A Ayee, "Election Management and Democratic Consolidation: The Electoral Commission of Ghana," in *The 1996 General Elections and Democratic Consolidation in Ghana*, ed. Joseph R A Ayee (Legon, Ghana: Department of Political Science, University of Ghana, Undated), 62-3.

activists could check for themselves that the results of each of the individual polls were being reflected in the figures issued nationally.⁵⁵

In the contest for votes, the NDC continued to enjoy the advantage of its incumbency status and ability to strategically deploy the budget, for example, using government contracts to reward businesspeople aligned with the ruling party or pouring government spending into communities aligned with that party.⁵⁶ In case anyone should have missed it, this logic was laid out by First Lady, Nana Konadu-Rawlins at a rally at Bonwire's Kente festival: "You people want to have development projects from us but you do not vote for us. How do we develop your area? You must know that the left hand washes the right hand whilst the right hand also washes the left hand."⁵⁷

Nonetheless, the structured and legitimate contestation of political power that the elections represented, and the revival of the party system that they facilitated, began to transform the tenor and conduct of politics in Ghana. According to Jeff Haynes, "for the first time in nearly 20 years, the government had to answer publicly for its programs and policies."⁵⁸ This engendered a different kind of politics in Ghana, one that shaped the behaviour not only of the government, but of its opponents too. To quote Haynes again, "[o]ver time,... not only Rawlings but also opposition leaders gradually learnt to speak the language and, at least overtly, adopt the values of democracy."⁵⁹

Given the incumbents' victories in the first two sets of elections, what was critical for Ghana's transition in this second phase was not so much what Rawlings and the

⁵⁵ The parties made use of cell phones to this end, asking supporters to text the results of each individual poll to the party headquarters to double check the official figures. Ibid., 63.

⁵⁶ Antoinette Handley, *Business and the State in Africa: Economic Policymaking in the Neo-Liberal Era* (London, UK: Cambridge University Press, Forthcoming).

⁵⁷ Quoted in Unattributed, *The Ghanaian Chronicle*, January 14-15 1998.

⁵⁸ Haynes, "The Possibility of Democratic Consolidation in Ghana," 105.

⁵⁹ Ibid.: 115.

PNDC did (i.e. continued to stage polls and respect the outcome when they were winning) but what they did not do (namely, upset the process when they did not win). For Ghana, the “turnover” test came with the 2000 elections when voters favored the opposition,⁶⁰ and all concerned passed it with flying colours. According to one observer, the 2000 elections took place in a “very relaxed and peaceful atmosphere, punctuated by meticulous and careful handling of registration procedure and electoral ritual.”⁶¹ As we know, the results handed power to John Kufour and the opposition NPP. Ghanaians were relieved to note the gracious behaviour of both winners and losers both during the elections and in their immediate aftermath. Rawlings, for example, can be an electrifying (even incendiary) speaker but his address on the eve of voting was “composed, sober and responsible.”⁶²

In many senses then, the 2000 election, and the incident-free handover of power that followed, was the cherry on the top of Ghana’s transition. From a review purely of domestic-level factors, it is not entirely clear why Rawlings gave way so peacefully. Granted, this was not the first time that Rawlings had “done the right thing:” over a decade previously, as the leader of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), Rawlings had once before handed over power to a democratically elected government.

His surrender of power in 2000 therefore was not totally unprecedented. Trapped by the

⁶⁰ These elections were supported by international donors to the tune of \$8.4 million. Crawford, “Democratisation in Ghana: Assessing the Impact of Political Aid (1997-2003)”, 32. For a more detailed analysis of the 2000 elections, see Joseph R A Ayee, ed., *Deepening Democracy in Ghana: Politics of the 2000 Elections* (Accra, Ghana: Freedom Publications Ltd., 2001). Ayee’s collection provides an in-depth, constituency-level analysis. For an analysis that is more critical of the election than most, see Smith, “The Structural Underpinnings of Ghana’s December 2000 Elections.” There were for example, still concerns over the voters roll and instances of voting irregularities, especially in the Volta Region, a region that has traditionally been a strong base for the NDC and Rawlings. Smith also discusses the malapportionment of parliamentary constituencies and hence seats and how this structural factor distorts regional influence and power.

⁶¹ Klaas van Walraven, “The End of an Era: The Ghanaian Elections of December 2000,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 20, no. 2 (2002): 186.

⁶² *Ibid.*: 188.

logic of the reforms that he had set in motion, and by the quiet but steady process of liberalization and resurgence of the opposition which this facilitated, Rawlings chose to step aside. Nonetheless, this decision remains one which is difficult to explain purely with recourse to domestic politics. What can an analysis of international factors contribute to the explanation of this and other aspects of the Ghanaian transition?

Section 3: International factors

The broad international background

The region that is today Ghana has long been enmeshed in a wide-ranging and dense set of trading and economic ties both with other states in the region and more far flung areas. The advent of colonialism restructured many of these connections, pulling Ghana into tighter set of relations with the UK and with Europe more broadly. As the US' prominence in world affairs increased in the aftermath of World War Two, so too did its profile in Ghana's economic and trading relationships; Ghana's "non-aligned" status after independence proliferated ties with the Soviet bloc and its allies too but these disintegrated over the course of the 1980s, along with the Soviet Union. Instead the adoption of structural adjustment in 1983 heightened Ghana's connections to - and dependence on - the financial flows associated with IFI conditionalities and Western donor preferences (which themselves increasingly converged around the "Washington consensus").

The international context within which Ghana made its transition then was more favorable to multi-party democracy than had been the case for decades. Notable here were the fall of the Berlin Wall, the associated collapse of the Soviet Union, and the end

of the Cold War. These events demolished, in the minds of many, the legitimacy of forms of governance that did not fit the Western, liberal model – and in particular of those systems that did not involve frequent and fairly contested structured competition for political power in the form of multi-party elections. Fukuyama’s “end of history”⁶³ and the triumph of Western liberalism made it increasingly difficult to defend “no party” or populist forms of government. These trends were epitomized in the Harare Declaration issued by the Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOGM) (of which Ghana is a member) which in 1991 affirmed “the individual’s inalienable right to participate by means of free and democratic political processes in framing the society in which he or she lives.”⁶⁴ This sea change was highly significant for Ghana, which had long been sympathetic to alternative / leftist projects.⁶⁵

As argued above, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and in particular, its inability to provide financial support to Ghana in its profoundest moment of economic crisis, prompted Ghana’s turn to the West in the early 1980s, at least with respect to economic policy. Convergence on matters political would take considerably longer. Nonetheless, Ghanaians were acutely aware of the momentous developments unfolding globally, and followed them closely.

The end of the Cold War and hence the end to the financial and strategic support that had been extended to African client states, along with ongoing economic crisis across

⁶³ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York Toronto: Free Press; Maxwell Macmillan Canada, 1992).

⁶⁴ Commonwealth Heads of Government, *Harare Commonwealth Declaration* (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1991 [cited 22 April 2008]); available from http://www.thecommonwealth.org/Internal/20723/34457/harare_commonwealth_declaration/.

⁶⁵ In its early days, the Rawlings government had associated itself with and even self-consciously modeled itself on leftist regimes, such as the Sandanistas in Nicaragua, Fidel Castro’s Cuba, Muammar Qaddafi’s Libya and Yoweri Museveni’s Uganda. More on the latter at the end of my conclusion.

the continent, contributed to a wave of regime transitions in Africa in the 1990s.⁶⁶

Arguably, this “wave” began in Benin in 1990 with the holding of a National Conference to decide that country’s future. Bratton and van de Walle describe how the upheavals that followed resulted in a quadrupling of the number of countries across the continent holding competitive elections in the region over a five year period. Of the thirty-eight countries that held elections in this period, twenty-nine of these “paved a route away from the monopoly politics of authoritarian regimes.”⁶⁷

According to Bratton and van de Walle, the governments of many of these countries collapsed in the face of democratic challenges essentially as the result of the financial crisis of the state, which was thence unable to continue to (financially) support the manifold needs of a clientelist system. This logic could well have played out too in Ghana, given the extent of that country’s economic crisis in the early 1980s. However, the fact that the PNDC was one of the earliest adopters of a SAP on the sub-continent, and that it rapidly became one of the favoured sons of the World Bank, meant that the Ghanaian government suddenly had access to a new revenue stream both in excess of, and in advance of, many other regimes across the continent, which bolstered the government’s internal position. The dynamics in Ghana then were not the same as those which pertained elsewhere during this period.

Nonetheless, it is probably safe to assume that the “wave” of democratizations across the sub-continent gave succour to pro-democracy activists in Ghana too, and that it reinforced pressures on the government to liberalise. While democratic transitions elsewhere may have served as an encouragement for democratic reform, incidents of

⁶⁶ Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 3.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

violent conflict and regime breakdown elsewhere equally served as a warning to the Ghanaian government of the costs of totally ignoring the wishes of significant sectors of the population. There can be little doubt that Ghanaians noted with concern negative developments in countries in the region and around the world although, once again, it is hard to quantify the precise or direct impact of such events.⁶⁸ Van Walraven, for example, argues that the “ugly pictures” of conflict in Ghana’s neighbouring state, Cote d’Ivoire, had a salutary impact on Ghanaians, especially in the critical 2000 poll.⁶⁹ I turn now, to a closer consideration of Ghana’s economic ties and relationships, and how these shaped the transition.

The political economy of influence: aid, trade and “say”

As suggested above, Ghana’s economic and trading relationships for the transition period were dominated by the West (see table two below). During the 1980s and 1990s the UK and US in particular featured consistently in the top ten of Ghana’s major trading partners (for both imports and exports); accordingly, along with their historical profile and their activist predispositions, these two states represented the most potent potential source of pressure (as far as individual states go) on the Ghanaian government.⁷⁰ While the Netherlands and Japan were also important trading partners, by all accounts these two

⁶⁸ For example, the Ghana Bar Association, in the resolutions at its annual conference in 1990, commended the independence of Namibia and the release of political prisoners in South Africa, while lamenting the conflict in Liberia. Nutifafa Kuenyehia, "Resolutions of the Ghana Bar Association at Its Annual Conference in Accra, 30 September to 4 October, 1990," in *Ghana's Political Transition: 1990-1993 Selected Documents*, ed. Kwame A Ninsin (Accra, Ghana: Freedom Publications, 1996), 30-1.

⁶⁹ van Walraven, "The End of an Era: The Ghanaian Elections of December 2000," 187.

⁷⁰ A more thorough analysis of Ghanaian trading patterns and how these might have served as an indirect source of pressure on Ghanaian decisionmaking is hindered by the absence of any reliable trade statistics for the crucial period between 1988 and 1995.

states did not seek to exert pressure of any kind on the Ghanaian government and instead had a much more hands-off relationship with Ghana. The same was true of China which regularly appeared in the top ten of Ghana's trading partners. One might have expected, for example, that the Chinese would provide support for those who did not favour movement towards multi-party democracy but in fact, there is little evidence that China acted directly to either advance or discourage democracy.

Ghana's top ten trading partners (ranked by total of both imports and exports in Ghana cedis (1986-7), and USD 1996-7))		
Rank	1986 and 1987	1996 and 1997
1.	UK	UK
2.	USA	Switzerland
3.	China	US
4.	Nigeria	Netherlands
5.	Netherlands	Japan
6.	Japan	France
7.	Togo	Italy
8.	USSR *	Belgium
9.	Switzerland	Nigeria
10.	France	Spain

Table 2
Source: Quarterly Digest of Statistics, Republic of Ghana

* The Soviet Union had been an important trading partner for Ghana until the late 1980s but obviously vanished from the list around this time; notably, its “spot” on the list was not replaced by Russia or any of the other former socialist states.

The US again ranks highly when one turns to aid figures,⁷¹ at least in terms of which countries and groupings are the key players for Ghana. As can be seen from table three below, by the mid 1990s, there was some overlap between Ghana’s major bilateral donors and her major trading partners:⁷² Japan, Germany and the US consistently rank within the top three partner countries.⁷³ (The one notable disparity is that the UK appears much further down the donor list than it does on the trading list. Nonetheless, this did not

Ghana’s major bilateral donors, 1995 (ranked by total annual ODA net)		
1.	Japan	USD\$122 million
2.	USA	\$54 million
3.	Germany	\$44 million
4.	Denmark	\$35 million
5.	Netherlands	\$30 million
6.	France	\$23 million
7.	Canada	\$23 million
8.	UK	\$21 million

Table 3

⁷¹ In the section that follows I draw overwhelmingly on the analysis of Gordon Crawford and Julie Hearn.

⁷² This ranking, drawn from 1995 figures, is fairly representative of the period under question.

⁷³ Much of the Japanese aid however is developmental and focused on service provision, and therefore of less direct relevance to the transition politics. Hearn points out that the exceptions to this rule are to grants to the National Commission for Civic Education. Julie Hearn, "Foreign Political Aid, Democratization, and Civil Society in Ghana in the 1990s," in *CDD-Ghana research paper* (Accra, Ghana: Center for Democracy and Development, Ghana, 2000), 9.

Source: Hearn, Julie. "Foreign Political Aid, Democratization, and Civil Society in Ghana in the 1990s." *CDD-Ghana research paper*, 26. Accra, Ghana: Center for Democracy and Development, Ghana, 2000, 8

appear to diminish its political influence, or its will and ability to be seen and heard within Ghana. By contrast, as with the trade figures, Japan's relative prominence is once again not matched by the size of its political agenda for Ghana and hence its political influence with State House.)

A quick review of the democracy-related spending of each of the major bilateral donors follows, before I consider aid trends more broadly. Until 1996, democracy-related aid from the US was focused on support for elections,⁷⁴ with support funneled through the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI). NDI for example supported a network of Ghanaian election observers, and also ran programs for parliament and civil society.

For the German foundations, strengthening democracy was supposedly "a primary objective,"⁷⁵ according to Hearn. The Friedrich Ebert Foundation in particular supported a number of civil society organizations in Ghana, including the TUC and GJA. They also hosted a number of conferences and seminars in the mid 1990s focused on democratisation. The Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation supported a range of organizations active in representing the private sector. This is not unique to the German foundations. The Ghanaian CSOs that consistently received the highest level of financial support in this period were not those focused on political reform, but rather those associated with the economic reform process. A key example here is the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) which had the highest number of

⁷⁴ Ibid., 14.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 22.

foreign donors of any Ghanaian CSO.⁷⁶ As for the operations of German Technical Co-operation (GTZ), Crawford points out that their support for “good governance” only began in 2004.⁷⁷

As suggested above, the UK’s overall level of aid to Ghana was surprisingly low given the trade figures and the embassy’s prominence. In the late 1990s, British aid focused on “government structures and the media,”⁷⁸ providing support to state institutions and structures that, they hoped, would support “good governance.” They also funded the training of local journalists. Nonetheless, it was clear that the British, like the Americans, favored a return to constitutional and multiparty rule and pressed Rawlings’ government to this end. For example, the forthright Baroness Lynda Chalker, director of the Overseas Development Administration (ODA), reportedly visited Ghana a couple of times a year and on these occasions would “lecture Rawlings on democracy.”⁷⁹

With respect to supporting CSOs, the US, Germany (via the Stiftungs), and the World Bank (more on this later)⁸⁰ were the biggest donors but overall the level of aid in support in this area was low. (Japan did not prioritise civil society in its programs at all.) Of all of Ghana’s bilateral donors, the US provided the most extensive and carefully thought out support to civil society.⁸¹ The British also provided support to a number of CSOs including the GJA.

⁷⁶ While the IEA was a key forum for debates concerning economic policy, it was far less concerned with the democratic transition. *Ibid.*, 24.

⁷⁷ Gordon Crawford, “The European Union and Democracy Promotion in Africa: The Case of Ghana,” *European Journal of Development Research* 17, no. 4 (2005): 583.

⁷⁸ Hearn, “Foreign Political Aid, Democratization, and Civil Society in Ghana in the 1990s,” 10.

⁷⁹ Cited in Maame Gyekye-Jandoh, “Explaining Democratization in Africa: The Case of Ghana” (Temple University, 2006), 127.

⁸⁰ Hearn, “Foreign Political Aid, Democratization, and Civil Society in Ghana in the 1990s,” 2.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 12-14.

All of this, considered in isolation, sounds reasonable – but those who study aid comparatively are unequivocal that, in international terms, not only was the amount of aid directed specifically at fostering democratization derisory, but indeed the total aid packages (including everything that could even indirectly be considered to be providing support to democratization) were generally low by global standards. Moreover, what little aid Ghana received that could be construed of as supporting democracy, tended to comprise support for “good governance” (often defined as on the efficient operation of the state and public sector organs and only indirectly concerned with democracy). This framework endorsed the principles of good governance because of their role in ensuring the success of the economic reform program, rather than as comprising a political good in their own right.

The overall aid picture did not look very different for the smaller European states. Crawford for example describes a “lack of significant democracy and governance support” from the Netherlands.⁸² The same was true for Denmark, which focused its support on decentralisation, elections and state-related institutions as well as strengthening organizations based in civil society.⁸³ The Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) supported research and analysis of the state of Ghanaian democracy (for example, they are credited in a number of publications on the subject).

When it came to elections specifically (particularly the 1992 and 1996 elections), there was more substantial donor support, both for the polls themselves and for the Electoral Commission (already alluded to above). The European Union, the Canadian

⁸² Crawford, "The European Union and Democracy Promotion in Africa: The Case of Ghana," 585.

⁸³ Ibid.: 581.

International Development Agency (CIDA), the British ODA, DANIDA, USAID, and the IFES for example all supported IPAC and attended IPAC meetings.⁸⁴ The Europeans also supported voter education programs, as well as the work of Ghana's National Commission for Civic Education.⁸⁵ For the polls, the Electoral Commission invited observers from a range of organizations including the organization of African Unity, the Commonwealth and the European Union, along with domestic observers.⁸⁶

Much of this picture – low overall levels of aid, most of it linked to economic development and/or reforms - can be explained by the international backdrop, including dramatically declining overall levels of aid to Sub-Saharan Africa. No longer seen as strategically important, Africa came to be regarded as a developmental challenge, with the concomitant stress on SAPs and economic recovery, rather than as a potential incubator for democracy. In the post Cold War era, Africa effectively lost out to Eastern Europe as the darling of democratization-minded donors.⁸⁷ Overall then, the picture was one of a surprisingly low level of democracy-related assistance for Ghana.⁸⁸

Despite all of this, one of the leading authorities on the subject, argues that “Ghana provide[d] a particularly favourable context for democracy promotion measures.”⁸⁹ Ghana's economic collapse and extreme vulnerability of the 1980s, and the country's consequent overwhelming reliance on the aid and funding flows associated

⁸⁴ Ayee, "Election Management and Democratic Consolidation: The Electoral Commission of Ghana," 64.

⁸⁵ The NCCE has been credited with the high voter turnout in the 1996 election.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 65.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Crawford, "The European Union and Democracy Promotion in Africa: The Case of Ghana," 589.

⁸⁹ Crawford, for example, points out that 90percent of the EU's aid was directed instead at rural development, road transport and macroeconomic support. He concludes that the relative neglect of democracy can be attributed to two factors: First, despite the EU's rhetorical commitment to democracy promotion, its actual operations in Ghana are more focused on containing “perceived burdens and security threats to Europe “ that might arise in that country and, second, because the EU is conceiving democracy narrowly i.e. in terms of limiting state power. Ibid.: 572-3, 79.

⁸⁹ Ibid.: 572.

with the adoption of SAPs made it so. For much of the 1980s and 1990s, Ghana was the site of the World Bank's largest lending program in Africa;⁹⁰ in turn, Bank lending constituted a very significant proportion (indeed, the single largest contribution) of aid received by Ghana. Moreover, major international donors, organized into the Paris Club, watched very closely the signals and judgements made by the IFI's in their ongoing monitoring of the state of economic reform and governance in Ghana. Donors essentially followed the IFI's lead on key policy questions. In sum then, Ghana's relative poverty, its structural dependence on the large flows of finance associated with the country's adherence to structural adjustment and its longstanding and economically consequential trade and diplomatic ties with a number of Western states rendered it peculiarly vulnerable to even subtle pressures from the relevant states and actors.

To recap, three features of bilateral aid to Ghana are noteworthy: First, overall levels of aid to Ghana were relatively modest, particularly by comparison with many other parts of the world. Second, even within these modest aid budgets, there was less focused and direct support for the broad project of democratization than one might expect. Third, much of this funding only began *after* the transition had already commenced. It can hardly be seen then to have directly fostered democratization. Having said all of this, what is striking is that despite all of this, Ghana's leadership clearly got the message that continued support from the West and, in particular the ongoing flow of IMF and Bank funds, required progress on the political front. Indeed, in a conversation with this author, Rawlings argued that he was compelled to "force democracy down the

⁹⁰ Hearn, "Foreign Political Aid, Democratization, and Civil Society in Ghana in the 1990s," 8.

throats” of reluctant and wary Ghanaians because “the State Department was saying that there’ll be no more IMF and World Bank facilities for us [if we don’t].”⁹¹

Part of the power of aid lay in Ghana’s acute financial vulnerability. Economic accounts of the time are clear that the economic reforms had not succeeded in delivering the hoped-for revival of private sector investment.⁹² Instead, the ongoing recovery of the Ghanaian economy continued to depend on public sector spending – which was being made possible only by ongoing IFI support. The other part of the power of aid lay in the congruence between and, in many instances, coordination of aid priorities among Ghana’s major bilateral donors. One US diplomat described for example an informal monthly luncheon for representatives from the major embassies to meet and discuss their impressions of events in Ghana.⁹³ More formal and public coordination took place via the Paris Club of donors of course. Donors acted together to demonstrate their support of moves to democratise. In the aftermath of the 1992 elections, for example, donors at the Paris Club in June 1993, pledged \$2.1bn to Ghana. One of Ghana’s leading scholars of the country’s foreign relations, Boafo-Arthur, judged this sum to be “an absolute vote of confidence” in the country and its new path.⁹⁴ There can be little doubt that it was intended to signal approval of the relatively smooth conduct of the elections and the progress that Ghana continued to make.

Perhaps the clearest evidence of concerted donor action – and Ghanaian responsiveness - however came in late 1991, early 1992 when donors had agreed

⁹¹ Rawlings.

⁹² See for example, Institute of Statistical Social and Economic Research, "The State of the Ghanaian Economy in 1991," (Legon, Ghana: Institute of Statistical Social and Economic Research, University of Ghana, 1992).

⁹³ Senior US diplomat, Telephone interview with author, 13 March 2008.

⁹⁴ Boafo-Arthur, "Ghana: Structural Adjustment, Democratization, and the Politics of Continuity," 64.

amongst themselves that, at their next Consultative Group meeting in Paris, one of the items on the agenda would attempt to focus pressure on the Ghanaian government to hold elections. As the donors were preparing to board the plane to Paris however, the Ghanaian government preempted any such public discussion by announcing the formation of the Consultative Assembly and the timetable for elections.⁹⁵ The prospect of a public break on this issue was obviously too threatening to Rawlings.

Crucially also, we must remember that most bilateral aid flows paled by comparison with multilateral giving,⁹⁶ especially from the IMF and World Bank⁹⁷ (see table four below). As Hearn points out, in the early 1990s loans from the Bank alone “averaged 30 percent of Ghana’s aid, rising to 37 percent in 1995.”⁹⁸ Jeff Herbst has argued moreover that the phenomenal influence of the IFIs rested not just in the substantial budgets of these institutions, but also in their gatekeeper role.⁹⁹ A wide range of bilateral donors watched - and followed - the policy lead of the Bank and its granting decisions. In short, if the Bank decided that a country met its conditionality requirements, then – and only then – would a large number of other donors follow that lead and be prepared to offer assistance to that country and its government. World Bank aid then, in Ghana as elsewhere, was consequential not just in and of itself, but for the way in which it was directly connected to larger flows of aid from the rest of the donor community. Taken together, all of this gave the Bank extraordinary policy leverage, not just over Ghana’s economic program, but over her political future too.

⁹⁵ Senior US diplomat.

⁹⁶ With the exception of Japan

⁹⁷ Crawford, "Democratisation in Ghana: Assessing the Impact of Political Aid (1997-2003)", 26.

⁹⁸ Hearn, "Foreign Political Aid, Democratization, and Civil Society in Ghana in the 1990s," 19.

⁹⁹ Personal correspondence with Jeff Herbst.

Ghana's major multilateral sources of funds (Net annual development assistance)				
	1992	1993	1994	1995
World Bank	US\$195 million	\$168 million	\$202 million	\$172 million
EU	\$62 million	\$63 million	\$42 million	\$54 million

Table 4

Source: Hearn, Julie. "Foreign Political Aid, Democratization, and Civil Society in Ghana in the 1990s." *CDD-Ghana research paper*, 26. Accra, Ghana: Center for Democracy and Development, Ghana, 2000, 9.

In 1989, a new clause was introduced into the Lomé Convention, the agreement that regulated relations between European states and developing countries, especially with respect to trade: article five of the Convention now prioritised respect for human rights and signaled the emergence of a new set of political concerns even in economic areas traditionally regarded as outside of the realm of politics.¹⁰⁰ Boafo-Arthur reminds us that in the same year, the World Bank's 1989 report on adjustment in Africa signaled the onset of political conditionalities, a shift in emphasis for the Bank which had hitherto focused exclusively on economic conditionalities. Henceforth the Bank would consider a wider set of "political barriers to economic development."¹⁰¹ Likewise, the new language of "governance," while not providing direct or explicit support for

¹⁰⁰ Crawford, "The European Union and Democracy Promotion in Africa: The Case of Ghana," 575.

¹⁰¹ Boafo-Arthur, "Ghana: Structural Adjustment, Democratization, and the Politics of Continuity."

democratization, emphasized regime characteristics such as transparency and accountability that are at least compatible with many forms of democracy. It did not take long for this new emphasis to be felt at a country program level; Aidoo points, for example, to the World Bank's 1992 country strategy paper for Ghana where the Bank "advocated broader participation [for Ghanaians] in political life."¹⁰² Consequential bias was, effectively, being mobilized along a wide range of fronts.¹⁰³

It is widely held in Ghana that it was the World Bank that forced the PNDC to liberalise its politics and make the transition to multi-party democracy. This contention is hard to verify for a number of reasons. First, there is no publicly accessible paper trail that might establish the truth or falsity of this assertion. The World Bank Resident Representative for the period under question, Ravi Kanbur, refused this author's request for an interview on the subject, referring her instead to a chapter that he had written on the value of aid and economic conditionalities¹⁰⁴ – a response which is hard to interpret for what it says about the Bank's particular stance on political reform in Ghana. If it is indeed true that the Bank made political reform a requirement for ongoing support, this would be notable, as it would contrast with the Bank's stated policy of abjuring involvement in the politics of the states to which it lends.¹⁰⁵

Having said all of that, there is a good deal of mostly indirect evidence that the World Bank was in fact applying significant pressure on the Ghanaian government to initiate political reforms. Perhaps the key evidence comes from Jerry Rawlings himself.

¹⁰² Aidoo, "The Context and Provenance of Democratization in Ghana, 1990-1992," 15.

¹⁰³ Bachrach and Baratz, *Power and Poverty: Theory and Practice*.

¹⁰⁴ Ravi Kanbur, "Aid, Conditionality and Debt in Africa," in *Foreign Aid and Development, Lessons Learnt and Directions for the Future*, ed. Finn Tarp (Routledge, 2000).

¹⁰⁵ There is, for example, evidence from elsewhere in the developing world that the Bank cared a good deal more about economic conditionalities than it does about democracy per se.

As cited above, in a wide-ranging conversation with the author, Rawlings directly attributed (or blamed, in his view) the move to multiparty democracy on the need to secure the next tranche of funding from the Bank, and to threats from donors (the US in particular) that this would not be forthcoming if suitable political progress was not made.

This account is consistent with the subtle shifts in World Bank policy already alluded to above and verified by the accounts of those situated in the IFIs.¹⁰⁶ In an interview with Maame Gyekey-Jandoh, Daniel Boakeye, an economist with the World Bank, described the dynamics as follows:¹⁰⁷

The World Bank did not directly insist that Ghana change from military to civilian rule, but it promoted “good governance” for many years. Good governance has many dimensions – political, economic, social accountability – and the Bank tries to promote all these aspects of governance progressively. The Bank has a rating under Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA).[sic] This assessment is often shared with government, where based on certain criteria such as the extent of rule of law, human rights protection (basically democratization), particular countries are given more aid if they are perceived to be progressing with regard to the criteria for the assessment. In effect, there is no hard and fast rule about not supporting military regimes, but when the good governance conditions are adhered to, aid is scaled up.

According to Eugene Nyambal, senior strategy officer with the International Finance Corporation, Rawlings¹⁰⁸

understood that to get continuous flow of money from the IMF, he needed to be less authoritarian and have a more open society... Without money, Rawlings’ government would have been weakened, and since the US had to agree to loans, Rawling’s move to democracy pleased the US and opened the doors for further aid.

Again, what is crucial here is not just the direct leverage of the World Bank over its own disbursement, but the co-ordination among donors and the importance that donors assigned to judgments made by the IFIs. According to Haynes, “the IMF and World Bank, as well as foreign governments including those of Britain and America, made it plain that aid and loan flows could be reduced, held up or even halted unless moves

¹⁰⁶ Gyekye-Jandoh, “Explaining Democratization in Africa: The Case of Ghana”, 124.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 117-8.

¹⁰⁸ Cited in Ibid., 118.

towards democracy began.”¹⁰⁹ These arguments were confirmed by my discussions with Rawlings on these matters.

I should caution that interviews can be confusing here: in conversation, sources often elide the World Bank, IMF and US, not necessarily seeing them as separate actors. Having said that, this tendency in itself is telling: pressure would likely have been principally from the US and the World Bank, but it could well have been experienced as coming from all of them (an indeed, from other aligned donors such as Germany and the UK too), almost indistinguishably.¹¹⁰ Indeed, these connections are made clear by Eugene Nyambel, in a continuation of the interview cited above:¹¹¹

There were no explicit political conditionalities, but rather policy or institutional-based conditionalities; this is because the Bank and IMF are apolitical organizations. But because they are the foreign policy arm of the US, if a country does not have good relations with the US, it cannot get loans from the IMF.

According to Paa Kwesi Amissah-Arthur, Deputy Finance Minister in the PNDC, via “snapshots of single interventions... it was still clear that democracy issues were important to Western government and multilateral institutions.”¹¹² Beyond such fora as the Paris Club, there is little concrete evidence that the donors’ messages concerning democratization were being directly administered via the IFIs. Nonetheless, it is very clear that a number of the more important donors were pressing the need for political reform with Ghana’s decision makers, and that those decisionmakers understood the ongoing flow of IFI funds to be directly connected to and contingent on political liberalization. As argued above, there is no question that the multilateral donors – and

¹⁰⁹ Haynes, "The Possibility of Democratic Consolidation in Ghana," 112.

¹¹⁰ Indeed, in an interview with Lydia Polgreen, Rawlings argued that “[w]e were forced by the State Department – oh yes, forced – to adopt multiparty democracy.” Lydia Polgreen, "Ghana's Unlikely Democrat Finds Vindication in Vote," *New York Times*, January 10 2009.

¹¹¹ Cited in Gyekye-Jandoh, "Explaining Democratization in Africa: The Case of Ghana", 126-7.

¹¹² Cited in *Ibid.*, 121.

the Bank in particular – were hugely powerful in their influence on Ghanaian decisionmaking because of what they contributed to the state’s budget in the short term and to the country’s economic recovery in the medium-term. Even a relatively small signal from this source then, would likely have been disproportionately influential – and all indications were that it was.

Section 4: Conclusion

What can we conclude then about the role of international factors in facilitating – or in hindering – Ghana’s transition to multi-party democracy?

For phase one, I have argued that the role played by the specific portion of the foreign aid budget directed at democratization (eg funding for CSOs or the independent media etc) was not – in and of itself - a significant factor. For the most part, such funding was limited and post facto, much of it only really starting in the late 1990s, and part of broader commitment to economic liberalization.¹¹³ Moreover, all the evidence is that far from directly supporting democracy, most of Ghana’s aid budget was intended to support the SAPs. To the extent that some funding went to civil society, it most often went to organized associations and thinktanks representing the Ghanaian private sector.¹¹⁴

Rather, the somewhat surprising conclusion from this review of international factors and external leverage in the Ghanaian case is that what was crucial in the end was the role of the World Bank – hardly the most obvious ally for democratic activists. Put more precisely, it was the leverage associated with the flow of aid, rather than the aid

¹¹³ As previously discussed, much of this was motivation by the perceived need to win local consensus and “buy-in” for the second generation of economic reforms, which in turn required an active civil society. Hearn, "Foreign Political Aid, Democratization, and Civil Society in Ghana in the 1990s," 2, 5.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 2.

itself, that was decisive - along with a consistent and coherent message from allied donors, and the connection that the Ghanaian executive drew between continued Bank funding and ongoing democratization. Without these pressures, directed right at Ghana's (financial) Achilles heel, the bravery and struggles of civil society activists within Ghana would probably have been insufficient, on their own, to accomplish a successful transition. Elsewhere, a colleague and I argued that "[r]egimes are likely to be most responsive to pressure in those areas where they are the most vulnerable; in Ghana's case," we conclude, "it was the need to access international flows of capital as a means of restructuring and diversifying a commodity-dependent (and thus highly vulnerable) economy."¹¹⁵ My research for this study confirmed this earlier conclusion.

The dynamics in phase two were rather different. As the course of economic reform began to falter over the course of the 1990s so too did the government's reliance on the IFI's deepen. This effectively weakened the position of the state, at a time when the momentum of reform and the strength of opposition and democratically-minded actors (both within and without government) was quietly growing. These dynamics essentially presented Rawlings with an unpalatable set of choices: he could reject the results of the election but if he did so he would probably risk many of the significant accomplishments which his government had achieved over his years in office and which had contributed to his own reputation. He may well have been able to cling to power, but the money and the international support which had made Ghana's political and economic recovery possible would, he believed, almost certainly drain away, and those advances

¹¹⁵ Handley and Mills, "From Military Coups to Multiparty Elections: The Ghanaian Military-Civil Transition," 6.

would be hard to sustain in such an event. It would have been a Pyrrhic victory and it was one he ultimately walked away from.

This sequence of events is congruent also with Robert Bates' contention that, over the medium term, "economic reconstruction should spawn political reform."¹¹⁶ He points out, for example, that it is "only after Africa's economic decline that governments felt the need to generate positive economic incentives and to build cooperative political relationship with those who controlled the major source of their revenues"¹¹⁷ – and in Ghana's case in the 1990s, those who controlled the country's new stream of revenue were the IMF and World Bank. Bates concludes that "[t]he economic impetus for political regime [thus] originates... from the needs of the public sector."¹¹⁸

In conclusion then, how are we to judge Rawlings and his government, and the impact of international forces on their decisionmaking? A comparison with the Uganda case might be instructive. Rawlings' model of no-party democracy was, as Richard Crook points out, inspired by the same "populist theories of participatory, community-led democracy which idealized the consensual character of 'traditional' village life and rejected the relevance of political parties" as those championed by President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda.¹¹⁹ Indeed there are a number of suggestive similarities – and differences – between these two cases. Both Museveni and Rawlings had come to power by military means but had not headed up military governments once in office; both had enjoyed remarkable success in stabilizing their respective societies, both politically and

¹¹⁶ Robert Bates, "The Economic Bases of Democratization," in *State, Conflict and Democracy in Africa*, ed. Richard Joseph (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1999), 87.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹¹⁹ Richard C Crook, "'No-Party' Politics and Local Democracy in Africa: Rawlings' Ghana in the 1990s and the 'Ugandan Model'," *Democratization* 6, no. 4 (1999): 1114.

economically, pulling them each back from the brink of total collapse; accordingly, both leaders were feted internationally for their accomplishments. Moreover, both countries had embarked on SAPs under the tutelage of the World Bank – and yet in Ghana’s case, the country successfully made the transition to multi-party democracy, while Uganda did not. How are we to understand this difference?

Because of the opacity of World bank operation, we know very little about how behind-the-scenes World Bank pressures on the two countries may have differed. We are therefore, at least partly in the realm of speculation. Having said that, there are some compelling reasons why Rawlings would both have come under greater pressure from the World bank to reform, and to have been less able to resist concerted donor pressure than Museveni – and these reasons centre on a set of security-related concerns.

As devastating as Ghana’s political conflicts of the 1960s and the 1970s, they had mostly been confined within the country’s borders and, while occasionally violent, they had not taken the form of sustained military combat. This had not been the case with Uganda. Museveni’s Uganda had to grapple not only with the devastating legacy of the Amin and Obote years (including the war with Tanzania), with the ongoing conflict in the north of the country, but also – and perhaps more crucially – with its ongoing history of entanglements in and connections with a series of other regional conflicts. In the 1990s then, a stable Ugandan state was regarded by many donors as vital to the ongoing stabilization of both Uganda itself and to the potential resolution of a number of regional conflicts. More specifically, because of his dominant role within that state, and because of the military and tactical skill that he has showed as head of the National Resistance

Army and its political wing, the National Resistance Movement, Museveni himself was regarded by many as indispensable to that stabilization project.

The ongoing predations of the Lord's Resistance Army in northern Uganda had received wide and sensationalistic international coverage. The horrors of Rwanda in 1994 moreover, had provided a dramatic demonstration of just how devastating the consequences of instability and the interlocking conflicts of the Great Lakes region could be. It seems entirely plausible that Museveni, in response to donor pressure to democratize, would have been able to stress that it was regional and domestic stability that ought to be the priority in this context, rather than a slavish devotion to Western-style democracy.¹²⁰

Rawlings could make no comparable arguments. While there continued to be political tensions in Ghana over the course of the 1990s, there was nothing equivalent to the low-grade civil war being waged in Uganda's north. Again, in contrast with the Great Lakes region, Africa's west coast was relatively calm. Granted, the situation in Cote d'Ivoire unraveled spectacularly in the late 1990s, but there was not a strong sense that that conflict was directly connected to either Ghana or Rawlings himself. Rawlings then, could not plausibly have put himself forward as central to the resolution of any potentially destabilizing regionalized conflict in order to deflect pressure for political reform.¹²¹

Moreover, for donors concerned with political stability, Ghana's long-standing two party system quickly revived to provide a clear institutionalized competitor and

¹²⁰ Interesting exchanges concerning the role of the security question vis-à-vis other priorities including the financial exigencies of structural adjustment can be viewed in the interactions between Museveni, his cabinet, and World Bank teams in the video documentary Peter Chappell, "Our Friends at the Bank," (France: First Run Icarus Films, 1998)..

¹²¹ Herbst, personal correspondence.

potential successor to Rawlings and his NDC. The same scenario did not appear likely in Uganda – raising the question therefore of who would steer the helm of this crucial ship of state should Museveni be forced to step down? Making a final judgment about what ultimately shaped Uganda and Ghana's divergent outcomes will probably require detailed archival work but, as I have argued, a number of factors suggest that while both leaders may have come under some pressure to reform, Museveni would likely have been able to argue that security concerns trumped democratic niceties.

The result of these different contexts – and their different outcomes – is that Ghana has just successfully completed another set of democratic elections and its second democratically-effected regime change (with voters handing power back to the NDC after two terms of NPP rule). Multiparty politics appears to be firmly institutionalized in that country and both the NPP and the NDC, its two major parties, have survived a leadership succession. Uganda, by contrast, continues to be ruled by the same man, Yoweri Museveni, and Ugandans grumble increasingly about the once respected leader's inability to delegate and his apparent determination to stay in office. More troubling, when the time comes to find a successor to Museveni, there is little reason to believe that this will be democratically or smoothly accomplished. While democracy has not solved all of the problems that Ghanaians face, the succession problem at least is not one of those.

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