

Reflecting on Democratic and Economic Experiences in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Comparative Analysis of the First 3 Decades vs. the Second 3 Decades under Ghana's Republics

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to juxtapose Ghana's first three decades [1960s-1980s] of democratic and military regimes with its second three decades [the 1990s-2010s] of only democratic regimes to understand its political and economic trajectories and dynamics. Drawing on the Mandate Theory and leveraging on the interpretivist paradigm, the study adopted a qualitative content analysis and in-depth interviews to collect and analyze the views and opinions of respondents in Accra. The findings show that (a) The 1992 constitution has effectively halted Ghana's 1960s and 80s cyclical political turmoil, ushering in 'Pax Ghanaianica', (b) There is a correlation between campaign promises and real GDP growth under the Fourth Republic, and (c) There is no correlation between a stable democracy and a stable real GDP growth under the Fourth Republic [i.e., The political campaign promises relative to power/electrification/energy have been unable to sustain production in Industry, Agriculture, Commerce, and Services]. The study concludes that Ghana's roller coaster economic development may re-trigger 'alien' incursions into contemporary Ghanaian politics. It recommends that the political economy of Ghana should be structured to propel sustainable production in Industry, Agriculture, Commerce, and Services.

Keywords: Democracy, Ghana, Roller Coaster, Sub-Saharan Africa, Sustainable Political Economy

I. INTRODUCTION

This study draws on Ghana's democratic and economic trajectories and dynamics in the 1960s-1980s [a 30-year period of democratic and military regimes] to understand its democratic and economic trajectories and dynamics in the 1990s-2010s [a 30-year period of only democratic regimes]. In other words, the study draws on an African proverb, "A person charting a path doesn't know that the part behind him/her is crooked", to reflect on Ghana's democratic and economic trajectories and dynamics. Historically, the early 1990s was a watershed moment in which Ghana crossed over into the Fourth Republic against the backdrop of democratic and economic turmoil in the 1960s-1980s. The history surrounding the 1990s, thus, prompts an academic 'incursions' to juxtapose the first and second 30s *before* and *after* that watershed moment. Favourable economic conditions allow governments to fulfil campaign promises, while unfavourable economic conditions undermine their ability to fulfil campaign promises (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; Thomson et al., 2017; Kingdon, 1984; Thomson & Costello, 2016). Single-party majorities have been able to develop campaign agenda with high levels of certainty more than single-party minorities and multi-party coalitions (McMillan, 2020; Martin & Vanberg, 2008; Powell & Whitten, 1993; Kostadinova, 2019; Thomson & Costello, 2016).

The mandate theory has been construed as a representation theory (Downs, 1957; Strøm et. al., 2003), where parties champion distinct campaign promises (Kostadinova & Kostadinova, 2016: 9) and voters instruct leaders to deliver on campaign promises (Downs, 1957; Hershey, 1994: 226). Here, politicians act as "office seekers", while voters are "[...] motivated by government policies [...]" (Downs, 1957; Mansergh & Thomson, 2007: 311). The study revealed that political campaign promises on power/energy vis-à-vis the economy gained significant political attention following the 1982-1984, 1998-2000, 2006-2007, 2012-2016, and 2024 power crises in Ghana. Further findings show that (a) The 1992 Constitution has *successfully* halted the 1960s and 80s cyclical political turmoil, ushering in 'Pax Ghanaianica', (b) There is a correlation between campaign promises and real GDP growth under the Fourth Republic, and (c) There is no correlation between a *stable democracy* and a *stable real GDP growth* under the Fourth Republic [The political

promises on power/electrification/energy have been unable to sustain production in Industry, Agriculture, Commerce, and Services]. The paper is therefore structured as follows: The introduction [which has been dealt with above], literature review and theoretical foundation, methodology, findings and discussions, and conclusion and recommendations.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The issue of campaign promises and their failures and/or fulfilments has come to occupy a centre stage of the global discourse on democratic and economic deficits in recent times. This has given impetus to many scholars (e.g. Thomson et al., 2017; Kingdon, 1984; Thomson & Costello, 2016; Mansergh & Thomson 2007; Thomson et al., 2017; McMillan, 2020; Martin & Vanberg, 2008; Powell & Whitten, 1993; Kostadinova, 2019; Thomson & Costello, 2016) seeking to examine campaign promises, fulfilments, and failures in Europe (Müller, 2020), North America (Krukones, 1985), Oceania (Müller, 2020), Latin America (Johnson & Ryu, 2010), and Africa (Managa, 2012; Jain, 2010; Matsimela & Kanjere, 2019). According to Thomson et al. (2017) and Thomson & Costello (2016), the first three decades [the 1960s-1980s] of Ghana's democratic and economic experiences were characterised by pervasive political and moral decadence and corruption and persistent democratic and economic instability, which, in turn, brought about high unemployment rates and widespread impoverishments in Ghana. The thinking of many Ghanaians was that the second three decades [the 1990s-2010s] of Ghana's democratic and economic experiences would have reversed the pervasive moral decadency, political corruption, and high unemployment rates, and accordingly transformed the lives of Ghanaians (Thomson et al., 2017; Thomson & Costello, 2016). However, the political successes chalked in the second 30 years had been unable to bring about positive changes in the real lives of ordinary Ghanaians (Thomson et al., 2017; Thomson & Costello, 2016). The trend seems to be widespread in sub-Saharan African countries; nonetheless, very little in terms of empirical research is known in the academic discourse. How, then, do Ghana's democratic and economic trajectories in the 1960s-1980s help to enhance our understanding of its democratic and economic trajectories in the 1990s-2010s? Therefore, this study draws on Ghana's democratic and economic trajectories and dynamics under its Republics in the 1960s-1980s [30-year period of democratic and military regimes] to understand its democratic and economic trajectories and dynamics in the 1990s-2010s [30-year period of only democratic regimes].

1.2 Research Objectives

The study was guided by the following research objectives:

- i. To examine the nature and scope of campaign promises in Ghana.
- ii. To juxtapose Ghana's first three decades [1960s-1980s] of democratic/military regimes with its second three decades [the 1990s-2010s] of only democratic regimes to understand its political trajectories and dynamics.
- iii. To scrutinize the Correlation between Democracy and Real GDP Growth in Ghana.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Empirical Review

The literature points to the fact that elections provide the basis on which politicians make campaign promises and establish policy priorities (Duval & Pétry, 2019; Petry et al., 2020), which are inevitable features of democracy (Born et al., 2018; Petry et al., 2020). Besides, it provides voters with alternatives to choose the best (Haan et al., 2010), and "Fulfilling campaign promises is an essential component of the democratic process [...]" (Faúndez et al., 2022: 19). A zoom into the literature on elections unravels similarities and de-similarities on election-related campaign promises, fulfilments, and failures.

On the similarities, some scholars agree that single-party majorities can develop political campaign agendas with high levels of certainty than single-party minorities and multi-party coalitions, which allows the former to deliver on campaign promises more than the latter (Mansergh & Thomson 2007; Thomson et al., 2017; McMillan, 2020; Martin & Vanberg, 2008; Powell & Whitten, 1993; Kostadinova, 2019; Thomson & Costello, 2016). The "[...] rate [...]" of campaign promises and fulfilments tend to be "[...] slightly lower in countries where single-party minorities are historically common (e.g. Sweden, Portugal, Spain) and much lower in countries where multi-party coalitions are the norm (e.g. the Netherlands, Ireland, Austria)" (McMillan, 2020: 7). However, Mellon et al. (2021: 18) observed, there is a "[...] significant gap between single party government and coalition government which might, for instance, be underestimated if parties in coalitions focus on completing small unobjectionable pledges, while shelving iconic—but contested—pledges." It is very imperative to note that parties in power may tend to fulfill promises more than parties in opposition (Thomson & Costello, 2016; Costello et al., 2016), and federal governments tend to fulfill promises more than regional governments (Pétry et al., 2020).

The extent to which election promises influence attitudes towards voting depends on the extent to which the media highlights election campaign promises (Andersen et al, 2005; Kostadinova, 2019; Walgrave, & Swert, 2007;

Muller, 2020; Soroka & Wlezien, 2019). The media focuses on political campaign promises by major parties than minor parties (Kostadinova, 2017). The more the media broadcasts and highlights particular political campaign promises, the more they are likely to be fulfilled (Klingemann, 1994; Kostadinova, 2019). Still, Muller (2020: 700) reported, “[...] media reporting of pledges tends to focus more on broken than on fulfilled promises.” Moreover, if a party’s “[...] record has not been widely debated and scrutinised through the media, then, it is more likely to escape electoral punishment” and vice versa (Hampshire, 2015: 1). Voters, for example, either demonstrate against or vote to reward and punish governments following successes and failures (Managa, 2012; Johnson & Ryu, 2010; Born et al., 2018). Some voters can capitalize on the media to make informed decisions in elections (Kostadinova & Kostadinova, 2016; Andersen et al, 2005; Soroka & Wlezien, 2019), while others are unable to do so because of lack of party manifestos, illiteracy, poverty, short-sightedness, and weak memories (Adekola et al., 2019; Ojo, 2008; Danjibo & Oladeji, 2007; Muller, 2020).

On the part of de-similarities, some scholars argue that favorable economic conditions allow governments to deliver on campaign promises in democracies (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; Thomson et al., 2017; Kingdon, 1984; Thomson & Costello, 2016). Thomson and Costello (2016: 19), for example, reported: “We found a strong effect of the prevailing economic conditions on political campaign pledge fulfilment. All political campaign pledges are more likely to be fulfilled when there is strong economic growth and less likely to be fulfilled in times of economic decline.” However, Faúndez and Navia (2022: 19) observed a different scenario in developing democracies, reporting that “[...] unlike what happens in developed countries, presidents fulfil more political campaign promises rather, when the economic conditions are not favorable. Precisely because emerging democracies are normally less developed, when there is economic growth, presidents enjoy a strong popularity boost that might lead them to be less concerned about fulfilling other political campaign promises.” Then again, some scholars think that politicians do fulfil campaign promises when in power (Artes, 2013; Kostadinova, 2013; Costello & Thomson, 2008; Thomson et al., 2017), whereas others think that politicians do not fulfil campaign promises when in power (Matsimela & Kanjere, 2019; Schattschneider, 1942). In effect, most scholars have sought to examine election-related campaign promises, fulfilments, and failures in Europe (Müller, 2020), North America (Krukones, M.G., 1985), Oceania (Müller, 2020), Latin America (Johnson & Ryu, 2010), and Africa (Managa, 2012; Jain, 2010; Matsimela & Kanjere, 2019) against the backdrop of these similarities and de-similarities. In these regions, election-related campaign promises do not only influence “voting and voter beliefs” (Born, et al., 2018: 685) but also allow voters to pass “collective judgement” about governments (Hampshire, 2015:1). Though the abovementioned studies generally remain silent on election-related promises, fulfilments, and failures in Ghana, they have highlighted key issues that allow investigations into election-related promises, fulfilments, and failures in Ghana.

2.2 Theoretical Review

2.2.1 The Mandate Theory

The *mandate theory* has been construed as a representation theory (Downs, 1957; Strøm et. al., 2003), where parties articulate distinct election promises (Kostadinova & Kostadinova, 2016: 9) and voters instruct their elected leaders using the ballot box as an instrument of demand (Downs, 1957; Hershey, 1994: 226). Here, politicians act as “office seekers”, while voters are “motivated by government policies” (Downs, 1957; Mansergh & Thomson, 2007: 311). The mandate theory, thus, upholds that elections allow voters to distinguish between programmatic parties and select the party with realistic policies and programmes (Kostadinova & Kostadinova, 2016: 9; Grossback et al, 2005; McDonald et. al., 2004; Royed, 1996). Others such as Grossback et. al. (2005: 407) pointed to voters’ reaction to the electoral message, claiming that if the reaction is real [i.e. observed in behavior], then, no matter the intent of the voters, a mandate has occurred. In this way, the mandate theory confers legitimacy on a government either inside or outside the ballot box (Hugh, 1997; Shamir et. al., 2008; Pennings, 1999; Strating & Harkness, 2018; Dahl, 1990; Azari, 2013; Grossback et al, 2005).

In effect, the mandate theory is often understood in two ways: the first is “command” and the second is “authorization” (Hofferbert and Budge, 1992: 152). The mandate theory, thus, commands and authorizes a government to implement, shape, and reshape its policies and programmes through elections (Pennings, 1999; Faravelli, 2015; Royed, 1996). Mostly, manifestoes articulate the policy-position and -priorities of parties, which is why researchers tend to rely on them to measure the mandate of governments (Laver et. al., 2003). The electorate may vote to either retain or remove a government in or out of office when it is weighed and found to be either effective or ineffective under the mandate (McDonald & Budge, 2005; Downs, 1957; Mansergh & Thomson, 2007). The mandate theory is “central to democratic politics” (Hershey, 1994: 225) since it is one of the major premises in representative democracies (Guinaudeau & Guinaudeau 2022: 2). The mandate theory, for example, has been rated as an “objective measure of elections” and a “constructed message after the fact” (Azari, 2013: 484) and, thus, becomes central to interpreting the meaning of an election” (Hershey, 1994: 226).

Besides, the idea of the mandate has been instrumental in strengthening the synergy between voters and elected officials in representative democracies (Shamir, et. al., 2008; Kostadinova & Kostadinova, 2016). The mandate theory, for example, allows voters to influence policies ahead of time and pushes governments to faithfully execute election-related pledges (Powell, 2000). This, thus, suggests that it connects a government's promises/pledges to its actions on the ground, which, in turn, works to strengthen consensus democracy (Mansergh & Thomson, 2007; McDonald et. al., 2004). The mandate theory, thus, allows the current study to examine the extent to which the politician actions and inactions reflect “mandate” under Ghana’s Fourth Republic.

Notwithstanding, some “political scientists are more skeptical of mandates” (Grossback et. al., 2005: 406). These scholars argued that the mandate theory is relevant only in two party systems where one party clearly wins the majority of votes (Dahl, 1990; Pennings, 1999; Louwense, 2011). Dahl (1990), for example, argued that the victory of a candidate who wins an election with only 50.9% of the votes is described as a *myth* than *mandate*. Furthermore, some scholars observed that a budget constrain may subvert the ability of a government to deliver on its mandate in democracies (Guinaudeau & Guinaudeau, 2022). In sum, Hugh (1997: 66) concluded, “The mandate theory is an imprecise concept whose imprecision limits rather than destroys its utility [...]”

III. METHODOLOGY

This study deployed a qualitative research approach using an explanatory/interpretive research design. Accordingly, it adopted content analysis and purposive sampling to select ten (10) participants which include two (2) Assemblymen, three (3) Market Queen Mothers, two (2) Opinion Leaders, and three (3) University Lecturers in Accra, Ghana. The study also ‘harvested’ the views of newly registered voters [the 18-years olds] in the Electoral Commission’s [EC] 2024 Limited Voter Registration Exercise—covered by TV3, Ghana and aired on 7th May, 2024—to support the primary and secondary data. In the case of data collection procedure, the researchers distributed formal letters to the prospective interviewees to request for their participation in the interview process. Afterwards, the researchers scheduled interview meetings with the participants, giving them the opportunity to decide on the convenient time for the interview exercise. English and Twi languages were used to conduct the in-depth interviews. Participants were assured of their anonymity and confidentiality before the commencement of the interviews. In-depth interviews were audio recorded. The audio recorded information was played and transcribed. The transcribed data was analyzed using thematic analysis, and discussed. The primary data was coded to determine the recurrent themes, which formed the basis for analysis. For the content analysis, excerpts from the TV3 news coverage were extracted for direct inclusion in the analysis. The recurrent themes from the primary data as well as the content analysis data were juxtaposed with the secondary data for similarities and differences.

3.1 Conceptual Model of the Relationship between the Input Forces, Output Forces, and Outcome Forces on Campaign Promises

The current study deploys a simple model to examine the correlation between the input force/s [the quest for power], output force/s [campaign promises], and outcome force/s [power/electricity supply and real GDP growth] [see Figure 1]. Here, the input forces are the factors [e.g. the desire to control the state’s purse] that tend to drive the politician to make *campaign promises* [output forces], while the outcome forces are the results [“fulfilments” and “failures”] of the output forces. Under the Findings and Discussions, the input and output forces are largely discussed under “The Nature and Scope of Campaign Promises in Ghana,” while the outcome forces are largely discussed under “The Correlation between Democracy and Real GDP Growth in Ghana.”

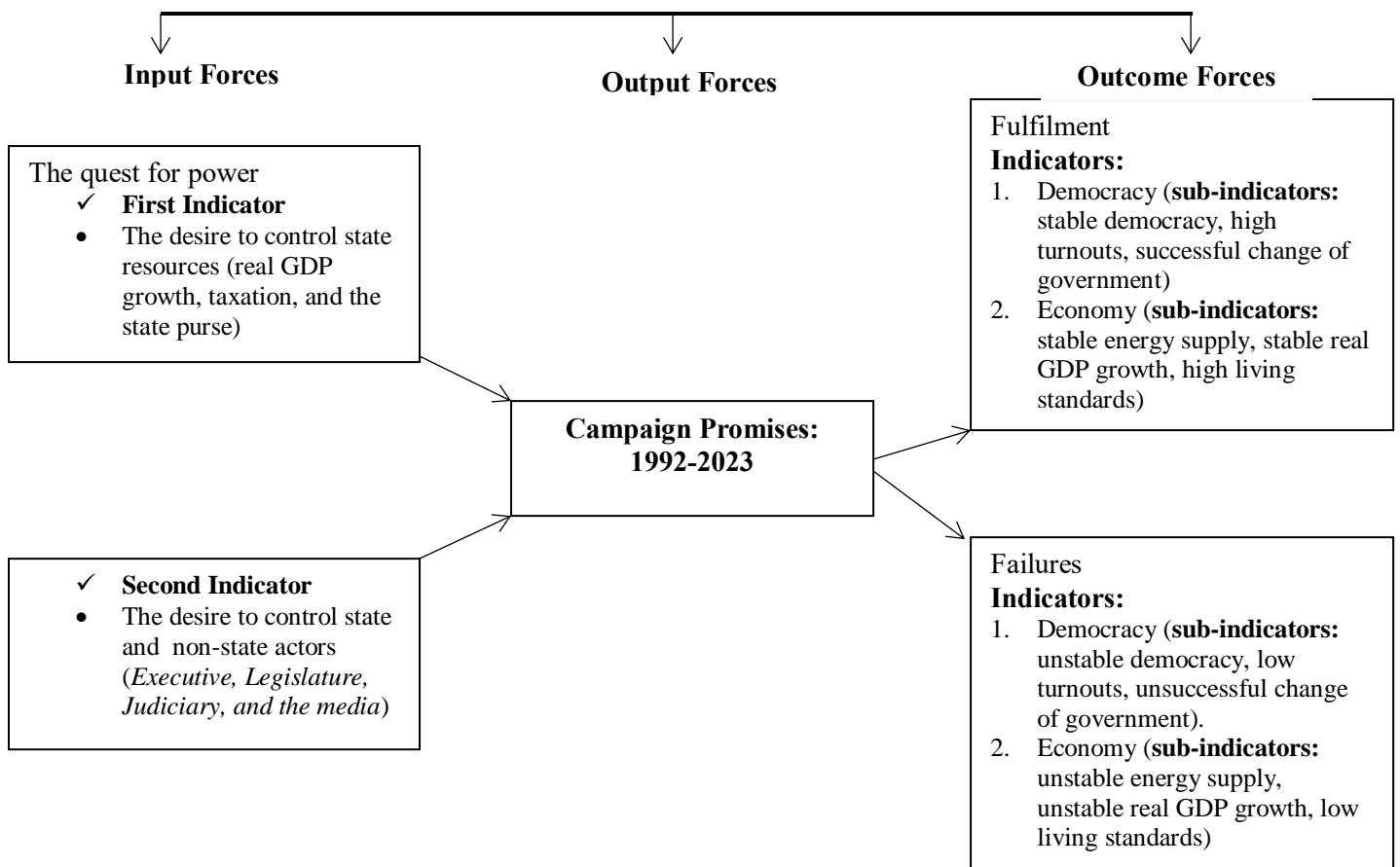


Figure 1
Conceptual Model of Input, Output, and Outcome Forces on Campaign Promises
Source: Researchers (2024)

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 The Nature and Scope of Campaign Promises in Ghana

Nature

Most respondents believed that the major force that tends to push politicians to make campaign promises is the quest for *power*: that is, the desire to control resources [i.e. the state’s purse], institutions, and actors [i.e. the executive, legislature, judiciary, media]. However, the question on, “*Do you see some differences between the incumbents’ and first-time candidates’ campaign promises?*”, divided the respondents into two camps. The first camp argued that first-time presidential candidates tend to articulate promises outside the realities surrounding the state’s purse. An opinion leader, for example, puts it as follows: “[...] the incumbent’s awareness of our limited budget limits the number of campaign promises, while first-time candidate’s lack of understanding about this budget increases the number of campaign promises.” Here, a Market Queen Mother, for example, observed that Nana Akufo-Addo [then a first-time candidate], campaigning from a non-incumbent viewpoint, articulated countless promises in the lead-up to the 2016 general elections—the Free SHS Policy [F-SHS-P], Planting for Food and Jobs [PFJs], One-Village-One-Dam [1V1D], and One-District-One-Factory [1D1F]. Thus, an Assemblyman concluded,

The opposition [...] makes promises that are only in the ideation phase. Most of these promises made by the opposition do not materialize. This implies that they made those big promises to get attention and also to win votes, but upon assuming office they realized that it is not feasible and this has been a major challenge since 1992.

The second camp, however, reasoned that the incumbent presidential candidates tend to tread cautiously when it comes to campaign promises. Mostly, it asserted, the incumbent presidential candidates articulate promises within the realities surrounding the purse. An Assemblyman, for example, observed that then President John Mahama, campaigning

from an incumbency viewpoint, attacked Akufo-Addo [then first-time candidate], describing his promises as not feasible in the lead-up to the 2016 general elections:

In 2016, if you listened to Mahama's campaign message very well, he said that he was against a complete and sudden take-off of the Free SHS Policy. Using the language of the 1992 constitution, he [Mahama] said he supported a gradual and progressive Free SHS in Ghana. Today, the fact that President Akufo-Addo and Vice President Bawumia have been struggling with the implementation of the Free SHS Policy and 1D1F justifies Mahama's opposition. These incumbent candidates have huge promises with loopholes for which they always find a way to defend upon not being able to deliver. It is the main reason why we may not see Mahama and Bawumia make lots of promises as we move into the 2024 general elections. The promise of a 24-hour economy [By Mahama] and digitalization [by Bawumia] may be the only promises they may have on the agenda.

Consequently, a lecturer concluded,

When a blind man [referring to a first-time candidate who lacks the realities surrounding incumbency and state purse] leads another blind man [referring to voters who lack the realities surrounding incumbency and state purse], they both fall into a pit [referring to the failures of campaign promises]. I think that election-related promises have not benefited Ghana since the inception of the Fourth Republic in 1992.

Scope

The focus of campaign promises, according to respondents, has been on theoretical and material issues in Ghana. Here, two Market Queen Mothers argued that realists' ideas—*the end justifies your means*—have influenced most politicians to prioritize 'lies' over 'truth' during campaign promises in Ghana. Similarly, an opinion leader argued that politicians have relegated 'truth' to the background and promoted 'lies' in Ghana. A market queen mother corroborated that 'lies' have become the pre-occupation of politicians, arguing that

They have made it [i.e. elections] like proposing to a woman. When a man wants a woman, he will promise her things he can and cannot afford. When he wins her heart and love, he considers the promise he made to her [as] not compulsory.

Some respondents, however, pointed to infrastructure in, among others, health, energy, and education as the major focus of campaign promises. Here, two lecturers argued that the focus of campaign promises has been on infrastructure such as, inter alia, roads, hospitals, dams, and school blocks. An opinion leader asserted, "We have had a big deficit in the energy and road network, which is why all political parties want to do something in those areas." Still, the Fourth Republic saw 'education' as one of the focuses of campaign promises in Ghana. In 2016, for example, then-candidate Akufo-Addo promised a radical and swift *Free SHS*, while then-President Mahama promised a gradual and progressive *Free SHS* in Ghana. However, the issue of power/electrification/energy vis-à-vis the economy, an Assemblyman observed, gained political attention following the 1982-1984, 1998-2000, 2006-2007, 2012-2016, and 2024 power crises in Ghana. The 2012-2016 power crisis and its impacts on the economy, an Opinion Leader corroborated, made it a topical issue in campaign promises prior to the 2016 general elections. In 2016, then-candidates Akufo-Addo promised 1D1F, de-inflation, PFJs, and 'production' over 'taxation'. Currently, the NPP champions a 'digitalization' of the economy, while the NDC champions a 24-hour economy ahead of the 2024 general elections.

4.2 The Correlation between Democracy and Real GDP Growth in Ghana

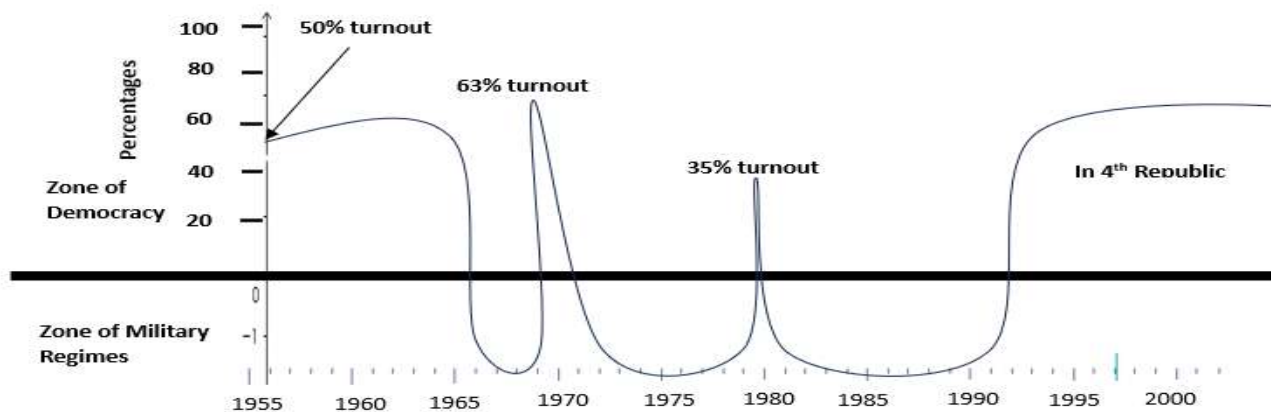


Figure 2: Diagram by Researchers.

Figure 2

Graphical representation of the voter turnout in the brief democratic and military trajectories from the 1960s to 1980s
Source: Researchers (2024)

There is a direct correlation, Pateman (1996) and Miller (2012) observed, between democratization and economic growth. However, the history of Ghana's politics, as shown in Figure 2, relays a roller coaster trajectory between the mid-1960s and early-1980s. In 1956, Ghana went to the polls with a 50% turnout (Nohlen et al, 1999) [see Figure 2], which ushered it into independence in 1957 with Nkrumah as the President of the First Republic. However, among the voters that went to the polls in 1956 stood the men [Colonel E.K. Kotoka, Major A. A. Afrifa, Lieutenant General J. A. Ankrah etc.] who would later cite economic downturns to overthrow the President of the First Republic. Indeed, these men launched the coup to overthrow President Nkrumah in 1966 (Kraus, 1983), ushering the nation into "[...] repeated [military] interventions into politics [...]" and "[...] cycle of political instability and policy uncertainty" (Hutchful, 1997: 51) and creating the "[...] problem of getting soldiers back into the barracks after they have broken into politics" (Austin, 1985: 90). However, Ninsin & Draht (1993: 184) observes,

The period following the 1966 coup d'etat and the liberal economic policies of the regime improved the economic situation quite well compared to the pre-1966 period. This appears to have been reflected in voter response to the 1969 parliamentary election. In that year's exercise 1,493,371 registered voters (or 63.2% of a total of 2,363,665) cast their vote [see Figure 2].

But then again, the 1969 polls, which ushered Ghana into the Second Republic, harboured the men [Colonel Ignatius Kutu Acheampong and Co] who would return to cite economic declines to overthrow the Prime Minister of that Republic [Kofi Abrefa Busia] in 1972 (Austin, 1985). However, Ninsin & Draht (1993: 184-185) further observes,

By the close of the 1970s when the economic crisis was clearly undermining the capacity of the state to perform its patronage functions, the voter turn-out in the elections of that period also showed a revealing decline. [The] [...] parliamentary and presidential elections [...] of 1979 produced [...] low voter turnout of 35.3% [see figure 2].

Still, the 1979 polls, which ushered Ghana into the Third Republic, had the men [Jerry John Rawlings and Co] who would later return to capitalize on economic mismanagement to overthrow the President of that Republic [Hilla Limann] in 1981 (Kraus, 1983). These events, thus, reveal a roller coaster political trajectory [see the zigzag line in Figure 2], which began with the First Republic in 1960 [see the *Zone of Democracy* in Figure 2] and plunged into military rule in 1966 [see the *Zone of Military Regimes* in Figure 2], moved up to the Second Republic in 1969 [see the *Zone of Democracy*], plunged into military rule in 1972 [see the *Zone of Military Regimes*], ascended into the Third Republic in 1979 [see the *Zone of Democracy*], descended again into military rule in 1981 [see the *Zone of Military Regimes*], and, then, ascended into the Fourth Republic in 1992 [see the *Zone of Democracy*]. Thus, in Ghana, Hutchful (1997: 251) observes, the military often "[...] intervened, as they soon explained, because of the growing corruption

and deteriorating conditions of service, the severe economic crisis and reduced military budgets, and the mismanagement of both the Armed Forces and the national government” during the 1960s and 1980s. Consequently, in the early-1980s, Hansen and Collins (1980: 3) bemoaned that “SINCE Independence in 1957, the masses of Ghana have been hoping for something dramatic on the political scene; they have been hoping for an earth-shaking change in the foundation of the power structure which has been ruling their lives, for an end to the seemingly endless cycle of poverty, deprivation and want.”

It was against this backdrop, according to the respondents, that a new constitution was adopted to stabilize Ghana’s *democracy* and *economy* in 1992. In Ghana, it was a period in which “Hopes were placed in the democratic method in the belief that democratization and freedom went hand in hand, and also in the belief that a decent standard of living for all citizens was part of democratization” (Pateman, 1996: 7). Today, a Lecturer reported, the 1992/3 constitution has successfully halted the 1960s and 80s cyclical political turmoil, ushering in ‘Pax Ghanaianica’ [a stable period] in Ghana [see Figure 3].

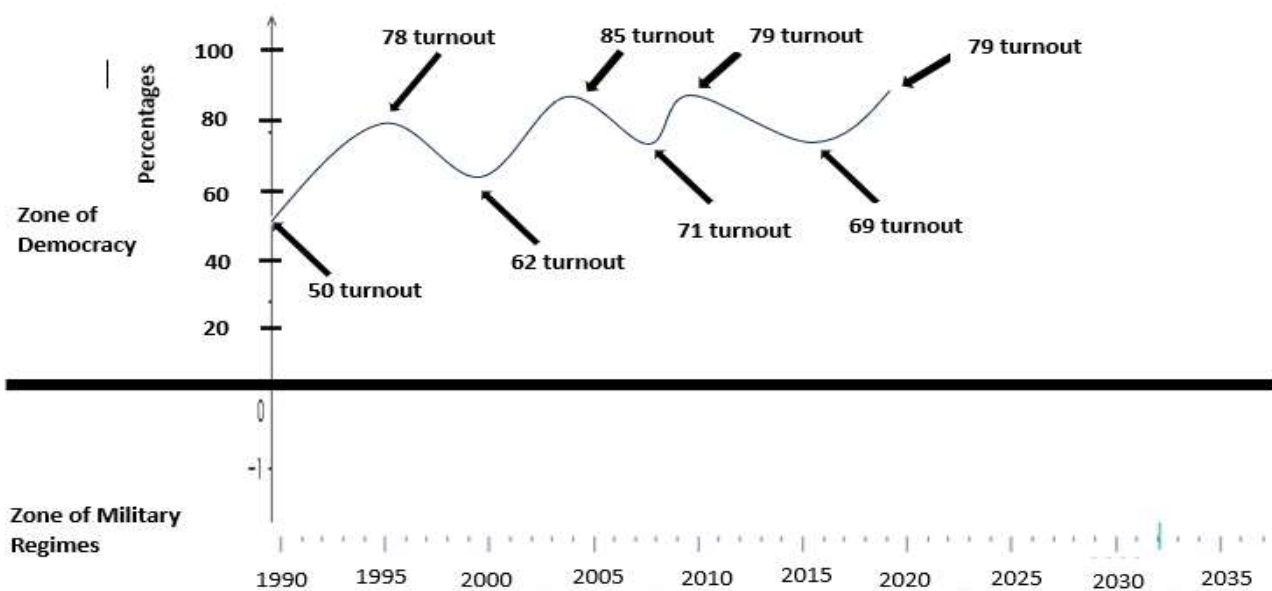


Figure 3: Diagram by Researchers.

Figure 3

Graphical representation of the voter turnout in the democratic trajectory in the 4th Republic of Ghana, 1990s to 2010s
Source: Researchers (2024)

The evidence in Figure 3, for example, shows that the trajectory of democracy has not plunged into the *Zone of Military Regimes* since the inception of the Fourth Republic in 1992. The turnouts have remained high in 1992 [50%], 1996 [78%], 2000 [62%], 2004 [85%], 2008 [71%], 2012 [29%], 2016 [69%], and, then, 2020 [79%]. Today, a Lecturer and Market Queen Mother observe, citizens are almost always eager to step out in their numbers to register and vote during *registration* and *election* periods in Ghana. The Market Queen Mother pointed to the winding queues at the various Voter Registration Centers nationwide, stating that

[...] you see, the queues at the Registration Centers tell how Ghanaians embrace the Voter Card in Ghana. We the parents are happy to pass on this culture to our children. In fact, we love to register them to vote during elections in Ghana.

On 7th May, 2024, TV3, for example, relayed the euphoria that came with the acquisition of the Voter Card during EC’s Limited Voter Registration Exercise. A grandmother, facing her granddaughter and TV3 Reporter, said to them,

Today, 7th May, I have registered you as a Ghanaian girl that, coming December 7th, you’ve got the right to vote [...] [addressing the granddaughter]. I am not the grandmother to convince my granddaughter. She knows what is going on because she’s of age, that’s 18 years, she knows what is good and bad [...]. So, her choice is hers” [addressing the TV3 Reporter].

The granddaughter, then, replied: “I am happy to come and do my voter’s ID card. I will be voting [...].” Another newly registered voter remarked:

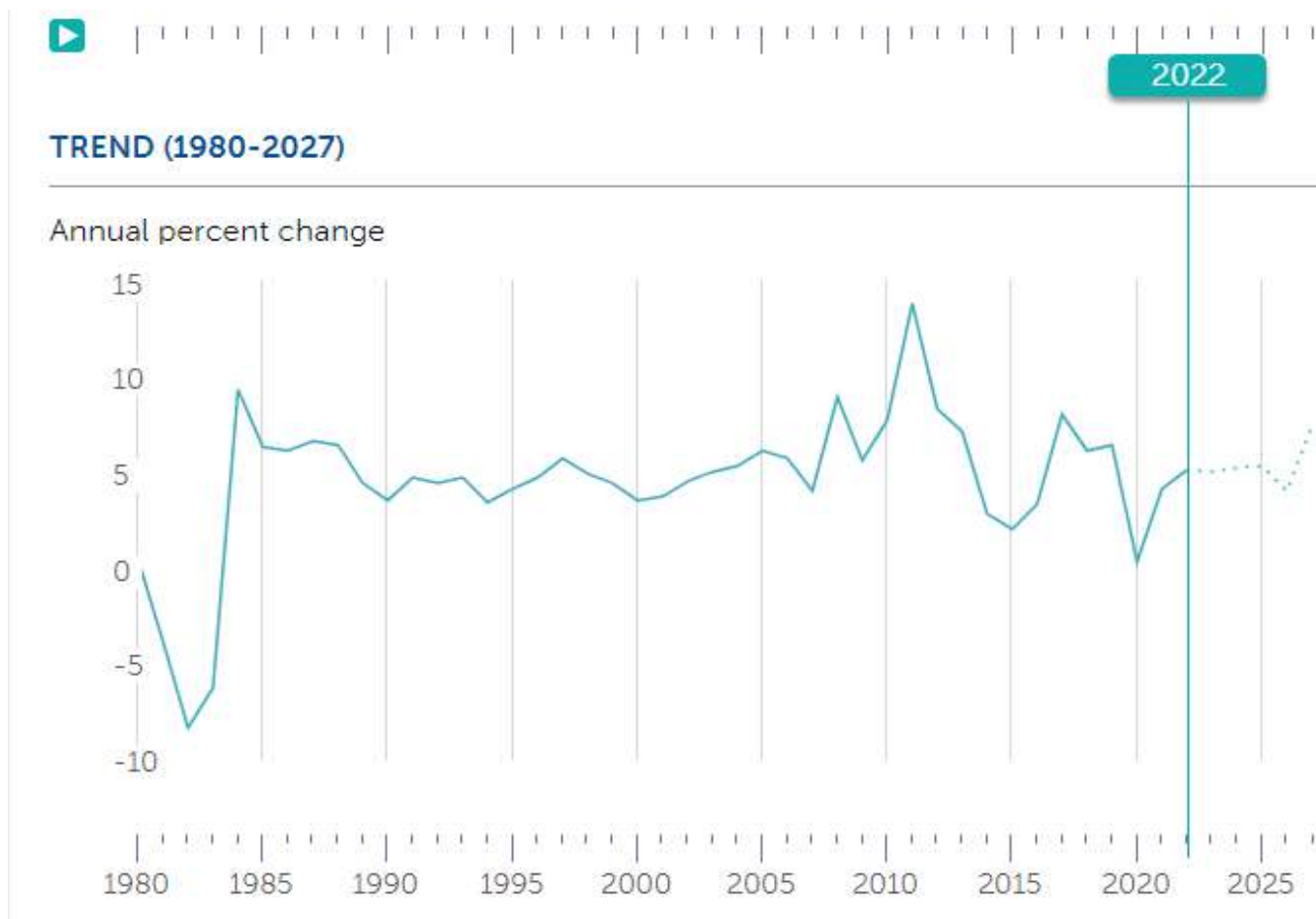
It is a great privilege for me to get a voter’s ID card, and I am extremely glad [...].
My parents can never put pressure on me to vote for maybe NPP or NDC, no, no,
no because I have the right, I am 18 years [old] and I need to decide [...].

Thus, an Assemblyman observed, the 1992 constitution has “[...] indeed injected fresh political blood into voters in Ghana.” Today, one Lecturer corroborated, the fact that the turnouts have been high in all the eight general elections suggests that “[...] the 1992 constitution is an anti-coup vaccine [...].” This prompted Lodge (2013) and Austin (1985) to remark that the Fourth Republic has not only passed Huntington’s ‘Two-Turnover test’ (Lodge, 2013) but also pushed the military back into the barracks, resolving the “[...] problem of getting soldiers back into the barracks after they have broken into politics” (Austin, 1985: 90). Consequently, “The common saying in Ghana now is that the power to make and unmake governments no longer resides in the barrel of the gun but with the thumb of individual voters” (Boafo-Arthur, 2008: 50). However, these turnouts, Pateman (1996: 7) cautioned, remind us of the

[...] long queues of people waiting patiently for many hours to take part in [...] ballot [...] [and] give us an insight into the hopes that have fuelled the long process of democratization in Western countries. The hopes were not just for an orderly succession in government [...], [but] [...] in the belief that a decent standard of living for all citizens was part of democratization. Women and men have not campaigned, and sometimes fought and died, purely for a certain electoral procedure. Rather, the universal vote symbolized democratic ideals and offered the promise of political change.

Real GDP Growth

In Abbasi et al’s (2021: 1) view, “A sustainable energy/electricity mix leads to stable and long-term economic goals.” However, in the respondents’ view, a *stable democracy* has not translated into a *stable economy* in Ghana. In the energy sector, they argued, politicians have been unable to sustain the gains of campaign promises under the Fourth Republic. Three respondents vividly recollected that the nation has had to endure sporadic power/electricity/energy crises, beginning in 1982-1984, 1998-2000, 2006-2007, 2012-2016, and 2024. The respondents, for example, recalled the four-year power crisis in 2012-2016, which unleashed untold consequences on the nation *within* and *after* that period. The Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER), University of Ghana, corroborated that the power crisis caused the nation to lose between \$320 million and \$924 million annually (Asare and Crentsil, 2015). Now, a roller coaster power supply, as we compare the abovementioned primary data with the following IMF data, indicates a roller coaster real GDP growth: Ghana’s real GDP growth [annual percentage change], which stood at 4.8 [1993], plunged to 3.5 [1994] and rose up to 4.2 [1995], 4.8 [1996] and up to 5.8 [1997] but, then, plunged to 5 [1998], 4.5 [1999] and, then, 3.6 [2000]. However, real GDP growth rose to 3.8 [2001], 4.6 [2002], 5.1 [2003], 5.4 [2004] and, then, up to 6.2 [2005] but, then, plunged to 5.8 [2006] and down to 4.1 [2007] but rose to 9 [2008] and, then again, plunged to 5.7 [2009]. The real GDP growth, however, shot up to 7.8 [2010] and up to 13.9 [2011] plunged to 8.4 [2012], 7.2 [2013], 2.9 [2014] and down to 2.1 [2015] but rose to 3.4 [2016] and up to 8.1 [2017] plunged to 6.2 [2018] rose up to 6.5 [2019] plunged to 0.4 [2020] rose up to 4.2 [2021] and, finally, up to 5.2 [2022] (IMF, 2022, see Figure 4).

**Figure 4**

Ghana's real GDP growth from 1980 to 2024

Source: IMF

The correlation between power and real GDP growth in Industry, Agriculture, Commerce, and Service is now quite clear: the power crisis in 1998-2000 caused real GDP to move from 5.8 in 1997 down to 5 in 1998, 4.5 in 1999, and, then, 3.6 in 2000. But then, a relatively stable energy supply in the early- to mid-2000s helped to achieve steady real GDP growth in 2001 [3.8], 2002 [4.6], 2003 [5.1], 2004 [5.4], and 2005 [6.2]. However, the 2006-2007 power crisis pulled real GDP growth from 6.2 in 2005 down to 5.8 in 2006 and, then, 4.1 in 2007. But then again, a relatively stable energy supply in the late-2000s to early-2010s helped to move real GDP growth from 4.1 [2007] up to 9 [2008] and then, dropped in 2009 [5.7], shot up to 7.8 [2010] and then, 13.9 [2011]. However, the worst power crisis in 2012-2016 pulled real GDP growth from 13.9 in 2011 down to 8.4 in 2012, 7.2 in 2013, 2.9 in 2014, and, finally, 2.1 in 2015. Therefore, we draw on the abovementioned pieces of evidence to draw the following conclusions: (a) There is a correlation between democracy [i.e. campaign promises] and economy [real GDP growth] in Ghana. In other words, the politician's actions [if power-related promises are fulfilled] and inactions [if power-related promises are renege] affect real GDP growth [i.e. power-related promises boost and undermine productivity in Industry, Agriculture, Commerce, and Service in Ghana], and (b) There is no correlation between a *stable democracy* and a *stable economy* in Ghana. In other words, a *stable democracy* has not translated into a *stable real GDP growth* under the Fourth Republic [i.e. Power-related promises have failed to sustain stable production in Industry, Agriculture, Commerce, and Service in Ghana]. In effect, an opinion leader observed,

When the politician needs power [political power], he/she runs to encourage Ghanaians to register and vote. Ghanaians have been faithful to register, vote, and sustain this power in the Fourth Republic. However, when the Ghanaian voter needs power [referring to electric power] to sustain his/her business, the politician goes to sleep.

Consequently, a Market Queen Mother lamented that,

The queue that voters form to vote to sustain political power shows orderliness. On the day of voting, both NDC and NPP voters join the same line to vote to sustain political power. Voters' differences in that line do not destabilize political power, but, rather, sustain it. So, though we disagree, we are in the same line to sustain power. So, I always ask, why can't the ideas of the NDC and NPP be in one line—unity in diversity—to resolve the electricity crisis in Ghana?

4.3 Discussion

One probable factor, inter alia, that caused an incumbent President Mahama [NDC] to lose power to Nana Akufo-Addo, the then Presidential candidate [NPP], was the 2012-2016 hydro-electric energy crisis. Thus, Nana Akufo-Addo took office as the President of the Republic of Ghana with the determination to prevent a relapse into the 2012-2016 hydro-electric energy crisis. Indeed, the stable hydro-electric energy supply—which probably moved Ghana's GDP growth from 3.4 [2016] to 8.1 [2017]—attests to the perceived determination by the NPP to resolve Ghana's hydro-electric energy crisis. This reinforces Abbasi et al's (2021: 1) observation that "A sustainable energy/electricity mix leads to stable and long-term economic goals." The 2019 outbreak of COVID-19, however, pulled GDP growth down to 0.4 in 2020. The outbreak of this COVID-19, together with its economic downturns, may have partly contributed to re-trigger the 2024 hydro-electric energy crisis. Unfortunately, some Ghanaians are not alluded to this COVID-19-2024 retriggered hydro-electric energy crisis. Accordingly, this has led some Ghanaians to decry NPP to have failed to provide a panacea to the persistent hydro-electric energy crisis in the country. Ghana has not recorded only the hydro electric energy crisis experiences but also decades of economic crisis. This economic crisis is said to trigger the political instabilities which characterised Ghana's first three republics [1960s – 1980s]. For instance, Ninsin (1993: 184-185) observes, "By the close of the 1970s [...] the economic crisis was clearly undermining the capacity of the state to perform its patronage functions [...]" in Ghana. Consequently, we uphold Thomson and Costello's (2016: 19) argument that "We found a strong effect of the prevailing economic conditions on political campaign pledge fulfilment. All political campaign pledges are more likely to be fulfilled when there is strong economic growth and less likely to be fulfilled in times of economic decline."

Notwithstanding, the quest to resolve Ghana's hydro-electric energy crisis goes beyond the wisdom and determination of any single individual/party in Ghana. The fact that the energy crisis, as the findings have demonstrated, has been an issue under successive governments [both NDC and NPP] suggests that only a united front could resolve these crises. In Faúndez et al.'s (2022: 19) view, "Fulfilling campaign promises is an essential component of the democratic process [...]". However, we argue that irreconcilable polarizations between and among political parties have the potential to undermine this "[...] essential component [...]" of democracy [i.e. "Fulfilling campaign promises [...]"] in Ghana. For example, on 21st August 2024, the District of Columbia Court, US, ordered Ghana to pay an amount of \$111 million to the Ghana Power Generation Company as a result of the former's termination of a Power Purchasing Agreement [PPA] with the latter on 18th February, 2018. Addressing this issue on TV3 evening news, the former Ghanaian Energy Minister who superintended over that PPA under the erstwhile NDC administration, Dr. Kwamena Donkor, bemoaned: "The painful thing is that every one of this PPAs has a termination clause, and I don't deny the right of any government to terminate an agreement if it found that the agreement is not in the national interest. There is a termination procedure enshrined in the contract. What stops you from utilizing the procedure enshrined in the contract? You see, we must respect agreement. We must be careful when drawing up agreement." Clearly, these remarks bring to the fore the usual NPP-NDC rivalries in Ghana: here, a united front could have saved and reinvested the \$111 million in the energy sector in Ghana. Consequently, we uphold that the usual NPP-NDC rivalries undermine the mandate theory, which is "central to democratic politics" (Hershey, 1994: 225; Guinaudeau & Guinaudeau 2022: 2).

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This study set out to juxtapose Ghana's 1960s-1980s democratic/military regimes with its 1990s-2010s democratic regimes to understand its political and economic trajectories. Using the Mandate Theory, interpretivist paradigm, qualitative content analysis, and in-depth interviews, the study found out that political campaign promises on power/energy vis-à-vis the economy gained significant political attention following the power/energy crisis that hit the nation in 1982-1984, 1998-2000, 2006-2007, 2012-2016, and 2024. Furthermore, the study revealed that (a) The 1992 constitution has *effectively* halted Ghana's 1960s and 80s cyclical political turmoil, ushering in 'Pax Ghanaianica', (b) There is a correlation between campaign promises and real GDP growth under the Fourth Republic, and (c) There is no correlation between a *stable democracy* and a *stable real GDP growth* under the Fourth Republic [i.e., The political campaign promises relative to power/electrification/energy have been unable to sustain production in Industry, Agriculture, Commerce, and Services]. The study, then, concludes that Ghana's roller coaster economic development

may re-trigger 'alien' incursions into contemporary Ghanaian politics. It recommends that the political economy of Ghana should be structured to propel sustainable production in Industry, Agriculture, Commerce, and Services. Besides, it is recommended that political economists should develop models which unify politics and economics, as we have proposed in this study. Finally, many citizens who vote are not well informed on the issues; therefore, voters should be given proper orientation on their actions and inactions during elections.

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