

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA



DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

**STATE ACTORS AND DEMOCRATIC RECESSION IN AFRICA: EXPERIENCE
FROM GHANA AND KENYA**

BY

KENNEDY DONKOR

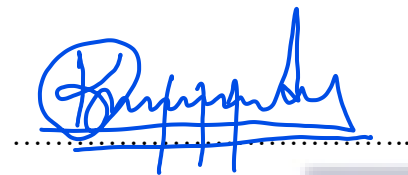
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**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON, IN
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DECLARATION

I, Kennedy Donkor, hereby declare that this thesis is my original work, conducted under the supervision of Dr. Maame Adwoa Gyekye-Jandoh and Dr. Emmanuel Yeboah-Assiamah, except where due acknowledgment has been made to the work of other authors. I further declare that this thesis, in whole or in part, has not been submitted to any other institution for the award of any academic or professional qualification.

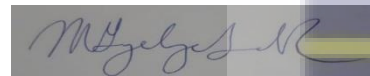


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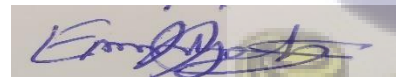


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DEDICATION

I solemnly dedicate this academic thesis to exceptionally significant individuals who have profoundly influenced my life and academic journey. The first individual to whom I would like to express my deepest gratitude is Mr. Daniel Donkor, a potential Doctor, whose insightful guidance and unwavering belief in my potential inspired me to pursue further education after I had spent several years at home following the completion of my Senior High School education. Secondly, I dedicate this work to the cherished memory of my late mother, Yaa Krah, as well as to my late uncle, Prince Ababio, both of whom have played pivotal roles in my life; although it brings me considerable sorrow to acknowledge your absence at this momentous juncture, I find solace in the profound belief that you are both proud of my achievements, wherever you may be in the realms beyond.



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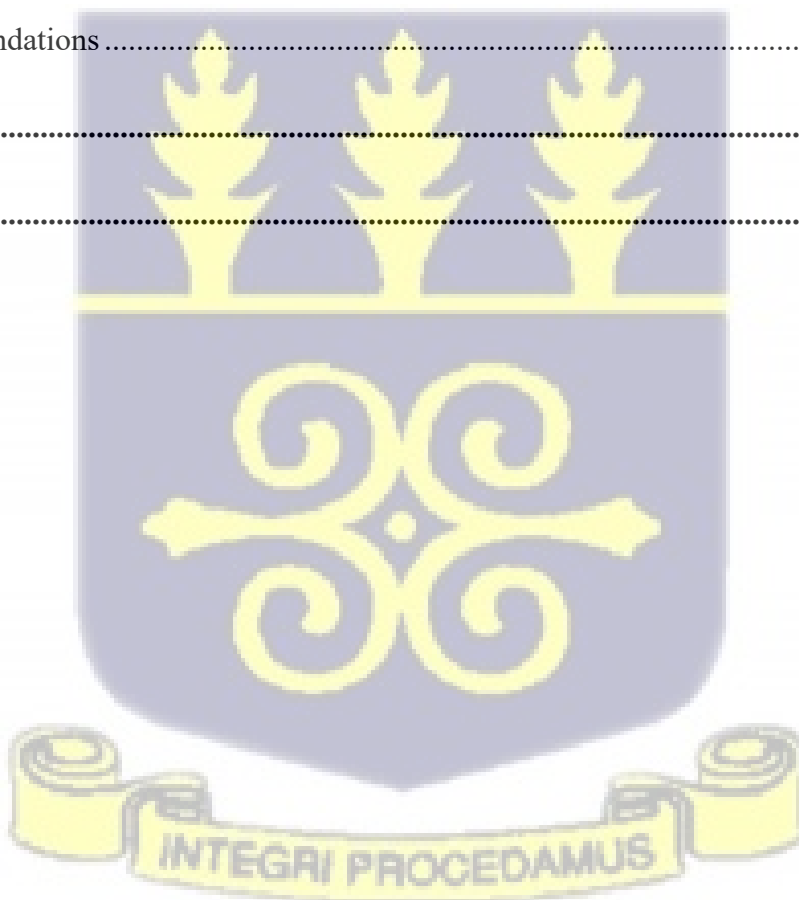
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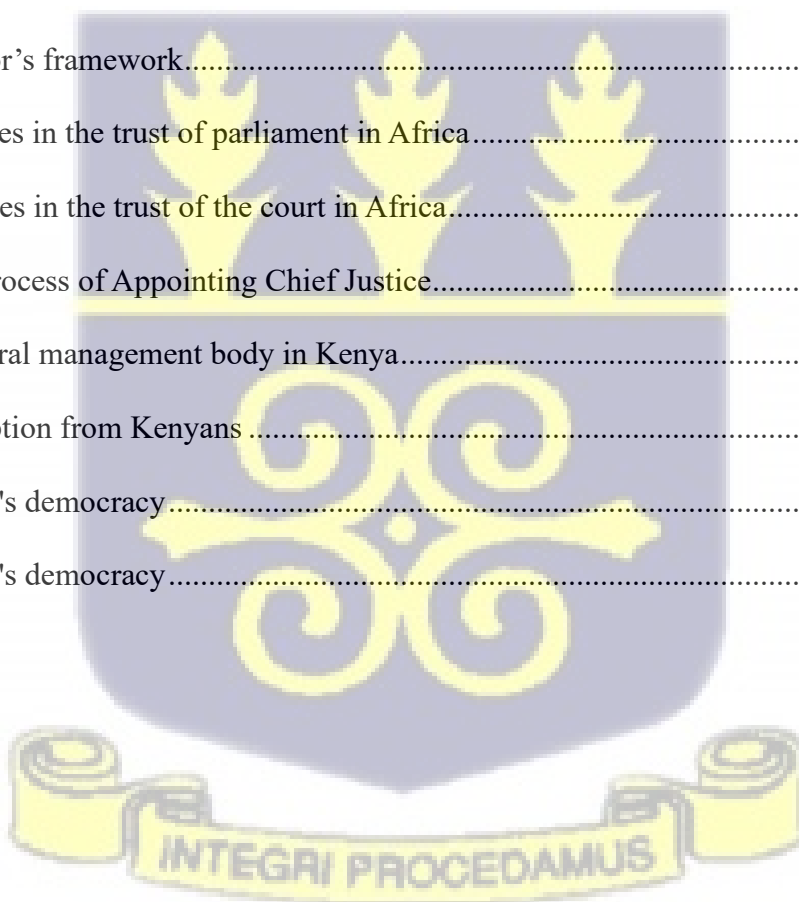
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AG	-	Auditor General
CDD- Ghana	-	The Ghana Centre for Democratic Development
CHRAJ	-	Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice
CJ	-	Chief Justice
DBT	-	Democratic Backsliding Theory
EC	-	Electoral Commission
EIU	-	Economist Intelligence Unit
IDEG	-	Institute for Democratic Governance
IEBC	-	Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission
IPOA	-	Independent Policing Oversight Authority
JSC	-	Judicial Service Commission
MDSD	-	Most Different Systems Design
MSSD	-	Most Similar Systems Design
OSP	-	Office of the Special Prosecutor
V-DEM	-	Varieties of Democracy
WVS	-	World Values Survey



ABSTRACT

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), in its annual Democracy Index report on global democratic performance, along with the Afrobarometer 2024 reports, have reached a consensus on the decline of democracy worldwide and in Africa, respectively. The Varieties of Democracy 2025 report states that only 28% of the world's population currently lives in democracies. Out of 167 countries and territories, 71 are classified as democracies and 96 as nondemocracies, a sharp drop from 123 democracies out of 193 countries in 2006. While Africa saw a wave of democratic transitions in the third wave of democratization—40 countries moved to democracy (Huntington, 1991)—today only 7 African countries remain democracies. Even established democracies like Ghana and Kenya face silent democratic erosion despite experiencing stability and having institutions such as the Judiciary, Legislature, Executive, and Electoral Commissions. Ghana has experienced a democratic recession since 2016, and Kenya since 2017. This thesis adopted a mixed-methods approach to analyze the patterns of democratic recession in these countries, focusing on the role of the executive in undermining democracy through electoral manipulation. It finds that there is no uniform pattern of democratic recession in Africa; instead, it varies by state. The interaction between the executive and other state institutions worsens democratic decline, with electoral violence and manipulation orchestrated by executive powers. Moreover, institutions intended to safeguard democracy are often exploited by executives to weaken it. The study recommends that Ghana pay close attention to its ongoing constitutional review and consider changing its system of government and reduce the appointment power of the executive. It also urges greater involvement of Civil Society Organizations in both countries, the strengthening of opposition parties in Kenya, and calls on Kenyan youth to break the cycle of tribal politics. This analysis reveals that democratic recession in Africa is nuanced and driven heavily by the misuse of state institutions by executive actors, undermining the continent's democratic gains.

Keywords: Democratic recession, State Actors, Executive power/presidential dominance, Parliament, Judiciary, Africa, Ghana, Kenya, Democratic Backsliding Theory (DBT)

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) in its annual report Democracy Index on global democracy performance had the one released in February 2025 captioned “*What’s wrong with representative democracy?*” (Democracy Index, 2024), and Afrobarometer captioned “*African insights 2024: Democracy at risk – the people’s perspective*” (Afrobarometer, 2024). These captions alone raise concerns about the worldwide democracy decline. One of the pressing challenges currently confronting the global landscape is a democratic recession. This predicament has garnered the attention of democracy scholars within Africa, prompting them to engage in research endeavors to elucidate the underlying reasons and mechanisms through which this issue has persisted. This study explores how the actions of state actors (with a special focus on the executive) within democratic countries contribute to the exacerbation of democratic recession. It specifically examines state actors in Ghana and Kenya, with a particular emphasis on the most critical factors that are impacting the ongoing democratic recession in these countries. This chapter offers an exhaustive and meticulous background on democratic recession, an articulation of the research problem, the objectives of the research, the rationale of the study, and the organization of this thesis.

1.1 The background

In an article published in 2015, Larry Diamond did a cross-time comparative analysis from 1975 to 2006. Diamond observed that the global count of democracies either increased or remained stable each year. However, this positive trend ceased in 2006 and has since exhibited indications of decline, a phenomenon that Diamond referred to as a “democratic recession” (Diamond, 2015; Levitsky & Way, 2015). An alternative assessment done by Lührmann et al. (2017), using data from Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem), specifically relying on the Liberal Democracy Index (LDI) indicated that although the state of the world’s democracy is close to its historical peak, ‘more nations have encountered substantial democratic recession than those that have seen improvement over the past five years,’ implying that, overall, the state of the world’s democracy has regressed to a stage comparable to those of a decade or fifteen years prior (Lührmann et al., 2017).

In fact, following the attainment of independence from colonial regimes in the late 1950s through the early 1960s, numerous African nations adopted a façade of democratic governance before being subjected to a series of unconstitutional governmental transitions (UCG), which persisted until the 1990s (Brown, 2017; Burchard, 2022; Gyimah-Boadi, 2015; Joseph, 1999). Throughout the Cold War, amidst the emergence of the “third wave” of democratization, the populace in Africa harbored significant optimism that they would enjoy the liberties afforded to citizens of former colonial nations (Campbell & Quinn, 2021; el Nabolsy et al., 2021; Mueller, 2018), particularly as the incidence of military coups markedly declined massively after the conclusion of the Cold War in 1991 (Elischer, 2023; Bundu, 2001). Therefore, a decade of the 1990s witnessed the involvement of 40 countries (Arriola et al., 2022) in the phenomenon termed the “third wave” of democratization (Huntington, 1991), which experienced renewed vigor after the end of the Cold War. By the year 2015, 46 countries collectively conducted nearly 400 competitive national

elections, in stark contrast to merely nine elections between 1985 and 1989 (Bleck & Van de Walle, 2018).

Currently, amidst the global trend of autocratization (Lindberg & Luhrmann, 2019), the democratic advancements realized in the early 1990s are being undermined throughout the continent as citizens encounter an increasing array of legal limitations on their freedoms of expression and association (Breckenmacher, 2017; Dupuy et al., 2016; Ezvan, 2025; Gunatilleke, 2021; Rakner, 2019; Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index [BTI], 2024).

Nancy Bermeo (2018) introduced a comprehensive idea of how democracy declines by using the term “democratic backsliding,” thus *“the state-led debilitation or elimination of the political institutions sustaining an existing democracy”*. The works of Diamond and Bermeo influenced Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt (2018) in their work *“How Democracies Die”*, by identifying key warning signs of democratic backsliding. To them, democratic backsliding is a process where *“democracies erode not at the hands of men with guns but by elected leaders who subvert the very process that brought them to power.”* Various terms such as ‘democratic recession,’ ‘democratic backsliding,’ ‘democratic erosion,’ ‘democratic decay,’ and democratic reversal have been employed by different scholars and used interchangeably, yet all those terminologies share a common denotation, thereby signifying the same underlying notion (Daly, 2019; Yusupova, 2021; Akinyetun, 2022; Bilawokit, 2023; Sotiropoulos, 2023; Little & Meng, 2024). However, for this study, democratic recession or backsliding refers to any state-led action by state actors that results in a sharp decline, persistent stagnation, or gradual erosion of democratic principles. On the other hand, *“state actors are the individuals and institutions that act on behalf of states/countries”* (Asare, 2018). Therefore, this thesis emphasizes the actions of presidents/executives (as state actors) in aggravating democratic recession.

1.2 Research problem

The V-DEM reports in 2024 and 2025 revealed a deteriorating democratic experience in Africa since 2004. Also, as stated in the Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2023) report, more than 60 per cent of individuals in Africa inhabit countries where civic engagement, entitlements, and inclusivity have declined over the preceding decade, with over one-third living in regions where this trend has exacerbated since 2017. The global movement of democracy has dropped significantly, with “function of government” (focus on the executive) among the five variables of the democracy index suffering the most (see Figures 3 and 4).

In 2023, 17 (30.4%) African countries were considered democracies, and 39 (69.64%) were identified as non-democracies (V-DEM, 2023). It has also been identified that 17% of countries in Africa are free, whilst 83% are not free; however, only 7% of the over 1.4 billion African population can be classified as free (Freedom House Report, 2024). Report further noted that in 2023 and 2024, 7 African countries could be considered as democracies; however, 37 countries are non-democracies, but let us note that Mauritania has moved from its status as a hybrid to authoritarian with a decline in score from 4.4 to 3.96 in 2023 and 2024, respectively (Democracy Index, 2023, 2024). Currently, 36% of over 1.4 billion Africans are enjoying democracy; however, 64% of the population are experiencing an autocratic regime (V-DEM, 2025). It is of serious concern to know that the majority of Africans have lost trust in their democratic institutions (Afrobarometer, 2024). Looking at the dire situation of Africa’s democracy, Afrobarometer's 2024 report revealed that two-thirds of Africans prefer democracy, while the majority oppose autocratic governance. However, over half of Africans are willing to accept military coups if elected leaders (State Actors) “abuse power for their own ends” (Afrobarometer, 2024, p. 12), accentuating a big threat to Africans’ democracy.

Currently, some researchers have examined democratic recession and its impact on the African continent based on its escalation. An empirical study done by Steve and Aidoo has found that the involvement of China as an external player, alongside the relative decline of Western benefactors, has significantly contributed to regional declines in democratic governance or incited democratic recession within Africa (Steve & Aidoo, 2019). Though their finding is justifiable to some extent, however, let us understand that China's current engagement in global geopolitics and geo-economics transcends the African continent, as it extends financial assistance, foreign direct investments (FDI), aid and various modalities of economic interaction to regions including North America (the United States) and Europe; nevertheless, these regions exhibit favorable democratic conditions according to current assessments from V-DEM, EIU, Freedom House, and similar organizations. Therefore, attributing China's influence in Africa as the principal factor contributing to democratic recession is subject to scrutiny or questionable because China's economic undertakings exhibit a global scope, with noteworthy investments in Europe, for example, where Chinese FDI has been considerable, although it has experienced a decline in recent years (Statista, 2024; Rhodium Group, 2024).

Besides that, Gyimah-Boadi (2021), in his work *“Democratic Backsliding in West Africa: Nature, Causes, Remedies,”* also argued that initiatives aimed at pro-democracy reforms, particularly those advocating for constitutionalism, have been obstructed or manipulated within Africa, thereby precipitating a democratic recession. Also, in the same year, Obiagu identified electoral and political violence in Africa and examined how such violence manifests in the encroaching reality of autocracy and the process of autocratization. He explained that electoral and political violence serve to elucidate the declining state of democracy across the African continent (Obiagu, 2021). But we need to understand that if these various initiatives, which are intended to strengthen

and improve democracy, ultimately fail to materialize as anticipated, and political violence also becomes common, then it is increasingly evident that there are unseen forces or influential actors, perhaps operating from the shadows, who are actively and strategically working to impede or prevent their successful realization. This observation strongly suggests the existence of a deliberate and meticulously calculated strategy employed by specific groups or entities, which are primarily focused on serving their vested interests, often at the considerable expense of broader democratic principles and ideals that are foundational to a just and equitable society.

Furthermore, another empirical work was done by Arriola and Rakner on “*Democratic Backsliding in Africa?: Autocratization, Resilience, and Contention*,” in which their findings unpack that there exists no overarching trend of democratic backsliding among African countries (Arriola & Rakner, 2023), accentuating how there are multifaceted causes of democratic recession in Africa. It is, nonetheless, debatable to claim that there exists no comprehensive trend/framework of democratic regression in Africa, especially considering that the obligation to maintain democratic principles lies with those individuals assigned the responsibility of its governance. In this context, the principal catalysts of democratic deterioration ought to be attributed to the state actors delegated with the duty of safeguarding democratic values, whose actions, inaction, or omissions frequently erode these foundational principles.

Lastly, the work of Arriola and Rakner influenced Yeboah-Assiamah et al. (2025), in their current publication “*Democratic Backsliding and Public Administration: The Experience of Ghana*,” they found that democratic backsliding manifests through efforts of the executive to undermine professional public administrators, thus, tactically through intimidation and unjustified dismissals based on selectively enforced rules. The study further found that autocratic leaders often retaliate against professional public officials and then “weaponize” state machinery to further their

objectives, using it as a tool to entrench their authority and minimize accountability systems, thereby weakening state institutions. Though this study alluded to the fact that state actors are the key stakeholders in democratic recession, this study also lacks a cross-national analysis.

While these recent academic researchers have endeavored to elaborate on the phenomenon of democratic recession, a significant number of these studies tend to neglect the role of state actors who are charged with the governance of the state and, therefore, bear the responsibility to uphold and ensure adherence to democratic principles. These studies also suffer from an absence of cross-national comparative analysis, which complicates the attainment of an accurate representation of the continent based on their findings. Hence, this study conducted a cross-national empirical investigation with a particular focus on state actors. The current study contributes to the empirical literature by examining how state actors contribute to democratic recession.

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of the thesis are to:

1. Analyze the pattern of democratic recession in both Ghana and Kenya.
2. Explore how the interaction between the executive and other state institutions exacerbates democratic recession in Ghana and Kenya.
3. Evaluate the role of the executive, rather than electoral management bodies, in facilitating democratic recession through electoral manipulation.
4. Investigate how the 'institutions of democracy' are used by executives in Ghana and Kenya to weaken democracy itself.

1.4 Rationale/Significance of the Study

This research endeavor is significant at this juncture, as numerous scholars and research institutions have discerned a global phenomenon concerning the autocratization of democracies. The African continent stands as a notable case experiencing a recession in democratic governance, particularly in light of the recent coups and elongation of state actors occurring within the sub-region. States traditionally regarded as beacons of democracy in Africa, such as Ghana, has been experiencing a democratic recession for the past 9 years, as has Kenya for the past 8 years. Consequently, the study embarked on cross-national analysis and illuminates how state actors in Africa are contributing to the erosion of democratic principles across the continent. As such, this research constitutes a highly pertinent and invaluable resource for a diverse array of stakeholders, including policymakers, scholars specializing in democracy, advocacy groups promoting democratic ideals, and students studying democratic systems, thereby establishing a robust foundation for their understanding of the nuances of democratic recession. Furthermore, it will assist international organizations, such as the United Nations, the European Union, and the African Union (Makubalo, Hosli & Lantmeeters, 2020; Monteleone, 2019), in discerning strategies to halt the democratic recession and enhance democratic governance towards achieving Agenda 2063.

1.5 Thesis Organization

This thesis entails six main chapters. The first chapter focuses primarily on the introduction, research problem, research objectives, and the rationale of the study. Chapter two consists of the literature review, and Chapter three explains the theoretical framework underpinned by this study. Chapter four delves into the methodology for this thesis. Chapter five is the data analysis and discussion, and also ends with a discussion of findings. The sixth chapter is made up of the summary of findings, a conclusion, and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive examination of the literature review, organized into various sub-themes. It delineates the concepts associated with democratic recession or backsliding, as well as the overarching or global phenomena of democratic deterioration. The literature concerning the trends of democratic recession in Africa, and focusing on the democratic recession trends in Ghana and Kenya, have been critically examined. Also, the role of the Executive in facilitating democratic recession has been thoroughly analyzed, and strategies aimed at addressing democratic backsliding have been scrutinized as well. Besides that, an in-depth exploration of the legal framework regarding the status and predominance of the Executive in both Ghana and Kenya have been examined in this chapter extensively.

2.1 Understanding/trajectory of democratic recession/backsliding

Scholars engaged in the study of democracy's deterioration can be classified according to several schools of thought or theoretical frameworks. The research conducted by Lust and Waldner (2015) and (2018) have identified key elements such as “*political leadership, political economy, political culture, political institutions, social structures, political coalitions, and international influences*” as foundational theories that explain democratic recession and backsliding. Similarly, Bermeo (2016), along with Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018), proposed a categorization that includes: promissory coups, electoral manipulation, executive aggrandizement, targeting state referees, targeting opposition forces, and changing the rules of the game (See Figures 1 and 2). These six elements are in tandem with the earlier analyses presented by Ellen Lust and David Waldner.

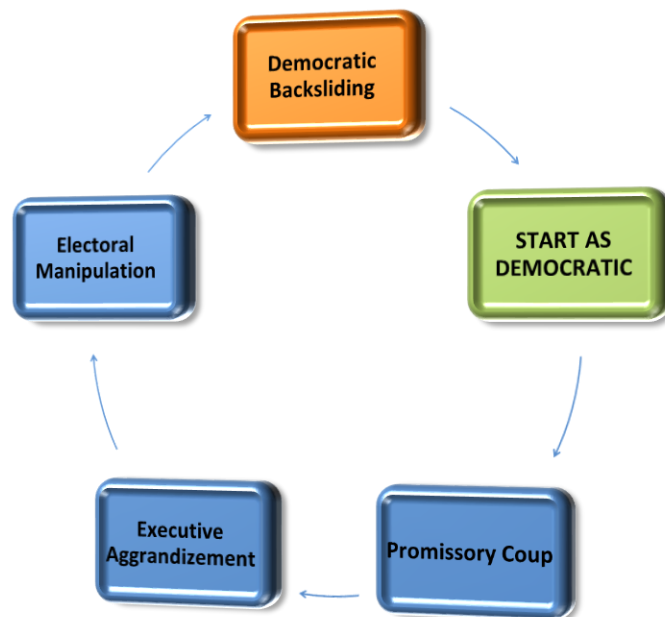


Figure 1 Bermeo's framework

Source: Author's Compilation from Nancy Bermeo, 2016

Within the spectrum of these theoretical frameworks, four predominant schools of thought regarding democratic recession are particularly noteworthy: namely, institutional theory/targeting state referees/changing the rules of the game, political culture and social theory/electoral manipulation, economic theory, and leadership theory/executive aggrandizement (Bermeo, 2016; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; Lust & Waldner, 2018). While these frameworks delineate distinct manifestations of democratic recession, they are inherently interrelated; indeed, in numerous instances, certain theories complement and interweave with one another. Collectively, these theoretical perspectives provide valuable insights into the cognitive frameworks underpinning democratic recession and elucidate the mechanisms through which democracies experience recession or backsliding.

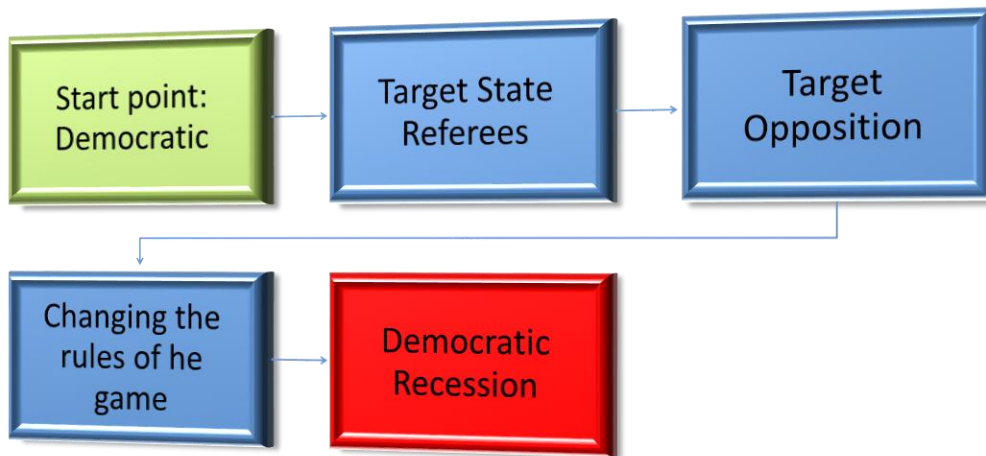


Figure 2 Levitsky and Ziblatt's framework

Source: Source: Author's Compilation from Levitsky and Ziblatt

Democratic recession, commonly termed democratic backsliding, has emerged as a focal point in the evolving landscape of academic inquiry. This phenomenon denotes the incremental deterioration of democratic principles, institutions, practices, or standards (Keck, 2023; Wolkenstein, 2022). This *"can occur through at least three key mechanisms: the erosion of institutions associated with liberal democracy, distortions within participatory democratic institutions, and declines in the core standards of minimal democracy"* (Corrales, 2020), as well as executive aggrandizement. As most studies focus on different mechanisms, this thesis centers on executive aggrandizement or the manipulation of institutions in the context of Ghana and Kenya.

Researchers have articulated this concept across various temporal contexts, building upon each other's insights. Its origins can be traced to the scholarship of Samuel Huntington (1991), a pioneering figure who scrutinized the cyclical characteristics of democracy and introduced the phrase "waves of democratization." Huntington illuminated the pattern in which global democratization movements were succeeded by counter-waves, during which certain democracies experienced regression or dissolution, while others adopted democratic principles or frameworks. His scholarship inadvertently established a basis for research concerning democratic recession by acknowledging the inherent fragility of democratic advancements. He asserted that authoritarian retrenchments were integral to the democratic narrative, as much as democratization itself. Although Huntington did not specifically employ the terminology 'democratic recession' or 'backsliding,' his acknowledgement of democracy's non-linear trajectory is crucial to the existing research lacuna that scholars are endeavoring to address.

Expanding upon Huntington's research or perspective, Larry Diamond (1999) presented the concept of democratic consolidation, emphasizing the potential for established democracies to regress into authoritarian regimes if institutional integrity falters. His study advanced the discourse by explicitly investigating the internal erosion of democracies, highlighting the vulnerability of democratic institutions even post-transition. Diamond's examination revealed how internal dynamics such as corruption and the attenuation of civil liberties could catalyze a democratic recession, thereby contributing to contemporary interpretations of democratic recession or backsliding, or regression.

In the early 2000s, Andreas Schedler (2002) enriched the discourse by investigating "electoral authoritarianism." Schedler provided a nuanced definition of how elected officials manipulate democratic frameworks to retain power, thereby undermining democratic norms without

completely dismantling electoral mechanisms, demonstrating that democratic recession frequently transpires insidiously, as regimes maintain a façade of democracy while eroding its fundamental tenets. Schedler's conceptualization of recession aligns with earlier theorization by illustrating the internal erosion of democracy via formal institutions, often associated with the imperatives of political survival.

It is noteworthy that the preceding contributions from these scholars did not explicitly utilize the terms “democratic recession or backsliding” to articulate the threats facing global democracy. Nonetheless, in 2015, an extensive work published in the *Journal of Democracy*, Larry Diamond conducted a cross-national and cross-time analysis of democratic trends from 1975 to 2006, and he observed that the number of democracies worldwide had either increased or remained stable. This upward trajectory, however, experienced an opposite direction between 2006 and the year of his publication in 2015. Thus, since 2006, democracy indicated signs of reversal, a phenomenon Diamond explicitly called ‘democratic recession’ (Diamond, 2015; Levitsky & Way, 2015).

As the academic debate or conversation continued, Nancy Bermeo (2016) introduced a comprehensive perspective of democratic backsliding, emphasizing subtle forms of democratic erosion through promissory coups over normal military coups. According to her, it is “*the state-led debilitation or elimination of the political institutions sustaining an existing democracy.*” Bermeo argued that contemporary democratic backsliding often involves legal or semi-legal changes in governance, such as executive aggrandizement, electoral manipulation, thus electoral fraud, or restriction of civil liberties and promissory coups. She traced the gradual process of declining democracy, which avoids the dramatic ruptures of the past but is equally destructive.

In their work *“How Democracies Die”*, they expanded on Bermeo’s and existing works by identifying key warning signs of democratic backsliding. To them, democratic backsliding is a process where *“democracies erode not at the hands of men with guns but by elected leaders who subvert the very process that brought them to power.”* They emphasized that democratic erosion often occurs through the actions of elected leaders, as opposed to external forces (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). Levitsky and Ziblatt’s contribution indicates that democratic recession typically involves slow, incremental steps, reinforcing the trends Schedler, Diamond, and Bermeo noted regarding the internal corrosion of democracy. Ali Riaz tested and affirmed the framework by Bermeo, Levitsky, and Ziblatt and extended by alluding that the process of democratic recession occurs not solely through institutional alteration but also by fostering or imbuing an ideology in the people that legitimizes the doings or actions of incumbents (Riaz, 2022).

By carefully conceptualizing the trajectory of these scholars, it is obvious that ‘democratic recession,’ ‘democratic backsliding,’ ‘democratic erosion,’ ‘democratic decay,’ and democratic reversal lead to a decline or stagnation in terms of a state’s democracy; therefore, these terms can be used interchangeably. It is obvious that studies on democracy have shown that democratic recession does not take place in a vacuum or out of the blue; instead, they are based upon internally elected (either directly or indirectly) leaders, institutional deterioration, economic factors, and social factors (Haggard & Kaufman, 2021; Little & Meng, 2024). However, the democratic recession in Africa is actually exacerbated by different reasons or factors (Arriola & Rakner, 2023). For instance, researchers have indicated that democracy is always recessed in accordance with the following issues: (1) *Corruption or weakening civil liberties* (Diamond, 1999). (2) *promissory Coup*, (3) *executive aggrandizement*, (4) *strategic manipulation of election* (Bermeo, 2016), (5) *targeting the institution of the state*, (6) *targeting the opponent*, and (7) *changing the rules of the*

game” (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). Many scholars have researched and have affirmed these notions, frameworks, or findings that contribute to democratic recession (Way & Levitsky, 2022; Lührmann & Lindberg, 2019; Lindberg & Gerring, 2022; Riaz, 2022; Yeboah-Assiamah et al., 2025), as well as deterioration of the rule of law (Ginsburg & Huq, 2018).

Another factor that contributes to democratic recession is populism, which results in the deterioration of democratic norms, as populist leaders portray themselves as the exclusive voices of ‘the people,’ delegitimizing opposition and undermining pluralism (Theuns, 2020; Schäfer & Zürn, 2023; Weyland, 2025; Winter, 2022). Also, polarization weakens democratic institutions by encouraging undemocratic behavior, where actors may justify violating norms to maintain power (Stamkou & Van Kleeef, 2014). Erosion of civic norms, such as respect for civil liberties and tolerance for dissent, can shift public attitudes toward authoritarianism, making it easier for leaders to weaken democratic structures (Müller, 2016; McCoy & Somer, 2019; Norris & Inglehart, 2019). Also, economic inequality, resource dependence, and economic crises can drive democratic recession by concentrating power among elites, reducing accountability, and eroding trust in democratic institutions (Boix, 2003; Druckman, 2024; Ross, 2012; Przeworski, 2019). Again, authoritarian diffusion and a decline in external democratic support have contributed to democratic recession (Cavari, Magen & Yoel, 2024; Haggard & Kaufman, 2021; Levitsky & Way, 2010; Carothers, 2006). The factors mentioned above that contribute to democratic recession function within the framework of the four primary schools of thought mentioned, thus: the institutional theory/targeting states referees/amending the rules of the game, political culture and social theory/electoral manipulations, economic theory, and leadership theory/executive aggrandizement.

2.2 General or Global Trends on Democratic Backsliding

The third wave of democratization (Huntington, 1991), which fostered a sense of optimism regarding the proliferation of democracy on a global scale, was characterized by a remarkable increase in democratization rates, with a notable elevation of 20% occurring solely in the year 1991 (Diamond, 1997). Indeed, the advent of the “third wave” was marked by the presence of 69 democracies out of 167 nations worldwide, constituting 41% of the total, and in the subsequent years, particularly over the nearly two-decade span from 1990 to 2005, global democracy experienced a significant augmentation, rising from 69 to 123 democracies among 193 countries, thereby escalating from 41% in 1990 to 64% in 2005 (See Table 1). The phenomenon of democratic backsliding emerged as a contentious issue in 2015, when Larry Diamond conducted a longitudinal comparative analysis spanning from 1975 to 2006. Diamond noted that the global tally of democracies had either increased or remained stable annually; however, this favorable trend abruptly halted in 2006, subsequently displaying signs of regression, a situation Diamond termed a “democratic recession” (See table 1; Diamond, 2015; Levitsky & Way, 2015). It is noteworthy that the pursuit of global democracy has been ongoing, as evidenced by the “third wave” of democratization in the 1990s, yet it is now undergoing a process of recession that occurs ‘in silence.’ On a global scale, 20% of the 195 countries are categorized as democracies, while 80% are classified as nondemocracies (Freedom House Report, 2025), indicating how severe the issue of democratic recession has become lately.

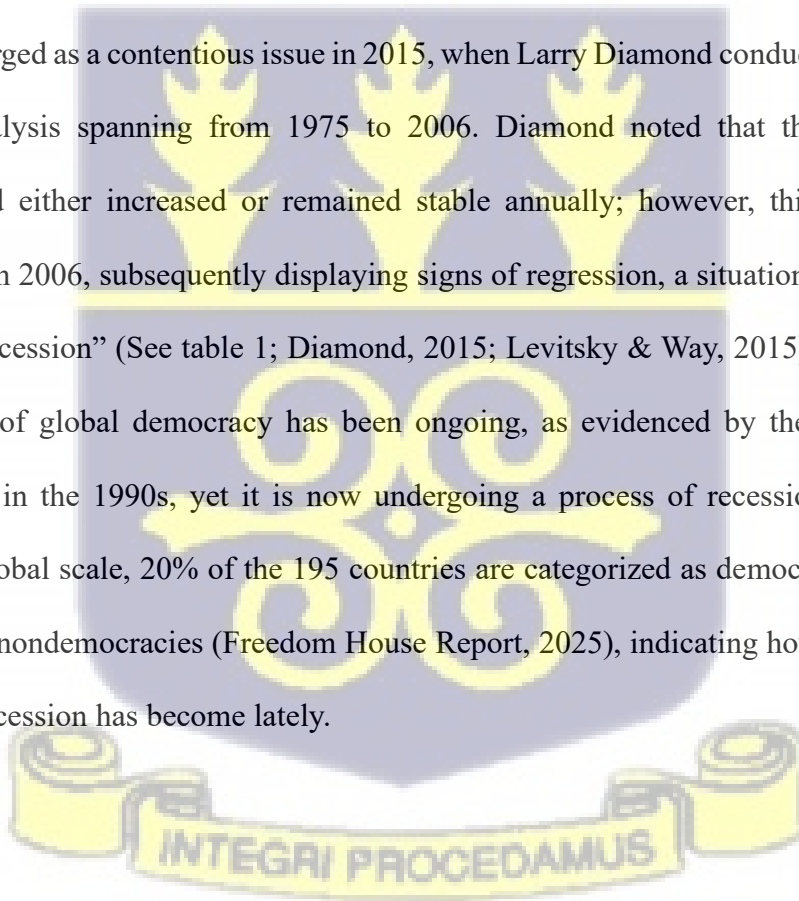


Table 1 The earliest trend of Global democracy after the “third wave”

Year of Survey	Year of Review	Number of electoral democracies in the World	Total number of countries (Thus same)	Total percentage of electoral democracies in the World
2015	2014	125	195	63
2014	2013	122	195	62
2013	2012	118	195	61
2012	2011	117	195	60
2011	2010	115	194	59
2010	2009	116	194	60
2009	2008	119	193	62
2008	2007	121	193	63
2007	2006	123	193	64
2006	2005	123	192	64
2005	2004	119	192	62
2004	2003	117	192	61
2003	2002	121	192	63
2001-2002	2001	121	192	63
2000-2001	2000	120	192	63
1999-2000	1999	120	192	63
1998-1999	1998	117	191	61
1997-1998	1997	117	191	61
1996-1997	1996	118	191	62
1995-1996	1995	115	191	60
1994-1995	1994	113	191	59
1993-1994	1993	108	190	57
1992-1993	1992	99	186	53
1991-1992	1991	89	183	49
1990-1991	1990	76	165	46
1989-1990	1989	69	167	41

Source: Author's compilation from Freedom House Reports.

At present, analyses conducted by international think tanks such as the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), the Center for Democratic Development (CDD), the Varieties of Democracy (V-DEM) project, Afrobarometer, and Freedom House reveal a concerning trajectory regarding global democracy when juxtaposed with the conditions observed in the 1990s. Over the past decade, the regression of democratic governance has permeated all geographical regions and numerous nation-states worldwide, thereby constituting a third wave of autocratization (Lührmann & Lindberg, 2019; Boese et al., 2022). The state of global democracy faces a significant peril, as evidenced by the decrease in the number of democracies from 74 in 2023 to 71, reflecting a decline of three nation-states. Conversely, the count of non-democratic regimes in 2023 was 93, which has escalated to 96 countries (Democracy Index, 2024). This accentuates that, at present, the quantity of authoritarian regimes globally surpasses that of democratic systems. A cross-time and cross-national examination of global democracy spanning from 2006 to 2024 demonstrates a pronounced deterioration in the state of democracy worldwide, as the chart has dropped sharply (See figure 3). Among the five variables, the 'functioning of government' performed very poorly worldwide (see

Figure 4), which makes this study particularly relevant as it focuses on the executive branch of government.

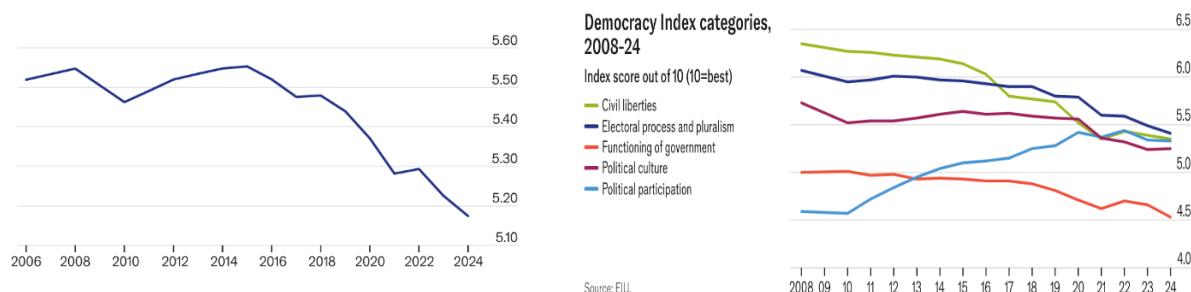


Figure 3 Chart of the World's democracy

Figure 4 Charts by variables

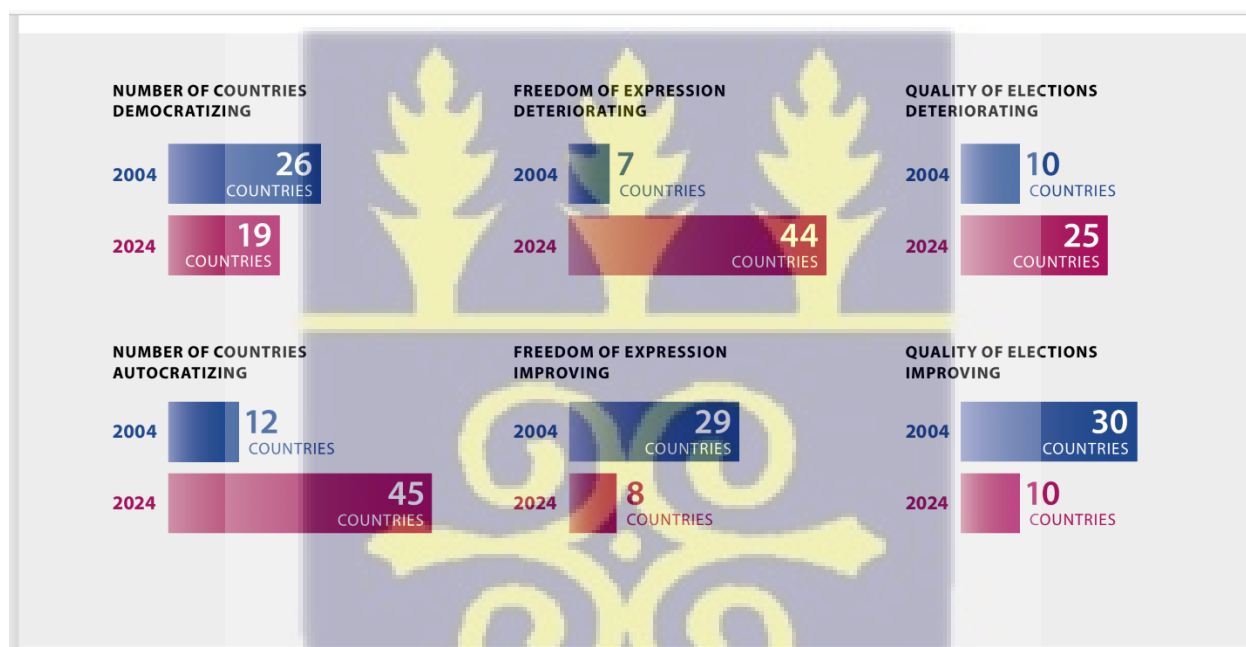
Source: From Democracy Index (2024)

Source: From Democracy Index (2024)

Employing the classifications established by the World regimes, it has been demonstrated that the regression of democratic governance is observable across various regime types; specifically, both the prevalence of closed autocracies and electoral autocracies is on the rise (Lührmann et al., 2018). The noteworthy increase in closed autocracies, escalating from a mere twenty in 2012 to thirty in 2021, is particularly significant, especially considering that these regimes were previously perceived to be on the verge of extinction (Lührmann & Lindberg, 2019; Boese et al., 2022). The escalation of autocratic governance has become so pronounced that, in 2004, 49% of the global populace resided in autocracies; however, within two decades, this figure has surged to 72% (V-DEM, 2025), underscoring a staggering reduction of 47% in democratic strength over this period. Furthermore, while 51% of the global population inhabited democratic systems in 2004, this proportion has dramatically diminished to only 28% at present. Consequently, the overarching trajectory of democracy from 2004 to 2024 has experienced a decline of 45%. This alarming trend necessitates heightened scrutiny. The phenomenon of autocratization is now gaining momentum

relative to democratic systems; in 2004, merely 7% of the global populace was under autocratic rule, a figure that has now escalated to 38%, thereby reflecting an alarming increase of 443% in the last two decades. Autocratic regimes now encompass 3.1 billion individuals globally, with South and Central Asia representing over half of this population, in contrast to the 452 million individuals who are currently engaged in democratic processes (See Figure 5). Notably, two-thirds of those residing in democracies are concentrated in three nations: Brazil, Poland, and Thailand (V-DEM, 2025).

Figure 5 Two decades of democratization and autocratization



Source: From V-DEM (2025)

An empirical examination of the scope and gravity of the decline of democracy posits that polarization and misinformation serve as significant catalysts for the current trend toward autocratization (Lindberg, 2023). The ramifications of diminished support for democratic ideals by the international community have profoundly affected civil society organizations—crucial

arbiters of democratic processes—especially adversely (Hyde, 2020). This decline is evident on a global scale, to the extent that no continent presently can claim instances of democratization surpass those of autocratization (V-DEM, 2025; See Figure 6), thereby clearly illustrating the current condition of global democracy. While some of these findings may be contested, it is critical to acknowledge that any advancements in democracy post-Cold War were ephemeral, failing to sustain democratic governance due to an excessive focus on electoral processes and a neglect of structural elements (Nooruddin, 2023). Therefore, our attention must shift towards political elites rather than the populace if we aspire to safeguard democracy universally, which carries significant ramifications for the methodologies employed in the study of democracy and its associated challenges (Bartels et al., 2023).

To that, researchers have reached a consensus on the idea that the current phenomenon of global democratic regression stems from the assertion that political leaders undermine democratic institutions to serve their personal agendas, ultimately resulting in the disintegration of democracy (Yeboah-Assiamah et al., 2025; Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018; Bermeo, 2016). A significant and concerning trend accompanying this present decline in democratic governance is the escalation of various manifestations of political violence. This is evident in the context of Russia's incursion into Ukraine, which started in 2022; however, statistical evidence also indicates a general rise in international disputes (Davies et al., 2022). Furthermore, a limited number of democracy assistance initiatives are designed with the objective of instigating regime transformation (Bush, 2015), while Meyerrose (2020) empirically demonstrates that affiliation with entities promoting democratic principles correlates with an increased, rather than diminished, likelihood of democratic backsliding. In addition, there has been a proliferation of “shadow or zombie” monitoring organizations (Hyde, 2011; Morgenbesser, 2020), of which empirical research

indicates that these entities can subvert the endeavors of legitimate democracy advocates (Daxecker & Schneider, 2014; Merloe, 2015). Studies concerning international electoral interventions, particularly those involving “zombie” monitoring organizations, have revealed that external interference can exacerbate societal polarization, either by aligning voters more closely with the intervener's stance (Corstange & Marinov, 2012) or by polarizing the views of citizens who supported unsuccessful candidates (Bush & Prather, 2022).

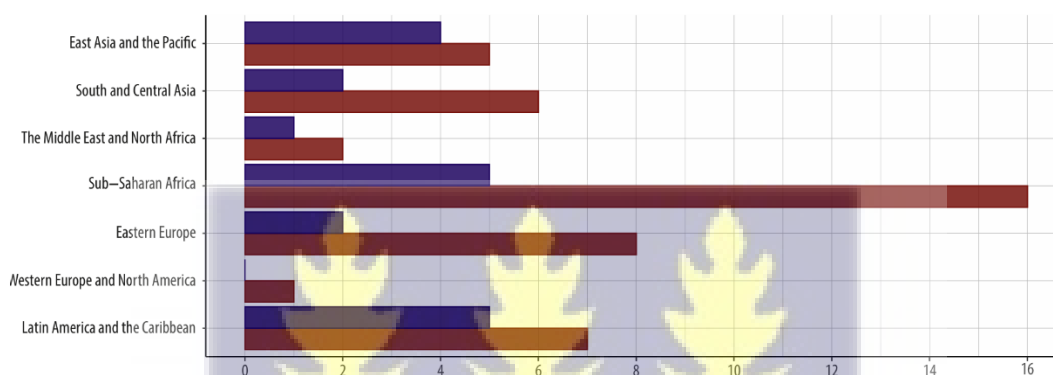


Figure 6 Continental trends of democratizing against autocratizing (Blue indicates democracy)

Source: From V-DEM (2025)

There is a prevailing consensus that the democratic paradigm, which has evolved over recent decades, is currently facing significant challenges. The observed declines across various temporal and spatial contexts—encompassing nations and continents—indicate that both global and domestic factors are influencing these phenomena; however, there remains a lack of clarity regarding the reasons for widespread disenchantment with democratic governance among the populace. In spite of the statistics and conclusions presented by some scholars and research entities, there exist contrary perspectives within the discourse surrounding global democracy, but some scholars emphasize the resilience of democratic systems (Levitsky & Way, 2015). Moreover,

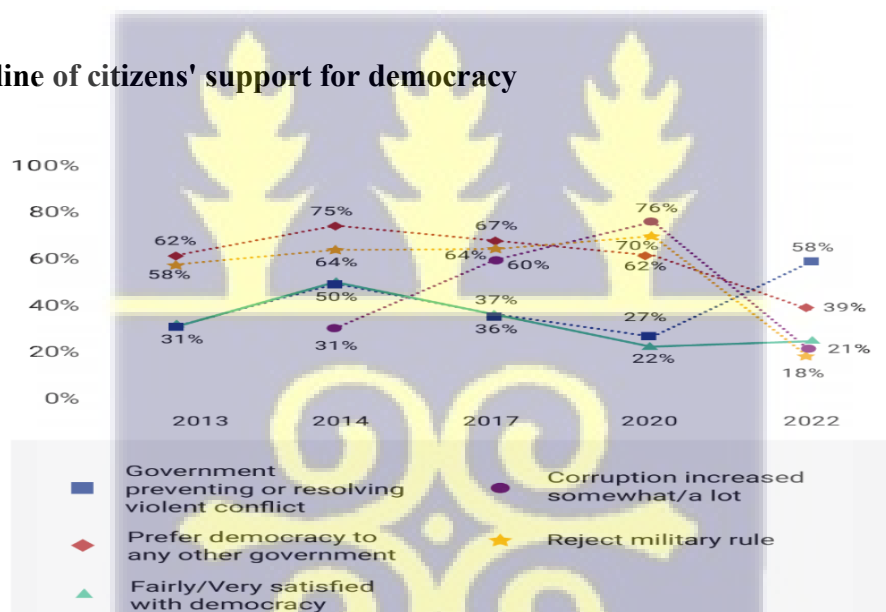
developments in certain regions reveal that democracy is experiencing stagnation rather than outright regression, as evidenced in Africa (Arriola et al., 2023) and Latin America (Mainwaring & Pérez-Liñán, 2023). While democratic pressures in Africa endure, prompting incumbent leaders to implement new strategies that have impeded yet not completely obstructed pro-democracy movements (Arriola et al., 2023). Conversely, other researchers concede that the trajectory of democratic expansion has indeed decelerated since the Third Wave, attributing the incidence of democratic failures to lower levels of socio-economic development and the quality of democratic institutions within this broader spectrum of democracies (Treisman, 2023). Ultimately, scholars have underscored the notion that democracy is perpetually in a state of crisis; however, the tensions arising from citizens' aspirations and grievances are intrinsic to the essence and uniqueness of democratic governance (O'Donnell, 2007; Przeworski, 2019).

2.3 Trend of Democratic Backsliding in Africa

The democratic evolution in Africa commenced positively during the 1990s, a phenomenon that Huntington referred to as the “third wave” of democratization (Huntington, 1990). This democratization epoch witnessed the adoption of democratic governance by 40 nations within the continent (Arriola et al., 2022). However, the initial optimism that characterized the democratic transitions of the 1990s has notably declined, prompting concerns that Africa's endeavor towards democracy might be experiencing a significant downturn (Afrobarometer, 2024). Currently, the threat of democratic regression is increasingly evident across the African landscape, as the conversation surrounding this dilemma has been expanded by scholars and research entities such as the Afrobarometer, Democracy Index, Freedom House, and V-DEM, which scrutinize democratic conditions in sub-Saharan African countries and globally. At this juncture, among the Sub-Saharan African states that have initiated democratic reforms, a mere seven (7) states,

amounting to 16%, are classified as democracies, whereas thirty-seven (37) states, representing 84%, fall under the non-democratic category (Democracy Index, 2024). This stark contrast indeed highlights the difficulties confronting democracy in Africa. Afrobarometer surveys conducted during this timeframe reveal a significant decline in citizen support for democracy, plummeting from a robust majority of 75% in 2014 to a mere 39% in 2022. A considerable portion of this decline (thus -23%) transpired in the immediate aftermath of the coups, between the surveys conducted in 2020 and 2022. Concurrently, the rejection of military governance diminished drastically, from 70% to 18%, showing a decline from 76% to 21% in public sentiment regarding the worsening of corruption in their respective countries (See Figure 7).

Figure 7 Decline of citizens' support for democracy



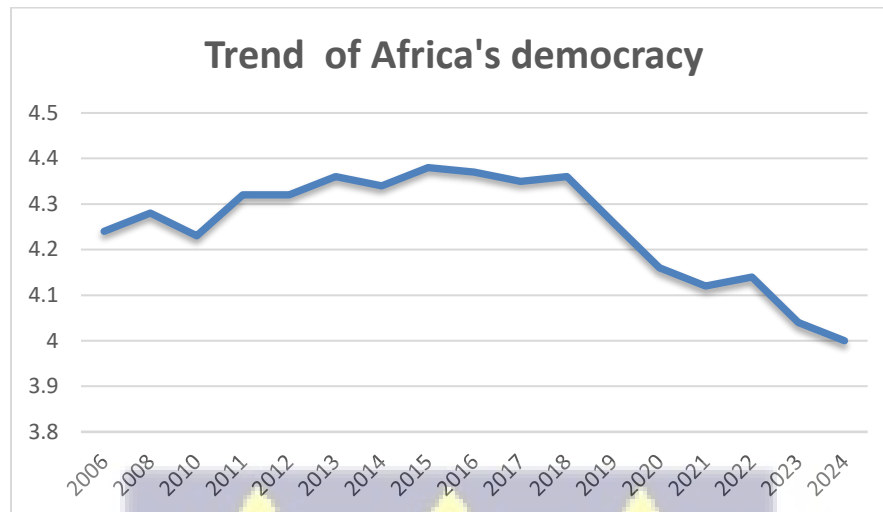
Sources: Afrobarometer (2024)

In recent years, a series of coups in Africa have contributed to heightened instability in the region, with military juntas frequently attributing their actions to the inadequacy of civilian administrations in combating jihadist insurgencies. These circumstances have been further aggravated by mercenary groups supported by the Russian state, such as Africa Corps (a successor

to the Wagner Group), which promote violence and regime protection to autocratic leaders and military officials in the region under the pretense of counterterrorism (Freedom House Report, 2025). In August 2020 and May 2021, segments of Mali's military executed coups in response to escalating public dissatisfaction regarding the civilian government's failure to tackle economic difficulties and corruption, as well as to reestablish comprehensive control over national territory (Bester, 2024; Melly, 2020). The military-dominated administration has increasingly restricted political liberties, culminating in the indefinite postponement of elections that were scheduled for March 2024 (Freedom House Report, 2024). This military-led regime constitutes one of the factors influencing democracy in Africa. In Burkina Faso, a coup occurred on 30 September 2022, followed by another in Gabon on 30 August 2023, and yet another on 23-24 January 2024. The continent also witnessed a coup on 5 September 2021, alongside the coups in Mali on 18 August 2020 and 24 May 2021, respectively. Additionally, Niger experienced a coup on 26 July 2023, while Sudan had a coup on 25 October 2021, further illustrating the tumultuous political landscape in Africa (Afrobarometer, 2024).

Moreover, the Democracy Index score for Sub-Saharan Africa has experienced a decline for the second consecutive year in 2024. The regional average score fell from 4.04 in 2023 to a decline of 4.00 in 2024. This regression over the past decade, which represents a decrease from a regional peak of 4.38 in 2015, can be attributed to various factors (Democracy Index, 2024). Since 2016, the continent has witnessed a decline; nevertheless, Africa has persistently encountered a continuous erosion of democratic principles (See Figure 8).

Figure 8 Performance of Sub-Saharan African democracies



Sources: Author's compilation from Democracy Index (2023, 2024)

Other patterns indicate potential threats to the democratic evolution of the continent. In the last ten years, public endorsement for democracy has significantly diminished in numerous nations, such as Mali, Burkina Faso, South Africa, Namibia, and Guinea. Resistance to military governance has weakened: Over fifty per cent of Africans are open to the idea of military intervention “when elected leaders misuse power for personal gain.” Although Africa’s younger generation shows little divergence from their predecessors in their advocacy for democracy, they are more inclined to accept military involvement (Afrobarometer, 2024), which is a big threat to Africa. This phenomenon led Gyimah-Boadi (2015) to suggest that the progress in democracy across African nations is undergoing a breakdown, if not a regression, due to “the declining commitment to the democratic agenda by political elites. In the African context, it has been observed that the democratization process appears to have reached an impasse in numerous African countries, primarily attributable to crises in governance, the phenomenon of “third-termism,” manipulation

of constitutional mandates, and the deterioration of public administration (Théroux-Bénoni & Kanté, 2023; Yeboah-Assiamah et al., 2025). Indeed, it is evident that the pervasive existence of fragile institutions within Africa correlates with the democratic recession currently afflicting the continent (Akinyetun, 2022). The ideals of human rights, adherence to the rule of law (critical institutions), and active citizen participation in governance are undeniably vital democratic principles that can be safeguarded by robust institutions to foster good governance (Mbaku, 2020). However, in countries characterized by weak institutions, such as those in Africa (Théroux-Bénoni and Kanté, 2023), the realization of these values becomes exceedingly challenging, including the capacity to avert or resolve conflicts, thwart state capture, ensure the delivery of public services, combat corruption, and attain the essence of democracy (Diamond, 2016; Khaitan, 2020).

Frequently, citizens' demands for regime change are triggered by disputes over elections that have been manipulated by the ruling elite, despite ostensibly conforming to formal democratic procedures (Ani, 2021). Nonetheless, the mere occurrence of regular elections and adherence to term limits have not emerged as effective remedies for misgovernance and its consequent disillusionment, calls for regime change, or civil unrest, thereby posing a risk to the democratization trajectory in sub-Saharan Africa due to the fragility of institutions. For instance, it has been reported that Museveni secured the alteration of presidential term limits within the Ugandan Constitution through the provision of a UGX 5 million bribe to each member of parliament (MP) (Bireete, 2015; Makara, 2020). While elections are instrumental in enabling citizens to forge effective democratic institutions and serve as a mechanism for the peaceful periodic replacement of obstinate and underperforming political elites (Mbaku, 2020), the prevalence of manipulated elections across Africa fails to fulfill this noble objective (Klašnja &

Pop-Eleches, 2022; Lynge, 2023), lacking a robust history of peaceful political competition and the transfer of power in a democratic manner (Masabo, 2019).

In specific states, which Brian Klaas and Nic Cheeseman (2018) characterize as “counterfeit democracies” within the diverse spectrum of democratic practices, elections are conducted regularly. However, opposition parties face insurmountable challenges in displacing the ruling parties (Chukwudi et al., 2024), and over time, civil liberties have either stagnated or significantly diminished (Odibo et al., 2023), a trend that is prevalent across Africa. This situation arises because bureaucrats are perpetually coerced into acting in favor of the interests of incumbents (Yeboah-Assiamah et al., 2025). Consequently, Cheeseman (2021) posits that the variability in the quality of democracy in Africa is as pronounced as in any other global region: *“Africa features a small number of high-quality democracies and some highly authoritarian regimes, while most countries have political systems that fall somewhere in between – combining elements of democracy with elements of autocracy.”*

The notion of the African economy has been alluded to the current ongoing democratic recession. Most Coups d'état are increasingly prevalent in the world's most impoverished nations, with Africa exhibiting numerous conditions that are conventionally associated with such events (Omilusi, 2024), thus reinforcing the notion that a nation's economic condition invariably impacts its democratic structure. Many of the key variables that precipitate coups remain evident in the Sahel region, where the latest coups have transpired (Fain et al., 2024; Ray, 2024). According to a World Bank projection (2022), Burkina Faso, Gabon, Guinea, Mali, Niger, and Chad all reported Gross Domestic Products (GDPs) of less than \$22 billion in 2022, while Sudan's GDP was \$52 billion. Despite Gabon's wealth in natural oil, manganese, and timber resources, its populace endures widespread poverty (Henry & Murray, 2023). Doumbouya, in his speech after oustering the

president, explained that Conde has mismanaged the economy (BBC, 2021). Abdourahmane Tchiani also said that while Bazoum had sought to convince the people that all was going well, however, the harsh reality of the country was a result of death, displacement of the citizens, humiliation, and frustration (Al Jazeera, 2023), based on the country's economy. Nevertheless, it has been observed that diminished levels of socioeconomic development do not seem to render political regimes more vulnerable to the phenomenon of democratic backsliding (Hess & Aidoo, 2019).

Besides that, elections that happen on the continent play a role in the continent's democracy. Africa witnessed the electoral manipulations that exacerbated democratic recession, for instance, during Nigeria's 2019 gubernatorial elections in Kano, election observers reported that armed individuals coerced aides from the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), falsified ballots, applied unauthorized thumbprints to favor the PDP, thereby rendering legitimate votes invalid, and threatened election staff with violence should they resist the rigging or validate the manipulated results (DW, 2019). In the context of Benin's presidential elections, allegations emerged regarding extensive ballot-box stuffing, the isolation of electoral monitors, and voter intimidation (Koter, 2024). This electoral manipulation causes democratic recession as it also degenerates into conflict in Africa (Appiah-Thompson, 2020), and this electoral and political violence helps explain the deteriorating state of democracy in Africa (Obiagu, 2021).

On the other hand, Professor Gyimah-Boadi posits that the persistent authoritarian political landscape, rooted in the historical context of precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial Africa, constitutes an additional obstacle to the advancement of democratization in West Africa. He further indicated that indicators of deficiencies in democratic citizenship and civic engagement reveal a limited commitment to fundamental democratic principles such as tolerance and respect for

minority rights (Gyimah-Boadi, 2021). This scenario typically exacerbates societal discontent in African nations, providing the military elite with opportunities to usurp power from civilian authorities (Maphaka et al, 2024), accentuating how most African countries are ready to accept a military coup if state actors abuse the principles of democracy for their personal interest (Afrobarometer, 2024). Although there is a global trend of diminishing coup attempts, their renewed prevalence in sub-Saharan Africa highlights the shortcomings of democratic systems in fostering development, given that “coups often occur amid public resentment against the regime” and “coups are most likely to overthrow authoritarian leaders” (Thyne & Powell, 2019).

Research has also shown that in some African societies, strong ethnic affiliations can lead to patronage systems where political leaders favor their ethnic groups. This practice undermines democratic principles by promoting inequality and eroding national unity. For instance, in Nigeria, ethnic favoritism has been linked to challenges in democratic consolidation (Rice, 2018). Looking at the findings of Fomunyoh (2020), he argued that the fragility of governance instruments in African countries is partly due to an undemocratic political culture. Despite a strong belief in democracy among the populace, the performance of political leaders often undermines democratic norms, leading to disillusionment and backsliding (Baldwin, 2016; Riaz & Rana, 2020). Findings by Afrobarometer continue to indicate a significant gap between the demand for democracy and its actual supply, which is exacerbated by weak institutions that fail to uphold democratic principles, clearly outlining how this culture in Africa affects democratic principles (Fomunyoh 2020). On this note, Gyimah-Boadi highlights that entrenched cultural values often resist democratic norms, leading to a situation where leaders manipulate these values to justify authoritarian practices. This manipulation includes the use of ethnic identities to consolidate power, which can further entrench undemocratic practices (Gyimah-Boadi, 2023). Such cultural

dynamics create an environment where political elites can operate without accountability and reinforce recession trends.

With the work of Arriola, Rakner, and van de Walle, discuss how historical legacies of colonialism and authoritarian rule have shaped contemporary political cultures in Africa. They argue that these legacies contribute to a lack of commitment among political elites to uphold democratic principles, leading to practices that undermine democratic governance (Arriola et al., 2023). On the other hand, studies indicate that socioeconomic inequality exacerbates cultural divisions and can lead to disappointment with democratic processes. According to a study by German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA) in 2024, this inequality fosters environments where authoritarianism can thrive, as citizens may turn to strongman leaders who promise stability over democratic governance (GIGA, 2024).

States have struggled to establish effective democracies capable of providing essential public services to their populations or ensuring citizens' fundamental security and subsistence needs (Carson & Hitefield, 2023), which invariably provokes public dissatisfaction toward democratic governance. The level of local support for coup leaders in the affected nations underscores the deteriorating quality of democracy and governance in Africa (Pryce & Time, 2023), which often neglects key democratic principles such as accountability, transparency, responsiveness, and civic duty (Grier et al., 2024; Maianhi & Liaga, 2024). In West Africa, coup plotters have exploited these democratic deficiencies to present themselves as liberators and seize control (Shehu, 2024).

2.4 Trend of Democratic Backsliding in Ghana

In the context of evaluating the democratic landscape of Africa with a specific focus on Ghana, a plethora of scholars and various research institutions have engaged in extensive investigations and

continue to delve into a wide array of elements that constitute the essence of democracy in the country. Among the topics that have garnered scholarly attention are: the complex processes of democratic transition, the intricate dynamics of democratic consolidation, and the unsettling phenomena of democratic recession or backsliding (Yeboah Assiamah, et al., 2025); the interrelation between democracy and stability as explored (Boafo-Arthur, 2008); the intricate balance between the demand and supply of democratic ideals as examined (Gyimah-Boadi et al., 2021); the critical role of democracy in conflict resolution (Oquaye, 1995); the fundamental connection between the rule of law and the principles of democracy as investigated (Frimpong & Agyeman-Budu, 2018); the essential nature of electoral reforms as discussed (Gyampo, 2017); the relationship between activism and the quality of democratic governance (Gyampo, 2013); the significant occurrences of democratic ruptures and the nature of electoral democracy (Ayelazuno, 2019); the troubling issue of electoral violence (Bob-Milliar, 2014); the pivotal role that civil society organizations play in fostering democratic consolidation (Botchway, 2018); the critical assessment of the quality of democracy and governance (Afrobarometer, 2019); the nuances of election management and its impact on democracy as discussed (Ayee, 1996); the advancements in biometric technology and its implications for voter identification (Effah & Debrah, 2018); and the intersection of biometric technology, elections, and the overall quality of democracy (Adams & Asante, 2019).

In the context of democratic recession in Ghana, Yeboah-Assiamah et al. posited that the deterioration of democracy in the country can be attributed to the erosion of public institutions (public administrators) due to governmental actions (Yeboah-Assiamah et al., 2025), this phenomenon frequently occurs when incumbents populate institutions with individuals loyal to them. In 2020, the electoral commission of Ghana, an entity intended to foster democracy, instead

disenfranchised the inhabitants of Santrokofi, Akpafu, Lolobi, and Likpe (SALL) (Otchere, 2024), following the incumbent government's changing of the electoral commission chairperson, thereby indicating how weakening state institutions can engender democratic decline. Over the years, the Ghanaian parliament has emerged as a pivotal institution in democratic governance, with its role in executive oversight and public accountability becoming increasingly significant (Gyimah-Boadi & Yakah, 2013). Nonetheless, it has been observed that the parliament, which is meant to serve as an oversight body, has been co-opted by the executive branch, compromising its efficacy (Doorenspleet & Nijzink, 2014). Draman (2017) contended that since approximately 2009, parliament has experienced a decline in its oversight capabilities regarding the executive, attributed to heightened partisanship, which has fostered considerable party cohesion and a reluctance to reprimand either incumbent ministers or the executive.

Moreover, stagnation in Ghana's democratic consolidation due to political elites who resist legal reforms and consolidate power through lawfare, limiting participatory rights and checks on executive power, has exacerbated the phenomenon (Oduro et al., 2023). By assessing the quality of Ghana's democracy, there was an indication of declining citizen engagement and governance challenges (Mohammed, 2023). Gyimah-Boadi, a leading voice on West African democracy, analyzed democratic backsliding's nature, causes, and remedies in the region, emphasizing governance deficits and elite resistance undermining democratic gains in Ghana (Gyimah-Boadi, 2021). Additionally, recent studies document the erosion of media freedom in Ghana as an indicator of democratic decline (Kwode et al., 2024). Collectively, these scholars argue that elite manipulation, executive aggrandizement, constrained civil liberties, and institutional weaknesses drive Ghana's democratic recession (Oduro et al., 2023; Mohammed, 2023; Gyimah-Boadi, 2021).

Moreover, indicators derived from various reputable sources, including the Democracy Index, the V-DEM initiative, as well as the Afrobarometer survey, have unequivocally demonstrated that the West African state of Ghana is currently undergoing a significant and concerning democratic recession, which has raised alarms among scholars and policymakers alike. Specifically, in the year 2015, Ghana had achieved a commendable score of 6.86 on the Democracy Index; however, it is rather disheartening to note that this score has experienced a substantial decline, plummeting to a mere 6.24 by the year 2024, a different of 0.62 indicating 9.04% lost as evidenced by the data presented in the Democracy Index reports for the years 2023 and 2024 (Democracy Index, 2023, 2024; See Figure 16). Furthermore, when conducting a comprehensive cross-time analysis that spans from the year 2003 to 2014, it becomes evident that Ghana was categorized as a “Liberal Democracy” on a global scale, yet in stark contrast, during the period from 2015 to 2024, Ghana has declined from its previous state to an “Electoral Democracy” (V-DEM, 2025). In addition to these troubling developments, the findings presented by the Afrobarometer survey have further indicated a significant erosion of trust among the citizenry of Ghana in critical democratic institutions, including but not limited to the parliament, the judiciary, the executive branch of government, and the electoral commission, all of which are foundational to the functioning of a healthy democracy in the country (Afrobarometer, 2024; See Table 5; Figures 11 & 12).

On the subject of democratic stability debate in Ghana, it is contingent upon three principal factors: (1) a robust commitment to the rule of law by political entities; (2) the autonomy and probity of the judicial system; and (3) an exceptionally efficient electoral management framework (Boafo-Arthur, 2008), nonetheless, it does not exclude initiatives, including poverty, ethnocentrism, corruption, and excessive reliance on foreign aid (Boafo-Arthur, 2008). Concerning demand for democracy, Ghanaians, akin to many Africans throughout the continent, aspire to democratic

governance, although the landscape is markedly heterogeneous across individuals, regions, and temporal contexts (Mattes, 2019). With respect to the provision of democracy, 70% of Ghanaians perceive themselves as living in a democracy and express satisfaction with its functioning, less than one-third of the populace believe they are receiving democracy in its entirety across half of the nations surveyed, including fewer than two in ten individuals in Cabo Verde (19%), Sudan (15%), São Tomé and Príncipe (13%), Togo (12%), Madagascar (7%), and Gabon (6%) (Mattes, 2019). In relation to electoral reforms and their effects on Ghana's democracy, Gyampo (2017) examines electoral petitions presented to the Supreme Court, particularly those associated with the 2012 presidential election and the electoral reforms suggested by the court in conjunction with its ruling. To that, he scrutinized the challenges involved in enacting electoral reforms in Ghana, the reasons behind the stagnation in implementation, and potential strategies for addressing these issues. This influenced Bob-Milliar (2014) to clarify how competitive political dynamics exacerbate electoral violence in Africa at large and in Ghana specifically. He contends that academic research has predominantly focused on large-scale organized political violence or high-intensity electoral violence, thereby neglecting low-intensity electoral violence, which significantly affects electoral integrity.

The issue of rule of law and its effect on democracy was also assessed by Frimpong and Agyeman-Budu in the Ghanaian context. They explained that Ghana's adherence to the rule of law during each of the four democratic epochs in the nation's political chronology, namely, the immediate post-independence era (1957–1966); the Second Republican phase (1969–1971); the Third Republican phase (1979–1981); and the ongoing Fourth Republican constitutional phase (1993–present). They concluded by saying, the majority of the successive post-independence administrations have failed to meet public expectations for delivering effective governance and

upholding the rule of law. This, they argue, has significantly undermined efforts to establish the rule of law as the foundation of democracy in Ghana (Frimpong & Agyeman-Budu, 2018).

2.5 Trend of Democratic Backsliding in Kenya

Kenya, much like a multitude of other states scattered across the globe, is similarly experiencing the repercussions of a pronounced global democratic recession that has impacted the political landscapes of various countries. An extensive array of scholarly research findings pertaining to the democratic challenges confronting Kenya reveals a complex amalgamation of multifaceted circumstances and variables that significantly influence the state of democracy within the country (Kagwanja & Southall, 2013; Cheeseman, 2015; Nyadera et al., 2023; Ochieng, 2019). Nyadera et al. (2023) have astutely suggested that a myriad of factors, including but certainly not limited to ethnicity, long-standing historical traditions, the fragility of institutional frameworks, as well as contemporary challenges such as the rise of populism and endemic corruption, have profoundly shaped the democratic landscape of Kenya. To that, the fragility of the Kenyan institutions cannot be left out. Kenya's democratic framework has encountered challenges stemming from frail institutions, particularly a parliament persistently undermined by the executive (Cheeseman et al., 2024). From the tenure of Daniel Arap Moi to the current presidency of William Ruto, parliament has remained largely impotent as state mechanisms are employed to intimidate opposition members of parliament, detain them for conducting "illegal" meetings, and diminish their electoral support (Mueller, 2018; Cheeseman & Tendi, 2010). This accentuates how the executive manipulations destroy Kenya's democracy.

This manipulation involves using constitutional, legislative, and judicial institutions to maintain control over governance. Furthermore, the 2007 post-election conflict, which resulted in the deaths of up to 2,000 citizens and the displacement of approximately 300,000 individuals, was attributed

to elite manipulation. A survey revealed that the diffusion of violence stemmed from elite manipulation of armed militias, a practice that has persisted since 1992 and significantly undermines Kenya's democracy (Kagwanja & Southall, 2013). Adding to this, the current Kenyan president, William Ruto, acted unconstitutionally by imposing the finance law on citizens. This action triggered mass protests that led to the loss of lives, further demonstrating how leaders contribute to democratic recession. Significantly, the Kenya Court of Appeal declared the finance law unconstitutional, affirming concerns about governance and constitutional violations and their effect on democracy (Miriri & Malalo, 2024).

This institutional manipulation was evident in the 2007 general election of Kenya, with allegations of a lack of transparency and manipulation because the Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK) was accused of vote tallying irregularities. However, the ECK chair later admitted to having been pressured to declare the election in favor of Kibaki, which degenerated into the 2007 post-election conflicts in Kenya (Waki Report, 2008). It has been observed and thoroughly documented that the democratic framework of the Republic of Kenya is significantly impacted by the persistent and multifaceted challenges posed by the dissenting voices and ethnic divisions that manifest within the sociopolitical landscape of the nation (Bratton & Kimenyi, 2008; Kisaka & Nyadera, 2019).

Moreover, the works of Veney and Zeleza provide a nuanced political economy lens through which the democratic transitions in Kenya can be examined, placing considerable emphasis on critical events that have served as watershed moments, notably the violent upheaval surrounding the elections of 2007 and the seminal constitution of 2010, which collectively underscore the intricate interplay of historical trajectories and ethnic dynamics within the political sphere (Veney & Zeleza, 2013). Veney and Zeleza tried to explain how a country's economy has consequences for its democracy. The economic hardship and inequality in Kenya, in addition to the passing of the

Finance Bill 2024, influenced Kenyan youth to protest against political exclusion, poverty, inequality, hardship, and unemployment. This protest was premised on Kenya's Constitution under Article 37, which states that *"every person has the right, peaceably and unarmed, to assemble, to demonstrate, to picket, and to present petitions to public authorities."* However, 42 people were killed (Kannampilly, 2025) during a youth protest in Kenya, clearly indicating how democracy can decline through economic factors.

The democratic dynamics observed in Kenya substantiate the concept of a democratic recession within the nation, as metrics sourced from various esteemed organizations, including the Democracy Index, the V-DEM initiative, and the Afrobarometer survey, have illustrated that Kenya is presently experiencing a notable and troubling democratic decline, prompting concerns among academics and policymakers alike to mention that Kenya's democratic backsliding is occurring based on different factors (Nyadera et al., 2023). Specifically, during the years 2015 and 2016, Kenya attained a Democracy Index score of 5.33; however, it is rather disheartening to observe that this rating has undergone a significant reduction, descending to a mere 5.05 in 2020, a figure that has remained constant over five successive assessments, reflecting a difference of 0.28, which corresponds to a 5.25% decrease as evidenced by the data presented in the Democracy Index reports (Democracy Index, 2023, 2024; See figure 17). Again, through a thorough cross-temporal examination extending from 2021 to 2024, it becomes apparent that Kenya consistently occupies a democratic grey zone (V-DEM, 2025), indicating a pivotal juncture in the nation's democratic journey. In conjunction with these alarming trends, the results from the Afrobarometer survey have further indicated a substantial deterioration of confidence among the Kenyan populace in essential democratic institutions, such as parliament and the electoral commission, which are vital to the preservation of a robust democracy in the country (Afrobarometer, 2024; See Table 5).

In furtherance, the middle class in Kenya tends to hold pro-democratic attitudes and support opposition parties, supporting Barrington Moore's claim that a strong middle class promotes democracy. Wealth and education significantly predict democratic support, whereas poverty and employment status are less influential. However, ethnicity remains a critical factor, intersecting with class and shaping political alignment and voting behaviour. The 2013 general election highlighted how class and ethnicity interact, complicating the middle class's democratic influence (Cheeseman, 2015). Additionally, scholars in a six-country study, including Kenya, argue that incumbent regimes employ legal and institutional tactics to undermine reform and maintain power, contributing to democratic backsliding (Press, 2022). Civic education programs have sought to improve democratic engagement following the 2007 election violence, which nearly led to civil war, but significant challenges remain (Finkel et al., 2012). Thus, while the Kenyan middle class shows democratic tendencies, ethnic dynamics and authoritarian strategies threaten the resilience of democracy in the country.

2.6 Role of the Executive as facilitating democratic recession

The executive branch of government may be regarded as a prominent state actor among the myriad of state entities within a given state, primarily due to the involvement of the president/prime minister in the sphere of international relations. The engagement of the executive branch with other governmental institutions in the context of democratic recession is crucial. Academic discourse has established how the executive exerts its authority by shaping the behaviors of other state institutions (Diamond, 2015; Bermeo, 2016; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; Haggard & Kaufman, 2021; Benasaglio et al., 2023; Seyis, 2024; Palacios, 2025; Yeboah-Assiamah et al., 2025). Threats to democracy are increasingly emanating from actions taken by legitimately elected governments (executive), rather than through military coups, as witnessed rampantly in previous years (Levitsky

& Ziblatt, 2018). The phenomenon of democratic backsliding scrutinizes the mechanisms through which elected leaders erode checks on executive authority, restrict political and civil rights, and compromise the integrity of the electoral system. Utilizing comprehensive case studies from the United States and various nations in Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Africa, the discourse on democratic backsliding emphasizes three interconnected causal mechanisms: the detrimental consequences of political polarization; the realignment of party systems that facilitate the ascent of elected autocrats to legislative power; and the gradual nature of erosions, which fragment opposition forces and render them ineffective (Haggard & Kaufman, 2021).

In recent years, there has been a prevalent belief that the world is experiencing a confluence of crises that are exerting pressure on democratic systems worldwide. On one hand, there is a discernible trend of democratic regression on a global scale, marked by a gradual erosion of democratic integrity, the diminishment of checks on executive authority, and an increase in detrimental polarization, among other factors. Conversely, populist executives with anti-liberal inclinations are seizing power in both democratic and authoritarian regimes. Furthermore, the populace appears increasingly inclined to accept undemocratic practices, which is interpreted as a definitive indicator of a crisis in democratic trust (Graham & Svolik, 2020; Carey et al., 2022; Palacios, 2025). By integrating a worldwide dataset concerning individual democratic perceptions and electoral choices with macro-level data regarding populist and non-populist incumbents alongside instances of democratic regression, this research explores voter responses to backsliding in environments where incumbents are likely to engage in such practices, “i.e., populist-led regimes” and in settings where backsliding is anticipated to be rare—yet occasionally occurs “i.e., non-populist-led regimes”. The principal findings suggest that supporters of non-populist factions in backsliding situations instigated by populist leaders may emerge as a formidable force in

safeguarding pluralistic democratic frameworks, as they bolster their faith in both legislative bodies and political parties and other institutions; therefore, backsliding becomes entrenched (Palacios, 2025). The investigation into the influence of populist executives presents a thorough examination of the mechanisms through which populist leaders systematically, incrementally, and gradually undermine democratic institutions, while observing the prevailing wave of democratic regression, posits that the contemporary surge of populism is central to this phenomenon. It specifically uncovered that populist executives exploit their authority, ultimately undermining the liberal dimensions of democracy. An analysis encompassing 18 datasets across Latin America and the United States illuminated the pivotal role of populist leaders in fostering executive overreach at the detriment of checks and balances across 46 democracies from 1989 to 2022. Moreover, populists also undermine judicial supremacy by compromising judicial independence (Seyis, 2024). This indicates how the executives hide behind the tendency of populism to weaken other state institutions through interactions.

Furthermore, in the context of evaluating the evidence for contemporary ideology-driven assertions regarding the regression of democracy compared to prior institutional explanations among all democratically elected officials across various global regions since 1970. By utilizing newly accessible datasets pertaining to populist leaders and parties to assess the risks posed by populists in governance, and employing matching techniques to differentiate the impacts of populist executives, presidents in their capacity as chief executives, and dominant leaders on the degree of erosion of liberal democracy. The findings indicated that the populist ideology espoused by executives is predominantly accountable for democratic recession and that institutional resources represent a significant threat when wielded by those with malevolent intentions (Benasaglio et al., 2023).

Through the examination of various hypotheses utilizing distinct random regression models focused on Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) nations over the timeframe of 2005–2021, an intriguing conundrum arises: contrary to prevailing assumptions, it has been determined that enhanced governmental trust positively influences democratic recession (Castaldo & Memoli, 2024). However, an evaluation of the interplay between federalism and the threats posed by national authorities, supported by quantitative assessments of this relationship across global nations and structured, targeted comparative case analyses in the United States, Brazil, Venezuela, and India, reveals no systematic correlation between federalism and democratic backsliding. Notably, the comparative studies substantiate the notion that federalism is likely to act as a safeguard against autocratic threats from national leaders only under a restricted set of circumstances (Kaufman et al., 2025). It is widely recognized that democratic backsliding transpires when elected officials weaken or undermine democratic institutions, leading to a diminished or illiberal form of democracy, but, currently, it has been expanded that international organizations (IOs) that advocate for democracy inadvertently increase the likelihood of backsliding by failing to promote democratic institutions beyond the executive branch and electoral processes, thereby augmenting executive authority and constraining the domestic policy options of states, which hinders institutional advancement (Meyerrose, 2020). Participation in IOs linked to democracy promotion is associated with an increased propensity for backsliding, diminished checks on executive power, and restricted domestic policy alternatives and political party development within emerging democracies (Ibib, 2020).

The central argument of these scholars is that democratically elected leaders can gradually accumulate excessive power for their personal gain through their interactions with other state institutions. This can then influence them by facilitating them to exceed the constitutional limits

originally intended for their office (James, 2022). This accumulation of power often occurs through weakening checks and balances: This can involve actions like stacking the judiciary with loyalists, undermining the independence of legislative bodies, or controlling key institutions like the media or electoral commissions manipulating democratic institutions: This can include gerrymandering electoral districts, suppressing voter turnout, or weakening the rule of law and Centralizing power: This can involve consolidating power within the executive branch, reducing the autonomy of local governments, or expanding executive control over key sectors of the economy (Bermeo, 2016; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; Riaz, 2020; Schedler 2002). Although instances of governmental breakdowns persist, traditional coups have diminished in favorability among political leaders. Instead, elected officials partake in a more insidious erosion of democratic institutions and practices, a process so incremental that it frequently escapes the notice of domestic observers (Bermeo, 2016; Diamond, 2015; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018).

The manuscript underscores two prominent strategies that authorities routinely implement to consolidate their power: the legal framework and the international landscape. It catalogues how governments leverage legal mechanisms to constrict the operational space available to citizens and civil society advocates striving to augment democratic freedoms, including the application of constitutional stipulations and judicial systems. Further, the analysis illustrates how governments exploit their positions in international affairs to diminish external pressures from international actors, including sovereignty assertions against foreign involvement and selective adherence to policies promoted by international donors (Arriola & Rakner, 2023). This legal framework becomes a catalyst by which leaders aggrandize their power (Riaz & Rana, 2020).

Leaders normally use their office to amend the constitution to prolong their mandate, and this is prevalent in numerous African countries, such as Togo, Comoros, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire,

Egypt, Gabon, Algeria, the Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi (Mbaku, 2018). In 2019, following his reelection for an additional four-year presidential term, el-Sisi orchestrated amendments to the Egyptian constitution, effectively abolishing presidential term limits and enabling his pursuit of a third term, potentially extending his rule until 2034 (Al Jazeera, 2019). Indeed, this manipulation of constitutional frameworks by African leaders to prolong their tenure poses a significant threat to democratic consolidation across the continent. A multitude of African presidents now operate with considerable impunity in this domain (Durotoye, 2016). This situation is affecting sub-regional organizations like ECOWAS and the African Union on how to prevent these constitutional amendments by state leaders.

Therefore, on 19 May 2015, a proposal was presented to the heads of state of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) during their assembly in Accra, Ghana, advocating for the limitation of presidential terms within member states to two terms. This proposal was met with resistance from the presidents of Gambia and Togo, driven by their vested personal interests (Dulani, 2015), Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea leaders also went for a third term in 2020 due to the political conflict that brought them into power (Zounmenou, 2020). These amendments are always achieved by strategically weakening state institutions (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018).

2.7 Measures at Addressing Democratic Backsliding

It is undeniably evident that the state of democracy across the globe has experienced a significant decline, and this observation is supported by numerous empirical studies and analyses, which reflect the troubling trends in democratic governance. Nevertheless, the ultimate trajectory and survival of democratic systems are fundamentally contingent upon the active engagement and commitment of the populace and government, and thus, the journey toward securing a robust democratic framework must commence with the bolstering of democratic principles and practices

at the local and community levels (Eisen et al., 2019). This foundational strengthening of democracy is essential, as it empowers citizens to take ownership of their political systems, fostering a culture of participation and accountability that is critical for the revitalization and sustainability of democratic ideals in the face of contemporary challenges.

2.7.1 Empowering the judiciary

A democratic recession can be reversed by rebuilding the judicial system of a state. At a 2016 prestigious conference convened by the Council of Europe, a British jurist underscored a multitude of interconnected challenges confronted by European counterparts: insufficient investment in judicial institutions and court systems, escalating complexity and volume of cases, inadequate personnel and administrative support, corruption, and political meddling (Scheppele, 2018). Specifically, constitutional courts have become targets of populist governance. As articulated by Bojan Bugarič and Tom Ginsburg, *“rule-of-law institutions in Central and Eastern Europe have historically been deprived of the essential backing from authentically liberal political entities and initiatives, rendering the courts susceptible to assaults from populist factions”* (Bugarič & Ginsburg, 2016). A salient example is Poland, where the governing Law and Justice (PiS) party has brought the nation perilously close to *“a point of no return regarding the autonomy of its judiciary.”* The Center for European Reform delineates how, since 2015, PiS has exerted control over Poland’s Constitutional Tribunal by appointing compliant judges, thereby eroding its neutrality and instituting disciplinary chambers aimed at silencing dissenting judges. These systematic actions have significantly undermined judicial independence and constitutional safeguards (Center for European Reform, 2024), which have direct consequences on democracy.

During her tenure as Prime Minister from 2015 to 2017, Beata Szydło significantly altered the judiciary by appointing new judges, restructuring the Constitutional Tribunal to diminish its

authority, and modifying decision-making protocols to “paralyze the court” (Bugarič & Ginsburg, 2016). Among various new legislative measures aimed at undermining judicial autonomy was a 2015 amendment that stipulated a two-thirds majority for binding decisions and increased the quorum necessary to hear cases from nine to 13 (Ibib). Given that the court comprised only 12 justices at that juncture, this regulation effectively incapacitated the institution. The ruling PiS party has persistently eroded judicial integrity through both actions and legal reforms: it has forcibly dismissed over 149 regional court officials for “discretionary” reasons, appointed inadequately qualified successors, delayed case adjudications, and restructured the National Council of the Judiciary (established to safeguard judicial independence) with politically affiliated appointees (Stiftung, 2016). Similarly, Kenya has employed budget reductions and has withheld judicial confirmations as a means of intimidation, adversely impacting the court (Gichohi & Arriola, 2023; The Platform, 2020), whereas Ghana has recently suspended the Chief Justice and has similarly engaged in court packing (Arhinful, 2025). These developments compromise the autonomy of the judiciary, thereby undermining democratic principles.

Therefore, for democracy to be firmly established and revert to its foundational phase, it is imperative that states devote considerable attention to their judicial frameworks. Robust democracies flourish through a collaborative relationship among the citizenry, elected representatives, and autonomous institutions (Kaltwasser & Taggart, 2016). Among these entities, the judiciary is paramount, especially in states trending towards illiberal governance. As observed, an independent judiciary assumes a distinctive function in constitutional democracies by upholding the constitution, civil liberties, political rights, and other democratic processes (Larkins, 1996; Law, 2011; Daly, 2014). An independent judiciary is characterized by its impartiality, unbiased case approach—including towards those wielding political influence—and its ability to function

without intimidation (Choudhry & Stacey, 2013; UNODC, 2021). In contrast, leaders often endeavor to undermine the judiciary to enhance their own authority, which significantly impacts democratic integrity (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). A critical tactic employed by aspiring autocrats is to operate under a façade of legality and establish a system that Kim Lane Scheppele terms a “Frankenstate” and Levitsky and Ziblatt call “target state referee,” in which autocrats co-opt the most detrimental aspects of liberal democracies to forge a novel and entirely illiberal regime (Scheppele, 2013; Ibib, 2018). To counteract this “autocratic legalism,” it is essential to regard the rule of law as a primary safeguard against the erosion of democratic institutions and to advocate for its robust protection (Scheppele, 2018). Such measures will foster an environment in which the judiciary can effectively perform judicial review to strengthen democracy.

It is important to note that, rule of law can be enhanced through mechanisms that promote judicial transparency. Nevertheless, transparency alone cannot be regarded as a comprehensive solution to invigorating democratic engagement (Lindstedt & Naurin, 2010). Empirical studies have demonstrated a positive correlation between judicial transparency and public confidence in judges (Grimmelikhuijsen & Klijn, 2015). Hence, it is imperative that both governmental entities and members of the judiciary endeavor to facilitate access to courtrooms by generating publicly accessible transcripts of proceedings in a prompt manner, implementing measures to limit the occurrence of sealed documents, and installing cameras within courtrooms. These initiatives can significantly contribute to reinforcing both judicial autonomy and public trust in the judicial system.

2.7.2 Civil society and media role in reversing democratic recession

The phenomenon of democratic recession can be mitigated by bolstering civil society. Civil society encompasses all organizations that play a crucial role in articulating the concerns of the populace

and in providing services that address societal needs, which include grassroots movements and non-governmental organizations (Kohler-Koch & Quittkat, 2009). A vigorous civil society is instrumental in maintaining democratic vitality, equipping citizens with the requisite information to guide their electoral decisions, and facilitating avenues for significant collective engagement. Even when these social networks and activities are entirely disconnected from political or governance matters, their intensity and regularity have profound implications for the resilience of democracy and the trajectories of democratization (Fishman, 2017; Warren, 2011). From the perspective of two political scientists, civil society organizations possess the capacity to *“raise awareness within society regarding urgent domestic and international challenges, foster community cohesion, assist citizens in articulating their values and interests, exercise oversight over political authorities, and deliver social services”* (Demeš & Forbrig, 2007). As indicated, the most effective strategy for a nation to combat corruption is to cultivate “corruption tripod” thus, a robust third force that compels the government to ensure adherence to appropriate practices within the state (Yeboah-Assiamah, 2017); this formidable third force comprises civil society organizations, religious leaders, and other stakeholders. These entities play a constructive role in holding the government accountable to exercise its democratic authority in accordance with constitutional mandates.

Whereas the attributes of leadership within an organization or movement are paramount, equally important is the composition of its membership. The most effective movements and organizations are those that resonate with a wide array of diverse audiences. Srdja Popovic, an eminent proponent and intellectual in the realm of civil resistance, underscores the necessity of fostering connections between varied societal factions. As he vividly articulates, “It’s unity, stupid!” (Popovic & Miller, 2015). The heterogeneity among participants in a movement—across dimensions such as gender,

age, faith, ethnicity, ideology, occupation, and socioeconomic standing—renders it more challenging for authorities to disregard, delegitimize, or marginalize it (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011), as empirical evidence indicates that strong social networks mitigate the impacts of repression (Ibib). Moreover, in addition to fostering participant diversity, civil society organisations and movements advocating civil resistance ought to aim for maximal membership or followers. Initiatives characterized by substantial participant numbers are inherently more predisposed to achieve success than those with limited engagement. Chenoweth and Stephan provide empirical validation for this assertion: after controlling for various factors, nonviolent resistance movements marked by elevated levels of participation exhibit a significantly higher likelihood of success (Ibib).

In the pursuit of a vibrant civil society, democracy cannot thrive without a media sector that is equally robust. An autonomous and free press performs essential functions within a democracy, such as scrutinizing public officials, facilitating a forum for discourse, and educating the populace (Aalberg & Curran, 2012). An enlightened citizenry acts as a safeguard against the excesses of powerful officials by ensuring that “representatives adhere to their official duties and fulfill, in a broad sense, the expectations of their constituents” (Ibib). Curran and Aalberg assert the beneficial influence of well-informed citizens on societal stability, characterized by coherent and substantial opinions on pertinent issues, interlinked interests and attitudes, and a preference for political candidates who align with their perspectives (Ibib). The freedom of the press assumes a “pivotal role” in democracy, as it serves as the matrix, the essential condition for nearly all other forms of freedom, and indeed for the democratic process itself” (Stotzky, 2004). In this context, the media is positioned to expose any actions by state actors that may undermine democratic principles.

7.2.3 Responsible political attitude in reversing democratic recession

In addition to this, in order to cultivate an environment favorable for the consolidation of democracy and to enact policies that safeguard democratic practices, officials are required to wield their political authority with responsibility to protect democratic integrity. In practical terms, politicians who honour their institutional responsibilities will adhere to two particularly significant norms of political conduct: “institutional forbearance” and “mutual toleration” (Eisen et al., 2019). By following these norms, they can shield themselves, their political parties, and their democratic systems from potential authoritarian threats (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). The norm of institutional forbearance posits that politicians ought to abstain from exercising the full extent of their politically conferred powers, particularly when such actions would jeopardize the democratic framework (Ibib., 106-111). Prominent political scientists emphasize the critical nature of such restraint for the stability and functionality of democracy. Institutional forbearance frequently involves adherence to unwritten norms, such as avoiding court packing, honoring term limits, and refraining from issuing executive orders that bypass the resolutions of other governmental branches.

Significant research into collaborative dynamics within political frameworks indicates that politicians who demonstrate moderation while pursuing optimal outcomes for themselves are engaging in a strategically sound approach. Such conduct fosters an environment conducive to ongoing cooperation and prolonged engagement over time and strengthens democracy. Conversely, obstinacy tends to provoke detrimental retaliation (Axelrod, 2006, 2012). Considerable historical data illustrate that excessive retaliatory measures can precipitate systemic collapse (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018), and open room for democratic recession. Occasionally, viable solutions may lie in robust constitutional safeguards; however, skillfully drafted constitutions (and,

when applicable, amendments) alone cannot ensure the preservation of democracy. Even the most well-crafted constitutions contain deficiencies and ambiguities that invite divergent interpretations. Additionally, constitutions are inevitably susceptible to what legal scholars term “constitutional hardball” (Tushnet, 2003). This phenomenon stands in stark contrast to institutional forbearance and presents formidable challenges in terms of prevention (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). An illustrative case of illiberal leaders engaging in constitutional hardball is exemplified by the political unrest in the Czech Republic during the tenure of President Milos Zeman. The unabashedly illiberal Czech President Milos Zeman maximized his limited constitutional authority to bolster the populist Prime Minister Andrej Babis, who faced a corruption scandal that triggered the largest protests in the Czech Republic since the Velvet Revolution (de Goeij & Santora, 2019).

2.7.4 Free and fair elections as a tool to reverse democratic recession

The assurance of secure, equitable, and transparent electoral processes constitutes the bedrock of democratic governance; however, the realization of such elections is an intricate challenge. Even within established democratic frameworks, it is pivotal to implement strategies that shield the electoral process from partisan attempts to distort the outcome (Meladze & Popovic, 2024). However, governmental entities ought to formulate policies that facilitate widespread electoral participation, including mechanisms such as automatic or same-day voter registration (Kenealy & West, 2018). Moreover, elections necessitate protection from foreign interference akin to that employed by Russia throughout Europe and the United States (Birnbbaum & Timberg, 2019). Mitigating external intrusion entails enhancing the technological robustness of electoral counting systems, voter registration technologies, and the networks utilized in political campaigns. Furthermore, it is crucial to foster collaboration between social media platforms and other news outlets with governmental authorities to combat the proliferation of disinformation (Kenealy et al.,

2018). Authorities on both sides must also devise a comprehensive deterrence framework that imposes adequate penalties on nations engaging in electoral interference (Polyakova & Boyer, 2018).

Additionally, it is essential to regulate the influence of financial contributions in the political sphere to prevent the prioritization of special interests over public welfare and to nurture trust in democratic institutions (Ohman, 2013). To mitigate the excessive sway of monetary influence in democratic processes, political entities should establish small donor matching systems or alternative public financing strategies for electoral campaigns, enforce transparency mandates regarding donations, and impose restrictions on the permissible amount of financial contributions to campaigns. Such reforms can yield beneficial outcomes, including the emergence of increased political challengers, a decrease in overall campaign expenditures, and a greater allocation of budgets towards public welfare initiatives, all of which synergistically contribute to bolstering democratic institutions and enhancing public trust in governance (Bardwell, 2003).

Aside from the issues being raised, five predominant mechanisms exist through which pro-democratic establishment entities may counteract authoritarian tendencies. Firstly, and of utmost significance, competing pro-democracy factions and figures ought to engage in collaborative efforts to form a consolidated front against extremist ideologies. Secondly, they should abstain from endorsing potential authoritarians on party electoral slates for elevated positions, even if such actions may yield electoral benefits. Thirdly, they can execute a cleansing of extremist elements within the grassroots of their respective parties, employing expulsion if deemed necessary. Fourthly, political organizations should refrain from forging alliances with any potentially extremist factions on their own ideological spectrum. Lastly, they can take an additional measure

by avoiding public appearances or associations with potential authoritarians, thereby denying those groups or individuals any form of political legitimacy (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018).

2.7.5 Dealing with democratic recession externally.

While it is indeed pertinent to initiate the process of fortifying democratic principles and practices within a nation's own borders, it would be exceedingly hazardous to neglect the importance of addressing democratic challenges on an international scale as well. This dual approach can be effectively realized through the enhancement of International Diplomatic and Economic Pressure directed toward Autocratic Leaders, thereby ensuring that the global community actively participates in the promotion of democratic governance.

Democratic nations ought to strategically employ methods such as diplomatic isolation, economic sanctions, and various forms of economic disincentives in order to hold leaders who exhibit antidemocratic tendencies accountable for their actions and to deter any potential regression into authoritarianism (Carothers & Press, 2022; Collins, 2009). The implementation of such external pressure can serve as a significant leverage point that compels autocratic regimes to consider and adopt democratic reforms that align with global standards of governance. Furthermore, there must be a concerted effort to provide both support and funding for Civil Society organizations and Independent Media outlets, alongside international institutions and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) that play a critical role in promoting democratic values. The provision of external support to NGOs, journalists, and various watchdog entities not only fortifies public oversight but also enhances the resilience of civil society against governmental encroachments on democratic institutions (Daly, 2025). Such forms of support are instrumental in amplifying domestic resistance to any instances of democratic backsliding that may occur.

Moreover, it is essential to advocate for the promotion of Judicial Independence through mechanisms of International Legal Cooperation and Monitoring, which can significantly contribute to the safeguarding of judicial integrity. Democratic states can play a vital role in this process by allocating funds for judicial training programs, facilitating exchanges of best practices among legal professionals, and meticulously monitoring judicial reforms to prevent the phenomenon of judicial capture and politically motivated interference in legal proceedings (Ibib, 2025). Lastly, it is imperative to provide both Technical and Financial Assistance aimed at ensuring free, fair, and transparent elections, as such external assistance is crucial in maintaining the integrity of electoral processes by bolstering electoral commissions, enhancing voting infrastructure, and supporting observation missions that oversee elections. This collective effort to strengthen the electoral framework ultimately serves to reinforce public trust in the democratic process and enhances the legitimacy of democratic governance (Daly, 2025).

2.8 Legal Framework on the status and preponderance of the Executive in Ghana and Kenya

The legal framework regarding the status of the Executive in Ghana and Kenya is embedded within their respective constitutional structure, which mandates the distinct operation of the three principal branches of government to function separately. This doctrine of Separation of Powers serves as a foundational model for democratic governance. This paradigm was initially conceived in ancient Greece and gained prominence during the Roman Republic, forming a component of its uncoded constitution. The principle of separation of powers has manifested in various iterations across different historical contexts. Its roots can be traced back to philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, while the 16th and 17th centuries saw contributions from French thinker Jean Bodin and British statesman John Locke, who articulated their perspectives on this theoretical construct. However, it was Montesquieu who first enunciated this doctrine in a systematic, scientific, and

coherent manner in his seminal work “*Esprit des Lois*” (The Spirit of the Laws), published in 1748 and became well-known. The notion of “separation of powers” is a quintessential principle for the governance of democratic societies as it seeks to check the powers of state actors. This is achieved because it necessitates the allocation of legislative, executive, and judicial responsibilities among distinct and autonomous entities. This division curtails the potential for arbitrary governmental overreach, as the consensus of all three branches is requisite for the formulation, implementation, and administration of laws (Milewicz, 2020) to enhance democracy.

Montesquieu identified fundamental aspects of the separation of powers, asserting that an individual should not occupy multiple governmental roles, that one governmental branch should refrain from executing the functions of another, and that no branch should intrude upon the functions of the other two (Sharma, 2022). This concept significantly influenced numerous nations, particularly in the United States, where it played a crucial role in the formulation of the U.S. Constitution (Galligan, 2014), as well as in other nations that gained independence from the 1950s to the 1990s, such as Ghana and Kenya. For example, the principle of separation of powers profoundly impacted the architects of the American, Ghanaian and Kenyan constitutions. As delineated in Article I; Section 1, all legislative authority is bestowed upon Congress. Article II; Section 1 assigns all executive authority to the President, while Article III; Section 1 allocates all judicial authority to the Supreme Court. In contemporary discourse, the doctrine has become less rigid due to the diverse configurations of legislative, executive, and judicial processes across various constitutional frameworks, for instance, Ghana using a hybrid system. Nevertheless, the principle of Separation of Powers continues to serve as a fundamental tenet of democratic governance. In crafting constitutions post-1990, African drafters were influenced by the legacies they inherited at the time of independence. The two most prominent colonial powers in Africa, the

British and the French, offered the primary paradigms of separation of powers. Among the two, the British model was distinctive as it emerged from a nation lacking a written constitution, leading British colonial drafters to borrow from the design of the United States Constitution, a practice later adopted by African drafters. The French model, which bears similarities to approaches found in various civilian jurisdictions in Europe, was embraced not only by francophone African nations but also by Hispanophone and Lusophone countries (Bilchitz & Landau, 2018).

African nations exhibit diverse methods regarding the delineation of governmental powers. For instance, Ghana maintains the principle that the three branches of government must operate independently; however, the executive branch appoints a majority of its ministers from the parliament. The overarching objective remains to facilitate a system of checks and balances among the three governmental branches (Fombad, 2016). This dynamic is evident at three distinct levels: the interaction between the executive and the legislature; the relationship between the legislature and the judiciary; and the connection between the judiciary and the executive. The executive branch is recognized as the most powerful segment of government, functioning fundamentally as the state's engine and bearing the primary obligation of implementing state functions (Ibib). To promote constitutional governance across Africa, it is imperative to mitigate the potential for power abuses by the executive, particularly by the heads of state (presidents).

Articles 93(2), 58(1), and 125(3) of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana delineate the three principal branches of government and explicitly outline the interactions expected between the executive and the other branches. Article 93(2) confers legislative authority upon Parliament, Article 58(1) allocates executive power to the President, and Article 125(3) assigns judicial authority to the Judiciary. Nonetheless, the 1992 Constitution endows the Executive President of Ghana with significant and far-reaching powers of appointment, as articulated in Article 78. Over time, this

has fostered the emergence of Winner-Takes-All (WTA) politics, which affects democratic principles in Ghana. Such authority is typically granted to presidents in civilian governance structures, thereby skewing the power dynamics in favor of the presidency while simultaneously undermining the roles of Parliament and the Judiciary. WTA politics signifies a form of “state capture” characterized by the partisan monopolization of state resources, facilities, and opportunities, alongside the systematic exclusion of political adversaries from national governance. This practice is inherently divisive, as it bestows certain exclusive privileges upon the upper echelons of the winning party and its affiliates post-election, while marginalizing the broader populace (Gyampo, 2010, 2011, 2016), facilitating de-participation in the political environment. This suggests that WTA politics facilitates executive overreach, as the victorious party seeks to exclude those perceived as ideologically incompatible, favoring collaboration with individuals who align with their policy agendas.

The architects of the comparatively progressive, competitive, and democratic Constitution of 1992 may have reasonably conjectured that a winning political party in elections would extend an olive branch to opposition parties to foster collaboration in promoting democracy (Abotsi, 2013). Nevertheless, the country’s experience with constitutional democratic governance over the past thirty years provides ample evidence that this high expectation has not been realized. Rather, as noted by Gyampo (2016), Ghanaian politicians have construed the Winner-Takes-All principle as extending beyond electoral contexts to a more literal interpretation that permits the utilization of state resources for political patronage to supporters and the political marginalization of adversaries, as well as a “contemptuous disregard for the opposition.” In this context, elections have morphed into a “do-or-die affair,” as the individual who ascends to the executive role wields substantial power given to him, which is attained through the legal framework in the country. Furthermore,

parliamentary activities have been marred by recurrent boycotts instigated by the minority due to the entrenched positions and frustrations they endure from the majority (Oquaye, 2013). This discontent stems from the understanding that the president predominantly selects his ministers from parliament; thus, the majority seeks to frustrate the minority to facilitate the smooth passage of their initiatives and policies, thereby augmenting executive authority.

Through a systematic examination of Ghana's Fourth Republic Constitution (1992) alongside reviewing scholarly works, a rigorous evaluation of the legal frameworks and tangible expressions of executive supremacy was probed. It scrutinized the appointment authority conferred upon the President, factoring in the contributions of the Council of State, Parliament, and various advisory entities. The findings revealed that the President's extensive appointment authority, as articulated in the Constitution, considerably undermines the autonomy of other governmental branches. Crucial appointments, including those pertaining to the judiciary, ministers, and heads of public institutions, are predominantly shaped by executive influence, resulting in a politicized civil service and diminished institutional checks and balances (Joshua, 2025). This undue aggregation of executive authority, as delineated by the legal framework, engenders less democratic policy formulation and potentially exacerbates threats to minority groups and individual liberties (Landau, 2013). The legal framework empowers the executive in Ghana to devise and implement policies through the political leadership of sector ministries, departments, and agencies. However, initiatives that entail substantial financial commitments must be presented to Parliament for endorsement, alteration, or rejection, among other procedural requirements, before the necessary financial sanctions are granted (Bukari, 2023). Nonetheless, it is atypical for Parliament to dismiss the prevailing policies in Ghana, as the ruling party consistently holds a majority in Parliament (Ninsin, 2006). This constitutional arrangement in Ghana's Fourth Republic affords the executive

branch substantial authority over other governmental institutions. Article 78 authorizes the President to make appointments, whereas the same constitution empowers him to revoke such appointments. For example, Article 146 permits the President to dismiss the Chief Justice in Ghana; notably, the President recently revoked the appointment of Chief Justice Her Ladyship Justice Gertrude A.E.S. Torkornoo on 1st September 2025. In this situation, the constitutional framework in Ghana creates a lacuna for democratic recession because the executive can hide behind this provision.

Similarly, the legal framework of Kenya can be contextualized within the framework of Ghana, as both delineate powers among the three principal branches of government, as elaborated in the Ghanaian scenario. The principle of separation of powers dictates that the political authority of the state is partitioned into legislative, executive, and judicial powers (Dauletmuratov, 2025). The fundamental tenets include: no individual should constitute more than one governmental organ, no single governmental organ should perform the functions of another, and no one organ should infringe upon the responsibilities assigned to the other two (Vile, 1998). Baron de Montesquieu posited that to most effectively safeguard liberty, these three powers must remain distinct and function autonomously. Nonetheless, Kenya's historical political landscape has encountered significant obstacles in upholding the separation of powers within its governance (Mak'Ouya, 2024). In the post-independence period and throughout subsequent authoritarian regimes, the executive branch frequently overstepped its bounds, infringing upon the roles of the legislature and judiciary. This concentration of power resulted in pervasive corruption, violations of human rights, and a deterioration of institutional integrity. The Constitution of 2010 represented a significant transition towards enhancing the independence and co-equality of governmental branches. However, the enactment of the separation of powers in Kenya has faced various

impediments. Political meddling, particularly from the executive branch, remains a persistent threat to judicial autonomy and legislative efficacy (Mak'Ouya, 2024), thereby undermining democratic principles and fostering a regression in democratic governance.

Immediately after attaining Independence, Kenya established a sovereign legal framework, commonly referred to as the Westminster Constitution (Ojwang, 2000). The Independence Constitution mirrored other British decolonization charters (Meyer, 2015). The principal characteristics of the Kenyan Independence legal framework encompassed its quasi-federal state arrangement, a bicameral legislative body, and a Bill of Rights that was confined to safeguarding civil and political liberties (Ojwang, 2000). From 1963 to 1969, the leaders of independence initiated extensive and transformative amendments to the fundamental aspects of the Constitution (Makhanu, 2015). These constitutional modifications entailed substituting the quasi-federal state structure with a unitary framework and transforming the bicameral legislature into a unicameral assembly (Ibib). The primary objective, along with the ramifications of these amendments, was to eliminate constraints on the President's authority, thereby centralizing power within this office (Khobe, 2021). Historically, the executive branch exerted dominance and wielded control over both the legislative and judicial branches without remorse (Branch & Cheeseman, 2009). The State House was perceived as the locus of divine providence and supremacy, and any directives originating from it were deemed final and obligatory for compliance by all individuals, irrespective of their roles or responsibilities towards the country, because it was constituted by the law (Ojwang, 1992). During this era, the president operated with unchecked authority over the subservient legislative and judicial branches (Ibib). This situation persisted, with de facto alterations occurring solely due to the president's benevolence at certain discreet intervals, until the promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya in 2010 (Wilson, 2017). This scenario prompts

inquiries regarding whether the existing legal frameworks in Kenya could effectively address the challenges posed by the concentration of power within the executive.

Despite the absence of an explicit mention of the separation of powers within the 2010 Constitution of Kenya, a fundamental aspect of its legal framework is explicit codification of the separation of powers doctrine among the governmental branches (Wilson, 2017). The Constitution commences with Article 1(1), which allocates all sovereign authority to the populace (The Constitution of Kenya, 2010). Subsequently, Article 1(3) delegates this authority to state entities, specifically, the parliament and legislative bodies of the county governments, the national executive alongside the executive bodies within the counties, as well as the judiciary and independent tribunals, all of which are mandated to execute their responsibilities in alignment with the Constitution (Ibid). Furthermore, Article 94(1) confers legislative authority at the national level to Parliament, whereas Article 185(1) assigns such authority to the devolved government within the county assembly (Ibid). Additionally, Article 159(1) entrusts the exercise of judicial power to the Judiciary and the tribunals established under the Constitution (The Constitution of Kenya, 2010).

The new constitution, consequently, establishes a devolved quasi-federal governance structure, a bicameral legislative assembly, an autonomous judiciary endowed with explicit judicial review authority, and independent constitutional commissions acting as the fourth branch of government (The Constitution of Kenya, 2010). In light of the nation's historical context of intimidated courts and weakened legislative bodies before the 2010 reforms, these structural modifications were designed to enhance horizontal accountability (Mak'Ouya, 2024). A significant aspect of the constitution to highlight is the manner in which the authors formulated the executive provision. The drafters purposefully refrained from explicitly conferring executive power at the national level to either the president or the cabinet. This was a calculated initiative aimed at restraining the

overpowering executive authority that characterized the initial four decades of Kenya's post-independence era (Mak'Ouya, 2024). Certain conventional executive responsibilities, including foreign relations, public service provision, law enforcement, and national defense, are expressly assigned to the President by Articles 131 and 132 (The Constitution of Kenya, 2010). At the county tier, executive authority is explicitly allocated to and can be exercised by the county executive as per Article 179(1) (The Constitution of Kenya, 2010). It is also important to observe that in addition to the enumerated functions, Article 132(4)(a) stipulates that the president is permitted to execute only those additional executive functions delineated in the "constitution or in national legislation" (Ibib), thereby restricting any attempts to wield power beyond legal confines. This was seemingly designed to limit the conventional understanding of executive authority as the residual state power once legislative and judicial responsibilities are allocated (Oluoch, 2015). Nevertheless, political interference, particularly from the executive branch, continues to threaten judicial autonomy and legislative efficacy, thereby impacting the democratic landscape of Kenya (Mak'Ouya, 2024).

The principal role of checks and balances within a liberal democracy is to mitigate the dominance of majority rule, thus averting the potential transformation of the sovereign's will into an electoral autocracy (Miller et al., 2010), while simultaneously fostering democratic principles within the state. Consequently, distinct governmental branches undertake specific responsibilities related to checks and balances concerning one another. This arrangement aims to guarantee that all governmental branches engage solely in activities that align with and uphold the rule of law (Venter, 2020). The Executive branch in Kenya, overseen by the President, bears the responsibility of appointing various officials. Nonetheless, such appointments must undergo scrutiny and receive endorsement from the "national assembly," which acts as a counterbalance to the President's

authority. This procedure is designed to ascertain that appointees possess the requisite qualifications, competencies, and ethical integrity. Any nomination to a State or public office made by the Executive is subject to examination by the National Assembly, Judiciary, Commission, or independent entity (Ochieng, 2019). The previously prevalent practices of arbitrary presidential and ministerial appointments have been restricted by new legislation that underscores the importance of procedural rigor in the execution of state responsibilities. Therefore, the appointments initiated by the President must transit through the parliamentary vetting procedure (Ibib). But it may prove exceedingly challenging for members of parliament, who represent the ruling party, to reject any appointments made by the President, thereby allowing the President to exert considerable influence over the Kenyan parliament.

In the year 2024, President William Ruto of Kenya ignited significant controversy in Kenya by asserting the existence of collusion between corrupt entities and members of the judiciary, aimed at obstructing government initiatives designed to enhance the welfare of Kenyan citizens, particularly in the realms of healthcare and housing. He suggested that, in light of public interest, he was prepared to overlook judicial rulings emanating from these purportedly compromised courts. However, these statements were met with substantial condemnation from numerous prominent figures, including members of the Opposition, the Chief Justice of Kenya, magistrates, the Judges Association, and the Law Society of Kenya, who contended that his comments were intended to disrupt the principle of separation of powers and undermine judicial independence, intimidate judges, and erode public confidence in the judiciary (Mak'Ouya, 2024). In response, critics admonished the president to adhere to the constitutional provisions concerning the separation of powers and judicial independence. The rule of law mandates that a nation should operate under its Constitution, statutory laws, policies, and established procedures, rather than be

governed by the arbitrary decisions or inclinations of government officials. Based on this, Ibib (2024) concluded that, despite Kenya's commendable reputation for possessing one of the most robust constitutions in the region, the principle of separation of powers remains largely theoretical, with minimal tangible progress made towards ensuring that Kenya fulfils the aspirations envisioned by the framers of the constitution for its citizens. This observation clearly underscores how the legal framework in Kenya is also biased towards augmenting the authority of the executive branch of government.

2.9 Research Lacuna

While scholars, including Bofo-Arthur (2008); Cheeseman (2015); Gyimah-Boadi (2015); Hess & Aidoo (2019); Gyimah-Boadi et al. (2021); Arriola et al. (2022); Nyadera et al. (2023); Obiagu (2021); Mohammed (2023) and Yeboah-Assiamah et al. (2025) have recognized the pervasive presence of democratic deficit within the African continent, particularly in the context of Ghana and Kenya, an intriguing observation emerges that the literature seems to display insufficient discussion about the underlying of the evidence mismatch between the demand for democracy and the supply of it. To that, this study contributes to the existing literature by revealing why democratic recession persists, with a focus on state actors.

2.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a comprehensive synthesis of the literature related to democratic governance and recession, with a focus on Africa. It explored the concepts of democratic recession and global democratic decline, situating Ghana and Kenya within these broader trends. The chapter again critically examined the trajectories of democratic governance in Ghana and Kenya, highlighting patterns of democratic backsliding. It further analyzed the role of state power in

facilitating democratic recession, supported by an in-depth review of the legal frameworks governing the executive branches in both countries. Additionally, the chapter scrutinized strategies aimed at countering democratic recession, addressing both institutional and socio-political dimensions. The review has helped in identifying the research lacuna in the study area. This literature review sets the foundation for understanding the complex dynamics of democracy and governance in Ghana and Kenya.



CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.0 Introduction

This chapter embarks upon a comprehensive conceptualization of the various theoretical arguments that fall under the umbrella of democratic backsliding theory, and also provides an in-depth explanation of the intricacies associated with the democratic backsliding theory (DBT). Furthermore, the chapter articulates the fundamental premise that constitutes the core assumption underpinning DBT, and in addition, it critically examines the multifaceted strengths as well as the inherent weaknesses that are intrinsic to the democratic backsliding theory itself.

3.1 Conceptualizing theories under democratic recession

Numerous theoretical frameworks elucidate the phenomenon of democratic regression, encompassing aspects such as the augmentation of political leadership/executive aggrandizement, political economy, political culture/electoral manipulations, political institution/targeting state referees/changing the rules of the game, social structure and political coalition, and international factors (Bermeo, 2016; Levitsky & Ziblatt 2018; Lust and Waldner, 2015; 2018). Within this array of schools of thought, four predominant paradigms significantly contribute to the discourse on democratic recession.

3.1.1 The Institutional school of thought

In the field of Political Science, institutions are seen as formal or informal procedures, routines, norms, and conventions in the organizational structure of the polity or the political economy (Hall & Taylor, 1996; Rauhut, 2020; Fleetwood, 2021). Institutional theorists argue that well-

established, independent, and rule-based institutions are foundational to democratic stability, as they constrain potential abuses of power, foster accountability, and promote inclusive participation, however, democratic recession occurs as a result of these same institutions, as they lose the capacity to safeguard democratic norms and prevent power consolidation by authoritarian leaders (Bermeo, 2016; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; North, 1990; Huntington, 1991; Haggard & Kaufman, 2016; Meyerrose, 2021; Druckman, 2024; Yeboah-Assiamah et al., 2025).

3.1.2 Political Culture and Social school of thought

Political Culture and Social Theories/electoral manipulation argue that shifts in electoral attitudes to subvert opponents (thus manipulating elections), loss of civic culture, and a weakened social fabric diminish democracy's resilience, leaving it open to democratic recession. As public support for democratic norms erodes through the weakened social fabric, authoritarian practices gain social acceptance, enabling leaders to undermine democratic systems with less resistance (Almond & Verba, 2015; Bermeo, 2016; Ibid, 2016; Norris & Inglehart, 2019; Klačnja & Pop-Eleches, 2022; Aguiar Aguilar, 2023; Laebens & Lührmann, 2023; Bennett & Kneuer, 2024; Omojowo et al., 2024).

3.1.3 Leadership /Executive aggrandizement school of thought

Academic scholars affiliated with this particular school of thought assert that democratic recession materializes through specific behaviors exhibited by state actors aimed at augmenting or perpetually seizing and preserving power, thereby diminishing the significance of democratic principles. This theoretical perspective emphasizes the mechanisms through which democratically elected officials progressively centralize power by subverting democratic institutions and eroding the checks on their authority. The primary emphasis is placed on the methods by which leaders

may effectively “aggrandize” their power; therefore, a multitude of strategies is being utilised (Arriola & Rakner, 2023; Bermeo, 2016; Durotoye, 2016; Fomunyoh, 2020; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; Mbaku, 2018; Riaz, 2020).

3.2 Democratic backsliding theory (DBT)

While no theoretical construct may claim perfection, this study capitalizes on the premise of democratic backsliding theory (DBT) after examining its merits. According to democratic backsliding theorists, democracy declines through the actions of state actors (leaders) that manipulate the existing structures that are supposed to strengthen democracy (Lust & Waldner, 2015; Bermeo, 2016; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; Lust & Waldner, 2018).

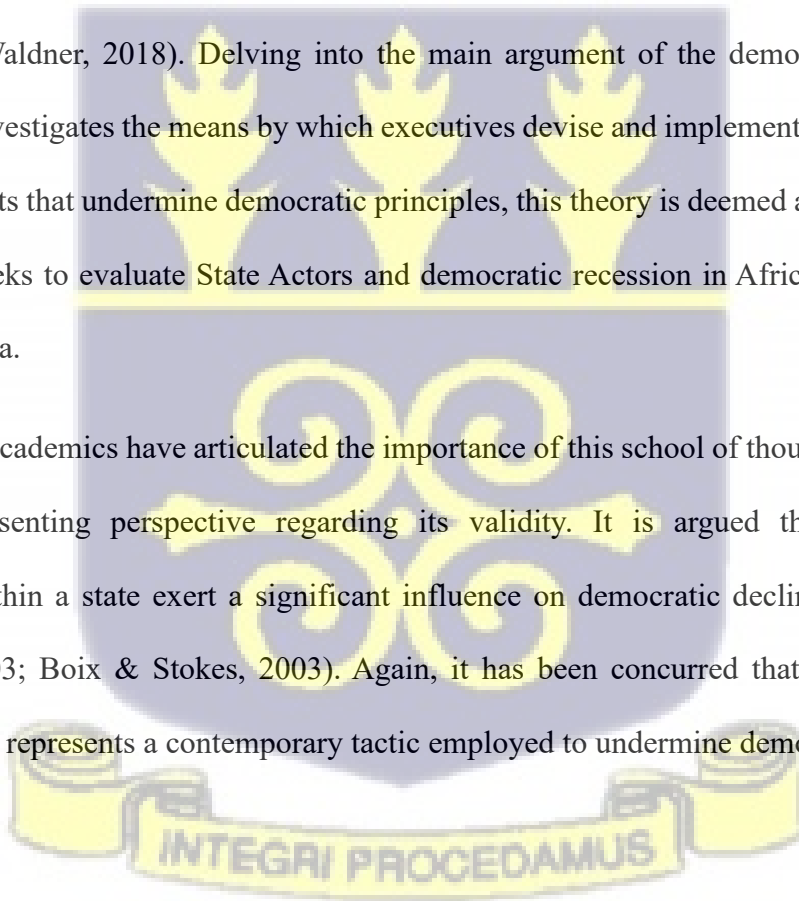
3.3 Assumptions of DBT

This theory’s central claim is that electoral manipulation and executive aggrandizement act as triggers for democratic recession (Bermeo, 2016). According to these thinkers, leaders constantly influence independent state institutions, attack opponents and critics, and later alter the laws that uphold democracy to suit their interests (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). Moreover, this theoretical perspective posits that leaders often pursue strategies that enable them to extend their authority over other institutions of the state (Bermeo, 2016; Lust & Waldner, 2015). Sequentially, states start on a good note as democracies, but weaken independent institutions, frustrate the opposition and critics, amend the rules and electoral process are also manipulated for executive aggrandizement (See Figure 9). The theory also argues that leaders hide behind legal processes to destroy or deteriorate democracy (Lust & Waldner, 2018; Riaz, 2022).

3.4 Strengths and weaknesses of DBT

The considerable significance associated with this DBT lies in its profound emphasis on illustrating the mechanisms through which contemporary democracies experience a gradual deterioration, particularly in contexts where the presence of firearms is notably absent; this process unfolds in a manner that is often insidious and, at times, remains imperceptible to the casual observer (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). Furthermore, it is crucial to recognize that this phenomenon of democratic recession does not occur in isolation or without broader contextual influences; rather, it is characterized as a “state-led” process that is meticulously orchestrated and strategically implemented by political leaders who are fully aware of the implications of their actions (Bermeo, 2016; Lust & Waldner, 2018). Delving into the main argument of the democratic backsliding theory, which investigates the means by which executives devise and implement strategies to fulfil their own interests that undermine democratic principles, this theory is deemed appropriate for my thesis, which seeks to evaluate State Actors and democratic recession in Africa with a focus on Ghana and Kenya.

Although these academics have articulated the importance of this school of thought, there remains a persistent dissenting perspective regarding its validity. It is argued that the economic determinants within a state exert a significant influence on democratic decline currently (Lee, 2024; Boix, 2003; Boix & Stokes, 2003). Again, it has been concurred that the concept of a promissory coup represents a contemporary tactic employed to undermine democratic institutions (Bermeo, 2016).



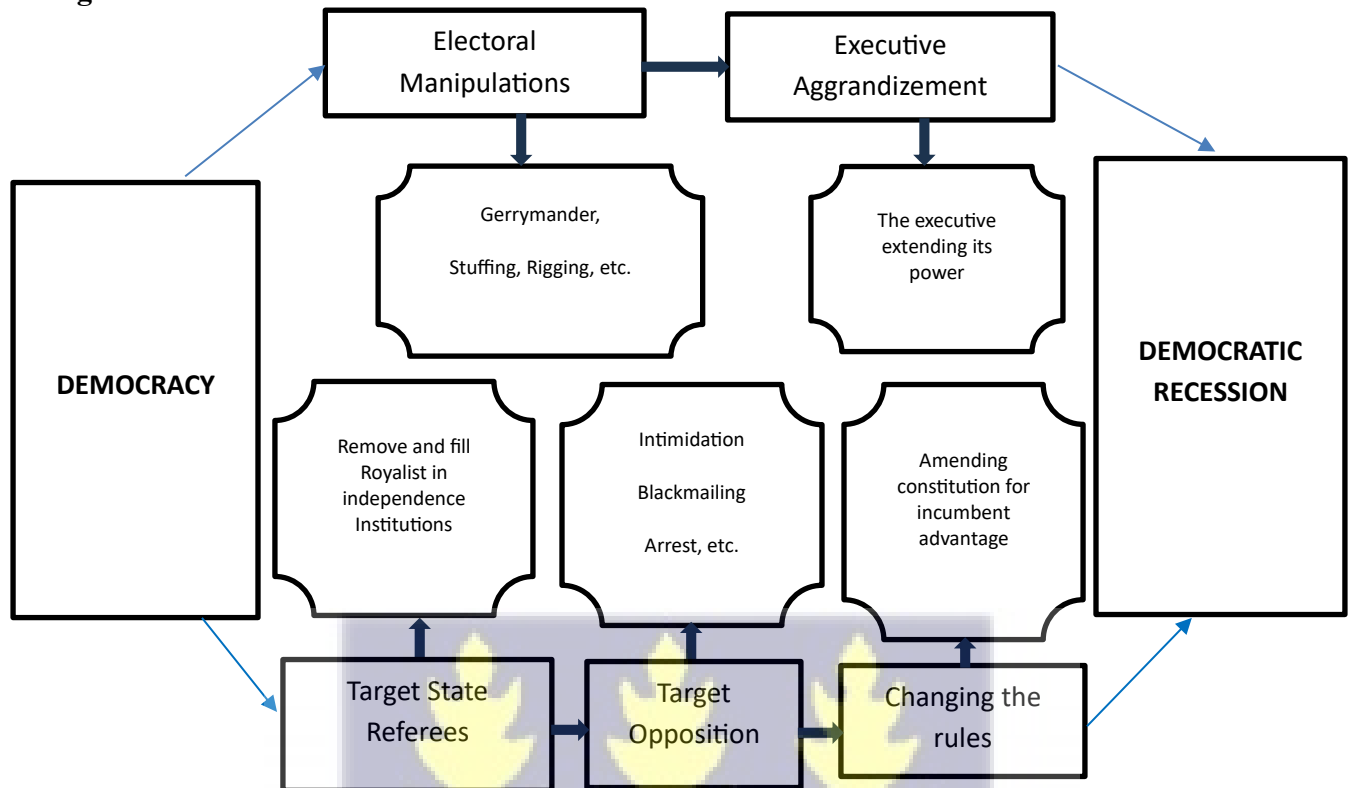
3.5 Relevance and application of DBT in the study

The adoption of the Democratic Backsliding Theory is highly relevant for this study as it provides a robust framework for analyzing how state actors contribute to democratic recession. The theory emphasizes that democratic decline is not always abrupt or violent but often emerges through the deliberate actions of political leaders who manipulate and weaken democratic institutions. This focus aligns directly with the study's objective of examining the role of state actors in the erosion of democracy in Africa, with particular reference to Ghana and Kenya.

By applying this theoretical lens, the study captured the subtle and gradual processes through which leaders consolidate executive power, alter the rules of the game, and undermine independent institutions. In contexts such as Ghana and Kenya, where elections are regularly conducted and democratic structures exist, DBT allowed for an exploration of how these institutions are nevertheless compromised through executive aggrandizement, electoral manipulation, and the weakening of oversight mechanisms. This made the theory suitable for unpacking the complex dynamics of democratic decline that occur under the guise of legality and constitutionalism.

Lastly, the application of DBT enhanced the study's explanatory power by highlighting the centrality of state-led strategies in shaping political outcomes. It allowed the research to trace patterns such as the manipulation of electoral bodies, the politicization of judicial systems, and the silencing of opposition voices, thereby linking theoretical assumptions to practical realities on the ground. In doing so, the theory not only shaped the analytical framework of the study but also offered a deeper understanding of how democratic institutions in Africa are transformed into instruments of executive control.

Figure 9 Process/indicators of democratic recession



Source: Author's compilation from Bermeo (2016) and Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018)

3.6 Research questions

1. How do the patterns of democratic recession happen in both Ghana and Kenya?
2. How does the interaction between the Executive and other state institutions exacerbate democratic recession in Ghana and Kenya?
3. Why should the Executive, rather than electoral management bodies, be blamed for democratic recession through electoral manipulation?
4. How do executives in Ghana and Kenya use 'democratic institutions' to weaken democracy itself?

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology employed in this thesis. It outlines the research paradigm and design that guided the study. It further explores the sources of data, the case study approach, and the research population identified as suitable for addressing the research questions. In addition, the chapter discusses the sampling technique, data collection instruments, analytical tools, and the ethical considerations that shaped the overall research process.

4.1 Paradigm of Research

A research paradigm constitutes a philosophical framework or worldview that delineates how scholars perceive reality (ontology), discern what can be known (epistemology), determine methodologies for acquiring that knowledge (methodology), and the ethical principles influencing research (axiology) (Joubish et al., 2011; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The four principal components of research paradigms that shape scholars are ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology, which influence how scholars perceive reality, acquire knowledge, approach investigation, and address ethics and values in research (Tanlaka & Aryal, 2025; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

The study adopted a pragmatic research paradigm. This paradigm was chosen because, as a philosophical framework for research, pragmatism posits that knowledge constitutes an objective reality present in the world; however, this reality can be comprehended solely through human experiential engagement (Dube et al., 2024). This provides accurate knowledge about the research problem (democratic recession) because respondents were selected based on their experience with democracy. Also, arising from a synthesis of positivist and constructivist paradigms, pragmatism

facilitates methodological versatility by integrating both quantitative and qualitative methodologies (Tanko, 2022). Combining qualitative and quantitative data facilitated the study in acquiring well-detailed and in-depth data that are intertwined with each other and provided reliable knowledge.

4.1.1 Pragmatism

Pragmatism constitutes a philosophical framework that perceives thought as an instrument for resolving practical dilemmas and defines truth as that which proves effective in tangible contexts. It assesses ideas and convictions based on their efficacy in achieving intended results, emphasizing action and efficiency in inquiries aimed at specific goals (Rescher, 2016). Pragmatism is distinguished as a progressive philosophy that directs efforts to confront persistent societal challenges. This perspective resides within the spectrum of positivism and interpretivism, employing pragmatic approaches to alleviate adverse conditions affecting human existence.

As a methodological paradigm, pragmatism regards knowledge as an objective entity that is present in the world, yet such an entity can only be comprehended through human experiences (Dube et al., 2024). The philosophical underpinnings of pragmatism posit that human experience is pivotal in shaping actions that are essential for systematically addressing challenges. Pragmatism provides a solid philosophical basis for research in social sciences, enabling comprehensive analyses and more insightful interpretations of human conduct and societal frameworks (Tanko, 2022).

4.2 Research Design

A mixed-methods approach was used for this research to examine the relationship between State Actors and democratic recession in Africa, with a specific focus on Ghana and Kenya. Combining

quantitative data from relevant research organizations with qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews with diverse respondents who have knowledge about democracy, as well as interviews available on YouTube/news outlets, provided thoughtful information for the study. From the findings of (W John, 2013; Silverman, 2005), researchers should not focus on only qualitative or focus on only quantitative method when conducting research; rather, researchers must combine the best aspects of both qualitative and quantitative. This suggestion is relevant because the integration of quantitative data and qualitative insights helped triangulate findings for greater validity and depth of analysis (Creswell & Clark, 2017). It is also important to know that mixing qualitative and quantitative methods addresses the limitations inherent in each approach, thereby strengthening research findings and helping uncover complex social issues that one method alone (thus only quantitative or qualitative) cannot fully capture (O’Cathain et al., 2008, 2010). Therefore, the use of mixed methods in this study helped in doing away with the inadequacies inherent in using only one methodology (Migiro & Magangi, 2011). Again, the mixed approach offered the opportunity and space for accessing more of the required information than a single approach could have offered (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

4.3 Sources of Research Data

Both primary and secondary data sources were utilized to gather data to answer the research questions. With regards to primary sources, interviews were conducted on the field and online with experts from the Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG), Center for Democratic Development (CDD), Afrobarometer, University of Ghana, Kent State University, Albert-Ludwig Universität Freiburg and University of Bergen who are familiar with democratic matters.

Additionally, secondary sources were employed to attain data for Ghana and Kenya, through journals, the World Value Survey (WVS), research institutions such as Economist Intelligence

Unit, Freedom in the World, Center for Democratic Development (CDD), Afrobarometer, Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG), news outlets, and YouTube. These institutions were chosen on the grounds that they provide frequent cross-national analysis reports of democracy about Ghana, Kenya, and the world at large.

By using primary data, it offered original and specific information directly collected and addressed the precise research questions, which ensured relevance and control over the research variables (Creswell, 2013). Secondary data provided access to large, pre-existing datasets that saved time, resources, and offered cross-time and cross-national perspectives that are unattainable through primary collection alone (Johnston, 2014). However, most importantly, combining primary and secondary data aided in data triangulation for this thesis, enhanced the research validity and confirmed results through multiple data sources (Creswell & Clark, 2017). This Triangulation enabled this research by cross-verifying findings, identifying contradictions, and understanding complex phenomena of the cases under study (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). This approach ultimately strengthens the credibility and reliability of research outcomes (Watkins, 2022).

4.4 Case Study Design

The study adopted a case study design because case selection is a pivotal and complex aspect of research design, especially in a situation where the researcher employs qualitative case study research, where the goal is often an in-depth understanding rather than statistical generalization (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). In case selection, the process involves purposeful or strategic selection of cases that can best expound the research objectives. Therefore, in case study design, researchers fall within different case types, such as prototypical/typical case, deviant case, exemplary case, representative case, critical case, etc. To that extent, selection depends on the research purpose of the study (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Stake, 1995). Despite this, strategies vary from single-case to multiple-

case designs (Yin, 2018), because in multiple case selection, a researcher must consider cases that are almost similar and comparable. Therefore, I adopted two cases to foster comparison.

Comparative research enhances understanding by providing contextual richness and depth, as cases are examined within their unique social, political, or cultural settings. Through this, researchers can identify similarities and differences, uncovering patterns that might remain hidden in single-case studies (Goodrick, 2020). Systematic comparison further enables causal inference by contrasting outcomes across cases, isolating factors that shape those outcomes (Plümper et al., 2019). Employing more than one case improves validity and reliability, as findings are cross-validated and potential biases from relying on one case are minimized (Yin, 2018). Thus, comparative studies strengthen both the depth and credibility of research insights.

The case selection was guided by representative comparative analysis as well as Most Different System Design (MDSD). Ghana and Kenya have represented stable democracies in Africa for some time now; however, they have also shown signs of democratic recession since 2016 and 2017, respectively (see figures 8 and 9). Therefore, selecting Ghana and Kenya was a perfect and ideal case for the study. Selecting cases that are as different as possible with similar outcomes helps isolate the variables responsible for that outcome, making MDSD a powerful tool for finding solutions to research questions (Anckar, 2008; Przeworski, 1970).

Ghana operates a unicameral system with a four-year term limit for the presidential term (thus four years per term and with a maximum of two terms). Kenya, on the other hand, has a bicameral structure with similar term limits; however, with five years per term. In Ghana, the President possesses significant authority regarding appointments. The President appoints the Chief Justice and the Electoral Commissioner, as delineated in Article 144 and Article 43, respectively. While

the President does so in consultation with the Council of State, the executive is not mandated to adhere to their counsel (Agbemava, 2018; The Constitution of Ghana, 1992). Conversely, in Kenya, the selection of the Chief Justice is conducted based on recommendations from the Judicial Service Commission (JSC) as per Article 166 of the Kenyan Constitution. The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), established under the IEBC Act of 2011, also holds the responsibility of recommending the Electoral Commissioner (Gichuki, 2016; The Constitution of Kenya, 2010). Ghana operates under a two-party dominant system (NPP and NDC) characterized by a peaceful transfer of power since 1992. In contrast, Kenya is characterized by a multi-party and ethnically fragmented political system. Thus, Kenya's political jurisprudence is fraught with ethnic considerations, a phenomenon not observable in Ghana. Geographically, Ghana is situated in West Africa, whereas Kenya is located in East Africa (See table 2).

Looking at this diverse system of governing, these countries have exhibited consistent democratic recession; therefore, selecting Ghana and Kenya was essential to find out the main variable why these countries are experiencing democratic recession, despite with different systems. These factors made it relevant to select Ghana and Kenya.

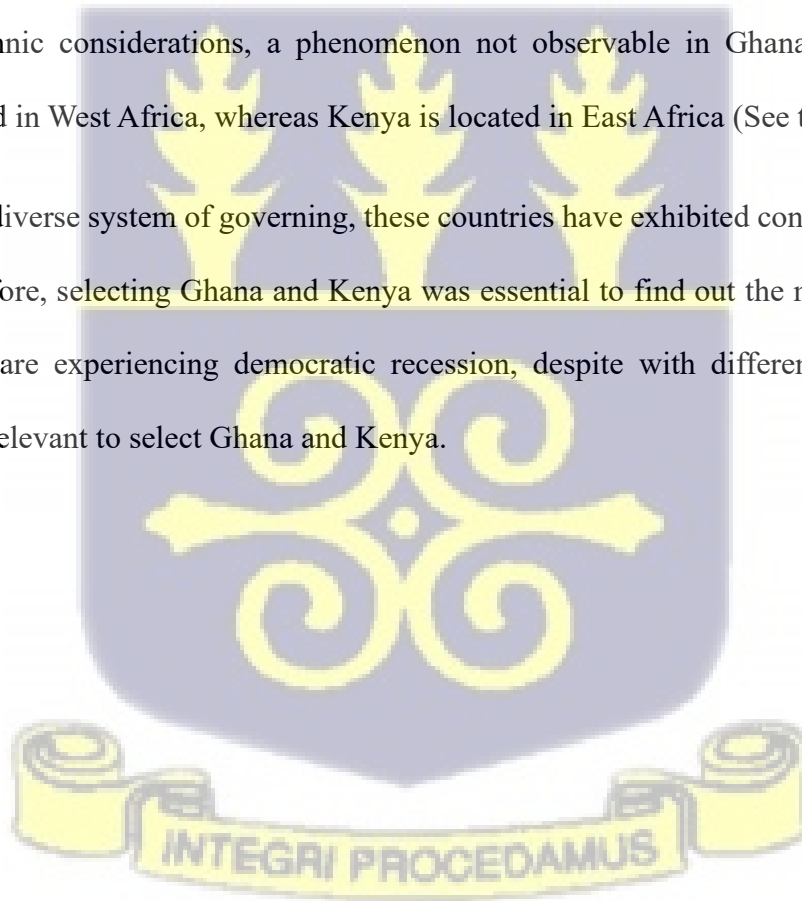


Table 2 MDSD of Ghana and Kenya

VARIABLES	GHANA	KENYA
Geographical	West Africa	East Africa
Political structure	Unicameral	Bicameral
Legal framework	The constitution gives much power to the President to directly appoint the EC and the CJ.	The President does not directly appoint the EC and the CJ
Party system	Two-party systems (Between NDC and NPP), since in this Fourth Republic	Multi-party system
Ethnic and political dynamics	Ethnicity does not play much of a role in the political jurisprudence	Ethnicity plays a role in the Kenyan political jurisprudence

Source: Author's compilation

4.4.1 Democratic Overview of Ghana

Ghana embraced democratic governance in the early 1990s, coinciding with the global emergence of the third wave of democratization (Yayoh, 2006). Since that pivotal moment, the nation has experienced a considerable degree of political stability and successfully navigated the two turnover tests during the 2000s. This transition, however, was not devoid of obstacles, including skepticism from pro-democracy factions regarding the persistent hegemony of the then-ruling Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) and apprehensions regarding authentic inclusivity within the transition process. Nonetheless, the elections of 1992 constituted a substantial shift from authoritarian military governance to constitutional democracy (Yayoh, 2006; Gyampo et al., 2017; Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 1992).

Despite this remarkable democratic achievement, it is relevant to highlight that Ghana has been grappling with a significant and concerning democratic recession that has persisted for an extensive duration of nine years. By the year 2006, it was observed that Ghana had successfully transitioned from a state characterized by electoral autocracy in 1992 to one that embodies the principles of liberal democracy (V-DEM, 2025). In the same year, Ghana attained an impressive score of 5.35, which subsequently experienced a commendable increase to a score of 6.86 in the year 2015; however, it is worth noting that this score has unfortunately experienced a decline, resulting in a current standing of 6.24 (See Figure 16).

4.4.2 Democratic Overview of Kenya

Kenya, like Ghana and many other African countries, accepted democracy in its governance system in the early 1990s (Burgess et al., 2015). The country faced political turmoil after the post-2007 electoral violence, which had a great impact on Kenya's democracy. This violence was said to have been influenced by the blend of politics and ethnic reasons. The post-electoral violence, alleged rigging of election results favored incumbent Mwai Kibaki, who belonged to the Kikuyu ethnic group, spurring outrage and political protest by the opposition led by Raila Odinga; therefore, the alleged electoral irregularities and lack of trust in the Electoral Commission escalated tensions (Ochieng, 2019). Even though the country has gone through electoral violence, the country has been stable after Kenya adopted a new constitution in 2010 (Murray, 2022).

Even though Kenya is currently witnessing a phase of democratic stability subsequent to the implementation of a new constitution, it is presently undergoing a democratic regression characterized by violations of human rights (Kannampilly, 2025; Reuters, 2025). The advancement of democracy in Kenya has been sluggish. Kenya was entrapped in electoral autocracy from 1990 until 2022; however, it transitioned into an autocratic grey zone in 2023, a state that has yet to

demonstrate any significant improvement (V-DEM, 2025). In 2006, Kenya shared a comparable regime classification with Ghana, thereby categorizing it as a hybrid regime with a score of 5.08. The peak score attained was 5.33 in 2015, which was subsequently maintained in 2016. Since that period, the score has experienced a decline to 5.05, a figure that has been sustained for five consecutive evaluations (See Figure 17).

4.4.3 Temporal scope of the Study

The study adopted the period between 1991 and 2025 as the major scope of research due to its critical significance in the democratic trajectories of Ghana and Kenya. This timeframe begins when both countries embarked on their broader democratic transitions—Kenya with the repeal of Section 2A in December 1991 that legalized opposition parties after 26 years of de facto one-party rule (wa Gĩthĩnji & Holmquist, 2012), and Ghana with the adoption of the landmark 1992 Constitution that formally initiated its Fourth Republic and multiparty democracy (Addadzi et al., 2022). These years provide a comprehensive lens to examine the evolution and consolidation of democracy amidst challenges and successes. This period allows for a robust analysis of political, institutional, and societal changes over more than three decades in both nations. For Ghana, the period marks the end of decades of military rule and the establishment of strong democratic institutions characterized by regular, peaceful elections and alternating power between parties, reflecting democratic consolidation (Owusu, 1996).

Furthermore, the selected timeframe of 1991 to 2025 offers a solid research trajectory to assess how Ghana and Kenya have navigated through their democracy, institutional reforms, and citizen engagement in their democratic experiments. It encompasses significant milestones such as multiple peaceful transfers of power in Ghana and Kenya's institutional reforms to strengthen

electoral processes (Gyimah-Boadi, 2001; wa Gĩthĩnji & Holmquist, 2012; Botchway, 2018). This period also permits analysis of the ongoing democratic recession, thus providing an understanding of both countries' democratic backsliding within the broader African context. This scope allowed the study to explore how democratic norms, institutions, and practices have been established, challenged, and endured over time, making it a meaningful scope for comprehensive comparative research for Ghana and Kenya.

4.5 Research Population

The population for this thesis consisted of individuals with a high level of expertise and knowledge about democracy/democratic recession, which enabled in acquisition of insightful and well-informed perspectives on the research topic. These individuals included Researchers/Scholars of Democracy, Graduate Students of democracy, think tanks (Afrobarometer, Center for Democratic Development-Ghana [CDD], and Institute for Democratic Governance [IDEG]). This population is appropriate for the study because the selected population has direct knowledge and experience with democracy and democratic recession, ensuring their input is highly relevant and focused on the research objectives. Again, representing academic researchers, graduate students, and policy think tanks, this group has a specialized understanding of democratic processes and trends, which improved the accuracy and sophistication of interpretations. These individuals are also capable of engaging with complex theoretical and practical concepts related to democracy, enabling nuanced responses that advance knowledge in the field. Lastly, using recognized institutions like Afrobarometer, CDD, and IDEG provided authority and trustworthiness to data, as these organizations are reputable sources on democracy in Africa.

4.6 Sampling techniques

The research deployed a purposive and snowball sampling technique. Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental or selective sampling, is a non-probability sampling technique in which researchers intentionally select participants who possess specific characteristics or experience relevant to the study's objectives. Unlike probability sampling, purposive sampling does not involve random selection; instead, it focuses on selecting individuals who have knowledge or information about a particular issue (Palinkas et al., 2015) to provide the most meaningful data for answering the research questions.

Purposive sampling begins with targeting information-rich cases (Palinkas et al., 2015), selecting participants with the required characteristics or knowledge directly relevant to the research question to generate meaningful insights. It then enhances efficiency by focusing on a subset of the population most likely to provide valuable data, saving time and resources—especially in studies with limited budgets, time, or small populations (Stratton, 2024), such as this study. Also, purposive sampling offers flexibility, as researchers can refine sampling criteria during the study to capture emerging themes or include newly identified groups, ensuring the research remains responsive and comprehensive (Saunders et al., 2023; Memon et al., 2024). On this background, experts from the Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG), Center for Democratic Development (CDD), Afrobarometer, University of Ghana, Kent State University, Albert-Ludwig Universität Freiburg, and a post-PhD fellow of Comparative Politics at the University of Bergen, who are familiar with democratic matters were considered with the purpose of attaining in-depth data from all respondents.

On the other hand, a snowball sample is a non-probability sampling technique in which existing interviewees/participants recommend new participants to join the sample (Nikolopoulou, 2022).

This type of sampling provides access to hard-to-reach populations, such as marginalized or far-to-reach respondents, through referrals from initial participants (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). Reaching respondents in Kenya was very difficult; for that reason, a snowballing approach was applied after getting a first Respondent, who facilitated the process of reaching out to other respondents. The referral process then helps build trust and rapport, as participants are more willing to engage and share openly when introduced by someone they know (Noy, 2008). The process was very flexible because each recommender was available for an interview at a faster pace. Besides that, it enabled time and cost-effective and rapid selection of respondents, which allowed the research to expand the sample size quickly without requiring broad or direct access to the entire population at the outset (Sadler et al., 2010). The snowball sampling facilitated the interview process by reaching out to respondents from Kenya, and conducted interviews electronically within a shorter period.

4.6.1 Sample size

To obtain in-depth and well-representative data, the selection procedure included two researchers affiliated with CDD, two from IDEG, two from Afrobarometer, and one researcher who is concurrently a PhD candidate specializing in Comparative Politics at Albert-Ludwig University of Freiburg. Additionally, one graduate student in Comparative Politics at the University of Ghana and another graduate student in Comparative Politics from Kent State University were included. In the context of Kenya, a researcher, currently a post-PhD fellow in Comparative Politics at the University of Bergen and recognized for contributions to the literature on Kenyan democracy, was selected. Furthermore, a Kenyan researcher from the University of Cape Coast (UCC) was also taken into consideration. Additionally, five bureaucratic officials operating at the county level were included in the selection. These bureaucrats were deemed essential due to their extensive

experience in governmental operations over time, rendering them well-versed in the actions and inactions of the executive across various administrations and temporal contexts. Lastly, a journalist was incorporated into the selection process to ensure the acquisition of more current insights regarding human rights and the manner in which state actors have engaged with democratic processes in Kenya.

This accounted for a total of seventeen (17) respondents interviewed for data collection and analyzed. The study arrived at seventeen respondents based on the principle of data saturation, thus with interviews continuing until no new themes emerged, ensuring adequacy for addressing the research questions. Arriving at seventeen respondents was also shaped by time constraints, balancing practical manageability with the need to generate robust and meaningful qualitative insights for the study and also meet the deadline for submission.

It should be maintained that there is no consensus on the sample size needed for a qualitative approach (Creswell, 1998, p.64; Guest et al., 2006), however, Morse (1994) suggested at least six (6) interviews for qualitative research. Given the specialized nature of the population, the purposive sampling enabled access to respondents who provided a rich diversity of perspectives concerning the research questions, because each interview took between 45 to 60 minutes.

4.7 Data Collection Instrument

The main instrument of primary data collection was in-depth interviews. Interviews serve as a fundamental method of collecting raw data (primary data), facilitated in obtaining of valuable insights and viewpoints from individuals directly involved in the research context, thus enabling a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon studied. To that, the study adopted a semi-structured interview approach as an instrument. A semi-structured interview combines both elements of structured and unstructured interviews. *“It is a number of open-ended questions based*

on the topic areas that the researcher wants to cover, such that the questions posed define the topic under investigation and provide opportunities for both interviewer and interviewee to discuss some topics in more detail” (Hancock et al., 2001).

The rationale behind selecting semi-structured interviews lies in the fact that it enables researchers to delve into neglected aspects of data and offer support to the interviewee when facing challenges (Kakilla, 2021). Additionally, it was adopted in order to facilitate the opportunity for further inquiry and exploration into the topic in the course of the interview. Furthermore, it permitted participants by providing comprehensive and in-depth information (O’Keeffe et al, 2016). Lastly, this approach does not restrict both the interviewee and researchers as they can go beyond to ask follow-up questions to get essential data that the structured questions may not cover (Gill et al, 2008).

With the interview process, an introductory letter from the Department of Political Science was first submitted to all prospective participants to formally request their involvement. For those available in Ghana, face-to-face interviews were subsequently conducted in their offices, with all sessions audio-recorded based on their consent. Ghanaian graduate students studying comparative politics abroad were interviewed virtually via Zoom and Google Meet, and these sessions were also recorded. Respondents in Kenya were similarly engaged through electronic interviews using Zoom and Google Meet, with recordings duly kept. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes to get more in-depth data.

4.7.1 Data Transcribing

In terms of transcribing, I conducted manual transcription without using any software such as NVivo or ATLAS.ti. Manual transcription involved carefully listening to the audio recordings and

typing out the content yourself (McMullin, 2023). This method is widely recognized in qualitative research for its ability to capture nuanced details like tone, pauses, nonverbal cues, and language variations that automated tools may miss (Lapadat, 2000). Although more time-consuming, manual transcription allows for precise control over the transcription process, ensuring accuracy and depth—especially valuable for sensitive, complex, or context-rich data (Nascimento & Steinbruch, 2019). Because saturation was reached before arriving at 17 respondents, embarking on manual transcribing was appropriate, as did not consume much time. This approach also enhances engagement with the data, contributing to a deeper understanding of the interview content during analysis.

4.8 Analysis tool used

In the context of this scholarly thesis, two primary analytical tools were meticulously utilized in order to facilitate a comprehensive examination of the research problem. To that extent, both thematic analysis, which involves the identification and interpretation of patterns within qualitative data, and content analysis, which systematically categorizes and quantifies textual information, were employed to enrich the research findings.

4.8.1 Thematic Analysis

The research adopted thematic analysis for the purpose of rectifying the various primary data gathered through interviews. Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method used to systematically identify, analyses, and interpret patterns or themes within qualitative data. It helps researchers make sense of complex, unstructured data by discerning recurring ideas or meanings that are relevant to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Thematic analysis is valued for its flexibility, as it is not bound to a single theoretical framework or epistemology, making it adaptable to diverse research questions and qualitative data (Hecker & Kalpokas, 2025). Moreover, its accessibility further strengthens its appeal, being straightforward to learn and apply for both novice and experienced researchers (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Through inductive and deductive approaches, it generates data-driven insights by uncovering patterns and deeper meanings within the data (Caulfield, 2023). This method also enables rich descriptions of participant experiences and social contexts (Braun & Clarke, 2006), while its step-by-step analytic process ensures transparency, rigor, and trustworthiness of qualitative research (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The themes were not precoded; however, they emanated from the various responses acquired through the data collection, providing valuable and necessary themes and sub-themes. Using an inductive approach, researchers do not pre-code themes; instead, themes emerge directly from the data, free from the influence of preconceived notions or existing theoretical frameworks. This process is commonly known as open coding and is a central aspect of grounded theory methodology (Strauss, 2017). These values of thematic analysis made it relevant for the study.

4.8.2 Content Analysis

Again, the study utilized content analysis for the purpose of secondary sources. In terms of content analysis, it constitutes a systematic, objective, and quantifiable methodology employed for the examination of diverse modalities of communication, which may include textual, visual, or auditory components, through the meticulous categorization and analysis of identifiable patterns, prevailing themes, or inherent biases found within the amassed data (Kuckartz, 2019; Luo, 2023). This approach focuses on communicative content generated by or captured from the presenter. Utilizing content analysis, researchers are enabled to explore both the latent meanings (what can

be inferred from the information) and the manifest characteristics (the tangible attributes of the communicated information) of the knowledge. Furthermore, it serves as a methodological instrument for investigating information processes over time. For example, a researcher may wish to explore the metaphors utilized in presentations (Maier, 2017). Its significance is underscored by its cost-effectiveness, emphasis on secondary sources, thereby making it particularly well-suited for mixed-method approaches, and its utility in interpreting a wide array of data, encompassing both qualitative and quantitative dimensions.

4.9 Ethical Issues

Ethics play a vital role in the realm of research. Consequently, the research diligently pursues the consent and endorsement of all respondents who participated in the interviews. Participants were informed in advance that the interview was intended for scholarly objectives and, therefore, they would be audio-recorded; they provided their agreement prior to the commencement of the interviews. Also, they were made aware that their identity would be confidential or anonymous. Integrity, honesty, and fairness are prerequisites in research; therefore, this thesis considered fairness and transparency in selecting interviewees, and analyzing data was based on impartiality. Besides that, respect for intellectual property rights was considered as required by given due acknowledgement to all literature used.

4.10 Summary of this chapter

This chapter outlined the methodology that underpinned the study. Guided by a pragmatist paradigm, a mixed-methods design was adopted, combining quantitative data from sources such as Afrobarometer, EIU, CDD, IDEG, WVS, and Freedom House Report with qualitative insights

from semi-structured interviews. Ghana and Kenya were selected as case studies using Most Different Systems Design and representative comparative analysis. The research population included researchers, graduate students and bureaucrats were selected through purposive and snowball sampling until data saturation was reached. Semi-structured interviews served as the main data collection tool, with analysis conducted through thematic and content approaches. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and fairness, were strictly observed. The methodology ensured rigor, credibility, and nuanced insights into democratic recession.



CHAPTER FIVE

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter conducts a thorough analysis of the numerous data gathered from interviews with researchers, think tank experts, graduate students of Comparative Politics, bureaucrats, and a journalist, comprising informed and experienced individuals, on democratic concerns. The chapter also used secondary sources, including both qualitative and quantitative approaches from scholarly publications and institutional surveys. The data analysis is organized into four main sections, each with subsections that clarify and provide data related to the main research objectives and questions.

5.1 Establishing the patterns of democratic recession in the two states (Ghana and Kenya)

The first objective of this study was to establish specific patterns of variables that influence the democratic recession in Ghana and Kenya. The perspectives from respondents indicated an in-depth knowledge of the democratic recession currently happening in both countries. Five main variables with a cross-time analysis were used to determine the patterns of democratic recession in the two states (See Figure 10).

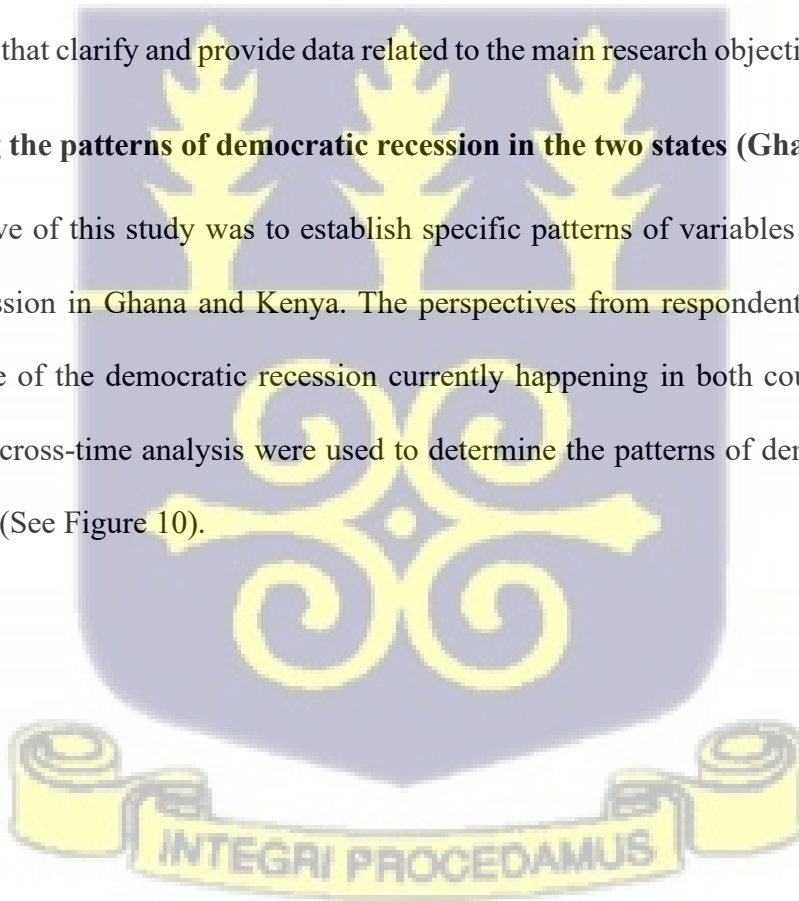
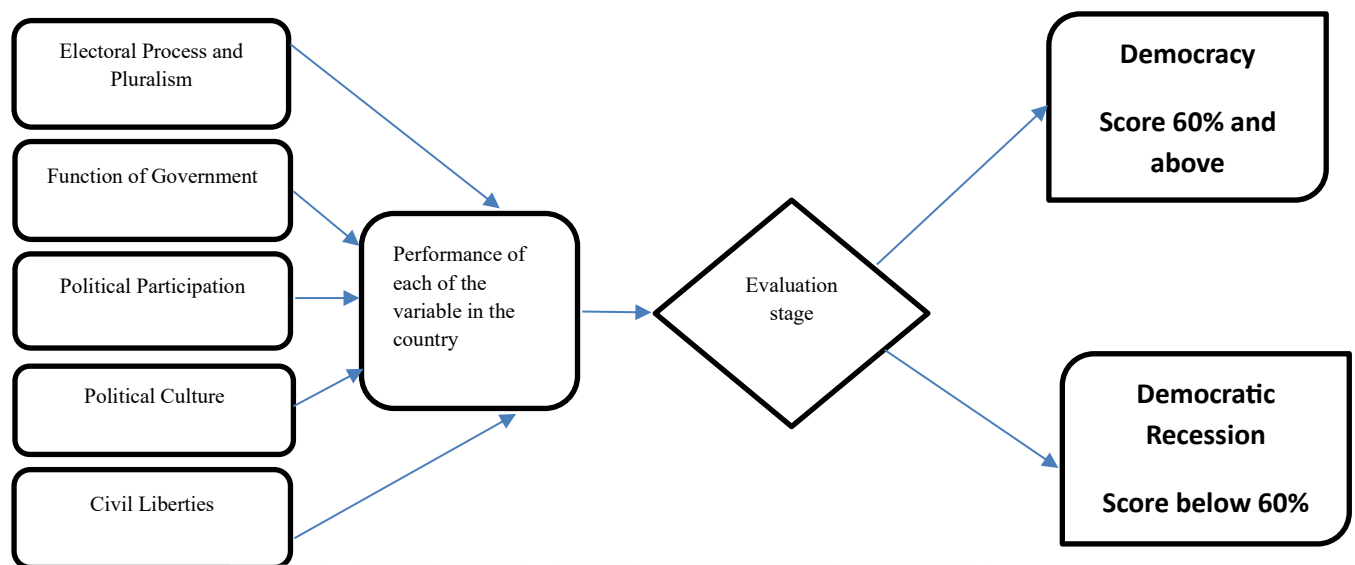


Figure 10 Author's framework



This section presents data tracing 17 years of scoring each variable, as indicated by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), spanning from 2006 to 2024. The apex score attainable each year is quantified as 10 out of a possible 10. Consequently, the aggregate maximum score for each variable within the 17-year timeframe is projected to total 170 points. The EIU classifies nations scoring between 8 and 10 as full democracies, indicative of a range of 80%-100%, while scores between 6 and 7.99 are categorized as flawed democracies (60%-79%), scores from 4 to 5.99 are designated as hybrid regimes (40%-59%), and those falling within the range of 0 to 3.99 are identified as authoritarian systems (0%-39%). The analysis utilized 170 as the full score, symbolizing 100% efficacy. A variable is deemed democratic when it registers a score between 136 and 170 (80%-100%) out of 170, and between 102 and 135 (60%-79%). In contrast, a variable is classified as experiencing recession if it achieves a score between 68 and 101 (40%-59%) out of 170, or falls within the range of 0 to 67 (0%-39%). These variables provide distinct patterns that exerted influence on the phenomenon of democratic recession in both Ghana and Kenya.

Table 3 Performances of Ghana's Democracy from 2006-2024

VARIABLES	2006 score	2008 score	2010 score	2011 score	2012 score	2013 score	2014 score	2015 score	2016 score	2017 score	2018 score	2019 score	2020 score	2021 score	2022 score	2023 score	2024 score	TOTAL
ELECTORAL PROCESS AND PLURALISM	7.42	7.42	8.33	8.33	8.33	8.33	8.33	8.33	8.33	8.33	8.33	8.33	8.33	8.33	8.33	8.33	8.33	139.79
FUNCTION OF GOVERNMENT	4.64	4.64	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.36	5.36	5.71	5.71	5.71	5.71	5.71	5.36	5.36	5.00	5.00	4.64	88.91
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION	4.44	4.44	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.56	5.56	6.67	6.67	6.67	6.67	6.67	6.67	6.67	6.67	6.67	6.11	100.58
POLITICAL CULTURE	4.38	4.38	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.63	5.63	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	5.63	6.25	96.90
CIVIL LIBERTIES	5.88	5.88	6.76	6.76	6.76	6.76	6.76	7.35	7.35	6.47	6.18	6.18	5.88	5.88	5.88	5.88	5.88	108.49

Source: Author's compilation from EIU (2006-2024)

Table 3 above revealed that with respect to the electoral process and pluralism, Ghana has achieved a score of 139, which corresponds to slightly over 80%, while a score of 108.49 signifies more than 60% concerning civil liberties. Furthermore, regarding political participation, the score stands at 100.58, which represents 59%, alongside a political culture score of 96.90, indicating 57%. In relation to the functionality of government, Ghana attained a score of 88.91, equating to 52%. The data explicitly demonstrates that the functionality of government, political culture, and political participation are the principal elements contributing to the democratic recession in Ghana.

Table 4 Performances of Kenya's Democracy from 2006-2024

VARIABLES	2006	2008	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	TOTAL
	score	score	score	score	score	score	score	score	score	score	score	score	score	score	score	score	score	
ELECTORAL PROCESS AND PLURALISM	4.33	3.50	3.92	3.92	3.92	4.33	4.33	4.33	4.33	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	64.91
FUNCTION OF GOVERNMENT	4.29	4.29	4.29	4.29	4.29	4.29	4.29	5.00	5.00	5.36	5.36	5.71	5.36	5.36	5.36	5.36	5.36	83.26
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION	5.56	5.56	4.44	4.44	4.44	6.11	6.11	6.67	6.67	6.67	6.67	6.67	6.67	6.67	6.67	6.67	6.67	103.36
POLITICAL CULTURE	6.25	5.63	5.63	5.63	5.63	5.63	5.63	5.63	5.63	5.63	5.63	5.63	5.63	5.63	5.63	5.63	5.63	96.33
CIVIL LIBERTIES	5.00	5.00	5.29	5.29	5.29	5.29	5.29	5.00	5.00	4.41	4.41	4.41	4.12	4.12	4.12	4.12	4.12	81.78

Source: Author's compilation from EIU (2006-2024)

In the context of Kenya, the dimension of political participation has attained the highest quantifiable score of 103.36, signifying a percentage of 60.8%, followed by the political culture, which holds a score of 96.33, thus constituting 57%. In relation to the functionality of government, Kenya received a score of 83.26, which corresponds to 49%, and a score of 81.78 was assigned for civil liberties, equating to 48%. The dimension with the lowest evaluation is the electoral process and pluralism, which received a score of 64.91, thereby indicating 48%. Therefore, an analysis of the data reveals that the electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, the functionality of government, and political culture are the primary variables that significantly influence and contribute to the phenomenon of democratic recession in Kenya (See table 4).

5.1.1 The irony of the 1992 constitution of Ghana and democratic recession

The 1992 constitution of Ghana has served the country well in this Fourth Republic. If nothing at all, the country's constitution has provided stability for more than three decades. However, the current constitution is serving as a “weapon” destroying Ghana's democracy. The constitution spells out how the government (executive) must function, and these functions serve as a tool facilitating democratic recession. The field data revealed that the 1992 constitution of Ghana gives too much power to the executive (The President) to function by appointing representatives to almost every sector in Ghana, which has implications for democracy performance. In an interview with a Senior researcher at CDD, he stated:

“The centralization of power by the 1992 constitution of Ghana is the main point that gives too much power to the executive arm of government. The constitution has made it very legal for the executive to appoint the heads of two main key institutions that promote democracy, the CJ and the EC. And let note that the President will not appoint his enemy, rather someone he knows will listen to him. The president of Ghana made two appointments to the EC, just two months before the general election. This, in essence, has implications for Ghana's democracy” (Field, 2025).

By interviewing a graduate student, who is currently studying PhD in Comparative Politics collaborated with the views of the first respondent. According to him:

“The President of Ghana interacts with almost all state institutions because he has the appointment power to appoint almost all public holders, this provides excess power to the president to influence such public holders to always act in their interest” (Field, 2025).

He added;

“The president's appointment power is often exercised to select individuals from their own party, inadvertently discourage broader political participation and negatively affect the quality of democracy” (Field, 2025).

This appointment power of the president is also used to appoint their own party people, which does not encourage political participation

In order to achieve a more profound understanding of the research objective, additional insight was examined and validated through further interviews, indicating that the prevailing democratic regression in Ghana is fundamentally attributed to the considerable authority conferred upon the executive branch by the 1992 constitution of Ghana has weakened Ghana's parliament. A Senior Research Fellow at IDEG articulated:

"The failure and inability of Ghana's parliament is a major factor that weakens our democracy. What makes parliament weak is that the President is mandated to appoint majority of ministers from parliament. This does not make the parliament an effective institution to check the executive" (Field, 2025).

Because the constitution of Ghana has concentrated much power in the hands of the executive, it is undoubtedly undermining the democratic framework of the nation. Notably, for the first time, the president of Ghana has dismissed a Chief Justice, a pivotal institution that serves to uphold democratic principles, an action seen as a deliberate action by the incumbent government. To this, the Senior Vice President of Imani, Lawyer Kofi Bentil, said:

"We have embarked on a race to the bottom as a country, and if we don't stop it, we will break this democracy, because democracies are very fragile, and on one issue and on one decision, they can break; therefore, it must be protected. Although the constitution was followed, yet it can be seen as a witch-hunt because somebody had a premeditated outcome, which they stated publicly. The NDC, including the President, saying we don't trust the CJ and that we cannot work with her" (TV3 Ghana, 2025).

It is then clear, with evidence, that the constitutional framework established in Ghana is significantly contributing to the ongoing democratic recession, as this particular legal structure

bestows an excessive concentration of power upon the office of the president, thereby undermining the principles of balanced power among the three main arms of government.

5.1.2 The type of political system and its impact on democratic governance

It is imperative to know that the ongoing democratic recession currently afflicting Ghana can be ascribed to the governmental system the country is practicing. The empirical data collected indicated that the hybrid governance model employed by the country, which amalgamates elements of both parliamentary and presidential systems, acts as a significant catalyst for the democratic recession that Ghana is undergoing. An interview with a respondent from IDEG said:

“The same president sits with some MPs at the cabinet and the same MPs need to act as an oversight responsibility of the executive. So, the hybrid system affects the country’s democracy because the parliament turns to obey the executive” (Field, 2025).

A graduate student from the University of Ghana added, saying:

“Yes, the type of governance system a country practices can determine whether the interactions of state actors can contribute to democratic recession. In Ghana, for instance, the hybrid system provides room for such a situation because the president appoints the majority of his ministers/cabinets from parliament. This act does not encourage the parliament to check on the executive function thoroughly” (Field, 2025).

As I interacted with a respondent from Afrobarometer about the subject matter, it was disclosed that the hybrid system in Ghana can be one of the factors that contribute to the democratic recession; however, we cannot blame the entire system. According to him:

“Our findings indicate that Ghanaians express low levels of trust in Parliament, largely due to the perception that Members of Parliament prioritize the interests of the executive over those of their constituents. This perception is reinforced by the dual role of MPs who simultaneously serve as ministers. However, it would be misleading to attribute this entirely

to the hybrid system of governance; rather, the issue appears to stem from how individual actors exploit the opportunities provided by the system” (Field, 2025).

5.1.3 Co-optation, a strategy that erodes Kenya’s democracy

Kenya is acknowledged as one of the African nations that has emerged as a stable democracy following the turbulent events of the post-2007 electoral violence. The newly adopted constitution has engendered political stability within Kenya, as it spells out foundational principles aimed at strengthening democratic governance. Notwithstanding this progress, Kenya is currently undergoing a gradual regression in its democratic practices. In this context, primary data revealed that the executive branch of government consistently employs “co-optation” as a strategy to undermine institutions and diminish opposition. During a one-hour interview with a researcher, it was stated:

“Another strategy adopted in Kenya and affecting its democracy is that the incumbent co-opts the opposition. For example, in the 2022 Kenyan election, the opposition was co-opted; therefore, there was no strong opposition to compete and strengthen democracy. Also, some politicians were accused of corruption, which affected voter turnout” (Field, 2025).

In a context wherein the opposition rigorously evaluates the actions of the incumbent, enhances transparency and accountability, rather than colluding or becoming entwined with them, such a scenario undoubtedly creates opportunities for corruption and diminishes both accountability and transparency, thereby undermining the integrity of political institutions. An interview with a Kenyan bureaucrat who works at the county level, collaborated with the earlier respondent by admitting the executive using “co-option.” According to her:

“Looking at the Kenyan political environment, the incumbent does not necessarily attack the opposition too much, but they co-opt the smaller parties to join them in parliament for

ministerial appointments. Therefore, Kenya doesn't have a strong opposition in parliament that can criticize and check the government. A clear example is what happened concerning the "finance bill" that was just passed by parliament, when Kenyans didn't like it. In this situation, where is democracy?" (Field, 2025).

In construct, a journalist dismissed the notion that the incumbent tactically co-opts the opposition for their advantage; rather, Kenya has lacked a formidable opposition for an extended period that could compel the executive to be answerable to the people of Kenya.

"True, the incumbent can tactically co-opt the opposition; however, it is important to know that, for some time now, Kenya hasn't had a robust opposition that is able to consistently hold the executive accountable. This situation is a significant challenge to our democracy" (Field, 2025).

Throughout the course of the interview process, I discerned that the populace of Kenya has been indirectly co-opted. This phenomenon can be attributed to the pervasive fear that has led many respondents to refrain from articulating their perspectives regarding the government. Therefore, a significant proportion of the respondents expressed profound concerns regarding the safeguarding of their confidentiality. Some asked more than three times during the process of the interview.

5.1.4 Unequal distribution of state resources and democratic recession

As certain respondents have alluded, the phenomenon of co-optation is perceived as the primary factor undermining the democratic processes in Kenya. Here, others contend that the unequal allocation of state resources is detrimental to the integrity of the country's democracy. Despite all respondents acknowledging the issue of unequal distribution of state resources, the data indicate that, first, the allocation occurs primarily among political elites, second, on an ethnic basis, and finally, resources are curtailed to particular institutions, such as the Judiciary and the Electoral Commission, in order to exert influence over them. A bureaucrat explained:

“The state resources are not shared equally in Kenya, but are always used by the political elites and their supporters. This always influences those who think they are being sidelined to cause chaos during an election to also capture power and the resources. However, if the resources are to be shared equally, nobody would fight during an election to destabilize the country” (Field, 2025).

A researcher added:

“Our politics is characterized by ethnic-base voting, so the incumbent allocates many resources to their ethnicity and fewer resources to the others. This creates tension and misunderstanding, especially during elections, which has consequences for our democracy. This was serious in the 2007 election and formed part of the post-2007 electoral conflict” (Field, 2025).

Besides that, it was revealed that the executive deliberately reduces the allocation of resources to institutions such as the judiciary and the Electoral Commission in order to impede their operations and compel them to comply with its directives. A research fellow stated:

“The executive, at times, uses budget cuts against the judiciary in order to weaken their impartiality. This strategy has been used by both the present and the previous governments, especially during the time of Justice David Kenani Maraga. With the EC, the government does not provide them with enough resources during elections, e.g. voting materials, rightful gadgets, bonuses, etc. This compromises the efficiency and integrity of these offices that are supposed to work efficiently without bias” (Field, 2025).

5.2 State Actors' Interaction and Institutional Erosion and Democratic Recession

The second objective of the study was to examine how the interaction between the executive and other state institutions exacerbates democratic recession in Ghana and Kenya. Because state actors—such as the president and executive branch—are linked and collaborate to establish governments in every state, their interactions with state institutions are inevitable. It is also clear that each institution—the executive, the judiciary, and parliament—is intended to function with

reasonable autonomy to prevent any one of them from abusing its authority. From the data, the following themes have been generated.

5.2.1 Executive Influence on Parliamentary Independence

The Republic of Ghana's legislative body, the Parliament of Ghana, and the Executive constantly and dynamically engage with one another. This phenomenon indicates the complex relationship between legislative and governance processes, because the executive can influence parliament. This influence has the unintended consequence of compromising the efficacy and integrity of Ghana's parliamentary mandate, leading to democratic recession. According to an interviewee with research background in Comparative Politics, said:

“In Ghana, for instance, the hybrid system provides room for such a situation because the president appoints the majority of its ministers/cabinets from parliament. This in a long round encourages other MPs to catch the eye of the executive. By doing so, they turn to do the bidding of State actors because they hope that by doing so, one day they will get the opportunity to be appointed by the executive as well, which weakens checks and balances. Based on this, it is only the minority (whose voice is not so loud) that always criticize the state actors” (Field, 2025).

This interaction between the executive and parliament has exacerbated loss of parliamentary confidence in many Ghanaians (See table 5), indicating a sign that Ghana's democracy is eroding, as data from EIU confirms.

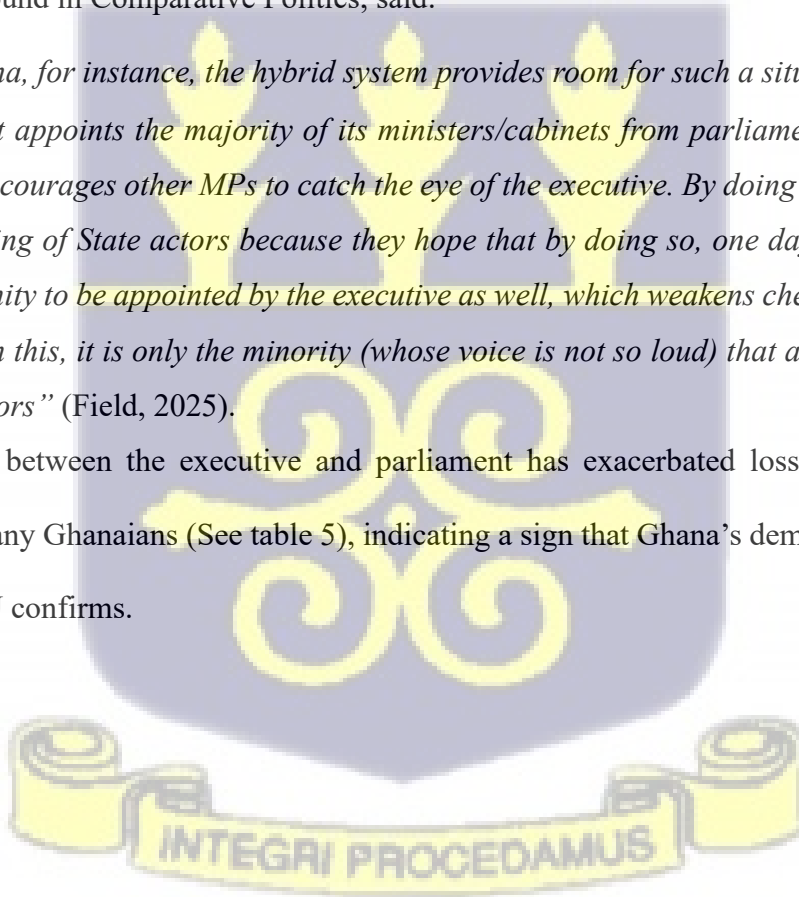
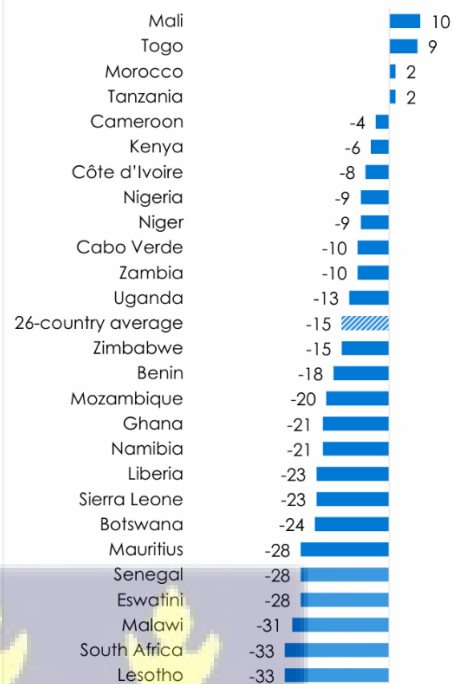


Table 5 Level of institutional trust in Africa

	Religious leaders	Army	Traditional leaders	Courts of law	Police	President	Electoral commission	Local government	Parliament	Ruling party	Opposition parties	Country average
Tanzania	94%	94%	56%	88%	79%	82%	72%	74%	73%	84%	45%	72%
Niger	90%	85%	80%	65%	77%	66%	54%	63%	58%	56%	42%	67%
Burkina Faso	76%	77%	72%	51%	71%	48%	46%	46%				61%
Mali	75%	89%	78%	42%	58%	86%	38%	57%	53%	43%	29%	59%
Cabo Verde	64%	74%		60%	60%	65%	61%	46%	48%	46%	52%	57%
Zambia	70%	80%	64%	65%	47%	70%	56%	47%	44%	62%	25%	57%
Ethiopia	90%	72%	75%	60%	57%	49%	46%	51%	44%	47%	28%	56%
Uganda	85%	62%	68%	50%	41%	62%	42%	50%	52%	52%	34%	54%
Senegal	92%	86%	75%	47%	77%	43%	39%	43%	27%	31%	34%	54%
Benin	67%	63%	65%	52%	67%	57%	41%	57%	43%	41%	34%	53%
Mauritania	81%	65%	55%	52%	58%	54%	42%	43%	47%	39%	31%	51%
Namibia	65%	62%	55%	59%	64%	55%	44%	38%	46%	40%	36%	51%
Zimbabwe	71%	55%	58%	54%	42%	51%	47%	51%	44%	44%	48%	51%
Togo	62%	61%	59%	47%	61%	57%	44%	47%	47%	46%	30%	51%
Mozambique	61%	55%	51%	56%	52%	47%	37%	42%	53%	40%	50%	
Gambia	81%	67%	65%	44%	52%	38%	40%	36%	36%	34%	35%	48%
Kenya	72%	66%	55%	56%	34%	52%	45%	35%	42%	32%	31%	47%
Tunisia	34%	90%		42%	46%	74%	28%	18%				47%
Madagascar	79%	55%	75%	27%	51%	52%	31%	58%	39%	31%	17%	47%
Sierra Leone	83%	68%	54%	36%	19%	53%	53%	32%	34%	47%	33%	47%
Guinea	80%	48%	67%	34%	38%	46%		45%		28%	30%	46%
Malawi	71%	74%	58%	62%	46%	27%	41%	28%	33%	22%	36%	45%
Côte d'Ivoire	67%	49%	61%	43%	45%	50%	32%	40%	39%	38%	34%	45%
Cameroon	64%	60%	55%	36%	44%	55%	34%	35%	36%	33%	30%	44%
Seychelles	68%	41%		47%	40%	40%	37%	38%	37%	34%	34%	42%
Mauritius	48%	38%		48%	46%	42%	38%	40%	37%	41%	37%	42%
Morocco	54%	72%	31%	61%	67%	18%	51%	22%	25%	22%	22%	41%
Botswana	55%	61%	55%	51%	46%	24%	31%	32%	30%	24%	35%	40%
Congo-Brazzaville	59%	51%	45%	32%	41%	45%	23%	26%	29%	24%	29%	37%
Lesotho	67%	58%	53%	44%	34%	20%	37%	39%	18%	15%	15%	36%
Sudan	57%	53%	33%	48%	41%	25%	26%	20%			14%	35%
Liberia	63%	62%	43%	30%	26%	37%	34%	20%	23%	29%	21%	35%
Ghana	43%	67%	25%	36%	28%	32%	33%	25%	27%	27%	29%	34%
Angola	53%	39%	45%	36%	32%	29%	21%		25%	27%	27%	33%
South Africa	49%	52%	35%	50%	32%	27%	28%	25%	23%	22%	22%	33%
Nigeria	60%	43%	50%	28%	15%	27%	23%	21%	19%	26%	21%	30%
São Tomé/Príncipe	41%	34%		26%	22%	34%	27%	27%	30%	36%	22%	30%
Eswatini	44%	23%	34%	29%	23%	23%	22%	23%	26%			27%
Gabon	45%	30%	38%	30%	25%	26%	16%	21%	21%	16%	14%	26%
39-country average	66%	61%	56%	47%	46%	46%	39%	38%	37%	37%	30%	46%
Key (%)	≥75	51-75	41-50	31-40	<31	Not asked in country						

Source: Afrobarometer (2024)

Figure 11 Changes in the trust of parliament in Africa



Source: Afrobarometer (2024)

Additionally, the data revealed that these MPs are more vulnerable to executives' influence and control after being appointed to executive roles. This, in turn, has serious ramifications for the standard of Ghana's democratic government and tends to undermine the legislature's independence. One of the key experts from a well-known policy think group (IDEG) that I interviewed collaborated with the earlier respondent, he said:

"The appointment of ministers from parliament by the executive has added to the erosion of democracy in Ghana as it compromises their independence" (Field, 2025).

Nevertheless, it is important to note that the executive does not use only ministerial appointments; however, the executive gives Members of Parliament (MPs) the opportunity to serve on certain

boards as well. My further interview was with a senior researcher who had a dissenting view of how the Executive influences parliament. He indicated:

“We should not appoint parliamentarians to serve on boards. For example, where the majority leader [Hon Afenyo Markins] is serving on the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG) board will definitely compromise his decision by the executive (state actor)” (Field, 2025).

In fact, in clear terms, it will be difficult for the majority leader in parliament to act contrary to the incumbent government, much less serve on the ECG board on behalf of the President.

However, in Kenya, it is acknowledged that even though the parliament and the executive interact, democracy is impacted when the executive consistently seeks to control the parliament by attaining/co-opting the majority of the Members of Parliament. This is achieved by orchestrating certain strategies by the executive. As stated by a respondent in Kenya:

“With the issue of parliament, the executive arm sponsors MPs and always carries the majority. This situation gives the executive the upper hand to manipulate or influence the parliament” (Field, 2025).

The same notion was endorsed by a respondent who added:

“The executive often supports MPs during elections, aiming to secure majority control, which allows it to dominate and sway parliamentary decisions to its advantage” (Field, 2025).

Another strategy that interviewees disclosed, which contrasted with the initial respondents, is “coalition building”, indicating how the executive co-opts members of parliament. According to a bureaucrat from Kenya:

“The state actors (the executive) always make sure they form a coalition with a promise of a ministerial or cabinet position for other parliamentarians who won their seats through different political parties” (Field, 2025).

This, in a long round, compromised the opposition, who are supposed to constructively criticize the executive. A researcher collaborated with the position by indicating a clear sign of democratic breakdown in Kenya. According to this researcher:

“In the 2022 Kenyan election, the opposition was co-opted; therefore, there was no strong opposition to compete and strengthen democracy in Kenya” (Field, 2025).

Democracy in Kenya is maturing; however, the interaction of the executive and parliament is based on the interest of the executive, which ends up weakening or destroying democracy in the country.

A researcher in Kenya who has published about Kenya’s democracy explained:

“In June 2024, there was a Gen. Z demonstration concerning the finance bill in Kenya. Now, before a bill is been passed, they conduct what is called “public participation” thus, gathering the views of the public concerning the bill. So, after parliament getting the feedback from the public of which they rejected the view of the government to implement the “finance bill,” instead of parliament to act towards the public feedback, they were influenced by the executive because the executive was interested in passing the finance bill to introduce more taxes to generate revenue while citizens said no, this affects or weakens parliament which affects democracy in Kenya” (Field, 2025).

Looking at the interactions that exist between the executive and parliament, the study went ahead to identify if the citizens trust the parliaments of their country; thus, the cases been understudy. The cross-national and cross-time data gathered from Afrobarometer revealed that fewer individuals, representing 42% trust the parliament of Kenya. On the other hand, only 27% of respondents indicated that they trust the parliament of Ghana (Refer to Table 5). The survey further

embarked on a cross-time survey (thus from 2011 to 2023) as well as a cross-national survey consisting of 26 countries in Africa to identify the trend of parliamentary trust, of which 22 of the countries showed a level of decline. To this, Kenya has declined by -6; however, Ghana has declined by -21 (See Figure 11), accentuating how Ghana and Kenya's parliaments have been influenced by the executive, which ends up weakening the democratic institution, thus parliament.

5.2.2 Executive-Judiciary Interface

As a crucial branch of government, the judiciary is principally in charge of interpreting laws and power of judicial review to ensure that state institutions and citizens equitably receive justice. It maintains the rule of law, defends rights, settles disputes, and preserves constitutional order (Stein, 2019). It reinforces democratic government and the idea of equality before the law by acting as a check on legislative and executive excesses as an independent body, indicating how the judiciary arm facilitates the promotion of democracy. Through the interview process, the majority of interviewees agreed that the power of the executive to appoint judges affects Ghana's democracy, despite some shared different views. During the data collection, my interview with a researcher at the Center for Democratic Governance (CDD) revealed that:

“The appointment of Judges and the Chief Justice by the executive has added to the erosion of democracy in Ghana, because it can compromises their independence, in a sense that it will be difficult for the Chief Justice to disobey the executive that appointed him to office ” (Field, 2025).

To get more information concerning the Judicial system and how it interacts with the executive, a PhD student of Comparative Politics was interviewed as well. The interviewee's perspective was in tandem with the initial interview with a respondent from CDD. The interview unveiled that:

“The appointment power of the judiciary by the executive can influence the judicial system. Therefore, the Judiciary shouldn’t be appointed by the Executive, to show a clear separation of powers” (Field, 2025).

On the contrary, my interview with a Senior Research Fellow did not agree that the appointment of the judiciary by the executive necessarily exacerbates influence on their role or neutrality; however, the intention behind the appointment is the core factor. According to the interviewee:

“Even in the more advanced democracies, The Executive appoint officials of state institutions e.g. the chief justice, EC, NCCE, CHRAJ, etc., therefore, the appointment by The Executive is not the problem, however, the issue is, is The Executive appointing power subject to other opinions, in other words, does The Executive appoint based on a broad consultative manner? Ghana’s appointments are not based on a consultative manner, and that is where the problem lies” (Field, 2025).

A further interview was with a graduate student who wrote his second-degree thesis on Ghana’s democracy. To him, the current process of the Chief Justice removal will serve as a serious case or test for Ghana’s democracy. He indicated:

“Although the president appoints the chief justice and other justices to the judiciary, there is no clear evidence on how that affects the judiciary system in Ghana. However, the current ongoing trial of the Chief Justice will determine how the Executive arm in Ghana wants to manipulate the judicial system” (Field, 2025).

The suspension of the CJ also influenced the Bar Council of England and Wales and the Commonwealth Lawyers about the executive decision. They explained:

“The existence of an independent and impartial judiciary is one of the cardinal features and bedrock of any country governed by the rule of law and Ghana has for several years displayed a strong commitment to the rule of law” (Commonwealth Lawyers Association, 2025; Graphic Online, 2025).

Therefore, as Ghana is a signatory to the Commonwealth:

“Any measure or action taken by the Executive which is capable of being seen as impacting an independent judiciary is a matter of serious concern” (Commonwealth Lawyers Association, 2025; Graphic Online, 2025).

The Bar Council of England and Wales, along with the Commonwealth Lawyers Association, continues to articulate profound apprehension of the executive and added:

“The decision to continue to suspend the Chief Justice which prima facie is in clear breach of Ghana's Executive's constitutional duties and the principles underpinning them which require that judges should be subject to suspension or removal only for reasons of incapacity or stated misbehavior that clearly renders them unfit to discharge their duties” (Commonwealth Lawyers Association, 2025; Graphic Online, 2025).

Based on that, they called upon the president and the entire executive to:

“Immediately and without delay, reinstate the Chief Justice of Ghana to her Office, consistent with both the hitherto strong attachment to the rule of law demonstrated by Ghana and also, the constitutional duties incumbent upon them” (Commonwealth Lawyers Association, 2025; Graphic Online, 2025).

In an exclusive interview with Johnson Asiedu Nketiah, the Chairman of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), live on the Class Morning Show by Kwame Dwomoh-Agyemang, the host, concerning issues about the removal of the Chief Justice, the chairman said:

“I have a general position, and my position is known before the general election. I have come to conclude that many of our state institutions have been compromised, so after

coming to power; we need to do institutional leasing and restructuring, such as the judiciary” (Class FM, 2024).

Before that interview, the Chairman had made it known publicly that the judiciary and the electoral commissioner must be removed from their position, which is a big threat to democracy.

Moreover, Ghana has witnessed court packing from January 2025 to June 2025, which has consequences for the court’s neutrality. The minority leader voiced his displeasure with the executive appointment of seven judges from the Court of Appeal to the Supreme Court within the first six months in power, calling it a clandestine attempt to push a third-term agenda of the incumbent. During a press conference in May 2025, Hon. Afenyo-Markin warned that this decision poses a serious threat to the balance of power and the independence of the court. According to him:

“This is not a routine judicial appointment. What we are witnessing is a strategic and deliberate effort to pack the Supreme Court with loyalists” (Arhinful, 2025).

He further added:

“The nomination of seven Appeals Court judges immediately after suspending the Chief Justice reveals a deeper, more dangerous political ambition—a third-term agenda in disguise” (Arhinful, 2025).

It is interesting to note that these appointments were made after the Chief Justice Torkornoo had been suspended and also on the backdrop of the earlier decision of the NDC, the then in opposition, had criticized the erstwhile administration for making further appointments of judges to the Supreme Court because the already justices were enough. On that note, the general secretary of the NDC, Fifi Fiavi Kwetey, said:

“The President must be reminded that such lopsided appointments, particularly to the judiciary, is a big factor in the widely held perception of a politically biased and hostile

judiciary in the administration of justice at the apex court, especially in matters involving the NDC and the NPP,” therefore, “President Akufo-Addo must therefore take a cue and desist from further appointments to the supreme court at this time in order to help de-escalate the perception of bias on the part of judiciary” (Kwafo, 2024).¹

After the Chief Justice was suspended, the government packed the Supreme Court by increasing the number of judges by seven, just six months in power,² and has ruled in favor of dismissing a bench warrant on social media activist Kevin Taylor, who is known to speak for the NDC, a sign indicating democratic recession³.

In Kenya, the engagement of the executive and other governmental institutions exerts an impact on Kenya’s democratic framework. Articles 1, 73, 160, 249, IPOA Act of 2011, and 250 of the Kenyan 2010 constitution are avant-garde, and they delineate the autonomy of each institution. The police implement what is referred to as “independent police oversight” to examine the ombudsman and other governmental bodies. It is also evident that each institution (The judiciary, Parliament, executive, and other entities) is intended to be autonomous; however, among these, the executive possesses leverage in appointing or recruiting personnel. Nevertheless, with the judiciary, in contrast to Ghana, where the executive directly designates the Chief Justice, there exists a Judicial Service Commission (JSC) accountable for that, but the executive still finds their way to influence the process. A respondent articulated:

“In the case of selecting the chief justice or judges in Kenya, there is a Judiciary Commission whose work is independent in choosing Judges to the office of the Supreme

¹ <https://www.modernghana.com/news/1324682/stop-further-appointments-to-supreme-court-to-help.html>

² <https://www.myjoyonline.com/nomination-of-seven-judges-to-the-supreme-court-is-a-mahama-third-term-agenda-afenyo-markin/>

³ <https://www.myjoyonline.com/the-supreme-courts-ruling-on-kevin-taylors-arrest-warrant-a-triumph-for-due-process-or-a-precedent-for-judicial-caution/>

Court of Kenya; however, those selected Judges have to be approved by the parliament. This gives the judiciary autonomy in their proceedings” (Field, 2025).

A Kenyan Journalist I interviewed also concurred that the contemporary Judiciary in Kenya is more independent than in previous times, distinctly collaborating with the initial interviewee, by explaining:

“The Judiciary has been given the authority to work independently now; therefore, what they say is final. For example, after the 2017 election, the matter was taken to court, and for the first time, the result was nullified based on rigging because voters were not verified; therefore, it couldn't be determined who won” (Field, 2025).

This situation shows that there has been improvement in the judiciary system in Kenya. Notwithstanding the Judiciary's independence in Kenya, further interviews reveal that the executive discovers avenues to exert influence on the judiciary, which exacerbates democratic recession. My interview with a research fellow disclosed:

“In Kenya, the executive’s interaction with the judiciary weakens the country’s democracy. For instance, the executive at times uses budget cuts against the judiciary in order to influence them to do the bidding of the executive. This strategy has been used by both the present and the previous governments, especially during the time of Justice David Kenani Maraga, who suffered under budget cuts” (Field, 2025).

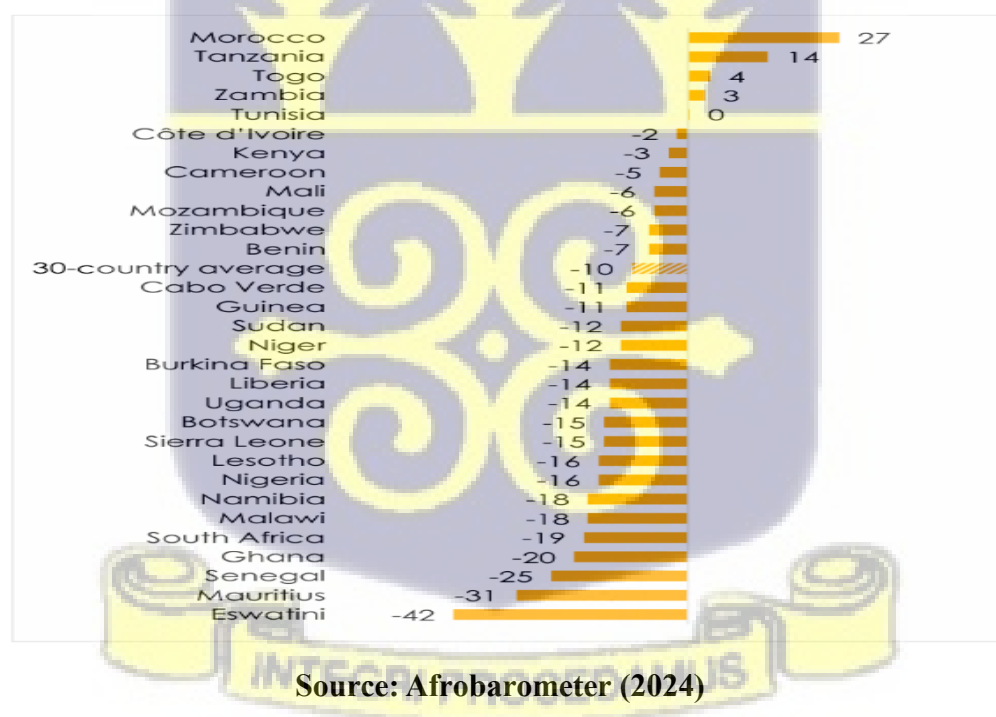
Chief Justice Martha Koome has accentuated the chronic issue of inadequate funding as a continual impediment, where reductions in the budget have constrained the expansion of infrastructure, security measures, and welfare programs designed for judicial officers. In 2023, the Treasury imposed limitations on judiciary expenditures, capping them at 15% of the designated budget, thereby necessitating the suspension of judicial appointments and programs that are essential for

the effective delivery of justice. Such financial strategies serve to perpetuate executive dominance over the judiciary and its operational functions.⁴

A subsequent respondent further elaborated on the intricate dynamics of the interaction between the executive branch of government and the judiciary, articulating his perspective with a notable affirmation regarding the extent of influence that the executive holds over the operations and decisions of the judicial arm. He said:

“When a judge does something wrong, such a judge is supposed to be investigated by the Judicial Service Commission (JSC). The majority of the JSC committee is being appointed by the executive, which can influence judges to act in favor of the executive, because they know that if they find themselves in any trouble in the future majority of the JSC been appointed by the executive will punish them during the investigation” (Field, 2025).

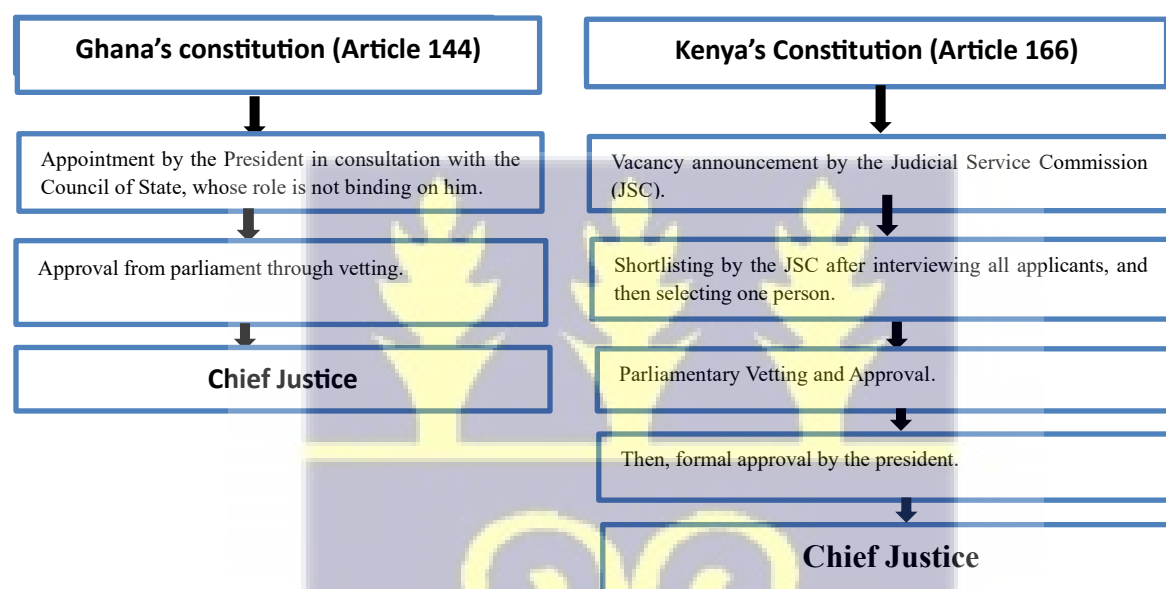
Figure 12 Changes in the trust of the court in Africa



⁴ <https://nation.africa/kenya/news/cj-koome-this-is-how-underfunding-of-the-judiciary-affects-kenyans-4824720>

The quantitative data, on the other hand, also signifies that, due to the fact that the executive does not directly designate Judges/Chief Justices in Kenya, the populace has greater confidence in their Judiciary than in Ghana, where the executive directly appoints the Chief Justices and the Judges. Kenya uses a bottom-up approach and Ghana uses a top-down approach (See figure 13).

Figure 13 The Process of Appointing Chief Justice



The empirical survey demonstrates that 56% of Kenyans have faith in the court, whereas only 36% of Ghanaians share a similar level of faith in the court (Refer to Table 5). A cross-time and cross-national survey was conducted, encompassing 30 nations in Africa, which revealed that between 2011 and 2023, the trust of citizens in the Kenyan judiciary has decreased by -3; however, Ghana has experienced a decline of -20, rendering its judicial system precarious (see Figure 12).

5.3 Executive Influence and Electoral Management Body Manipulation

The third objective of the study was to assess the role of the executive, rather than electoral management bodies, in facilitating democratic recession through electoral manipulation.

In other words, it sought to examine the *modus operandi* adopted by the executive to unduly control and interfere in the operations of an independent institution (Thus, EC). The principle of constitutionalism, especially through institutional and procedural limitations put in place to prevent executive abuse of power and for oversight. However, the executive deploys some mechanisms to unduly subdue these checks over the EC. Based on the data collected, the subsequent themes were adopted.

5.3.1 Introduction

Elections are paramount as they facilitate a tranquil transition of power within nations (Chin, 2024). Due to the significant function that electoral management entities fulfil in every state, their activities cannot be underestimated. Nevertheless, there have been instances of violence, discord, and electoral manipulation in both Ghana^{5,6} and Kenya^{7,8}. The inquiry that subsequently arises is, who bears responsibility for these predicaments? This session analyzed the various data about the issue in question.

5.3.2 Executive Control over Electoral Commissions (EC)

Article 146 of the 1992 constitution and 251 of the 2010 constitution give the Executive the mandate to remove the Electoral Commissioner from office in Ghana and Kenya, respectively. This removal authority provides much power for the Executives to influence the EC. In Ghana,

⁵<https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/gh/c06edef5de3b21c587b02e044152aae9ddcd70162744987d8469cc24eee53afe6.pdf>

⁶ <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/blood-ballot-election-violence-ghana>

⁷ <https://www.cfr.org/report/electoral-violence-kenya>

⁸ <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/kenyas-electoral-violence>

the process begins with the President receiving a petition for the removal of the Electoral Commissioner. The President then refers this petition to the Chief Justice to determine whether there is a prima facie case. If the Chief Justice finds that such a case exists, a committee is set up to investigate the allegations thoroughly. This committee conducts an inquiry and reports its findings back to the Chief Justice. Finally, the Chief Justice forwards the committee's recommendations to the President, who is obliged to act in accordance with those recommendations. In the context of Kenya, the procedure involves the President appointing a tribunal to investigate a petition for removal after consideration by the National Assembly. The tribunal investigates, makes a binding recommendation to the President, who must act within 30 days in accordance with that recommendation.

The interview process revealed that the preponderance of respondents confirmed that the electoral manipulations, violence, and strife that have been encountered can be ascribed to the executive. This is due to their conviction that all occurrences are the orchestration of the executive, whose primary goal is to capture and maintain political power. A respondent articulated that:

“The executive must be blamed first because they often initiate manipulations. When there is electoral manipulation by the EC, the influence is coming from someone to force the EC to behave in a certain way; therefore, for me, the behavioral aspect of the EC is the result of influence from somewhere, which is the executive/incumbent” (Field, 2025).

A researcher from CDD holds the same view and stated:

“The ECs are supposed to work independently, but the manipulation that we see from the EC is the result of pressure from the executive” (Field, 2025).

In this instance, the probability for democracy to deteriorate is high because the executive can influence the EC, which is supposed to act on a middle ground.

Another researcher also said:

“The NPP government decided to remove Charlotte Osei because they knew she wouldn't have listened to them. Consequently, let's change her and bring someone whom we can trust” (Field, 2025).

Moreover, a participant associated with the concept of the latter, by insinuating that the executive possesses the authority or mandate to designate/appoint the Electoral Commission, therefore has the capacity to influence them. According to the interviewee:

“In this situation, who appoints the EC comes to mind. It is much easier for the person who appointed the EC to be manipulated by him/her; therefore, the executive who appointed the EC can then manipulate its role” (Field, 2025).

Even though the majority of interviewees affirmed that the EC can be influenced by the executive, the EC itself has not been let off the blame. A researcher indicated:

“However, the EC also must be blamed because the EC itself may be willing to do so, because the EC is aware that if those who appointed them into office lose power, their position may be at risk. So, to preserve their office, the EC can manipulate the process” (Field, 2025).

But another senior researcher from IDEG objected to that perspective and raised that:

“Although the EC manages or conducts an election, they are not responsible for the security aspect of the election; rather, it is in the hands of the National Election Security Task Force (NESTF), and the EC is just a member of it. Even though the police has the power to arrest anybody with electoral malpractices or violence, they cannot go ahead

to prosecute without approval from the Attorney General after a docket has been received. In essence, they go free when such individuals are part of the party faithful” (Field, 2025).

This supports the view that the executive also wields influence over the Electoral Commission, since the executive oversees the NESTF. The NESTF is led by the Inspector-General of Police (IGP), who serves as its chair. The IGP is appointed by the president under Article 202 and is accountable to the president.

As a matter of fact, Electoral Commissioners face unexpected intimidation, which they often cannot speak about openly—especially while still in office. During a democracy dialogue 2025 hosted in Ghana, captioned “How Democracies Die”. The former EC chair, Charlotte Kesson-Smith Osei, a Ghanaian lawyer, shared how she was intimidated during her time in office. She stated:

“The cost was really on a personal level, attacks on my family, concerns about the safety of my children, and my wider family. There was a time that a political party mob surrounded my dad's house, that they were going to burn it down because of action they felt I had taken (Joy News, 2025).

In the case of Kenya, primary data affirms that those electoral manipulations and violence can be attributed to an orchestration by the executive. With my first interview on the issue, the researcher raised a lot of questions concerning the Kenyan electoral commission. It was stated that:

“On paper, the electoral commission is working, for instance, they announce when polls open and close, the distribution of ballot papers to voting centers, etc. But the most important question is, under which body does the EC sit on? And who has the power to appoint them? How well is the EC tech protected from interference? Who sponsors for

printing of the ballot papers? These are relevant questions that need to be conceptualized in matters of the executive and the electoral bodies. Since the EC relies on the executive, they can influence them” (Field, 2025).

Another respondent added that:

“The electoral bodies, which are supposed to work independently, however, there has been a case where the EC had secret meetings with the executive at night, jeopardizing their independence. One thing that can easily be traced back to the era of Kibaki is, “it's our time to eat,” with this in mind, they use all means to manipulate the entire electoral system in their favor” (Field, 2025).

Nevertheless, it is rather intriguing and thought-provoking to consider the fact that the executive branch, through its strategic decision-making processes, employs the implementation of budget cuts and delays as a means to systematically undermine, manipulate, weaken and influence the efficacy and operational capabilities of the EC in Kenya. According to an individual who participated in the interview process. He explained:

“The electoral management body (EMB) is not well-funded properly, which affects their independence. This influences the EC to depend on the executive in one way or the other, hence sabotaging our democracy because they turn to depend on the executive through late funding and even salaries, which then affects the democracy directly” (Field, 2025). Here, the EC, which is to serve as the referee, turns to depend on the executive that is part of the game.

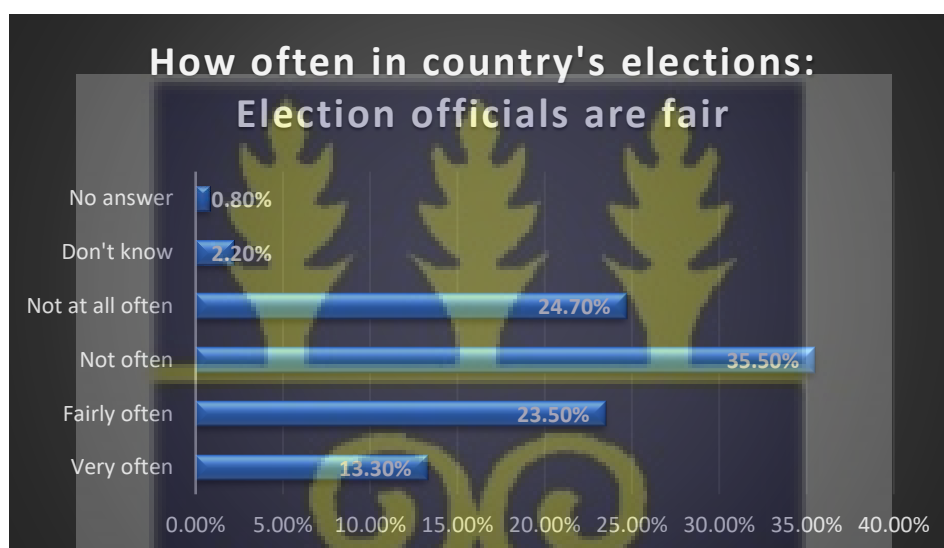
In furtherance, another respondent elaborated on the perspectives of the preceding interviewees, asserting that both the citizenry and the executive branch should bear responsibility for electoral manipulations, rather than solely attributing blame to the executive. As articulated:

“The citizens are always manipulated or used as a tool to cause that electoral violence. This is done by dividing the electorates on tribal lines. Based on that, we blamed the

citizens for allowing themselves to be used. With the executive, it does everything possible to remain in power; therefore, they can orchestrate anything, even if it is to destabilize the environment for their benefit. The electoral commission, before the election, was accused of receiving a bribe of three million dollars (\$ 3M)” (Field, 2025).

The headline on what appears to be the front page of the Kenyan newspaper Star's 7 July 2022 issue, which is making the rounds on Facebook, says, “Interpol: IEBC chair was bribed \$3M.” This can be connected to the causes of Kenyan democratic decline and stagnation, respectively.

Figure 14 Electoral management body in Kenya



Source: Author’s compilation from World Value Survey (2025)

More significantly, in order to ascertain whether the Electoral Commission's way of administering elections in Kenya has aggravated electoral malfeasance, the study then aimed to determine the frequency with which the Electoral Commission in Kenya has successfully managed elections. Through a cross-time analysis spanning from 2017 to 2022 with a carefully selected sample of 1,266 participants, the data signified that 35.50% indicated the EC is “not often fair” with their role, and 24.70% expressed that they are “not at all often” fair. Furthermore, 23.50% also

demonstrated that the elections in Kenya are “fairly often” conducted, while 13.30% asserted that the electoral officials are “very often” fair. This indicates that 60.2% of the respondents hold the belief that electoral officials are not fair, in contrast to only 36.8% maintained an opposite view (See Figure 14). This survey corresponds with the earlier respondents who agreed that electoral manipulations can be blamed on the electoral management bodies/EC as well, and not only the executive.

5.3.3 Challenges of Electoral Commission Independence

The field interviews gathered indicated how the executive arm of government has a direct role in appointing the EC in Ghana; however, in Kenya, the executive has no direct business in appointing the EC. Notwithstanding, both the executives of Ghana and Kenya influence their Electoral Commissions (ECs). On that premise, the research wanted to uncover whether there should be a general election or a referendum in Africa to elect electoral commissioners. It is interesting to know that all respondents in Ghana rejected the notion of having separate elections for electoral commissioners. A graduate student at the University of Ghana said:

“I do not think it is a good idea, because it will increase electoral monetization; therefore, after winning, this will influence the EC to get back all the money used during campaigning. Also, it can influence the executive to sponsor candidates and later do their bidding for them” (Field, 2025).

As the executive can sponsor candidates, this can turn the EC into another extension of the executive arm of government that can weaken the EC’s neutrality.

By interviewing a senior researcher, he also refuted the idea of a referendum and general election, thus affirming the earlier interviewee, but suggested that the appointment power must be taken from the executive in Ghana. He started:

“Although I reject the idea of a referendum or holding a general election to elect our EC, let’s take the appointing power from the Executive and give it to the legislature, which has a balanced committee that contains a civil service organization. The committee should work on more consensus and deliberative-based decisions to arrive on someone” (Field, 2025).

A research fellow at CDD agreed with this notion and said:

“No, the executive can appoint them; there shouldn’t be a general election for a state institution like the EC, but the parliament has to get every opportunity to interview them thoroughly. But the EC office can be on a termly basis or on a specific period, like Sierra Leon” (Field, 2025).

With my interaction with Kenyans, the majority of the respondents disagreed with the notion of having a general election or having a referendum to elect ECs; however, one person agreed that having a general election would help the country acquire a fair and independent EC. As a respondent explained:

“Having a national election to elect the EC cannot solve the problem of the independence of the EC because they would be sponsored by the same executive arm of government. However, the process of selecting the EC should be transparent, and parliament should meticulously vet such individuals” (Field, 2025).

A further interview affirmed the perspectives of the initial respondents, as the respondent disclosed:

“A general election will not work to have an independent EC, but there should be equal distribution of resources across the country, and individuals who must be appointed to the EC office should not be based on nepotism, friendship, or tribal affiliation. When that is done, no one will fight during elections. Nobody is ready to fight during an election if the person is aware that at the end of the day, the national resources would be shared equally” (Field, 2025).

But a very crucial information was disclosed, a respondent said:

“If there should be an election to elect the EC, then the question will be who will supervise the electoral process to elect the EC? So, let us currently maintain what the constitution provides at the moment. Even if we have a national referendum, the executive will still influence the entire process. Kenyan election IT head, Chris Msando, was an EC worker but was found dead a few days before the election because he wanted to do the right thing. The situation was linked to political underpinning” (Field, 2025). This clearly shows the extent to which state actors can go to weaken or destroy the EC just to win or maintain power.

In contrast, another respondent had a contrary view about all the correspondents, to her:

“The entire citizens' electing the EC might work, in terms of its independence” (Field, 2025).

A cross-national survey between Ghana and Kenya gives a collaborative affirmation on how the citizens have lost trust in the EC. A survey revealed a score of 45% in Kenya, indicating that 55% do not trust Kenya's Electoral Commission. Ghana marks a troubling trend because only 33% of Ghanaians trust the Electoral Commission, showing that 67% of Ghanaians do not trust the Electoral Commission (Refer to table 5).

5.4 Democratic Recession through Institutional Misuse/Interference by the Executive

The last objective of the study was to examine how the ‘institutions of democracy’ are used by executives in Ghana and Kenya to weaken democracy itself. By interviewing respondents and gathering secondary sources of data from both Ghana and Kenya, it was identified that the institutions that are supposed to be used in the protection and promotion of democracy are, rather, the tools for causing democratic recession.

5.4.1 Introduction

State institutions are an integral part of democracy; however, the excessive power of any of the institutions can also turn such institutions into a tool to destroy democracy. This strategy is always used by the executive arm of government to capture political power, which deteriorates democracy. As Ghana and Kenya are experiencing democratic recession, it is prudent to delve into the nuances and the extent to which ‘institutions of democracy’ are used in the destruction of democracy in these countries (Ghana and Kenya).

5.4.2 Manipulation of Referees of the State (Independent Watchdog Institutions), Which are Supposed to Defend democracy.

5.4.2.1 Sabotaging the Office of Special Prosecutor?

The Office of the Special Prosecutor Bill (2017), passed by Parliament in November 2017 as Act 959, was signed into law and came into force on 2 January 2018. After being presented to the parliament in July 2017, this bill was finally enacted after over 30 modifications. The executive determination to establish an agency with special expertise that can look into and prosecute corrupt scandals involving politically exposed individuals and recover syphoned resources for the State was shown by the approval of the OSP Bill (Asante, 2019). However, since the establishment of the OSP in Ghana, statements and reactions from the OSP indicate how the executive influences their functions to prosecute matters, especially those relating to government officials. The first OSP, Mr. Amidu, resigned from his position and stated that:

“There was political interference and also an issue of the independence of his office, as well as his office was given inadequate staff who were mostly on secondment, a situation that made it nearly impossible for his outfit to effectively carry out its functions” (Graphic Online, 2020). Mr. Amidu then described President Akufo-Addo as the “Mother serpent of

corruption” on the basis that the President was using his office to shield corruption in his administration (Sarfo-Ntow, 2024).

Following Amidu's departure, Lawyer Kissi Agyabeng assumed office in August 2021 but voiced concerns after two years about a growing disregard for the Office of the Special Prosecutor (OSP). Agyabeng noted impediments to the office's investigative autonomy (Graphic Online, 2023), accentuating a troubling trend of executive interference. During a press conference at the OSP's office, Kissi Agyabeng said:

“There appears to be a developing trend of rather regressive and dismissive judicial decisions in respect of cases involving the OSP, with troubling consequences; therefore, I am just doing my part and will leave when it's my time” (Graphic Online TV, 2023)

In furtherance, he added:

“A judge has, in a process, granted two persons immunity from investigation and, in effect, immunity from prosecution. This decision opens up a calamitous deluge as every person under criminal investigation will be encouraged to take out suits to injunct investigations and prosecution bodies from investigating and prosecuting them. Indeed, there is a live case involving the OSP now in which someone has taken a queue to see to injunct the OSP from injuncting them” (quoted in Osei, 2023).

Unlike OSP in Ghana, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) in Kenya is the national prosecuting authority, established to institute and undertake criminal proceedings. This institution is headed by the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), who operates independently, as stipulated by the 2010 Constitution of Kenya (Article 157). The ODPP is responsible for ensuring that individuals accused of criminal offences are brought to justice while also safeguarding the rights of the accused (ODPP, 2025). However, there have been issues of public concern showing how the office that is supposed to work independently has been compromised by the executive.

In 2023, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) encountered substantial criticism for retracting multiple prominent corruption cases, several of which implicated politicians associated with President William Ruto. This prompted widespread public dissent and raised inquiries regarding the independence of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP). On that note, Transparency International Kenya (TI-Kenya) subsequently revoked an integrity accolade previously awarded to the then-DPP Noordin Haji, citing apprehensions about perceived political meddling. TI-Kenya Executive Director Sheila Masinde said:

“The decision to withdraw the award followed petitions filed after Haji controversially withdrew a number of high-profile cases from September last year” (Njoroge, 2023).

This case was the killing of baby Samantha Pendo, a six-year-old baby.

At the same time, Transparency International reaffirmed its steadfast conviction that upholding the utmost standards of integrity is imperative for all individuals receiving the awards. However, the petitions submitted brought forth significant concerns regarding the decisions made by the DPP, asserting that the retractions led to the loss of billions in public resources. It was added that:

“Transparency International Kenya has made the decision to withdraw the Leadership Integrity Award (State/Public Officer) conferred upon you in 2019” (Njoroge, 2023).

Further scrutiny arose concerning the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) and its management of a case pertaining to police misconduct. The Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA) indicated that attempts to prosecute law enforcement officers implicated in extrajudicial killings were obstructed by police interference and the ODPP's insufficient promptness. For example, of the 60 investigations initiated in the aftermath of the Gen Z protests, only 22 cases were completed inquiries submitted to the ODPP, many of which were returned

without any subsequent prosecution. To that, the organizations associated with Missing Voices encompass Haki Africa, Defenders Coalition, International Justice Mission, Independent Medico-Legal Unit (IMLU), International Commission of Jurists-Kenya (ICJ), and the Kenya Human Rights Commission, articulated apprehensions regarding the withdrawal of charges and the increasing prevalence of enforced disappearances as a tactic employed by law enforcement to suppress or penalize individuals.⁹ According to the think tanks:

“We are concerned that the DPP dropped charges against eight senior commanders who had been lined up for prosecution. Even more worrying was the move by the DPP to expose witnesses in the charge sheet, endangering their lives” (Kinyanjui, 2025).

Despite these concerns, government officials have reiterated the ODPP's independence. In December 2024, Deputy President Kithure Kindiki emphasized the government's commitment to upholding the autonomy of the ODPP and other independent institutions. He stated that the executive would provide necessary resources to empower these institutions while fostering collaboration, underscoring the importance of a cohesive criminal justice system. According to Deputy President, Kithure Kindiki:

“President William Ruto has been steadfast in his commitment not to interfere with the functions of independent offices, while encouraging a whole-of-government approach to the criminal justice system” (Gitonga, 2024).

He again added:

“The Executive is committed to providing resources to ensure we not only enhance but also safeguard the independence and interdependence of these offices and institutions” (Gitonga, 2024).

⁹ https://eastleighvoice.co.ke/national/147356/police-obstruction-odpp-inaction-frustrate-efforts-to-punish-killer-cops-ipoa?utm_source=chatgpt.com

5.4.2.2 The Auditor-General saga

Another instance indicative of institutional interference has to do with Daniel Yao Domelevo, the former Auditor-General of Ghana, who was compelled to take an extended cumulative leave of 123 working days in July 2020 and never returned. This move, widely criticized by various think tanks, raised alarms about executive influence compromising the office's responsibility for auditing governmental institutions (Adogla-Bessaby, 2020). To that, an executive director of Alliance for Social Equity and Public Accountability (ASEPA), Mensah Thompson, indicated:

“After Domelovo revealed the wrongdoing in the Krol and Associates agreement, which involved former senior minister Yaw Osafo Mafo, the government of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) purposefully worked to remove him from office” (Ghana Web, 2021).

The auditor general was asked to go on an accumulated leave after the incumbent was suspected of settling private companies, thus Kroll and Associates, for allegedly paying an amount of \$1 million, in the auditor general's findings from 2019, but there was no proof that any work had been done by those firms.

Executive-Police, EOCO influence

The enforcement of laws is a primary responsibility of the executive branch of government. This function is typically carried out through agencies/services such as the police or the Economic and Organized Crime Office (EOCO), depending on the specific national context. The deployment of these agencies is fundamentally aimed at reinforcing or strengthening democratic governance in democratic states. However, empirical evidence indicates that these institutions, which are mandated to safeguard the lives and rights of citizens, are at times exploited in ways that undermine their essential role within the executive branch.

The data showed that the police targeted protesters or individuals who oppose the government's actions or programs. In Ghana, the 'Democracy Hub' was a victim of that when they protested against illegal mining in Ghana. This influenced the CDD-Ghana to condemn such treatment from the Ghana police. According to the think tank's press release on September 26, 2024:

"CDD-Ghana is particularly concerned about the Ghana Police Service's repeated use of excessive and illegal control tactics, especially when dealing with young protesters. These actions undermine both the letter and the spirit of Article 14 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana" (CDD-Ghana, 2024).

They stated:

"(1) The unnecessary manhandling and brutality of citizens exercising their civic and political rights to protest, (2) denial of access to legal counsel for detainees, in direct violation of Article 14(2) of the 1992 Constitution, underscores the situation's urgency and (3) the prolonged detention of protesters beyond 48 hours without being brought before a competent court violates Article 14(3) of the 1992 Constitution" (CDD-Ghana, 2024).

During an interview with a researcher regarding the ongoing arrests and detentions of individuals affiliated with the NPP, it was revealed that the government is using these agencies to retaliate against the opposition, believing it's time to exact revenge. He said:

"The arrest of Bernard Antwi Boasiako, the NPP Ashanti Regional Chairman, and Kwame Baffoe, the Bono Region Chairman for the NPP, along with their extended detention for over 48 hours, clearly appears to be politically motivated. It seems the government is strategically using these arrests as a means to suppress opposition figures, sending a message that they are willing to use state power to target key political figures within the opposition, with the intention that they went through a similar situation when in opposition (Field, 2025).

In fact, a human rights lawyer, Martin Kpebu, also collaborates with that perspective by condemning the detention of such individuals in custody without granting bail for more than 48 hours. He complained when Abronye was refused bail on the issue of misdemeanour. According to the Lawyer:

“We must let the Attorney-General and IGP Yohuno know that this is not lawful. We didn’t vote for the NDC for this type of governance, and I cannot be part of this type of government” (Dzidzoamenu, 2025).

Similarly, Kenya adopts the same tactics by using the police—whose role is to protect citizens' rights and apprehend wrongdoers—but instead, they end up abusing their power and even killing innocent people. By interviewing a Kenyan scholar, he said:

“The security also contributes to democratic recession, especially what happened concerning the finance bill (Gen. Z demonstration). The police’s action was unprofessional, and it is obvious that the police received instructions from the executive arm of government” (Field, 2025).

By interviewing a bureaucrat in Kenya, her view was in tandem with the latter's notion. According to her:

“The police were supposed to protect the youth for the demonstration of the finance bill, but they attacked them with live bullets and killed some of them” (Field, 2025).

A further interviewee also added:

“The police in Kenya are not protecting us, seeing what happened during the finance bill protest. Even just a week ago, a young man was killed, alleging that he insulted a police officer” (Field, 2025)

5.4.2.3 Hiding behind the laws to weaken democracy.

Laws are enacted to maintain order and prevent anarchy. In democratic societies, the rule of law is essential, serving as the foundation for safeguarding individual rights, ensuring justice, and strengthening democracy. By upholding these laws, a nation can foster stability, promote fairness, and protect its citizens from arbitrary power. Regardless, hiding behind these laws to destroy democracy has become known in democratic societies. During an interview in Ghana, the respondent stated how the then-President Akufo-Addo removed the EC by citing the constitution. It was explained:

“The NPP government decided to remove Charlotte Osei because they knew she wouldn't have listened to them. Consequently, let's change her and bring someone whom we can trust” (Field, 2025).

A Senior Vice President of Imani, Lawyer Kofi Bentil, lamented how Article 146 of Ghana's constitution was used to destroy democracy. He said:

“We have embarked on a race to the bottom as a country, and if we don't stop it, we will break this democracy, because democracies are very fragile, and on one issue and on one decision, they can break; therefore, it must be protected. Although the constitution was followed, yet it can be seen as a witch-hunt because somebody had a premeditated outcome, which they stated publicly. The NDC, including the President, saying we don't trust the CJ and that we cannot work with her” (TV3 Ghana, 2025).

In the case of Kenya, Article 221 of the Constitution grants the executive the authority to prepare the national budget. However, data collection revealed that the executive often uses this provision

to justify budgetary cuts to certain institutions, with the intent to exert influence over them. A respondent explained:

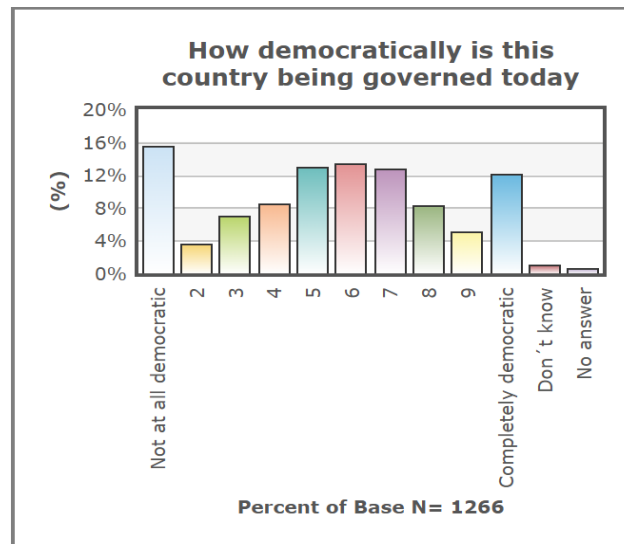
“The executive, at times, uses budget cuts against the judiciary to weaken their impartiality. This strategy has been used by both the present and the previous governments, especially during the time of Justice David Kenani Maraga. With the EC, the government does not provide them with enough resources during elections, e.g., voting materials, rightful gadgets, bonuses, etc. This compromises the efficiency and integrity of these offices that are supposed to work efficiently without bias” (Field, 2025).

Furthermore, by interviewing a researcher, he also confirmed how the executive had used a budget cut in Kenya. It was stated:

“Sometimes the government deliberately cuts the Judiciary’s budget to influence judges, and this undermines democracy. When courts are underfunded, they cannot operate independently or deliver justice efficiently, which weakens checks and balances. By using budget control as a political tool, the Executive erodes judicial independence and limits accountability, creating a situation where democracy itself is compromised” (Field, 2025).

These situations clearly demonstrate how the Executive strategically hides behind legal provisions and constitutional loopholes to influence institutions or individuals. By invoking the law selectively or manipulating existing provisions, it creates a façade of legality while pursuing its own interests. In many cases, the Executive also relies on certain state institutions or regulatory agencies as instruments to advance its agenda, ensuring that decisions appear lawful even when they primarily serve political goals, which can deteriorate democracy.

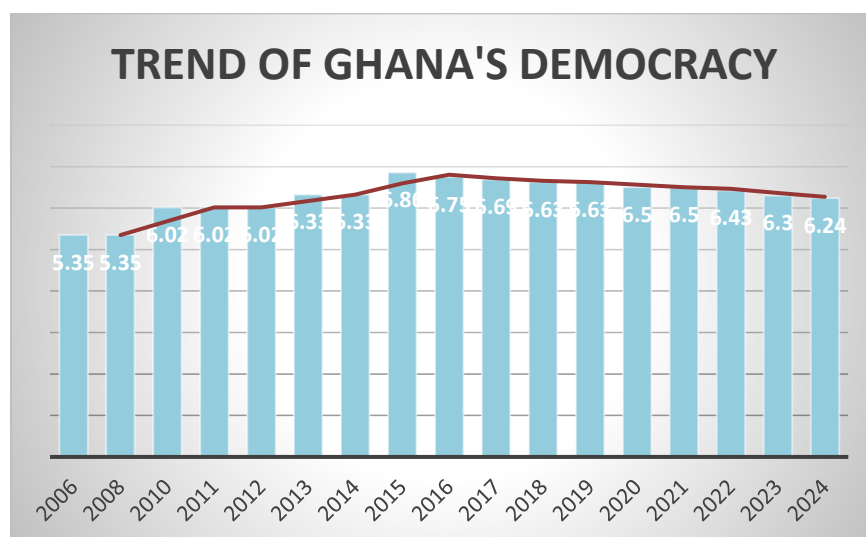
Figure 15 Perception from Kenyans



Source: from World Value Survey (2025)

Through a cross-time analysis (from 2017 to 2022) encompassing 1,266 samples collected, it was found that 195 respondents, accounting for 15.4%, characterized Kenya's governance as “not at all democratic.” Conversely, the data further elucidated that 152 respondents, constituting 12%, expressed complete agreement that the governance of Kenya is fundamentally democratic. Nevertheless, upon employing a rating scale ranging from 1-10. 1-5 ratings indicate that Kenya's governance is deemed undemocratic, and 6-10 indicate that Kenya's governance is deemed democratic. The data subsequently indicated that 649 respondents, representing 51.2%, perceived the nation's governance as aligned with democratic principles, while 598 respondents, constituting 47.3%, asserted that the country does not operate under a democratic framework (Refer to figure 15).

Figure 16 Ghana's democracy

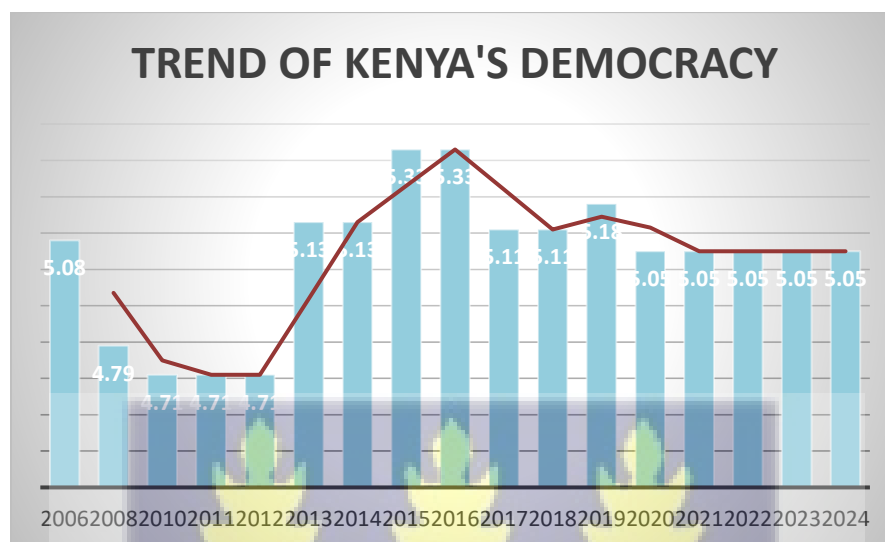


Source: Author's compilation from Democracy Index, 2023,2024

To ascertain the democratic position of Ghana and Kenya, empirical data from the democracy index were systematically gathered through a cross-time analysis spanning from 2006 to 2024. In the year 2006, Ghana attained a score of 5.35, which it sustained in 2008; however, in 2010, it recorded an increase in its score to 6.02, which persisted in 2011 and was again maintained in 2012. Nevertheless, in 2013, Ghana's score was elevated to 6.33, a score that was preserved throughout 2014. In 2015, Ghana achieved a score of 6.86 out of 10, which was a period during which Ghana reached its peak, but subsequently experienced a decline to 6.75 in 2016. The downward trend continued, with the score further decreasing to 6.69 in 2017 and subsequently to 6.63 in 2018, a score that remained unchanged in 2019. A further decline was observed in 2020, as the score dropped to 6.50 and remained stagnant in 2021; however, in 2022, the score further declined by 0.07, followed by an additional reduction of 0.13 in 2023, along with a 0.06 decrease reported in the current report, thus the 2024 report. Carefully studying the data, it illustrates that Ghana has been undergoing a democratic recession for the past nine years. Since reaching its zenith

in 2015 with a score of 6.86 out of 10, Ghana has subsequently declined to a score of 6.24, as indicated by the findings of the 2024 report (See Figure 16).

Figure 17 Kenya's democracy



Source: Author's compilation from Democracy Index, 2023,2024

Kenya, akin to Ghana, had a score between 5 and 5.9; consequently, both nations were categorized as a hybrid regime in 2006, with Kenya obtaining a score of 5.08. Nevertheless, this score experienced a pronounced decline in 2008, falling to 4.79, and continued to deteriorate to 4.72, a level that was sustained through 2011 and 2012. Contrarily, the score increased to 5.13 in 2013, and this same value was preserved in 2014. Furthermore, in 2015, the nation fortified its democratic framework by achieving a score of 5.33, which remained unchanged in the subsequent year. The score subsequently receded to 5.11 in 2017 and was replicated in 2018. However, in 2019, the country experienced a slight improvement, attaining a score of 5.18; nonetheless, it confronted another significant decline to 5.05, a score that has stagnated through to 2024. In a parallel context, Kenya has also exhibited indications of a democratic recession. Evaluating its

performance, Kenya managed to sustain an impressive score of 5.33 consistently throughout 2015 and 2016. Since that point, there has been a decline, although a modest recovery to 5.18 was observed in 2019. Subsequently, Kenya has continued to decline and has not achieved any further improvement (Refer to Figure 17). Although the two countries are experiencing democratic recession, the rate at which Ghana is declining is at a faster pace than Kenya.

5.5 Discussion of findings

This section presents a comprehensive conceptualization and thoughtful discussion of the research findings, grounded in rigorous data evaluation that addresses the four key research objectives. It critically engages with existing literature to contextualize the results in relation to the theory that underpins this thesis, offering insights and perspectives.

5.5.1 Research Objective 1: Establishing the pattern of democratic recession in both Ghana and Kenya.

Drawing on empirical data collected, scholarly literature and other secondary sources, the analysis reveals distinct yet interconnected dynamics informing democratic recession in both cases. As the data reveals, the democratic recession in Ghana is primarily driven by three interrelated factors: the function of government, political culture, and political participation. However, by carefully analyzing, these manifest through the excessive appointment of the executive by the constitution and the hybrid system being practiced.

The finding indicates that the Ghanaian constitution vests substantial appointment powers in the executive, enabling the president to appoint key governmental and sectoral positions predominantly with loyalists who supported the incumbent during campaigns and are also ready

to do the executive bidding. It then becomes difficult for the executive to even reshuffle, let alone carry out dismissals. This does not provide efficiency from the executive, clearly affecting the function of government. This practice manifests neo-patrimonial logic of African presidentialism tendencies noted by Bratton, M., & Van de Walle, N. (1994), as well as Osae-Kwapong (2024), who documents how executives resist reshuffling appointees to preserve factional support even when the appointees could not perform well, resulting in weakening the function of government. President Akufo-Addo's reluctance to undertake cabinet reshuffles despite visible performance deficits exemplifies this dynamic¹⁰.

It is also imperative to understand that the shared attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and values within a society or group that influence how individuals understand and engage with their political system cannot be detached from their political orientation (Almond & Verba, 2015). This shapes people's perceptions of political behaviour and their expectations of the government and political regimes towards democracy or authoritarianism.

Observing responses from the participants, it is noted that Ghana's political culture is clearly shaped by its hybrid regime characteristics, which have instead entrenched a political culture that privileges and reinforces democratic recession by inhibiting legislative oversight. MPs appointed by the executive are often captured and seen as part of the executive, reducing their willingness or capacity to hold the executive accountable, echoing evidence from Gyimah-Boadi (2021), who stressed how Ghana's hybrid features undermine democratic consolidation by weakening checks and balances. This executive-legislative fusion is perilous due to fostering institutional deadlock

¹⁰ <https://cddgh.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/CDD-Blog-Akufo-Addos-Ministerial-Reshuffle-Osae-Kwapong-.pdf>

or excessive concentration of power (Linz, 1990). In Ghana's case, the hybrid arrangement has normalized executive dominance as part of the country's political culture through the hybrid system, limiting the development of genuine horizontal accountability. Because this practice has entrenched itself within the political culture of Ghana over an extended period of time, it is evident that significant public attention has not been adequately allocated to the critical examination of how this phenomenon is gradually influencing and undermining the democratic processes and institutions within the country. This is due to the fact that the executive benefits from maintaining the status quo.

Moreover, consolidation of democracy is premised on political participation, which includes any actions taken by citizens intended to influence government decisions, communicate preferences and concerns to officials, or take part in the decision-making process (Sairambay, 2020). In contrast, the study finds that political participation in Ghana is further constrained by the executive's partisan distribution of appointments, which emanates from the appointment power of the executive. This excludes non-ruling party members from governance processes. Such practices resonate with theories of "competitive authoritarianism" (Levitsky & Way, 2010), where formal democratic institutions exist but are systematically manipulated to ensure the ruling party's advantage. By narrowing opportunities for pluralistic participation, Ghana's democratic institutions increasingly resemble arenas for partisan control rather than platforms for inclusive governance. This situation fuels winner-take-all politics and makes the election a "do or die affair" (Gyampo, 2010), since those who win elections gain total control by participating in the government, while those who lose are excluded; the election becomes a life-or-death battle, undermining the very foundation of democracy. This does not encourage broader consultative and political participation.

On the other hand, it is obvious from the data that democratic recession in Kenya emerges through intertwined factors centered on the function of government, electoral process and pluralism, political culture, and civil liberty. These also manifest through two key factors, thus through co-optation and unequal distribution of state resources.

The Kenyan case illustrates similar but distinct pathways of democratic recession compared to Ghana. One of the most significant dynamics is elite co-optation, whereby opposition leaders are absorbed into the ruling coalition through patronage appointments, as evident in the data analysis, where participants alluded to. This weakens the opposition's institutional capacity to act as a counterweight to executive power, producing what scholars term hegemonic preservation strategies (Slater, 2010). This co-optation blurs the lines between ruling and opposition parties, eroding the competitive nature of politics or elections and stifling avenues for dissent. Citizens' capacity to mobilize against government abuses is also curtailed, as state security forces respond to protests with repression because there is no strong and unified elite front to put the executive in check. This situation mirrors (Howard & Roessler, 2006; Levitsky & Way, 2010) description of how incumbents tilt the playing field in competitive authoritarian regimes, not by eliminating opposition, but by rendering it politically impotent. By co-opting the opposition in Kenya, the executive becomes more powerful in effect to silence dissenting voices that are supposed to put the executive on its toes. This creates a pathway that allows the executive branch to easily implement its programs and policies, which might not resonate with the people.

Again, by delving into the data, the study finds that the unequal distribution of state resources influence the Kenyan democratic recession, which reflects Kenya's entrenched elite and ethnic patronage politics. As the data revealed, resources are disproportionately allocated to political

elites, their supporters, and co-ethnic constituencies, reinforcing patterns of ethnic bloc voting, which continues to tense Kenyan political environment. This practice undermines issue-based politics and perpetuates electoral polarization and violence that is affecting Kenya's democracy. As an interviewee noted, if the national resources are shared equally, nobody will fight even during an election. This dynamic exacerbates ethnic cleavages in divided societies (Horowitz, 1989). Moreover, the executive often distributes fewer resources to pivotal institutions such as the Judiciary and the Electoral Commission, which is a strategy that compromises institutional independence and reinforces state capture, affirming Levitsky and Ziblatt's findings in 2018. These practices fit within the broader framework of neo-patrimonial governance, where formal institutions coexist with informal patron-client networks, but the latter dominate political outcomes. As Van de Walle (2003) argues, such systems prioritize regime survival over democratic consolidation, eroding institutional capacity and fostering systemic corruption.

Overall, both Ghana and Kenya exhibit elements of democratic recession that manifest differently in each country. The pattern of Ghana's democratic recession stems primarily from the constitution and the hybrid system, while Kenya's democratic recession is driven by co-optation and unequal distribution of resources. This implies that there exists no uniform pattern that influences democratic recession within the African context; nonetheless, it is contingent upon particular national circumstances. This contradicts (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018), who outlined three sequential stages of democratic recession: initially undermining the institutions that act as referees of the state, then moving to target the political opposition, and finally altering the fundamental rules governing the political process.

5.5.2 Research Objective 2: Examining how the interaction between the executive and other state institutions exacerbates democratic recession in Ghana and Kenya

Addressing the second research objective—examining how the interaction between the executive and other state institutions exacerbates democratic recession in Ghana and Kenya—the findings demonstrate how the executive interaction with other state institutions (thus parliament and judiciary) leads to institutional capture, undermines democratic checks and balances in both countries, albeit through differing mechanisms rooted in their political contexts.

In Ghana’s hybrid regime, the executive’s interaction with parliament is structurally embedded in Article 78 of the 1992 Constitution, which mandates the president to appoint most ministers from among sitting Members of Parliament. The study then finds that this dual role compromises parliament’s autonomy, as MPs simultaneously serve as cabinet ministers expected to oversee executive performance while politically aligned with it. In this context, it will be very difficult for Cassiel Ato Forson, the current Minister of Finance, to challenge a budget on the floor of parliament that he himself collaborated with the executive and prepared. It is therefore crucial to know that the continuous interaction is not just a passive exchange but rather a crucial catalyst that allows the executive to significantly impact the parliamentary proceedings (Shalaby & Williamson, 2024). This finding collaborates with Gyampo (2010, 2017), who stated that this convergence undermines parliament’s core legislative and oversight functions, weakening democratic principles. The resultant “blurring of powers” attenuates the checks on executive authority fundamental in liberal democratic theory (Diamond, 1999).

In addition, the judiciary is one of the major arms of government that safeguards democracy. The data gathered indicates that the interaction between the executive and the judiciary also exacerbates democratic recession. As respondents revealed, the executive exerts significant influence on the

judiciary by directly appointing and removing judicial heads, compromising judicial independence and impartiality. The recent removal of the Chief Justice on September 1, 2025, along with the strategic packing of courts, exemplifies executive encroachment designed to align the judiciary with ruling interests. This politicization of judicial appointments undermines the separation of powers doctrine and contravenes principles of judicial independence as emphasized (Joshua, 2025). The executive's ability to leverage judicial processes against opposition actors creates an environment conducive to democratic recession by marginalizing dissent.

Similar to the situation in Ghana, the research indicates that the democratic recession observed in Kenya is likewise entrenched within the dynamics that characterize the interaction between the executive branch and the legislature. Kenya's executive reinforces its dominance over parliament by forming coalitions with opposition MPs, effectively capturing them into support networks that facilitate the passage of executive agendas without rigorous scrutiny. Kenya's capacity to repeatedly maintain the status quo through these executive-legislative interactions suggests that, despite reforms aimed at strengthening parliamentary independence, informal political realities continue to favor executive control over Parliament (Mueller, 2014). This interaction compromises parliament's oversight role, reducing its institutional capacity to hold the executive accountable as described in Cheeseman et al.'s (2019, 2021, 2024) analysis of Kenyan political bargaining. The legislative body risks becoming an extension of executive power rather than a robust democratic check.

However, unlike Ghana, Kenya's executive employs more indirect methods to subjugate the judiciary. It is found that the executive has influence over the tribunal commission, which oversees judges' disciplinary matters, by securing majority representation on the commission. This

hegemony instils fear among judges. The process undermines their impartial adjudication through potential reprisals (Powe Jr, 1992; Fry, 2023), because cases related to government officials may result in them losing their position in the sense that the commission of enquiry would be appointed by the executive in the future. Additionally, the data revealed that the executive-imposed budget cuts intended to destabilize judicial functioning, weakening institutional capacity. These tactics reflect a strategic erosion of judicial independence that aligns with Riaz's (2022) findings on how it played a key role in destroying Bangladesh's democracy.

In general, the findings reveal that while the executives in both Ghana and Kenya employ different mechanisms of interacting with parliament and judiciary, the outcomes converge: weakened legislatures and compromised judiciaries. These demonstrate how the modern democratic recession in Africa often unfolds through incremental institutional erosion rather than outright authoritarian reversals, as it used to be. By manipulating institutional interactions, executives consolidate power and erode accountability, confirming Riaz (2022) and Levitsky and Ziblatt's (2018) observation that modern democracies deteriorate through gradual erosion of democratic institutions. However, democracy is declining at a faster rate in Ghana (with a drop of 0.62 between 2016 and 2024) compared to Kenya (with a drop of 0.28 between 2016 and 2024), suggesting that Ghana stands at a higher risk of losing its flawed regime to a hybrid regime if the current trend persists.

5.5.3 Research Objective 3: Assessing the role of the executive, rather than electoral management bodies, in facilitating democratic recession through electoral manipulation.

This section addresses the third research objective: thus, assessing the role of the executive, rather than electoral management bodies, in facilitating democratic recession through electoral

manipulation. The data reveal the executive's central role in shaping electoral outcomes through indirect control over electoral institutions and orchestrating electoral violence.

In Ghana, the Electoral Commission (EC) functions nominally as an impartial referee, but empirical findings from this study demonstrate that it operates under significant executive influence because the executive appoints and removes the chair. Scholarship emphasizes that the executive strategically appoints compliant officials within the EC, ensuring institutional decisions align with ruling party interests; therefore, the EC must go through thorough vetting (Owusu-Mensah & Akeliwira, 2022). The executive's power extends to covert interactions with electoral officials through intimidation of removal, and even threats of killing, forcing compliance with their duties. Therefore, the EC's independence is structurally compromised. The data clearly explain how the former EC was faced with threats of killing and to even burn down his father's house, accentuating the extent to which the incumbent manipulates the electoral process. Indication of the extent to which the EC faces a threat to compromise its decision.

By observing the data from Kenya, the study finds that electoral officials are perceived as partial or unfair, amplifying doubts about the credibility of the electoral commission (IEBC), clearly having a direct relation to the issue of bribery. This is premised on the relationship between the executive and the EC. It was found that the executive undermined institutional autonomy by appointing loyalists and orchestrating patronage networks that influence electoral outcomes (Cheeseman & Klaas, 2018; 2013). Upon the perception, both Ghana and Kenya exhibit popular rejection of referenda as legitimate mechanisms for democratic decision-making to select ECs due to distrust of executive manipulation of the processes that will lead to choosing someone.

Besides that, the data under this section reveal that both in Ghana and Kenya, pre-electoral violence, during polling violence, and post-electoral violence are frequently linked to executive strategy. Such violence serves as an instrument of intimidation to suppress opposition mobilization and manipulate voter behavior. The executive's tacit or direct sponsorship of violence corresponds with broader patterns of authoritarian resilience that leverage coercion alongside electoral processes (Higashijima et al., 2024). As respondents indicated, electoral manipulations are consistently orchestrated by the executive branch of government, primarily aimed at ensuring their continued hold on power. In furtherance, the study also finds that the citizens are not merely passive victims but also complicit in democratic erosion by accepting inducements or participating in partisan or political violence. This agency reflects embedded clientelist relationships whereby voters are mobilized or coerced by executive-aligned actors for electoral gains (Posner, 2005). The interplay between executive strategies and citizen behavior indicates a complex social contract shaping electoral manipulation and violence.

Taken together, the study finds that the electoral manipulations and violence that happen in three phases (thus, pre-election, during election, and post-election violence and manipulations) are orchestrated by the executive, whose primary objective is to maintain political power. This occurs by: Firstly, exerting influence over the processes of appointment and dismissal; Secondly, engaging in the bribery and intimidation of Electoral Commission officials; Thirdly, inciting citizens to perpetrate violence for their benefit. This finding aligns with the theory of electoral manipulation, which argues that democracy deteriorates as leaders strategically manipulate the electoral process to maintain power (Bermeo, 2016).

5.5.4 Research Objective 4: Examining how the ‘institutions of democracy’ are used by executives in Ghana and Kenya to weaken democracy itself.

The last research objective was to find out how institutions of democracy that are supposed to strengthen democracy are weaponized by the executive to destroy democracy itself.

In addition to the executive orchestrating electoral manipulation, the study further identified that the executive also engages with watchdog institutions. This dynamic has consequently contributed to a regression of democratic principles. In both Ghana and Kenya, the executive’s interference extends to independent watchdog bodies responsible for accountability, such as Ghana’s Office of the Special Prosecutor (OSP), Auditor General (AG), and Kenya’s Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP). Governments use bureaucratic frustrations and political influence to undermine these institutions’ mandates, constraining their prosecutorial autonomy and weakening anticorruption efforts. This interference aligns with the level of intimidation tactics used by the executive to intimidate public holders for the benefit of incumbents’ interest (Yeboah-Assiamah, et al., 2025).

By analyzing the data, it indicates that in Ghana, institutions meant to uphold democracy by fighting corruption are significantly undermined by executive interference. The resignation of the first Office of the Special Prosecutor (OSP), Mr. Amidu, and complaints of interference by his successor, Kissi Agyabeng, reflect persistent challenges to prosecutorial independence. The government’s tactical removal of heads of institutions such as the EC and the Auditor General, based on investigating government officials, creates broader obstacles towards democracy. This indirectly provides the executive with excessive powers, enabling control and obstruction of democratic checks. Here in Ghana, Appiah et al. (2014), identify systemic barriers faced by anti-corruption agencies, including a lack of budget and fiscal autonomy that restrict their effectiveness,

contributing to weakened institutional autonomy. Such limitations blunt their ability to hold officials accountable and erode the democratic function of these agencies as checks on power.

Similarly, in Kenya, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) has failed to prosecute state officials implicated in serious offenses, such as the killing of a six-month-old baby, by dropping charges. It is obvious that these cases were dropped because the accused involved were state officials. This confirms concerns about prosecutorial independence and executive interference pervasive in Kenyan governance. Kenya's executive has often ignored unfavorable decisions from independent bodies, highlighting systemic executive overreach. As noted elsewhere, such institutions serve as crucial quasi-judicial institutions safeguarding democracy, and their independence and operational autonomy are vital, yet these bodies face external pressures and interference, particularly from dominant political regimes (Xu & Xu, 2024), and when these bodies lose autonomy, democracy erodes because mechanisms for accountability are blunt (Persson et al., 1997). Therefore, the interference in these institutions demonstrates a common trend or intention to cripple these institutions from their watchdog role to a puppet institution.

The Police and EOCO have to protect the citizens, properties and also implement the laws of the state. Conversely, the study finds that the police, EOCO (in Ghana), and similar agencies, intended to protect citizens and implement laws, have instead been instrumentalized to undermine democracy. In Ghana, these agencies have unlawfully harassed opposition groups and activists without due process, weakening democratic rights. In Kenya, the police have perpetrated violent crackdowns on peaceful demonstrations, such as the Gen. Z protests, including unlawful arrests and killings. These actions indicate how security institutions have been weaponized to abuse and maintain executive control and silence dissent. This finding echoes the work of Cheeseman and Fisher on *Authoritarian Africa: Repression, resistance, and the power of ideas*, by articulating that

security forces are key instruments of repression; therefore, they are often deployed to intimidate, harass, arrest, or violently suppress opposition groups, protestors, and any form of political dissent (Cheeseman & Fisher, 2019). It is therefore imperative to know that, when these agencies are instrumentalized to serve executive interests, they become tools of repression rather than accountability, leading to the suppression of opposition, violations of democratic rights, and erosion of the rule of law. The law enforcement abuses serve as mechanisms for the executive to intimidate opposition and control political spaces for themselves. To that extent, they always abuse critics/demonstrators who condemn the incumbent's action.

The process of guiding and steering a state in a manner that is consistent with democratic principles is fundamentally grounded in the foundational legal framework established by its constitution, which serves as the supreme guiding document for governance and civic engagement within that political entity. Conversely, the data revealed how constitutional provisions are used as an instrument by the executives to weaken democratic institutions. In Ghana, Article 146 was invoked to remove the Electoral Commission, a key institution of democracy, in 2018, and similarly, to remove the Chief Justice, one of the main branches of government, on 1st September 2025, and has been replaced by executive appointment. Notwithstanding, the Ghana BAR Association, the Bar Council of England and Wales, and the Commonwealth Lawyers have condemned the decision by the executive to suspend the Chief Justice in the first place. They articulated profound apprehension regarding the suspension of Ghana's Chief Justice, Her Ladyship Justice Gertrude A.E.S. Torkornoo, who was appointed on 12 June 2023 by the erstwhile government of H.E. Nana Addo Dankwah Akufo-Addo. Such actions demonstrate how the executive leverages constitutional powers to centralize control over institutions that should operate independently (Bermeo, 2016).

By conceptualizing the perspective of the respondents, if the selection of the Chief Justice and additional judges for the Supreme Court of Ghana is not predicated upon extensive consultation, then there exists a significant likelihood that the executive may appoint individuals who are loyal to its agenda to occupy these positions, thereby perpetuating a cycle that future executives may exploit, which can lead to manipulation by the executive branch, consequently undermining the integrity of Ghana's democratic framework. In Kenya, Article 221 has been used by the executive to cut the judiciary's budget, thereby weakening judicial independence and the system of checks and balances critical for democracy. This budget manipulation compromises the judiciary's capacity to act as an effective counterweight to executive power. It is thus evident that the provision within the constitution, which is intended to safeguard democratic principles, is being utilized to undermine such principles. This collaborates with the argument that constitutional mechanisms are dual-edged; therefore, can empower but also be manipulated. For instance, provisions meant for accountability can be twisted to serve executive interests (Elkins et al., 2009). Therefore, constitutional design alone does not guarantee democracy unless there are safeguards against executive overreach and mechanisms to preserve institutional independence in practice. The data reveals how constitutional provisions intended as tools for democracy are exploited to consolidate executive power and weaken democratic institutions.

By and large, the study finds that the contemporary democratic recession in Africa differs significantly from the conventional type observed between the 1960s and 1980s, a period characterized by recurrent coups and counter-coups throughout the continent. Currently, institutions meant to protect democracy are instead being used to undermine it. The study revealed parallel executive interference in Ghana and Kenya's democratic institutions by instrumentalizing watchdog bodies, security forces (police), and hiding behind the provision of the law to deteriorate

democracy. Both governments constrain prosecutorial autonomy and politicize law enforcement to suppress dissent, weakening accountability and democratic checks. These findings engage with Bermeo (2016), Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018), and Lust and Waldner (2018), who argue that the modern-day democracy does not occur through men with guns but does so through institutional breakdown orchestrated by the leaders.



CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

6.0 Introduction

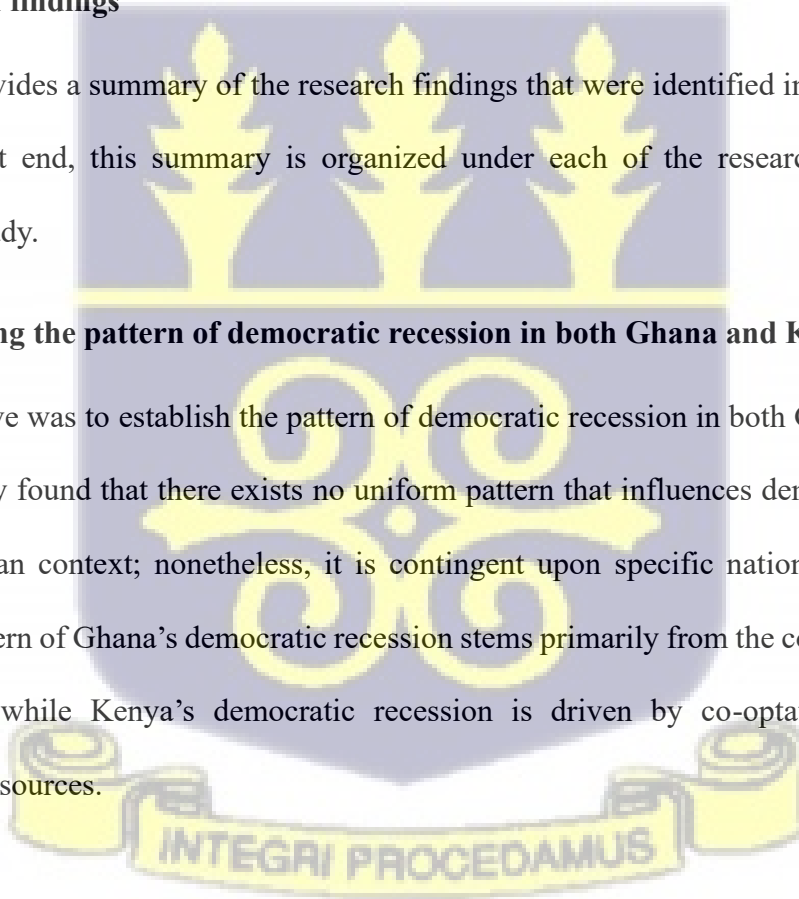
This chapter summarizes the core findings, drawing clear conclusions based on the evidence. Finally, it provides practical recommendations that stem directly from the data analysis and findings, contributing to both academic discourse and potential real-world applications of democratic recession.

6.1 Summary of findings

This section provides a summary of the research findings that were identified in the discussion of findings. To that end, this summary is organized under each of the research objectives that informed this study.

6.1.1 Establishing the pattern of democratic recession in both Ghana and Kenya

The first objective was to establish the pattern of democratic recession in both Ghana and Kenya. To this, the study found that there exists no uniform pattern that influences democratic recession within the African context; nonetheless, it is contingent upon specific national circumstances. Because the pattern of Ghana's democratic recession stems primarily from the constitution and the hybrid system, while Kenya's democratic recession is driven by co-optation and unequal distribution of resources.



6.1.2 Interaction between the executive and other state institutions exacerbates democratic recession in Ghana and Kenya

The second objective was to examine how the interaction between the executive and other state institutions exacerbates democratic recession in Ghana and Kenya. From the data, the study found that the interaction of the executive and other institutions exacerbates democratic recession through weakening the judiciary and compromising the legislature. Both Ghana and Kenya converge on this finding.

6.1.3 The executive, rather than electoral management bodies, facilitates democratic recession through electoral manipulation.

The third objective was to assess the role of the executive, rather than electoral management bodies, in facilitating democratic recession through electoral manipulation. Based on the data, the study uncovered that the electoral manipulations and violence that happen in three phases (thus, pre-election, during election, and post-election violence and manipulations) are orchestrated by the executive, whose primary objective is to maintain political power. This occurs by: Firstly, exerting influence over the processes of appointment and dismissal of ECs; Secondly, engaging with bribery and intimidation of Electoral Commission officials; Thirdly, inciting citizens to perpetrate violence for their benefit.

6.1.4 ‘Institutions of democracy’ as a weapon by the executives to weaken democracy itself.

The last objective was to examine how the ‘institutions of democracy’ are used by executives in Ghana and Kenya to weaken democracy itself. From the data, the study found that the contemporary democratic recession in Africa differs significantly from the conventional type observed between the 1960s and 1980s, a period characterized by recurrent coups and counter-

coups throughout the continent. Currently, institutions meant to protect democracy are being used to undermine it instead.

6.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study has found that there exists no uniform pattern that influences democratic recession within the African context; nonetheless, it is contingent upon particular national circumstances. Because the pattern of Ghana's democratic recession stems primarily from the constitution and the hybrid system being practiced, while Kenya's democratic recession is driven by co-optation and unequal distribution of resources.

Moreover, the study has indicated that the interaction of the executive and other institutions exacerbates democratic recession in Ghana and Kenya through weakening the judiciary and compromising the legislature.

Furthermore, the study revealed that electoral manipulations and violence, which occur in three phases (pre-election, during-election, and post-election violence and manipulations), are orchestrated by the executive, whose primary objective is to maintain political power. This occurs by: Firstly, exerting influence over the processes of appointment and dismissal; Secondly, engaging in the bribery and intimidation of Electoral Commission officials; Thirdly, inciting citizens to perpetrate violence for their benefit.

Lastly, the study has found that the contemporary democratic recession in Africa differs significantly from the conventional type observed between the 1960s and 1980s, a period characterized by recurrent coups and counter-coups throughout the continent. Currently, institutions meant to protect democracy are being used to undermine it instead.

6.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study proposes that;

Ghana must pay attention to the ongoing constitutional review.

There is an urgent need for Ghana to pay close attention to the current constitutional review process. This process has been long overdue and should not be left incomplete or ignored again. It is a critical step toward addressing the challenges in the governance system and must be pursued with commitment and urgency. Leaving it hanging only delays the reforms that are necessary for national democratic progress. One of the core issue the constitutional review must address is the concentration of power in the executive arm of government. Currently, the president holds the authority to appoint over 1,000 public office holders, giving the executive far too much influence over key institutions. This centralization undermines checks and balances and risks turning these institutions into extensions of the ruling government rather than independent bodies serving the public interest. To promote good governance, the country must decentralize this power and limit the executive's role in appointments. To achieve that, the review committee must inculcate in the constitution independent bodies to oversee the appointment of leaders to crucial institutions such as the Electoral Commission, the Judiciary and the Office of the Auditor-General and must be free from political interference because these institutions play vital roles in ensuring democratic transparency and financial accountability.

Change of government system

In addition, Ghana must reconsider its hybrid political system, which allows members of parliament to serve simultaneously as ministers. This practice creates a conflict of interest and undermines the legislature's ability to hold the executive accountable. Members of Parliament

should be fully dedicated to representing their constituencies and performing oversight duties, not serving in executive roles or on boards where their independence is compromised. Ending this dual-role system would promote a clearer division between the legislative and executive branches.

Separate political parties from government.

State institutions in Ghana and Kenya must operate independently of political party influence. Too often, decisions taken by the executive are influenced more by the interests of the ruling party than by what is best for the state. This dynamic creates a culture where party loyalty is rewarded over competence, and it is common to see party officials appointed to government positions. Such practices obscure the line between governance and politics, weakening institutions and eroding the principles of meritocracy and democracy.

Encourage Civil Society Organizations' (CSOs) Activism

Another crucial area for reform is the empowerment of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and ordinary citizens. A vibrant and active civil society is essential for holding government accountable and ensuring transparency. Citizens must be educated, organized, and ready to speak out when institutions in Ghana and Kenya fail and to demand responsible governance. Strengthening CSOs gives people a platform to raise their voices and actively participate in the democratic process.

Kenyan Laws Must Be Enforced

The Kenyan 2010 constitution is fit for democratic governance; therefore, the executive arm of government must implement the laws appropriately. This is essential to maintaining a clear separation of powers, which is a fundamental principle of any healthy democracy. When the executive respects the roles of the legislature and judiciary, it helps create a balance where no

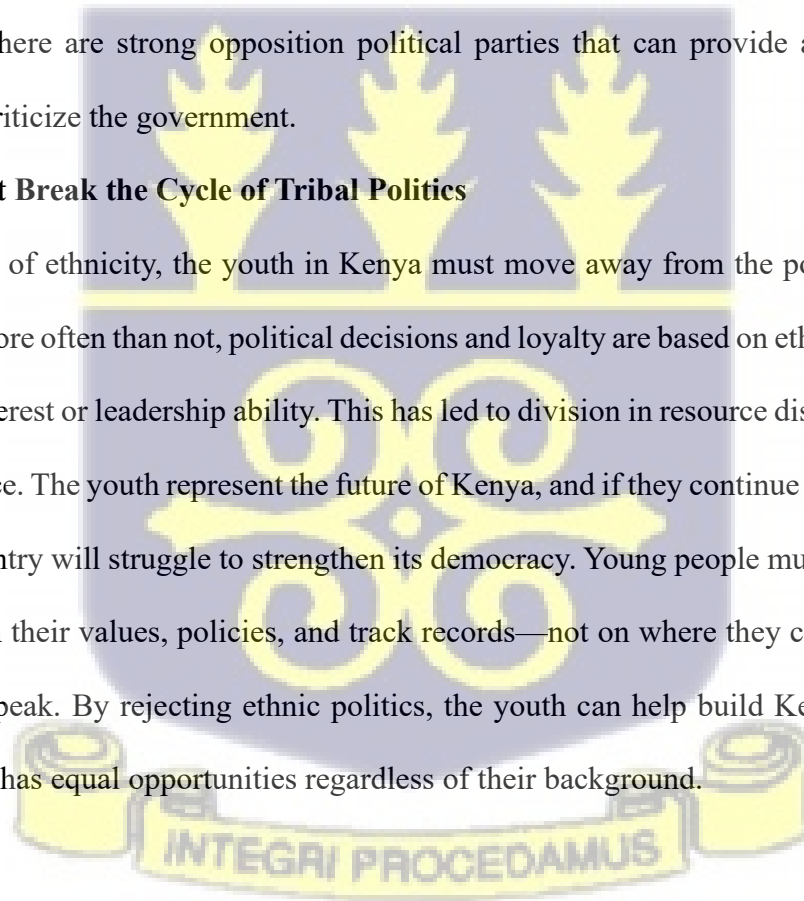
single branch becomes too powerful. Unfortunately, in many cases, laws are passed but are not effectively implemented due to political interference and a lack of political will.

Encourage Strong Opposition Political Parties

Again, Kenya needs strong and organized opposition political parties. Opposition parties are not just about criticizing the government, they play a vital role in providing alternative ideas, keeping the government in check, and representing the voices of citizens who may not support the ruling party. When the opposition is weak, divided or compromised, the government faces little pressure to perform or remain accountable. A strong opposition encourages healthy competition, debates on national issues, and policy development that benefits all citizens. Kenya's democracy will grow stronger when there are strong opposition political parties that can provide an alternative and constructively criticize the government.

The Youth must Break the Cycle of Tribal Politics

Lastly, speaking of ethnicity, the youth in Kenya must move away from the politics of tribalism and ethnicity. More often than not, political decisions and loyalty are based on ethnic identity rather than national interest or leadership ability. This has led to division in resource distribution, tension, and even violence. The youth represent the future of Kenya, and if they continue the cycle of ethnic politics, the country will struggle to strengthen its democracy. Young people must begin to choose leaders based on their values, policies, and track records—not on where they come from or what language they speak. By rejecting ethnic politics, the youth can help build Kenya's democracy, where everyone has equal opportunities regardless of their background.



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APPENDIX



UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE SCHOOL
OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

GRADUATE CANDIDATE: KENNEDY DONKOR

**RESEARCH TOPIC: STATE ACTORS AND DEMOCRATIC RECESSION IN AFRICA:
EXPERIENCE FROM GHANA AND KENYA**

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. How do the patterns of democratic recession happen in both Ghana and Kenya?

- In your view, how has democracy evolved in Ghana/Kenya over the past decades?
- Think tanks and scholars have concluded that Ghana and Kenya are experiencing a democratic recession. Therefore, what do you think are the main drivers of democratic recession in Ghana/Kenya?
- What then can be done to resolve this predicament?

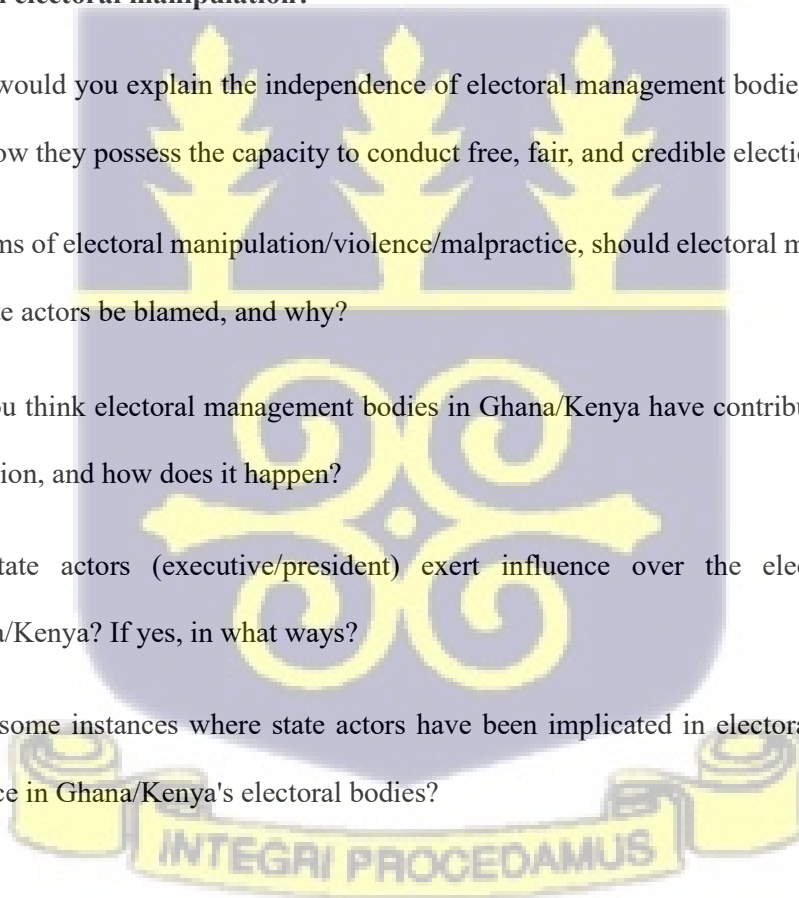
2. How does the interaction between the Executive and other state institutions exacerbate democratic recession in Ghana and Kenya?

- Does the relationship between state actors (executive/president) and other state institutions (thus the Legislature and Judiciary) in Ghana/Kenya lead to a democratic recession? If yes:
- How do these interactions manifest democratic recession?

- Also, what are some of the strategies these executives use to undermine the institutions they interact with?
- Can you provide examples of instances where the interaction between state actors (Executive/President) and institutions has led to the deterioration of democratic norms or processes in Ghana/Kenya?
- In your opinion, what reforms are most needed to improve the relationship between state actors and other state institutions regarding democratic recession in Ghana/Kenya?

3. Why should the Executive, rather than electoral management bodies, be blamed for democratic recession through electoral manipulation?

- How would you explain the independence of electoral management bodies in Ghana/Kenya, and how they possess the capacity to conduct free, fair, and credible elections?
- In terms of electoral manipulation/violence/malpractice, should electoral management bodies or state actors be blamed, and why?
- Do you think electoral management bodies in Ghana/Kenya have contributed to democratic recession, and how does it happen?
- Do state actors (executive/president) exert influence over the electoral process in Ghana/Kenya? If yes, in what ways?
- What are some instances where state actors have been implicated in electoral manipulation or interference in Ghana/Kenya's electoral bodies?
- What reforms are needed to strengthen the independence and effectiveness of electoral bodies and prevent state actors from undermining the electoral process in Ghana/Kenya?



4. How do executives in Ghana and Kenya use ‘democratic institutions’ to weaken democracy itself?

- Can you explain to me some democratic institutions used by the executive (State actor) to undermine democracy?
- In what ways do these state actors, particularly the executive branch, use such institutions that deteriorate democracy?
- Can you allude to specific actions taken by the executive in Ghana/Kenya that demonstrated how they hid behind those institutions to destroy democracy?
- In your opinion, what can be done to curtail the situation?

