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How a Democracy Survives: Explaining the Process of Democratic Consolidation in Benin *

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Abstract

Benin, an impoverished nation in West Africa, has been consistently ranked as one of Africa's best democracies. While countries in the region have seen major democratic backlashes, this study seeks to explain how it is that Benin's democracy has survived since 1991. This paper operationalises a theoretical framework of democratic consolidation based on three approaches — structures, attitudes and behaviour — through 11 factors. In applying this framework to the case, the research analyses qualitative data longitudinally (through inter-country time comparisons) and cross-sectionally (with similar nations in the region). It then triangulates the findings with qualitative scholarly remarks and suggests the explanatory value for each factor. Based on the findings, I argue that Benin's democratic survival, ultimately, is dependent on a lack of any major anti-democratic behaviour from its main political actors. This absence is likely attributed to strong institutional constraints on the presidency as well as a favourable pro-democracy attitudinal basis which have, likely, incentivised actors to behave democratically. However, the findings also indicate that several factors promoted in the field are not applicable to this case. Economic structures of income inequality and GDP per capita, as well as the institutionalisation of the party system, cannot account for the democratic survival in Benin.

1. Introduction

During the early 1990s the global political system underwent several significant changes, famously prompting Francis Fukuyama (1992) to refer to the period as “the end of history”. But with the fall of communism and the third wave of democracy, history was not ending, it was renewing. This became especially noticeable in Africa, and in particular in Benin, a West African state with 11 million inhabitants. Popular uprisings and a national conference in 1990 set the Beninese democracy-train in motion and, suddenly, a transition to democratic rule was underway. Within a year, a new constitution had been approved in a referendum, representatives elected to the national assembly, and ex-dictator Mathieu Kérékou electorally defeated (after 20 years in office) by Nicéphore Soglo (Heilbrunn 1993). For the years to come, Benin would go on as one of few nations in the region able to maintain its democratic rule.

Thus, despite some recent and still unfolding events as of April 2019, which might harden the situation for Beninese democrats in the future, the country’s historical standing as a democracy is strong (Preuss 2019; Roberts 2019). For instance, in the electoral democracy index from Varieties of Democracies, Benin ranks ahead of EU members Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary (Lührmann & Lindberg 2019:58). Yet, with around half of its population living in extreme poverty and illiteracy rates at 70% (World Bank 2019), the story becomes even more impressive. Therefore, while regional neighbours like Togo, Niger, Mali and Republic of the Congo (who also convened national conferences for democracy in 1991) are trying to find a way to get back on the train again, Benin is seated in first class.

In this paper, I will argue that Benin’s democratic survival, ultimately, can be explained by an absence of any major anti-democratic behaviour. This absence, in turn, is likely attributed to strong institutional constraints on the presidency and a stable public support of the democratic regime which has, fundamentally, incentivised actors to behave democratically.

1.1 Purpose and scope

The purpose of this research is to explain the democratic consolidation (understood here as democratic survival) observed in Benin from 1991-2018. In order to do this, I will systematically examine the case based on 11 indicators deriving from a three-dimensional theoretical framework — structural, attitudinal and behavioural — of democratic consolidation. Specifically, this research has three underlying aims. First, to develop and operationalise a theoretical framework of democratic consolidation. Second, to collect and analyse quantitative and qualitative data based on that very framework. And third, through the analysis, suggest which factors and perspectives that bear the most explanatory significance for the case of Benin.

In delimiting the scope, the paper will focus solely on the consolidation period, that is, the events since Benin's democratic transition in 1991. The study will thus not seek to explain why Benin underwent a democratic transition in the first place, but how it has since been able to sustain its democracy. The two main reasons for this has to do with significance and academic saturation. Frankly, the fact that Benin experienced a democratic transition is not what sets it apart. Several nations in the region underwent some changes in favour of democratic rule in the 1990s (like Mali, Niger, Congo and Togo), but few of them managed to maintain it. This is illustrated in Figure 1.1 where virtually all counties improve democracy in the early 1990s but eventually experience a backlash (Niger in 1996 and 2009, Congo in 1998 and Mali in 2012) except for Togo that only stagnated. The significance of the Beninese case is thus that its democracy actually survived.

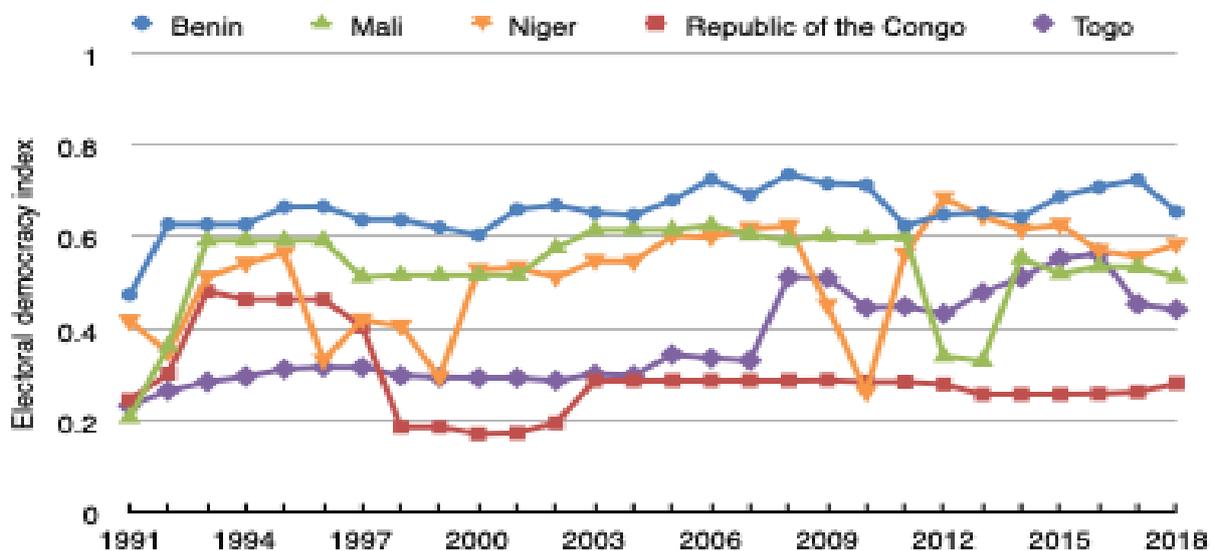


Figure 1.1 *Democratic development in selected countries. Source: V-Dem dataset v9 (Coppedge et al. 2019a).*

The second reason has to do with academic saturation. The democratic transition in Benin has been researched several times and scholars have, by and large, made similar explanations — see for instance Heilbrunn (1993), Robinson (1994) and Nwajiaku (1994). In contrast, scholars that have sought to explain Benin’s democratic survival have come to rather different conclusions (Gisselquist 2008). It does, therefore, appear more constructive to look past the transition and instead focus on what makes the case significant.

In order to adhere to the purpose of the study, achieve the aims and follow the delimitation outlined just above, a research question has been drawn up. The question has two

motives, to guide and maintain focus throughout the research, as well as to allow the study to reach a conclusion. It reads as follows: *What explains the process of democratic consolidation in Benin?*

2. Conceptual framework

Before delving further into the Beninese democratic experience, it is important to clarify and define several of the terms that are used extensively. As these are heavily debated concepts, like democracy itself, this section is devoted to that very purpose.

2.1 Democratisation & democracy

This research is situated in the field of democratisation which seeks to study essentially two things: how and why nations move from authoritarianism to democratic rule; and why some countries remain democratic whereas others slide back into authoritarianism (Grugel, 2002:12; Teorell 2010:1). In order to do this, however, it is necessary to know what democracy is and is not. Yet, according to Coppedge (2012:11), to reach an agreement on the actual definition of democracy have turned out to be one of the more difficult challenges in the democratisation field. Grugel (2002:6) characterises this as a debate between minimalists and maximalists. For some, the concept of democracy is so thick, it is essentially a list of 72 characteristics, ranging from holding regular elections and jury service to an unbiased state and the right to childcare (Held 1996, quoted in Coppedge 2012:14-6). For others, like Przeworski et al. (1996), the definition is much thinner, solely a regime filling governmental offices through elections in which the opposition has some chance of winning.

Now, it does make sense to settle this paper somewhere in the middle of these two understandings. Primarily, as a too broad definition would make democracy almost impossible to study and operationalise, while a too narrow one does not capture the essence of the word. Here, Teorell's (2010:30) two-folded definition appears somewhat preferable. Democracy, he argues, implies the holdings of periodic, free and fair elections as well as a set of political rights, like freedom of association and opinion. This follows Grugel's (2002:31) conceptualisation of democracy as not only a procedure to elect a government, but as a concept also embodying values and norms.

Normally, the democratisation field is distinguished between two different parts, transition and, the focus of this study, consolidation. In practice, this means that there is a difference in studying how an authoritarian regime transitions into a democratic one, and looking at how that democratic regime, once in place, survives. The conceptual difference reads as

follows. A democratic transition (like the one in Benin 1991) is completed when a (first) elected government is produced with social and political authority, ruling in accordance with the constitution and democratic values (Linz & Stepan 1996a; Valenzuela 1990). However, if democracy is something more than just a procedure to select a government, solely organising an election is not enough. Democratic consolidation, then, is a process that starts after the transition when democratic attitudes and habits must be established, with a certain longevity, in order to make sure that democracy survives (Linz & Stepan 1996a).

There are scholars of democratisation that disagree with this dichotomous division. Teorell (2010:32), for example, argues that it “muddies the waters”. In the larger context, however, his position appears to be an outlier. Coppedge (2012:78) has referred to this distinction not only as “conventional wisdom” but also as a necessary one. In fact, he argues, the factors contributing to democratic transitions are indeed different from those that help democracies survive.

2.2 Democratic consolidation

Now, there are two different conceptual approaches to democratic consolidation that have divided the academic field. One side defines consolidation merely as the survival of the democratic regime, while the other understands it as the deepening of the democratic structures. For the survival camp, with authors like Schedler (1998; 2001) and Linz & Stepan (1996a), the main point of democratic consolidation is to secure the already achieved levels of democratic rule. Schedler (2001) employs Valenzuela’s (1990) definition, arguing that a democracy should be considered consolidated when all observers expect it to last well into the future. This definition thus equals consolidation with regime continuity, studying the factors that should make democracy more likely to endure and less likely to break down. Conceptually, then, consolidating democracy is the process of making the potential for a breakdown so low that democracy will persist.

On the other hand, the case for understanding consolidation as the deepening of democracy is made by authors like Gasiorowski & Power (1998) and O’Donnell (1996). For them, consolidation is about positive changes strengthening democracy, moving up on the democracy scores. Another way of putting it would be to describe democratic consolidation as yet another transition. Conceptually, then, consolidation involves positive changes in order to complete a pending, or incomplete, second transition of deepening democratic rule. However, as Schedler (1998) forcefully makes the point, this muddies the waters even more. Because if a regime needs to move up on the democracy scores to be qualified as consolidated, one could

argue the transition probably did not produce a “good-enough” democracy. Or, as Linz and Stepan (1996a) put it, only a democracy can become a consolidated democracy. Thus, if a regime needs to improve its democracy ranking to be qualified as consolidated, that would be a subject for transition-studies, not for consolidation research.

To be clear, this study will thus embrace the view of democratic consolidation as meaning that of democratic survival or, in other words, regime continuity. This does not mean that positive changes are irrelevant (they may indeed be instrumental in making a democratic reversal less likely), but it does mean that positive changes will not be viewed as a conceptual precondition for a regime to classify as consolidated. Now, however, it is high time to delve into the framework of democratic consolidation itself.

3. A theoretical framework of democratic consolidation

The theoretical framework of this research will draw much upon Schedler’s (2001) seminal work of “measuring democratic consolidation”. In scrutinising the field, he distinguishes between three basic approaches used by scholars to predict the chance of survival for democracies. First, a structural perspective, viewing socioeconomic and institutional contexts as determinants of democratic consolidation. Second, an attitudinal approach, seeing elite and public support of, and adherence to, democratic rules and norms as instrumental. And third, a behavioural perspective, saying that how actors behave and what choices they make are ultimately what defines democracy. These three approaches towards consolidation differ not only in their objects of observation but also in their causal claims. Interestingly, however, Schedler (2001) also argues that this triad forms its own chain of causation. This means that, first, structural contexts shape general societal attitudes. That attitudes, in turn, move and determine behaviour. And that behaviour, finally, appears as a concluding determinant of regime stability as illustrated in Figure 3.1.

Structural contexts → actors and attitudes → behavior → democratic stability

Figure 3.1 *Causal hierarchy of examined approaches. Source: Schedler (2001).*

The reasons for using this broad and overarching framework are several. First, if one is to systematically examine the case of Benin, or any case for that matter, it is necessary not to confine the analysis to a single thematic approach. Some authors discussing Benin, like

Magnusson & Clark (2005), have emphasised behavioural factors, while others, like Seely (2009), have argued that structural aspects are of most importance. Therefore, there seems to be a need for a broader framework to synthesise previous explanations and arguments.

Second, many existing operational frameworks adhere to the minimal definition of democracy that is not employed in this research (as was explained in section 2.1). Huntington (1991:266-7), for instance, argues that a democratic regime is consolidated after two electoral turnovers. Although this definition is incredibly easy to operationalise, it essentially equates democratic consolidation to the holdings of elections. Further, it says nothing about the explanatory value of the factors which allow these elections to take place. Instead, the three-layered framework is better suited for the purposes of this paper.

Now, the next question to address becomes an operational one. What factors must be identified in order to explain the democratic consolidation in Benin? Based on the three perspectives — structural, attitudinal and behavioural — the sections below will address these questions and the inherent logic of the approaches. In the end, it will result in an operationalised framework of consolidation, pointing to 11 specific factors.

3.1 Structural factors of democratic consolidation

The first part of this framework is a structural one. Here, it is essentially argued that democracy is likely to survive if it rests upon favourable structural conditions. The casual assumption is thus that structural contexts form incentives and constraints that influence the survival of democracy (Schedler 2001). Two structures that generally receive the most attention, socioeconomic and institutional ones, appears to be of greatest relevance in forming this framework.

3.1.1 Socioeconomic structures

The idea of democracy as being dependent on economic performance dates back long. How long is unclear, but Lipset (1959) traced the thought back to Aristotle, born in Ancient Greece 384 BC. The theoretical assumption Lipset (1959) formulated was, essentially, that economic growth contributes to social changes favourable for a democratic regime. In terms of consolidation, these ideas translate into the proposition that levels of economic development, as a societal structure, render constraints (and opportunities) for a democratic regime. Both GDP per capita and income inequality are two such structures.

Starting with GDP per capita, Przeworski et al. (1996) calculated the life expectancy of new democracies based on their economic performance. A poor democracy with annual per capita GDP under USD 1,000, they argue, can be expected to live 8.5 years on average. If the per capita income lies between 1,000 and USD 2,000, life expectancy is 16 years, between 2,000 and 4,000 it is 33 years, and so on. Acemoglu et al. (2008), on the other hand, found that although per capita income and democracy were indeed positively correlated over the past 100 years, there was no causal effect one way or the other. Still, the relationship between GDP per capita and democracy is not an unreasonable notion. Further, it bears much historic weight into the democratisation debate. As such, it will act as a natural starting point for the analysis on Benin.

Another economic structure is that of income inequality. From a structural standpoint, it has been argued that extreme social and economic inequalities pose a threat to the stability of democratic regimes (Schedler 2001). In studying this empirically, Muller (1988) found that countries with extreme income inequality were likely to experience a democratic breakdown. He argued that if a democratic transition takes place in a country with extremely unequal distribution, this inequality will likely undermine the democratic regime and eventually cause it to collapse. On that note, Acemoglu and Robinson (2001) found that high economic inequality was likely to lead to political instability and, as such, that democracy was more likely to become consolidated if inequality levels were limited. Whereas Przeworski et al. (1996) do not agree with Muller's casual claim, they do argue that democracy is more likely to survive if inequalities are declining. Therefore, it seems appropriate from a structural perspective to include a measurement of income inequality.

3.1.2 Institutional structures

The second structural aspect of democratic consolidation is institutional. Here, it is argued that institutional dynamics dictate the success and failure of democratic experiments (Bratton & van de Valle 1997:242). From a structural perspective, institutions are here perceived as a structural constraint that can either discourage or encourage anti-democratic behaviour. Further, institutions form a set of boundary structures, one might call them institutional safeguards, implemented to lock the democratic regime in place (Schedler 2001). But, then, which institutional structures are essential for democratic survival? Three aspects appear as key. The first two has to do with these safeguards, or checks and balances, that ensure constraints on the power of the executive, whereas the third deal with the functioning of the political parties.

Starting with the first point, Bratton & van de Walle (1997:242) argue that the concentration of political power to an all-powerful president constitutes a grave threat to

democratic stability. Indeed, unchecked executive power may result in “the slow death” of democracy (Bratton & van de Walle 1997:235). It is thus vital, for democracy to survive and not slide back into authoritarianism, that there are effective institutional constraints on the most powerful player in the democratic regime (for Benin, the president). Such constraints are usually exercised in two ways, through the judicial and the legislative branch. The judiciary plays a critical role as it has the ability to prevent a president’s tendency to manipulate rules (in the constitution) and instead assure the rule of law (Bratton & van de Walle 1997:248; Przeworski et al. 1996:43). The legislator must also actively monitor the executive branch and check for abuses of power to ensure democratic survival (Bratton & van de Walle 1997:247-8). As such, it is evident that institutional constraints on the executive (both judicial and legislative) are crucial for democratic survival.

An institutional aspect of the electoral process includes the functioning of the party system. Przeworski et al. (1995:45) argue that a democracy, in general, does not survive when a presidential system is combined with a fractionalised, un-institutionalised party system. On that note, Valenzuela (1990) argues that democratic consolidation is favoured if social and political conflicts are all handled within the boundaries of democracy, through well-defined and institutionalised procedures. This means that parties and the party system must, in and of themselves, be institutionalised. As Bratton & van de Walle (1997:252) argue, a fractionalised party system with weak party organisations is connected to parliamentary instability, clientelistic politics and a weak political culture. Therefore, the degree to which the party system is institutionalised appears as important for democratic consolidation.

3.2 Attitudinal factors of democratic consolidation

The second part of this framework on democratic consolidation is attitudinal. This perspective builds much on the work of Larry Diamond (1999) who perceives democratic consolidation as the process of achieving and maintaining broad and deep legitimacy for the democratic regime. His attitudinal argument is two-folded. For one, all actors, as well as the broad public, should believe that the democratic regime is the most appropriate way to govern their society — thus rejecting any authoritarian alternatives. And second, all actors, political or not, must conform to both the unwritten and written norms and procedures of the democratic system (Diamond 1999:65). This follows Bratton & van de Walle’s (1997:236) point, that democratic rule cannot survive if it doesn’t enjoy popular (or elite) support. As such, the essential logic behind this approach is that a democracy, rooted in a “democratic consensus”, has never broken down (Schedler 2001). Below, three ways on how to operationalise this perspective

are laid out. First, whether or not the public rejects one-party rule and thus supports the idea of democracy. Second, the degree to which the public expects democracy to live into the foreseeable future. And third, to what extent there are any significant anti-system movements, rejecting democracy as a way of governing.

The first point draws upon Linz and Stepan (1996b:6) who argue that a strong majority of public opinion should believe that democratic procedures are the best way to govern collective life. In other words, the attitudes of the public must reflect a rejection of authoritarianism and one-party rule. Diamond (1999:65) agrees with this, saying that at mass levels, people should believe that democracy is better than any alternative to governing. Attitudinally, thus, there must be a normative consensus independent of policy performance and who is in power at the time (Diamond 1999:65,175). But then how much public support is enough? Diamond (1999:68-9), quoting some empirical evidence, proposes that at least two-thirds of the population should believe democracy to be preferable. In terms of data, Diamond (1999:174) suggests that mass-level survey data on popular support is an “indispensable measure of progress towards democratic consolidation”.

The second point also deals with public support but expands the argument above. Instead of only seeing if the public is supportive of democracy, this aspect adds a perspective of regime continuity. Thus, if all major actors, including the public, expects democracy to survive, it is reasonable to assume that it will (Schedler 2001). This builds on Valenzuela’s (1990:16) notion of democracy as consolidated when all major actors, including the public, “expect the democratic regime to last well into the foreseeable future”.

Finally, the third attitudinal aspect is that all actors must adhere to the rules of the democratic game. No significant actors should seek to take down the democratic regime outside of the electoral process. As such, the support for anti-system alternatives should be small (Linz & Stepan 1996b:6). Consequently, if there is strong support for organisations performing outside the democratic system seeking to take the democratic regime down, democracy is not consolidated as it is not “the only game in town” (Diamond, 1999:65). To what extent there are any anti-system movements in the country, and their strength, would thus also appear as a significant indicator of attitudinal consolidation.

3.3 Behavioural factors of democratic consolidation

The third and final part of this framework is a behavioural one. From this perspective, democratic consolidation is dependent on the behaviour of major actors. In short, the idea is that democracy is safe, and thus likely to survive, when all players behave democratically. Or, as

Diamond (1999:65) puts it, democracy should not only be a commitment from leaders, it must be evident and routinised in their behaviour. This argument can also be expanded further by saying that if all relevant actors have adhered to democracy, they can, to some extent, be expected to continue doing so in the future. Democratic consolidation is, in that sense, dependent on an absence of anti-democratic behaviour. So what are the signs of when major players behave in a way that violates the basic rules of the democratic game? Schedler (2001) proposes three indicators; the use of violence, rejection of elections from the opposition and the “transgression of authority”. These are outlined and explained below.

The use of politically motivated violence goes against the basic fundamentals of democracy. Intimidation of voters and candidates, riots and assassination attempts of opponents are examples of behaviour that clearly does not help democracy survive but undermines it (Schedler 2001). In other words, actors who pursue their goals by force do not play within the democratic rules (Linz and Stepan 1996b:6). A large extent of politically motivated violence would thus seem to indicate that democracy is, behaviourally, far from consolidated.

Another example of anti-democratic behaviour is when candidates and parties refuse to accept the outcome of elections. This threatens the whole legitimacy of the democratic system and has been referred to as the “fraud syndrome”. That is, when parties allege fraud whenever they lose (or fear to lose) elections (Schedler 2001; Mozaffar & Schedler 2002). Despite what the reason might be, it is from a behavioural standpoint a sign of anti-democratic tendencies. Therefore, the extent to which opposition parties and candidates accept electoral outcomes is an indicator of behavioural consolidation.

Finally, the way elected officials and political actors exercise their powers are detrimental for the survival of democracy (Diamond 1999:69). Indeed, if major leaders (and especially the president) start to ignore the legal boundaries of their offices, bypass parliamentary decisions and disregard court rulings, warning bells should start to sound (Schedler 2001). If such violations develop into a recurrent practice, democracy is in danger. Therefore, a major aspect from the behaviour perspective is to look for “transgression to authority”, when elected leaders start to slowly tear down the democratic regime. Another way of framing this is to see whether or not the executive (the president in Benin) actually respects the constitution.

3.4 The operationalised framework

Thus far, this study has defined, explained and operationalised a three-dimensional framework of democratic consolidation specified with 11 measurable factors. For the sake of clarity, these are summarised in Table 3.1. Now, by nature, this framework does not capture

every single existing explanatory variable for democratic consolidation out there. Still, however, given the circumstance of this study, its significance lies in capturing the main schools of thought.

Table 3.1 An operationalised framework of democratic consolidation

<i>Socioeconomic</i>	Structural <i>Institutional</i>	Attitudinal	Behavioural
1. GDP per Capita	1. Judicial constraints on the executive	1. Public support of the democratic regime	1. Politically motivated violence
2. Income inequality	2. Legislative constraints on the executive	2. Public expect democracy in the future	2. Opposition accepts electoral outcomes
	3. Party system institutionalisation	3. Anti-system movements	3. Executive respects constitution

4. Methodology

In this section, the employed research methods will be explained and motivated. Possible limitations are discussed under each sub-section.

4.1 Research design

This research, as many in the democratisation field, is drawn up as a case study. The benefits of the case study design align well with the purpose of this research. Following Bryman (2012:66), a case study is an intensive and detailed analysis of a single case, allowing the researcher to untangle its complexity and particular nature. In other words, a case study allows the researcher to look at depth at a phenomenon (democratic consolidation) within its actual context (Benin) (Hague et al. 2016:92). According to Coppedge (2012:116), case studies also have the advantage of being multifaceted and multidimensional. As this study will examine the case from multiple approaches, this further motivates the selection of the case study method. Taking place in a framework of theory and, given that prevailing propositions will be applied to the case, this case study corresponds in part to Lijphart's (1971) definitions of the theory-infirming/confirming approach.

Still, as with any method in the social sciences, the case study approach comes with its limitations. Bogaards (2019), for instance, in reviewing research methodology in the field, mentions a common inability to generalise. This point about external validity is also lifted by Bryman (2012:69) as well as Coppedge (2012:115) and thus seems crucial to address. Now, it is

not an overarching ambition of this research to provide generalisable findings. Still, however, a theory-concerned case study can, via its findings, contribute to theory building (Lijphart 1971). Specifically, as stated by Bogaards (2019), it can rule out alternative explanations and help polish existing propositions. It is likely, through its analysis, that this study will be able to contribute towards theory building in this regard.

4.2 Data collection

The data collection will be based on the 11 indicators suggested in section 3.4 and will come both from quantitative and qualitative sources. A detailed outline of the sources used for each specific indicator is available in Appendix A, while a basic summary is presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Outline of data collection

Quantitative statistics	Qualitative explanations
A) World Development Indicators ¹	A) Academic articles and books
B) Afrobarometer Surveys ²	
C) V-Dem Dataset ³	B) News articles

Notes: ¹World Bank (2019) dataset. ²Round 3-7, (2005-2018). ³Version 9, see Coppedge et al. (2019a; 2019b).

The quantitative data comes from three sources. Now, using the World Bank and Afrobarometer datasets is rather straightforward in the sense that they are measuring classical, factual indicators (like GDP) numerically. One could, however, be critical of how Varieties in Democracy (V-Dem) approach transforming arguably very complex issues, for instance “legislative constraints on the executive”, into a numerical scale. Naturally, the authors behind V-Dem are better suited to argue for its methodology and significance, see Lindberg et al. (2014), but three facts are comforting. First, that country experts, including native borns, code and evaluate the variables. Second, that these coders set a confidence interval of how certain they are of the rating. And third, that the V-Dem data today is widely used in the academic field — see for instance Mainwaring & Bizzarro (2019).

Still, however good the coded data is, as Coppedge (2012:258) argues, there becomes a gap between theory and reality when a complex issue is reduced to a numerical indicator. The

way through which this study seeks to counter this is to use a mixed methods approach and collect qualitative sources. Again, see Appendix A for details.

4.3 Data analysis

The data analysis addresses one major issue for this research — how should the data be analysed in order to distinguish the significance of each factor? While the aim is not to establish causality or pin-point correlations, it is to trace out which of the factors that seem to be of explanatory value for the case of Benin. Given that, I will employ three procedures. The quantitative data will be analysed both longitudinally and cross-sectionally while the qualitative data will be used to triangulate the findings.

Longitudinally, the study will compare Benin with itself at different times. Here, the logic of inference says that any factor that did not change from time A (1991) to time B (2018) cannot, generally, be the cause of an outcome observed only in time B (Coppedge 2012:118). However, for the purposes of the research, that logic must be modified. Democratic consolidation is here understood as democratic survival, in other words, the outcome in Benin has remained fairly constant both in time A and B (see Figure 1.1). Thus, in order for a factor to have affected that static dependent variable, one would expect it to, either, also have remained static or changed positively. If a factor develops negatively from time A to B, however, it would logically not be able to account for a dependent variable remaining static. Such a factor would, generally, be expected to have a low explanatory value. On the other hand, a factor which longitudinal development is either positive or constant (at high levels) would, generally, be expected to have a higher explanatory value.

Cross-sectionally, the study will compare variables for Benin with other countries using a most-similar design. The logic behind this approach is that the cases should be as similar as possible, except for the dependent variable (democratic survival). If the states being studied perform similar in variables x and y , those very variables should not be able to account for the difference in outcome (Hague et al. 2016:96). The comparative nations chosen for this study are Mali, Niger, Republic of the Congo and Togo. This selection was made on three grounds. First, in being structurally similar, these are Francophone countries located in West Africa. Second, they did, like Benin, hold a national conference to begin a democratic transition in 1991 but has since experienced a backlash to authoritarianism. Finally, to ensure that the qualitative data is applicable, the countries have been used previously by scholars in comparison to Benin. Again, the nations which correspond to these criteria are Togo, see Seely (2009), Niger, see Gazibo (2005), Congo, see Magnusson & Clark (2005), and Mali, see Dickovick (2008).

Now, in using the cross-sectional and longitudinal approaches for quantitative data analysis, this study is not looking for causal connections, but rather average tendencies that can be further elaborated (Coppedge 2012:257). Such elaboration takes place in a framework of triangulation — where scholarly qualitative accounts of the case are used to “check and correct” the quantitative data (Bryman 2012:635).

5. Empirical analysis

In this section, the 11 factors indicated in Table 3.1 will be applied to the case of Benin. Quantitative data for each indicator will be analysed longitudinally and cross-sectionally (with Mali, Niger, Republic of the Congo and Togo), and then triangulated with qualitative accounts when such are available. A summary of the results can be found in section 6.

5.1 Structural socioeconomic factors

For this approach, the two factors identified in section 3.1.1 are examined below.

5.1.1 GDP per capita

First and foremost, the structure of economic growth will be examined. Here, the World Bank (2019) provides data on GDP per capita (in parity purchasing power, international dollars) which allows for cross-country comparisons. This is shown in Figure 5.1. Benin has, internally, steadily moved from below USD 1,000 in 1991 to above USD 2,200 by 2017. The longitudinal development is thus positive and the claim from Przeworski et al. (1996), that democracy would have survived for 8.5 years at the time of the transition, appears as fairly inaccurate.

Comparatively, three of the four surveyed nations appear to have performed similarly to Benin, especially Mali. Togo and Niger, although at lower levels, have also seen similar developments over time. While Congo is a clear outlier at much higher levels, around USD 2,000 above, it is also less democratic (Freedom House 2019:16). Therefore, in comparison, economic development is not something that has set Benin apart, and the explanatory value from the cross-sectional point of view should thus be considered low.

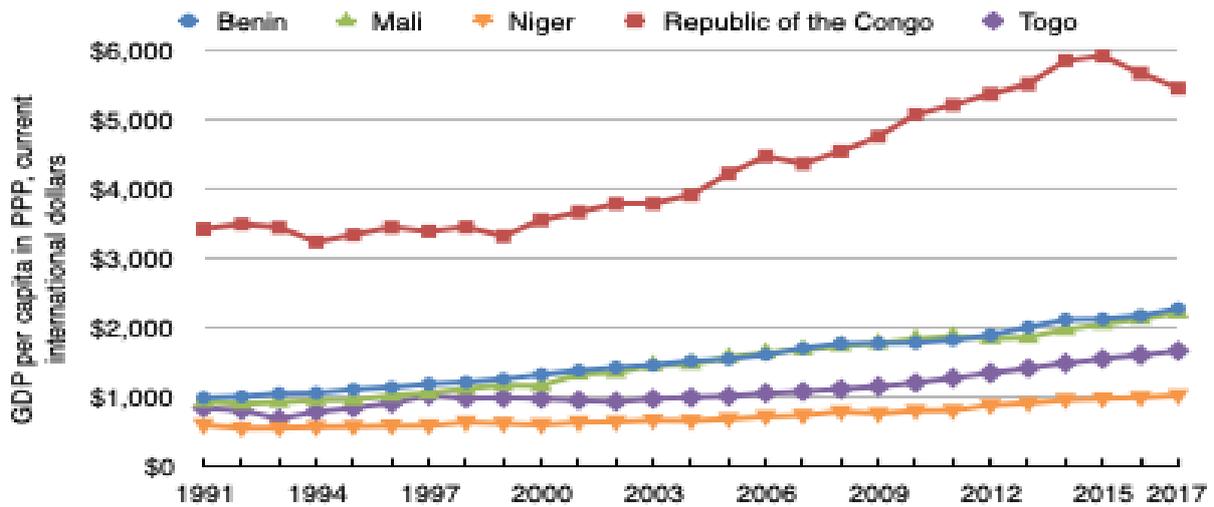


Figure 5.1 *GDP per capita. Source: World Bank (2019)*

Now, both Gisselquist (2008) and Gazibo (2005) argue that this increase in the economy, although moderate, has contributed to Benin’s consolidation. Gazibo (2005) concludes that in circumventing an economic bankruptcy (much in relying on foreign aid), Benin avoided domestic dissatisfaction with the new democratic regime. One could thus argue that the increase in GDP per capita, as a favourable structural condition, has helped sustain democratic consolidation. However, in a comparative perspective, both Niger and Mali experienced democratic backlashes despite having increasing economies like Benin. Thus, the explanatory value of this factor, it will be argued, appears as relatively low.

5.1.2 *Economic inequality*

The second factor is income inequality. The World Bank (2019) calculates the GINI Index, measuring the extent to which distribution of income deviates from a perfectly equal distribution pattern. Unfortunately, the available data is scattered and, for Benin, solely spans from 2003 to 2015. Still, during this time, the GINI Index (where 100 represents the most unequal) increased dramatically from 38 to 48. Cross-sectionally, instead of performing in the middle as in 2003, Benin is by the latest available numbers instead underperforming Togo (43), Niger (34) and Mali (31), all of which are significantly less unequal.

Qualitative accounts here, however, seem to be lacking. A report from the Bertelsmann Stiftung (2012:14) merely pointed out that rising inequalities have deepened dissatisfaction in society, and that more than half of the country still lives in extreme poverty. Thus, considering the drastic negative changes in inequality, both cross-sectional and longitudinal, its ability to explain the democratic survival should be considered very low. In general, socioeconomic

structures appear to be of less significance here. It would, therefore, be reasonable to argue that Benin does not seem to have benefited from a very favourable socioeconomic basis for democracy.

5.2 Structural institutional factors

For this approach, the three factors identified in section 3.1.2 are examined below.

5.2.1 Judicial constraints on the executive

The first factor is the degree to which there are institutional judicial constraints on the executive branch of government. For this issue, V-Dem's index (with the same name) indicates, for instance, to what extent the judiciary operates independently and how well the executive complies with court orders (Coppedge et al. 2019b:46). Judging by Figure 5.2, Benin has made a significant positive move from 0.56 to 0.83 (with 1.0 being the highest). This means that judicial checks and balances have improved at high levels during the consolidation phase, making it likely to assume that this factor has contributed to the democratic survival. Further, from a comparative perspective, Benin is starting to outperform all nations (including Mali) around 2012. As such, both comparatively and longitudinally, this seems to be a factor with high explanatory value in accounting for the democratic survival.

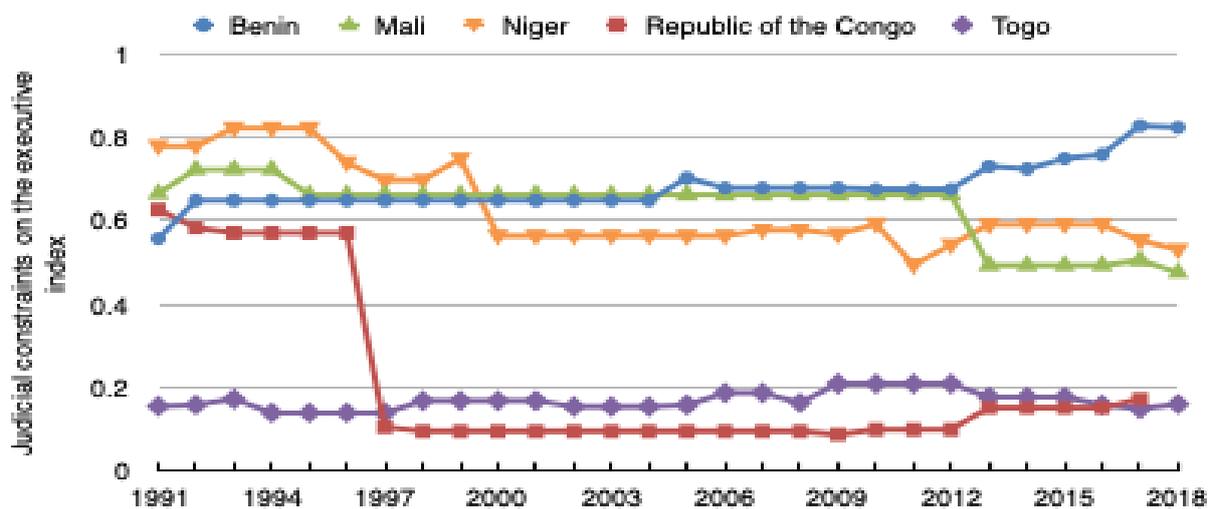


Figure 5.2 *Judicial constraints on the executive.* Source: V-Dem dataset v9 (Coppedge et al. 2019a).

Now, this institutional perspective has received a lot of attention from scholars. Seely (2009:154) and Fomunyoh (2001) describe how the constitutional court (the major judicial check on the executive) gradually has become a viable institution for solving disputes, having

demonstrated its independently in critical moments. For instance, during a budget crisis in 1994 when then-president Soglo tried to pass a budget without the approval of parliament, the court stepped in and deemed his actions unconstitutional. Further, as Amuwo (2003, quoted in Seely 2009:154) describes, when Soglo seemed prepared to challenge his loss in the 1996 election, the ultimate reason he decided not to was he knew it would not pass the court system. Another example is when then-president Kérékou tried to sabotage CENA, the independent electoral commission, during the 2006 election but failed. Here, the institutions and the judiciary had, according to Seely (2007), “united” to prevent Kérékou from undermining the polls.

The court also solved disputes over fraud in the 2001 and 2011 election, when irregularities were noted that the court investigated. However, it eventually certified the results as fair (Gisselquist 2008; Souaré 2011). The argument here is thus that in relying on its historical record and demonstrated strength, the judicial institutions have become an effective check on executive power and electoral misconduct. These qualitative accounts corroborate the quantitative finding and paint a clear picture of a judiciary that has built a reputation of independence and fairness, with an ability to divert crises of executive overreach. The judicial institutions thus appear to play a very important role in explaining consolidation in Benin.

5.2.2 Legislative constraints on the executive

It is not only the judiciary that must contain the executive but the legislature as well. The “legislative constraints on the executive index” by V-Dem captures the ability of the parliament to question, investigate and exercise oversight on the executive (Coppedge et al. 2019b:46). The data is shown in Figure 5.3. Here, Benin has scored consistently high, remaining relatively static in the higher rows around 0.7-0.8 (with 1.0 being the highest). Comparatively, it is Benin and Niger that stand out, scoring significantly above the others. Thus, as this factor has remained consistent at such high levels, it is likely to be of significance.

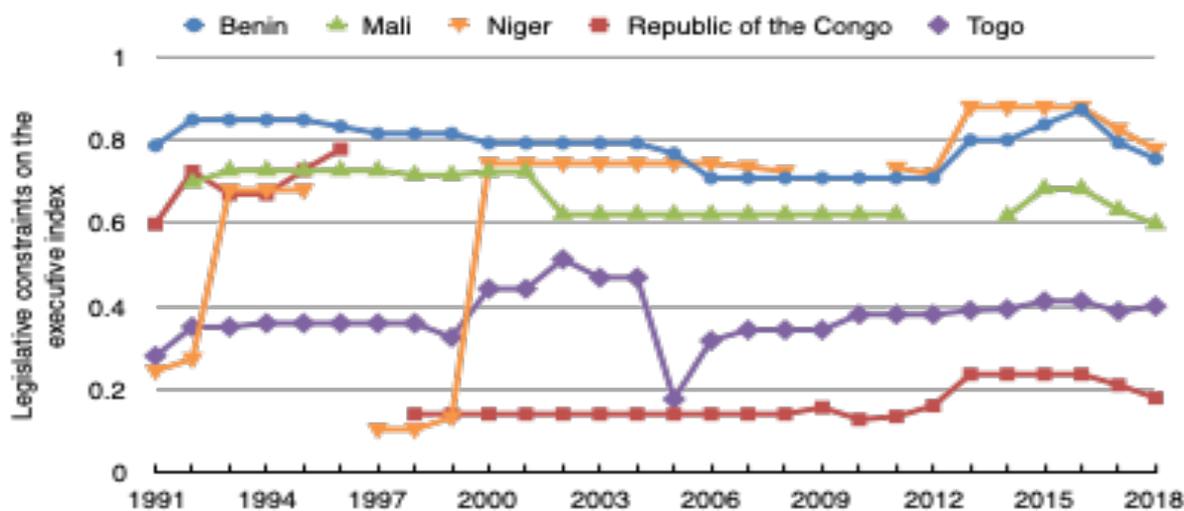


Figure 5.3 *Legislative constraints on the executive.* Source: V-Dem dataset v9 (Coppedge et al. 2019a).

Bierschenk’s (2009) qualitative account of this issue, however, stand in some conflict with the V-Dem statistics. In fact, he argues, the Beninese parliament is predominantly weak in comparison to the executive and can easily be isolated or bypassed. As it lacks the technical capabilities to challenge the administration, it cannot practically exercise oversight (Bierschenk 2009). Bailey (2017), however, takes the other side. Using the example of when now-president Talon’s single-term limit amendment to the constitution was defeated in parliament, he argues that Benin is very different from other African countries. Evidently, in Benin, the president cannot reform the constitution virtually at will through a politically obedient legislature. It remains, however, unclear how these two authors are able to draw such vastly different conclusions. Still, the argument that emerges is that consistently strong legislative constraints on the presidency (including increasing judicial ones since 2012) are factors that set Benin apart and thus seem to be of high importance in explaining the democratic consolidation.

5.2.3 Party system institutionalisation

Finally, the degree to which the political parties are institutionalised will be analysed. Here, V-Dem’s “party institutionalisation index” measures various attributes of political parties, including depth of organisation, coherence to ideology and links to civil society. The higher the score on the index generally indicates a more institutionalised party system (Coppedge et al. 2019b:281).

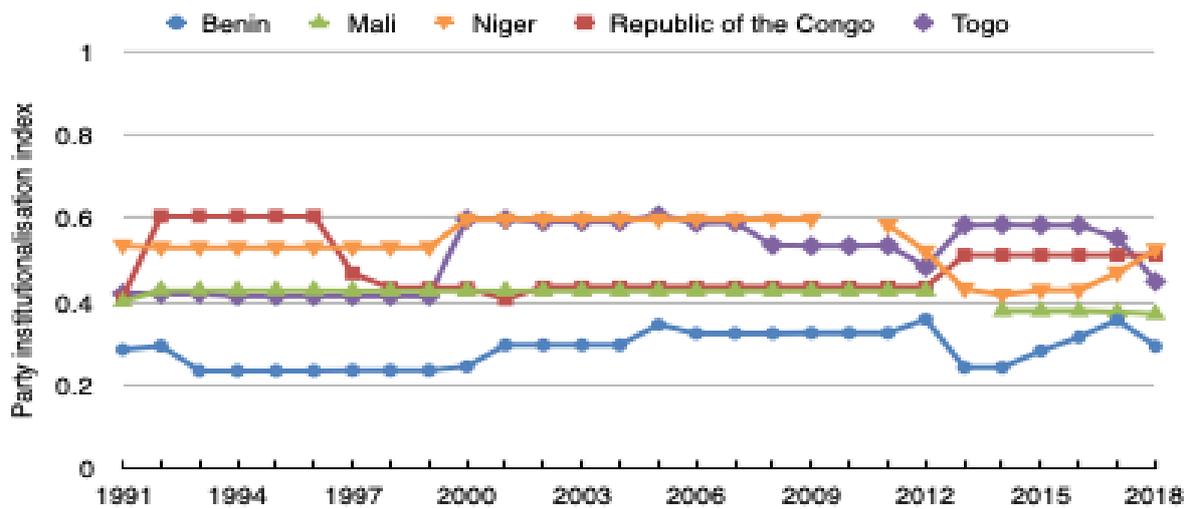


Figure 5.4 *Party system institutionalisation. Source: V-Dem dataset v9 (Coppedge et al. 2019a).*

As illustrated in Figure 5.4, Benin has performed rather stable from 1991 to 2018, generally varying between 0.2 and 0.3. This indicates, on its own, that the Beninese party system has remained highly un-institutionalised throughout the period of consolidation. Comparatively, furthermore, Benin is scoring consistently lower than its regional neighbours. It is significantly below even Mali, a country for which Vengroff (1993) argued it is unclear if even successful parties survive until the next election. Thus, not only has the Beninese party system remained un-institutionalised for a long time, it also fares much worse than in comparable countries. This would logically indicate that this factor is of low significance in explaining Benin's consolidation. Authors like Gisselquist (2008 & 2014) has elaborated on the implications this has for the Beninese democracy, arguing in line with the statistics above that it is one of the most fragmented and least institutionalised on the entire African continent. Not only are the parties subordinate to individual leaders, they also lack cohesion, frequently dissolve and are linked to ethno-regional patterns. However, Gisselquist (2014) also states that this might have facilitated coalition-building. In that sense, diverse parties and shifting alliances might have helped to avoid very deep political and ethnic cleavages in the Beninese society (Gisselquist 2008). Yet, broadly speaking, Gisselquist (2014) concludes that the party system (and its lack of institutionalisation) has not played any decisive role in affecting democracy. Ultimately, the quantitative empirics analysed here has not been able to prove otherwise.

5.3 Attitudinal factors

For this approach, the three factors identified in section 3.2 are examined below.

5.3.1 Public support of democracy

First, it is appropriate to examine the degree to which the public supports democracy. However, instead of looking at people who bluntly say that they are in favour of democracy, it is more fruitful to go one step further and see if people find democracy as the preferable type of regime. This means that, if the public inherently supports democracy, they must also reject one-party rule. In the Afrobarometer survey, since round 3 in 2005/2006, respondents have been asked whether they approve or disapprove of the statement “only one party is allowed to stand for election and hold office”. Unfortunately, some countries only started participating in the survey by 2010, and Congo has yet to be included.

Judging by Figure 5.5, Benin is performing consistently above Diamond’s (1999:68-9) threshold of two-thirds of the population. Although Benin does fluctuate, it has never gone below 70%. Comparatively, the other nations do score similarly but there is a lack of data to trace the developments back far. Based on the available data, however, the strong condemnation of one-party rule seems to be of importance internally given Benin’s rather stable performance, although the comparative significance is less evident.

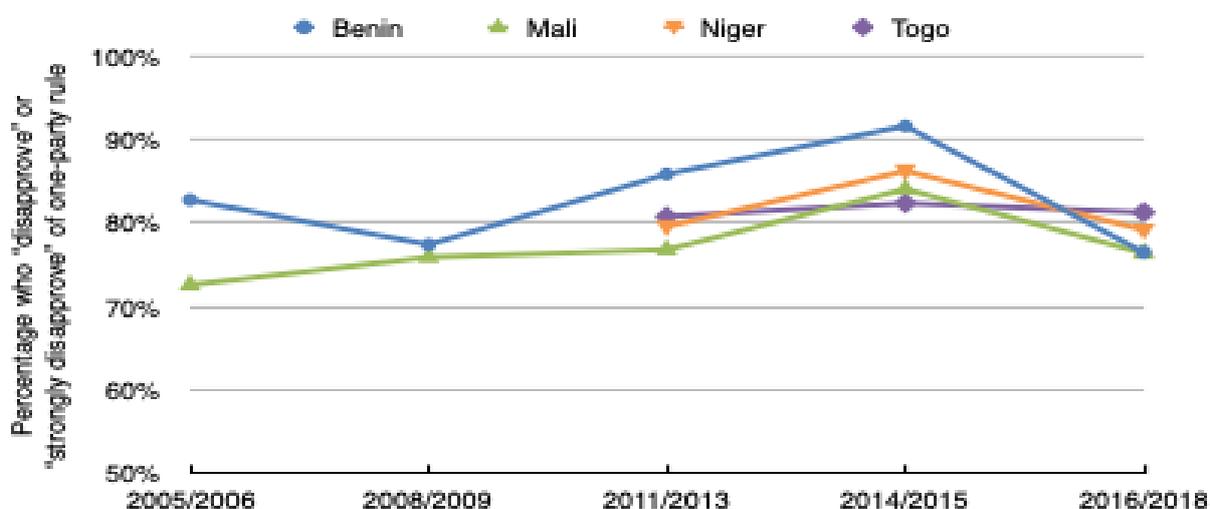


Figure 5.5 Disapproval of one-party rule. Source: Afrobarometer (2018).

Qualitative accounts of this factor are scarce. Seely (2007), for instance, solely mentions that the people of Benin (in relation to the 2006 election) showed strong loyalty to their democratic institutions. Doorenspleet (2012), in analysing the support of democracy in eight new African democracies, concludes that the majority of people in Benin are “satisfied democrats” — meaning that both the support of and satisfaction with democracy is high. It could, therefore, be

argued that this points to a very stable attitudinal ground of the Beninese democratic regime, arguably of essence to the consolidation process.

5.3.2 Expecting democracy in the future

The second factor deals explicitly with the question of regime continuity from a public perspective. In other words, do people expect democracy to persist into the future? Here, the available data comes from Afrobarometer round 3 in 2005/2006 in which only Benin and Mali participated. The question asked was “how likely is it that your country will remain a democratic country?”. Unfortunately, this question (or any variety of it), has not been asked since.

In the survey, 60.5% of respondent in Benin answered that this was either “likely” or “very likely” (Afrobarometer 2018). Although close, it does not satisfy Diamond’s (1999:68-9) threshold of two-thirds of the population. In a comparative perspective, similarly, 58.2% of respondents in Mali answered the same. Yet, due to the evident lack of comprehensive data, it is hard to draw any strong conclusions here. Gisselquist (2008), however, expresses explicit concerns about these numbers in terms of the long-term stability of Beninese democracy. Doorenspleet (2012), as was discussed above, came to a different conclusion in describing the Beninese as “satisfied democrats”. Thus, given such conflicting accounts and a general lack of data, this research will not be able to draw any conclusive remarks regarding this factor.

5.3.3 Anti-system movements

Finally, the third attitudinal factor deals with potential movements seeking to overthrow the current regime. These should, according to Linz & Stepan (1996b:6) among others, enjoy low or minimal support. V-Dem’s “CSO anti-system movements” indicator demonstrates if civil society contains any such groups and the degree to which they pose any threat to the current regime. It ranges from 0, where such movements are practically non-existent, to 4, where a high level of such activity poses a real and present danger to the regime (Coppedge et al. 2019b:182). The data is shown in Figure 5.6.

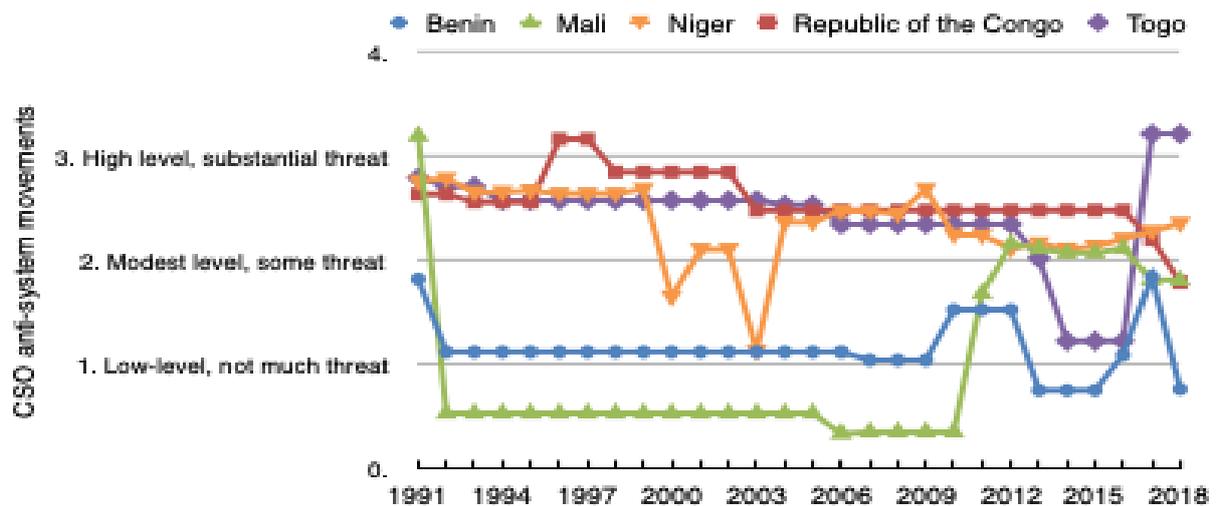


Figure 5.6 Degree and threat of anti-system movements. Source: V-Dem dataset v9 (Coppedge et al. 2019a).

Benin has, internally, moved from a modest level in 1991 to remaining at a low level of anti-system movements since. Despite some fluctuations entering the early 2010s, the general trend is positive. In a comparative perspective, Benin surpassed Mali in 2011 and has since been first of the nations in the comparison. However, as Mali historically performed significantly better, it would not be fair to state that Benin comparatively has outperformed the other nations. Internally, however, this has been a relatively stable factor. Now, a report from the Bertelsmann Stiftung (2012:26) corroborates these findings by simply concluding that no major anti-democratic actor has surfaced. Unfortunately, other qualitative accounts have not been identified. Still, the stable internal development of this factor seemingly indicates that it plays a part in forming a favourable attitudinal basis for democracy.

5.4 Behavioural factors

Finally, for this approach, the three factors identified in section 3.3 are examined below.

5.4.1 Politically motivated violence

The first factor deals with the issue of politically motivated violence. Here, the “physical violence index” from V-Dem reflects freedom from political killings and violence committed by governments agency. On a scale from 0-1, the higher the score generally indicates less such violence (Coppedge et al. 2019b:263). Judging by Figure 5.7, Benin has performed very stable with a slight positive increase during this period. It is also relatively consistently ranked higher in a comparative perspective, moving further ahead in the late 2010s. This would thus indicate that

both internally, and from a cross-sectional perspective, this indicator should be of significance in explaining the democratic survival.

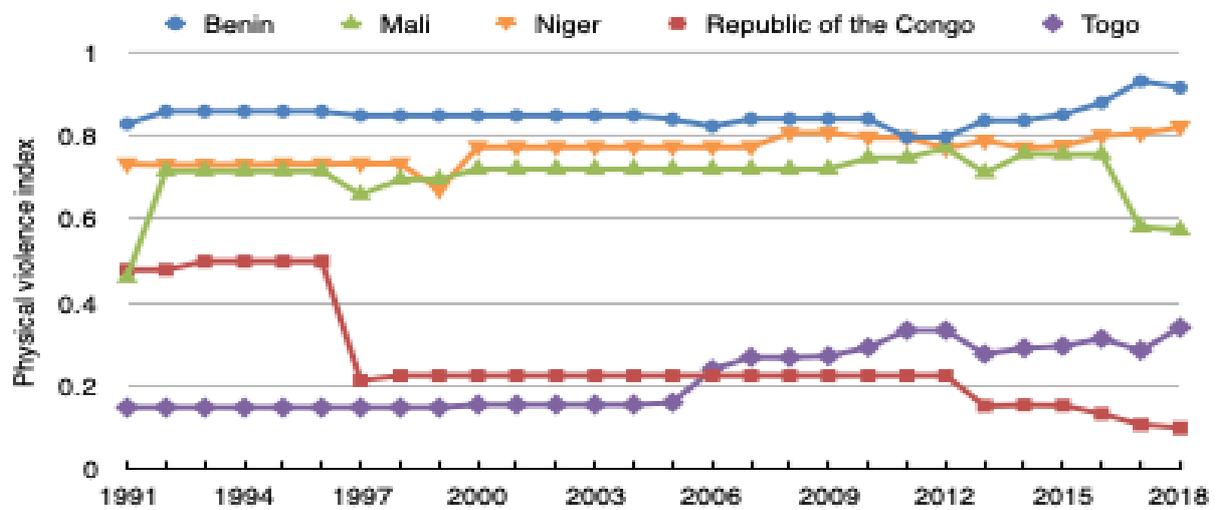


Figure 5.7 Politically motivated violence. Source: V-Dem dataset v9 (Coppedge et al. 2019a).

Several studies seem to agree that political violence is absent from Benin (Bierschenk 2006; Bierschenk 2009) but do not go on to explain it. However, the Bertelsmann Stiftung (2012:13-4) attributes this lack of violence to an overarching social trust in society. United Nations Development Programme (2018:76-7), in measuring this, found that 62% of respondent in Benin stated that they have “confidence in the national government”. However, as the average in Benin’s group of low human development countries was 60%, social trust might not be the perfect attribution. Ultimately, however, in indicating a near absence of anti-democratic behaviour, the lack of politically motivated violence does surface as a significant factor.

5.4.2 Opposition accepts electoral outcomes

The second behavioural factor is whether the opposition accepts the outcome of elections. Here, V-Dem’s “election losers accept results” measurement indicates the degree to which defeated parties and candidates accept electoral outcomes within three months. This is ranked scaling from none (0) to all (4) (Coppedge et al. 2019b:60-1).

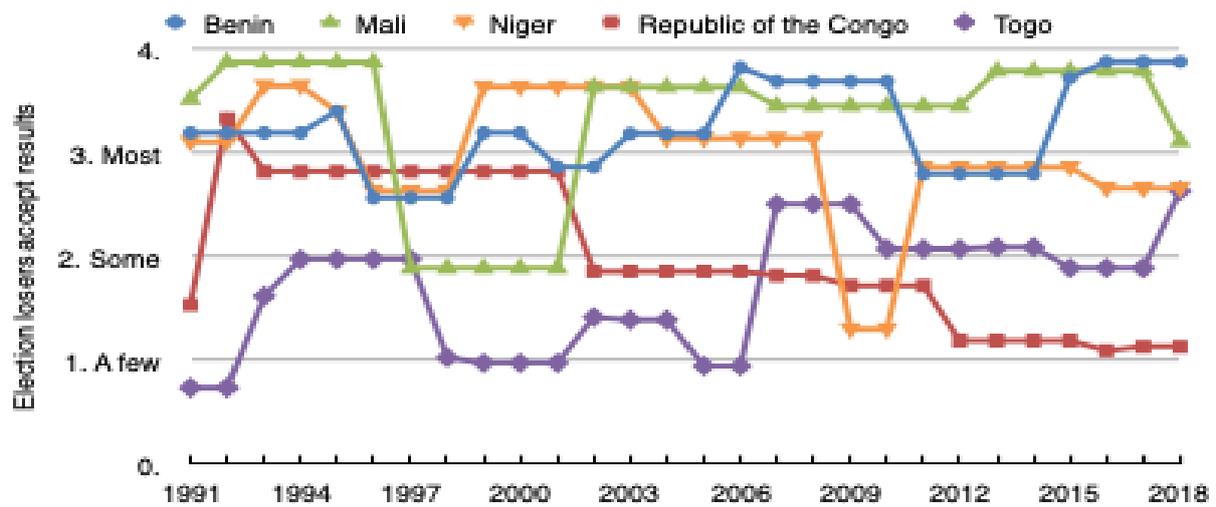


Figure 5.8 *Opposition accept election results. Source: V-Dem dataset v9 (Coppedge et al. 2019a).*

As shown in Figure 5.8, other than a major setback around the 2011 election and a smaller one in 1996, the Beninese trend has been positive, moving from “most” to “all” actors during this timeframe. In essence, here, fewer fluctuations would indicate more stability. Yet, although Benin does fluctuate, it hardly goes below “most” which means that the standards, generally, are high. Comparatively, Benin does not stand out significantly. Mali has seen fewer fluctuations (although a bigger setback in 1997) while Niger has been fluctuating around “most”.

Here, three examples (the 1996, 2001 and 2011 elections) have been lifted by scholars (for further clarity, see Appendix B for a list of Beninese presidents). First, Magnusson & Clark (2005) describe then-president Soglo as not a particularly “gracious” loser in the 1996 election. Indeed, he accused the constitutional court (who had certified the result) of unfairness and favouritism of incoming president Kérékou. Soglo did, however, eventually step aside and accept his loss voluntarily. Second, in the 2001 election, both Soglo and Houngbedji (the two major opposition leaders) alleged fraud and refused to stand against Kérékou in the second round. However, Amoussou (finishing fourth) agreed to take the run-off place in the second round and thereby ensured that a normal election could be held (Gisselquist 2008). In the 2011 election, Smith (2011) recounts how opposition leader Houngbedji refused to accept the results and even went so far as to declare himself the elected president. However, the opposition was divided in their reacted to Houngbedji’s declaration, protests died out and the court, which investigated the allegations, eventually certified the result (Freedom House 2012; Souaré 2011).

The key in these cases, as Magnusson & Clark (2005) argue, appears to be that the actors, eventually, came to grip and accepted the outcome, although not without their share of protest. Gisselquist (2008) takes this argument one step further in saying that the particular

choices of leaders, which have been the right ones in the end, are essential in explaining the democratic consolidation at-large. It could thus be argued that the explanatory value of this factor, further contributing to the absence of any major anti-democratic behaviour, is high.

5.4.3 Executive respects the constitution

Lastly, the final behavioural factor is how well the executive (the president) respects the constitution. V-Dem’s indicator, with the same name, reports from 0-4 to what extent members in the executive can violate the constitution without legal consequences. Scoring 4 here represents that the executive never violates the constitution, whereas 0 means that they can do it “whenever they want” without legal implications (Coppedge et al. 2019b:118). The data is shown in Figure 5.9.

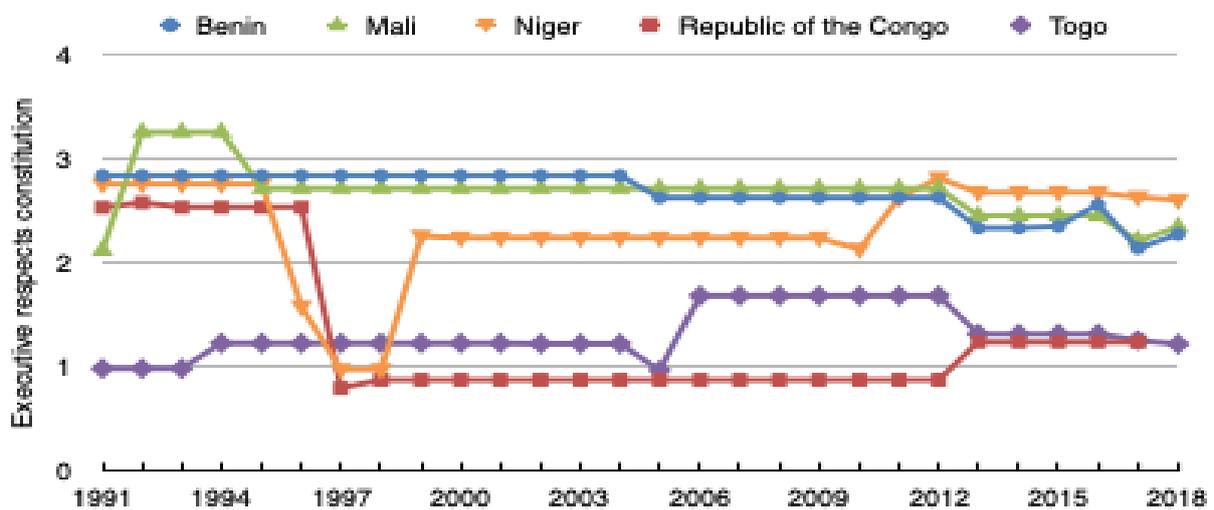


Figure 5.9 Executive respects the constitution. Source: V-Dem dataset v9 (Coppedge et al. 2019a).

Benin, after steadily lying around 3 – meaning that the executive rarely violates the constitution and, if it does, would face legal charges — has developed negatively closer to 2, meaning that the executive can violate some provision without having to face legal consequences. Surprisingly, this negative development would thus indicate that this factor is of less importance in explaining Benin’s consolidation. Furthermore, in a comparative perspective, both Niger and Mali seem to fare better in recent years. Benin’s development is very similar to Mali, and the overall trend does thus not stand out. This would, also surprisingly, point to the subordinate significance of this factor in explaining the democratic consolidation.

The qualitative accounts of Gisselquist (2008) and Magnusson & Clark (2005), pointing to the importance of Benin’s good leadership, stand in conflict to the picture outlined above.

Generally, the argument they make is that all the presidents have stepped down when they should have. One could thus argue that Benin's decrease in Figure 5.9 is relatively slight and that the factor still remains at moderate levels. Yet, V-Dem's indicator is arguably capturing a more broad picture. It might, therefore, be the case that this factor is of less significance than previously argued.

6. Summary of findings

To clarify the results of the analysis, a summary of the findings, including an estimation of the explanatory value for each factor, is shown in Table 6.1 below. Again, it might be important to restate that these are not casual claims, but rather average tendencies. Now, if it is assumed for a moment that the logic of the employed theoretical framework is correct, that consolidation is ultimately dependant on an absence of anti-democratic behaviour, then the following two observations appear as vital.

First, consider the strong institutional constraints on the presidency. Not only are such constraints, both judicial and legislative, significant on their own, it is also likely to assume that they have limited the space for actors to behave anti-democratically. In other words, going back to the inherent logic of the framework, the relative strength of the institutions is likely to have incentivised actors to refrain from anti-democratic behaviour. As such, one can empirically observe that using violence to take down the opposition has never been a viable option, and that opposition leaders have eventually come to grip with accepting election results. In fact, scholars have pointed out several occasions when the constitutional court have countered presidential overreach. Therefore, it will be argued that strong institutional constraints likely explain the relative absence of any major anti-democratic behaviour, which, in turn, is the ultimate determinant in this framework of democratic consolidation.

A second finding that emerges is a strong internal public support of the democratic regime. It is likely that this strong attitudinal foundation of democracy can, at least partly, explain the relative absence of any anti-system actors. Further, one could also assume that such support further incentivised political actors to behave democratically (accept election results, refrain from violence, and so on). Not only can thus a favourable institutional basis for democracy be observed, but an attitudinal one as well. This makes it possible to argue that, in Benin, both a stable institutional (judicial) and attitudinal basis for democracy likely incentivised actors to refrain from anti-democratic behaviour.

Table 6.1 Summary of empirical findings

<i>Socioeconomic</i>	Longitudinal	Cross-sectional	Qualitative accounts	Explanatory value
<i>GDP per Capita</i>	Positive change	Similar performance	Somewhat conflicting	Low
<i>Income inequality</i>	Negative change	Underperforms	—	Very low
<i>Institutional</i>				
<i>Judicial constraints</i>	Positive change (at already high levels)	Outperforms (since 2012)	Support the findings	Very high
<i>Legislative constraints</i>	Static (at high levels)	Outperforms (all but Niger)	Conflicting	High
<i>Party system institutionalisation</i>	Static (at very low levels)	Underperforms consistently	Support the findings	Very low
<i>Attitudinal</i>				
<i>Public support of democracy</i>	Static (at high levels)	Similar performance	Somewhat conflicting	Moderate
<i>Public expects future democracy</i>	Inconclusive	Inconclusive	—	Inconclusive¹
<i>Strength of anti-system movements</i>	Positive change (at already low levels)	Slightly better performance	Support the findings	High
<i>Behavioural</i>				
<i>Politically motivated violence</i>	Slight positive change at very low levels	Outperforms	Support the findings	Very high
<i>Opposition accepts elections</i>	Positive trend (at high levels)	Similar performance	Support the findings	High
<i>Executive respects constitution</i>	Negative change to moderate levels	Similar performance	Partly contradicts the findings	Low

Notes: ¹Due to a lack of longitudinal & cross-sectional data, no decisive conclusions could be drawn for this factor.

These two robust foundations of democracy have thus incentivised democratic behaviour – but it might also be the case that these mechanisms work the other way around. In other words, that sudden anti-democratic behaviour triggers institutional and attitudinal responses. For instance, after the 2011 election when opposition leader Houngbedji lost by almost 20 points but refused to concede, one can empirically observe changes in several indicators. Institutionally, measurements for judicial and legislative constraints start to move up. Attitudinally, the strength of anti-system movements take a downturn and the Afrobarometer survey that followed the election (in 2014/2015) has the highest rejection of one-party rule

observed. Seemingly, one could thus argue that strong institutional and attitudinal foundations not only limits the space of anti-democratic behaviour, but also respond to it. This would mean that, in Benin, institutional structures, attitudes and behaviour has worked in reinforcing ways, that they have responded to each other and, as such, ensured the nation's democratic survival.

Now, on the other hand, consistent with the analysis, I will argue that at least three factors appear as less important determinants of the democratic consolidation in Benin. As societal structures, neither high income inequality nor low levels of party system institutionalisation seem to have affected either attitudinal support of the democratic regime or caused an increase in anti-democratic behaviour. This stands in bright contrast to what Przeworski et al. (1995:45) claimed about the harmfulness of a weak party system and what Muller (1988) argued about too high inequalities. Further, the GDP per capita claims from Przeworski et al. (1996) about income levels, to put it very nicely, does not bear much weight. Whereas the indicator "executive respects the constitution" has dropped, this decrease is relatively slight and still remains at average levels. Consequently, at a general level, it would not be unreasonable to argue that neither socioeconomic structures nor party system characteristics are able to account for Benin's democratic survival. One could thus make the case that, in general, theories should revise how they assume the value of those very factors.

7. Conclusion

This study has sought to explain the process of democratic consolidation in Benin since its democratic transition in 1991 until 2018. In drawing up a theoretical framework with three approaches (structural, attitudinal and behavioural), it located and surveyed 11 factors which authors and theories have promoted within the field. These factors were applied to the case of Benin and analysed both longitudinally (via inter-country time comparisons) and cross-sectionally (with West African francophone countries that, like Benin, held a national conference in 1991). The analysis also included qualitative explanatory accounts to further triangulate the findings.

In short, this research makes two contributions. First, the findings indicate that, in Benin, both a stable institutional (judicial) and attitudinal basis for democracy likely incentivised actors to refrain from anti-democratic behaviour. This logic, seemingly, also works the other way around where observed anti-democratic behaviour (for instance in 2011) triggered an institutional response and increased attitudinal support for democracy further. It is therefore tempting to conclude that, based on reinforcing factors from the institutional, attitudinal and behavioural approaches, the Beninese democracy was able to survive.

Second, this study suggests that socioeconomic structures of growth and income distribution, as well as the level of institutionalisation in the party system, have not been of decisive importance for Benin's democratic survival. Ultimately, it can be concluded these factors cannot account for the democratic consolidation and their respective theoretical basis would thus appear as virtually irrelevant for Benin.

Having started to explain what factors seemingly appear as significant for Benin's democratic consolidation, this study now welcomes further research to build on these findings. Studies are encouraged to look further into the relationship between institutional, attitudinal and behavioural factors. It is important to additionally clarify how, in practice, these dimensions and factors connect. Further, the arguments I put forward in this paper would not hold up if future studies could show that Beninese political agents operate outside the boundaries that institutions form. It would also damage the argument if Benin's attitudinal basis, the inherent support of the democratic regime, was proven to be weak.

Moreover, it is of importance that future research into this and other cases employs comprehensive theoretical frameworks. Democratisation is a complex issue, but when more factors are considered and analysed, researchers can paint more thorough pictures. Indeed, it is about using smaller brushes to fill in the gaps, instead of simply drawing sketches. Because at a time when democracy globally appears to be in retreat, it is of essence that research continues to build an empirical and practical understanding of how a democracy, actually, survives.

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Appendix A

Data sources for the empirical analysis

Indicator	Quantitative empirics	Qualitative empirics
<i>1a. Structural-socioeconomic</i>		
1a.1 GDP per capita	GDP per capita in PPP current international \$ (World Bank 2019)	Gazibo (2005:83) & Gisselquist (2008:808)
1a.2 Income inequality	GINI Index (World Bank 2019)	Bertelsmann Stiftung (2012:14)
<i>1b. Structural-institutional</i>		
1b.1 Judicial constraints on the executive	V-Dem's "Judicial Constraints on the Executive Index" (Coppedge 2019a; 2019b:46)	Fomunyoh (2001:37-8,45), Gisselquist (2008:799), Seely (2007:200), Seely (2009:154), Souaré (2011:87-8)
1b.2 Legislative constraints on the executive	V-Dem's "Legislative Constraints on the Executive Index" (Coppedge 2019a; 2019b:46)	Bailey (2017) & Bierschenk (2009:350)
1b.3 Party system institutionalisation	V-Dem's "Party Institutionalisation Index" (Coppedge 2019a; 2019b:281)	Gisselquist (2008:808) & Gisselquist (2014:137,143)
<i>2. Attitudinal</i>		
2.1 Public support of the democracy regime	Disapproval of one-party rule (Afrobarometer 2018)	Doorenspleet (2012:284) & Seely (2007:196)
2.2 Public expect democracy in the future	Likelihood of country remaining democratic (Afrobarometer 2018)	Doorenspleet (2012:284) & Gisselquist (2008:810)
2.3 Anti-system movements	V-Dem's "CSO Anti-System Movements" (Coppedge 2019a; 2019b:182)	Bertelsmann Stiftung (2012:26)
<i>3. Behavioural</i>		
3.1 Politically motivated violence	V-Dem's "Physical Violence Index" (Coppedge 2019a; 2019b:263)	Bertelsmann Stiftung (2012:13-4), Bierschenk (2006:546), Bierschenk (2009:338) & UNDP (2018:76-7)
3.2 Opposition accepts electoral outcomes	V-Dem's "Election Losers Accept Results" (Coppedge 2019a; 2019b:60-1)	Freedom House (2012), Gisselquist (2008:808), Magnusson & Clarke (2005:567), Smith (2011) & Souaré (2011:87-8)

3.3 Executive respects
constitution

V-Dem's "Executive Respects
the Constitution" (Coppedge
2019a; 2019b:118)

Gisselquist (2008:808) &
Magnusson & Clarke
(2005:567,570)

Appendix B

Presidents of Benin since the democratic transition

President	Year	Party affiliation
<i>Mathieu Kérékou</i>	<i>1972–1991</i>	<i>PRPB (Parti de la révolution populaire de Bénin)</i>
Nicéphore Soglo	1991–1996	RB (Parti de la renaissance du Bénin)
Mathieu Kérékou	1996–2006	FARD-Alafia (Front d'action pour le renouveau et le développement)
Thomas Boni Yayi	2006–2016	Independent
Patrice Talon	2016–	Independent

Source: Gouvernement de la République du Bénin (2018).