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DEMOCRATIZING THE MEASUREMENT OF DEMOCRATIC QUALITY: PUBLIC ATTITUDE DATA AND THE EVALUATION OF AFRICAN POLITICAL REGIMES

by Carolyn Logan and Robert Mattes

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AFROBAROMETER WORKING PAPERS

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Democratizing the Measurement of Democratic Quality:
Public Attitude Data and the Evaluation of African Political Regimes

Abstract

Diamond and Morlino (2005) propose a quality of democracy framework that includes eight dimensions, but they suggest that only one of these – responsiveness – is susceptible to measurement using public opinion data. However, we argue that citizen experiences and evaluations are essential pieces of data which may enable us to capture valid "insider" or "ground-up" measures of democratic procedures and substance that may be missed by expert judges and macro-level indicators. In this paper we develop indicators based on public attitude data for all eight dimensions of democracy. Substantively, this subjective mass opinion perspective on the Quality of Democracy gives us insight into what Africans themselves want out of democracy, and how they prioritize its various components. In general, African governments seem to be more interested in supplying – and African citizens seem to be more interested in getting – protection for rights and equality, as well as a strengthened institutional framework. Governments remain deficient in democratizing their interactions with citizens by creating mechanisms of vertical accountability and responsiveness, and citizens, quite frankly, seem considerably less interested in these goals as well. As we explore the places where citizen and expert evaluations diverge, we are drawn to the conclusion that both individual and expert assessments of the quality of democracy deserve to be carefully interrogated. What parts of Africans' everyday experience of democracy (or lack thereof) are missed by country expert assessments? And what parts of democratic qualities (or flaws) are missed by citizens with limited access to independent sources of information about events and trends that lie beyond their immediate experience? We cannot at this point conclude that either experts or ordinary citizens provide the "true" or "correct" assessment, but rather that both perspectives are essential to fully understanding today's democratic experience, and the shape of the democratic future, on the continent.

Introduction

The emerging literature on the "quality of democracy" promises to advance our knowledge of democratization in several ways. First of all, it takes us beyond the narrow assessment of stability and endurance of democratic political regimes to ask about the quality of democracy those regimes supply. We move from asking "how stable?" to "how well?" Second, the concept of quality promises to provide us with greater nuance and precision, and thus greater ability to distinguish amongst widely disparate countries -- such as Cape Verde and Ghana on one hand, and Canada and Greece on the other -- that are usually lumped together as free, or as liberal democracies by the relatively blunt measures provided by Freedom House or Polity. Finally, and related to this, it enables us to move beyond "whole system" (Diamond 2002) measures and brings into focus differing dimensions of democracy, allowing us to appreciate that some countries can do better on some dimensions but worse on others. This also opens up the possibility that we may be able to measure democratic qualities in countries that do not qualify as electoral or liberal democracies (Elkins 2000).

The emerging "quality of democracy" framework also invites analysts to go beyond behavioural measures or expert judgments of objective phenomena and include the lived experiences and subjective evaluations of ordinary citizens. While various conceptual frameworks of democratic quality have been proposed (e.g. Beetham et al, 2001; Merkel 2004; Croissant 2004; Merkel and Croissant 2004), in our view, the framework that combines the greatest degree of conceptual development with realistic cross-national data collection and measurement has been proposed by Larry Diamond and Leonardo Morlino (2005). Drawing on definitions provided by the industrial and marketing literatures, Diamond and Morlino find three different understandings of quality. The quality of a good or service can be measured by (1) the *process* by which it is made or delivered; (2) by its *content* – or the structural characteristics of the material by which it is made; and (3) by its *results*, or the satisfaction of its consumers (regardless of how it is produced, or its actual content). Using this logic, they divide a range of key dimensions of democracy into these three clusters. First, the quality of democracy can be assessed through a series of procedures: *Rule of Law, Participation, Competition, and Vertical and Horizontal Accountability*. Second, democracies can be measured by the degree to which they provide the substantive content of democracy: *Rights and Freedoms, and Equality*. Finally, the quality of democracy can be calculated according to the extent that a system is able to provide the essential result, that is, a government that does what the people want it to do – or *Responsiveness*. It is on this last dimension that Diamond and Morlino advocate the use of individual level survey data aggregated to the country level to measure public demands in order to assess the extent to which public policy reflects those demands (but see Powell (2005) for a discussion of the range of difficulties raised by this strategy) or the extent to which citizens are satisfied with the outputs of democratic government.

However, we wonder whether citizens' lived experiences and opinions can be successfully limited to a measure of only the results dimension of democratic quality. To return to the analogy of the industrial and marketing world, it does not make sense for a study of the quality of an automobile to ask consumers about the workings of the Volkswagen Annual General Meeting, the efficiency of Toyota's assembly line or the metal alloy used by General Motors in its assembly plants. But the same is not true for citizens in a democracy. The use of data on citizen opinions experiences and evaluations may enable us to capture more valid "insider" or "ground-up" measures of democratic procedures and substance that reflect actual behaviours and conditions which are simply missed by "outsider" expert judges and "top-down" macro level indicators. Indeed, public opinion researchers routinely ask citizens about their experiences and evaluations of a wide range of aspects of both procedure and substance. Citizen experiences and evaluations are essential pieces of data which tell us, for example, whether the day-to-day reality of how governments interact with their citizens matches the standards set out "on paper." Does the presence, for example, of a public ombudsman in Ghana, really mean that an ordinary Ghanaian can safely and successfully find a means to redress inequalities, right wrongs, or get something done in her community? Does the existence of a watchdog anti-corruption commission actually reduce the likelihood that an average Ugandan will encounter demands for bribes or face discrimination in seeing her case through the courts? And does the existence of a wide range of constitutionally entrenched social democratic rights and a state of the art constitution guarantee

that South Africans will conclude that their political system produces an acceptable degree of democracy? To paraphrase John Stuart Mill, citizens know where the democratic shoe pinches.

But if it is difficult to limit the use of survey data to the results dimension, it may be even more difficult to officiate between the conclusions drawn from expert judgments and objective data on one hand, and survey data on the other, should those data contradict one another. If we justify the use of subjective attitudinal data on the ground that it might produce more valid measures of democratic reality, it does not require much of a stretch to extend the logic and argue that such perceptions *are* the reality. To return to Mill, if citizens say "the shoe pinches," the shoe pinches – regardless of what objective data or expert ratings of the shoe might declare. From this perspective, democratic quality is only knowable from the "eye of the beholder." To be clear, we do not want to be pushed to this extreme. We hold that objective data and expert evaluations need to play a central role in the measurement of democratic quality. Our purpose here is only to warn that once we bring attitudinal data into this framework, we must consider our analytical response if popular evaluations depart from other assessments in important ways.

In this paper we try to deploy and test the limits of public opinion data in the measurement of democratic quality. We seek to develop indicators based on public attitude data for the full array of quality dimensions developed by Diamond and Morlino (2005). Previous research has shown that Africans are able to offer separate and analytically distinct expressions of their demand for democracy and their assessments of its overall supply (Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi 2005). But pushing further on the "supply side," we ask whether Africans are able to go beyond global, "whole system" assessments of the supply of democracy and provide meaningful, distinct evaluations of various dimensions of democratic governance? To put it another way, we wonder whether political scientists make distinctions that are "too fine" and not evident to ordinary citizens? To the extent that citizens do offer a nuanced assessment of democracy, we ask whether the structure of these attitudes resembles the quality of democracy framework? Do responses to questions designed to measure a given dimension cohere together? And are they distinct from responses to questions intended to measure other dimensions? Or do people view democracy through a different lens entirely? Finally, if we find that Africans' views of democracy are indeed organized along some schema that resembles the quality of democracy framework, we ask what picture of democracy emerges from the data? Where do citizens perceive lesser or greater quality in democratic governance? And how do Africans' own ratings compare to those of the political scientists and country experts who produce other well-known indicators? In fact, previous research has found that Africans' estimates of the overall extent of democracy in their country correlate quite strongly with expert ratings such as Freedom House (Bratton 2007). But will we find the same thing with regard to popular assessments of democratic qualities? Finally, we explore the impact of the various dimensions of democratic quality on citizens overall evaluations of the supply of democracy. Do people base their global judgments more on procedures, substance or results?

Operationalizing the Quality of Democracy Framework With Public Opinion Data

Our analysis of these issues is based on the results of over 27,000 face-to-face interviews of nationally representative clustered, stratified area probability samples conducted by Afrobarometer in 20 countries in 2008-2009.[1] Sample sizes ranged from approximately 1200 to 2400 respondents per country, although in the statistics reported here, the data are weighted to represent each country equally (n=1200). The margin of sampling error never exceeds 3 percent at a 95 percent level of confidence. We caution the reader that because Afrobarometer surveys are concentrated in countries that have undergone at least some degree of political and economic liberalization in the last decade (although there are exceptions), these results generally represent the continent's most open societies and cannot be taken as representative of sub-Saharan Africa as a whole.[2] It should also be noted that while assessing attitudes toward and evaluations of democracy and

[1] Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

[2] For more information on the Afrobarometer, visit the website at www.afrobarometer.org.

governance is a core purpose of the Afrobarometer, the survey instrument was *not* explicitly designed with the intent of measuring the quality of democracy. Nonetheless, the scope and variety of questions included suggests the possibility of developing a comprehensive set of quality indicators.

We began by identifying all questions items that on face validity could potentially measure each of Diamond and Morlino's dimensions. We then tested the integrity of each scale or construct using factor analysis (to examine validity) and reliability analysis to eliminate items whose pattern of responses did not cohere with the rest of the items in the proposed scale. In all instances, the remaining items were then re-tested and the scale scores are reported in the endnotes.[3] As it turns out, we successfully developed valid and reliable multi-item constructs or scales for six of the eight dimensions, but the indicators for Horizontal Accountability and Equality presented greater challenges to be discussed below. The specific Afrobarometer survey question items that were used to create indicators for each of the eight dimensions of quality of democracy are shown in Table 1. Some brief notes on each indicator are provided below.

Rule of Law

Diamond and Morlino propose a "thick notion" of rule of law that includes, among other things, equal and unfettered access to, and protection by, the legal system, equal enforcement of the law, a neutral and independent judiciary and a professional police force, minimal corruption, and a constitution and justice system that have earned the respect and adherence of both the security agencies and the public at large (thus suggesting that public attitude data is a highly relevant to measuring success in achieving the rule of law). They then go on to add that rule of law is distinguished by a legal system that "defends the democratic procedures, upholds citizens' civil and political rights, and reinforces the authority of other agencies of horizontal accountability" (2005: xv).

This broad and multi-faceted description presents challenges to developing a single indicator that captures all of the dimensions of rule of law that Diamond and Morlino have described. This task is further complicated by that fact that there are numerous points of overlap with other dimensions, including horizontal accountability, freedom, and especially equality. Diamond and Morlino's framework might benefit, therefore, from a revised definition of the rule of law that is either considerably more parsimonious, or that is disaggregated into several clear sub-components. The dimension might, for example, be better understood as a collection of several distinct sub-dimensions that include beliefs about the law, the trustworthiness of political and state institutions and their incumbents, levels of, and actual experiences with corruption and crime and access to and the equality of law enforcement and justice.

The Afrobarometer includes a wide array of indicators that tap these various dimensions of the rule of law. We were able to create a single *Index of the Rule of Law* that consists of beliefs about trustworthiness and levels of corruption in key law enforcement agencies (the police and courts), and the degree to which people are victimized by those institutions, as well as popular perceptions of the extent to which government officials are subject to the law.[4] It is important to note that beliefs about the right of the police, the courts, and tax collection agencies to require compliance did not fit in this index. Neither did personal experiences of crime and fear.

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[3] There are many different combinations of methods of Factor Analyses. We error on the side of caution, and use the most stringent methods: Maximum Likelihood methods of extraction and Direct Oblimin methods of rotation, guaranteeing that if a factor solution can be found with these methods, it will be found with all other methods. Test statistics from Factor Analysis and Reliability Analysis are cited in order to establish the validity and reliability of all multiple item indices. However, we ultimately calculate and use simple average, and in some specified cases—additive, index scores in bivariate and multivariate analysis. Since the actual factor weightings of individual items may vary greatly across countries and language groups, it is much safer to assume that all items contribute to each index equally.

[4] Factor analysis extracted two rotated factors with Eigenvalues over 1 from these seven items. We use the first and strongest of the two factors, with an Eigenvalue of 2.21 and which explaisns 32 percent of the common variance. Reliability is acceptable (Cronbach's alpha=0.625).

Table 1: Component Indicators for the Dimensions of Quality of Democracy

Dimension	Question Item Indicators
Rule of law	• How much do you trust each of the following: o the police? o the courts of law? • How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption: o police? o judges and magistrates? • In the past year, how often (if ever) have you had to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour to government officials in order to: o get a document or permit? o avoid a problem with the police? • How often do officials who commit crimes go unpunished?
Participation	• With regard to the most recent, [200x] national elections, which statement is true for you? (responses: voted in the election vs. did not vote or were not registered) • Here is a list of actions that people sometimes take as citizens. For each of these, please tell me whether you, personally, have done any of these things during the past year: o attended a community meeting? o got together with others to raise an issue? o attended a demonstration or protest march? • During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons about some important problem or to give them your views: o a local government councillor? o a Member of Parliament? o an official of a government agency?
Competition	• On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last national election? • How much do you trust the National Electoral Commission of [your country]? • During election campaigns in this country, how much do you personally fear becoming a victim of political intimidation or violence? • How likely do you think it is that powerful people can find out how you voted, even though there is supposed to be a secret ballot in this country? • How often, in this country, does competition between political parties lead to violent conflict?
Vertical Accountability	• Think about how elections work in practice in this country. How well do elections: o ensure that Members of Parliament reflect the views of voters? o enable voters to remove from office leaders who do not do what the people want?
Horizontal Accountability	• How often does the President ignore the laws of this country?
Freedom	• In this country, how free are you: o to say what you think? o to join any political organization you want? o to choose who to vote for without feeling pressured? • In this county, how often do people have to be careful of what they say about politics?
Equality	• How often are people treated unequally under the law?
Responsiveness	• How likely is it that you could get together with others and make your _____ listen to your concerns about a matter of importance to the community? o elected local councillor o member of parliament • How much of the time do you think the following try their best to listen to what people like you have to say? o MPs o Elected local government councillors • When there are problems with how local government is run in your community, how much can an ordinary person do to improve the situation? • -How easy or difficult is it for an ordinary person to have his voice heard between elections?

Participation
Diamond and Morlino's dimension of participation is intended to measure the public's formal and effective *ability* to engage in politics in a host of ways, including voting, joining organizations and associations, communicating with others, contacting officials, and, in sum, seeking to influence the policy-making process. Afrobarometer provides numerous indicators of respondents' reported levels of participation, including voting, contacting leaders, and various forms of communal engagement. Table 1 identifies seven items that scale together to form a single *Index of Participation*.[5]

It should be noted that all these indicators of participation measure people's actual decisions to take action, *not* the freedom or opportunity that the regime offers for them to act. This index thus raises a fundamental question about the scope of the quality of democracy framework. In particular, we find Diamond and Morlino's framework to be somewhat ambiguous on the question of whether quality is something *provided* by political regimes, or if it is something that emerges out of the interaction between the *opportunities* provided by a regime, and whether or not citizens *take advantage* of those opportunities through *action*, thus leading to the actual achievement of a democratic goal. At one point Diamond and Morlino note that "a quality democracy [is] one that *provides its citizens* a high degree of freedom, political equality, and popular control…" (xi, emphasis added). Similarly, with respect to vertical accountability they refer to the government's obligation to provide "the freedom for these groups to function and a rule of law that protects them from intimidation and retribution" (xx). But elsewhere, they appear to conceive of quality as requiring the *actual achievement* of vertical accountability through citizen *action*.

For now, we note that the use of self-reported behaviour as an indicator of quality rests on the assumption that levels of citizen action reflect the opportunity structure provided by political institutions. Yet we know that that participation is based on a wide range of factors beyond the actual opportunity for influence (Dalton 2008). Thus, it is quite possible to imagine situations where apathetic citizens fail to take advantage of the opportunities provide to them by the system, or conversely, where critical citizens participate even when it is otherwise not rational do so. Hence, we propose that the quality of democracy framework should ultimately separate the provision of opportunities for citizen action from the question of whether or not citizens actually take advantage of those opportunities.

Competition
Regular, free and fair elections that involve competition between different political parties are widely seen as a minimal indicator of democracy. But as defined by Diamond and Morlino, the concept of competition as an indicator of quality must go further, incorporating the ease of entry into political competition for new political actors, the equality of access to the media and to campaign funding, and, ultimately, the ease with which incumbents can actually be defeated. They suggest that in a high-quality democracy, there must be a real likelihood of alternation. But while the attempt to gangue the likelihood of party alternations almost always leads analysts to make use of election results (e.g. the margin of victory, the distance between the first and second party, or the number of effective parties), we argue that this conflates the rules and conditions that allow for the possibility of competitiveness (or what Dahl in *Polyarchy* called contestation) with how competitive the process actually is. To use another analogy, one soccer game can end in a 10-0 whitewash despite being played on an immaculate pitch and officiated by a scrupulously fair referee, while another can end in a 1-1 draw even though one team was smaller, had less training, and had to overcome the bias of the referee.[6] In other words, the fairness or level of contestation in an election, and the competitiveness, or closeness of the outcome, are two different – though often interrelated – things. We note, for example, the enduring historical legacy that continues to privilege the African National Congress (ANC) over other parties in South Africa even in a context of high levels of political and civil freedoms and elections widely regarded

[5] Factor analysis extracted two rotated factors with Eigenvalues over 1 from these six items. We use the first and strongest of the two factors, with an Eigenvalue of 2.42 and which explains 40 percent of the common variance. Reliability is acceptable (Cronbach's alpha=0.680).

[6] We are indebted to Elliot Mitchell who develops this point in *Political Competition and Elections Results in Africa: A Conceptual Critique With Data* (Masters Thesis: University of Cape Town, 2010).

as free and fair. The country enjoys high levels of contestation, but at least at the national level, electoral contests are far from competitive. Thus, the indicators that we have included in our *Index of Competition*, as shown in Table 1, privilege public evaluations of the fairness or contestation of the process over the closeness of electoral outcomes. We find that five varied indicators of the freeness and fairness of elections, trust in the electoral commission and citizens experiences with political contestation produce a single indicator of competition.[7]

Vertical Accountability

The obligation of elected leaders to answer to citizens and non-governmental actors for their decisions and actions is referred to as vertical accountability. Vertical accountability is enforced most directly via elections, but it can and should also occur between elections through a system of media monitoring, civil society engagement, and individual action, known as societal accountability (see Smulovitz and Peruzotti 2000). Questions have been raised about the extent to which African publics expect or demand a relationship of inter-electoral vertical accountability with their governments (Bratton and Logan 2009). But for our purposes here, we build an *Index of Vertical Accountability* not on demand for this quality – which may be weak in many countries – but on its supply: in short, perceptions of how well elections serve to represent public opinion and remove bad leaders.[8] It is notable that responses to questions about citizens' ability to make elected leaders listen do not load onto a single factor with the other items and are thus not used on this scale.

Horizontal Accountability

Horizontal accountability refers to the extent to which office holders in government have to report information, answer to, or justify their decisions to other officials within government. It refers generally to the system of checks and balances that exist between judicial, legislative and executive branches of government, but also to the ability of monitoring agencies or institutions such as anti-corruption commissions, ombudsman's offices, opposition parties and others to compel cooperation from the government officials they are meant to monitor or oversee. As such, horizontal accountability appears at first blush to be best suited to measurement via external, macro-level assessments, rather than public attitudes. But the Afrobarometer does include a question that measures one aspect of the supply of horizontal accountability by exploring the extent to which people think there are effective checks on presidential power (which, we note, overlaps with the rule of law dimension). We readily concede that a one-item indicator is generally sub-optimal. However, given that one overwhelming concern in Africa is presidentialism (i.e., systems dominated by excessively strong -- *de facto* or *de jure* -- presidents with insufficient limits on their powers), the Afrobarometer question that asks respondents how often the president respects the law may in fact do quite a good job of capturing overall popular impressions of Horizontal Accountability.

Freedom

Freedom is perhaps the most straightforward, clearly and concisely defined of all of the dimensions of democratic quality. It refers to the extent to which the system protects and respects political rights to engage in electoral activities (campaigning, standing for office, organizing, voting), civil rights to speech, association, and movement, and socioeconomic rights. We create a single *Index of Freedom* from four Afrobarometer items that ask respondents about the extent of their ability to speak their minds (two items), join organizations and vote without fear.[9]

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[7] Factor analysis extracted a single unrotated factor with an Eigenvalue of 1.79, explaining 36 percent of the common variance. Reliability, however, (Cronbach's Alpha=.543), is barely acceptable. .

[8] The two items are sufficiently correlated (Pearson's r = .57) and reliable (Cronbach's Alpha = .73) to warrant the creation of a two item average Index of Vertical Accountability.

[9] Factor analysis extracted a single unrotated factor with an Eigenvalue of 2.20, explaining 79 percent of the common variance. Reliability is acceptable (Cronbach's alpha=0.652).

Equality

In the African context (as elsewhere) equality is a multi-faceted concept. As Diamond and Morlino present it, the core features of this dimension of democratic quality include equal rights (overlapping with the freedom dimension), equal treatment under the law (overlapping with the rule of law dimension), equal influence in voting and policy-making (which overlaps with the responsiveness dimension) and freedom from discrimination. With regard to economic equality, Diamond and Morlino also note that while democracy does not require a specific set of policies or outcomes, it can nonetheless be undermined by extreme social or economic inequalities that undermine political engagement and influence. As such, the concept is diverse enough that it can be difficult to approach a single indicator of equality.

The Afrobarometer includes a number of questions about various aspects of the experience of or protection of equality and equal treatment. These items cover both economic and political equality, and in some cases approach the question from the specific vantage point of ethnic equality. However, none of the responses to these questions scale together at a level that allows us to combine multiple variables into a single indicator of equality. This outcome suggests that both the importance of equality and the very nature of equality vary too much from country to country to develop a single, common, multi-faceted indicator that can serve across all of the countries included in our study.

In particular, the conventional wisdom about the widespread salience of ethnic concerns on the continent suggests that inequality, if it exists, it is likely to coalesce around ethnic divides. But while such patterns may be evident in some countries, they are completely absent in others. For example, in Cape Verde, "ethnic identity" is quite low. Fully 53 percent do not identify with any ethnic group, far higher than in any other country in our sample (the next highest are Mozambique and South Africa, at 15 and 14 percent, respectively). And of the remainder, only 7 percent believe that their ethnic group is "often" or "always" treated unfairly by government. Yet a full 50 percent of Cape Verdians believe that the government "often" or "always" treats people unequally. Similarly, in Lesotho, where a single language dominates and ethnic divisions are rarely seen as a relevant issue, nearly as many people (62 percent) think that people are regularly treated unequally by government as in Kenya (70 percent), a country renowned for its high level of ethnic tension. Meanwhile, the concerns about unequal treatment in Lesotho far surpass those in Botswana – which is also relatively linguistically homogenous –where just 19 percent perceive problems of unequal treatment, the lowest of any country. Thus, it appears that despite the conventional wisdom about the widespread salience of ethnic issues on the continent, an ethnic lens is too limiting to fully address the question of equality or inequality. We therefore rely instead on a more general indicator of (in)equality for the purposes of this analysis: the perceived frequency with which people are treated unequally under the law by government.

Responsiveness

Diamond and Morlino define responsiveness as the extent to which a government responds to the preferences, interests and needs of their citizens. This dimension is perhaps the least clearly elucidated of those in the framework. Responsiveness can be measured in many different ways: by the extent to which governments address the problem areas prioritized by citizens; by the extent to which government policy reflects the policy preferences of the public (which could either mean a majority, a plurality, or the median voter); or by the extent to which voters feel that their elected officials listen to them. For the purposes of this analysis, we opt for the last option, drawing on six indicators of how well citizens feel representatives *listen* to the voices of their constituents to construct a into single *Index of Responsiveness*.[10]

[10] Factor analysis extracted two rotated factors with Eigenvalues over 1 from these seven items. We use the first and strongest of the two factors, with an Eigenvalue of 2.28 and which explains 31 percent of the common variance. Reliability is acceptable (Cronbach's alpha=0.618).

An Overall Index of Democratic Quality

Finally, we find that it is possible to create a single underlying "second order" *Index of Democratic Quality* based on the average responses to the eight indicators (six indices and two single item indicators) of the dimensions of democratic quality.[11] This suggests that ordinary African citizens not only recognize and distinguish among the various individual dimensions of democratic quality, as proposed by Diamond and Morlino, but that these dimensions also manage to capture analytically distinct elements of a broader underlying dimension of quality.

The Quality of Democracy in 20 African Countries, 2008-2009

Comparing Dimensions

We present in Table 2 a summary of the average (mean) values for each of these eight indicators across 20 countries in 2008-2009. Responses to all items were standardized to a scale of 0 (equivalent to a perception that there is no supply of a particular quality) to a maximum of 4 (indicating complete supply of that dimension). While the metrics of each are not exactly equivalent and we should not make too much of the comparison across indicators, the rank ordering in Table 2 does give some indication of the comparative supply of each dimension. According to popular perceptions, the most widely enjoyed dimension of democratic quality is Freedom (2.9 on the 0 to 4 scale) which scores well above the putative midpoint (2.0 on the 0 to 4 scale). This result is consistent with a wide range of findings based on Afrobarometer data from the past 10 years indicating that Africans associate the term democracy first and foremost with the protection of rights and freedoms (civil liberties). Moreover, they also perceive vast improvements in the protection of these rights since the advent of multiparty rule (Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi 2005). Respondents also provide average scores to Horizontal Accountability (2.6), Rule of Law (2.6) and Competitiveness (2.5) that place these above the midpoint.

Table 2: Aggregate Indicators of Democratic Quality

Dimension	**20-country Average (2008-2009)**
Freedom	2.9
Horizontal Accountability	2.6
Rule of Law	2.6
Competitiveness	2.5
Vertical Accountability	2.1
Equality	1.9
Responsiveness	1.6
Participation	1.3
Index of Democratic Quality	2.2

In contrast, Vertical Accountability (2.1), Equality (1.9), Responsiveness (1.6) and Participation (1.3) fall at, or well below the scale midpoint.[12] Vertical Accountability and Responsiveness are particularly important since they reflect not only how well African governments treat their people, but also how well they *interact*

[11] Factor analysis extracted two rotated factors with Eigenvalues over 1 from these eight measures. We use the first and strongest of these, which has an Eigenvalues of 2.60 and which explains 32 percent of common variance. Reliability is acceptable (Cronbach's alpha=0.669).

[12] We note that although participation clearly falls far below the other indicators, this may derive primarily from the fact that this indicator reflects only reported behaviours, whereas the others either mix behaviours and evaluations, or use only evaluations.

with them. This suggests that one of the main areas in which Africa's young democracies and multiparty systems are most deficient is in extending the link between citizens and government beyond regular elections and formal constitutional protections to the day-to-day realm of policy-making and implementation. In other words, African governments of the 21st century may treat their citizens far better than in the past (Freedoms), and are making some progress toward establishing the broad institutional structures of democracy (Competition, Horizontal Accountability, and Rule of Law), but they remain weak when it comes to *listening* and *responding* to public priorities, preferences and complaints (see also Bratton 2008).

Comparing Countries

We display in Table 3 the average scores for each Quality of Democracy indicator across the 20 countries surveyed by Afrobarometer in 2008-2009. Here we can observe an important contribution of the Quality of Democracy framework. That is, groups of countries that cluster together with similar or identical ratings of overall Quality can have vastly different scores across the constituent dimensions. For instance, respondents in Mali and Madagascar provide both those countries with similar aggregate self-assessments of Democratic Quality (roughly 2.2) but starkly different scores across the various dimensions. Whereas Malians report the second highest levels of Participation across the 20 countries,[13] they offer one of the lowest ratings for Equality. Malagasy do exactly the opposite, rating their political system highly on Equality, but reporting quite low levels of Participation. Liberians, meanwhile (with a similar aggregate score of 2.17) also rate their government much higher than Malians on Equality, but much lower when it comes to the degree of Vertical Accountability enjoyed in the country. Similar distinctions among countries with comparable aggregate scores are evident at the lowest and highest end of the scale as well. At the same time, Batswana give their country the highest average rating (2.8) and also rate their system at or very near the top on seven of the eight dimensions (the except being Participation), the only country that comes close to doing this. In sharp contrast, Nigerians are harsh and consistent critics, placing themselves in last position overall with rankings between 15th and 18th position across the eight dimensions.

14

[13] We note, however, that according to International IDEA, at just 36% Mali has one of the lowest rates of voter turnout (calculated as a share of registered voters) not just in Africa, but in the world. Turnout as a share of estimated voting age population is, however, considerably higher – and more comparable with a number of other countries – at 48% See http://www.idea.int/vt/. Note that according to the International IDEA website, there may be several explanations for the apparent anomaly of an estimated voting age population that is smaller than the pool of registered voters, including inaccuracies in or a failure to maintain and update voter roles, as well as the fact that population figures are always estimates. The fact that the two figures come from different sources exacerbates the potential for discrepancies. The figures for voting age population are drawn from the UN Demographic Yearbook. See http://www.idea.int/vt/faq.cfm for a detailed explanation.

14

Table 3: Quality of Democracy Indicators, by Country (2008-2009)

Country	Rule of Law	Participation	Competition	Vertical Accountability	Horizontal Accountability	Freedom	Equality	Responsiveness	Overall Democratic Quality
Botswana	3.2	1.3	3.4	2.6	3.6	3.6	3.1	2.0	2.83
Ghana	2.6	1.3	2.9	2.7	3.2	3.3	2.5	1.9	2.57
Malawi	2.9	1.3	2.8	2.8	2.9	3.4	2.3	1.5	2.48
Tanzania	2.7	1.5	2.8	2.1	3.3	3.2	2.1	1.8	2.48
Namibia	3.0	1.1	2.6	2.0	3.0	3.1	2.5	1.5	2.34
Benin	2.5	1.4	2.9	1.9	3.0	3.1	2.1	1.5	2.30
Mozambique	2.8	1.2	2.8	2.3	2.6	2.6	2.0	2.0	2.29
Cape Verde	2.7	1.1	2.7	2.3	2.6	2.9	1.9	1.7	2.21
Madagascar	2.6	1.2	2.7	2.0	2.5	2.6	2.3	1.7	2.21
Burkina Faso	2.8	1.4	2.7	1.9	2.5	2.6	1.7	2.0	2.21
Liberia	2.4	1.4	2.3	1.8	2.9	2.9	2.2	1.5	2.17
Mali	2.4	1.5	2.6	2.1	2.7	2.9	1.4	1.7	2.16
South Africa	2.6	1.1	2.4	2.1	2.4	2.9	1.9	1.6	2.14
Lesotho	2.8	1.4	2.3	2.2	2.2	2.9	1.5	1.7	2.09
Zambia	2.6	1.2	2.3	1.8	2.2	2.9	1.9	1.4	2.03
Senegal	2.8	1.4	2.5	1.5	1.7	3.1	1.4	1.2	1.95
Uganda	2.3	1.3	2.0	2.0	2.1	2.8	1.6	1.7	1.94
Kenya	2.2	1.4	1.6	2.0	2.3	3.0	1.4	1.5	1.90
Zimbabwe	2.4	1.3	1.6	1.8	1.5	1.9	1.4	1.7	1.69
Nigeria	2.1	1.0	1.6	1.4	1.9	2.3	1.5	1.3	1.66
Average	2.6	1.3	2.4	2.0	2.5	2.9	1.9	1.6	2.2

**All indicators are calculated on 0 to 4 scale, with 0 representing the lowest or minimum level, i.e., no participation or no supply of a dimension of quality, and 4 representing the highest or maximum level, i.e., complete supply or total participation ("always")*

Quality Versus Supply

As mentioned, the Afrobarometer survey instrument has not been explicitly designed to comprehensively measure all dimensions of the Quality of Democracy framework, although some elements of the framework have been incorporated into the questionnaire in the series of surveys conducted in 2005-2006, and again in 2008-2009. However, the Afrobarometer has developed a potentially similar, but much broader global indicator of the perceived *Supply of Democracy* that dates back to the first surveys conducted in 1999. The Supply of Democracy index is derived from responses to two separate indicators. First, Afrobarometer asks respondents "In your opinion, how much of a democracy is [your country] today?" Response categories range on a four-point scale from "a full democracy," though "a democracy with minor problems" and "a democracy with major problems," to "not a democracy." We then ask "How satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [your country]?" Those respondents who *both* rate their country as either a full democracy or one with only minor problems, *and* who are either fairly or very satisfied with the way democracy works, are considered to be supplied with democracy. These two responses can then be combined into a single reliable *Index of the Supply of Democracy*. The aggregated average scores have tended to correlate relatively strongly with Freedom House scores (Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi 2005; Mattes and Bratton 2007; Bratton and Mattes 2009).

But to what extent do Africans' experiences with and evaluations of the discrete areas of representative government covered by the Quality of Democracy dimensions help them decide how democratic they judge their political system to be? Are the two sets of measures essentially duplicative? Is measuring the Quality of Democracy merely a fancier and more arduous means of measuring the same thing that the Supply of Democracy indicator has always captured? Or do more disaggregated measures of quality tell us something more, or something altogether different?

In fact, we find a strong convergence between the two summary indicators. Across 20 countries, the aggregate country-mean scores for the *Index of Democratic Quality* correlate very highly with the country-mean value of the *Index of Supply of Democracy* (Pearson's r=.897**). The correlation is also quite strong at the individual level (Pearson's r=.479**). But the Quality of Democracy framework adds even more value when we assess the micro-level relationships among the individual components of democratic quality and overall perception of democratic supply. We find that there are meaningful connections between seven of the eight dimensions of democratic quality and global assessments of the Supply of Democracy (only Participation registers a substantively weak bivariate correlation).

Regressing perceptions of the overall Supply of Democracy on the evaluations of the eight distinct indices of democratic quality, we find that citizen's perceptions of electoral contestation (Competition, Beta, the standardized regression coefficient=.253) and to a lesser extent the ability to hold presidents to account (Horizontal Accountability, Beta=.135) and Freedom (Beta=.123) are the most important determinants of their global assessment of the Supply of Democracy. Recall (Table 2) that all three of these (along with Rule of Law) are among the dimensions on which respondents think they are getting the greatest supply. In contrast, two of the factors that were seen to be less supplied – Responsiveness and Vertical Accountability – also play considerably smaller roles in shaping overall assessments of the Supply of Democracy. This suggests not only that governments place a lower priority on supplying responsiveness and accountability to citizens, but also that citizens place a lower priority on securing these dimensions from their democratic systems. At the same time, while evaluations of the various dimensions of democratic quality make a strong contribution to overall judgements of the supply of democracy (adjusted $R^2 = .262$), the relationship is far from perfect. While developing a full model of the supply of democracy is beyond the scope of this paper, previous research tells us that Africans also look to the individual job performance and trustworthiness of their president as well as to recent economic trends to adjudge the overall supply of democracy (Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi 2005; Mattes and Bratton 2007). At the same time, it is clear that Africans do not ignore these democratic qualities, and in fact place great weight on them.

Table 4: Micro-Linkages Between Quality of Democracy and Index of Supply

	Bivariate Correlation	Standardized Regression Coefficient (Beta)	Standardized Regression Coefficient (Beta)
(Overall Index)			
Democratic Quality	.479**	.479***	
(Constituent Dimensions)			
Competition	.438**		.253***
Horizontal Accountability	.334**		.135***
Rule of Law	.302**		.071***
Freedom	.297**		.123***
Vertical Accountability	.241**		.080***
Equality	.237**		.036***
Responsiveness	.210**		.093***
Participation	.077**	-	
Adjusted R^2		.229	.262

Dependant Variable: Index of Democratic Supply
Ordinary Least Squares

Comparing Democracy Indicators

How do these "insider" measures of democracy from the ground up compare with "outsider" or expert assessments made from the top down? Are insiders and outsiders all seeing the same thing? To assess this, we compare Africans' evaluations of their country's Quality of Democracy and those generated by three different expert-based projects: Freedom House's Status of Freedom (for 2008 and 2009);[15] Polity's Democracy Scores (for 2008);[16] and lastly, the Democracy Status Scores produced by the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (for 2008 and 2010).[17] According to citizen perceptions, Botswana (2.83) has the highest quality democracy, by a considerable margin followed by Ghana (2.57) and perhaps surprisingly Malawi (2.48) and Tanzania (2.48). The lowest scores belong to a set of countries clustered around 1.9 (Senegal 1.95, Uganda 1.94, Kenya 1.9) with Zimbabwe (1.69) and Nigeria (1.66) bringing up the rear (see Table 5).

[15] www.freedomhouse.org. Freedom House scores, which range from a "high" of 1 to a "low" of 7 on each of two indicators (one for political rights and the other for civil liberties), have been combined and reversed and reset to a more intuitively understandable scale of 0 to 6.

[16] http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm

[17] http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/cps/rde/xchg/SID-EDAE0CD5-44B67D1B/bst_engl/hs.xsl/307.htm.

Table 5: Quality Indicators in Comparison, by Country

Country	AB Democratic Quality Index, 2008-2009 (0 to 4)	AB Democratic Supply, 2008-2009 (0 to 4)	Polity Score, 2008 (-10 to +10)	Freedom House Combined Score, 2008-2009 (0 to 6)*	Bertelsmann Status Index Democracy, 2008 (0 to 10)	Bertelsmann Status Index Democracy, 2010 (0 to 10)
Botswana	2.83	3.21	8	5.0	8.45	8.40
Ghana	2.57	3.18	8	5.5	8.10	8.15
Malawi	2.48	2.34	6	3.0	6.60	6.40
Tanzania	2.48	2.85	-1	3.5	6.85	6.15 ↓
Namibia	2.34	2.69	6	5.0	8.10	7.80
Benin	2.30	2.78	7	5.0	7.90	7.70
Mozambique	2.29	2.37	6	4.0	6.55	6.35
Cape Verde	2.21	2.48	--	6.0	--	--
Madagascar	2.21	1.91	7	3.5	7.45	6.00 ↓
Burkina Faso	2.21	2.32	0	3.0	6.30	5.77 ↓
Liberia	2.17	2.33	6	3.5	5.30	6.18 ↑
Mali	2.16	2.29	7	4.5	7.25	7.15
South Africa	2.14	2.20	9	5.0	8.60	7.60 ↓
Lesotho	2.09	1.66	8	4.5	--	5.70
Zambia	2.03	1.98	7	3.5	6.80	6.65
Senegal	1.95	1.83	8	4.0	7.10	6.30 ↓
Uganda	1.94	2.14	-1	2.5	6.80	6.85
Kenya	1.90	1.89	7	3.5	7.00	5.85 ↓
Zimbabwe	1.69	1.41	-4	1.0	3.97	3.95
Nigeria	1.66	1.58	4	2.5	6.05	4.80 ↓

Sources: Freedom House: Freedom in the World 2009 *(for 2008 scores for all countries except Zambia and Zimbabwe) and* Freedom in the World 2010 *(for 2009 scores for Zambia and Zimbabwe), available at www.freedom.org.*
Polity IV: The Polity Score subtracts the Autocracy Score from the Democracy Score, available at www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm
Bertelsmann: Bertelsmann Transformation Index, available at www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/cps/rde/xchg/SID-EDAE0CD5-44B67D1B/bst_engl/hs.xsl/307.htm
.

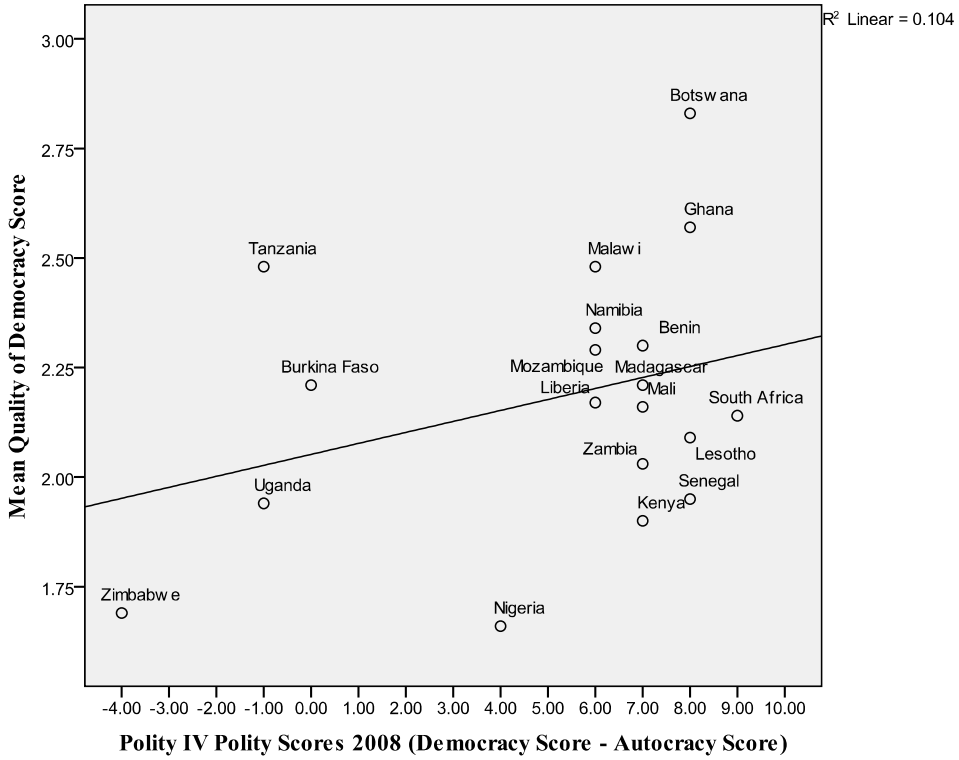
Popular evaluations of Quality of Democracy are most weakly related to the scores produced by Polity (r=.322; p=.172).[18] This poor overall match may reflect the fact that the Polity coding scheme focuses on more formal institutional features, such as the presence or absence of institutionalized procedures for participation and influence, legal restraints on the executive, and guarantees of civil liberties (Marshall, Gurr and Jaggers 2009: 13-14). As such, Polity ratings likely miss many of the behavioural violations experienced by ordinary citizens (see Table 6). As a result, a range of countries that are all scored by Polity as largely democratic receive vastly different scores from their citizens. For instance Botswana, Ghana, Lesotho and Senegal are all scored by Polity at "+8" in 2008 (on a scale from –10 to +10), yet received vastly different Quality of Democracy scores from their citizens, ranging from 2.83 (Botswana) to 1.95 (Senegal) (on a 0 to 4 scale) (see Figure 1). Thus, while the assessments of Batswana are relatively consistent with those of Polity experts, the perspective of the average Senegalese is noticeably at odds with expert opinion.

Table 6: Comparing Democracy Indicators

	AB Democratic Quality	**AB Democratic Supply**
Polity Score, 2008 (Democracy – Autocracy)	.322	.211
	(N=19)	(N=19)
Freedom House, 2008-2009	.589*	.633**
(Combined Civil Liberties & Political Rights)	(N=20)	(N=20)
Bertelsmann Status Index -Democracy, 2008	.588**	.621**
	(N=18)	(N=18)
Bertelsmann Status Index - Democracy, 2010	.729***	.813
	(N=-19)	(N=19)

Cells display bivariate Pearson's r correlation coefficients

Figure 1: Afrobarometer Quality of Democracy Compared With Polity IV



[18] This correlation is calculated across 19 states since Polity does not produce scores for Cape Verde.

Popular evaluations of the Quality of Democracy correlate more strongly with the Freedom House scores, which combine measures of political rights and civil liberties as measured in the year of the survey (2008 or 2009) (r=.589, p=.006). A visual inspection of the resulting scatter plot indicates that Malawians and Tanzanians over-rate their country's quality of democracy compared to Freedom House, while Cape Verdians and to a lesser extent Nigerians underrate theirs (see Figure 2). Citizen ratings of Democratic Quality also correlate at about the same level with the 2008 Bertelsmann scores (r=.588; p=.01)[19] which aggregate 18 indicators clustered into five different sets of variables covering the integrity of the state, freedom of political participation, the rule of law, the stability of democratic institutions and patterns of political and social integration (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2009: 16-17). We again see that Malawians and Tanzanians seem to overrate their quality of democracy compared to the expert judges at Bertelsmann, while South Africans and Nigerians are, again, more critical, as are Kenyans and Senegalese (see Figure 3). It is interesting to note that the Index of Democratic Quality correlates much more strongly with the Bertelsmann scores for 2010 (r=.729, p=.000). This affinity might suggest that democratic changes and developments that are reflected almost immediately in public opinion may take longer to show-up in expert indices due to the sheer inertia of these large data collection and coding enterprises. In other words, the effects of either democratic gains or losses on expert indices may be lagged (Bertelsmann produce their estimates every two years). Thus, when the comparison shifts to Bertelsmann's 2010 scores, some of the most glaring gaps with Afrobarometer scores (generated in 2008-9) were reduced sharply because in 2010 Bertelsmann reduced its ratings in places like Nigeria, Kenya, Senegal and South Africa, and increased them for Liberia, bringing these countries' scores more closely in line with public evaluations from the previous year. At the same time, the uncritical citizens of Tanzania, Malawi and Uganda still seem far more forgiving of the shortcomings in their political systems than the expert judges (see Figure 4). [20]

Figure 2: Afrobarometer Quality of Democracy Compared With Freedom House

[19] This correlation is calculated across 18 states for 2008 since Bertelsmann did not produce scores for either Cape Verde or Lesotho, and for 19 states in 2010 when Bertelsmann did not produce a score for Cape Verde..

[20] While it might seem that Batswana sharply over-rate the quality of their democracy in relation to Freedom House and Bertelsmann judges, the regression line would probably come far closer to their position if Tanzanians and Malawians offered less optimistic ratings, and Nigerians more optimistic ratings.

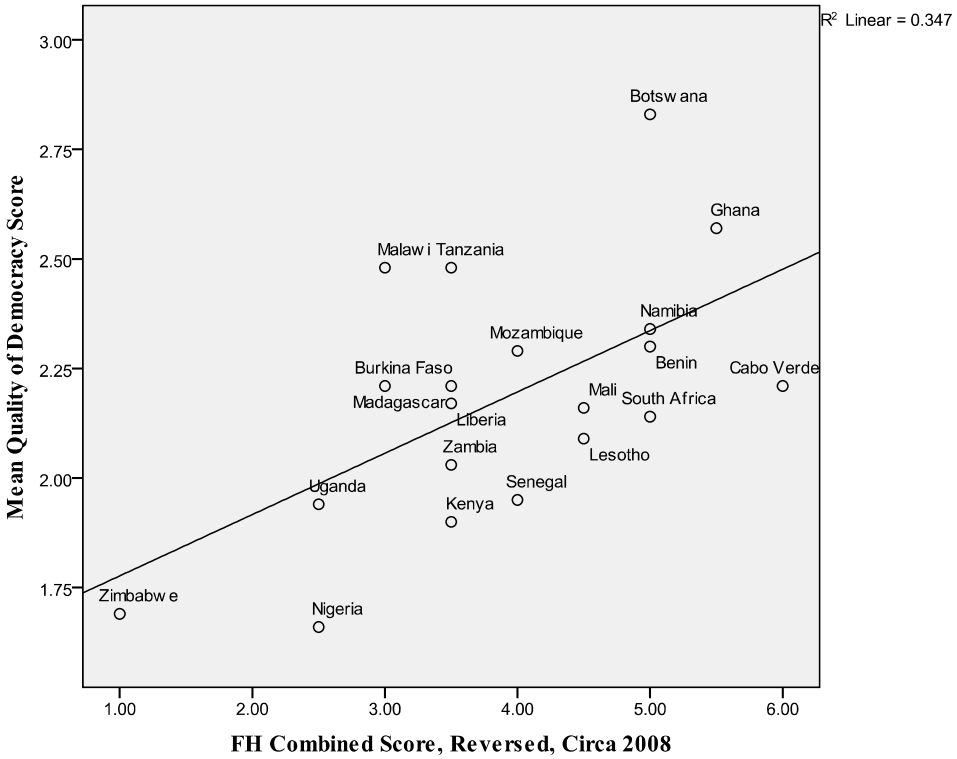


Figure 3: Afrobarometer Quality of Democracy Compared With Bertelsmann Foundation, 2008

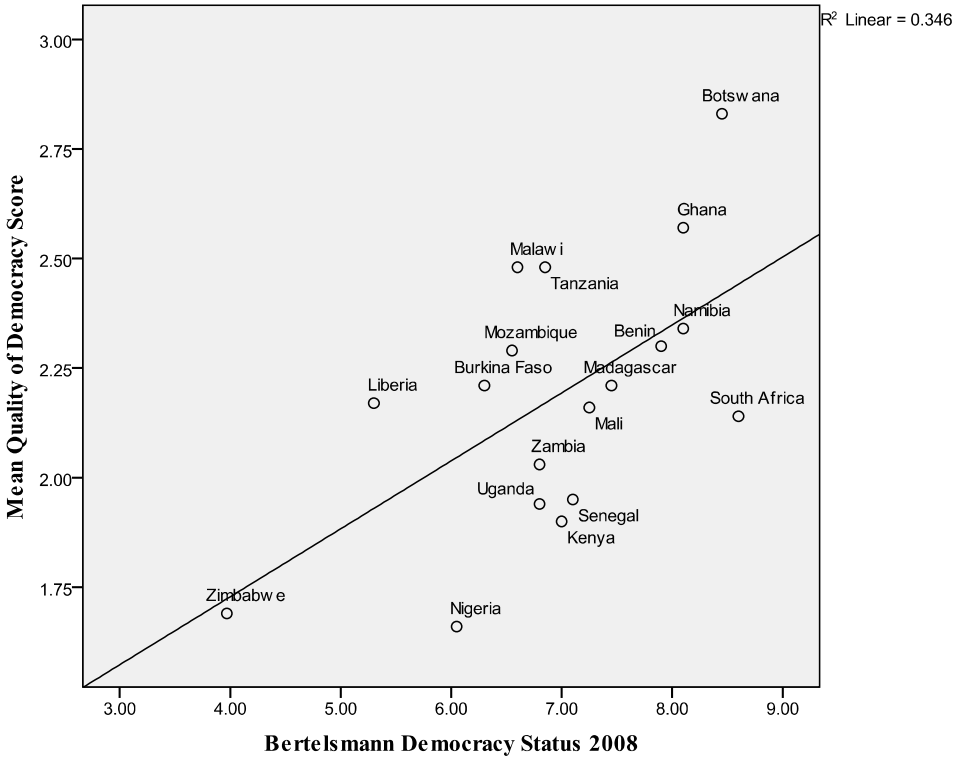
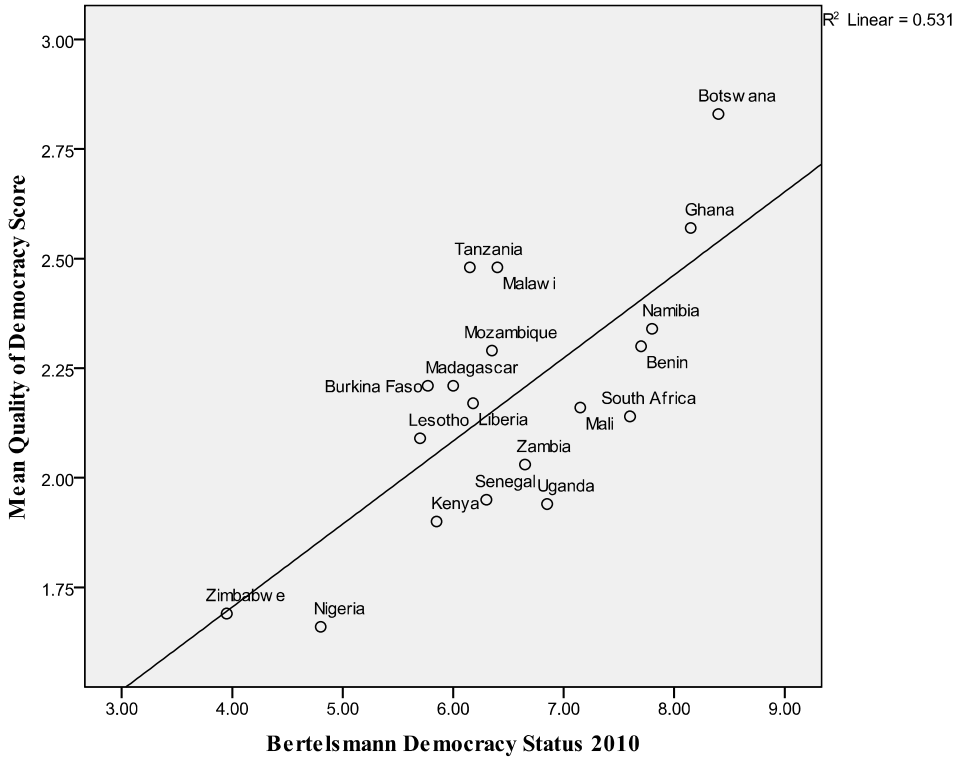


Figure 4: Afrobarometer Quality of Democracy Compared With Bertelsmann Foundation, 2010



So, while we detect broad convergence between estimates of democratic quality provided by citizens, on one hand, and political scientists on the other, there are also clear discrepancies. We thus return to the caveat we set out at the beginning of this paper. How do we explain these differences between internal, subjective evaluations of quality and external expert assessments? Is one of the assessments more correct or valid? And is it possible to locate an independent, Archimedean point from which to stand and judge citizen and expert evaluations? While a systematic explanation of the gaps between mass and expert ratings is beyond the scope of the present paper, we offer several possible propositions which should be put to the test in future work.

First of all, we recall the fact that Malawians and Tanzanians have been shown to be consistently far more favorable to their own political systems than the experts. This suggests that citizens with low levels of formal education and who live in countries with weak information infrastructures (e.g. the number, reach of, and access to independent radio and television stations which carry political news, and the distribution and range of independent newspapers), and who are thus dependent on state news media for information might be expected to be more forgiving and less critical of democratic performance. A second, quite different possibility is that citizens of countries with different histories and experiences have diverse understandings of democracy, and thus may have varying expectations and standards against which they measure the quality of their own political systems (Bratton 2010). Citizens who have fought liberation struggles in South Africa and Zimbabwe, or experienced electoral alternations in Benin and Ghana, may now have much higher expectations of their political leadership than citizens of Malawi and Tanzania, who are less experienced both with political struggle, and with the potential for democratic change. Third, it is also possible that experts and citizens are exposed to sharply differing realities. How a political system looks from the ground up can be significantly different from how it looks from the top down. When Freedom House or Bertelsmann ask experts to rate various features of these political systems, they are, for the most part, limited to a high level of aggregation and abstraction, drawing on factors such as existing laws or institutions and

macro country-level data about how effectively those institutions are functioning. In contrast, citizens evaluate their system from a much different vantage point. They may know less about – and perhaps be less concerned with – what is happening among political elites at the central level, and instead respond more in terms of how democratic – or not – their own daily experience is. Finally, it is worthwhile to ask whether external assessments are influenced by a country's reputation and history. Does South Africa, a darling of the international community since the end of the apartheid era, receive overly high marks from indulgent experts? Or is Tanzania's *de facto* one-party state not given enough credit for its political successes in creating a widespread sense of security, well-being and equality despite hardship among its population?

However, we should not let discrepancies between mass and expert-based ratings of the quality of democracy obscure the fact that we have found considerable convergence between the two types of data. Thus, the key message from this analysis is that until we gain better knowledge about the discrepancies, we should– whenever possible – use both mass and expert rating systems to obtain the fullest picture of the quality of democracy.

Conclusion

Ordinary Africans are not only able to offer meaningful global assessments of the Supply of Democracy, they are also able to make distinct evaluations across discrete dimensions of Democratic Quality. Moreover, the component dimensions of African public opinion largely match up quite well with the intellectual framework develop by Diamond and Morlino (2005). While there is certainly room both for improving survey indicators, as well as for refining certain aspects of the Quality of Democracy framework itself to make it more amenable to producing effective measurement, our analysis has clearly demonstrated the value of both the framework, and of using public attitude data to operationalize that framework.

Substantively, the subjective mass opinion perspective on the Quality of Democracy gives us insight into what Africans themselves want out of democracy, and how they prioritize its various components. In general, African governments seem to be more interested in supplying – and African citizens seem to be more interested in getting – protection for rights and equality, as well as a strengthened institutional framework (horizontal accountability, election regulation). Governments remain deficient in democratizing their *interactions* with citizens by creating mechanisms of vertical accountability and responsiveness, and citizens, quite frankly, seem considerably less interested in these goals as well. There is, however, significant cross-country variation in preferences and priorities, as well as evaluations.

We also find that quality of democracy data can add a richness to our understanding of particular country contexts. It allows for finer distinctions between the democratic experiences of countries that may score similarly at higher levels of abstraction and aggregation. Finally, the effects of approaching an assessment of democracy from the perspective of the multi-faceted quality of democracy framework, combined with utilizing public opinion data to generate indicators, leads to the conclusion that both individual and expert assessments deserve to be carefully interrogated. What parts of Africans' everyday experience of democracy (or lack thereof) are missed by country expert assessments? And what parts of democratic qualities (or flaws) are missed by citizens with limited access to independent sources of information about events and trends that lie beyond their immediate experience? We cannot at this point conclude that either experts or ordinary citizens provide the "true" or "correct" assessment, but rather that both perspectives are essential to fully understanding today's democratic experience, and the shape of the democratic future, on the continent.

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