**Benin**
Vanderbilt

Benin is coded as an autocracy from independence in 1960 until 1991 and as a democracy thereafter. During the autocratic period, power changes hands frequently, with Northern and Southern politicians vying for influence. According to Dossou-Yovo (1999), the three principal political figures during the greatest time of unrest (1963 to 1972) each represented the interests of a different region of the country: Hubert Maga for the North, Sourou-Migan Apithy for the South-East, and Justin Ahomadegbé for the South-West (Dossou-Yovo 1999, 60).

Maga, the first leader after independence and a member of the Rassemblement Démocratique du Dahomé (RDD), headed a personalist regime. There is no SOLS change at independence. In 1963 there was a military coup, and Christophe Soglo, a Southern sympathizer and Chief of Staff of the Army, headed a provisional government. Soglo removed Maga from office because the country was experiencing massive riots and was at risk for civil war (Maher 2004, 771). Both worldstatesmen.org and the Europa World Yearbook refer to Soglo as head of a provisional government. Thus, we do not code a SOLS change here.

The Parti Démocratique (PD) won the 1964 elections, bringing Apithy, a southerner and former Vice President, into office. Because GWF codes Apithy's government as a separate personalist regime (1964-1965) that is distinct from Maga's personalist regime (1961-1963), I code a leader change from Soglo (or Maga) to Apithy as a major SOLS change. Further, while Apithy was the Prime Minister in Maga's government, Seely (2009: 31) states that a political alliance between Maga and Apithy fell apart in the coup.

A provisional government was formed, headed by Congakou Tairou. Both worldstatesmen.org and the Europa World Yearbook (Maher, 2004) confirm that this was a provisional government. Thus, this is not coded as a SOLS change. Later in the year, Soglo headed another military takeover and established a military regime. Because the last regular leader Apithy was not a military man but Soglo was a military officer supported by the military this is coded as a major SOLS change.

There are a number of other leaders that rule during the military regime between 1965 and 1970, some of which came to power by means of coups. In December 1967, Soglo, due to a failure to cope with economic crisis, was overthrown in a coup led by a young military officer, Maurice Kouandeté. Kouandeté handed over power after two days to Soglo's former Chief of Staff of the Army, Alphonse Alley (Decalo 1970, 447), and is such not listed in the data set. I code a minor Change with Alley. According to GWF, he started a separate military regime which is distinct from a prior military regime under Soglo. By our rules, we code minor SOLS changes between different military regimes.

In 1968 Alley appointed Émile Derlin Henri Zinsou, a figure without regional affiliation, to the presidency. This is not a SOLS change, again because Zinsou was appointed by the military. Lentz (1994:88) describes that "the ruling military government appointed Zinsou president on August 1, 1968".

In December 1969, due among other reasons to Zinsou's inability to follow orders from those who elevated him, Kouandété turned against the army's own choice for president and carried out a coup against Zinsou (Decalo 1970, 453). Kouandété's request to the military

establishment to become “interim” president was rejected and Paul-Émile de Souza, not politically affiliated, was appointed instead. We code a minor SOLS change with Kouandeté because GWF code a separate military regime starting with him.

Elections were held in 1970. Maga effectively won the elections, but before the votes were fully counted, the elections were cancelled by de Souza and turmoil ensued. After weeks of bargaining, the three main factions came to a power-sharing agreement: Maga would become president for two years, through 1972, followed by Ahomadegbé and Apithy, who would also each serve two years in a rotating presidency lasting for a 6 year term (Decalo 1970, 456). GWF consider no clear authoritarian regime to be in pace and code the country as a provisional regime from 1971 to 1971. Because Maga’s support base was not clearly military (GWF’s military regime ends with de Souza) and he is not the pre-designated successor of de Souza, we code a major SOLS change here.

In 1972, Maga was succeeded by Ahomadegbé as arranged by the power-sharing agreement. Because of the power-sharing agreement, Ahomadegbé can be seen as Maga’s pre-designated successor. It was arranged already in 1970 that he would succeed Maga. Thus, this is not a SOLS change. Later that year, Major Mathieu Kérékou, a northerner and Deputy Chief of Staff of the armed forces, came to power after a military coup. This is a major SOLS change. Soon after the elections, Kérékou changed his affiliation from the military to PRPB, or Parti du Revolutionare Popular du Benin, the only legal party from 1979 to 1990 according to Worldstatesmen.org. This is not a SOLS change. In sum, there are three leaders in this year: Maga (RDD), Ahomadegbé- Tomêtin (PDD), and Kerekou (MIL, PRPB). GWF codes Benin as a personalist regime from 1973 to 1990. We don't have a specific coding rule for what to call the leader’s SOLS in a case of a personalist regime. Worldstatesmen lists Kerehou’s SOLS as Mil/ PRPB. It appears, however, that while Kerekou came to power as a military leader, he then created a communist party, so these were sequential rather than simultaneous SOLS.

From 1973 to 1990, the regime is coded as pure personalist with the SOLS of the Kerehou’s PRPB (GWF). In the late 1980s, domestic and international pressures convinced Kérékou that he should move towards a transition to democracy. In 1990, his SOLS changes from PRPB to PRB (Parti de la Renaissance du Bénin). In 1991, Benin experienced a relatively peaceful, civilian-led transition to democracy with Nicéphore Dieudonné Soglo, also of the PRB party, winning elections to become president (Magnusson 2001, 219). We code Benin as a presidential democracy starting with Soglo’s election. Whether the transition between Kérékou and Soglo marks a SOLS change is a bit tricky. On the one hand, Soglo’s presidency marks the beginning of a democratic Benin and a break with the former autocratic personalist regime of Kérékou. On the other hand, Kérékou had made Soglo defense minister and he became part of a transitional government with Kérékou still in power (Maher 2004, 771). They also had the same party affiliation. We code this as a major SOLS change because Kérékou’s personalist regime is coded as ending in 1991 and Soglo was not technically Kérékou’s pre-designated successor since they competed in the elections for the office of the President (Maher 2004, 771). Another major SOLS change occurs when Kérékou, now running on a different party platform (FARD- Front d'Action pour le Rénouveau et le Développement) than Soglo, is elected president in 1996. Because of term limits Kérékou was barred from running for re-election in 2006. The 2006

election was won by Former West African Development Bank Director Boni Yayi, who did not have a clear party affiliation.

The transition between Boni Yayi and Talon in 2016 is coded as a SOLS change. Benin is considered a democracy during this period so we use political affiliation to determine whether a SOLS change occurred. However, both Boni Yayi and Talon were non-party leaders, requiring us to look at pre-designated successors and the supporting coalition. In the 2016 presidential, Boni Yayi could not run for re-election and Talon defeated Boni Yayi's preferred candidate Lionel Zinsou (BBC 2019). As a result, we do not consider Talon as a pre-designated successor and code a SOLS change.

**Sources**

BBC News. 2019. "How Benin's Democratic Crown Has Slipped." BBC News. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48150006 (June 13, 2019).

Decalo, Samuel. 1970. "Full Circle in Dahomey." African Studies Review 13/3: 445-457.

Dossou-Yovo, Noel. 1999. "The Experience of Benin." International Journal on World Peace 16/3: 59-74.

Lentz, Harris M. (1994) Heads of States and Governments: A Worldwide Encyclopedia of Over 2,300 Leaders, 1945 through 1992, North Carolina and London: Mafarland.

Magnusson, Bruce A. 2001. "Democratization and Domestic Insecurity: Navigating the Transition in Benin." Comparative Politics 33/2: 211-230.

Maher, Joanne (ed.). 2004. The Europa World Yearbook 2004. Volume 1. 45th edition. London, UK: Europa Publications.

Seely, Jennifer C. 2009. The Legacies of Transition Government in Africa: The Cases of Benin and Togo. Palgrave McMillan.

U.S. Department of State. "Background Notes: Benin." February 3, 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6761.htm> Accessed on June 29, 2010.

Coded by Anna Carella 7/5/2010
Checked by Michaela Mattes 07/09/2010
Revised by Michaela Mattes 12/17/2011
Updated by Naoko Matsumura 06/13/2012
Revised by Bryan Rooney 10/01/2012

Revised by Naoko Matsumura 04/15/2014
Edited by Andrew Wood (Rice) on 5/22/14
Edited by Michaela Mattes 11/11/2015
Edited by Kristin Bryant to include information about 2009-2018 period coded by Alex Pugh on 08/08/2020