

DEMOCRACY AND STABILITY IN WEST AFRICA:
The Ghanaian Experience

Kwame Boafo-Arthur

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November 2008

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Editor's Foreword

This is the fourth issue of the CAMP series. It presents the text version of the 2006 Claude Ake Memorial Lecture, delivered by Professor Kwame Boafo-Arthur. Having obtained his Ph.D. from the University of Ghana in 1991, Professor Boafo-Arthur is currently Head of the Department of Political Science at the University of Ghana, Legon.

13 years ago, Claude Ake made his final visit to the Department of Peace and Conflict Research. He gave a lecture to an international post-doc programme for scholars from the so-called Third World. He spoke mainly on the prospects, challenges and hazards facing democratization processes in Africa. The so-called 'third wave of democratization' had been underway for some years. After the lecture, I asked Professor Ake which countries, in his opinion, were most likely to be seen as the African success stories in the beginning of the new millennium. Not an advocate of speculation, Ake nevertheless politely offered an answer: 'Its anybody's guess, perhaps Botswana, perhaps Ghana, why not Benin and, we can only hope, South Africa.'

Much of the ground Ake covered in that lecture has since been probed and problematized by others, not least by Dr. Cyril Obi in the second issue of the CAMP series. In the present issue Professor Boafo-Arthur takes a look at his own country, Ghana, just over a decade after Ake volunteered the above informed guess. While the present paper differs from previous CAMP issues, in that it focuses on just one country, it does nevertheless seem pertinent to scrutinize this particular West African country, recipient of much international praise for its change processes. What can we learn from Ghana's successes (and failures) in terms of striving towards 'positive peace', particularly with regard to state-making, nation-building, democratization and development? Do these lessons apply elsewhere, or do they derive solely from the specifics of the Ghanaian context?

Professor Kwame Boafo-Arthur starts by outlining the process of democratization in West Africa. Countries in West Africa have, in fact, undergone several political transitions: from multi-party democracy on attaining independence, through one-party rule and military dictatorship, and then back to multi-party democracy. The early 1990's marked a turning point in the region with the return to democratization and constitutional rule in most countries. Starting with Benin's elections in 1991, West African countries have, one after another, re-instituted democracy. In between, the region has had to

contend with several forms of destabilizing conflicts, including not least the civil wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire.

With a point of departure in the general perception of Ghana as an oasis of peace and stability in a turbulent region, the paper seeks explanations for Ghana's relative stability. Boafo-Arthur finds that it is largely attributable to a benign combination of three factors: 1) a strong adherence to the rule of law by political actors, 2) the independence and integrity of the legal system, and 3) a highly effective electoral management system. With the first election of 1992 as a starting point, the paper maps out various measures that the electoral commission put in place to facilitate credible and legitimate electoral outcomes in the subsequent elections of 1996, 2000, and 2004.

Professor Boafo-Arthur also analyses other measures that have significantly contributed to the relative stability in Ghana, including the nature of civil-military relations, freedom of the media, the active role of civil society organizations and good relations with donors. The paper also identifies key threats to continued stability, such as poverty, ethnocentrism, corruption and overdependence on donors. While based in the Ghanaian experience, his careful analysis of these and other factors—as well as the policy advice it generates—clearly deserves to be widely read and understood by political actors throughout Africa.

The paper has a partisan orientation and, as such, it will be seen as controversial by some. This, it may be argued, fits nicely into a context that pays homage to Claude Ake. Perhaps more importantly—and in line with Ake's thinking—Professor Boafo-Arthur delivers in his paper, in a carefully motivated and justified manner, a strong statement in the African context, namely, that popular legitimacy, real democracy, political stability and stable peace first and foremost hinge on two central factors: first, the quality of the system of governance in a state and, second, how and for what purposes holders of state power use the resources they have at their disposal.

Uppsala
November 2008

Thomas Ohlson
CAMP Series Editor

DEMOCRACY AND STABILITY IN WEST AFRICA: The Ghanaian Experience

Kwame Boafo-Arthur

1. Introduction

The West African sub-region has several unique features in terms of politics on the African continent, both historically and in contemporary times. For me, the sub-region, for years constituted the heartbeat of politics in sub-Saharan Africa. Before the dawn of armed resistance against colonial rule in Africa, West African intelligentsia had constituted itself into enlightened opposition to foreign domination. In Anglophone West Africa, where colonial policy marginalized the educated elites in the day-to-day administration of the colonies, the Aborigines Rights Protection Society was formed in the then Gold Coast to articulate the interest of the indigenous people. The National Council of British West Africa also emerged in the early 19th Century to agitate for autonomy or participation in the administration of Anglophone West Africa.

There are other trailblazing features of the West African sub-region. Liberia, for instance, had her independence in 1847 and is thus the oldest African republic. Ghana was the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to attain independence in 1957. Arguably, the collapse of the French Federation in West Africa was contributed to by the radical posture of Guinea's leader Sekou Toure who opposed Charles de Gaulle's plans of independence for Francophone Africa within the French Community. The independence of Guinea in 1958 served as a catalyst for the wholesale independence of Francophone colonies in the sub-region in 1960.

Interestingly, after the independence of most of these colonial territories, West Africa also provided the continent with a foretaste of what was to follow in the sub-region with the first military coup when the Togolese army toppled and murdered Sylvanus Olympio, the country's Prime Minister, in January 1963. Since then West Africa has become the hub of military forays into politics or military adventurism. West Africa has acquired "a reputation as the coup d'état belt of the African continent" (Olukoshi 2001: 1). The

culture of militarism that has become part of the politics of the sub-region resulted from prolonged military dictatorship and this has contributed immensely to various forms of instability and recourse to civil wars as a means of resolving political issues. Nigeria blazed the trail with her civil war 1967-70. It could further be argued that the sustained military interventions in various countries in the sub-region did not only affect overall stability but also the economic development of the region. Development plans in individual countries never lasted as epidemics of coups engulfed the sub-region.

This partly also explains why West Africa has not seen any high levels of development since the euphoric and contagious independence of Ghana in March 1957. One of the demons that have contributed in holding development at bay is political instability. With stability being a scarce commodity for decades, it is not surprising that most states in the West African sub-region are always at the lower rungs of the international pecking order, even within Africa, with regard to low levels of economic development. For instance, of the 42 Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) in the world, 34 are in Africa. Out of these 34 African HIPC, 14 are in the West African sub-region, which is made up of 16 independent states.¹ These countries are deemed the poorest and are eligible for International Development Association (IDA) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility concessional assistance. It is not by accident, therefore, that West Africa is perceived as the world's poorest region (IRIN 2005). Given the frequency of coups, post-election conflicts, ethnic and communal clashes and the spiral of violence, others perceive the sub-region as the "riskiest region in Africa"(Edi 2006: 7). Four of the HIPC countries in the sub-region namely, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, and Côte d'Ivoire have gone through debilitating internal crises culminating in civil wars. Côte d'Ivoire, for instance, is yet to resolve the conflict that has effectively divided the country into two on both religious and ethnic grounds.

Among those countries in the sub-region that have not as yet experienced civil war in the recent past, none can lay claim to having had absolute political stability for a sustained period of time. High levels of stability are necessary to facilitate the building of various structures and institutions that may aid overall development. In other words, all the countries in the sub-region have hallowing tales regarding national stability. Even for those who are not yet members of the exclusive regional poor man's HIPC club like Nigeria and Cape Verde, national stability has not been an easily accessible commodity especially in Nigeria.

¹ The West African HIPC countries are Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo (World Bank 2004: 362).

Generally, all the countries in the sub-region have one or more acts of destabilization in the form of military interventions in political administration. The exception is Senegal, which over the years has instead been struggling to contain irredentism from the Casamance region. Without doubt, no region that has such a mixed bag of political instability can develop to any higher level. A stable political environment creates avenues for all forms of socio-economic activities that contribute to national development.

The onset of the third wave of democracy in the early 1990s created some hope for many observers of the West African political scene that the time had come for the countries in the sub-region to ensure a stable political environment. However, the expectations for a democracy dividend in the form of a stable political atmosphere in the region are yet to materialize. Côte d'Ivoire is a sad example of a stable country that was a model in the sub-region, and then imploded. Sierra Leone and Liberia are trying to forge stable political environments after landmark elections in 2002 and 2005, respectively. The elections in the two countries also marked the end years of civil wars. It must be noted that in 1997 Liberia had an election of some sort to end the civil war that started in late 1989. Charles Taylor won that election but the instability in Liberia, which was the making of Taylor himself, continued until he was forced into exile in Nigeria in 2003. He is now on trial at The Hague for crimes against humanity. In a nutshell, the West African sub-region is a region in turmoil.

Why Ghana is generally perceived, correctly or wrongly, as a stable and peaceful nation in the sub-region is the burden of this study. The extent to which this relative stability has been contributed to by democratic governance is examined. This assessment is done against the backdrop of several years of militarism and dictatorship that have engendered a volatile and unstable political environment with its concomitant negative impact on the building of democratic culture and institutions of governance. My attention is on the incremental and qualitative growth in democratic norms through effective and consensual management of the electoral process. More often than not governments in the sub-region lose their legitimacy by implication as a result of manifest or glaring electoral irregularities. Some of these contestations over election results have degenerated into conflicts. Ghana's relative stability, generally acknowledged by development partners, happens to be one of the positive democracy dividends and this has been contributed to by the comparatively transparent mode of election management. It is difficult to dispute the fact that elections are the heartbeat of any democratic process and this is why any mishandling often leads to destabilization or loss of legitimacy. This in turn leads to the adoption of extra-legal measures by political leaders to hold on to power, thereby undermining stability.

If stability is crucial for development and democracy could facilitate national stability, then the fortunes of the over 300 million people in the sub-region should turn for the better in terms of development. This has not been the case in the sub-region since the rebirth of democracy in the early 1990s, suggesting that democracy *per se* does not guarantee stability. Other variables must be at play and this is why a conscious effort must be made by stakeholders to facilitate stability even in a democratic setting. What explains the relative stability of Ghana since the foundational elections of 1992?

The omnibus assumption underlying this study, therefore, is that until stakeholders find a consensual mode of diffusing societal tensions that may crop up in a democratic environment, stability will continue to elude West Africa. A corollary to this is that the relative stability of Ghana is predicated on the ability of stakeholders to agree to the rules that should govern the contestation for political power.

In this study, particular attention is given to the following issues: the rebirth of democracy against the background of many years of military rule in the sub-region, the essence of stability for democratic growth and development in the sub-region, Ghana's transition process and the significance of the mode of electoral contest to national stability and democratic strengthening, rationalizing the relative stability and peace in Ghana, and prospects for the sustenance of national stability. I argue that, among other reasons, the effective management of the electoral process in comparative terms by all stakeholders—government, political parties and civil society organizations—is of crucial importance to stability. The near consensus resolution of contentious and polarizing electoral issues since the 1992 elections have gone a long way to reduce to the barest minimum the normally high levels of tension that characterize elections in many countries in the sub-region.

2. The Rebirth of Democracy in the Sub-Region

The rebirth of democracy in the sub-region was against the background of repressive military regimes and one party dictatorships. Here, rebirth signifies the passage of a country from a non-democratic to democratic rule. That the sub-region had become a hotbed of authoritarianism before the early 1990s is an understatement. Coups and counter-coups became distinctive features of the politics of the sub-region. The statistics are very revealing. From 1960 to 1989, West Africa was highly unstable and accounted for a very high percentage of military coups on the continent. Without counting abortive coups that were made public, Nigeria, the regional giant, tops the military coup league table with six successful interventions, followed by Ghana with five successful interventions. Ghana's northern neighbour, Burkina Faso and Nigeria's western neighbour Benin have had four successful

coups each. The military coup league table before and after the democratization process in West Africa is shown in Table 1 below together with the 2006 Freedom House Rating of the countries in the sub-region on political rights, civil liberties and current freedom status.

The extent of West Africa's instability is clear from the table. Many countries have suffered from one party rule as well as military interventions with the concomitant abuse of the rights of the people. Some have suffered irreparable damage to economic infrastructure because of civil wars. It is interesting to note that in the Freedom House Ratings only five of the West African countries are categorized as 'free' with eight of them being 'partly free' and three classified as 'not free'. One can then conclude, on the basis of the number of countries that are 'partly free' and 'not free' with reference to political rights and civil liberties, that the region is still volatile. It could also be argued that when it comes to relatively stable polities in the sub-region, then mention should be made of the five countries that have been classified as 'free' by the Freedom House Ratings. These are Benin, Cape Verde, Ghana, Senegal, and Mali. Our focus in this study, however, is on Ghana.

For sure, a combination of internal and external factors explains the rebirth of democracy in the sub-region.² Various social movements in individual West African countries had been struggling for the opening of the political space for countervailing forces to participate in political activities before the unanticipated collapse of the communist bloc and the subsequent end of the Cold War. National conferences organized by civil society organizations became the norm, with Benin being the trailblazer in Francophone West Africa. The transitions across West Africa were dramatic and unanticipated in most cases.³ Thus constitutional reforms engulfed the whole of the sub-region after 1990. Consequently, there were more elections in the sub-region between 1990 and 2000 than between 1957, when Ghana attained independence, and 1989, when the Berlin Wall crumbled to signal phenomenal political changes across the globe. Another significant outcome of the democratization process was the limitation of presidential terms. This effectively abolished the 'life president'-syndrome, which in my view also contributed to military interventions, to the extreme militarization, and to tension in the politics of the sub-region.

² For details on the internal and external influences on transition to democracy in Anglophone West Africa, see Ibrahim (2006). On Ghana in particular, see Ninsin (1998).

³ By late 1995, two thirds of the countries in the sub-region had drafted and adopted democratic constitutions. It started with Benin and Guinea in 1990, Burkina Faso and Sierra Leone in 1991, Cape Verde and Niger in 1993. In 1992, Ghana, Mali and Togo held referenda to adopt more democratic constitutions. In 1999, Nigeria and Senegal joined the bandwagon with new democratic constitutions, and in 2000 Côte d'Ivoire also ratified a new constitution.

Table 1: Political Data on West Africa

| Country | Yr. of Independence | Yr./No. of Military coups | Current Political System | Freedom House Ratings (2006) | | |
|---------------|---------------------|---|--------------------------------|------------------------------|----|----|
| | | | | PR | CL | S |
| Benin | 1960 | 1963; 1965; 1969; 1972 | Democracy | 2 | 2 | F |
| Burkina Faso | 1960 | 1966; 1974; 1980; 1987 | Emerging Democracy | 5 | 3 | PF |
| Cape Verde | 1975 | - | Democracy | 1 | 1 | F |
| Côte d'Ivoire | 1960 | 1999 | Restricted Democratic Practice | 6 | 6 | NF |
| The Gambia | 1965 | 1994 | Emerging Democracy | 5 | 4 | PF |
| Ghana | 1957 | 1966; 1972; 1978*, 1979; 1981 | Democracy | 1 | 2 | F |
| Guinea | 1958 | 1984 | Restricted Democratic Practice | 6 | 5 | NF |
| Guinea Bissau | 1974 | 1980 | Democracy | 3 | 4 | PF |
| Liberia | 1847 | 1980 (1990-1997-civil war) | Democracy | 4 | 4 | PF |
| Mali | 1960 | 1968; 1976 | Democracy | 2 | 2 | F |
| Mauritania | 1960 | 1978; 2005 | Military Regime | 6 | 4 | PF |
| Niger | 1960 | 1974; 1996 (1990-1995-Tuareg rebellion) | Democracy | 3 | 3 | PF |
| Nigeria | 1960 | Jan.1966; July 1966; 1975; 1983; 1985; 1993 | Democracy | 4 | 4 | PF |
| Senegal | 1960 | - | Democracy | 2 | 3 | F |
| Sierra Leone | 1961 | 1967; 1992; 1997 (1991-2001-civil war) | Democracy | 4 | 3 | PF |
| Togo | 1960 | 1963; 1967; 2005 | Restricted Democratic Practice | 6 | 5 | NF |

Source: Compiled from African Elections Database Country Reports (<http://africanelection.tripod.com/>). Accessed: 27-10-06.

F= Free; PF= Partially Free; NF= Not Free <see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_in_the_World_2006>

A highly significant phenomenon is power alternation in some of the countries. Even though this has been on the low side given the fact that the rebirth started only in 1990, it nonetheless signals the gradual strengthening of dem-

Table 2: Democratic Presidential Elections in West Africa, 1990-2006

| Country | Year of Elections | Government Turnover | Next Election Date | |
|---------------|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| | | | <i>Presidential</i> | <i>Assembly</i> |
| Benin | 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006 | (2) 1996, 2006 | 2011 | 2007 |
| Burkina Faso | 1991, 1998, 2005 | - | 2010 | 2007 |
| Cape Verde | 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006 | (1) 2001 | 2011 | 2011 |
| Côte d'Ivoire | 2000 | - | 2006? | 2006? |
| The Gambia | 1996, 2001, 2006 | - | 2011 | 2007 |
| Ghana | 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004 | (1) 2000 | 2008 | 2008 |
| Guinea | 1993, 1998, 2003 | - | 2008 | 2007 |
| Guinea Bissau | 2005 | - | 2010 | 2008 |
| Liberia | 1997, 2005 | (1) 2005 | 2012 | 2012 |
| Mali | 1992, 1997, 2002 | (1) 2002 | 2007 | 2007 |
| Mauritania | 1992, 1997, 2003 | - | ? | ? |
| Niger | 1993, 1996, 1999, 2003 | (1) 1996 | 2009 | 2009 |
| Nigeria | 1999, 2003 | - | 2007 | 2007 |
| Senegal | 1993, 2000 | (1) 2000 | 2007 | 2007 |
| Sierra Leone | 1996, 2002 | - | 2007 | 2007 |
| Togo | 2005 | - | 2010 | 2010 |

Source: Compiled from African Elections Database Country Reports (<http://africanelection.tripod.com/>). Accessed: 27-10-06.

ocratic norms in the sub-region. In 1991, Benin had a smooth transition from Mathieu Kerekou's Marxist-Leninist authoritarian regime to democratic rule under a former World Bank Official Nicephore Soglo. The case of Benin has its own unique features. Mathieu Kerekou, the military strong man contested the 1991 elections but was defeated. He calmly accepted the verdict of the people. It was significant in the democratic struggles in the sub-region and in

the words of Christopher Fomunyoh, it was “a harbinger of hopeful political trends” in the sub-region (Fomunyoh 2001). But that was not to be and the table above gives a bird’s eye view of the trends after the monumental elections in Benin. Benin has already conducted four successful general elections with two government turnovers. Kerekou won the 1996 presidential election by defeating Soglo and won again in 2001, the melodrama surrounding the run off notwithstanding.⁴ The April 2006 presidential election in Benin was won by a relative newcomer on the political scene, Yayi Boni who contested as an independent candidate and won 74.6 per cent of votes cast.

Cape Verde has also had a governmental turnover. The Movement for Democracy (MpD) candidate, Antonio Mascarenhas Monteiro won the presidential race in the foundational election in 1991 by comprehensively defeating the candidate of the African Party for the Independence of Cape Verde (PAICV), the veteran politician Aristides Pereira. In 1996 both PAICV and MpD reached a consensus to support the MpD candidate Monteiro for the presidency. This was significant and unprecedented. The two main parties were convinced that there should be only one candidate and they both supported him while contesting for spoils in the assembly elections. The 2001 and the 2006 elections were both won by the PAICV under the leadership of Pedro Pires.

In 2000, political power alternated in Senegal with the veteran politician Abdoulaye Wade of the Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS) defeating the incumbent Abdou Diouf of the Socialist Party (PS). The same year recorded the change of political fortunes in Ghana with the New Patriotic Party (NPP) led by J. A. Kufuor defeating the candidate of the ruling National Democratic Congress (NDC), Prof. E. Atta-Mills. The defeat of the NDC was a significant political landmark as it marked the first time in Ghana that political power had changed hands through the ballot box. Table 2 above shows the number of elections conducted by each country since democratization started in 1990, together with governmental turnover through the ballot box.

Since 1990, all the countries in the sub-region have had democratic elections. Some have led to governmental changes, others not. In the next section an attempt is made to examine the relationship between democracy, stability and growth. This is necessary for us to appreciate to some extent the realities regarding the question of democracy and stability in the sub-region.

⁴ There was no clear winner in the 2001 presidential elections but Nicephore Soglo refused to participate in the run off and the third placed candidate, Adrien Houngbedji equally declined to contest. Kerekou won the run off with over 80 per cent of the votes cast.

3. The Interface of Democracy, Stability, and Growth

The issue of a stable polity is of great essence to national development. Whether national well-being is gauged at the macro or micro level, one cannot escape the fact that stability is very important. My contention is that democracy can only thrive in a stable political environment and by this I imply an environment where the fundamental political and civic rights of citizens are respected and institutionalized. Growth could take place in an illiberal political environment as in South East Asia, but what we should ask ourselves is whether economic growth should be at the peril of the people who are supposed to enjoy that growth. Even though social science researchers relying on a cacophony of research methodologies are not always in agreement on the intrinsic linkages between democracy, stability, and economic growth or development, I personally feel that one does not need a soothsayer to realize the importance of stability to national development. The fetish for measurement has in actual fact impoverished the ability of most social scientists to examine variables on the basis of historical development and come out with far-reaching and meaningful assessments of any social phenomena.

Yi Feng points to the relationship between democracy and growth, and between political stability and growth. Three main schools of thought have worked on these relationships with conflicting outcomes. The argument of the 'conflict school' is that democracy obstructs economic growth, especially in developing countries. Sirowy and Inkeles who are of the conflict school are of the view that "the 'dysfunctional consequences' of 'premature' democracy slow growth; and democracy is incapable of pervasive state involvement in the development process in the present world-historical context" (Feng 1997: 392). There are those who are also convinced that the rapid growth of a nation calls for autocratic control and limited freedom. Developing countries, according to this argument, cannot achieve rapid economic growth in the absence of a strong centralized government. The least said about this argument, the better because the political history of the sub-region is replete with the developmental or growth outcomes of several years of authoritarianism in the guise of one-party states, military dictatorships and, in some instances, the dictatorship of development partners and multilateral agencies who impose a variety of development paradigms that encourage draconian measures by rulers. Some of these paradigms were brewed in the corridors of the Bretton Woods institutions. It is gratifying that the same international multilateral dictators have made a U-turn and are at the forefront in the struggle to plant and nurture democratic institutions for the betterment of the generality of citizens in the sub-region in particular and Africa in general (Boafo-Arthur 1999).

In contrast to the ‘conflict school’, Feng (1997) identifies the ‘incompatibility school’ of thought, which opposes the ideas of the conflict school and argues strongly that democracy enhances economic growth, and that democratic governments in developing countries are better placed to foster sustained and equitable economic development. Political and economic freedom, it is argued, enhances property rights and market competition, thus promoting economic growth.

The third school, the ‘sceptical’ perspective argues that there is no systematic relationship between democracy and economic development in the sense that economic growth is not guaranteed by a democratic government. Rather, emphasis should be placed on institutional structures and development strategies of the government, which “may vary independently of the democratic character of a political system” (Feng 1997: 393). Findings from studies on political stability and growth are equally inconsistent. However, it is argued that stability is analytically distinct from the democratic quality of the political system and should be viewed through an empirical prism. This is because there is a positive relationship—if even indirect—amongst democracy, political stability and growth. On the instability-growth nexus, it is pointed out that “*irregular* political changes such as *coups d’etat* instill great amounts of uncertainty into the market-place, slowing down and even reversing economic growth” (Feng 1997: 397). Regarding instability and democracy, the postulation is that “democracy encourages political competition in a constitutional context and tends to bring about government change through party politics, thereby increasing the chances of substantial government turn-over between political parties. In the long run, it reduces the chances both of the same party holding on to power for a long time and of abrupt, profound unconstitutional government change.” And finally, on the democracy-growth nexus, it is contended that “democracy is likely to have a significant indirect effect on growth through its impact on political stability”. (Feng 1997: 398). There has been little theoretical work from either the compatibility or conflict schools on the impact of democracy on growth via the agency of political stability.

Perhaps, one has to rely on focused analysis based on empirical perception of what actually happens in political systems that are deemed to be stable. Webster’s New World Dictionary defines political stability as ‘having a definite governmental organization that is not likely to break down, fall apart or give way.’ Unstable political systems have certain distinguishing characteristics which include frequent shifts from one type of government to another as well as regular changes in the personnel of the state. Recurring violence in the form of riots and coups and counter-coups, communal violence, religious intolerance, etc, are also features of unstable polities.

On the other hand, the main features of political stability have been identified as legitimacy, effective conflict management mechanisms and the durability of the system being operated. With stable polities, the citizenry perceive its institutions and leaders as having attained such status through a legitimate mode acceptable by the majority. A legitimate government has the capability to command obedience without recourse to extra-legal measures. The loss of support or legitimacy in stable polities normally results in electoral defeat attested to be free and fair. Max Weber's three kinds of legitimacy—traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal—throw further light on the features of stable states. For our purposes, the rational-legal type of legitimacy best explains what should pertain in the new and emerging democracies in the sub-region. The fulcrum of the rational-legal authority is the general acceptance of the legality of established rules and of the right to govern of those who come to power by adhering to the laid down rules. Where political power is attained outside the Weberian sources, extra-legal measures are always employed to maintain authority. Some level of stability may be attained in this manner but that may be fear-induced stability, that is, stability based on the fear of being incarcerated or brutalized by authoritarian rulers for expressing a viewpoint unpalatable to the rulers as happened in Ghana during the rule of the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC). A durable stability is not based on fear but the result of the harmonious operation of legitimate state institutions and administrative or governance norms that the people being ruled had a hand in instituting. The implication is that even within the Weberian conceptualization of legitimacy, a government in power may lose its support if it disregards the fundamental political rights and civil liberties of the people.

The second source of stability is the capability to manage conflicting and competing societal interests. The system's capability to successfully mediate various competing and at times contentious interests helps in sustaining national stability. Where ethnic as well as religious proclivities assume extremist forms, for instance, the conflict management capability of the system is openly challenged. The ability to forestall the degeneration of such competing demands into open intra-state conflict goes a long way in enhancing the stability of the system. There have been several examples in the sub-region where the inability of political leaders to manage conflicts has led to total breakdown of the system. Furthermore, resolution of conflicts becomes unduly taxing where institutions are weak. Successful management of such societal conflicts helps to strengthen the mechanisms for conflict resolution. The whole society benefits when conflict management mechanisms in contrast to the use of brute force are utilized to maintain national stability.

The third component of political stability is the durability of the system over time. The durability of a government is attained where consensual politics

become the norm and mechanisms for crisis resolution or management are efficient. One key issue, whose efficient management could help in the struggle to stabilize societies, is the contentious electoral system. Even though elections do not amount to democracy, there is little argument over the fact that elections constitute an inseparable part of democracy and is actually the gateway to democratic governance.

With the foregoing as background I discuss below the nature of Ghana's transition to democracy with particular attention to the various elections and how the political system has managed to tackle the most polarizing mechanism in virtually all transition countries, i.e., election management. By this, I mean the manner an institution that has been set up to handle the various processes of electoral contestation in a country goes about its assignments so as to inspire confidence, trust, autonomy, etc., in society as a whole.

4. Ghana's Transition Process

Writers have pointed to the fact that the Rawlings-led PNDC was not overly interested in Ghana's democratization process (Yeebo 1991, Shillington 1992, Folson 1993). Ghana's return to democracy could instead be attributed to unanticipated changes in the international system as well as internal agitations by civil society groups. The weak economic base of the nation made the PNDC government vulnerable to external pressures, especially at a time in the late 1980's when leading donors or development partners had imposed political conditionalities. This imposition re-energized the hitherto emasculated, enfeebled and uncoordinated civil society organizations, whose struggles for political openings before then had been sporadic and inconsistent (Boafo-Arthur 1998). Confronted with both external and internal pressures for democratization the PNDC adopted several measures to end its dictatorial rule. They were:

- The holding of District Level elections in 1988 and 1989.
- The collation of views on the democratic future of the country by the National Commission for Democracy (NCD).
- The promulgation of a law on 17 May, 1991 setting up a nine-member Committee of Experts (Constitution). The mandate of the Committee was to prepare a draft proposal (constitution) taking into cognizance past constitutions of Ghana since independence and any other relevant constitution(s) as well as other matters that may be referred to it by the PNDC.

- Inauguration in August 1991 of a 260-member Consultative Assembly (CA) to draw a draft constitution (based on the work of the Committee of Experts) for the country.⁵
- Submission to the PNDC on 31 March, 1992 of a draft constitution by the CA and the setting up of an Interim Electoral Commission.
- A referendum on the draft constitution was held in April 1992 with 92.6% of eligible voters voting in favour of the draft constitution.
- Lifting of the ban on political party activities in May, 1992. Consequently, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) was formed by the Chairman of the PNDC, Flt. Lt. Rawlings to contest the Presidential and parliamentary elections.
- Holding of presidential election on 3 November 1992 and the parliamentary election on 28 December 1992.
- The inauguration of the Fourth Republic on 7 January, 1993 with Rawlings as the First President of the Fourth Republic.

The PNDC successfully converted its pseudo-military structures into effective party wings. A confluence of factors explains the transition from the autocratic military regime of the PNDC to the more liberal civilian outfit, the NDC, in the Fourth Republic (Ninsin 1995). Rawlings' distrust of and antipathy to democratic governance was sublimated because he was assured by the measures taken by the PNDC, including turning the PNDC into a political party, that his personal interests and security would be guaranteed in a new democratic dispensation. The best way to guarantee that was to form and lead a political party in the 1992 elections. To a large extent, therefore, personal considerations as opposed to altruistic national feelings appear to have underpinned his recourse to democracy. This was to ensure self-succession and directly perpetuate his rule under the umbrage of a democratic constitution in which were inserted provisions that made it illegal for any citizen to question their behaviour. The defeat of the NDC in the 2000 general elections, after being in power for two successive terms of four years each, was therefore a landmark that vindicated the virtues of democracy as the only political system for stabilizing and legitimizing the exercise of political power. How did Ghana manage her various elections to maintain some relative stability, the several years of political instability engendered by militarism notwithstanding?

⁵ The mode for selecting people to the Consultative Assembly was pre-determined by the PNDC. Many representatives were assigned to associations and groups that were supportive of the PNDC. As a result, the Ghana Bar Association (GBA) and The National Union of Ghanaian Students (NUGS), who were assigned one representative each, refused to participate in the Consultative Assembly.

5. The 1992 General Elections in Perspective

The seeds of discord and confrontation before the 1992 general elections were sown before the ban on political party activities was lifted in May 1992. The point is that the playing field was not level for the opposing parties that emerged to contest the elections. This was due to the decision of the PNDC to exchange its military features for a democratic party that was named the National Democratic Congress (NDC). Most people were simply not in favour of certain provisions of the 1992 Constitution, but they had to vote for it in the referendum of 28 April 1992 for the sake of seeing the military and in particular Flt Lt. Rawlings off the political scene. The formation of the NDC and the choice of Rawlings as its presidential candidate increased political tension. With huge incumbency advantage, Rawlings' populism and the often brutal attacks on political opponents by militia and commandos, the odds were stashed against the opposition *ab initio*.

Nonetheless, the elections were significant because they followed the trend in the sub-region with the elections in Benin, Burkina Faso and Cape Verde the previous year and other countries including Ghana had scheduled elections in 1992. Ninsin (1993) points out that the 1992 elections were undemocratic. This was because the freedom for other political parties to operate was circumscribed by PNDC operatives, especially the CDRs, militias and other paramilitary organs. Additionally, all the repressive laws the PNDC used to gag Ghanaians were still on the statute books so freedom of expression was still curtailed. The political opposition and civil society organizations made no input into the appointment of electoral officers and had no say in monitoring the election process, save the presence of completely inadequate foreign observers whose operations were limited to the major cities. In the view of Gyimah-Boadi (1994), the transition to democracy of which the 1992 elections was the first step was just another transition without change, as the key political operatives, both military and civilian, during the reign of the PNDC were the same people that manned the NDC political juggernaut. The modus operandi did not undergo any significant change with the only exception being the modicum of restrictions imposed by the constitution with regards to respect for the political rights and civil liberties of citizens.

The hasty declaration of the presidential elections as 'free and fair' by the Commonwealth Observer team was an apology of what actually transpired. Some political commentators from afar refuse to see what was fundamentally wrong with the 1992 elections by claiming by implication that the flaws in the management of the 1992 elections were negligible and the margin of error could be accommodated. If that had been the case, there would have been no need for the massive overhauling of the election management process to accord it the general acceptability and thereby confer legitimacy and

credibility to the process in subsequent elections. The declaration by the Commonwealth Observer team was made at noon even before the voting was over. It appeared the Observer team was in a hurry to enthrone Rawlings as a civilian Head of State to avoid a potentially looming crisis. The maturity of the political opposition was manifested and instead of embarking on actions that would have thrown the country into chaos and given room for a state of emergency or possibly create an avenue for the military to stage a hasty come back, the New Patriotic Party led by the late Professor Albert Adu-Boahen rather chronicled the flaws of the 1992 elections into a report aptly titled *The Stolen Verdict: Ghana's November 1992 Presidential Election*. The flaws inherent in the presidential election cast a pall on the legitimacy and morality of the democratic transition as well as the efficacy of the new democratic institutions that had been set up. A comical aspect of the electoral gerrymandering in the 1992 presidential vote was the case of General Erskine, the former Commander of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon, who was the presidential candidate of the People's Heritage Party. In the electoral area he and his family had voted he was credited with zero. The opposition parties—made up of the New Patriotic Party (NPP), People's National Convention (PNC), National Independence Party (NIP), and People's Heritage Party (NIP)—therefore boycotted the parliamentary election of December 1992. Thus the Parliamentary election was an all NDC affair. In the end, the first parliament of the Fourth Republic was a one-sided parliament with the NDC having 189 seats and nine other seats for two smaller parties that were floated by the NDC and two independent candidates. However, the acceptance by the EC of the loopholes identified by the political opposition, which it subsequently dealt with through consensus building and direct involvement of political parties in the election management process, have been the basis for national renewal and confidence in the electoral process. This has underpinned the relative stability of the nation.

However, 1992 was significant for democratic growth. First, the disputes surrounding the elections notwithstanding, it created an important opening for political liberalization which gave Ghanaians a much broader umbrage than before to exercise their political and other fundamental rights. In this context, the gradual opening of the airwaves to private entrepreneurs was crucial to the nascent democracy being nurtured. Second, there was far more transparency and accountability in government business through parliamentary debates in the NDC dominated parliament. In addition, the confidence of the ordinary man to speak up on issues upped by the day and people began to freely associate for political causes they espoused without much fear of intimidation. Third, the new dispensation as a result of the 1992 elections opened a bigger political space for the hitherto intimidated civic associations and nongovernmental organizations (NGO's). Many NGO's and civic groups devoted much attention to human rights issues, and some citizens

contributed meaningfully to national issues by sending memoranda to the National Assembly. In sum, even though it was emphatically a restricted democracy and the conduct of the elections left much to be desired, the positive signs for deeper citizen participation were clear and encouraging.

The 1992 general elections were equally significant for the openings it gave to the extra-parliamentary opposition led by leaders of the NPP to attack some of the existing obnoxious laws that restricted the rights of people and created the erroneous impression that the democratic transition has no impact on draconian legislation, whose existence were in direct conflict with the 1992 Constitution. The opposition decided to use the courts in the struggle for a freer society under a democratic dispensation. Three of the numerous constitutional cases the NPP brought against the government and its agents deserve mention because of their bearings on the fundamental human rights and the process of democratic strengthening. If a level playing field was to be created for the 1996 elections then something had to be done about the skewed reportage on political issues by the state-owned Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC). Earlier, the state-owned media marginalized the activities of the opposition parties as if they never existed. And this compelled the opposition to seek redress in the court through an interpretation of the relevant constitutional provisions. This is an issue the opposition could take to court because of the eased political atmosphere. It would have been unheard of if the opposition or any group of people had challenged the role of the state-owned media in political reporting before the elections of 1992.

In the case of *NPP vs. The Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC)*, the plaintiffs issued a writ asking for a declaration by the Supreme Court that:

- By virtue of Articles 163 and 55(11) of the 1992 Constitution the GBC as one of the state owned media had a duty to afford the NPP fair opportunities and facilities for the presentation of their views; and
- The refusal of the GBC to afford them equal time on TV to present their views on the 1993 budget as accorded the NDC on 23 and 24 January 1993, was a violation and contravention of the constitution.

On 22 July 1993, the Supreme Court granted the declaration sought by the plaintiffs. The court ordered the GBC to grant the NPP fair and equal access to its facilities within two weeks of the date of the order to enable the party articulate its opinions on the 1993 budget just as it was accorded the ruling NDC. To underscore the crucial role governmental institutions are to play in the new democratic order so as to enhance its growth, Justice Aikins noted:

How can the populace boast of effective political pluralism when some institutions refuse to abide by clear constitutional provisions and hide behind the

concept of discretion in situations where it is abundantly clear they have no right to exercise any discretion in the matter? (Bimpong-Buta, 1995:382).

The Supreme Court ruled in favour of the plaintiffs. The GBC was ordered to give equal time and coverage to the activities of the opposition parties. The political opposition wanted to maximize societal gains from the democratic dispensation and therefore tackled another legislation on the statute books that was inimical to free movement and assembly of Ghanaians.

Article 21(1)(d) of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana guarantees the right to freedom of assembly and the right to hold demonstrations and processions. The security agencies, especially the police, appeared unwilling to adhere to such provisions even in a supposedly democratic dispensation. In several instances, attempts by the opposition to organize rallies and demonstrations were prevented by the police. In *NPP v the Inspector General of Police (IGP)* a declaration was sought by the plaintiffs on the proper interpretation of portions of the Public Order Decree 1972 (NRCD 68). The party wanted a declaration on several sections of the law:

- section 7 of NRCD 68, which empowered the Minister of the Interior to prohibit the holding of a public meeting or procession in any public place;
- section 8, which required a person intending to hold any public event to obtain a permit from the police;
- section 12(a), authorizing the police to stop and disperse any meeting or procession held in contravention of sections 7 & 8; and
- section (13)(a), making participation in a meeting or procession held in contravention of the said sections an offence.

The party's argument was that the specific sections were inconsistent with the provisions of Article 21(1)(d) of the 1992 Constitution under which the individual has the right to demonstrate, participate in a procession or meeting without necessarily obtaining police permit. The party's action emanated from the arrest and detention of some of its members for demonstrating against the 1993 budget.

The Supreme Court ruled that, in line with Article 21(d) of the Constitution, no permit is needed from the police or any other authority for the holding of a procession, demonstration, rally or a public celebration of any traditional custom or cultural performance by any person, group or organisation. Amuah-Sekyi (JSC) noted: "Based as they are on a requirement that permission be sought of the executive or one of its agencies before the right of freedom of assembly is exercised, Sections 7, 8, 12(a), and 13 (a) of NRCD 68 are clearly inconsistent with Article 21(1)(d)" (Kotey 1995: 269). The Supreme Court therefore ordered the Attorney-General and IGP to 'duly

obey and carry out the terms of these orders' through permanent circulation by way of formal notices and publicly display them at all police stations and posts through out Ghana. They were also enjoined to set out *in extenso*, the offending sections in the Public Order Decree 1972 (NRCD 68) referred to in the judgement, declaring them null and void and unenforceable.

In another landmark 5-4 majority decision in support of an NPP law suit, the Supreme Court outlawed the observation of the 31 December 1981 overthrow of the civilian regime of President Hilla Limann as a public holiday. The argument of the NPP was that there had been many successful coup d'état in the country and they could all be justified one way or the other, therefore to single out 31 December 1981 for celebration with state resources is unconstitutional. This is one judgement whose effect on President Rawlings was immediate and tremendous. President Rawlings referred to the judgement as a 'Supreme Court coup' against his NDC government. His reaction was that his government "will respect the constitutional position of the Supreme Court but *we cannot allow that arm of the government to stage a coup d'état against the other organs*" (my emphasis)⁶. What precisely the president meant by that statement was not clear at that time but the continued celebration of 31 December after the landmark judgement of the Supreme Court amply explain the import of the president's statement. It is alleged that after the judgement the President summoned the Justices of the Supreme Court to the Castle and harangued them collectively and individually for daring to tell him he could not use public money to celebrate the anniversary of his revolution.⁷ Even if the NDC accepted the judgement, it indirectly violated the Supreme Court decision by organizing every year, through December 31, week-long activities, including route marches by soldiers, as a way of celebrating the return to constitutional rule. The defeats at the courts led to the resignation of the Attorney General, Mr. Anthony Forson, because of attacks on his competence. More significantly, the outcomes of the court cases assured Ghanaians of the impartiality of the judiciary and of the judiciary's preparedness to maintain its autonomy, thereby play its role in strengthening Ghana's fledgling democracy.

The various Supreme Court decisions were very crucial at the early stages of political. It compelled the ruling government to refrain from what would have amounted to electoral dictatorship or authoritarianism and adhere to or respect the constitution, especially in a situation where the NDC had a total monopoly over parliament as a result of the boycott of the parliamentary election by the opposition parties. It also presented an opportunity for the judiciary to redeem its image as it had been perceived to be under the thumb

⁶ *West Africa*, 20-30 January 1994, p. 129.

⁷ See *Ghanaian Chronicle*, March 22, 1999.

of the Chief Executive President Rawlings. These bold decisions by the courts therefore lifted the gloom of public uncertainty about the judiciary and boosted confidence in its ability to stand on its own in the new democratic dispensation. Against the backdrop of the public mauling and ridicule the judiciary endured during the so-called revolutionary years, the newly found assertiveness inspired confidence in the democratic process. More importantly, it paved the way for a much more vigorous campaign by the political opposition for the 1996 general elections, especially the order to the state owned media to treat the parties equally in terms of coverage and the declaration of aspects of the Public Order Law as null and void because it contradicted the 1992 Constitution.

6. A View on the 1996 Elections

The flaws that came to light during the 1992 elections served as a basis for reforms to be made to the electoral process to reduce acrimony, enhance the legitimacy of the elected government, improve transparency and accountability, and to strengthen democratic structures. The Ghanaian polity was still polarized on account of the weaknesses of the electoral system in 1992. However, stakeholders agreed to reform the system if that was the only way to improve upon democratic governance and thereby prevent the military from interfering in the affairs of state. As such, far-reaching measures aimed at strengthening the electoral system to assure its credibility were put in place. Some of the grievances of the opposition parties included a transitional authority to supervise the electoral process, a completely new voter's register to be compiled, and identity cards issued to voters to forestall multiple voting and impersonation in subsequent elections. The credibility of the 1996 general elections was going to depend on how electoral reforms were made to ensure transparent elections.

Several measures were put in place to facilitate a level playing field for contestants, to reduce the advantages of incumbency, and enhance the electoral process. However, realizing the essence of political consensus in nation building and the need to sustain the parties and assure national stability, a series of meetings to reach an accord on the modalities for governance, and more importantly political understanding and tolerance, were held. In the heat of the recriminations and accusations, an inter-party dialogue with the objective of searching for genuine and sincere modalities for national reconciliation was sought. It was also felt that such inter-party discussions hold the potential for reaching acceptable accord on the form of future electoral process. In actual fact, the accusations of vote rigging leveled against the NDC by the opposition parties were due to the lack of transparency in electoral management. The dialogue brokered by the two leading parties was an essential step "in the efforts needed to stabilize and consolidate our fledgling

multiparty democratic constitutional experiment” (Boafo-Arthur 1995: 221). Even though the initial efforts at reconciliation at the inter-party level failed on account of entrenched positions taken by the NDC and the NPP at the negotiations, it became the bedrock for further attempts at consensus building. There is no doubt that political institutions including political parties, draw strength and vitality from an enabling environment fashioned for their operation. Given the deplorable inter-party conflict management mechanism of the First Republic, one cannot overemphasize the importance of mutual agreements between contesting parties (Austin 1960).

For sure, political parties, among others, draw their sustenance from a vibrant electoral process that is fair to all. This was the crux of the political disagreements between the main contending parties. Since the long-term sustainability of the political system and the institutions within the system depends on such a transparent electoral system, party leaders and the donor community saw the need in pursuing mutual consensus by the parties. Several measures were taken by the Electoral Commission, first to redeem its image, second, to gain the inputs of the parties in electoral management and third, to sustain the electoral system and *ipso facto* prevent relapse into dictatorship via another coup d'état. The measures put in place by the EC before the 1996 elections with the support of the political parties included:

- The compilation of a new voters register. This was necessary since the earlier register was alleged to be bloated. Interestingly, the registration was supervised with the active collaboration and participation of representatives of the political parties.
- The provision of a voter identity card for every registered voter. Financial constraints restricted this facility to voters in the regional capitals and ten selected rural constituencies. Thumb-printed identity cards were issued to the rest of the voters.
- Transparent ballot boxes were provided to debunk allegations or suspicions that ballot boxes were stuffed with votes before being sent to the polling stations.
- The provision of cardboard voting screens to safeguard the integrity of the ballot, as opposed to the previous method of a voter entering a room alone to thumb-print the ballot paper.
- Votes were counted at each polling station immediately after the close of voting in the full glare of the general public (Ayee 1998).

One innovation before the 1996 elections—one that has strengthened consensus-building and confidence-building—was the EC’s success in bringing the parties into election management through the establishment of the Inter-Party Advisory Committee (IPAC) in March 1994. Donor representatives

attended IPAC meetings with those of the political parties and EC officials as observers. It was at such meetings that decisions to hold both presidential and parliamentary elections on the same day and the use of transparent ballot boxes with numbered seals were dispassionately discussed and approved by the parties. Apart from enhancing voter confidence in the management of the electoral system, it gave no room for complaints by any losing party.

In addition, the parties decided to put their political fate in their own hands and therefore mobilized 60 000 party agents at polling stations on the day of elections. Civil society organizations, notably the Christian Council, the Conference of Catholic Bishops, and the Ghana Legal Literacy and Resource Foundation embarked on voter education campaigns. There also emerged two main poll watching groups, the Ghana Alert led by Ben Ephson, a veteran journalist, and the Network of Domestic Election Observers (NEDEO), whose leader was a retired Appeals Court Judge and a former Electoral Commissioner, Joseph Kingsley Nyinah. NEDEO had a very broad base and encapsulated the Christian Council, the Catholic Secretariat, the Federation of Muslim Councils, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission, the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT), and the National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS). They trained some of their personnel to function as domestic monitors on the day of the election.

Unlike foreign observers who monitor only on the day of voting, these domestic monitoring groups under NEDEO were trained to have almost five months monitoring of political development before, during and after the elections. The Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) also trained volunteers to monitor elections in some selected constituencies. There were some headaches that had to be contained before the elections, the major one being the bloated voter's register that had 9.2 million voters out of a population of almost 18 million people. In the actual election, the domestic monitors found instances of children voting, especially in the rural areas.⁸

Political permutations before the 1996 general elections were also revealing as it showed the freedom people had acquired to join parties of their choice and indeed, team up in a political alliance with the hope of winning political power. In the presidential elections, only three parties namely, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) under the flag of the Progressive Alliance (PA), the New Patriotic Party (NPP) under the flag of the Great Alliance (GA), and the People's National Convention (PNC) contested. In the parliamentary election five parties—the NDC, NPP, PNC, the People's Convention Party (PCP), and the Democratic People's Party (DPP) fielded candi-

⁸ For a comprehensive discussion on the 1996 general elections, see Gyimah-Boadi (1997) and Ayee (1979).

dates. The Progressive Alliance was made up of the NDC, Every Ghanaian Living Everywhere (EGLE) and DPP. The Great Alliance was composed of the NPP and PCP, which was in itself made up of the People's Heritage Party (PHP), the National Independence Party (NIP), and a segment of the National Convention Party (NCP). All the parties in both the PA and GA had contested the 1992 elections independently. Ideologically, the GA was composed of the 'rightist' NPP, tracing its roots to the Danquah-Busia tradition, while the other parties in the Alliance were 'leftist' and trace their political antecedents to Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. The joining of forces by the NPP and the Nkrumah-ist parties was unexpected by most foot soldiers of the party.

In the presidential election Rawlings had 57.4 per cent of the votes cast. In 1992 the total votes he obtained was 58.3 per cent. The NPP candidate Kufuor obtained 39.6 per cent as compared to 30.4 per cent obtained by Boahen (NPP's candidate in 1992). Mahama of the PNC obtained 3 per cent of votes cast. In the parliamentary election, the NDC won 133 seats as compared to the 189 seats it won in 1992, and the NPP won 60 seats, PCP won five seats and the PNC one seat. The voter turnout was also indicative of growing interest and trust of the electoral system. While in 1992 the voter turnout was 50.2 per cent in the presidential elections, the turnout in 1996 was 77.9 per cent.

The NDC won the presidential elections for a number of reasons. First, the lack of focus of the opposition as demonstrated by their hasty electoral pact with parties that claimed to draw inspiration from Nkrumah. Ideologically, they are polar opposites even though economically there appeared to be some level of convergence in thinking. The problem that faced the GA was the sharing of parliamentary seats for their component members to contest. Originally the parties had agreed on selecting candidates with the most appeal for the various constituencies. They could not agree on candidates for over 67 constituencies and they resorted to blaming each other in the media over this. Second, the organizational machinery of the NDC was stronger than that of the NPP and the component members of the GA. The NDC relied a lot on the CDRs and other revolutionary organs, including the 31 December Women's Movement headed by the wife of President Rawlings.

The results of the 1996 general elections and the congratulatory messages from the losing presidential candidates were indications of the growing durability, transparency, efficiency and strengthening of the electoral process and its acceptance by the electorate. As pointed out by Dumor, a member of Ghana's Electoral Commission,

The 1996 Election indicates that by paying attention to the techno-structure and functional arrangements of government apparatus and process which al-

low for an effective participation and competition through multiparty system, the foundation is being laid for a stable society (Dumor 1998: 20).

In sum, even though the NDC won the general elections of 1996, tension and acrimony before, during and after the elections were not as pronounced as in 1992. This was because of the measures taken to ensure free, fair and transparent elections put in place by all stake holders created the necessary rapport and trust among the rank and file of the various contesting parties. Once the process was deemed to be transparent as compared to the 1992 election, accepting the end result was less arduous for the losing political parties. The very good performance of the NPP, winning 60 seats after the boycott of the parliamentary election in 1992, was a positive signal to the opposition in general to focus on the 2000 elections.

7. The 2000 General Elections: The Watershed

The year before the 2000 elections generated some level of apprehension as to whether President Rawlings would honour the constitutional provisions with regard to the completion of his two terms as a civilian Head of State. This apprehension was because of an innocuous suggestion proffered by Vincent Assiseh, in charge of NDC communication at the Speaker of Parliament's breakfast forum, whether it may not be possible to extend the mandate of the president to seven years. Possibly, this was to gauge the mood of Ghanaians. The backlash was sufficient to send a clear signal that the nation was not prepared for any subversion of the constitution.

The 2000 elections had several important features. First, the NDC had been in power for two terms of four years each and the electorate was to decide their political fate. Second, President Rawlings had run his two terms of constitutional rule and was not a contestant. Third, in contrast to the political climate of 1992 and 1996, the economy had not performed any better after several years of structural adjustment. Inflation was high and the same applied to unemployment and other development indicators. Fourth, the NDC's vulnerability was beginning to show as the party had lost a couple of by-elections to the NPP. In addition to the poor economy the political opposition kept reminding the populace of the historical antecedents of the NDC even though Rawlings was no longer a contestant for the 2000 elections. Fifth, the transparency of the elections was going to be further enhanced on account of additional improvements made by the Electoral Commission. Apart from the regular meetings of IPAC, the Electoral Commission replaced thumbprint voter-identification cards with photographic ones.

The preparations for the elections had its own drama in connection with the conversion of thumbprint to photo ID cards. The photo ID was meant to

eliminate 'ghost voters'. However, based on calculations of the estimated population of Ghana from the 2000 census, there was an excess of 1.5 million 'ghost names' on the voter registration lists displayed by the Electoral Commission for inspection. The EC was skeptical about complete coverage of voters in the photo ID exercise but argued that what would be left to be done before the elections would be statistically insignificant. The EC, therefore, announced that only holders of photo IDs would be eligible to vote. This decision stirred the ire of the ruling NDC which argued that it was a ploy to disenfranchise rural voters (its perceived support base), while the decision was hailed by the opposition parties. The leaders of the NDC called on their supporters to defy the EC on election day. The Supreme Court ruled in favour of the NDC when they took the case to court. Following the ruling of the court, those with thumbprint ID cards were allowed to vote alongside those with photo ID cards. The ruling generated a lot of tension but at the end of the election, it was found out that less than 1 per cent of the electorates voted with their old thumb print ID cards, thus vindicating the EC. The EC also put in place enhanced measures to ensure free and fair elections in to the new ID cards. The measures included (Ayee 2002: 145):

- Collaboration with the National Media Commission and the Ghana Journalist Association for an effective framework to ensure fair coverage of the activities of political parties by the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation.
- The EC was to work together with political parties to promulgate a Political Parties Code of Conduct.
- Involvement of party agents in all stages of the electoral processes.
- Collaboration with IPAC for a consensus on balloting for positions by political parties on the ballot paper. Parties agreed and for the first time they balloted for positions on the ballot paper.
- Agreement with the parties on the role of both foreign and domestic observers operating under the Coalition of Domestic Observers (CODEO), Forum for Religious Bodies, Ghana Legal Literacy Resource Foundation, Ghana Alert, and the Commonwealth Secretariat.
- A strenuous voter education exercise.
- Cooperation with political parties in recruiting of election officials.
- Revision of the electoral roll by the EC in May 2000 (carried out in the presence of party agents).
- Party agents were also to be present during voting, counting of ballots, collation, declaration and verification of results from polling stations.

In comparative terms, the electoral process in 2000 could be said to have been owned by all the stakeholders in the contest, because of the cooperation amongst them to set the rules to cover the elections. To reduce incumbency advantages and the financial constraints that faced the political opposition, the government enacted the Political Parties Act (Act 574). This Act re-

moved the restrictions imposed on individual financial contributions to political parties. This was a boost to the NPP, whose members were freed from the strictures on contributions to their party to compete with the NDC.

In electoral management aspects like trust, impartiality, authority, autonomy, competence, and resourcefulness must be seen to be present by political contestants. On the strength of its efficient preparation for the 2000 elections as well as the demonstrated trust and confidence reposed in them by both the electorates and contesting parties the EC was bold to reassure the nation that “The Electoral Commission has worked hard to ensure a freer and more efficient electoral process this time around. This will produce a fairer reflection of the wishes of the people, and, therefore, enhance the elected authority’s claim to legitimacy” (Ayee 2002: 155).

This does not mean that there were no hiccups before the 2000 general elections. I have already alluded to the photo ID tussle between the ruling party and the EC. The election date also had to be resolved by the Supreme Court. The EC fixed 8 December 2000 but a citizen challenged the constitutionality of the date announced by the EC. One of the leading members of the NPP who had defected to the NDC, Alhaji Issaka Inusah, complained to the EC on the grounds that the date announced was a Friday and also within the period of the Ramadan, the Holy Month of Muslims. Reacting to the constitutionality or otherwise of the date, the Electoral Commissioner Dr. Kwadwo Afari Gyan pointed out that “the 1992 Constitution provides a time-frame for the fixing of the date for the conduct of general elections and any date that would be fixed outside that date would be unconstitutional” (Ayee 2002: 156). The EC sought legal opinion on the date and thereafter the date was changed to 7 December 2000, which satisfied the constitutional provision. According to the 1992 Constitution, presidential elections should be organized within four months and not later than one month of the end of the tenure of a sitting president and parliamentary election should be held within 30 days before the dissolution of parliament. After the 1992 elections, it was decided that both presidential and parliamentary elections should be held on the same day. Fixing a date that satisfied constitutional demands was the dilemma that faced the EC. The 7 December date satisfied both conditions set by the constitution. To avoid future confusion, the EC called on parliament to set a specific day in a specific month for future elections.

On the campaign trail, the NDC decided to pump fear into the electorate arguing that the conflicts in the sub-region were the result of dangerous attempts to effect a change of government through the ballot box. They also created the impression that a win for the opposition will create the stage for

violence. To win the support of the military, Rawlings—in campaigning for Mills—organized town hall meetings or durbars for the military.⁹

On the other hand, the NPP campaigned under the slogan ‘positive change,’ depicting the NDC as corrupt and with bad economic policies that had made life difficult for most people. The NPP pledged to make a positive impact on the economy for the benefit of all. There was an American-style innovation when a ‘presidential forum’ was organized by an American foundation, Freedom Forum in collaboration with the Ghana Journalist Association (GJA) and the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC). However, the NDC presidential candidate, Professor Mills, refused to take part and expressed “misgivings about the nature of the debate and its foreign orientation regarding the organization and the multiplicity of roles of the vice-president, including his functions as acting President” (Ayee 2002: 164).

The NDC failed to win outright victory in the 7 December 2000 elections. In the run-off, the NPP got firm commitments of support from the smaller parties while the NDC and members of the Progressive Alliance were stuck together. In the parliamentary elections, the NPP, which won 60 seats in 1996, now won 100 seats. The NDC lost 41 of its 133 seats, landing at 92 seats. Four independent candidates won seats as compared to two in 1992 and zero in 1996. The strong showing of independent candidates resulted from protest votes in some constituencies, where there was unhappiness with the mode of selection of parliamentary candidates, not least by the NDC.

The voter turnout in 2000 was not as impressive as in 1996. In the general elections, the turnout was 61.7 per cent, declining further to 60.4 per cent in the run-off. This compares poorly with the 1996 turnout of 78.2 per cent. Ayee (2002) assigns four main reasons for the poor voter turnout. First, it is likely the voter registers were still bloated and that several names on the register were nonexistent. Second, the use of the photo ID cards prevented double voting by some people and voting by people below the minimum voting age of 18 years. Third, Rawlings’ populist appeal was missing even though he hijacked the campaign of his former Vice-President, Mills. Fourth, voter apathy could also be blamed on the grounds that voting in previous

⁹ In addition, as part of the campaign strategy, the NDC organized various projects where they got the opportunity to campaign. Funerals of prominent people were equally turned into campaign grounds with the funeral of the influential Paramount Chief of Dormaa, Osagyefo Agyeman Badu being a classic example. Both parties engaged in personal attacks. The NDC tried to portray Kufuor as “a failed businessman, failed lawyer, failed sports administrator, failed minister in the PNDC government, failed aspirant for the presidency in 1996” (Gyimah-Boadi 2001: 108). There was fear, especially in the urban areas, as the NDC decided to deploy the military to various places as a show of force. There were instances where NDC and NPP youth clashed and assaulted each other. Some critics of the NDC government were arrested and detained.

elections had not impacted positively on the life of majority of the people. What must be added to the low turnout was the fear as a result of intimidation by NDC using the military in unwarranted maneuvers. Peace FM for instance, had to broadcast several appeals to the electorates to come out and vote as nothing was going to happen to them.

Apart from effecting a change of government, there were equally important features of the 2000 elections that must be mentioned. One is the increased number of women who contested parliamentary seats. In 1996 they were 53 and this shot up to 94 in the 2000 elections. Unfortunately, however, only 18 won parliamentary seats in 2000 while 17 won seats in 1996.

8. Explaining NPP's Victory in the Run-off

In the presidential run-off Kufuor (NPP) obtained 56.9 per cent of the votes to that of Mills (NDC) who got 43.1 per cent. Ayee (2002) assigns four main reasons for the defeat of the NDC in the 2000 elections. First were the arrogance and its accompanying complacency on the part of the NDC. The party and its leadership took the elections for granted. After all, they had been in power for almost twenty years if one counts the period of the PNDC dictatorship. They had the financial wherewithal and the state media projected the party to the detriment of the opposition contestants. Mills was also a well marketed candidate since he had been Rawlings' Vice President for four years. But swollen-headedness and sheer impudence on the part of the leaders of the party contributed to their woeful performance. This complacency and arrogance also explain why Mills' campaign was hijacked by Rawlings, as if Rawlings was the one contesting. Insulting statements from leading members of the party, created the impression that the country was a war booty, under the control of Jerry Rawlings. The impression was also created that if the NDC left the scene, the country was going to disintegrate since the opposition had nothing to offer. These combinations of arrogant perceptions on the part of the NDC explain why the party failed to adequately inform the electorate about their programmes to the electorate. On a political platform in Kumasi in November 2000, Rawlings was at his contemptuous best when he told the chiefs and people that the opposition should not pester his party because the NDC "will only hand over power at the second coming of Jesus Christ" (Ayee 2002: 170). He also averred that the key to Ghana's prosperity had been given to him and his party by God and allowing another group to take over the administration will put the development and progress of the country in reverse gear. He ended with an adage that "if the tiger is sick it does not mean the goat can go to its backyard" (Ayee 2002: 170).

The second major reason for NDC's defeat at the polls in 2000 was the complete absence of internal democracy within the party. Rawlings' wish was to

be obeyed in the party and the general perception was that the party was the property of Rawlings and his wife. As a result of this dearth of internal democracy, a section of the youth led by Goosie Tandoh broke away to form the National Reform Party (NRP) to contest the election on its own. Those who left with Tandoh were among the active young cadres. The party's own internal assessment had hinted on a possible breakup if the leaders did not approach issues from a democratic angle. Sam Garba, leader of the NDC internal Reform Movement who stayed with the party after the split, pointed out the problems to the party's review meeting in November 1999. He noted:

It seems obvious to anyone who cares to look, that we seem inert, effete, and adrift and that this paralyzing inertia is loading the dice heavily in favour of the opponent. It is piling up a political bill of dreadful proportions that would be challenging to redeem, without harder work, before the polls time.¹⁰

The party equally paid a heavy price for imposing unmarketable parliamentary candidates on some constituencies. Several constituencies objected to the imposition of candidates that were deemed bad parliamentary material because of allegations of corruption and inactivity over the previous four years. The NDC National Executive Council equally ignored the call for the conduct of primaries in the constituencies for the selection of candidates. Ignoring such calls coming from the grassroots turned out to be costly in political terms. On the other hand, the NPP organized primaries and was able "to repair its internal divisions, develop a coherent campaign strategy and expose its standard bearer to the public" (Gyimah-Boadi 2001: 107).

Third, many Ghanaians were complaining about economic hardship which the NDC also blamed on the workings of the international economy. In an unusual statement the Trades Union Congress (TUC) called on its members to vote for the party that could better their wellbeing. Fourth, the NPP had a well-programmed campaign that hit the NDC where it pained most—the parlous nature of the economy. The support base of the NPP was also solid. One of the campaign strategies of the NDC was to portray the NPP as an elitist political grouping whose members did not care about the downtrodden. This was debunked by the NPP with an array of common people in their fold. They were also accused of being an ethnic party but the running mate of Kufuor, Aliu Mahama, was a Dagomba from the North and the party did not hesitate to respond to any smear campaign from the NDC. Meanwhile the NDC had little or no answer to the issue of economic mismanagement and the abysmal human rights record of NDC even in a democratic dispensation. For instance, a TV panelist who allegedly insulted Rawlings on the programme he was participating in was arrested, detained and interrogated

¹⁰ *Public Agenda*, 5-7 Jan. 2001, p. 3, cited in Ayee (2002: 107).

by the Bureau of National Investigations (BNI). On the same day, a private FM, accused of airing inflammatory statements from an NPP parliamentary candidate, was closed down. A publisher of a private newspaper was arrested and detained for allegedly stealing a diskette with confidential information on NDC's campaign strategies. The opposition capitalized on all these to hammer home their accusation of intolerance and human rights abuses.

Fifth, the opposition kept telling the electorate that voting for Mills was just like voting for Rawlings to come to power through the back door, as Mills could not be his own man. Some private newspapers caricatured Mills as a 'poodle'. Perhaps, Rawlings himself confirmed this with his adage in Kumasi about a 'sick tiger' and the fact that he took over the campaign of Mills. Since Mills was single-handedly nominated as the presidential candidate by Rawlings, it was easy for the opposition to hit hard on the assumption that if Mills won, he was going to be manipulated by Rawlings.

The major significance of the 2000 general elections was the governmental turnover. In addition, the elections in general were peaceful. Media and religious bodies kept informing the electorate not to forget what was happening in neighbouring Sierra Leone, Liberia and other trouble-spots. The run-off was at a great cost to the exchequer and people argued that the amount of \$2 150 000 used in the run-off could have been used for social development if the NDC had agreed to concede defeat after the first round. However, democracy does not come cheap and the exercise was a test for the strength of the democratic structures in place. It was also in fulfillment of a constitutional provision, calling for a run-off if no winner emerges in the first round. According to the constitution, the winner must obtain 50 per cent of the vote plus one. After all, the country had a run-off in 1979 when the economy was in total shambles. Again, the congratulatory message from the defeated candidate to the winner further enhanced the credibility and legitimacy of the electoral process. The election also demonstrated that the nation was prepared for a long haul with democratic governance and the intimidation from the NDC on a possible mayhem if the opposition came to power did not deter the electorate from exercising their franchise. The sheer joy of almost all Ghanaians for a peaceful election and a government turnover was captured by the Forum of Religious Bodies which, on the day of the hand over to a new government on 7 January 2001, noted:

This election has put Ghana on the world map of respectability. For the first time in the history of our nation, a president has been elected through the universal adult suffrage to take over from a democratically elected leader. By achieving this feat, Ghanaians have lived up to and probably surpassed the high expectation of the international community (Ayee 2002: 173).

Democratization is based on factors such as popular legitimation, the diffusion of democratic values, the neutralization of anti-system actors, civilian control over the military, the elimination of vestiges of authoritarianism, the stabilization of electoral rules, alleviation of poverty and economic well being of the people, etc. Ghana cannot boast of satisfying all the criteria to be in the league of democratically consolidated polities, but a significant step was taken with the outcome of the 2000 elections.

Given the massive preparation by all stakeholders in conjunction with the EC and especially the continuous retooling of the electoral process to give the outcome the credibility and legitimacy it deserved, the ground was well prepared for the fourth election in 2004. The main issue was whether the NDC could stage a come back, f.e. like Matthieu Kerekou did in Benin. Were the structures put in place to ensure free and fair elections as well as stability capable of proving their resilience?

9. Elections 2004: Balancing the Equation

All the elections Ghana has had since the rebirth of democracy had their respective uniqueness. The 2004 elections were seen as the decision time for the NPP to stamp their authority on the politics and governance of the country and the NDC to recover lost ground. In fact, the battle lines were drawn after the 2000 elections but the NDC took too long a time moaning over their defeat in the 2000 elections to the extent that many felt that the defeat had spelled the doom of the party. The impression was also created that with its defeat, the party was going to disintegrate into various factions. In the party were two main factions, the Rawlings faction and the Asamoah faction. The founder of the party was almost always at crosspurposes with the chairman of the party, Obed Asamoah. For the NDC to be politically competitive, the NDC had to shape a political machine where the role of the rank and file was acknowledged. Furthermore, the party had to learn that the days of the PNDC were gone forever. Thus, the vestiges of authoritarianism that characterized the running of the party had to give way to a humane party structure and organization that could withstand the test of time.

Given the foregoing, the NDC had to do a lot of introspection to find out what actually went wrong in 2000. This introspection was needed for the party to mount a credible challenge to the now ruling NPP in the 2004 elections. There was also a need for a major restructuring and re-designation of titles and positions of office holders in the party. It was, finally, important to deal with the canker of infighting if the party was to be able to provide the necessary opposition which is important in any democratic setting.

The party set up a restructuring committee, which came out with a recommendation for Rawlings to give up the party leader's title since he was no longer going to contest as a flagbearer. Rawlings unhappiness was very manifest but the party decided the issues at their 2001 Congress. Rawlings failed in his attempt to hang on to the two titles of founder and leader. The next major restructuring issue tackled was the position of Co-Chairman of the party. Before the defeat of the party in 2000, the party constitution had created a co-chairmanship position which many in the rank and file found not to be conducive to efficient management of the party due to two power centres. While Rawlings favoured the continuation of the co-chairmanship system, the restructuring committee led by Asamoah favoured a single chairmanship. That was apparently the genesis of the feud between Rawlings and Asamoah, or that might have added to an existing feud that had not come into the public domain. At the 2001 party congress, Rawlings again lost the battle on the issue of single chairmanship and co-chairmanship. Asamoah won the election to become the sole chairman of the NDC. However, NDC's preparation for election 2004 suffered a major hiccup at its congress in December 2002. Rawlings supported Mills once again as the NDC flag bearer for the 2004 election and Asamoah rooted for Dr. Kwesi Botchwey, the former PNDC Finance Minister. However, some of the NDC members men who supported Botchwey's candidacy were assaulted by party members believed to be supporting Mills at the congress. Asamoah was hooted at when he was giving his address as the Chairman of the party. Mills won the elections to represent the party again as the presidential candidate.¹¹

The NPP on the other hand was in a state of euphoria and bracing up for the responsibilities of government, having been in the political wilderness for several years. Faced with the realities on the ground, the NPP had to acknowledge certain fundamental truths in politics. Talk is very cheap when you are not in power. In power, the permutations are very different because you come into direct contact with the demands and pressures of the job. President Kufuor promised to have an all-inclusive government when he was sworn in and he brought in the Convention People's Party (CPP) leading member, Dr. Paa Kwesi Nduom as a Minister of State. But Kufuor could not trim the size of his ministers and deputy ministers.¹²

It was also clear that complacency had taken the better part of the NPP given the margin of their victory in 2000 and the numerous infightings within the

¹¹ The kind of treatment given to the supporters of Kwesi Botchwey was so humiliating that one of the NDC MPs, Kwame Asante of Assin Fosu, resigned from the party. In the consequent by-election in his constituency, the NPP won.

¹² On the campaign trail for the 2000 elections, the NPP had chastised the NDC for the bloated number of ministers. Kufuor apologized to the nation that, faced with the realities, he had concluded that the NPP erred when accusing the NDC of too large a number of ministers.

NDC. The NPP had no problem with the selection of their presidential candidate, since in the estimation of the party rank and file, President Kufuor was doing well. The party was therefore spared the headache of the NDC regarding the deep conflict between the founder and the chairman. However, the leading members of the NPP had already written off the NDC before the 2004 elections. In the view of many of the leading members, the 2000 elections symbolized the death of the NDC as a party and 2004 was to be the requiem mass for the party. This erroneous conception was buttressed by several unscientific, questionable and cacophonous public opinion polls that were fed into the system predicting a landslide victory for the NPP in the 2004 elections. In my view, therefore, the NPP went to the 2004 elections very confident that the NDC was in for a drubbing and would probably just wither away thereafter.

The NPP had their own problems and one of them was a malaise that had afflicted the NDC in 2000. It was the issue of imposition of parliamentary candidates on constituents. Conscious of its credentials as a democratic party, it tried to leave the constituency executives to manage the issue of the primaries. But there were a few instances where some of the primaries were openly manipulated to suit some party bigwigs. Having won political power, many other people who originally sat on the fence in a wait and see manner wanted to have a go at the primaries. Others returned from the diaspora to stake a claim in the NPP camp by contesting the primaries. There were therefore several accusations of people using money to win the primaries.

At the national level in both camps, interesting issues cropped up. The major one was the decision of the Electoral Commission, based on the 2000 census, to increase the number of parliamentary seats from 200 to 230. The NDC was the first to fault the EC arguing in some parts that it was a ploy to help the NPP win several seats. The action of the EC was also attacked by some leading members of the NPP. Mr. B.J. da Rocha, the chairman of the NPP in its formative and uncertain years, came out openly against the EC's proposals for the increase. However, Dr. Afari Gyan, the Electoral Commissioner stood his grounds.¹³ Article 47(5) of the 1992 Constitution states:

The Electoral Commission shall review the division of Ghana into constituencies at intervals of not less than seven years, or within twelve months after the publication of the enumeration figures after the holding of census of the population of Ghana, whichever is earlier, and may, as a result, alter the constituencies (GoG 1992).

¹³ The redistribution of the 30 new constituencies affected all regions with Ashanti being the prime winner with 6 new constituencies followed by Greater Accra with 5, Volta, Western, Brong Ahafo, and Northern with 3 new constituencies each, Central, Eastern and Upper West Regions with 2 new constituencies each and Upper East Region with 1 new constituency.

In the advanced industrial countries, representatives of the legislature would like to go on contesting for as long as they have breath. However, before the 2004 elections, seasoned parliamentarians from NDC announced their unwillingness to continue, citing several reasons. In truth some were having problems in their constituencies with some young parliamentary aspirants breathing fire down their necks. For others, it was a question of fatigue, having been a parliamentarian for three terms. Genuinely, some wanted newcomers to also have a feel. Some believed the NDC parliamentarians were scared of being defeated in the election. This is highly questionable because most of those who decided not to contest again were in safe constituencies in the Volta Region. Those not in the Volta Region were also strong candidates in their own right. Even though the NDC appeared bereft of seasoned contestants, they were all very committed and went into the trenches on the campaign trail for the candidates that replaced them.

10. The Nature of Political Campaigns

The excitement associated with the 2000 elections could not be compared to the 2004 elections. All the same, the parties went on the campaign trail with their messages. The NDC, in political opposition for the first time harped on the poor economy of the country. They argued that the policies being pursued by the NPP administration had worsened the economy of the nation and the people were finding life more difficult than during the NDC administration. This message was countered by the NPP, arguing that the worse conditions being talked about by the NDC were created by them. They argued that it was because of the NDC's poor management of the national economy that the NPP government decided that Ghana should join the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. The followers of the NPP campaigned for the mandate of the people to see through the numerous economic measures put in place. In reality, as compared to 2000 there was macro economic stability and the rapid erosion of the value of the local currency had been checked. In addition, inflation—very high in 2000—was within tolerable limits. This made it difficult for the NDC on the campaign trail.

Just like in previous elections, Rawlings campaigned as if his whole life depended on the election outcome, which showed the ex-President's passion for politics and his belief in the new mode of selecting national leaders and decision makers through the ballot box instead of the barrel of the gun. The rather sluggish start of the NDC campaign picked up in midstream. The NDC was all of a sudden able to revive most of its dormant cells in the regions and constituencies. There was excitement all over as to what the final outcome was going to be. The NPP had to double their efforts because the indicators were that the NDC had narrowed the gap between them. The campaign of the NDC became more ethnic-orientated as the party desperately

tried to woo the Gas to vote NDC. Anti-Ashanti sentiments were expressed especially on the campaign trail in the Volta Region (Frempong 2006). President Kufuor was accused of appointing family members to ministerial position and that the nation does not belong to Ashanti's alone.¹⁴

In sum, the political campaign of 2004 turned ugly with specific references to ethnic slants, while issue politics took a back seat. Both parties could share the blame because of lack of restraint on the part of their supporters. I think, however, that the degeneration of the 2004 campaign into an ethnic shouting match was aggravated by poor journalism. Several papers had emerged championing the cause of their parties and they kept spewing jaundiced election propaganda that could set the nation aflame.

11. The People's Verdict and its Significance

It is incontrovertible that Ghana is now a two-party state. The previous elections had shown the likely trend and this was confirmed by the outcome of the 2004 elections. Kufuor won the presidential vote with 52.4 per cent to that of Mills with 44.6 per cent. The other parties shared the remaining three per cent of the votes cast. In the parliamentary election the NPP maintained its hold with 128 to NDC's 94 seats. The success of the NPP was not that overwhelming as to justify the earlier aspersions by the NDC that the EC was creating the 30 new constituencies to favour the NPP. Out of the 30 new constituencies, the NPP won 16 and the NDC 13, with one going to the People's National Convention (PNC).

Another important outcome was the highly impressive voter turnout of 85 per cent. It underlined the fact that Ghanaians are incurably political and they cherish going to the polls to pick those to rule them. Exercising their franchise has become part of their political existence and for me this augurs well for the future of democracy. It was a marked improvement on the 2000 voter turnout. Where you have apathetic voters, as indicated by poor voter turnout, all that a bad government needs to do is to induce its core supporters to always go and vote to keep them in power. But where you have a majority of the people taking keen interest in political outcomes, political parties have no option than to play according to the rules or lose the support of the people. The high voter turnout also drove home the fact that Ghanaians now believe in the democratic system as the best mode to change rulers.

¹⁴ The unfortunate assassination of the Ya Na Yakubu IV in an intra-family feud was resurrected as a campaign tool by the NDC. This was fueled due to the fact that since that unfortunate incident President Kufuor never visited the place and the interpretation given was that it was because of NPP's complicity in the assassination (see also p. 52 and fn. 18 below).

The 2004 elections gave Ghanaian politics a new terminology of 'skirt and blouse' where a voter decides to vote for a presidential candidate but votes for a different party in the parliamentary vote. There were instances where the presidential candidates obtained very high votes in a particular constituency but the parliamentary candidate failed to win the seat. There were as many as 16 constituencies where the electorate voted 'skirt and blouse' (Boafo-Arthur 2006: 47-8). What this implies is the growing political sophistication of the Ghanaian voter. No political contestant can take the voters for a ride just because he belongs to one's party. It is also a lesson for the political parties to always go by the democratic mode in selecting parliamentary candidates. Another significant development was the number of women who became parliamentarians. Women contestants increased from 95 in 2000 to 104 in 2004 and those who won equally rose from 18 to 25. This was a modest gain for women and the parties should seriously think of giving safe seats to women contestants. In addition, Ghana demonstrated that with an astute electorate, committed to the development of the country, elections can be held with minimum confrontation. The educational campaigns embarked upon by civil society NGO's and the observation and monitoring they engaged in helped in conducting another successful general election.

The significant role played by the Electoral Commission deserves commendation. Of course, the Commission was assisted in large measure by civic associations and religious bodies. But its proactive innovations so as to produce a credible and legitimate outcome has enhanced the local and international credibility of Ghana's electoral process as well as that of the Electoral Commission. The reforms the EC has introduced in the electoral process are in two categories: (a) reforms in connection with voter registration, and (b) election and election material management. The former includes the issuance of photo ID cards, the use of OMR scanners to minimize human errors, giving of special numbers to voters to avoid impersonation, etc. On the latter, all Returning Officers and their Deputies are interviewed and the objective is to weed out incompetent or biased officials, working in concert with domestic observers and monitors, balloting by political parties for positions on the ballot box, voters photos on the register, etc.

Just as in the run up to the 2000 elections, the political parties in collaboration with IEA came up with another Code of Conduct for members. The parties agreed to liaise with the IEA and IPAC to enforce the code by forming national, regional and district bodies to whom electoral infractions were reported to for resolution. All the political parties that contested the 2004

elections were represented on the forum conducted by the IEA to put in place the Code of Conduct.¹⁵

In the light of the foregoing one needs to identify some of the factors that in my estimation have contributed to the relative stability of the country, in addition to the significant role played by the Electoral Commission.

12. Accounting for Ghana's Relative Stability

The reasons that have been adduced in an attempt to explain the relative stability of Ghana could equally be utilized to a large extent in explaining the survival of the nation's democracy. A caveat that must be highlighted is that even though the effort depends largely on enhancing the electoral process and making it more transparent, one needs to accept the fact that elections form just one part of democratic rituals. After all, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah and other immediate post-independence African leaders such as Nyerere, Kenyatta, Banda, Kaunda etc, organized several elections based on one party rule but the political systems they presided over were not democratic in the strictest sense of the term. Thus, a lot could be said about the finer grains of electoral management and practice but if the other components of a democratic system such as political rights and civil liberties are absent, the stability of such a polity may be due to coercion or the imposition of extra-legal measures that might have cowed the populace.

Many factors explain why Ghana has been able to conduct four elections without the system breaking down and with no signs of relapse or democratic regression. There is no doubt that there is a growing commitment to democratic principles by all stakeholders. The past experiences under military dictatorship appears too fresh in the memory of Ghanaians to allow this opportunity of exercising one's political freedoms and civil liberties to be whittled away. Democracy has not turned Ghana into an economic paradise overnight, but the dogged determination of stakeholders to stick to democratic norms appears far deeper than meets the eye. In this regard, I identify the following explanatory factors for Ghana's relative stability: memories of the past, enhanced civil-military relations, activities of civil societies organizations and think tanks in the areas of human, political, civil rights education, media pluralism, disbanding of para-military organizations, banning of ex-President Rawlings from visiting military installations, decentralization of intelligence gathering, and relations with development partners.

¹⁵ With the exception of Bawku constituency, where sporadic electoral violence was recorded and the Northern Region where a fatality occurred with the death in police custody in Tamale of the Northern Regional Chairman of the CPP, the 2004 elections passed as very peaceful.

Memories of the Past

Arguably, lessons from the recent past of military brutalities and the fear and intimidation conjured by dictatorial rule seems to have made a lasting impact on many Ghanaians. There is the realization also that a bad civil administration is better in terms of guaranteeing peoples' liberties than a military regime. This viewpoint is better captured by Adebayo Olukoshi (1999: 461) who notes that "the alternative to bad civilian government is not military rule but better civilian government". Ghanaians are fully aware of what is happening in the sub-region with regard to political instability and civil wars. The demonstration effects of such events, coupled with repression during military administrations, seem to have influenced most Ghanaians, especially the military who made political interventions their pastime. This notion is reinforced by the fact that the Ghanaian military participates in virtually all United Nations peacekeeping operations across the globe. They have experienced what real war is like and the effects of such wars on societies. As such, they do not wish to see in Ghana what is happening in some war ravaged sub-regional countries. This, in my opinion, has equally had an influence on the men in arms and they find the democratic dispensation satisfactory, and would want it firmly entrenched for them to develop further their professionalism and other talent in a stable and peaceful environment.

In addition, most staff in the Ghana Armed Forces realize that their personal advancement is in no way guaranteed by taking over political administration. It is not by accident that the Army Education Unit has been collaborating with the University of Ghana for the provision of various educational programmes meant to enhance the educational qualifications of army officers. At the moment there is a post-graduate programme for Masters Degree in International Affairs being run in conjunction with the University of Ghana, Legon for the past five years. Plans are far advanced for the introduction of other programmes. The programme benefits not only Ghanaian officers in training but also officers from across Africa at the Ghana Armed Forces Training School for military officers training at any point in time. In the Armed Forces today, many officers and men are desirous of adding value to their qualifications so as to get an international appointment after they retire officially or voluntarily. In other words, most officers now look forward to some sort of UN appointment given the plethora of peacekeeping operations. As such, planning a coup appears to be of secondary importance to many officers and men. These developments have been highly instrumental in forging rapport between the military and civilian population.

Enhanced Civil-Military Relations

The gradual assertion of civil authority over the military after the rebirth of democracy takes its source from the 1992 Constitution. The president is the

Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces but the raising of forces is the preserve of parliament. The President appoints the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), and the head of the other wings of the Ghana Armed Forces in consultation with the Council of State. The President also grants commissions and appointment on the advice of the Armed Forces Council. However, the battered image of the armed forces and the erosion of respect for army officers as a result of the revolution had to be dealt with before a solid civil-military rapport could be reached.¹⁶ Throughout the first term of the NDC this became the task since Rawlings who was the President was highly instrumental in lowering the respect junior officers and non-commissioned officers had showed to senior military officers. Nonetheless, Rawlings was better placed to improve the antagonistic relations between the army and the civil population and he also appointed a Deputy Defence Minister who was also a retired Colonel. In addition, there is implicit awareness of the military that they are to be under civilian control. Hutchful, in an interview found out that “the officers themselves want political direction” and that “all understand quite clearly that soldiers are controlled by civilians” (Hutchful 1997: 274). In spite of the fact that Rawlings was able to subordinate the Armed Forces to political authority, the officers themselves were fully aware of the bad blood between the Armed Forces and civilians because “most officers have undoubtedly realized that the traumatic events of 1979 and 1981 subverted their legitimacy” (Hutchful 1997: 274). This perception served as a barrier to improved civil-military relations. This possibly might explain Hutchful’s findings that “some believe that the Armed Forces would receive a better deal at the hand of a civilian Head of State/Government, and this might help to account for the strong showing of the opposition in constituencies dominated by military installations” (Hutchful 1997: 274).

The arduous task of effecting positive civil-military relations fell on the NPP administration. The government has no military antecedents and it was in its interest as a government to court the military and ensure that the military accept their role under the 1992 Constitution. It is not surprising therefore that civil-military relations have improved since the electoral defeat of the NDC in 2000. The norms of military professionalism and civil control of the armed forces are increasingly being accepted in Ghanaian society. This may be attributed to the government’s desire to ensure that the military conforms to constitutional provisions and also international opinion, which is averse to military intervention. As noted above, there is gradual realization that the army’s corporate interest could better be pursued under a civil than military administration. The point is that there are no quick fixes to national problems dominated by high levels of poverty, socio-economic decline and political uncertainties. Military interventions by the junior ranks and non-

¹⁶ For more on the reforms since the rebirth of democracy, see Hutchful (1997).

commissioned-officers undermine the military's esprit de corps, professionalism, command structure, discipline, coherence, and efficiency.¹⁷

The need for the pursuit of amicable relations between military and civilian authorities as well as the citizenry has been alluded to by several commentators on politics in transitory states. Larry Diamond (1997) argues strongly that rolling back military prerogatives and refocusing the military's societal role, training and expenditure around matters affecting external security is a major challenge for any newly emerging democracy. This is crucial because of the military's predilection to intervene in politics in Ghana. It has also been argued that an essential part of the struggle for democratic consolidation, especially in Africa, is the restoration or the upgrading of the military's professionalism. This must be done concurrently with educating the civil population to realize the importance of freeing itself from the "debilitating effects of the ideology of militarism which has sunk roots in their thinking and praxis" (Olukoshi 1999: 461).

The various positions come down to the role of the military as an institution after the transition process. Two main positions are pertinent. First are those members of the armed forces who perceive the regime transition as an opportunity to de-politicize, re-professionalize and re-equip the armed forces to play its traditional role. The second viewpoint that is articulated in the National Commission for Democracy's 1991 Report is that "the military has now become a major power bloc and is therefore a *de facto* political constituency" which should be a player in the "political administration of the country" (Luckham 1996: 171). The background to the two views is the military's resentment of the open attacks on the military establishment by some elements of the opposition groups. As rightly noted by Luckham, even though the Ghanaian military establishment is not as cohesive a corporate actor as that in Chile, its interests and role in the struggle toward democratic consolidation should not be ignored. There has been latent tension between the military and the civilian populace. That tension could be traced to the ruthlessness of the military during the revolution and the military's support for the government party during the transition process. The military at various times created the impression that its fortunes are tied to those of the NDC government. The military's support for the then ruling NDC seem to emanate from the extent to which the PNDC went to safeguard the security of key military actors in the revolutionary years through the Transitional Provisions of the 1992 Constitution, indemnifying all actions taken by the PNDC and the AFRC while in office. The military was therefore made to

¹⁷ See Agyeman-Duah (2002) for details on measures put in place by the NPP government to facilitate positive relations between the Armed Forces and their civilian counterpart.

believe that the NDC stood for their interest and this interest could not be safeguarded by a change in leadership.

There has been a gradual but noticeable rebuilding of the relationship between the civilian population and the security services. Cordial civil-military relations have reached a new height as a result of a deliberate policy to bridge the wide gulf between the military and their civilian counterparts. To be candid, the gradual turn for the better in terms of relations between the army and the civilians started when the NDC was defeated in the 2000 elections. The NPP government took drastic measures to ban all militia groups that were still operating without any hindrance during the first eight years of democratic rule under the NDC and President Rawlings. There was a calculated but effective de-politicisation of the security services. Before the NPP victory in the 2000 general elections, the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDR) with its equivalent, the Armed Forces Defence Committee (AFDC) were still operational in the security services as well as in the general body politic. Vestiges of authoritarianism were therefore manifested in some ways instead of dying with the dictatorial PNDC regime. The paramilitary groups had earlier acquired a reputation for terrorising civilians. Their continued existence undermined the people's trust in democracy and created the impression of permanent instability in a constitutional era.

On winning political power, and as a result of constant attacks on the government of the anomalous position of the CDR's in a constitutional era, the NDC government changed the name of the CDR's to the Association for the Committee for the Defence of the Revolution (ACDR). It claimed that it was a non-governmental organization. In reality, however, it arguably served as a wing of the NDC party and acted as such in propaganda work. There were branches of the CDR in the armed forces. The NDC government appointed a Presidential Staffer with the rank of a Minister of State to be in charge of the affairs of the ACDR. If this had been allowed to continue by the NPP government it would have seriously undermined national security and *ipso facto* the stability of the nation as CDR members of the forces could have been incited against the new government given the recriminations between the ex-president and the incumbent.

There is no doubt that a lot has been achieved in fostering cordial civil-military relations. There are several question marks as to whether the government has put in place, in the area of intelligence gathering, various mechanisms needed to ensure effective civil control of the armed forces with the urgency it requires. This is important because of the cacophony of intelligence reports that tend to confuse the executive arm of government. Such confusion has been part and parcel of governments since independence. According to Boraz and Bruneau (2006), any government serious about ensur-

ing civil control over the military ought to undertake the following steps more or less simultaneously:

1) *Raise public interest and pressure.* The government ought to determine in clear terms which institutions have an oversight role and whether the work of the intelligence community is well organized to support decision makers. There is a need to counter the public apathy toward or fear of intelligence and put in place an informed public debate.

2) *Increase civilian awareness and competence.* There is the need to make civilians working in security setups show interest in intelligence work. It is only when civilians are motivated to learn about intelligence that they can control it. This could be effectively done if democratizing countries open up their military-intelligence training schools to civilians.

3) *Institutionalize process that support transparency and effectiveness.* Standing committees in the appropriate ministries and institutions must be set up to review intelligence or security matters. The presidents of democratizing states must also be interested in security matters and review security strategies where necessary.

4) *Foster a political culture that supports and trusts intelligence in society and inside the intelligence community.* The key issue here is to forge politically healthy bonds between civilians and the security setup through joint educational and professional activities.

5) *Professionalize the intelligence services.* Professionalization enhances control of the security services as each individual in the setup knows his tasks and how to handle them in the interest of the larger society. Professionalism will improve expertise, facilitate corporateness, and responsibility.

The danger here is that they must be professionals who have a sense of responsibility for democratic governance. Boraz and Bruneau (2006: 38) state emphatically that “newer democratic regimes may find their situation particularly precarious in fostering ‘responsibility’ since the regimes that they replace typically have no tradition of accountability to the people or the rule of law, and indeed may even have featured ‘independent security states’ in which the IC answered essentially to no one, not even its ostensible authoritarian masters.” For sure, this situation aptly fits the state of affairs during the rule of the military PNDC and its civilian shadow, the NDC. The NPP’s campaign manifesto for the 2000 elections underlined how they expected the role of the security services to be. According to the manifesto:

Their main concern will be the survival of the state and the protection of its territorial integrity and its democratic system. They will not be part of the

party apparatus and they must not be party members. Security service personnel will thus be expected to show absolute neutrality in political conflicts and will be guaranteed secure tenure, subject to normal disciplinary measures (NPP 2000: 40).

The issue of asserting democratic control if it came to power was not mentioned because it was very sensitive. By and large, however, the government carried out personnel changes, including retiring some serving officers and reassigning others. This was interpreted in certain circles as bringing ethnicity to the barracks, as most of those reassigned or retired were from a particular ethnic group (Aning 2000). It seems to me that such measures were necessary in the search for effective control of the military by the new civil administrators, and there was nothing discriminatory in ensuring that those you can safely rely upon are manning the key positions of your security setup. There is very little debate on the issue that the effective management of the security setup and the growing rapport between the military and civilians have gone a long way in assuring a relatively stable polity in Ghana.

Role of Civil Society Organizations (CSO's)

One other positive development is the emergence of several civil society organizations, think tanks, and non-governmental organizations that keep on churning out educative programmes and analyzing societal issues with the aim of keeping the people informed not only about elections but also economic trends in the country. Politicians, and indeed, security officers are regularly invited to some of the workshops organized by the think tanks, NGO's etc. Thus, the society is more informed on day-to-day issues than it used to be. As indicated above, civil society organizations played pivotal roles in facilitating peaceful elections, especially in the 2000 and 2004 elections. By the 2000 elections, such organizations had come to believe that democracy was there to stay and it was gaining national support from all segments of society. If it needed a better facilitator, the civil society organizations were better placed than other groups to play that role.

In assessing why Ghana has attained such relative stability, the role of the civil society organizations, owing their vibrancy to the rebirth of democracy, ought to be recounted. For instance, they were highly instrumental in voter education to complement what the EC was doing before the 2000 and the 2004 elections. Some of the well established think tanks like the Institute for Economic Affairs (IEA) and the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD)-Ghana established effective liaison between political parties, government institutions such as the National Commission on Civic Education (NCCE), Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), Parliament, the Judiciary and the Electoral Commission and other CSO's. The sole objective for such interactive and facilitative work by the

CSO's and the think tanks was to ensure conflict-free and peaceful elections and that if even conflict cropped up it would be very minimal. In my candid opinion, this objective was attained through the measures they helped to put in place and the consensus building they brokered in addition to urging political parties to build on what had been attained through IPAC.

In 1996 and 2000 under the umbrage of organizations like the Network of Domestic Election Observers (NEDEO) and the Coalition of Domestic Observers (CODEO) respectively, civic groups through effective observation and monitoring exercises brought not only legitimacy but also credibility to the electoral processes. In addition to CODEO, the 2000 elections also witnessed the active roles of the Forum of Religious Bodies (FORB) in conjunction with the Ghana Legal Literacy Resource Foundation (GLLRF) in the observation and monitoring exercises. These umbrella groups, representing different kinds of civic associations, successfully mobilized, trained, and deployed over 15 000 observers to cover most of the over 20 000 polling stations across the country (Agyamen-Duah 2005, Frempong 2006). In addition, CDD-Ghana and IEA introduced a Public Forum and Town Hall Meetings, respectively, where aspiring parliamentary candidates addressed issues of concern to the electorate running the gamut of education, HIV-AIDS, the national economy and security. Such meetings were held in several constituencies. The role of the civic organizations in the 2000 and the 2004 elections was to avoid the mistakes of 1992, thereby preventing post-election disputes and boycotts. By so doing, the groups were ensuring the ownership of the electoral process by the people and enhanced the credibility and legitimacy of the outcomes (Frempong 2006: 4).

Media Pluralism

Free media is central to the functioning of democratic societies. It helps in strengthening freedom of expression and information and the free flow of information and ideas. Such a media is also instrumental in building a democratic culture. In this context, media pluralism has been another positive dividend of democracy in Ghana. Since the repeal of the Criminal Libel Law by the NPP government in 2001 the media landscape has expanded exponentially. Before January 1993 Ghana only had state-owned media. Today, there are some 40 newspapers made up of weeklies or bi-weeklies, a few of them are dailies. There are dozens of radio stations in Accra and in the regions and five TV stations, only one of which is state-owned.

However, in some instances even free media can be accused of sensationalism. Nonetheless, the opening up of the media space with the proliferation of private radio stations have done a lot of good to Ghana's democratic stability. Starting with the 1996 elections FM stations virtually cover all the polling stations and run commentaries on what may be happening. This reduces

electoral fraud and other electoral malfeasance. The electorates are gradually becoming sophisticated on account of this and this helps to explain why there was a governmental turnover. The common saying in Ghana now is that the power to make and unmake governments no longer resides in the barrel of the gun but with the thumb of individual voters.

Disbanding of Para-Military Organizations

One of the measures taken to assert civil control over the armed forces, and thereby ensure national stability, was in my view the proscription of the notorious 64th Regiment of the Ghana Armed Forces, popularly called the commandos. The unit was disbanded and the officers and men were assigned to other military units depending on their professional expertise. This regiment was the creation of Flt. Lt. Rawlings and it was operating like his personal security outfit. It was a regiment whose core members were trained in Cuba, Bulgaria and other former Eastern bloc countries in all forms of military tactics. They were well equipped and highly professional. The name itself depicts its remit or agenda before its disbandment. In actual fact, the regiment was set up to perpetuate the ideals of the so-called revolution that according to proponents started with the bloody coup of 4 June, 1979. The number 64 is symbolic of the *month* and the *day* that the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) that released Rawlings from prison successfully took over political administration from the Supreme Military Council II headed by General Fred Akuffo. It must be recalled that it was the AFRC that without due process ordered the execution of eight high-ranking army officers, three of whom were former Heads of State and buried them in unmarked graves. These graves were located and the bodies identified and given fitting burial by the NPP government.

Banning Ex-President Rawlings from Military Installations

Even though highly contentious an argument, I also strongly believe that the bold decision taken by the Kufuor government to bar ex-President Rawlings from entering any military installation for security reasons has equally enhanced the nation's stability. One has to consider the fact that he was in power for almost 20 years. Given his populism, a large number of personnel might have come under his influence when he was the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. In addition, the many who were actively involved one way or the other in the infamous revolution and the brutalities visited on Ghanaians are still in the army and one cannot discount the nostalgia of such people for the period in the history of this country when they did what they wanted without revulsion. More importantly, Rawlings is fond of playing to the gallery with populist outbursts, being helped most of the time by his oratory capabilities (Boafo-Arthur 2005). By refusing him a ready audience in the army—which was his constituency for almost 20 years—the NPP effectively prevented him from openly inciting and recruiting the most loyal

of his supporters to team up to destabilize the country. The NPP government apparently learnt from history as Rawlings capitalized on his frequent visits to military barracks after handing over in 1979 to recruit junior officers for the coup of 31st December 1981.

Decentralization of Intelligence Gathering

The current structure of national security is outlined in The Security and Intelligence Agencies Act, Act 526, 1996. An innovation was the establishment of security councils at regional and district levels. These regional and district security councils operate as wings of the National Security Council. The objective was to make the regional and district security councils serve as early warning mechanisms with regard to conflicts that might escalate to inflame the whole country. When micro-conflicts are effectively dealt with at the regional or district levels they may not create national problems that will undermine the stability and security of the state. The decentralization of intelligence gathering to involve the District Assemblies could also be cited as having contributed to the stable political atmosphere. These measures were put in place ostensibly to insulate the NDC from any military adventurism. It has been of great assistance to national security and stability.

Relations with Development Partners

To a large extent, Ghana's ability to stabilize could also be attributed to the forging of good international relations with other actors in the global system. The growing interdependence and globalization have invariably led to changes in how nations relate in the international system. This system has been of immense benefit to the nation in terms of financial and other forms of support. For a country that looks for over 40 per cent of its budgetary support from development partners, one could say that but for that, it would have been incapacitated in economic terms and that would have spelt doom for the democratic experiment. However, extreme dependence on the international system for financial and other forms of support could also be detrimental to national stability as discussed in the final section.

In sum, Ghana has successfully dealt with societal conflicts, especially those pertaining to electoral politics. Since most intra-state conflicts in the West Africa sub-region emanated from partisan political activities and rumblings that came to the fore after national elections, it could be argued that the state has been able to reduce the intensity of conflicts through effective conflict resolution mechanisms and the proverbial gentleness of the Ghanaian populace. Credit must also go to the role of the re-invigorated state institutions and other constitutional bodies with the mandate to resolve societal crisis. Conducting four successful general elections for a country with such a militarist past is no mean achievement. In a country where national destabilization became a pastime of the military, the relative stability obtained is worth

celebrating. That there has been no successful coup d'état since Ghana's re-democratization is also a pointer to the growing assertion of civil control over the military and the realization by the military that their corporate future do not lie in destabilization. Another important issue is the kind of leadership style adopted. One very positive fall out from democratization is the opportunity for political mentoring and grooming unlike in yesteryears where military men from nowhere and with no political experience whatsoever took over the mantle of leadership through the barrel of the gun. Not all needs have been satisfied through democracy but it cannot be disputed that peace, stability, transparency, accountability, respect for human rights, and the rule of law have been enduring features. Ghana's experience is a pointer to what needs to be done by other countries in the sub-region to facilitate the strengthening of democratic institutions with its attendant positive benefits.

In comparison with many West African countries, there is thus little argument over the stability of Ghana. But for development to take place and the various democratic institutions to be strengthened, the relative stability must last. What are the guarantees that this will be the case? Or what factors are likely to undermine the relative stability of the nation?

13. Is Ghana's Relative Stability Sustainable?

If democratic norms are weakened as a result of dysfunctional activities by actors in the political system for one reason or the other, the relative stability may be destroyed and this signals the threat of a relapse to autocracy. Every system of government at one point or the other undergoes some tensions that may be due to internal or external factors. As pointed out by Wiseman, "in no African state can democracy be said to be fully consolidated and immune from serious erosion or termination in the future" (Haynes 2001: 000). Internally, there have been instances or events which, if it had not been well handled, could have undermined the stability of the state. One example was the murder of Ya Na Yakubu IV, the overlord of the Dagbon traditional area in March 2002 when the NPP was barely two years in government. His assassination was the result of an intra-family feud or struggle for dominance between the Andanis and Abudus.¹⁸ The key conclusion emanating from the

¹⁸ In terms of political persuasion, the majority of the Andanis are supporters of the NDC while a majority of the Abudus support the NPP. It happened that the NPP was in power with many Abudus in key government positions. The murder of Yakubu, therefore, had political repercussions as the NDC insinuated that the NPP knew something about the murder of the chief. The feud, in fact, has a long history of political manipulation depending on the government in power. Even though a state of emergency was declared in the area for some time, the democratic structures never broke down to the extent of the country relapsing into dictatorship. The government tried to get the perpetrators brought to book by first setting up the Justice Wuako Commission of Enquiry whose report is yet to come out. Later, the government turned to prominent chiefs and set up a Committee of Eminent Kings, under the chair-

non-violent outcome of this unfortunate event is that there is more support for the democratic system of government in Ghana than ever before. My contention is that the sustainability of the relative stability of Ghana—and for that matter the democratic dispensation—will be contingent on the efficient and effective handling of some of the issues that have been discussed in the preceding sections, especially civil-military relations, as well as the following: improving the national economy, checking ethnocentrism, continued international support and the taming of corruption.

Improving the Economy

Allied to the desire for basic freedoms and rights is the issue of economic well being of the ordinary man. Incontrovertibly, democracy is expected to do several things for the ordinary man. The near total contraction of the state from economic management on the wings of the neo-liberal economic creed and the institutionalization of democratic structures for governance are hoped to improve the lot of Ghanaians. It follows that if this expectation is not met for any reason, tension is likely to mount. Poverty is a major problem in the country and unemployment is very high with able-bodied youth engaging in menial informal jobs.

It means that there is a high level of economic dissatisfaction in the country and this does not augur well for the sustenance of national stability. The fact that a country is democratic does not imply that it should meet the economic needs of all the inhabitants. However, the expectation is that under democratic rule, standards of living will be enhanced. It is poverty that normally drives some desperate people to take to arms and this is what must be avoided by creating the necessary environment for the generality of the people to earn a decent living. Adam Burgess (2001) argues that, if democracy is to be construed in both political and non-political terms, there would not be a single democratic country. In other words, democracy must be concerned fundamentally with political issues. Burgess further argues that conditions in most societies with reference to equality and distribution of resource, is still not satisfactory. It may be true that this is a problem of democracy but he cautions that “profligate use of the term democracy threatens to render it meaningless” (Burgess 2001: 59). He states:

Democracy is a political system. Social inequality and injustice, meanwhile, is more than a political problem, and their solution does not lie in requiring democracy to effect social transformation before it is recognized as legitimate. The result of incorporating such elevated standards of (social) democ-

manship of the King of Asante, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II to settle the issues involved to pave the way for the burial of the King. This proved successful and the king was buried on April 10, 2006. For detailed discussions of the various political influences at play in the Dagbon crisis since independence, see Brukum (2006).

racy into the idea of democracy is at least as likely to be a sense of futility as a constructive yardstick which to measure the progress of democratization around the world (Burgess 2001: 59).

By implication, democracy is not a magic wand that has the potential of solving every socio-political, economic, ethnic and cultural problem. Democracy as a political system attempts to create an enabling climate for the majority of the people to carry on with individual ventures that will enhance their wellbeing. So, to expect democracy to instantly solve the economic problems of every Ghanaian is impracticable. While the logic of Adam Burgess' argument appears unassailable, the point made by Claude Ake (1993: 241) on the economic component of democracy in Africa is worth considering. He noted:

Ordinary Africans do not separate political democracy from economic democracy or for that matter from economic wellbeing. They see their political empowerment, through democratization, as an essential part of the process of getting the economic agenda right at last and ensuring that the development project is managed better and its rewards more evenly distributed.

Ake's position aptly reflects what pertains in Africa regarding people's conception of democracy and its dividends. His stance was informed by the fact that the whole democratic agenda and the struggles by social forces were to facilitate the equitable distribution of societal resources and as he noted, "the demand for democracy in Africa draws much of its impetus from the prevailing economic conditions within" (Ake 1993: 241). This is a truism identified also by David Simon. Simon notes that the major push for the democratization process in the 1990s was the people's dissatisfaction with unending economic crisis and endemic poverty. For many Africans therefore, the democratic wave signaled two things, a change in leadership and change in economic prospects. "People thus viewed political change in instrumental terms: as a prerequisite for economic recovery" (Simon 2002: 25).

In my view, the passion underpinning Burgess' position stated above suits the conception of liberal democracy as it pertains to the advanced industrialized countries. But even so, it is difficult to segregate economic from political benefits of democracy. Citing the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation, Ake stated:

We affirm that nations cannot be built without popular support and full participation of the people, nor can the economic crisis be resolved and the human and economic conditions improved without the full and effective contribution, creativity and popular enthusiasm of the vast majority of the people. *After all, it is to the people that the very benefits of development should and must accrue* (Ake 1993: 241; my emphasis).

West Africa and for that matter Ghana is basically communal and since the communal spirit was instrumental in effecting political change, the people deserve to benefit from that transformation in totality. There is no point drawing a line between political benefits and economic benefits since the two are intertwined. Thus for Claude Ake, the economism of the current democratization process has two main implications. First, the feasibility of democratization is contingent on enhanced economic prospects. Second, given the overarching role of the economic factor in the rebirth of democracy, there is the need for a shift in “emphasis from abstract legal and political rights to social and economic rights”. In other words, the embedded neo-liberal economic creed of the current democratization process that sees nothing wrong with glaring economic inequities should permit a modicum of state intervention in the economy for the sake of “growth and a redistribution of economic wealth” (Ake 1993: 242). Ake’s contention is that democracy ought to reflect the vital interests of its social base. This social base is composed of ordinary workers and artisans with a sprinkling of some elites whose interest was to capitalize on mass support to attain political power. It was on the strength of this conviction that Ake (2003: 132) prescribed four main democratic models that in his view address the gross social inequities that characterize liberal democracy. These suggested models are:

1. A democracy in which the power of decision-making resides with the people over and above the rituals of electoral choice. This calls for a strengthened legislature, decentralization of power and considerable premium on institutional development “for the aggregation and articulation of interests”.
2. A social democracy that stresses political, social, and economic rights in contradistinction to the strong emphasis on political rights by liberal democracy. “It will be social democracy that invests heavily on the improvement of people’s health, education, and capacity so that they can participate effectively”.
3. A democracy that stresses both collective and individual rights. Such a democracy has to pay attention to “nationalities, subnationalities, ethnic groups, and communities as social formations that express freedom and self-realization and will have to grant them rights to cultural expression and political and economic participation”.
4. A democracy of incorporation. Such a system must be as inclusive as possible.

Governments ride on poor economic performance as a campaign tool. The NDC was harping on ‘continuity and stability’ in 1992 and 1996. The NPP rode on the wings of the downturn of the national economy and the fact that people could not make ends meet to win votes from the electorate in the 2000 elections. If you use the bad shape of the economy as a campaign tool promising a ‘positive change’ in the living conditions of the people to win

political power, then it is difficult to swallow any form of separation between the economic and political realms in any political system. This explains why there is always a heightened economic expectation from the electorate. There is no way a government can ignore the economic plight of the people without endangering its hold on power. There is an organic link between political wellbeing represented by freedom, enjoyment of political rights and civil liberties, and economic wellbeing represented by equity in the sharing of national resources and enhanced standards of living. I do not think any African government has ever attempted to differentiate between the economic and political realms. That will amount to political suicide. Yet clearly, for emerging democracies like Ghana—where the economy was in tatters in spite of years of IMF-sponsored structural adjustment—a longer period is required for policy measures to yield the needed economic impact. On the other hand “people do not eat democracy” as pointed out by Thandika Mkandawire.¹⁹ The intertwining of economics and politics are forcefully argued by Makau Mutua and Salim Ahmed Salim. For Mutua, democratic survival in Africa is a forlorn hope “if the majority of its population continues to live in abject poverty” and that African support for democracy is because, among other things, it will reverse “economic hardship.” For Salim, political rights, civil liberties, human rights etc., are all meaningless if the stomachs of the people are empty. Unless democracy delivers on bread and butter issues, there will be a reversal of democracy on the continent and create a situation “where the politics of poverty gives rise to the poverty of politics on the continent.”²⁰

The tragedy of democracy in the sub-region is the unholy zeal of the elite to satisfy Bretton Woods conditionalities. This zeal has blinded governments since the rebirth of democracy to the realities of the Ghanaian situation. People in Ghana need political freedom and all the rights inherent therein. They equally cherish their civil liberties but at the same time they expect the economy to improve to enhance their living standards by meeting their basic needs. Where this fails, there is bound to be tension and instability, which are direct threats to the survival of democracy. It is when economic problems become unbearable or the majority of the people find living conditions highly despicable, that demagogues succeed in inciting them to undermine the legitimacy and sovereignty of the state. In terms of ongoing developments in the country, Ishmael Yamson, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Standard Chartered Bank has drawn attention to the fact that Ghana’s stability at the macro level was good but was not enough. In his view, one could have a stable macro economy and still not grow well because the mi-

¹⁹ Mkandawire cited in Olukoshi (1999: 459).

²⁰ Mutua and Salim cited in Boafo-Arthur, ‘Introduction’ (p. 7) in Boafo-Arthur (2006).

cro level could have de-motivational factors to scare investors.²¹ Perhaps, Yamson's observation could help in explaining why the wellbeing of the ordinary man is far from being realized, the stable macro economy notwithstanding. Therein is the danger for the survivability of Ghana's relative stability and for that matter democracy. Customizing democracy to suit Africa's realities in the face of democracy's universalism and its internationalist support is undesirable at this trajectory. Wallensteen (2004: 27) equally points out that "deliberate export of democracy may affect its long-term legitimacy in recipient societies." The best approach to forestall relapse and thereby save the system is to double the efforts geared toward easing the economic stranglehold on the people. This could be done by rethinking the notion of consigning the state to an umpire without a whistle in the economic arena under the aegis of neo-liberal economic management practices.

The solution then appears to be in the bosom of sustained education of the people, self-sacrifices by those in authority, and heavier doses of transparency and accountability in government business. In addition to the ritualized elections every four years, the people must be genuinely involved in decision making as the District Assembly concept seeks to do. If this is done, there will be better understanding as to why the generality of the people have to still wait for better days in future. This calls for the revamping of the District Assembly concept for the economic realities to be known by the generality of the people. Effective participation of the social base through the District Assembly is necessary to ensure active and sustained input into policy making by the people. As Olof Palme, the late Prime Minister of Sweden pointed out, "conscious, critical and active people are the prerequisite for progress. It is only when men and women, with their individual capabilities and dreams, can actively influence and take part in decisions that democracy takes root and a society in harmony and justice can be built up."²² This is the way to make people come to terms with the economic situation of the country.

The Problems of Overdependence

According to Ake (2003: 27), "what globalization is doing is rendering democracy irrelevant and in this it poses the most serious threat yet in the history of democracy." In other words, there is the likelihood of globalization undermining democratic government in the sub-region because of overdependence and continuous marginalization. Ake was also concerned with the situation where as a result of overdependence in the name of globalization democratizing states lose their self-esteem. With all its positive sides, it is an incontrovertible fact that globalization has accelerated the marginalization of most countries in West Africa, where a majority of the countries are

²¹ See *Daily Graphic*, 20 October 2006.

²² Palme cited in Oquaye (1993: 10).

among the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC). Globalization has worsened the unemployment situation in the sub-region. This high unemployment rate equally account for the growing levels of poverty. The high levels of poverty have been a major contributor to the endless struggle for control of natural resources with catastrophic effects in countries such as Sierra Leone. In 1997, the ILO/UNDP (1997: 23) observed:

The proportion of the population living in poverty is increasing and is projected to rise from about 48 per cent in the early 1990s to about 50 per cent by the end of this decade [...] Africa is the only region in which the proportion of the population living under poverty [...] is projected to increase.

Globalization, if not well engaged, poses a threat to national stability as it subverts the autonomy of the state. Nita Rudra points out that “globalization fundamentally unravels elite cohesiveness as the degree of control over economic policymaking and performance becomes significantly constrained, and nations are confronted with higher levels of uncertainty, indeterminacy, and hence, social instability. The combination of private sector desertions and mass disenchantment results in the growing political isolation of rulers” (Rudra 2005: 704). In the Ghanaian case this could result from economic dependence on the munificence of development partners. This explains why it was not difficult for the NPP government to sign the Bilateral No Surrender Agreement (BNSA) with the United States of America. Under the BNSA ‘friendly nations’ are by the terms of the agreement not to surrender to the International Criminal Court (ICC) any US national or military/government employee (past or present, including contractors and non-nationals) who commits any of the four crimes within the jurisdiction of the ICC.²³

Another negative fallout from overdependence on the international system for financial aid is the complacency it develops among national leaders who readily get such support. That is another angle from which globalization threatens democracy. The ability of the state to implement far reaching domestic measures to improve the economy and wean itself from international financial support is circumvented, because there is always an implicit assurance that the international system will rush in to support. Whereas globalization erodes barriers, I think it gives enough room for leaders to confront internal and external problems undermining development from their own perspective. In this instance, it is the social base and their welfare that should receive prime consideration from national leaders. The dilemma posed by globalization and the overdependence on the international system, in Ake’s

²³ The four crimes are: the crime of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression. It is interesting to note that the US government gave Ghana a deadline of November 1, 2005 to ratify the BNSA or risk losing US military assistance. Not surprisingly, the NPP-dominated parliament ratified the agreement.

view, is that “the political entity which ideally materializes popular sovereignty has less and less power while the amorphous space of transnational phenomena which is not amenable to democratic control has more power” (Ake 2003: 27). The state loses its autonomy and since it has deprived itself of the capabilities to compete in the international economy on a solid economic footing, its marginalization is accentuated. Rudra (2005: 707) states that “[t]he result is social instability alongside waning of legitimacy”.

High budgetary support is another area where the overdependence of the economy is lucid. According to the 2006 budgetary statement, this stood at 31 per cent of the total budgetary allocation. This has become a nightmare because there does not appear to be an end in sight to such dependence. Since globalization had virtually broken down national boundaries, the inability of national leadership to foresee the precipice at the end of the globalization highway by adopting proactive measures is problematic. The nation has no doubt benefited politically from the globalization bandwagon in the form of democratic government, but it does not augur well for the long term stability of the nation to be a classic example of handout recipient from the international community. President Kufuor, with his calm demeanour and disposition has been able to facilitate a good image for the nation and that has been a key factor in the continuous flow of international financial support for the nation.²⁴ However, the danger of limiting a nation’s diplomatic clout and arsenal to the goodwill enjoyed by a particular leader is potentially dangerous. President Kufuor is at the tail end of his second term in office and likely to leave with every goodwill that inured to Ghana because of his personal touch. What has the nation put in place in this competing age of globalization that his successor could rely on as a bargaining chip to facilitate international support? This is crucial because the concept of interdependence in my view thrives on *quid pro quo*. Should the nation be dependent on international support in perpetuity?

The alarm bell has already been sounded by Mats Karlsson, the World Bank representative in Ghana, with concurrent accreditation to Liberia and Sierra Leone. In a statement on the economic prospects of Ghana in an interview he granted, Karlsson pointed out that the nation has no basis for complaint regarding difficulties in the management of the economy because all the necessary resources for accelerated development are available. He noted: “I think we are at a stage where there are no excuses for Ghana. You’ve got your debt relief, you’ve got HIPC and you’ve got a doubling of development

²⁴ For instance, on account of the policy measures put in place by the government, Ghana obtained debt cancellation from the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the African Development Bank which will relieve the nation of more than \$4 billion. Japan wrote off almost \$1 billion debt.

partner inflows over the past three years” (Karlsson 2006). In his view the major problems facing the nation regarding foreign inflows is the implementation of stated projects. This is an indictment, in my view on the efficiency and monitoring capabilities of the various oversight ministries. The question is whether in a competitive world in a country with abundance of human resources which Mats Karlsson refers to as ‘human gold’, we needed to wait to be reminded about the essence of project implementation?

As noted above, the canker of complacency appears to be gnawing the marrows of those in authority and Mats Karlsson noted that the current macro-economic stability being enjoyed by Ghana was an excellent achievement but it has been taken for granted. He then advises that the resources obtained should be put to real value by deploying them into various projects under different sectors. There is the need for the prudent management of resources and as such individuals as well as stakeholders should shift attention from the quantum of money that was received by the government to how the money was managed. Meanwhile, micro-level issues have not been well attended to due to the irrepressible inroads made by foreign companies on the wings of globalization. One of the end results is the dumping of foreign goods the nation used to produce efficiently, such as textiles. The stifling of local textile production as a result of free flow of foreign products without any state intervention has contributed to high levels of unemployment and general social dissatisfaction with economic performance at the micro-level. This situation is going to be aggravated by the rapid inroads of China into the markets of several African countries. At least, this was the impression created after the Sino-African conference to commemorate 50 years of China-Africa relations. Trade and investment between China and Africa was the driving force for the summit. As China makes further inroads in African markets, the simmering manufacturing enterprises will die slowly especially in textiles because of Chinese propensity of dumping their products at cheaper prices in the markets of trading partners. At least, the EU’s incessant struggles with China on its textile exports to EU market stands as a testimony. If the EU with their strong component economies found it difficult warding off the Chinese flooding of their markets, then where stand individual African countries, such as Ghana, in such a contest?

In a nutshell, Ghana has been a beneficiary of globalization as the nation has been able to garner international financial support for national development, if even at the expense of sovereign autonomy on certain matters. If at the end of the day the massive inflows are not put to better use and mismanagement and corrupt practices become predominant, there could be an implosion because, unlike under dictatorial governments where the rights of the people are cowed, this is a democratic government and the people deserve the right to an accountable and transparent government. Globalization in Ake’s view

portends danger to democracy. The nation could assuage this if the right policy implementation steps were to be taken. Such policies will ensure that inflows from the international community will benefit a sizeable majority of the social base of society. Another important measure is to prevent undue seepage of the inflows by removing the battle against corruption from the realms of rhetoric. For Rudra (2005: 704), the solution lies in enhanced social spending: “[i]ncreasing welfare spending alongside globalization can provide this necessary safeguard for elites by encouraging social stability”. Rudra further states that “if the state provides social spending to compensate (buy off) the injured majority, the masses will be less likely to attack the elite via politics” (Rudra 2005: 707). The point is that any government that toys with the economic wellbeing of the majority of the people is equally toying with its fate at the polls. Thus, even though globalization in the form of neo-liberal economic creed may push for a total withdrawal of the state in the management of the economy, the elites need not be told that their constituency is the masses and not the multilateral institutions if it comes to the issue of legitimacy. The ballot box does confer legitimacy on the group that governs, but that is merely a circumscribed form of legitimacy as real legitimacy is determined by the people on the basis of their standard of living.

The Dangers of Ethnocentrism

Untamed ethnic proclivities pose a threat to almost all democratic governments in Africa. The pathetic case of Somalia, where since 1991 the country has had no central government and has been torn apart by warlords who draw their strength from ethnic groups, is a grim reminder for all those who fan the embers of ethnicity in the sub-region. On the surface it appears ethnic cleavages do not pose any threat to the stability of Ghana. If the Ghanaian leadership is consumed by complacency, the nation may be taken unawares by the growing danger of ethnic sentiments, which are at times openly expressed on political platforms in an instrumentalist mien to garner electoral votes apart from causing disaffection toward people of other ethnic groups (Frempong 2006). Heightened ethnic attachment in Ghanaian politics is an instant danger to the sustainability of not only democracy but the relative stability of the country. Ethnographically, Ghana’s population distribution according to the 2000 Population and Housing Census is as follows: Akan 49.1%, Mole Dagbani 16.5%, Ewe 12.7%, Ga-Adangbe 8%, Guan 4.4%, Gurma 3.9% and Man-Busanga 1.1% (Frempong 2006: 161; GoG 2002, Nukunya 2003). The trend of general elections results since 1969 portray an ethnic voting pattern by the Ashantis within the Akan stock and the Ewes.²⁵

²⁵ For instance, in the 1969 election the Progress Party (PP) led by Dr. K.A. Busia, an Akan, won all the Akan seats, while the National Alliance of Liberals (NAL) led by Mr. K.A. Gbedemah, an Ewe, captured all the Ewe seats in the Volta Region. In all, Gbedemah polled 76% of votes from the Volta Region while Busia obtained 85% of votes cast in Ashanti and Brong Ahafo regions.

Mike Oquaye argues that Ewe dissatisfaction after the 1969 elections led to the ouster of Busia's government in 1972. The paradox, however, is that the coup of January 1972 was led by an Akan, Col. I. K. Acheampong. Perhaps, Acheampong might have been asked by the real coup makers to lead the junta. This seems to be the logical conclusion on the basis of what Professor Kofi Awonoor stated regarding the 1972 coup that toppled the Busia government. He pointed out that the coup could be explained by the 'tribal factor' and he identified the main architects of the coup who were all Ewes. Awonoor gives an explanation for the destabilizing propensities of his Ewe ethnic group in the Ghana Armed Forces by noting that:

Ewes in the Armed Forces have achieved the reputation of being notorious coup makers and plotters against successive governments. This could be ascribed partially to the fact that Ewes, the second largest ethnic group in the country, see themselves in opposition to all governments in Ghana which inevitably become Akan (Ashanti) dominated. As it were, the contest for power is reduced in simple terms to a fierce contest between the Akan (Ashanti) and the Ewes. The large Ewe presence in the civil service, the military, and in institutions of learning, is seen as an effective check on Ashanti efforts at hegemony" (Awonoor 1984: 57, cited in Oquaye 1993).

If that really is the case but not the personal view point of the learned Professor, then Ghana's stability will not last unless the intelligence service is on red alert all the time. In terms of population per ethnic group, the Akans of which the Ashantis are part dominate the others so the likelihood of having a sizable number of Akans in every government is high. By Awonoor admission, that will be enough for Ewes in the army to execute a coup d'état because of the contest for power between the two ethnic groups. It appears then that the nation is sitting on a time bomb.

In the 1992, 1996, 2000 and 2004 general elections the same ethnic pattern as in 1969 was demonstrated.²⁶ According to Claude Ake ethnicity has a

²⁶ Flt. Lt. Rawlings, from the Volta Region and leader of the NDC polled 93.2% from the region while Professor Adu Boahen of the NPP, an Akan garnered 3.6%. In 1996, the pattern was repeated and Rawlings again polled 94.5% of votes from the Volta Region while J. A. Kufuor, an Akan (Ashanti) polled only 4.7% of the votes. Two Akans contested the 2000 elections, Kufuor, an Ashanti (Akan) and Mills a Fante (Akan). Mills, the NDC presidential candidate was handpicked by Rawlings to be the Presidential candidate in the teeth of stiff opposition from the party members. The interpretation then is that whether it was Mills contesting or Rawlings, NDC was basically an Ewe party and since the founder, Rawlings was behind Mills they had to vote overwhelmingly for him. The same argument could hold for the NPP candidate in the Ashanti Region. The 2000 elections registered a slight increase in the votes of Kufuor in the Volta region. He garnered 11.5% from Volta Region while the NDC candidate, J.E.A. Mills obtained 88.5%. Kufuor obtained 79.9% of votes in Ashanti to Mills' 20.1%. In the 2004 elections, Professor Mills, the candidate of the NDC and an Akan (Fante) swept the votes in the Volta Region, the home region of Rawlings with 83.8% and registered an increase in his votes from the Ashanti Region to 24.1%. In the same vein, Kufuor won massively with 74.6% of the votes in Ashanti, his home region and also had an increase in his

preponderant influence on voter choice. This is because in the conception of primordialism, ethnicity serves to bond a particular group together and it is within such primordial cleavage that they (group) realize its identity. The instrumentalist conception of ethnicity holds that those of the same group manipulate and mobilize their ethnic affinities for political ends. In Ake's words, "ethnic groups are real, at least in the limited sense of a solidarity, of consciousness, however misguided or spurious" (Ake 2003: 93). Ake's analysis of ethnicity was based on Nigeria where at least strong ethnic cleavages could be said to have contributed to the civil war of 1967-1970. Regarding the interface of democracy, ethnicity and conflict, Ake wrote: "More often than not students of democratizing plural societies in the Third World worry about democratization giving impetus to ethnocentrism and ethnic conflict. In this instance at least, democracy overrode ethnic identities" (Ake 2003: 95). The implication is that those who expected democracy to signal the collapse of Nigeria because of strong ethnic sentiments were disappointed. In spite of the sharp ethnic differences, democracy, no matter its imperfections, is the political system in operation in Nigeria.

Ethnic proclivities cause multiple problems in some African countries. Ake argued that the instability in parts of Africa, including Burundi, Cameroon, Central Africa Republic, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, the Sudan and Zaire, reinforces the need for democracy. As he put it, "the only response to this situation and the only way to reduce the hostilities and begin to achieve incremental political coherence is to embrace democracy in the sense of participative negotiated consensus" (Ake 2003: 32). However, "democracy also has difficulties in managing ethnically highly divided societies, either those with strong polarization between two or three sizable competing groups, or those with considerable fragmentation, whose coalition-making may be difficult" (Wallenstein 2004: 27).

In the Ghanaian case, ethnic proclivities were dealt with by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah through the promulgation of the Avoidance of Discrimination Act to prohibit the formation of religious, regional and ethno-based political parties. But the 'ghost' of ethnicity and ethnic influence in voting, especially

vote from the Volta Region to 14.3%. Much to the anger of the NDC supporters, Mills flopped in his home region, the Central Region. Out of the 19 constituencies in the Central Region, the NDC won 2 seats and Mills obtained 46.3% of the votes while the NPP won 17 of the Central Region's parliamentary seats and Kufuor obtained 58.6% of the votes. The performances of the two parties in Ashanti and Volta Regions in the 2004 elections also showed ethnic bias. While the NPP won 36 of the 39 constituencies in Ashanti, the NDC won only 3. In the Volta Region, the NDC turned the tables by winning 21 out of the 22 seats with only 1 going to the NPP. Incidentally, the seats won by the NDC in Ashanti are peopled largely by migrants from the Volta Region and Northern Ghana. Kufuor lost the presidential race in the one constituency the NPP won in the Volta Region, while Mills won the presidential race in the three seats the NDC won in the Ashanti Region.

in the Volta and Ashanti Regions of Ghana have refused to die as the general elections of 1969, 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004 portrayed. The question then is whether ethnicity is likely to be the bane of Ghanaian politics and for that matter stability and democracy?

Writing on the 2004 elections, Felix Anebo argues strongly that “the processes of societal modernization and heightened political awareness are strenuously eroding the ‘traditional’ social identities, based on ethnicity, dialect, tribe, region, and religion that had predicted the mass basis of party support in Ghana during the earlier decades”. He argues further that “geographical mobility and urbanization have engendered crosscutting cleavages based on location, occupation, and communication thereby weakening linkages with tribal groups. Thus Ghanaian voters engage in issue voting as well as retrospective assessment of the governing party” (Anebo 2006: 107). The voters of a country in general might vote on the basis of the structural changes in the economy as well as urban influence but that does not mean the absence of ethnic attachment or influences on voting patterns. In addition, the glaring ethnic sentiments, even in Accra and some other places, expressed by some politicians during the 2004 campaigns belie the fact that urbanization is weakening ethnic propensities. When politicians become desperate in their quest for political power, they stop at nothing and do not reflect on the likely implications of their statements. It is in this context that I will understand the direct appeal to ethnic Fantes in the Central and Western Regions to vote for a ‘native son’, i.e., Mills in the presidential run-off of 28 December 2000 when the 7 December presidential election did not produce a winner. The NDC also exhorted people in those two regions to ‘wizen up’ and vote for one of their own.²⁷ Ethnicity may be used in an instrumentalist manner in urban areas by politicians but in rural Ghana, and especially in the Ashanti and Volta Regions, primordial attachment appears to be very strong. But whether the strong ethnic convergence that is demonstrated through the pattern of voting will eventually lead to a reversal of the stability of Ghana is difficult to judge. For a fact, many other Ghanaians look at issues generally from a nationalistic perspective. Maybe the pattern of voting is the only major exception. It appears to me that even though ethnicity plays a role in electoral contestations, the ethnic differences as compared to other polities are not so fractious, irreconcilable or unamenable to negotiations. That is why Ghana may yet escape from ethnic turmoil.

The solution to the ethnic problem lies in political and opinion leaders pointing out the dangers along the way. The army is the only institution that could

²⁷ It is even alleged that a delegation of chiefs from the Volta Region visited their counterparts in the Central Region to map out how best to mobilize the Fantes to vote for a ‘son of the soil’ (Gyimah-Boadi 2001: 107).

without much ado exploit ethnic sentiments, as argued by Professor Kofi Awonoor, to destabilize the country. As Ake emphatically noted; “ethnicity is not threatening democracy but facilitating it”. The nation therefore has to tap into the positive aspects of ethnicity that will facilitate democratic growth instead of seeing how political parties rely on primordial cleavages as well as the instrumentalist utilization of ethnicity, which may portend danger for democratic growth. The Nigeria experience recounted by Ake (2003: 111) shows that “if indeed ethnic consciousness is a problem, especially for a peaceful coexistence and political stability, then democracy is the answer.” James Hall points out that ethnic tension was the key reason in explaining the situation in Côte d’Ivoire. The coup of General Robert Guei in Côte d’Ivoire in 1999 seemed to have opened a Pandora’s box. It facilitated Côte d’Ivoire’s slide into anarchy, which could not be effectively assuaged by the elections of 2000. All of a sudden, one’s ethnic background became the criteria for qualification to contest as a presidential candidate. This compounded the problem (Hall 2004). One cannot shy away from ethnically based voting in several African countries. Chabal & Daloz point out that “the foundations of political accountability in Africa are both collective and extra-institutional: they rest on the particularistic links between Big Men, or patrons, and their constituent communities.” The trend of ethnic voting then is “because they must placate the demands of their existing or putative patron” (Chabal & Daloz 1999: 39).

Another factor that may save Ghana from ethnically engineered implosion is the gradual realization of the implications of the entrenched ethnic pattern of voting by Volta and Ashanti Regions. At the individual level, cordial relations between the two groups that translate in some cases into intermarriages are prominent. Perhaps, the visit to the Asantehene, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II by Togbe Afede XIV, the President of the Asogli State in the Volta Region at the height of the expression of extreme ethnic sentiments by some people was to prove that as a nation, our unity is more valuable than ethnic proclivities. The pledge by the two prominent traditional rulers to fight tribal politics at the end of their meeting serve as a fitting summary of what is happening in Ghana regarding ethnic cleavages.

What we have to agree to is that it is not democracy that may inflame ethnic passions to the point of destroying democratic values and national peace and stability. It is rather politicians and political parties who employ ethnicity for narrow political ends in the context of democratic contestation for political power who endanger the stability of the nation. This does not mean that there should be no conscious efforts to tackle the issue of ethnicity. This could be done first and foremost by outlawing all ethno-based associations in various institutions of learning. However, the constitution allows freedom of association and in the context of this stricture some other means has to be

found in an attempt to deal with this issue. In my view, ethno-based associations in our institutions and cities are breeding grounds for the fanning of ethnic sentiments. Second, the clergy and all politicians must be constantly reminded of the danger that awaits the nation if ethnic passions are not trimmed. At least, what happened in Liberia with all the ethnic undertones should serve as an example in order not to plunge the country into chaos through unbridled, baseless and destructive ethnic rivalries subscribed to by few egocentric tribal jingoists. Third, there is the need to re-examine the mode of enlistment into the Ghana Army with an eye on regional balance, given the revelations in Awonoor's book. It is gratifying that the Parliament of Ghana discussed the issue of enlisting people into the army on regional basis as a way of obtaining a fair ethnic representation in the Ghana Armed Forces.

Ethical Leadership and the Will to Fight Corruption

I am inclined to think that combating corruption in the sub-region in general, and Ghana in particular, will not be all that difficult if we have ethical leaders who back words with action. It could be argued that wherever corruption is very high the collective leadership could be culpable, especially when some of the leaders are deemed to be corrupt. When a leader fails to deal with perceived corruption, the wrong signals are sent to investors. In addition, people may assume, rightly or wrongly, that the leader himself may be involved in corrupt deals. At the same time, citizens who have specialized in shouting from rooftops about corruption in a country without substantiating equally do a great disservice to the nation concerned.

That corruption has the capacity of undermining national security and stability is a moot point. There are some who are of the opinion that corrupt practices may facilitate administrative actions. This is clearly a negative connotation of corruption and does not enhance the image of any country. There are serious implications for the stability of a nation and its political institutions when patronage becomes a priority in the disbursement of public goods. Corruption undermines democratic institutions like the judiciary and even the legislature when in cases of vetting appointees to public positions the right thing is not done because the one being vetted is from the same ethnic group or is a school mate or from the same church or fellowship. A leader who becomes corrupt undermines the political system and the fair spirit of democratic contestation because he gains undue advantage in comparison with other contestants. Furthermore, given the position of the leader he may be able to escape any checks that the political system has put in place as a means of enforcing public accountability. One other canker of corruption that may hinder democratic advancement and in the end destroy a nation's stability is when leaders influence powerful and vocal blocks with all kinds of inducements as a way of gagging them or winning their support. Corrupt

practices, if not checked, end up in undermining formal rules of governance and this may affect national security and stability.

It is generally accepted that corruption is ‘the misuse of public office for private gain’ and it assists those who engage in corrupt practices to bend existing rules for private interest (Hope 2000a), Treisman 2000, Warren 2004). In the words of Hope, corruption “is not only a failure of ethical leadership but of governance as well” (Hope 2000b: 19). Corruption undermines social capital, destroys the image of state officials, and fosters political instability. It also leads to political disempowerment on the basis of putting square pegs in round holes to facilitate administrative manipulation. This leads further to the undermining of public confidence in political institutions and this mistrust begets indiscipline, disrespect for authority and confrontations, which are all destabilizing factors in any political system.

The World Bank (1989: 61) is also of the view that a good example set by a country’s leadership can minimize corrupt practices. Roland Hope notes that “the considerable lack of exemplary ethical leadership” exhibited by African leaders have not only exacerbated corruption in Africa but also engendered political instability and underdevelopment (Hope 2000a: 22). African leaders have by commission or omission pointed to leadership crisis since independence as a major constraint on development. In the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), the authors of the document unequivocally state that “we recognize that failures of political and economic leadership in many African countries impede the effective mobilization and utilization of scarce resources into productive areas of activity in order to attract and facilitate domestic and foreign investment” OAU 2001: 8). According to Tony Blair’s Commission for Africa Report, “it is Africa’s actions and leadership that will be the most important determinant of progress in generating a resurgence in Africa, advancing standards and taking forward the fight against poverty” (CAR 2005: 359).

Ghana’s persistently low rating on the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) should be of concern to government, given the image it creates and the long-term implication for democratic stability. In the 2006 assessment of 163 countries, Ghana was ranked 93rd. Ghana’s score of 3.3 points out of ten is lower than the 2005 ranking of 3.5 points. The Transparency International CPI ranking is done on the basis of people’s perception of corruption among public officials and politicians. In all cases the CPI rankings reflect the views of experts living in the country assessed and a cross-section of people such as businessmen and analysts around the world. The basis for the assessment is asking the standard questions on for instance bribery of public officials, kickbacks in public procurement, embezzlement of public funds, etc. They also ask questions that probe the strength and efficiency of anti-corruption

policies and as such TI covers both administrative and political corruption in their surveys.²⁸ The issue is that if six years after declaring ‘zero tolerance’—and after having put in place a host of agencies purportedly to deal with the canker—then the TI score 3.3 suggests that the battle has to be intensified to minimize the level of frustration among the ordinary people. The fall in the ranking is a threat to democratic stability because of the perception that those in authority and their cronies are amassing wealth which should have been utilized in enhancing the conditions of the masses. For democracy to survive, for stability to be sustained and long term development assured, something drastic must be done about various corrupt practices in the sub-region in general and Ghana in particular. We cannot live under the perception that there exist high levels of corruption.

14. Conclusion

The West African sub-region has been a zone of political instability for a long time. One main cause of this was the long line of personalized rule and military dictatorship in virtually all countries of the sub-region. Even though some could claim a measure of stability before the democratization process, such as Senegal and Côte d’Ivoire, they were practicing what could aptly be termed as personalized rule under Leopold Senghor and Houphouët Boigny, respectively. The over three decades of Eyadema’s dictatorship in Togo is another very good example. Other countries could be added, where military coups became personal vendettas against senior army officers, as in Ghana where high-ranking army officers, including former Heads of State, were executed without due process in the course of an ill-defined revolution.

The democratization process in the region conjured hope for political observers as well as citizens. However, several countries are ‘partially free’ and three are classified as ‘not free’ by Freedom House. This creates the impression that the region is still struggling to maintain stability in individual countries. The existence of a ‘partially free’/‘not free’ entity implies that, in some cases, strong-arm tactics are employed by authorities to maintain law and order. It also means that people’s fundamental rights are not respected. Where the political rights and civil liberties of citizens are restricted you cannot meaningfully talk about stability, and where stability is absent development suffers. In almost all states that have gone through civil wars, one of the causes has been the never-ending poverty levels that made people vulnerable to demagogues who exploited their economic conditions for their own parochial ends.

²⁸ The TI scale is 0-10; an assessment less than 5 indicates high corruption and from 5 to 10 is clean. In the 2006 survey Finland, Iceland and New Zealand topped the list of very clean countries on the corruption scale with 9,6 while Haiti was at the bottom with 1,8.

However, there are a few countries in the sub-region that are deemed to be free by the Freedom House Ranking of 2006. These are Benin, Cape Verde, Ghana, Mali and Senegal. Several factors explain their relative stability. In Ghana, the key factor has been the continuous improvement in electoral management since the controversial presidential election of 1992. I argued that since most contested elections results in Africa leads to sustained tension and instability, Ghana's ability to manage the past four elections has been highly instrumental in ensuring the relative peace and stability in the country. Once political opponents accept the outcome of the electoral race and congratulate each other, it takes the venom out of those harbouring any intension to utilize the election results as a point for mobilizing people to destabilize the system. As noted by Elklit and Reynolds "it finally appears to have been recognized explicitly that the quality of electoral administration has a direct impact on the way in which elections in the developing world and their outcomes are regarded, not merely by international observers, but also—and more importantly—by domestic actors such as voters, parties, media and local observers" (Elklit & Reynolds 2002: 87).

In the Ghanaian case, the trump card of the Electoral Commission was its humility to accept lapses in the conduct of the 1992 elections and go to the drawing table to improve the various mechanisms. The formation of IPAC in 1994 was a masterstroke. It deprived contending parties of grounds for complaining about lapses. It must be stressed that no general election will be absolutely free of complaints by losers. Complaints form part of the game; a means to get people to empathize with a party's inability to win political power at the polls. But such complaints should not be allowed to degenerate into confrontations that have the capability of undermining the democratic system. The fact that through IPAC the EC was able to take on board all the complaints leveled against it after the 1992 elections was instrumental in improvements in subsequent elections. IPAC represented the transparent management style of the EC and this made it possible for all complaints and grievances to be addressed with all contending parties being part of the problem solving machinery.²⁹ The comparatively peaceful elections after the foundational elections in 1992 testify to the good election management by the EC. But more importantly, it demonstrates the benefits of working to-

²⁹ On the basis of complaints leveled against the conduct of the 1992 elections, a new electoral roll was prepared in an all inclusive manner as representatives of stake holders, especially political parties participated in the revision process. In addition, officials of the EC and party agents were in charge of the registration of voters after the latter had been trained by the EC. Voter education, counting of ballots at each polling stations, provision of transparent ballot boxes which clearly showed to the electorates that no ballot box was stuffed with pre-stamped ballot papers, provision of photo ID cards for voters etc, reflected the good management style of the EC.

gether with relevant bodies to ensure transparency and by so doing create a general perception of a legitimate and credible electoral process.

It must be added that the EC was able to achieve all this because of the independence it enjoys under the 1992 Constitution. The government cannot control the EC if officials are bent on abiding by constitutional provisions and this has actually been the trend, especially after the 1992 elections. A good example of the independence of the EC in Ghana was its ability to kick against plans by the NPP government to control the purchase of voting materials for the 2004 elections. The government raised several issues regarding the procurement of such materials but the EC brushed the government aside, took its case to the public domain for public opinion and judgement, and the government had to recoil to allow the EC to carry on with its job. Arguably, the assertion of the EC's independence, guaranteed by the constitution, saved the nation a catastrophe. Without government interference, the opposition NDC could still claim that the 2004 presidential election was rigged by the NPP, a view not shared by the host of internal domestic monitors, observers and their foreign counterparts. The near perfect interplay between the EC, civil society organizations and political parties facilitated the evolution of an efficient election management processes in Ghana.

The efficiency of the EC notwithstanding, attention has been drawn to other salient factors that in my view have contributed to the stability of the nation. These include the wish by most Ghanaians not to allow past dictatorship, whether civilian or military, to be repeated. And this calls for collective defense of the democratic structures and institutions that are being strengthened on account of the relative stability the nation enjoys. Other factors are improved civil-military relations, commitment by civil society organizations and their continued education on the virtues of democratic norms as opposed to dictatorship and military rule, media plurality that makes it possible for every segment of society to know about political issues, prohibition of paramilitary organizations, and a supportive role of development partners.

Mention must be made also of the willingness of the political parties to liaise with civic associations and policy think tanks to build consensus for the progress of the country. Consensus building has been of immense assistance to the EC to carry out its responsibilities. Another instance of such consensus building was the introduction in 2003 of the Platform of General Secretaries and the Chairmen's Caucus, initiated by the IEA. This exclusive platform is composed of political parties with parliamentary representation. The twice-monthly meetings of the Caucus are devoted to intensive discussions of party programmes and activities, as well as larger problems with the potential of destabilizing the country that may crop up (Frempong 2006).

However, there are also several factors which, if not well managed, may threaten the survival of the nation. These include extreme dependence on the international system at the expense of developing indigenous productive sectors that will minimize such dependence. No nation has been solely built through external support. This is not to say that nothing is being done to revamp the economy to ensure growth. The point is that the nation has banked its hope on external financial support to an extent that has overshadowed any attempt at revitalizing local productive sectors. Much needs to be done at the micro-level for an all round development instead of taking solace in impressive macro-economic indicators which are always appreciated by development partners and the Bretton Woods institutions but means nothing to the man on the street.

Ethnicity is a canker in African politics and Ghana is not an exception. Even though many would want to sweep this under the carpet, the problem of ethnic voting is real and this should engage the attention of all stakeholders. It is a truism that even in industrial democracies, parties have their strongholds and they bank on them in elections. While it may serve parochial interest, it bodes ill for the sustained stability of the nation. Perhaps, Ghana is not as ethnically polarized as in other countries, but the continuous ethnic voting pattern will continue to pose danger to the nation's democratic growth. Urbanization and high levels of migration should help people to grow out of their ethnocentric shells. Politicians must be aware of the harm they do on the campaign trail when in place of issues they try to mobilize along ethnic lines, oblivious of the potential danger it poses to national stability. There is the urgent need for people to think nationally.

The stability of Ghana is equally threatened by the lingering perception of corruption in high places. Ethical leadership is necessary if the trust and confidence of the people would be bolstered. Where leadership is perceived as corrupt the masses lose faith in the democratic process and this may lead to frustration and social explosion.

Finally, I argued that much as the ordinary citizen cherishes his/her fundamental freedoms and civil liberties, continued stability would be contingent on the economic wellbeing of the majority of the people. Sustained poverty may undermine the trust people have and the legitimacy they grant to the democratic system of government in general and the ruling class in particular. This is the reason why Claude Ake admonishes democratic leaders in the sub-region not to marginalize the social base, whose dissatisfaction with how the system was being managed by personalized, military and pseudo-democratic rulers paved the way for the democratization process. Pressures from the international community and political conditionalities would have yielded few democratic gains if the majority of the people were contented

with their standard of living under dictatorship of all hues. This is the reason why it is plausible to argue that the economic status of the people as opposed to their political and civil liberties holds the key to the growth of democracy and sustained stability of the sub-region. In truth, even the very poor cherish their fundamental freedoms and liberties and will always engage in social struggles to have them. However, there is a threshold, a defining moment, a point where the convergence of desperation and frustration born out of severe economic deprivation would lead to political implosion and this will undermine any stable polity. No one wants to be a bedfellow of poverty in perpetuity. For the sustenance of Ghana's relative stability, heed must be paid to the call by Claude Ake for a shift in emphasis to social and economic rights so as to ensure growth and redistribution of economic wealth.

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Abstract (for back cover page)

Countries in West Africa have undergone several political transitions: from multi-party democracy on attaining independence, through one-party rule and military dictatorship, back to multi-party democracy. The effects of such changes were polarized polities, economic crises, and high levels of political intolerance, impunity, instability, and in a few cases, a descent into full-scale civil conflict. The early 1990's, however, marked a turning point in the region with the return to democratization and constitutional rule in most countries. Starting with Benin's landmark elections in 1991 and ending with that of Togo in 2005, countries in the sub-region re-instituted democracy. In between, the region had to contend with several forms of destabilizing conflicts, including the civil wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau and Côte d'Ivoire, the rebellions in Niger, and countless ethnic clashes and minority agitation in Nigeria. An overview of political transitions to democracy in West Africa underscores the position that Ghana is largely perceived as an oasis of peace and stability in a turbulent West African sub-region. The paper seeks explanations for Ghana's relative stability, noting that it is partly attributable to an effective electoral management system that recognizes and allows the inputs of all stakeholders in the political contestation for power. With the acrimonious first election of 1992 as a starting point, the paper maps out various measures that the electoral commission put in place to facilitate credible and legitimate electoral outcomes in the subsequent elections of 1996, 2000, and 2004. The paper also identifies other measures that have significantly contributed to the relative stability in Ghana, as well as some of the main threats to continued stability.