

# Ethnic Politics and its Potentials for Violent Conflicts: A Ghanaian Perspective

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Thesis submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirement  
for Master of Philosophy in Peace and Conflict  
Studies, Department of Political Science.

UNIVERSITETET I OSLO

Spring 2008

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

AFRC: Armed Forces Revolutionary Council

ARPS: Aborigines Rights Protection Society

AU: African Union

AYA: Ashanti Youth Organization

AYO: Anlo Youth Organization

CPP: Convention Peoples Party

ECOWAS: Economic Community of West Africa States

EC: Electoral Commission

EU: European Union

GAF: Ghana Armed Forces

GCCPP: Gold Coast Convention Peoples Party

GTC: Ga Traditional Council

LACIA: Legon Centre for International Affairs

MAP: Muslim Association Party

NAFAC: National Festivals of Arts and Culture

NAL: National Alliance of Liberals

NCBWA: National Congress of British West Africa

NDC: National Democratic Congress

NGO: Non Governmental Organization

NLC: National Liberation Council

NLM: National Liberation Movement

NPI: Nairobi Peace Initiative

NPP: Northern People's Party

NPP: New Patriotic Party

NRC: National Redemption Council

OAU: Organization of Africa Unity

PANAFEST: Pan African Festival

PFP: Popular Front Party

PNC: Peoples National Convention

PNDC: Provisional National Defense Council

PNP: Peoples National Party

PP: Progress Party

SMC: Supreme Military Council

UNIGOV: Union Government

UNO: United Nations Organization

UP: United Party

## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the material presented in this thesis is entirely my own work and that it has not been submitted previously for a degree in this or any other University; neither is it a joint work.

## **DEDICATION**

This study is dedicated to my mother Mrs. Gladys Adu-Siaw and my wife Mrs. Millicent Joyce Nyarkoa.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

First and foremost, I would like to express my profound gratitude to the Lord Almighty for giving me the wisdom, perseverance and strength to complete this thesis. Also, I am very grateful to my supervisor, Professor Stein Sundstøl Eriksen who has been instrumental in not only furthering my interest in

Ethnopolitical issues but he also provided me with the opportunity to obtain significant experience in research. Through the thesis process, I greatly benefited from his consistent feedback and his ability to help me put things on its right perspectives. Professor Stein Sundstøl Eriksen's support, kindness, patience, and intellectual contributions have been invaluable.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the members of my family who have supported and assisted me throughout this journey. One of such members is my father, Mr. Kwame Aduansere Dapaah, who is popularly known among his children as Old Major. He was unable to fulfill his desire to pursue higher education due to family responsibilities. His support and enthusiasm for greater pursuits were instilled into his children and he remains a source of inspiration. I will also use this opportunity to express my gratitude to my mother, Mrs. Gladys Adu-Saiw. She supports me through the good and rough times and provides me with me with all my needs. Her contributions to all her children are too many to be listed. Last but not the last, my wife Mrs. Millicent Joyce Nyarkoa and her mother Grace Antwi cannot be left out. I express my gratitude to them for their numerous prayers and support. God richly bless them.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the Norwegian government for given me financial support through the Quota Scholarship. I must admit that this financial support has really helped me a lot in my two year studies in Norway. My appreciation also goes to the co-ordinator and the secretary of Peace and Conflict studies programme Professor Anna Julie Semb and Mrs. Aashild Ramberg respectively for their kind hospitality. Also I extend my deepest gratitude to the co-ordinator of the Quota Scheme and the advisor of the International Students Michele Nysæter and the entire staff of the International Education Office.

There are many relatives and friends to thank for their support, companionship, and assistance. These include Felix Acheampong, Vivian Adu-Tumuwaah, Gilbert Ayin, Alex Nana Yaw Brako, Caroline Ochudoh, Fred Owusu, Hagar Amponsah, Anna Kesewaa and Rosina Tutuah. These people have been a constant source of support for many years and I would like to thank them for their help.

Finally, my appreciation goes to all the respondents who provided me with information in this work especially to Dr. Kwesi Aning, the head of Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution Department (CPMRD) at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre. My special thanks go to Mr. Alexander K.A Frempong, a lecturer at the Political Science Department, University of Ghana for his kind advice.

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis analyses the potentiality of ethnic politics and violent conflicts in Ghana. It is a fact that involvement of ethnicity in politics has been a source of conflict in some Africa countries. Most of these conflicts often tends to become a nationwide conflict with its alarming destructive impacts on humans and property. Ghana has not been spared the spectre of violent ethnic and communal conflicts that have engulfed the sub-region since the 1980s. However, in Ghana, most of these conflict have been limited within some ethnic groups and have not threatened the stability of the state. The potentials are there especially when the perceptions like ethnic rivalries, inequalities, ethnic imbalance, chieftaincy disputes, land litigations, fear of exclusion and ethnic tension comes to mind. It can be said that Ghana is sitting on a time bomb and ready to explode but that has not happened. This can be attributed to the institutional arrangements, public policies, Constitutional provisions and other laws that have help to regulate political competition and to manage ethnic diversity, by setting out the rules for all Ghanaians, irrespective of one's background and ethnic affiliation which emphasis on national integration. The study therefore concludes that though there is undeniable fact that ethnicity remains a major problem in Ghanaian politics, the country has not experienced any major conflict as a result. Conflicts in Ghana has been contained by an over arching national identity which unifies people across ethnic boundaries. The strength of such a national identities is a major reason why nationwide conflicts have been limited and also why the risks of future violent conflicts are unlikely. However the success of the containment of ethnicity and conflict as obtain now will by and large depend on how political and economic power will be distributed among the political elites and the various ethnic groups in the country especially as the Fourth Republic politics progresses.



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# GENERAL INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background to the Research Problem

A major perennial problem that has bedevilled politics in the developing countries is the involvement of ethnicity in their politics. The politics of ethnicity have long been a fact of life in modern sub-Saharan Africa. Politicians are elected, power is wielded, contracts are awarded, and government largess is handed out on the basis of tribal affiliations. Thus the competition to be the most powerful ethnic group, or "tribe," as they are known in Africa, is tremendous. Unfortunately, such politics of ethnicity creates rivalry between ethnic groups and has often been not only divisive and corrupting in countries that can ill-afford it, it has also been extremely deadly and has created violent conflicts in most cases. One has to look at the Nigerian Civil War, in which over one million people, most of them Ibos, died between 1967 and 1970, the 1994 Holocaust in Rwanda, when an almost equal number were killed in a far shorter period of time in the bloodletting between the Hutus and the Tutsis, and the carnage that occurred in Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and a number of other hot spots on the continent.<sup>1</sup> In Africa perhaps more than anywhere else in the world, ethnicity is a powerful force. An individual identifies with his ethnic group rather than his country. The outside world may see a Ghanaian, but the person, if asked, would consider himself as an Akan first. Only when he is outside Ghana would he answer to "Ghanaian." The same is true for an Ijaw Nigerian, a Shona Zimbabwean or a Luo Kenyan.<sup>2</sup> Even when a person is

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<sup>1</sup> Vickers Michael, *Ethnicity and sub-Nationalism in Nigeria*. Oxford: Worldview publishing 2001 p.401

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p.402

"enlightened" enough to consider himself a citizen of his country rather than a member of a tribe within that country, there can be countervailing forces that ensure that the tribe's interests are predominant over the individuals.

The phenomenon of ethnic politics and conflict has become a familiar feature in Africa. Violent conflict, in the form of civil wars, coups d'état, inter- or intra-ethnic conflicts, inter- or intra-religion conflicts among others, with their alarming destructive impacts on humans and property, have for some time now become common in the Africa continent and has engaged the attention of several people as well as civil society organisations and international governmental organisations. Most of these conflicts are as a result of the involoment of ethnicity in politics where one particular ethnic group dominate and claim superioity over the political scene for so long that the other minor ethnic groups are feel threatened and alienated. In the cause of this, the minor groups rovolt against the dominance and ask for the effective participation of different ethnic groups whether majority or minority in sharing the national cake politically and economically. Politics of ethnicity has brought conflcts in many Africa countries and the severe ones being the conflicts in Rwanda between Hutus and the Tutsis, Sierre Leone between the Creole and the Mende, and Liberia between the Americos and the Natives. One of the common pratice elsewhere in Africa, is that the group that controls political power also determines how the national resourses are to be distributed. In this regard it can deduced that the linkage between competitive politics and the politicization of ethnic identities in Africa suggest, *inter alia*, that political ethnicity is primarily an instrumentalist phenomenon, its primordial underpinnings notwithstanding.

Politics of Ethnicity have become almost synonymous with conflict. In most cases wherever there is involvement of ethnicity in politics, conflict follows. For ages, crisis and conflict have dominated reports on the continent. The post-colonial era

has not been any better. Whereas the period up to the early 1980s saw more of inter-state conflicts, armed violence between states is becoming an anachronism. In its place, a new form of violent conflict has emerged. Such conflicts are often referred to as “intra ethnic conflicts” and are often caused by the involvement of ethnicity in the country’s political affairs. In West Africa alone, at least 10 of the 16 countries have experienced one or the other kind of conflict, with particularly brutish wars occurring in Sierra Leone and Liberia.<sup>3</sup> Conflicts in Africa take various forms and have different causes and dimensions. Both ethnic conflicts and other types of violent conflicts have been waged in contemporary Africa. Religion conflicts and clashes as happened in Nigeria, racial conflicts as happened in the apartheid South Africa, industrial conflicts as happened with the Sekondi Takoradi Railway workers strike in Ghana in the early 1960s and the numerous other forms of conflict have broken out at one time or the other on the Africa continent.

Virtually every modern nation-state is to a greater or lesser extent ethnically divided. This frequently implies a potential for various forms of conflict ranging from armed conflicts to autonomist movements and political segregation along ethnic lines.<sup>4</sup> Looking at the Africa continent from the 1990s to date, conflict as a result of involvement of ethnic politics has superseded all other type of conflicts which many of them have generated into a major conflict nationwide that has often attracted the attention of most international organisation such the United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), Africa Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) to intervene and restore peace. The politics of ethnicity in Ghanaian politics is not new as the country had witnessed this phenomenon in the first, second, third and the fourth Republics. It was also evident

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<sup>3</sup> Fayemi, J.K, Security Challenges, 2000

<sup>4</sup> For more information see Thomas Hylland Eriksen, , Ethnicity verses Nationalism. Journal of Peace Research. Vol. 28, no.3 1991

in the military governments that intermittently intervene to disrupt the constitutional process.

## 1.2 Statement of Research Problem

The deteriorating social and economic conditions, as well as the unstable political environment in the West African sub-region during the last two decades have attracted the attention of social scientists and resulted in the proliferation of studies on ethnicity in politics, ethnic conflicts and conflicts resolution in the region. Since the 1980s and 90s, violent conflicts have engulfed the sub-region and destabilized many of the hitherto stable countries, such as those in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote d' Ivoire. Most of these conflicts began as internal strife among disputing parties but quickly spilled over the borders and engulfed the neighbouring countries. A significant feature of these conflicts is that, irrespective of their root causes and the motives of the various protagonists, ethnicity and politics has eventually played a major part in the conflicts. Even where the ethnic and politics factor was initially not relevant to a particular conflict, it eventually became a dominant factor as the conflict and internecine war progressed.<sup>5</sup>

Most of the political leaders, rebel warlords and disgruntled soldiers at the centre of these conflicts were quick in mobilizing members of their ethnic and regional group to their cause. It was from amongst their own ethnic group that they recruited most their adherents, fighters, and financiers. It is this ease with which politicians recruit supporters from their own ethnic group, and the fact many conflicts on the continent finally end up being fought along ethnic, regional and political lines. There can be no doubt about the prevalence of violent conflict of the political genre in Africa. The empirical evidence is overwhelming, as few

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<sup>5</sup> Steve Tonah, "Ethnicity, Conflicts and Consensus in Ghana"2007, P.4

countries on the continent are exempt from one form of violent conflict and state violence or the other. The most common forms of political violence are those that are caused by ethnic politics leading to state revolutions, repression and terrorism.

Ghana has not been spared the spectre of ethnic politics and communal conflicts that have engulfed the sub-region since the 1980s as all the categories of conflicts also exist in Ghana. However, in Ghana, most of these conflicts have not exploded to become a national conflict as seen in other Africa countries. Also most of the conflicts have been limited to a particular traditional area or region and have not threatened the stability of the state. Nevertheless, these conflicts were widely reported in the Ghanaian media and their effects have been felt throughout the country.

### 1.3 The Research Question

The major and crucial research question the study seeks to interrogate relates to “to what extent does ethnic politics a potential for violent conflicts in Ghana”? Various Governments in Ghana realising how important peace is to their effective functioning, often introduced policies to help to deal with the mounting ethnic tensions, which threatened to disintegrate the country. Against this background, this study examines the political relations between ethnic groups in Ghana, the reasons behind the stable atmosphere as compared to other Africa countries with similar involvement of ethnicity in their politics, distribution of power within the ethnic group and the questions of ethnicity and elections.

As a people, Ghanaians cannot shy away from the realities of ethnicity in politics and its potential for open conflict and disintegrating consequence for national polity. The social, political, and economic realities in Ghana are all affected, in one



way or the other, by the ethnic factor as long as the country like most African countries lives in a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural nation.

#### 1.4 Objective of the study

To meaningfully analyse the involvement of ethnicity in Ghanaian politics and its potential for open conflict and disintegrating consequences for national polity, a number of vital questions need to be considered:

1. What factors in the history of Ghana contributed to the formation of political parties along ethnic lines?
2. What has been the role of the various governments in resolving the ethnic problems that can bring civil wars in Ghana?
3. What are the perceptions of political leaders on the question of conflicts among various members of the ethnic groups?
4. How has political power been distributed between ethnic groups in the country?
5. What are the formal roles of chiefs in Ghanaian politics?
6. Is there an existing conflict going on among the various ethnic groups that might become violent?
7. Are the members of the ethnic groups reserving any sort of resentment by virtue of political affiliations against each other or the state as an entity?
8. How has ethnicity impacted on elections in Ghana?

These questions would be addressed in an effort to answer the central question concerning the potentials of violent conflicts as a result of ethnic politics.

## 1.5 Methodology

The study is based on two main sources of data: primary and secondary data. Primary data includes official documents on the various governments' policies on ethnic politics as well as speeches of leading members of the government. In addition, unstructured interviews have been conducted on cross number of Ghanaians and for the purpose of this study, some key institutions were selected. These include 3 leading members from the main opposition parties, 2 Opinion leaders from different communities, 3 officials of the ruling National Patriotic Party (NPP), 2 Traditional rulers (chiefs), 3 professionals from different ethnic groups, 3 non-commissioned officers of the Ghana Armed Forces(GAF), and 3 officials of the Electoral Commission.(EC) I preferred interviewing the leaders and the officials because of my limited resources which restricted me to interview more members of the groups.

The secondary data is based on books, articles, magazines, newspapers and unpublished works which are located in some libraries in Ghana and Norway. Among the libraries used are the Georg Sverdrups Hus library located on the University of Oslo campus (Blindern), Balme Library; Legon Centre for International Affairs (LECIA), African Studies and Political Science Department libraries, all located on the University of Ghana campus. Also all available published materials and relevant trusted materials were retrieved from the Internet. All data collected from the above named sources were subjected to critical analysis so as not to expose the study to biases.

I started my data collection for both primary and secondary sources from the 4<sup>th</sup> July, 2006 and completed on the 6<sup>th</sup> August, 2006.

Qualitative methods are used to collect and analyze data on ethnic politics and violent conflicts in Ghana. The importance of qualitative approaches<sup>6</sup> cannot be overemphasized in this type of study; “Qualitative research seeks to maximize the range of specific information that can be obtained from and about that context, by purposely selecting locations and informants that differ from one another”.<sup>7</sup> The aim here is to compare and analyze how these ethnic politics and violent conflict took place. Qualitative methodology is generally associated with interpretative epistemology, which refers to the form of data collection and analysis that rely on understanding with emphasis on meaning.<sup>8</sup> This method is preferred because it is believed that it is the most appropriate method for a systematic, collection, organization and interpretation of the data by talking with the people. As agreed by Kirsti Malterud’s reason for opting for a qualitative research. Malterud says that ‘the aim of such research (qualitative) is to investigate the meaning of social phenomenon as experienced by the people themselves’.<sup>9</sup> With regard to context, Malterud argues that ‘Contextual issues are better studied with these methods than with quantitative approaches’. Relating Malterud’s arguments with my study, it is obvious that I have use qualitative research method because I want to investigate the potentiality of ethnic politics and violent conflicts based on actual experienced of the people. Again, this study is also contextualized, thus from a Ghanaian perspective. Variables for the analysis of this study are pulled from the interviews

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<sup>6</sup> Wickham, S., Cooper, D. and Bailey, T., the Research Journey Workbook. (Cape Town: Research & Academic Development; 1997).

<sup>7</sup> Earl Babbie and Johann Mouton, ‘The Practice of Social Research’ (Oxford University Press; 2003), 277.

<sup>8</sup> Marshall, G., Concise Dictionary of Sociology (New York; Oxford University Press).

<sup>9</sup> Malterud Kirsti, The Art and Science of clinical knowledge: evidence beyond measures and numbers, in the lancet. Vol. 358, August 4, 2001.

of respondents from 10 constituencies. The interview is one of the several means used as an effort to develop qualitative analysis of ethnic politics and its potential for conflicts in Ghana. The interview covered all the major ethnic groups in Ghana, with 10 of the 230 constituencies covered, incorporating a well-rounded breadth of variability among the citizens in general, and among the 20 respondents who were randomly selected from the 10 constituencies.

## 1.6 Importance of the study

The purpose of this study is to help in strengthening an understanding of the potentials of ethnic politics and creation of conflict. Politics of ethnicity itself has caused several conflicts which have led into bloodletting in Africa. Although this study concentrates on the discussion of the potentials of ethnic politics and the conflict eruptions in Ghana, I hope it will be helpful to those who are interested in undertaking analysis of violent conflicts in Africa.

## 1.7 Relevance of the study to political science

The study dwells on ethnic politics and conflicts in Ghana and this has to do with politics in developing countries, which is one of the main branches of political science. It brings out the relationship between ethnic politics and conflicts.

## 1.8 Limitation of the study

A number of problems were encountered in undertaking this study. The most outstanding was inadequate data. This is the result of classifying some information as confidential. Some of the respondents too were reluctant to answer questions. Nevertheless, these problems do not affect the quality of the work because the study has tried to utilize the available data with circumspection.

## 1.9 Clarifications of concepts and terms

A concept may have more than one meaning; two or more slightly different concepts may be used interchangeably. Such situations create ambiguities. It is therefore necessary that in any research work operational definitions be given to terms used, to avoid uncertainty. It is in the light of this that a few of such concepts are defined below.

1.9.1 ‘Conflicts and Crisis’: It is unlikely to give an overarching definition of conflict here. Depending on one’s academic background, interest and other personal linkages, its meaning reflect on these diverse individual linkages. For instance psychologically, conflict might exist in the mind of an individual; politically, parties would be stressed in terms of disagreement in trying to define conflict. However, I am not here to debate on what conflict is or not based on the previous perspectives but to present how the usage of conflict implies in this study. Conflict would basically mean a state of disagreement between persons, groups, ideas, and interest. In this direction when a higher intensity of force is applied in conflict then violent conflict, a sub-set of conflict occurs. Essuman-Johnson makes a contribution necessary for understanding the subject matter (that is conflict). He notes that, writing on conflict, one needs to distinguish between ‘conflict’ and ‘crisis. To him, conflict is usually used to refer to the underlying issue in disputes between parties, while crisis is used to refer to the outbreak of armed hostilities, thus a level of conflict with tense confrontation between mobilized armed forces which makes the probability of war high.<sup>10</sup> It could be gathered from this that, conflict when not resolved quickly could lead to armed hostilities or crisis and finally culminate into war.

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<sup>10</sup> Essuman-Johnson, “Africa Conflicts, Refugees and Conflicts Resolution”, 1995 p.172

**1.9.2 ‘Ethnicity and Tribe’:** Steve Tonah also emphasized that the concept of ethnicity and tribe which became quite dominant in the social sciences in the 1960’s is confusing and need to be distinguished. Through out the colonial period and immediate post-independence era, most of the politics and large social groupings of the people of Africa were commonly referred to as a tribe. The term “tribe” was initially used by anthropologists and sociologists to refer t a group of people who share a common language, territory and custom. Later on, the use of the word ‘tribe’ was extended to include groups of people with well- organized hierarchical political system under the leadership of a chief or a king. Since the 1970’s the term “tribe” is seldom used and has been virtually replaced by the less pejorative and value- laden term “ethnicity”.<sup>11</sup> Ethnicity as used in this study is about the creation of difference (real or imagined) among social groups. It is, just as other social categories such as the clan and lineage, concerned with the delineation of the social environment into “we and them” categories.

**1.9.3 Ethnic Group:** An ethnic group is defined in this study as “a group of people sharing an identity which arises from a collective sense of a distinctive history. Ethnic group possess their own culture, customs, norms, beliefs and traditions. There is usually a common language and boundary maintenance observed between members and non-members”

**1.9.4 National Unity:** National unity in this study is defined as togetherness for a common purpose by the entire citizen in a particular country. Coming together as one people with one common destiny has the ability to reduce tension and conflict and if not completely, reduce it to the barest minimum. National unity

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<sup>11</sup> Steve Tonah, “Ethnicity, Conflicts and Consensus in Ghana”, 2007

becomes possible if laws that are enacted to prevent ethnic inequalities, rivalries, discriminations, exclusion and tensions are obeyed.

## 1.10 Organization of the Study

The study is divided into six chapters. The first chapter deals with the introductory aspects, covering the research problem, objectives of the study, relevance of the study to the study of political science, Methodology and explanation of concepts and terms. Chapter two concentrates on literature review and some existing theories on the theme as expressed in some published materials.

The third chapter will introduce Ghana or my context. This will cover the geography and history of Ghana, Demography of Ghana's Ethnic Cleavage and Structure, location of Ethnic Groups in Ghana and information on Ghana relating to violent conflicts and ethnic politics for the audience to understand my context and the state of problem this work tries to address. The beginning of this chapter will deal with introducing Ghana as a whole to the audience. The second section also concentrates on the geography, history and the demographic of Ghana's Ethnic Cleavage and Structure as well as the background studies relating to violent conflicts as a whole with emphasis on politics. The chapter four will concentrate on the politics of ethnicity and political developments in Ghana as well as ethnicity and Ghana's elections. Here the concentration will be on the history of ethnic politics and the likelihood of conflicts. This chapter also examines some of the essential questions about ethnicity and elections in Ghana, to be specific, ethnic voting.

The fifth chapter concentrates on the analysis of the study and the observations derived from various authors and the observations from the field. The sixth

chapter which is also the final chapter of this study concentrates on the summary and the Conclusion. The entire study is concluded with this chapter.



# **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

## **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

In every research work of academic significance, theoretical understanding is very necessary as it can serve to make more fully explicit the implicit assumptions underlying a research design and thus bring out dimensions and implications that might otherwise be overlooked. Given the nature of the ethnic politics in Ghana and its potential for violent conflict, several theories are utilized to give comprehensive explanation of events. It is for this reason that some pertinent theories are captured hereunder to help the reader appreciate how ethnic politics and conflict generally has been explained and their application to the Ghanaian scenario. Among the theoretical ideas about ethnic political activity and conflict, two are relevant to my analysis. These are: (1) “Symbolic politics theory” which is a general theory of ethnic war explains the necessary conditions for ethnic war (2) “Instrumentalist theory” to explain the compelling socio-economic-political factors in ethnic conflicts.

## **2.2 Symbolic politics theory**

According to symbolic politics theory, people respond to ethnic symbols and mobilize for war only if a widely known and accepted ethnic myth-symbol complex justifies hostility to the other group.<sup>12</sup> The myths justify hostility if they identify a territory as the group’s homeland which must be defended and

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<sup>12</sup> Kaufman, Stuart J. “The symbolic politics of ethnic war” 2001 P.31

dominated politically and define a mythical enemy with which the other group can be identified. Chauvinism-the belief that one's own ethnic group is superior-is typical part of motivation for the goal of dominance. An aspect of the theory talks about ethnic fears. A fundamental factor causing ethnic conflicts to escalate to war is that first one side,then eventually both sides,come to fear that the existence of their group is at stake. Such extream fears justify hostile attitude toward the other group and extreme measures in self-defence, including demands for political dominance. Once ethnic fears become prevalent among the members of any ethnic group. For whatever reason, they justify and motivate a resort to violence in self-defence. Such fears are necessary condition for ethnic war because people are more concerned to aviod loss than to pursue gains, so they are usually mobilizable only when confronted by some threat. This is one of the reasons why leaders of nations especially powerful natons like the United States and Russia even when they launch aggressive wars, always justify their actions by claiming that it is aimed at averting some mortal danger. As was noted by Kaufman, "even the Holocaust was justified by an ideology that Jews were not only inferior, but evil and dangerous".<sup>13</sup> Another aspect of this theory talk about opportunity being a requirement for ethnic war. This aspect of the theory says that , ethnic groups must have enough freedom to mobilize politically without being stopped by state coercion. Effective policing can prevent violent episodes from escalating, and political represion can prevent ethnic leaders from articulating their demands and mobilizing their followers for conflict. In the nutshell, the symbolic politics theory holds that if the three preconditions-hostile myths,ethnic fears and opportunity are present, ethnic war results if they lead to rising mass hostility, chauvinist mobilization by leaders making extreme symbolic appeals, leading to security

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<sup>13</sup> ibid. P.44

dilemma between groups. Different kinds of triggering events works by activating either the hostility or chauvinist mobilization. When myth, fears, and hostility are already strong, a new opportunity and a galvanizing event allow a powerful mass led ethnic movement to emerge. Such movement spur politicians to seek support by making chauvinist symbolic appeals, goading mobiliation even if the government opposes it; if the results is a feeling of insecurity , war follows. Other conflicts are elite-led, in which a few powerful elites, typically government officials, harness ethnic myths and symbols to provoke fear, hostility, and a security dilemma and mobilize their group for violence. In either case, war results from a vicious feedback loop in which hostility, extremist symbolic appeals, and a security dilemma all reinforce each other to spur violence. If any of the three processes is absent, however- if hostility rises but politicians avoid extremist appeals, or if the population resists such appeals, or if the sides demands do not cause a security dilemma – war can be avoided. Looking at Africa, for example, the argument that hostile myths and fears of extinction are critical causes of ethnic war holds up well. Sudan’s long-running ethnic war is clearly rooted in the mutually antagonistic identity myths of North and South, and where the “slavery” as the threat to the black sotherners is based on the reallty of slave trading by Arab northerns that continue into the twentieth century. Simiarly, Nigeria’s ethnic war of the 1960s, was driven by the Hausa-Fulani fear of group extinction, which was based on the sterotype of “pushy” southerners. In Congo/Zaire in the 1960, in contrast, most violence was ideologically or regionally rather than ethnically based because myth-symbol complexes, and therefore identities, were relatively weak and underdeveloped. And South Africa simmered but did not explode in the 1990s in large part because Nelson Mandela and the Africa National Congress

successfully prevented white fears of group extinction from arising, hence avoiding the emergence of a black-white security dilemma. Worby in his article<sup>14</sup> also shows how the ZANU-PF uses the symbol of the Shona<sup>15</sup> as the symbol of the Zimbabwean state as a form of seeking support by making symbolic appeals.

### 2.3 Instrumentalist approach

Instrumentalist analysis of ethnicity gained momentum during the 1970s and quickly became the favoured perspective. Young, one of the advocates of the theory, points out that the success of instrumentalism owes much to the prevailing intellectual climate. According to instrumentalist theories, ethnic groups were nothing more than material interest groups in cultural clothing. Though members of ethnic groups may truly share common cultural traits, sheer “rent seeking” and clientelism motivate the recognition of such commonalities. Instrumentalist advocates define an ethnic group as a politically mobilized collective whose members share a perceived distinctive self-identity. Ethnicity is a group option in which resources are mobilized for the purposes of pressuring the political system to allocate values for the benefit of the members of a self-differentiating collective. Ethnic groups are most likely to exist in situations in which there is a high level of intergroup competition and where multiple access points into the political systems are available. Ethnic groups are a form of interest group, and, as such, are not quaint leftovers from a primordial past but a form of collective identity and organization that is well suited to a modern, structurally differentiated polity<sup>16</sup>. Ethnicity is essentially a political phenomenon, as traditional customs are

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<sup>14</sup>Eric Worby, Tyranny, Parody and Ethnic Polarity: Ritual Engagement with the state in Northern Zimbabwe.

<sup>15</sup> An Ethnic group in Zimbabwe

<sup>16</sup> Ross, 1978 P. 392

used only as idioms, and as mechanisms for political alignment. People do not kill each other because their customs are different. If men do actually quarrel seriously on the grounds of cultural difference it is only because these cultural differences are associated with serious political cleavages. Barth contributed to the instrumentalist approach when he argued that the content of a culture has little import for the integrity of an ethnic group; indeed, contrary to the implications of primordialism, each generation of an ethnic group makes changes to the prevailing culture. Rather, it is the boundaries separating groups that matter most<sup>17</sup>, the mists of history have nothing to do with it.

Instrumentalism exposes ethnicity as a purely modern phenomenon — as a special kind of political mobilization. Rational choice theorists, meanwhile, perceived that instrumentalism supported their view: individuals always acted so as to maximise their material gains. Individuals would act as collectivises where it furthered their individual self-interest, and ethnicity offered advantages along these lines: If an ethnic group managed to secure political power, it could guarantee material returns for all members of the group. As a marked and visible identity, ethnicity allows no cheaters; communal leadership can monitor who participates in furthering the group interest and who does not, and distribute rewards accordingly<sup>18</sup>. According to Young, a scholar of ethnicity in Africa, the decades following Third-World decolonisation offered ready proof of the instrumentalist theories. Uganda and the former Zaire, among others, played host to ethnically mobilized political parties whose primary goals seemed to be “kleptocracy” and enriching loyal ethnic brothers.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Barth, 1968 P.17

<sup>18</sup> Young, 2002, P. 29

<sup>19</sup> Timothy Perry 2003, p. 66

## 2.4 Ethnicity in African Politics: Literature Review

Literature review is important in such work, to give a panoramic view of the terrain in which a particular research traverses. Within a bird's eye view, such review captures a cross section of perception and positions on a subject matter and contextualizes the study. Consequently, it helps the ultimate reader to appreciate a particular study against the backdrop of existing knowledge and view points. It is in this connection that an overview of some relevant literature on ethnicity, politics and conflict is hereby made.

There is a considerable literature on the ethnicity in African politics. Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz in their study<sup>20</sup> consider ethnicity as used in African circles as a problem: either because it is seen as an inconvenient leftover from a previous 'traditional' age and hindrance to modernization or else because it is viewed as a divisive political weapon used by unscrupulous political operators. In the west it is normally subsumed under citizenship, though, as in the Basque region of Spain, there are exceptions. Such sentiments are usually more salient and more consequential in Africa because of the nature of the evolution of contemporary Africa politics. The argument that Chabal and Daloz is putting across is that ethnicity has been misinterpreted, both historically and conceptually. In historical terms, they said, there is now ample evidence of what has been called the 'invention of ethnicity', by which is meant the ways in ways it was constructed and instrumentalized during the colonial period. They agree to the fact that, there is, of course, no denying fundamental impact which colonization had on configuration and reconfiguration of ethnic identities, although is quiet clear that such effect was not distinct in every region and impinged differently on existing or

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<sup>20</sup> Chabal and Daloz, Africa works, disorder as a political instrument. 1999 P.56

imaginary ‘tribal’ perceptions. According to Chabal and Daloz, what we should understand by the invention of ethnicity is not that such affiliations did not exist prior to colonial rule but simply that they were reconstructed during that period according to the vagaries of the interaction between the colonial rule and Africa accommodation. They gave example to demonstrate their argument. For example, they said, “ it is more important to understand how the present day ethnicity of Hutu or Kikuyu evolved over time than it is to demonstrate that these ethnic groups were ‘created’ during the colonial period. Apart from the fact that, Chabal and Daloz accept that the argument that the current problems in Africa cannot be blamed on the colonial authorities policy of balkanization, they argued that Africa post-colonial political problems have been caused by the imposition of a ‘foreign’ state, or political system, at independence. According to them, it is not the foreignness of the post –colonial state that is responsible for its excess. Rather, it is that the structure of the post-colonial state has enabled those Africans who have held power to instrumentalize ethnicity into political tribalism in order to serve their patrimonial interest. In so doing they have suppressed a crucial aspect of their past and failed to create new, more impersonal, forms of accountability, which, in the present context, would obviously not be to their advantage.

The work of Chabal and Daloz is useful in that they takes us through the creation of ethnicity in Africa countries and established the fact it was due to both colonial rulers and the African themselves but they emphasize more on the fact that African institutions were not good and that has lead Africans to where they are today. In actual fact, however they dealt with only the negative aspect of the Africa state and this is not what this study wants to do. Furthermore, the book down play the fact that most ethnic politics and conflict in Africa today is due to the balkanization of Africa by the colonial authorities into different ethnic groups, which this thesis set

out to discuss as some of the reasons of ethnic conflicts in most Africa countries today.

Marina Ottaway in her book *Ethnic Politics in Africa: Changes and Continuity*<sup>21</sup> analyze the changing nature of ethnic politics in Africa and the broader trends of which it is a part and debunk the assumption that ethnic identities can and should be made to fade away. She held a very strong view on the number of violence of open conflicts revolving around ethnic identities, showing clearly that ethnic divisions are not losing their importance in any part of the world; on the contrary, she supports the assertion that ethnic identities and ethnic nationalism have gained strength and even a degree of legitimacy in recent years. She seems to support the assumption that the ethnic problems that African countries experience today must be understood as a modern phenomenon, a product of colonialism and of contemporary political struggles, not a leftover from a primitive past. She also believes that these ethnic conflicts are rooted in the present, and they play a major role in modern politics in Africa, as elsewhere. Ottaway strongly believes that modernization which according to her is made up of economic development, formal education and all other element that can be classified as modernization are not going to make ethnicity disappear, neither in the three or four years that Sekou Tour thought would suffice several decades, but the importance of ethnicity as a political factor waxes and wanes. Another point she made that I find very interesting is the fact that democratic elections tend to destroy old arrangement based on raw power or on agreements among elites. They thus have the potential for subverting existing power relations among the ethnic groups, causing heightened tension or open conflict. She concluded her book with the assertion that the rules that successfully contained ethnic conflict in Africa for three decades no

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<sup>21</sup> Ottaway, M., *Ethnic Politics in Africa: Changes and Continuity*. P.299



longer apply in a world of rampant nationalism, reassertion of cultural pluralism, and democratic pressure. Solutions needed to be based on the recognition that ethnic identities are not going to disappear and that they are not bad in themselves, as long as they do not become the basis of violent conflict and discrimination.

Ottaway's work is useful in that she takes us through the ethnic problems that Africa countries experience today. Touching on the some of the problems that Africa countries face, she said, there is a new ethnicity in Africa, as there is elsewhere. The challenge for Africa countries, as the rest of the world, is to accept the inevitability, and indeed the legitimacy, of different ethnic identities and to find ways to manage the conflicts that arises, particularly when political movements manipulate these identities for political purposes.

From my perspective, this is where Africa countries lacked and for so many years have not been able to do and thereby creating political tension in some countries. She again repeated that the fact that accepting that ethnic identities will not melt away does not, however, mean automatically accepting the inevitable dissolution of existing states. Nevertheless, the problem of some conflict mismanagement is possible within existing states. Ottaway saw and believed that, after decades of independence, ethnicity is more central than ever to the political process of many Africa countries, as political openings and multiparty elections have lead to the formation of innumerable overtly or covertly ethnic political parties with negative side of manipulation and depriving other parties and members of other ethnic groups of what is due them. But to her, this is not a sign that a primitive and tribal Africa continues to reassert itself through the thin veneer of modern institutions. Personally, I share this thought and see the aspect of the manipulation and deprivation as one of the causes of most ethnic conflicts in Africa.

In my observation, both authors namely Chabal and Daloz and Ottaway literature on ethnicity in African politics in one way or the other has some relation with the theories presented above. Ottaway, Chabal and Daloz idea of ethnicity has some similar undertone with the instrumentalist idea. According to the instrumentalist, individuals being it political leaders or leaders of ethnic groups always act so as to maximize their material or political interest. Ottaway therefore hit the nail at the right place when she said “The challenge for Africa countries, as the rest of the world, is to accept the inevitability, and indeed the legitimacy, of different ethnic identities and to find ways to manage the conflicts that arises, particularly when political movements manipulate these identities for political purposes” Here the idea is the that conflicts that comes about as a result of individuals including political leaders’ manipulation of ethnic groups for their political gains should be able to find a way to manage it. Also, Chabal and Daloz who consider ethnicity as hindrance to modernization viewed it as a divisive political weapon used by unscrupulous political operators for their personal interest. Again, they made mention of the fact that it is not the foreignness of the post –colonial state that is responsible for its excess. Rather, it is that the structure of the post-colonial state has enabled those African who have held power to instrumentalize ethnicity into political tribalism in order to serve their patrimonial interest. Beside the instrumentalist idea, Chabal and Daloz also have some of the idea put forward by the symbolic politics theory which talked about fear, manipulation and deprivation triggers conflicts

## 2.5 Symbolic Politics and Instrumentalist Theory: Explanation of Ethnopolitics and Conflicts

Symbolic politics theory is more about myth-symbol complexes as a means of explaining violence between ethnic groups which best understood not as a

consequence of security dilemmas, informational asymmetries, commitment problems, or elite manipulation, but instead as a consequence of the content of ethnic groups' identities. These complexes are basically mythologized narratives of an ethnic group's culture and history, which also contain depictions of certain target groups as victimizers or inferiors. Feelings of enmity are the result of such narratives, according to Kaufman, violence is the result of such feelings. Kaufman tests this theory against the some rationalist theories in the context of the conflicts in southern Sudan and Rwanda. He concludes that the evidence from these cases strongly supports his theory, while disconfirming the rationalist ones.

The symbolic politics approach has had its limitations and that the approach is not a very satisfactory analysis of ethnic conflict, because it doesn't explain why groups can sometimes live together in peace, or at least without evident conflict, and be consumed by bloody ethnic conflict at other times. Both symbolic politics theory and instrumentalist theory focuses on the utility of ethnic identity as a tool of politics, used in a similar fashion by both individuals and groups in order to achieve their personal agendas. Here the emphasis is on political leaders, political entrepreneurs and demagogues who mobilize communities around perhaps latent or forgotten ethnic identities and grievances for their own gains.

From my perspective, because the focal point of this study is the likelihood of ethnic factor in politics and conflict eruption, theories involving the origin and durability of the ethnic factor will be less relevant than those that focus on the way in which ethnic communities become mobilized and how different types of ethnopolitical issues are unfold in creating conflicts. Here the instrumentalist approach can be useful, but it is the best perceived as one of the several means of explaining mobilization of political followers and conflict involving ethnic communities. As for the instrumentalist approach, it will explain ethnic mobilization and conflict at some point in time in any area of contemporary

multiethnic world, though the opportunities to manipulate the ethnic factor have perhaps been most prevalent in the third world, where first decolonization and then subsequent regime failures have presented local demagogues with the opportunity to exploit ethnic issues and animosities for personal gain and also gives politicians an open political field in which to organize parties on an ethnonational basis and to play on minority grievances. Unfortunately, this approach to explaining ethnic conflict also failed to explain the question why the few leaders were able to provoke such violence. It is one thing incite a brief ethnic riot; quiet another to persuade people to nail their neighbours to the door of their houses.

In general, instrumentalist theories of ethnic conflict, together with symbolic politics explanation of its hostile myths and fears of extinction, generally explain manifestation of ethnic conflict in one or two ways. They are either the result of tensions between two or more self-defining ethnic communities mounted until they explode into open conflict or more frequently the result of a catalyst igniting simmering interethnic grievances.

In this study, the two (2) approaches namely the instrumentalist and the symbolic politics approaches are used. They are useful in one way or the other and hopefully can explain the scenario in Ghana. Basically the study will focused on the instrumentalist approach and the symbolic politics approach. Though each of them may have its own limitations, they are being used because when it comes to explaining ethnic politics and conflict in relation to Ghana, they will hopefully help explain my observation on the field

## INTRODUCING GHANA

### 3.1 Geography and History:

Ghana, which lies in the centre of the West Africa coast and a few degrees north of the Equator, shares 2,093 km of land borders with the three French-speaking nations of Burkina Faso(548km) to the north, Cote d' Ivoire (668) to the west, and Togo (877) to the east. To the south is the Gulf of Guinea.<sup>22</sup>

Historically, Ghana before Independence on March 6, 1957 was called the Gold Coast. The earliest Europeans to arrive in Ghana were the Portuguese in the 15th Century followed by the Dutch in 1598. Many other European traders came to the Gold Coast to trade. These included the British, Danes and Swedes. These European traders built several forts along the coastlines. In 1872, the Dutch lost interest in the coast and ceded their forts free to the British. By 1874, the British were the only Europeans in the Gold Coast and thus made it a crown colony. This in effect gave them total control. The British government established their headquarters at Cape Coast Castle.

The name Ghana was given to the new nation immediately after independence by the first president Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. The name Ghana was borrowed from the ancient Ghana Empire which means the land of gold. Ghana in 1957 became the first country in colonial Africa to gain its independence. It is divided into ten (10) administrative regions, and one hundred and thirty-eight (138) districts based on the district assembly system.

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<sup>22</sup> Most of information given under this section is based on personal knowledge as a Ghanaian, with some also coming from this website: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghana>; <http://www.ghanaweb.com/>, accessed on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2007.

### 3.2. Demography of Ghana's Ethnic Cleavage and Structure

Ghana, like most countries in Africa is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural society. Its current population, which is estimated at about twenty million, is a vast mosaic of large and small ethnic groups. Since 1957, four censuses have been conducted - in 1960, 1970, 1984 and 2000. Only the 1960 and 2000 censuses collected data on ethnicity. For the purpose of this study, the 2000 population and housing census will be used. According to the 2000 Population and Housing Census, eight major ethnic groups were identified and the evidence indicates that there are about ninety-two separate ethnic groups in Ghana. These groups are often classified into a few large groups, namely, Akan, Mole Dagbani, Ewe, Ga Adangbe, Guan and Gume. The predominant group is the Akan with (49.1%), followed by the Mole Dagbani with (16.5%), then the Ewe with (12.7%), the Ga Adangbe with (8.0%). It is important to make the reader aware that, each of these ethnic groups has its own language which distinguishes them within the same group.

### 3.3. Location of Ethnic Groups in Ghana:

Ghana's main ethnic groups are clumped regionally across the country. The Ga-Adangbe is a small group in the South Eastern parts of Ghana, in particular the Eastern and the Greater Accra Regions. The Ewes predominate in the east, near Ghana's border with the Republic of Togo, a country where Ewes also constitute one of the major-ethnic groups. Overall, the population census in Ghana reveals that Ghana's ethnic groups are not confined to specific location or geographical areas. Internal migration and foreign immigration have rendered the various areas less and less homogeneous over time from the point of view of tribal distinction.

Ethnicity as the interest-oriented social action and participation in the social, political, and economic process by ethnic groups for their advantage could be examined from the “we” and “they” perceptions of one another. In this instance, ethnic groups attribute traits of negative qualities to one another without any objective criteria, and therefore prejudices and stereotypes about another become the basis of inter-ethnic relations. There are common insinuations about members of ethnic group A as being lazy, rude, money-grabbing, crude and arrogant; and members of ethnic group B are being perceived as being wicked, tribalistic, and blood-thirsty and cliquish.<sup>23</sup> The consequences of such attitudes are the discriminatory and unfair treatment given by the people in position of authority to those who are from ethnic groups other than their own. Such experiences also have consequences of different degrees of alienation from society on the part of victims, whereas the favoured ethnic group members who are beneficiaries of such actions become the target for hatred and hostility.

### 3.4. History of Ghanaian politics

On the issue of politics, the country has witnessed a number of Civil and Military governments. The CPP or the Nkrumah tradition dominated the first republic from 1946 to 1966. In 1966, the Ghana Armed Forces and Police led by Lt. Col. E. K. Kotoka and Maj. A. A. Afrifa overthrew Nkrumah's administration and the first Republican Constitution of Ghana. A National Liberation Council (NLC) took office, headed by a retired army officer, General J. A. Ankrah. Lt. General A. A. Afrifa, in 1969, succeeded General Ankrah as the Chairman of the NLC.

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<sup>23</sup> Asamoah, Ansa K. 1990. Class and Tribalism in Ghana.

Danquah-Busia tradition produced its first government from 1969 to 1972. Dr. Kofi Abrefa Busia's Progress Party (PP) took over from the NLC by winning the 1969 elections. The Progress Party Administration with Dr. Busia as Prime Minister and former Chief Justice Edward Akuffo Addo, one of the Big Six as President, was overthrown by a military coup in 1972 led by the then Col. I. K. Acheampong.

He formed and chaired a military junta, the National Redemption Council (NRC). General I. K. Acheampong became the Head of State and Chairman of the NRC. The name NRC was later changed to the Supreme Military Council (SMC). General F.W.K. Akuffo replaced General Acheampong in a palace coup in July 1978. The SMC II was overthrown on 4th June 1979 through a mutiny by some officers and men of the Ghana Armed Forces who established an Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) with Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings as Chairman and Head of State. The AFRC was in office for only three months. On 24th September 1979, the AFRC handed over power to Dr. Hilla Limann leader of the People's National Party (PNP) which won the 1979 elections. The Limann administration and the Third Republican Constitution of Ghana were overthrown in yet another military coup in Ghana's post Independence history in 1981. The coup was led by Flt. Lt. Rawlings who again became Head of State and Chairman of a Provisional National Defense Council, (PNDC) which he established. The PNDC ruled Ghana from 31st December 1981 to 7th January 1993. A combination of internal and international pressure factors led to a return to constitutional multi-party democratic rule in 1993. In the Presidential election held on November 3rd 1992 Flt. Lt. Rawlings contested on the ticket of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and beat eminent African historian and human rights activist Prof. Albert Adu Boahen, the flag bearer of the New Patriotic Party, into second place. In the Parliamentary elections the Progressive Alliance, made up of the National



Democratic Congress, the National Convention Party (NCP) and the Eagle Party (EP) won 198 seats out of the total of 200. Four other parties, the NPP, PNC, NIP and PHP boycotted the parliamentary elections on account of dissatisfaction with the electoral arrangements.

The Fourth Republic was inaugurated on January 7th 1993 with the swearing in of H. E. Flt. Lt. Rawlings as President and his running mate, Mr. Kow Nkensen Arkaah as Vice President. On December 7th 1996, Flt-Lt. Rawlings was re-elected for a second four-year term as a President, with Prof. John Evans Atta Mills as his running mate. In the 1996 elections, President Rawlings defeated Mr. J. A. Kufuor of the NPP to second place. In the Parliamentary elections, the NDC won 133 seats, the NPP 61 seats, PCP 5 seats and PNC 1 seat.

In the third Presidential and Parliamentary elections of the Republic, held on December 7th 2000, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) won 100 seats while the National Democratic Party (NDC) obtained 92 seats. The People's National Convention (PNC) obtained 3 seats, independent candidates 4 seats and Convention People's Party (CPP) 1 seat. In the Presidential elections, none of the seven candidates had 50% plus one vote as required under the Constitution. Thus in the Presidential run-off on December 28th, 2000, between the two candidates with the highest votes, Mr. John Agyekum Kufuor (NPP) emerged the winner with 56.90% of the valid votes cast while Professor John Evans Atta-Mills of the (NDC) had 43.10%. In December 2004 President John Agyekum Kufuor won a second and final four-year term as President of Ghana.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> See [www.ghanadistricts.com](http://www.ghanadistricts.com). Accessed on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2007

### 3.5 Ethnicity, Politics and Conflicts in Ghana: An Overview.

Ghana like many Africa countries has suffered some form of violent conflict.<sup>25</sup> However, the country has not encountered a bloody conflict cutting across the entire country. Violent conflicts in Ghana are mostly seen in the area of religious and chieftaincy successions.

Politically, the country has witnessed a number of coup d' etats, uprooting both civilian and military regimes. Although these transitions resulted in some human rights abuses including lost of life and destruction of property, the country has never been a victim of civil war or large scale violent conflict transcending across the nation.

On the eve of the birth of the nation, from the British colonial government, the country was entangled with several challenges which could have immersed her into violent conflict. The first among these challenges is what is referred in Ghanaian politics as "The 1948 Riot" There had been many wars fought between the people of the Gold Coast and the British over governance and after a long and brave fighting, the Gold Coast agreed to sign a peace treaty with the British. After the Second World War (1939-1945), things began to change in the then Gold Coast. The discrimination against educated Ghanaians in the civil service was on the increase and high positions were reserved for white men while Ghanaians became "hewers of wood and drawers of water".<sup>26</sup> The European firms were also seriously exploiting the Ghanaians. The Ghanaian soldiers who fought in the

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<sup>25</sup> Steve Tonah, "Ethnicity, Conflicts and Consensus in Ghana", 2007

<sup>26</sup> Kimble David, 1963, Political History of Ghana

World War, helped in another way to expose the weakness of the British. They realized that they performed better than the whites on the battlefield. These Ex-servicemen again saw the struggle for independence in India and Burma where most of them went to fight. They were therefore inspired to struggle against the same British in Ghana after their return from the war.

In January 1948, Nii Cabana Bonne III, a Ga Chief organized a general boycott of all European imports. A series of riots followed the boycott in early February, 1948. The last straw that broke the camel's back was the famous February 28, 1948 incident. Unarmed ex-servicemen marched to the Christiansburg Castle on that day to submit a petition to the Governor about their poor conditions. Superintendent Imray, a white police officer, ordered the policemen at the castle to shoot. When the police refused to do so, Imray himself opened fire on the unarmed soldiers at the Christiansburg crossroad. Three of the leaders namely; Sergeant Adjetey, Private Odartey Lamptey and Corporal Attipoe fell dead. Thereafter, riots broke out in Accra. European and Asian stores were looted by the angry mob. The rioters forced open the Central Prison and set free its inmates. This riot brought destructions of properties and lost of lives. Again it leads to the confusion between the Ghanaians and the Ghanaians who were supporting the British. Finally, confusion erupted between the Dr. Kwame Nkrumah and his employers – The Gold Coast Convention Peoples Party(GCCPP) whose main objective is to gain independence from the British within a shortest possible time as against the philosophy of Dr .Kwame Nkrumah, who believed in self government now.

Another challenge is what is regarded in Ghanaian politics as the Ewe Question. Before the British gave independence to Ghana, the British Togoland which was inherited from the Germans after the First World War, was not allowed to join their brother and sisters of French Togo. Due to this rejection by the Nkrumah government, tension mounted in the country. A plebiscite in 1956 could not

resolve the tension either, because the majority of the people in the northern part of the protectorate who were non-Ewes voted in favour of unification with Ghana.<sup>27</sup> However, the majority of the Ewe people held up their interest, and leaders boycotted the ceremonies marking Ghana's independence.

The next challenge that also brought conflict and anarchy into Ghanaian politics was a party established in 1954 called the National Liberation Movement (NLM). This party emerged three months after the 1954 elections, and among other things, started and essentially remained as, an Asante's nationalist movement with its leadership concentrated in the hands of Ashanti people. The principle objective of this movement was to a large extent to safeguard the interest of Ashanti's against the Nkrumah's government and to demand independent form the Gold Coast. The NLM was forceful in its demand for a breakaway from the Gold Coast national cause with their cry of "Yeate ye ho" literally meaning "we are now independent". The decision to break away can be explained by the inability of the Ashanti's elites to have their way in the political arena vis-a vis the dominate nationalist Nkrumah's Conventions Peoples Party (CPP). The Ashantis came to a conclusion that, it will be better for them ask for a separate state because of the apparent loss of a great deal of income as a result of the pegging of the price of cocoa at a level lower than what the government had promised before the elections. Asante, which at the time produced more cocoa than any other part of the country, gave unflinching support to the NLM by swearing the Great Oath of Asante, and together with the chiefs, they endorsed this purely ethnic movement under the chairmanship of the Asante chief linguist, Baffour Osei Akoto.

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<sup>27</sup> Adu-Boahen, 1989. *The Ghanaian Sphinx: Reflections on the Contemporary History of Ghana*.

The NLM was largely an Ashanti-based movement which according to its chairman, Baffour Osei Akoto was an attempt by the Ashanti to safeguard its national identity and reverse the trend that threatened its traditional institutions with extinction. In its effort to capture political power at the national level the NLM struck an alliance with Akyem Abuakwa and sought alliances with other ethnic and regionalist parties like the Anlo Youth Organization in the Volta Region and the Northern People's Party (NPP). The rise of the NLM affected the subsequent history of Ghana in two ways; it opened an era of violence, arson and anarchy which reigned in Kumasi and its immediate environs for about three years, and it also raised problems as to what kind of constitution independent Ghana should have and whether there should be any fresh elections before independence or not. While the NLM insisted on a federal constitution, the CPP insisted that the constitution should be unitary. On the question of fresh elections, the former argued that since it had just emerged after the 1954 elections, there should be new general elections to determine the popularity of the two parties.

Similarly, in Accra, , the capital, tensions between the Nkrumah's government and the Ga people<sup>28</sup> grew worse and led to the formation of the nativist Ga Shifimokpee, (the Ga Standfast Association) in 1957. This movement later joined forces with the opposition groups. This association was a body representing the interest of the Ga people that reserved its grievances against Nkrumah's government. The Ga Shifimokpee was alleged to have been an expression of the Ga resentment of the other ethnic groups, especially Fante, Asante and Ewe whom they regarded as strangers who came to dominate their land. While the Gas perceived these strangers as acquiring estate houses and occupying positions of

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<sup>28</sup> The native group in Accra, the capital of Ghana and together with other tribe as the Dangme tribe constitutes the Ga Dangme ethnic group.

power in the civil service administration, they found themselves with poor housing conditions and not having a fair share of the positions in the civil service. The Ga chiefs were alleged to have given their support to this ethnic organization with its cry, “Gboi mli gbewo,” which means “strangers are killing us”<sup>29</sup>

The antagonism and the tension was further worsened when after boycotting the Assembly the opposition sent a delegation to London to press the case for a federal form of government. Kwame Nkrumah was not happy about the situation at that time especially the confusion that was about to erupt due to the demands of the opposition parties. It is against this backdrop that Nkrumah after becoming president in 1957 introduced a number of harsh and radical political measures, in an attempt to deal with the mounting ethnic tensions, which threatened to disintegrate the country. The measures started innocuously with the passage of Deportation Act, July, 1957 which was used to deport all foreigners supporting the opposition parties. This was followed by the another law forbidding the formation of political parties along ethnic, religious and regional lines (Avoidance of Discrimination Act, December 1957), which served to suppress all existing parties that had raised the question of federalism such as the National Liberation Movement and the Togoland Congress Party. Nkrumah and his government followed this up with the Preventive Detention Act in July 1958. This mandated the regime to detain anybody without trial up to 5 years based on any information the government saw as a threat that had a potential of subverting the progress of the state. Indeed the dissolution in March 1959 of the quasi-federalist interim regional assemblies established under the 1957 Independence Constitution appeared to have put a permanent lid on the issue of federalism and to some extent, decentralized local government.

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<sup>29</sup> Ametewee Victor, *Ethnicity and Ethnic Relations in Ghana*. 2007, P.33

In short, Nkrumah and the CPP justified the use of totalitarian measures as necessary for containing the fissiparous tendencies that threatened national unity, integration and development. The political measures were in large part meant to strengthen the CPP, concentrating power at the centre and weakening regional and ethnic sentiments and loyalties. Although, these measures were criticized by the opposition parties as something that can worsen the existing tensions in the country but at the same time it was also true that the measures contributed to a remarkable degree of peace, order and stability in the country.

It became clear by the year 1966 that the ballot box has not proved futile in changing Nkrumah's CPP government. It is against this backdrop that a joint leading military and police officers overthrew his regime in February 1966. The coup makers NLC as they are called returned the country to a democratically elected government in 1969. Dr. K A Busia who succeeded the leadership from the NLC was also overthrown in another military coup in 1972 after only 2 years rule. General I.K. Acheampong who became the leader of the military junta, National Redemption Council (NRC) later changes the name to Supreme Military Council (SMC I). The SMC I was also ousted by another coup on 5<sup>th</sup> July, 1978 by one of its leaders to form SMC II. According to the General Akuffo who became the leader of the SMC II, his intention was to correct the anomalies of that regime and to return the country to the majority rule.<sup>30</sup> It must be stated that, all these coups were marked by non-violent.

The members of the Akuffo's government were openly accused of corruption and mismanagement. The patience of the ordinary Ghanaian seemed to be reaching its full exhaustion. This atmosphere of confusion and frustration provided another

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<sup>30</sup> Paul Nugent, *Big Men Small Boys and Politics in Ghana*. P.7

opportunity for a military intervention. A group of young soldiers led by Flt. Lt. J.J. Rawlings seized power in a coup d'etat which was greeted with almost a universal cry of relief. The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) was thus formed as third Ghana military government on June 4<sup>th</sup> 1979, with Flt. Lt. J.J. Rawlings as the chairman and head of state. This transition was marked by overwhelming violence. There were so many pronouncements made by the leader of the AFRC which included the idea of not believing in constitutional democracy. With this the Ghanaian elites who believed in democracy didn't sit down but decided to fight. They organized demonstrations, seminars, and symposia to send messages to the military government of their unpreparedness to accept his idea. The AFRC set itself the task of instilling a high degree of moral attitude, concern and discipline into the political leadership of the country. It is against this backdrop that eight top political and, military leaders, including Acheampong and Akuffo were tried on charges of corruption and mismanagement and executed on firing squad between 16<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> June 1979. This was followed by public whipping, inappropriate dismissal of public servants, confiscation private assets, arbitrary detentions, long sentencing of plaintiffs and mysterious deaths. In all these violence, the victims were people identified by the coup makers as enemy of progress of the nation.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> September 1979, the country (Ghana) had another opportunity to practice constitutional democracy but unfortunately the administration of third republic under President Hillia Limann could not exhaust his full term of office. The Limann administration, backed by the bourgeoisie, made functional and structural changes within the various units of the armed forces in favour of certain ethnic groups. In addition, leaflets against, a nationality in the country was distributed where the rest of the population was advised to solve the problem of ethnic groups once and for all. In the northern part of the country, a small section



of the rural bourgeoisie angered by demand for better working conditions by their hired poor farmers, tribalised the issue and succeeded to initiate a horrible intertribal war. Limann did not seem to have appreciated the negative consequences of ethnicity which has characterized the national political arena before his advent. That Captain Kojo Tsikata, Flt. Lt Rawings, Brig. Arnold Quainoo and Brig. Mensa Nunoo (all of whom were Ewes) could be single out as individuals for the harassment and unceremonious retirement from the Armed Forces did hurt ethnic sentiments. These actions of the Limann administration were considered a blunder<sup>31</sup> which alienated the admires and ethnic supporters of such people, both within and without the military establishment. With this backdrop, Rawlings and his clique returned into Ghanaian politics after overthrowing the Limann administration on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1981. This time they came with the name Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC). There was not much violence associated with this overthrow. However his long reign that ended in 1992 was marked with all sorts of violence and human rights abuses.

In 1992, under the pressure of the international community, particularly the major aid donor countries, Rawlings agreed to return the country to democratic rule. Elections were organized and he contested and won the presidential elections in November 1992 as a leader of the National Democratic Congress (NDC). The NDC won 189 of the 200 seats in the Legislature a month later. This election marked the beginning of the Ghana's Fourth Republic. The Fourth Republic's experiment in democratic governance seemed about to break down as violent clashes erupted in many parts of the country as a result electoral malpractices such as intimidation, impersonation, and Manipulations.

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<sup>31</sup> Adu-Boahen, 1989. *The Ghanaian Sphinx: Reflections on the Contemporary History of Ghana.*

There are many violent conflicts that have occurred outside the national political history of Ghana. Some of the prominent conflicts in the country include the following: the violent clashes between the people of Akropong-Akwapem and Abiriw of Southern Ghana. This conflict which initially started as litigation between the two groups over land, quickly developed into a bloody secession dispute that resulted in the loss of lives and property. This followed the unilateral decision of secession within the traditional paramountcy and the formation of an Akuapem Confederacy, with a rotating presidency<sup>32</sup>

Similarly, the violent conflict between the people of Techiman and the town of Tuobodom all in the Brong Ahafo Region, following the latter's declaration of loyalty to the Asantehene resulted in the siege of the "rebel town" for several weeks. The conflict itself was explosive and nearly expanded into the neighboring Ashanti Region.

In the Volta Region, there is on-going rivalry and animosity between the Pekis and the Tsitos, which recently resurfaced following the decision of the government to locate the capital of a district capital among the Tsitos. There is also the intractable and land dispute between the Alavanyo and the Nkonya people in the northern Volta Region. More recently, there have been media reports of violent clashes between Fulani herdsmen and indigenous farmers over land and access to natural resources in the Volta basin. Such localized conflicts are to be found throughout Southern Ghana.

Northern Ghana has, even more than southern parts of the country, been prone to violent ethnic conflicts. Some of the notable ones include the Konkomba-

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<sup>32</sup> Ansah -Koi, Kumi 1995. "The Akwapem Imbroglio: A study of Internal Conflict in Contemporary Ghana" in: Mike Oquaye (ed) Democracy and Conflict Resolution in Ghana. pp 154-166.

Nanumba war over chieftaincy instituted by the latter in 1981; the Bimoba war against the Konkomba in 1986 and 1989; the violent clashes between the Nawuri and the Gonja at Kpandai over claims to paramount chiefship and land in 1991; the succession dispute among the Dagomba in 1991 and 2001, that lead to several deaths, the latter incident leading to the death of the *Ya Naa*, the king of the Dagomba; and the protected conflict between the Mamprusi and the Kusasi at Bawku in 2000<sup>33</sup>. However, by far the most devastating and most extensive communal/ethnic conflict in Ghana has been the Konkomba-Dagomba conflict in 1994. This conflict alone is reported to have resulted in the death of thousands of people, the destruction of enormous property and the displacement of large sections of the population of the northern region of Ghana.<sup>34</sup> The roots of most conflicts in Ghana both intra and inter ethnic – particularly those in Dagbon in Northern Ghana, is the succession disputes to the chiefship.

With the intra-ethnic conflicts, it has already been mention that Dagombas fought among themselves in 1991 at Voggu and zabzugu. A year later, Gonjas fought among themselves in Yapei and Kusawgu all in the northern Ghana. Then in March 2002, Dagombas again fought themselves at Yapei in which the Na Ya Yakubu II, overlord of Dagbon was killed. These wars have arisen mainly because of the attempt of one “gate” either to prevent the other from ascending the skin or to bypass it in ascending the skin. A typical case is the relationship between the “Abudu Yili” and “Andani Yili” in Dagbon which but for governmental political intervention, would have always been bloody. By the late 2002s, the yearly controversy and violent conflicts between the “Abudu Yili and the “Andani Yili”

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<sup>33</sup> Brukum, N.J.K. 1995. “Ethnic Conflicts in the Northern Region of Ghana

<sup>34</sup> Van de Linde, 1999. Building Sustainable Peace. Conflict, Conciliation, and Civil Society in Northern Ghana.

in Dagbon had created tension not only among the adherents of the two gates but had generated a series of violence among its members in other cities in the country

Chieftaincy disputes are quite widespread throughout Ghana and can be described as one of the most common forms of communal conflicts in the country. The human desire for power and prestige and, in recent times, the quest to obtain wealth by controlling lands that have been placed under the jurisdiction of the various chieftaincy stools and skins in the country have been a major source of these disputes. This is particularly the case of in the Greater Accra Region, the capital city of Ghana, where due to rapid infrastructural development, the value of land has increased considerably in the last two decades. The appreciation of the value of land has made it a lucrative and an enviable property and hence the scramble by persons, both royals and non-royals, for the position of a chief, which in turn, will give them access and control over lands belonging to the communities. Though not the only factor, the role that the land plays in chieftaincy disputes can be clearly recognized in the numerous conflicts that have sprung up in the newly developing peri-urban areas of the Greater Accra Region, such as in the Tema and Ga districts. According to the survey in a Ghanaian news paper, the Ga district topped the list of chieftaincy disputes in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana and has nearly 40 percent of the total number of land-related chieftaincy disputes in the entire region<sup>35</sup> The country has witnessed a series of chieftaincy disputes since 1957, mostly after the death of the incumbent chief. One of such chieftaincy disputes that rocked Ghana in the 1990s was in a small peri-urban community called Bortianor in the Ga District of the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. These disputes have resulted in the lost of lives and property in the community. They have also brought about serious disruptions in the socio-cultural and economic

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<sup>35</sup> Daily Graphic, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2003 edition of the a Ghanaian news paper

activities in the town and the surrounding towns. There were instances when cultural and religious activities, such as *homowo*, *gmayeli* and *end yeke and solo*<sup>36</sup> gods celebrations had to be cancelled as the results of these disputes.

Another remarkably conflict that resulted in bloody clashes in Ghana is the clashes between religious groups. Since the last decade, there has been continued tension between Ga traditionalists and some charismatic churches in Accra, Ghana's capital city over the annual ban on drumming and noising-making imposed by the Ga Traditional Council prior to the celebration of the Ga traditional festival of Homowo.<sup>37</sup> The Homowo festival is celebrated each year by the various Ga communities to usher in the farming season. Prior to the festival, the Ga Traditional Council (GTC) imposes a one month ban on all drumming and noise-making throughout the Ga Traditional Area, which covers the Accra-Tema metropolitan area of the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. While some Christian Churches resent the imposition of the ban, which according to them, infringes on their constitutional rights to freedom of worship, the Ga traditionalists are, however, of the view that this time-honoured religious tradition of the indigenous inhabitants should be respected by all residents, irrespective of their religious, ethnic and social background. These contradictory opinions resulted in sporadic clashes and act of violence between church members and ethnic Ga traditionalists in parts of Accra. Though these differences of opinion between the churches and Ga traditionalist have always existed, media reports of confrontations between the two groups were not much publicized until the violent incidents that occurred during the ban period of May 1998 and May 1999.

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<sup>36</sup> Annual festival of the people of Accra.

<sup>37</sup> This is a annual festival of the people of Accra,Captital city of Ghana

By the early 2000s, the yearly controversy and violent conflicts between the Ga traditionalists and some churches in Accra had created tension not only among the adherents of the two religions but had generated a series of debate among residents in the city, many of whom questioned the appropriateness and usefulness of this religious tradition in a modern, highly urbanized, and heterogeneous society, such as Accra. A number of newspaper publications, radio discussions, phone-in calls and commentaries devoted considerably attention to the constitutionality of the annual ban on drumming and noise-making in Accra

# **POLITICS OF ETHNICITY AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN GHANA**

## **4.1 Introduction**

Politics of ethnicity is not new phenomenon in Ghana as it began as far back in the 1850's when Ghana, then Gold Coast was then under the British colonial rule. The idea of nationalism and politics in Ghana was initially to fight with colonial authorities to grant them independence. In their effort to end colonial rule, anti-colonial nationalism then began around the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century when the Aborigines Rights Protection Society (ARPS) comprising chiefs and lawyers, and the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA) were founded.<sup>38</sup> However, the united front adopted by the nationalist elites against colonialism in the pre-colonial period later turned antagonistic, especially with the emergence of ethno-regionally based political parties during the decolonization era. This development has impacted on the Ghanaian politics of the subsequent years. In this section,

The elections of 1954 witnessed the formation of political parties along regional and ethnic lines. For example, the Northern People's Party (NPP) was formed out of the fear of the people of the Northern and Upper Regions, especially of the educated people and chiefs, becoming dominated by the people of the south after independence. Its aim among others was to win respect for the culture of the people of the Northern Territories to ensure their just treatment, their protection against abuses, and their political and social development. Closely connected with

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<sup>38</sup> Kimble David, 1963, Political History of Ghana

the NPP was the Muslim Association Party (MAP). This party was formed in 1954 out of the Gold Coast Muslim Association established in the early 1930s. As the name indicates it was formed primarily to cater for the interest of Muslims living in the Zongo (Muslim communities) of the main towns in the country.

The National Liberation Movement (NLM) emerged which started, and essentially remained as, an Asante nationalist movement with its leadership concentrated in the hands of Ashanti people. Their aim was an attempt by the Ashanti to safeguard its national identity and reverse the trend that threatened its traditional institutions with extinction. The rise of the NLM affected the subsequent history of Ghana as it opened an era of violence, arson and anarchy which reigned in Kumasi and its immediate environs.

On the basis of NLM forming a political party for only one ethnic group, it was seen as dangerous and it is something that can easily bring conflict. On that note, majority of the respondents contacted agreed to the idea that forming political parties along ethnic lines can bring conflicts but as to whether parties in Ghana under the fourth Republic constitution are formed along ethnic lines. The disagree by saying that the fact that the two main political parties, the NDC and the NPP always wins most of their seats and votes from a particular region and from a particular ethnic groups does not mean that these parties were or are formed along ethnic lines. Also the aims and objectives of these political parties exhibit in their constitutions do not in any way state that they are formed to safe guard and protect any particular ethnic groups interest as was seen in 1954 where the National Liberation Movements (NLM), Northern Peoples Party (NPP), and the Ga Shifimokpee were formed to represent the interest of certain ethnic groups. A few respondents also agree to the idea that forming political parties along ethnic lines



can bring conflicts and appeared to say that this idea in Ghana was evident only in the first republic, but quickly ruled out the rest of the Republics.

Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, who became the first president after colonial rule, realized that forming political parties along ethnic lines can be dangerous to the extent that it can threaten the stability of the country. It is against this backdrop that the Nkrumah-led CPP government introduced a number of harsh and radical political measures, in an attempt to deal with the mounting ethnic tensions, which threatened to disintegrate the country. The measures started innocuously with the passage of laws forbidding the formation of political parties along ethnic, religious and regional lines (Avoidance of Discrimination Act, December 1957), which served to eliminate all existing parties that had formed along ethnic lines like the National Liberation Movement and the Northern Peoples Party.

The Avoidance of Discrimination Act introduced by the Nkrumah government in 1957 marked the genesis of the Ewe-Ashanti Rivalry in Ghanaian Politics. The Act sought to ban all organizations, parties and societies, which were confined to only 'particular tribal, racial and religious groups, which were used for political purposes'. Under this law, almost all the existing opposition parties and associations became illegal. In response to this bill all the opposition parties - NPP, MAP, NLM, WAY, AYA, and the Ga Shifimokpee - united to form the United Party (UP) in 1957 under the leadership of Kofi Abrefa Busia.<sup>39</sup> However, the unity forged by two of the regional parties, the NLM in Ashanti and the AYO in Volta was short-lived.

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<sup>39</sup> Richard Asante and E. Gyimah-Boadi, *Ethnic Structure, inequality and Governance of the Public Sector in Ghana*, 2004

After the over throw of President Kwame Nkrumah and his CPP-led government, the politics of ethnicity continued in the second, third and the fourth Republics and it has mostly been between two main ethnic groups: the Akans and the Ewes. These politics of ethnicity was also evident in the military governments that came intermittently to disrupt the constitutional process in 1972, 1975, 1979 and 1981.

In the 1966 coup which preceded the 1969 election, the ‘comrades in crime’ were an Ashanti (Major Afrifa) and an Ewe (Colonel Kooks), perhaps in pursuit of the promotion of the ethnic interests manifested in the formation of the UP. However, the death of Kotoka in 1967 during an attempted coup by Akan junior officers and the subsequent takeover of the military government and the National Liberation Council (NLC) leadership by Afrifa marked the beginning of the parting of the ways between the Akans, in particular the Ashanti and the Ewes<sup>40</sup>. By the time the NLC handed over power in October 1969, the military regime had split into factions with the Ashanti and Ewes poles apart.

Furthermore, the ethnic backgrounds of the two leading parties and the voting pattern in the 1969 Elections did not help matters. Significantly, the absence of Ewes in Busia’s cabinet and the disqualification of KA Gbedemah (an Ewe) and leader of the National Alliance of Liberals (NAL), the removal of the most senior Ewe Officers in the Armed Forces and the dismissal of 568 Public Servants by the Busia administration ostensibly under the Transitional Provisions of the 1969 Constitution and the perception that Ewes were over represented among the senior public servants affected by the retrenchment exercise further deepened the Ashanti-Ewe rivalries.

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<sup>40</sup> Hutchful Eboe, 1997 “Reconstructing Civil Military Relations and the collapse of Democracy in Ghana 1979-81

Ethnicity in the NLC and Busia-Progress Party administrations appeared to have informed the politics of the next military administration – the Colonel Acheampong’s National Redemption Council –NRC- (1972-75) and Supreme Military Council – SMC- (1975-78). Thus, in addition to trying to reflect ethnic and regional balance on the ruling Council, the Acheampong administrations attempted to foster de-politicization<sup>41</sup>. The NRC/SMC sought to institutionalize no-party politics in Ghana through the promulgation of the “Redemption Charter“, and more stridently, through the military and civilian power sharing no-party Union Government (Unigov) concept. The two projects that sought to position the NRC/SMC between Nkrumah and Busia were presented as alternatives to authoritarian rule under the military and multi-party civilian rule<sup>42</sup>. In addition to the resurgence of Ewe irredentism in 1974 Acheampong’s efforts to promote national unity and abate ethno-regional conflicts through no-party politics flopped miserably. Unigov and especially the referendum over it in 1977 proved exceptionally politically divisive, and paved the way for the palace coup of August 1979 and the ushering in of SMC 2 under the leadership of General F. W. K Akuffo.

Politics of ethnicity appeared to have surged in the multi-party contest that was staged in 1979, with Ewes voting decisively against the Popular Front Party (PFP) because of a perception that its leader, Victor Owusu was an “arch tribalist,” and the Peoples National Party (PNP) proved popular in the northern regions at least in part because the Party’s presidential candidate, Dr. Hilla Limann, was ‘native son.’ But Asante-Ewe rivalry had not featured much in the Third Republic and under Limann-PNP administration.

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<sup>41</sup> Rotheild, David, 1997 “ Ethnicity and purposive De-Politicization”

It will not be fair to talk about politics of ethnicity in Ghana without talking about the Rawlings and its PNDC regime. Ethnic inequalities have long been a factor in Ghana, but with the emergence of Rawlings on the Ghanaian political scene, class rivalries became the overriding feature of inequalities and the conflicts they drove. Indeed, the Rawlings-PNDC administration was not devoid of ethnic cleavages, especially after the exit of the ‘northern radicals.’ The balance of ethnic representation on the ruling council was severely disturbed by the fleeing into exile of Chris Atim and Sgt Aloga Akata Pore from the PNDC by the end of 1983. From that time onwards, Alhaji Idrissu Mahama was the only northerner and Muslim on the council. The departures also appeared to have tilted that balance in favor of Akans (5) and Ewes (3) and set the stage for subsequent recriminations over alleged Ewe overwhelming influence in the PNDC administration<sup>43</sup>. Nonetheless, a strong perception of over-representation of Ewes in the PNDC government had built up by the late 1980s. Alleged tribalism under the Rawlings-PNDC administration was forcefully brought out into the public sphere in 1988 in a public lecture given by a distinguished professor of History and occasional politician, Albert Adu Boahen on the platform of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences, accusing the PNDC government of tribalism.

Indeed, it is difficult to sustain a claim of Ewe over-dominance in Ghana under PNDC administration, although the perception remained strongly held to the end, especially among Akans. Interpreting ‘ethnic’ data to make a claim of over-representation against Ewe or any other ethnic group in Ghana requires

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<sup>42</sup> Chazan, Naomi, 1983. “An Anatomy of Ghana Politics. Managing Political Recession, 1969-1982”

<sup>43</sup> Richard Asante and E. Gyimah-Boadi, op cit (Note 47), P. 38

considerable caution, but it did not prevent opponents of the PNDC from seeing at least superficial credibility in the perception of Ewe over-representation in the fact that the Volta region constituted about 10 percent of the population (according to 1984 census), but Ewes formed 23.1 percent, 28.6 percent, 21.4 percent, 20.7 percent and 18.5 percent respectively of the PNDC membership in 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, and 1990 respectively<sup>44</sup> gave at least superficial credibility to such claims of Ewe overrepresentation in the PNDC.

The politics of ethnicity which has resulted in the Ashanti-Ewe rivalry has also persisted into Ghana's Fourth Republic, with Ashanti-Ewe exceptionalism in voting patterns. While other regions distribute their votes, Volta and Ashanti Regions concentrate their votes on their home-based parties in all the elections held in the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic. The NDC swept the votes in the Volta region by 94.5 percent, 93.2 percent and 88.47 percent respectively in the 1992, 1996, and 2000 presidential elections, while the New Patriotic Party (NPP) won approximately 66 percent, 61 percent and 80 percent respectively in the Ashanti Region.<sup>45</sup> Indeed the two main parties, the NDC and NPP are largely perceived as Ewe and Ashanti/Akan based respectively. Therefore, even though the two leading candidates were Akan (NDC presidential candidate Mills is a Fante Akan and NPP candidate Kufuor is an Asante-Akan) in the 2000 presidential elections, the Volta region voted overwhelmingly for Mills while Ashanti voted massively for Kufuor. Indeed, even though the NDC presidential candidate in the 2000 election was not from the Volta region, most of the leading members of that party, including Rawlings who was also designated as the 'Founder of the NDC' and Obed Adamou (the party treasurer who later became the party chairman in the 2004

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<sup>44</sup> Paul Nugent 1995, *Big Men Small Boys and Politics in Ghana*

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/election2004>, Accessed on 15th Nov 2007

elections) hail from the Volta region. Similarly, both the NDC and NPP enjoyed considerable support from the traditional rulers of Volta and Ashanti regions respectively. On the evidence of involvement of ethnicity in Ghanaian politics, majority of the respondents appeared to think that politicians are always ready to take advantage of ethnicity to achieve their selfish interest. For them, they cannot rule out ethnicity in Ghanaian politics as it is obvious in most countries in the world. They do not think that politics in Ghana is so special to devoid of ethnicity. Minority of the respondents appears to accept the fact that politicians are always ready to take advantage of ethnicity to achieve their selfish interest but were reluctant to comment on the Ghanaian situation.

## 4.2 Ethnic Group Relations in Ghana

There is an impression that multi-ethnic structure of Ghanaian society and the consequent inter-ethnic relations are not too savoury, this study wants to show that the survival of the current positive developments in Ghana – social, political and economic drive from the oneness that is being forged out of the ethnic diversity. Institutional structures such as the boarding secondary schools and the university residential system, afford the youth from different ethnic background the opportunity to learn to know about one's ethnic group, and hence the acquisition of values which operate in various ways to diffuse ethnic prejudices and stereotypes. Also the regular National Festivals of Arts and Culture (NAFAC) and the bi-annual Pan African Festival (PANAFEST), all of which bring together artistes and performance from all ethnic groups, are positive expressions of inter ethnic co-existence and belongingness as one people.<sup>46</sup> The organization of sports and games

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<sup>46</sup> Victor K. Ametewee, *Ethnicity and Ethnic Relations in Ghana*, P.37

for inter- regional competitions among Ghanaian schools and universities, and the Ghanaian passion for soccer at both national and international levels operate to blur their ethnic consciousness.

There are many other areas of the Ghanaian cultural life to which education has contributed, and it still contributing, to the blurring of ethnic, social and psychological distance among the different ethnic groups. The education in the values of Christian and Moslem religious, the two major religions which cut across ethnic boundaries, has fostered inter-ethnic relationships and help reduce ethnic differences. A very positive and important development in this regard is the increase in inter-ethnic marriages which is attributable to education and urbanization, and also to the multi- ethnic nature of the religious organization. Some years ago, a study conducted by prof.Nukunya<sup>47</sup> of the sociology department, University of Ghana, found that 37 percent of the marriages among the academic staff at the University of Ghana were inter-ethnic, whereas a majority of the student did not think that ethnic background was an important factor in selecting a spouse.

In spite of such integration, ethnic tensions remain because in theory the underline discussions exist but in practice something else is seen. Several ethnic groups exist in Ghana and there is the likelihood that differences between them may also not disappear. All the ethnic groups take part in the social, political, and economic process. Members within the same ethnic groups are close and see themselves as brothers and sisters than from different ethnic groups. Thus, there is more cordiality between members from the same ethnic group than members from the different ethnic group .For example an Akan is more closer to his brother or sister

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<sup>47</sup> For details of this study, see Nukunya, G.K. 2003. Tradition and change in Ghana.

from the same Akan ethnic group than being closer to an Ewe or any other ethnic groups in Ghana. There are common insinuations about members of each ethnic group. Some ethnic group are described as lazy, rude, money-grabbing, crude and arrogant; and members of other ethnic group are perceived as being wicked, tribalistic, blood-thirsty and cliquish. Such insinuations exist among some of the ethnic groups in Ghana and the consequences of such attitude are the discriminatory and unfair treatment given by people in authority to those who are from ethnic groups other than their own. Also, such experiences are the different degree of alienation from society on the part of victims, whereas the favoured ethnic group members who are the beneficiaries of such action become the target for hatred and hostility.

In related circumstances, where merit is the basis of selection for a job position and promotion, and members of a particular ethnic group happen to be in authority positions, members of the other group still pose several questions. If it happened that the person in authority belong to ethnic group that has the largest work force, members of the other ethnic groups will see him to prefer nepotism and also likely to prefer ethnic favouritism, even without no clear evidence. Thus, inter-ethnic relation is full of recriminations, intrigues, false accusations and even sabotage in the political and occupational arenas. Another bad aspect of ethnicity is also observed in purely social gatherings. At public gatherings like parties, in drinking bars, entertainment halls, in schools and at other important public gatherings, ethnic hatred and discrimination do get reflected of the behaviour of individual Ghanaians. In the words of Asamoah<sup>48</sup>, instances abound where

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<sup>48</sup> For more information see Asamoah, Ansa K. 1990, *Classes and Tribalism in Ghana*.



Some Ghanaians get terribly irritated when the languages and cultural programmes of nationalities other than theirs are spoken and shown respectively. They angrily switch off their television and select a foreign programme on their radio sets when aspect of the ways of life other or certain Ghanaians nationalities are telecast or staged plays. But they expect others to of different ethnic backgrounds to hail every aspect of their culture.

In the area of politics, the idea of political organizations in Ghana is also such as to play down ethnicity. Political parties are national organizations, and as such, they cut across ethnic boundaries. In this regard, political party solidarity, ipso facto, means solidarity across ethnic boundaries. Thus, any political party which comes to power owes allegiance and duty to no particular ethnic group, at least in theory, but to the people as a whole; and thus, in the nation search for democracy, the idea one nation and one destiny cut across ethnic boundaries. In spite of this, the voting behavior and election result continue to reflect trends of ethnicity, just as it has been since 1969. The voting behavior and election result that were witnessed in the second Republic has persisted into Ghana's Fourth Republic, with Ashanti-Ewe exceptionalism in voting patterns. While other regions distribute their votes, Volta and Ashanti Regions concentrate their votes on their home-based parties in all the elections held in the fourth Republic. Similarly, both the NDC and NPP enjoyed considerable support from the traditional rulers of Volta and Ashanti regions respectively. The massive voter support in both the Ashanti and the Volta region has earned the regions the accolade of "World Bank". The name World Bank here has nothing to do with the monetary institution in Washington but because of the massive votes got from those regions. The parties themselves also refer to it as their "strong holds" The Volta region is said to be the World Bank and for that matter no go area for the NDC and the vice versa for the NPP.

Collecting peoples views on ethnic relations and rivalry between ethnic groups, most people appear to agree to the fact that the various ethnic groups are not in good terms with each other and to them this has been witnessed since the post independence era to the fourth Republic. According to them, before independence, all the ethnic groups in Ghana were very much eager to gain independence and so they rally behind the nationalist movement whose main objective was to gain independence from the British and govern themselves. With his idea there was not much rivalry between various ethnic groups because they were fighting for a common cause. After the country gained independence from the British and parties has to be formed to context for elections to govern the country saw some political parties formed along ethnic lines. Marginalization of other ethnic groups and appointment which was supposed to be on merit were now been on whom you know and ethnicity. But majority people including some academic intellectuals on the other hand although agreed to that fact, but also pointed out that rivalry between ethnic groups only seems to come up where ever there is a general elections, and after the election and depending on whoever wins the rest of the ethnic groups rally behind him to move the country forward. Frempong, a lecturer at the political Science department, gave evidence to support this claim. According to him, the 1992 election was between Jerry Rawlings, an Ewe from the Volta Region and Prof. Albert Adu Boahen, an Akan from the Eastern Region of Ghana. Before the election there was rivalry and confusion among the Akan ethnic groups and the Ewe ethnic groups throughout the country to the extent that many people from the ethnic divide lost their lives and other got injured. Some even lost their properties because their houses got burnt and hundred millions wealth of property were destroyed. Immediately the electoral commissioner declared Jerry Rawlings as the winner of the elections, though there was little misunderstanding but eventually, the entire ethnic groups rally behind him to move the country forward in peace. In his cabinet, the Akans were even more than the any of the ethnic

groups in Ghana. Other respondents also mention the idea of inter marriages to debunk the idea of rivalry between ethnic groups.

### 4.3 Chieftaincy, Conflicts and Politics

A disturbing phenomenon in the political landscape of Ghana after independence has been the outbreak of either intra-ethnic or inter-ethnic conflicts. Most of the conflicts have been between the indigenous people and the more recent settler groups. The toll in terms of lives lost, injuries to residents, destruction of property, including the loss of critical social and economic infrastructure that most conflict have caused has been staggering. Moreover, scarce national resources have been use to maintain peace. In 1994 alone, the Government of Ghana Claims to have spent 6 billion cedis which is equivalent to \$615million when the most devastating conflict broke out in the Northern Ghana.<sup>49</sup> Most of these conflicts come about as a result of attitude of some chiefs. Before independence, chieftaincy constituted the axis for the exercise of executive, legislative and judicial powers. Since the colonial era, the institution has been linked to the politics in Ghana. Various governments – colonial, civilian or military have in one way or the other tried to influence the role of chiefs in political affairs.<sup>50</sup> Some governments even go to the extent of asking chiefs for ethnic support during elections. Many of such situations have brought conflicts between the chiefs on one hand and the supporters of most opposition parties on the other hand. It is always the ruling governments that influence chiefs to help them win elections. The governments used state resource

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<sup>49</sup> Speech delivered by the Acting Northern Regional Minister, Mr.E.A.Debrah to the press on the 13<sup>th</sup> November 2002.

<sup>50</sup> Boafo-Arthur, K. (2000), “Chieftaincy and the Prospects for Democratic Consolidation in Ghana” Paper presented at a symposium on the theme “Chieftaincy and Development” organized by the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon on June 14, 2000

to influence chiefs in order to get their support. During the 2000 election campaigns, for example, some Volta Regions Chief who foresaw that the National Democratic Congress (NDC) has majority of its supporters in the region were reported to have traveled to the central region to consult the chiefs there to whip up Fanti support for Professor Atta Mills who happens to be the presidential candidate of the NDC and also hails from that region. Personally, the step taken by the chiefs were not decision taken by themselves but a motivation of influence from somewhere. This was an attempt for the professor to have much support among the Fantis as he has in the Volta region. This step taken by the chiefs has a great potential of creating conflict first among the chiefs themselves, secondly among the ethnic groups the chiefs themselves represent and last by not the least the two main political parties. The overall powers and authority of chiefs have experienced ebbs and flows depending on regime preferences and dynamic changes in the chieftaincy institution itself. Apart from the chieftaincy institution playing the role as the centerpiece for mobilizing people for communal development, they also serve as effective link between the people and the central government.

After the coming into being the policy of grassroots political participation – thus allowing people from the grassroots to take part in active in politics in the local level introduced by the Provisional National Defence Council government (PNDC), the functions and powers of chiefs have come under serious attack. The constitution explicitly debar chiefs from active political participation. The wisdom of the constitutional framers cannot be faulted, in the view of Boafo-Arthur<sup>51</sup>, is on the basis of the historical confrontation that has marked the relations between government and chieftaincy institutions during the pre-colonial and post-colonial periods. Of great importance for the institution and those who

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<sup>51</sup> Boafo-Arthur,(2001). "Chieftaincy and Politics in Ghana since 1982.

cherish its essence, is the bold attempt by the 1992 Constitution to free the institution from the gridlock of partisan politics and thereby guarantee its sustenance.

Historically, chieftaincy institution has been the embodiment of political power in pre-colonial, colonial, and post- colonial times. There are dozens of ethnic groups in Ghana, and the institution of chieftaincy is guaranteed by the constitution. Although chiefs are not permitted to participate in politics, they play an important role in the Ghanaian society. The National House of Chiefs has authority over traditional laws and customs, and chiefs have a great deal of influence in the community and government<sup>52</sup>.

It must be admitted, however, that the traditionally unfettered powers of chiefs have undergone transformation as a result of formal colonial rule and the introduction of parliamentary democracy after independence. It must be admitted however that, governments failed to perform and for that matter voted out in elections, at times unwarranted military interventions, it is a fact that the chieftaincy institution has demonstrated amazing resilience and still remains a key player, not only in local administration, but also in national life. Even though the key role of chiefs as repositories of local political authority has been dented for many reasons, the institution is still revered, especially in communities where chiefs have carved niches for themselves by spearheading local development. Some of the keys roles are discussed below.

The first role chiefs play is the control of lands. Almost eighty percent of all lands belong and control by the chiefs, while twenty percent is public lands which is

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<sup>52</sup> Constitution of the Republic of Ghana.

administered by the government of Ghana and it is their responsibility to distribute lands within their community for development.

Chiefs also play a role of promotion of development. This as a result of relieving their people out of poverty has induced many chiefs to try to promote social and economic development in their area jurisdictions. In the field of social development, the main objective is human resource development, primarily via education. In the field of economic development, it is employment and creation of industry and tourism facilities. The funding for these developmental goals has been based on both internal and external resources. Among the internal sources, the main contributors have been citizens of Ghana or Ghanaians living abroad. Besides, chiefs have been committed to get financial support by companies. Realizing the huge amount involve in development, chiefs have also relied on external sources, mainly provided by NGOs, private and public international foundation and global multilateral financial institutions like the World Bank.

Chieftaincy in Ghana remains the most important uniting force as they have been engaged as mediators in traditional conflicts. Though chiefs see themselves as uniting force, they play roles that one way or the other is almost tantamount to divide the society they govern. Due to the fact that their leadership is based on life time, chiefs see themselves in a unique position to be able to promote and strengthen unity in Ghana. In recent years, there have been initiatives which explicitly aim at promoting the chiefs in their effort for unity. Apart from these roles which one can be termed as positive roles, they also have some functions which can bring conflicts. According to the 1992 constitution of Ghana specifically Article 276 (1) prevents chiefs from active politics. Some chiefs appeared to have flouted this provision and openly campaign for political parties, actively involved in various political functions such as holding office in a political

party, speaking or delivering an address on the platform of a political party, an clearly identifying with a political party by being a card carrying member.

Chieftaincy in Ghana play all this important roles mentioned above as their official roles with the aim of contributing their quota to the development and the country's quest for peace and stability, but in practice most of this official roles played by the chiefs, are not something to write home about. Some of the contradictory practices include selling stool lands to foreigners without the money using for the intended purpose. Mostly finance generated from such transactions is supposed to be used for development but in this case the money is diverted to do something different. The chieftaincy institution in Ghana is another area where conflict has been generating. Land distribution is mostly done by chiefs but how to do it raises eyebrows in a way. Land in the actual fact should be distributed fairly but in most cases most lands are given to a particular tribe especially the chiefs own tribe living out the other tribes. This is seen by the other tribes as been excluded from the land allocation. Besides this, the chiefs sometimes deprive their own tribesmen and sell the lands to people who are not from the community. In all, the role of chiefs is ambiguous as it can contribute to bring conflict and sometimes to contribute to bring peace.

There is one area that chiefs are not supposed to indulge themselves in. There is a provision debarring chiefs from active or partisan politics. The 1992 constitution states categorically in Article 276 (1) that, “ a chief shall not take part in *active party politics*; and any chief wishing to do so and seeking election to Parliament shall abdicate his stool or skin”. Article 94 (3) (c) reinforces this by noting that a person shall not be eligible to be a Member of Parliament if he is a chief.<sup>53</sup> With this provision, some group of chiefs with rich experience and talents that could be

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<sup>53</sup> For details see the 1992 constitution of Ghana.

exploited in developmental and promotion of peace for the nation may not be tapped. With such a provision most chiefs expressed their opinions on the matter. To the question whether chiefs should be involved in partisan politics, the majority of those interviewed answered in the negative and some also have called for an amendment of the constitution to restore the rights of chiefs to participate in active politics.

On the question of chiefs engaging in active politics and its consequence, Nana Odeneho Gyapong Ababio, the President of the National House of Chiefs and a member of the Council of States expressed worry during the interview over the endorsement of political parties and presidential candidates by chiefs in the country and according to him, the trend if not checked can undermine the role of chiefs as unifiers. He continued by saying that chiefs as fathers of their traditional areas should not force their subjects to vote for a particular candidate or party. He therefore advised his colleagues that even if they will make any political statement during courtesy calls on them by party leaders at all, their message should be couched in a way that will not clearly identify them with a particular divide. On the same question, majority of the respondents agreed that there are a number of consequences that can be seen when chiefs take active part in politics. They mention division among his subordinates and according to them can easily create conflicts. On the other hand few respondents do not think that but rather see this as means of undermining of rights of chiefs.

#### 4.4 Ethnic Composition of Governments in Ghana

The connection or the nexus of the ethnic factor in the political sphere and conflict eruptions in Ghana cannot be fully appreciated without the reference to the ethnic composition of the various governments in Ghana. Ethnic factors may be influential but not decisive in determining election outcomes. But to what extent



do ethnic factor influence ethnic composition of governments in Ghana. This section examines the ethnic representation of post-colonial regimes in Ghana.

Discussions is based on the ethnic composition of various governments in Ghana starting with the Convention People's Party (CPP) administration which was lead by Ghana first president, Kwame Nkrumah from 1957-65. Secondly, ethnic composition of the Prime Minister of the second Republic, Kofi Abrefa Busia's Progress Party (PP) administration from 1969-71 will be examined. Thirdly, the ethnic composition of the third Republic administration which was led by Hilla Limann's People's National Party (PNP) from 1979-81 will be examined. Fourthly, the ethnic composition of Jerry Rawlings' PNDC administration that governed the country from 1981-92 is discussed. The ethnic composition of the Jerry John Rawlings' National Democratic Congress (NDC) administration will also be examined from 1993-2000, and lastly discussion is made on the ethnic composition of the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) administration led by John Agyekum Kufuor.

In Kwame Nkrumah cabinet, all the major ethnic groups were represented from 1952 but from 1965 onward, Akans were clearly over-represented. In all, 13 out of a total of 18 cabinet members in 1965 were Akans, with 3 from Nkrumah own Nzimah ethnic sub-group, an ethnic group that is very insignificant in Ghana in terms of population. With this representation Nkrumah was considered to be ethnically blind since his cabinet was made up of only two ethnic groups.

The Second Republic which was led by Busia operated along the British parliamentary system. The Prime Minister was required by the constitution to select his cabinet from among members of parliament. In all, Busia assembled a government of 18 ministers, twenty-nine Ministerial Secretaries and nine Regional Chief Executives. But Busia's cabinet had a major flaw, in terms of ethnic and regional balance. The party's failure to win any seat in the Volta region left out the

Ewes completely, thereby seriously constraining Busia's ability to put together a geographically balanced cabinet. The cabinet continues to have those flaws in that the reshuffled that came in 1971 did nothing to change the strong Akan presence in the cabinet and or absence of Ewe. With ethnic composition of the 1971 cabinet, events were not different from the 1969 cabinet where there was absence of Ewes in Busia's cabinet. This time event led to charges of ethnic Akan bias against Busia and this really affected the PPs rural development programme could not escape charges of discrimination against the Volta Region and the Ewe. Busia bias towards ewes was descended to most senior Ewe officers in the armed forces as some were removed for a variety of reasons. Similarly, Ewe public servant suffered as their brothers in the military when over-representation of Ewes among the senior public servants was affected by the retrenchment of 568 public servants by the Busia administration.

Busia government's reaction to retrenchment exercise, as well as the recriminations arising from the debate in Parliament, highlighted intensified Akan-Ewe conflict in the Busia-PP administration. According to the Ghana Parliament Debate 1970 Dr. GK Agama, the Opposition Leader on the June 16, 1970 described the Prime Minister in a motion in the House as a 'tribal Prime Minister', and his Government, a 'tribal Government.

The 1979 cabinet of Dr. Hilla Limann of the PNP and the winner of the 1979 elections was reasonably balanced in ethno-regional terms, possibly because of the lessons learnt from the Busia-PP experience. All the major ethnic groups represented.

Looking at the ethnic composition of the previous military administrations, one can consider it to be fair in terms of the ethnic composition as compared to the Busia's administration and on the face of it, the PNDC administration maintained a balance on its ruling council. The early PNDC comprised 3 Akan, 2 northerners, 1

Ga, and 1 Ewe. At the later years of the rule of the PNDC, there was a strong perception of over-representation of Ewes in the PNDC government. Alleged tribalism under the Rawlings-PNDC administration was forcefully brought out into the public sphere in a public lecture on the platform of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences. Rawlings PNDC was metamorphosed into a democratic government namely the National Democratic Congress (NDC). Rawlings and his NDC emerged winner of the 1992 and 1996 presidential elections, giving them another chance to form a government. The cabinets of the two administrations had all Ghana's major ethnic groups represented.

The ethnic composition of Kufuor Government came as no surprise to many people. John Agyekum Kufuor of the New Patriotic Party won the 2000 presidential elections. He formed his government as follows. Akans who constitute about 49.1 percent of the Ghanaian population formed about 69 percent of Kufuor's government. Clearly, Akans are over-represented. It is also true that all the major ethnic groups are represented in cabinet. In contrast to the Busia government where Ewes were completely left out in cabinet in 1969 and 1971 respectively, Ewes are represented in the Kufuor's cabinet even though the NPP did not win any parliamentary seat in the Volta region in the 2000 elections. Kufuor reshuffled his cabinet in 2003, though the new cabinet reflects a strong Akan presence. The Ewe and Gas were still represented. The NPP won the 2004 elections and again the Akans were over-represented in Kufuor's cabinet.

Opinions on the deprivation among the nation's ethnic groups which can also generate conflict, suggested that, majority of Ghanaians do not appear to see appointments as sufficiently reflective of ethnic and regional balance as stated by the 1992 constitution of the Republic of Ghana, suggesting a sense of relative deprivation among the nation's ethnic and regional groups. The northern group is

more inclined to feel this way than the three southern groups - Ewe, Akan and Ga-Adangbe. It is instructive to note that the northern group has consistently complained of marginalization especially in terms of appointments and development. Few respondents on the other hand do not think that ethnic backgrounds of people in the top hierarchy may pose problems for them or deprive them of their jobs, though it was a problem for a significant minority, especially Ga, Ewe and sometimes Mole Dagbani felt otherwise one time in the history of Ghana. Few of the respondents agreed that the deprivation in all aspect of life comes about depending on the ethnic background of the president or the regime in power.

# ANALYSIS

## 5.1 Introduction

Until quite recently some Ghanaian scholars were quick to argue that politics in Ghana at the national level is devoid of ethnic conflicts.<sup>54</sup> Observers and scholars of the Marxist persuasion in particular claim that any reference to tribalism and ethnic conflict was an excuse used by bourgeois scholars to camouflage or cover up what, to them were clearly issues of class conflicts. Recent events in the former socialist countries, especially in the former Soviet Union, and political developments in many parts of the world over the past two decades have shaken the foundation of this orthodox Marxist view of the role of ethnicity and ethnic conflict in politics in Africa particular and the world in general.

Conflicts in its violent nature still exist in certain parts of Ghana. The Northern Region of Ghana for example, has been a scene of tribal genocide continuously for several years. The past 25years have witnessed a number of destructive ethnic conflicts in Northern Ghana. The very explosive ones are those of 1980 (Konkombas against Nanumbas) and the Guinea Fowl War of 1994 (between the Konkombas on one hand and Nanumbas, Dagombas and Gonjas on the other hand). In 1980/86 and 2000, Mamprusis and Kusasis went to war in Bawku. Dagombas also fought among themselves at Voggu and

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<sup>54</sup> See DK Agyeman (1995) 'Democracy, Politics of Ethnicity and Conflict Resolution in Ghana' in M. Oquaye (ed) Democracy and Conflict Resolution in Ghana.

Zabzugu. The most recent of these intra-Dagbon clashes were those between the Andani and the Abudu Gates in Yendi, in 2002. There has been much similar communal violence among the Gonjas and other ethnic groups in the Northern Region of Ghana. In regional Africa and especially Africa south of the Sahara, ethnic based violence/civil strifes are very common and continue to threaten the stability of the region. Those in the early African nation-states' history include the Biafara war in Nigeria and the relatively recent ones such as the Liberian Civil war, the Sierra Leone Civil war, the great lakes conflict (between the Tustis and the Hutus and the ones in Burundi and Uganda), the Ethiopia- Eritrea war, civil war in Cote d'Ivoire, and the civil war in the Sudan. Civil wars have rolled back over 100 years in history, the development successes made in both colonial and post-colonial eras in several African Countries. These and other similar ethnic conflicts, though open and violent, have been significant only at the local level and have hardly any far reaching consequences on the national political scene which could lead to national political disruptions such as civil wars or secession as characterized by the Biafran war in the 1960s or the recent experiences in Yugoslavia and Rwanda. In this chapter, I analyze the involvement of ethnicity into the Ghanaian politics and its potential for violent conflicts which though have been latent or rather subtle in some cases. In order to analyze this effectively, I used the data gathered from the field and also analyzed some observations from various authors. Leaders of political parties, head of ethnic groups and Chiefs have so far advocated national unity and refrained from ethnic politics and the fact that other recriminations and cries about ethnic discrimination have not incited these leaders to resort to politics of ethnicity in their bid for political power is a positive sign that ethnic conflict in Ghana is less likely to erupt into violent civil wars, as it is found in other African countries both in the past and in recent years. This idea is based on the information gathered from the field and observation from authors.

First, according to Naomi Chazan's study of politics in Ghana from 1969 to 1982, ethnicity in Ghanaian politics has been structurally amorphous. To her, "only at the centre, at the most dependent juncture, did ethnic boundaries achieve any degree of coherence, with ethnic difference surfacing as important principles distinguishing among groups closely associate with the state nexus. As the distance from the state grew, so did the utility of ethnic differentiation as an instrument of social organization and personal mobility. At the lower levels, ethnicity became a framework, and not a means for social interaction.<sup>55</sup>" In other words, ethnicity and ethnic factor became an instrument of mobility and for competition only at the national political centre and only among contending political elites. To the extent therefore that the ethnic factor and ethnicity are use as instrument for central political and economic power competition among the elites, the elites who are now leading the political parties and have seen the dangers and the futility of ethnic violence are less likely to promote politics of ethnic violence. As has been stated above, the hierarchies of all political parties engaged in vying for political power in Ghana especially in the Fourth Republic continue to advice their rank- and- file against their use of violence. The leaders themselves employed caution about the use of violence either physically or verbally. Information gathered form the field shows that, Ghanaian politics cannot be devoid of insults, violence and abusive language as seen in most of the world democracies and that is the reason leaders advice their rank- and- file against the use of violence.

Secondly, the leaders of all political parties continue to show a high degree of ethnic mix among the political elites. One could hardly talk of any single ethnic

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<sup>55</sup> Chazan, N. 1983, P. 36

group dominating any political parties competing for state political machinery. The executives of all the political parties showed a good mix of all ethnic groups. A review of the ethnic background of members of the National Executive of both the NPP and NDC by 2003 shows they are fairly representative of the major ethnic groups in the country. Four out of the seven elected National Executive Members of the NPP are Akans, one is from the Volta, two are Ga, and two are from the Northern Region. Similarly, fourteen (14) of the thirty-four National Executive members of the NDC are Akans, six (6) Ewes, five (5) Ga and nine (9) Northerners. Clearly the hierarchy of the two major political parties NPP and NDC show a high degree of ethnic mix. This ethnic mixing politics adopted by the hierarchy of the parties has turned out to be useful strategy, in that, it has contributed to the diffusion or elimination of ethnic imbalances in the voting pattern during the presidential elections. This was reflected in the 1992 elections where with exception of the Volta Region the NDC swept the vote by 93 percent and the Ashanti Region, the NPP won approximately 61 percent of the total vote cast, the rest of the votes were evenly distributed among the major parties in the other regions.

The final observation derives from Chazan's comments that the lower levels of ethnicity becomes "a framework, and not a means for social interaction" in modern political processes in Ghana.<sup>56</sup> This does not imply, though, that ethnic associations and ethnic interaction do not take place at the lower levels of the society. There is evidence that suggest that a number of ethnic associations exist in the urban areas of which some are the Akan group, Ewe group, Ga group, Fanti group, Hausa Group etc. Mostly their main function is to seek the welfare of all members. Also these serve the function of social gatherings and substitute for the

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<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*



extended family system which exists in the rural areas. The ethnic associations do engage in some kind of rivalries among themselves and protect their members against outsiders. However, as ethnic associations at the lower levels, their activities and inter-ethnic relations do not have the same political impact as the actions of the national political elites have on the state machinery. Thus it can be conjectured that as long as the political elites at the state center are satisfied with the political power distribution, the existence of ethnic associations is less likely to lead to ethnic violence which could trigger off ethnic wars.

## 5.2 Ethnicity as an Explanatory Factor in Ghana's Elections

As indicated by Erdmann<sup>57</sup> and Posner<sup>58</sup> voting behaviour in Africa is predominantly explained by factors such as ethnicity, personal linkages, and clientelism. Berman<sup>59</sup> has also emphasized that ethnicity as a social cleavage has gained a prominent place in the understanding of politics in Africa. After independence, elections in Ghana cannot to be said to be devoid of ethnic voting. Ethnic voting has been witnessed in all the elections from the first republic to down to the fourth republic but this dose not mean that people just vote for leaders from their ethnic groups without listening to the issues at stake. Put differently, ethnicity or ethno-political identity is certainly not the only, but one factor that accounts for election outcomes. Perhaps, other factors might be more relevant than expected. Ethnicity is clearly not a sufficient explicator for election outcomes but it plays its role.

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<sup>57</sup> See Gero Erdmann 2004

<sup>58</sup> See Posner 2005

<sup>59</sup> Berman et al, 2004

Immediately after independence, most African leaders decided to turn their countries into one-party states. Dr Kwame Nkrumah who happens to be the first president of Ghana also went along with this ideology with the defence that multiparty system is not good for Africans because it is likely to breed competition along ethnic lines with potentially disastrous consequence. Personally, looking at the Africa continent in the era of globalization, their prediction has become something of a self-fulfilling prophecy when countries like Kenya comes to mind.

Numerous authors have identified ethnicity as one crucial dimension of Ghanaian politics.<sup>60</sup> Albert Adu Boahen on the platform of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences said something which suggests that ethnicity has a role to play in Ghanaian politics He controversially said:

“Is it not strange and rather unfortunate that the Head of State, the head of National security, the head of the police service, the head of the army, the acting Governor of the Bank of Ghana and the head of the National Investment Bank, and I am sure there are others all happen to belong to a single ethnic group, or at least come from a single region of the country? Please note that I am not attacking the personalities themselves. I have nothing against them as persons some of whom I know personally and some of who are friends of mine. But whether Rawlings is aware of this or not, this situation is giving the unfortunate impression that the country is being dominated and ruled by that single ethnic group, and this impression is causing such anger and irritation that in the interest of national reconciliation and peace, measures should be taking to rectify the situation. What is happening at the Bank of Ghana is particularly provoking and should be corrected as soon as possible. In support of Adu Boahen’s point, one observer

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<sup>60</sup> For authors who have identified ethnicity as one crucial dimension of Ghanaian politics, see Adu- Boahen, 1989, Ansa Asamoah, 1990.

noted that 80 percent of the top hierarchy of the Ghana Armed Forces was made of Ewes in the early 1990s, whilst 60 percent of the entire Ghana Armed Forces consisted of Ewes.<sup>61</sup> K. Ansa Asamoah argued in reaction to Adu Boahen's criticism of Rawlings' government, also acknowledges that fact for Adu Boahen to say that over-representation of one ethnic group or region which manifest in elections is not unique and has been seen in different regimes. Producing figures, Ansa showed that from 1965 (i.e. the latter part of Nkrumah's rule) and the late seventies when successive regimes were dominated by Akan military governors and civilian politicians, all the politically and economically important positions were occupied by Akan officials; and that Governors and Managing Directors of the Central Bank of Ghana and the National Investment Bank from 1965 to 1973 were Akans; the Vice Chancellors of the three Universities namely University of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and University of Cape Coast from 1966 to 1973 were all Akans; successive Chiefs of Defense Staff and/or General Officers Commanding the Ghana Armed Forces from 1969 to 1979 were Akans; and the head of National Security from 1975 to 1979 was also Akan. Others however, have discussed the evolution and development of the Ghanaian party system without any reference to ethnicity.<sup>62</sup> This statement depends on where the person is coming from but in my estimation, it not is possible to talk of Ghanaian politics without touching on ethnicity. Ethnicity as has been said in this chapter is a major problem in Ghana and if there is going to be a major conflict in Ghana, ethnicity and politics is an area that should be carefully looked at. People have the right to express their opinion when it comes to issues like this but the fact still remains that ethnicity is a problem in Ghanaian politics. Usually more than 90

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<sup>61</sup> Statesman, one of the private news papers in Ghana. Vol. 1, No 45, Week-ending March 28, 1993, p.3

<sup>62</sup> Author who believed that ethnicity does not play any role in Ghanaian politics; see Felix Anebo in Issues Salience Verses Ethnic Voting in the 2004 Elections.

ethnic groups are accounted for in Ghana. After disruptions in the Ghanaian constitutional process for so many years, the fourth republic, for the first time in the country's history, has witnessed four general elections in succession. In all these four elections, ethnicity has played a role in electing presidents and members of parliament. At the same ethnicity has not been the sole factor as has been speculated in other studies. The first two elections returned the former military ruler-turned president, Jerry Rawlings, into power. In another first, political power alternated in 2000 from then ruling National Democratic Congress(NDC) to the opposition New Patriotic Party(NPP) led by John Kufour, who was re-elected president in 2004. The success of four successive elections has made Ghana the paragon of good governance and peaceful co-existence in a region which over the last decade and a half has been better known as for a spiral of violent conflict.<sup>63</sup>

Ethnicity however remains a major problem in Ghana. As the country continues to receive praises for its good governance and its democratic consolidation, there is growing concern that ethnic rivalries pose a threat to the democratic gains the country has made since 1992. Perhaps, the clearest manifestation of this dangerous trend can be traced from the first general election right down to 2004 election. Three months after the 1954 elections, the National Liberation Movement (NLM) emerged which started, and essentially remained as, an Asante nationalist movement with its leadership concentrated in the hands of only Ashanti people.<sup>64</sup> This group received the support of the people and the chiefs of the Ashanti land. Another dangerous trend was the post-Election 2004 bashing of the people of the central region. That region's only 'crime' ironically has been the rejection of the

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<sup>63</sup> For detail discussion see Alexander K.D.Frimpong, *Ethnicity, Democracy and Ghana's Election 2004*

<sup>64</sup> The largest ethnic group in Ghana

canker-worm of ethnicity. The region dominated by ethnic Fantis,<sup>65</sup> has vote massively for Kufour, an ethnic Ashanti against Mills who hails from that region and had campaigned there on the virtues of voting for a “son of the soil”

As I have said earlier, Ethnicity and party affiliation while still important is not as significant to voters as it was in previous decades. Ghanaians are commonly believed to be strongly rooted to local communities through primarily ties of ‘blood and belonging’, including those of kinship, family, ethnicity and religion, as well as long-standing cultures bonds.<sup>66</sup> Horowitz<sup>67</sup> offers one of the most influential theories about the relationship between ethnicity, party system and voting behavior in developing societies. For Horowitz, ethnicity exerts a strong direct impact on electoral behavior in ethnically-segmented societies, through generating a long-term psychological sense of party loyalty anchoring citizens to parties, where casting a vote becomes an expression of group identity. By implications, other social identities become subsumed in ethnicity. Horowitz defines ethnic parties as those that derive their support from an identifiable ethnic group and serves the interests of that group. Where ethnic parties predominate, Horowitz suggests that an election essentially become ‘ethnic census.’ Party systems are define as ethnic if all parties are ethnically based, as exemplified for Horowitz in the mid-1980s by the Sudan, Sri Lank, Chad, Benin, Kenya, and Nigeria. Such party systems are prone to conflict, exacerbating existing ethnic divisions. This theory even though a good theory but cannot fit in the Ghanaian situation. In the 2000 election for instance, the electorate to a greater degree than

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65 Another ethnic group in Ghana

66 For further discussion see Chazan, 1982

67 Horowitz, 1985, Ethnic groups in conflicts

earlier cast their vote based on the situation at that time rather than voting along ethnic lines. The decisive NPP win in the 2000 elections was clearly the result of structural voting, or an assessment of the economy by the voters, which even resulted in the defections from the NDC to the NPP party. Voters in this direction then assess important campaign issues and give support to the candidate who would best promise improvement in the areas of Education, Health, provision of infrastructural and others. In the same way, the 2004 presidential was also as sample as a choice between continuing existing policies of Kufour and trying something new. Unemployment, inflation and the needed for development headed the list of problems considered most important by the electorate.

The voting patterns in the Central Region, the Greater Region, The Northern Region, Upper East and Upper West Regions clearly show that Ghanaian s were not voting for candidates merely because they come from their home region, district or own town. Ethnicity matters in Ghanaian politics especially in Volta and Ashanti Regions of Ghana but is not decisive for electoral outcomes. In the 1969, 1979, 1992, 1996, 2000 and 2004 the voting patterns of these two regions have remained fairly the same but were insignificant in determining the overall national electoral outcome in those years.

In 1957, the CPP passed the Avoidance of Discrimination Bill which outlawed parties and political groupings based on religiosity and ethnicity. Ever since, Ghanaians have decided as a country to keep religion and ethnicity out of their body politic. Indeed northerners in particular have since the NPP debacle learnt to be more nationalistic than ethnic centered. Thus when the late President Hilla Limann formed the Peoples National Convention (PNC) and contested the 1992 election with the man who overthrew his democratically elected government, northerners overwhelmingly rejected their own in support of Jerry Rawlings. Prof.

Adu Boahen also suffered the same fate when his own Akyem people rejected him in the support of Jerry Rawlings in the 1992 elections. Dr. Edward Mahama continued to suffer the same fate with his northern brothers. As for Professor Atta Mills' fate in the Central Region, the least said about it the better.

From the above, even though politicians have been quite sensitive to ethnic issues and tried to use ethnicity to achieve their selfish interest, ethnicity operates largely at the latent level in Ghanaian politics, competing political parties will find themselves unable to resist playing the 'ethnic card' This, in turn, fosters ethno-regional voting patterns and drives political appointments to follow ethno-regional lines. It also raises the possibility that ethnicity could be used as an instrument of mobilization and for competition particularly in the public service and in politics both at the national and local levels. What is been realized from the above is the fact that politicians will find it extremely difficult to do away with ethnicity in their bid to achieve their interest by providing the needs of their ethnic groups. Following the instrumentalist argument, ethnic groups are nothing more than material interest groups in cultural clothing and for that matter individuals, countries and politicians played host to ethnically mobilized political bodies whose primary objectives seems to be enriching loyal ethnic brothers. Relating this to the Ghanaian situation, political parties in Ghana are one way the other have some relations with certain ethnic groups and always try influence them when the need be in order to vote them into power and in return provide them with their needs especially jobs.

In Ghana and other countries around the world, there is a strong perception that politics of ethnicity is highly potential and possibly the most influential factors in conflicts eruptions, though Ghanaians evince a strong sense of nationhood at the same time. This is a genuine concern that ought to be raised. Most countries in

Africa have gone through these stages and the consequence has been clear for everyone to see. Every country in one way or the other has a potential to engage in conflict and Ghana has not been exceptions of this and it will be misleading to completely rule out conflict in Ghana. Countries that are entangle with conflicts such as Ivory Coast, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Angola, Somalia, Sudan, DR Congo and Rwanda in Africa and Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Croatia all in the Eastern Europe and finally Sri Lanka, Iraq in Asia were in one time in their lives very peaceful but eventually run into this conflictual situations. The factors that brought conflicts to these countries have not gone into hiding and they are every where for people to witness. Some of which are involvement of ethnicity in politics which led to marginalization of other minor ethnic groups, depriving other ethnic groups of opportunities ranging from economic, political and appointment into both the public and the civil service. Others are the colonial situation, chieftaincy and dominance of one particular ethnic group in order for other ethnic groups to grab with fear and feel threaten.

This in one way or the other explains the symbolic politics theory of ethnic war. According this theory, a fundamental factor causing ethnic conflicts to escalate to war is fear of existence. Such extream fears justify hostile attitude toward the other group and extreme measures in self-defence, including demands for political dominance. Once ethnic fears become prevalent among the members of any ethnic group. For whatever reason, they justify and motivate a resort to violence in self-defence. Such fears are necessary condition for ethnic war. The theory continues that other conflicts are elite-led, in which a few powerful elites, harnes ethnic myths and symbols to provoke fear, hostility, and a security dilemma and mobilize their group for voilence. In either case, war results from a vicious feedback loop in which hostility, extremist symbolic appeals, and a security dilemma all reinforce each other to spur violence. This very action is not new in Ghana as some ethnic



groups are very large while some others are very small; and there is always the tendency for the major ones to be dominant and claim superiority over the minor ones. The minority ethnic groups then feel threatened and alienated. With this the minority ethnic group who are in fear for possible attack will first attack and justify their hostile attitude toward the other group as measure of self-defence. This situation exist in Ghana and has in many occasions created some minor conflicts in many parts of Ghana. Mostly, it is this same minor conflict that generate into nationwide violent conflicts. Looking at the history of Ghana from the pre-independence to date, one can confidently say that most events that took place at that time has a potential to bring a nationwide conflict as seen in most Africa countries.

First, the leaders who became the forerunners after the anti colonial struggle, found their ethnic roots as a powerful tool for establishing their political base. Many of these elites took upon themselves to promote collective, political and economic interest, and for that matter assumed authority as ethnic intermediaries. As it has been said earlier, ethnicity in politics is dangerous and can bring confusion in a state. Though ethnic conflicts do occur between different ethnic groups and in one way or the other, governments intervened to restore peace but these ethnic conflicts become violent and bloody when politicians become involved and want to have their interest met. As explain by the instrumentalist theories, people do not kill each other because their customs are different. If men do actually quarrel seriously on the grounds of ethnic and cultural difference it is only because these ethnic and cultural differences are associated with serious political cleavages and also ethnic groups are nothing more than material interest groups in cultural clothing. The works of the political elites were reflected in pre-independence demand for separate region and federal government by ethnic based political parties. In 1954, one of such ethnic political movement called National

Liberation Movement (NLM) and basically Asante Organization was formed with the aim of having their own independence. Their decision to demand for their independence can be explained by the inability of the Asante elites to have their way in the political arena due to the dominance of the Kwame Nkrumah and his Peoples Convention Party and because of the fact that the Asante produce more cocoa than any part of the country and finally because of the apparent loss of a great deal of income as the result of the pegging of the cocoa price at a lower level than what the government had promise before the elections. What this meant is that because the Asante political elites were finding it extremely difficult to have their way into the political arena, they decided to use the 'back door' by doing every thing possible to create confusion between the Asante and the government of the day and also between the Ashanti's and the other ethnic groups. Of the actions the Ashanti elites were taken, it will deduced that the separate region they were asking will come to pass for them to have control over the resources in the Ashanti land. Their plan though did not succeed but rather brought violence in the country till a law was passed by the Nkrumah government to ban all political parties formed along ethnic lines. This indeed led to the division between the Ashanti's and many of the other ethnic groups. The other ethnic groups realized that the Ashanti's simply want to have access and controlled the resources by themselves without any of the other ethnic groups coming to parasite. This was selfish on the part of the Ashanti's elites. Though it was the elites who were fighting for this cause but the fact they received unflinching support form the chiefs and the entire Asante population make Ashanti's in general are selfish and not only the elites. The hatred that came about as a result selfishness on their part has persisted in all the republics especially between the Ashanti's and the Ewes and this hatred has a potential to bring conflict on any slightest provocation.

Apart from the NLM, other ethnic organization also came out with similar objectives as the NLM. Amongst them are the Ga Shifimo Kpee with it aim of protecting the interest of Gas who also had the support of chiefs and people of the Ga state and the Northern Peoples Party (NPP). Virtually with this kind of ethnic parties, hatred became the order of the day between various ethnic groups which in my opinion is a roots cause of many conflicts in Africa. It will not be surprise if Ghana with all the respect it has in the eyes of many well developed countries and the international organizations in this millennium finds itself in similar situation if such hatred continues.

The hatred that began as a result of the Ashanti's 'asking for separate region to control their resources was an attempt to deprive other ethnic groups who were unfortunate not to have resources on their own for development. This means that those unfortunate ethnic groups have to depend on the funds that government gets from the export of these resources which were found on the Asante land. This idea of the Asantes were seen to be something that cannot be forgotten and for that matter became history in Ghana .History itself is one of the subjects studied at schools and students get to know the selfish plan of other ethnic groups. The manifestation of the hatred came to light when in 1970, Dr. GK Agama, the Opposition Leader of a particular political party which was perceived to be an Ewe party, described the Prime Minister who is an Akan in a motion in the House as a 'tribal Prime Minister', and his Government, a 'tribal Government'. This remarks elicited a sharp retort from Busia's foreign minister Victor Owusu (an Asante) accusing Dr. Agama of being a member of a group (tribe) well known for being 'inward-looking'. These particular remarks by Victor Owusu featured prominently in the poor performance of the PFP in the Volta region in the 1979 election when he was the party's presidential candidate. This meant that ethnic groups which have the habit of characterizing their fellow ethnic groups in a bad manner and

describe them as murderers wicked, thieves, tribalistic, inferior, underdogs and other bad ways can be a potential to generate hatred. This brings discriminations and unfair treatment and the consequence of such attitude is alienation from society on the part of the victims and the beneficiaries become the target for hatred and hostility. A case in point is what happened in Rwanda in 1994 when the majority Hutus was seen as the over all lord and the Tutsi were as their slaves and depriving them from all the opportunities ranging from Political, economic and infrastructural development.

Despite of the above argument that ethnic politics is a potential for violent conflict in Ghana, various governments have put in place mechanisms to restore peace whenever peace is endangered. Though there are minor ethnic conflicts that have the potential to generate into a nationwide conflict, however, due to some of these mechanisms, Ghana is still enjoying the peace. Comparing Ghana to other Africa countries where similar conflicts do occur, they start as either inter or intra-ethnic conflict, basically at a local level and eventually escalate into national conflicts. In Ghana similar ethnic conflicts exist with involvement of politicians which makes it more dangerous. Apart from the kinship cause, politics has also play a great role in conflicts to the extent that when in 2002 the conflict broke out and subsequently leading to the death of the overall Dagbon King Ya Na Andani Yakubu II, some members of the ruling NPP government in the persons of the then interior minister, Malik Alhassan Yakubu and also Member of Parliament of Yendi where the conflict took place, the vice president of the Republic of Ghana Aliu Mahama and the country's security coordinator, Major General Joshua Hammedu were accused as people was masterminded the attack. Before the untimely death of the king in March 2002, the crises which is well known as the largest intra family conflict, is a feud with a long history of partisan political undertones. The Andanis have traditionally supported the Nkrumah's Convention Peoples Party and in the Fourth

Republic, the Rawlings NDC; while their half-brothers, the Abudus have been associated with the Danquah-Busia traditional whose offshoot is the ruling NPP. As has been said already, at the time of the crises, there was a large number of Abudus in the top hierarchy of the security apparatus in the ruling NPP. Under the circumstances, what ever the NPP government did in relation to the accusation could not shake off the perceptions that either by omission or commission it facilitated the gruesome murder. These perceptions are in the mind of the Andani family which in my opinion will force them to seek revenge but due to several mechanisms, policies and the structures put in place by the government to restore peace whenever peace is endangered, the Andanai family has been calm.

The 1957 Constitution established a parliamentary system of government with multi parties. It also provided unfettered associational and other civil rights. But subsequent legislation and constitutions have introduced restrictions on freedom of association, party formation and elections. A few years after independence, the CPP government passed the Avoidance of Discrimination Act to prohibit the formation of political parties on ethnic, regional or religious lines. This was apparently aimed at addressing the ethnic tensions and conflicts that had emerged in the period immediately before and after independence. Nkrumah's initial policy of putting restrictions on freedom of association, party formation and elections, cannot said to be a good one in that these are tantamount to political relegation which are some of the causes of war, it was done in order to address the ethnic tensions and conflicts that came up as a result of forming political parties along ethnic, regional or religious lines, though this did go down well with his political opponents and their supporters and they consequently criticized him as a dictator. Late, however it has been seen to be one of the reasons why there is peace in Ghana. Since then this policy of prohibiting formation of political parties on ethnic, regional or religious lines has been repeated in all the constitutions to date.

Also, the framers of the liberal democratic constitutions of 1969 and 1979 in Articles 35 (1) and 42 (5) respectively saw it wise to include provisions aimed at curbing ethnic-based electoral politics, checking ethnic polarization and promoting national integration seeing the danger it can pose and what happened before independence under Nkrumah. Similarly, the framers of the 1992 Constitution and other legislation governing the operation of political parties contain far-reaching provisions for checking ethnic and regional polarization and sectarianism. Article 55 (4) of the 1992 Constitution is fairly typical in prohibiting ethnically-based parties, by providing that the leadership and membership of political parties are not to be restricted to any particular ethnic group; names, symbols, color, or motto should not have exclusive or particular sectional significance or connotation; and parties must be formed for the sole purpose of seeking the welfare, advancement or interests of members of any particular group. As noted by Kaufman in his symbolic politics theory of ethnic war, people respond to ethnic symbols and mobilize for war only if a widely known and accepted ethnic myth-symbol complex justifies hostility to the other group. The idea in the constitution is explicit here. With the constitution prohibiting ethnically-based parties and also restricts any political party using names, symbols, color, or motto for any particular ethnic group will prevent conflicts.

The Political Parties Act of 2000 takes further steps to ensure that the structures and mode of operations of political parties are national in character. For instance, Article 3(1), (a) (b) of the Act states that no political party shall be formed on ‘ethnic, gender, religious, regional, professional or other sectional divisions’; or ‘which uses words, slogans or symbols, which could arouse ethnic, gender, religious, regional, professional, or other sectional divisions.’ Article 3 (2) of the Act further provides that ‘a political party is formed on ethnic, gender, religious regional, professional or other sectional divisions if its membership or leadership is

restricted to members of any particular community, regional, ethnic group, gender, religious faith or profession, or if its structure and mode of operation are not national in character.’ Article 15 (3C) of the same Act enjoins political parties to establish or maintain a national office or a regional office in every region in the country, failure of which may lead to the cancellation of the registration of that party by the Electoral Commission. What these provisions meant is apparently to ensure that the formation of political parties is national in character and also the internal organization of parties conforms to democratic principles.

Another provisions contained in the 1992 Constitution under the ‘Directive Principles of State Policy’ provide additional instruments for managing political competition and inequalities. For instance, Article 34 (5) obligates the state to actively promote national integration by prohibiting discrimination and prejudice on the grounds of place of origin, circumstances of birth, ethnic origin, gender or religion, creed or other beliefs. In this regard, the state is required to take appropriate measures to ‘foster a spirit of loyalty to Ghana that overrides sectional, ethnic and other loyalties;’ and achieve reasonable regional and gender balance in recruitment and appointment to public office.’ The significance of all these constitutional provisions is that they seek to regulate political competition and to manage ethnic diversity, by setting out the rules for all Ghanaians, irrespective of one’s background and ethnic affiliation. They lay emphasis on national integration.

The 1992 Constitution also contains notable proclamations and extensive provisions on good governance and participation. It also contains certain innovations such as the explicit recognition of economic, educational and cultural rights, covering women, children, the disabled, and the sick, along with the traditional constitutional concern with civil, political and private property rights. It is doubtful whether they are truly justiceable, but they indicate a clear intention on

the part of the state of Ghana under the fourth Republic to promote policies and programs that override sectional, ethnic and other loyalties and foster gender balance in all appointments to public office. They also seek to foster the inclusion of groups and regions who do not support or vote for the government of the day to be represented in government.

The 1992 Constitution, coupled with the Representation of the People Law (PNDC Law 284) 1992, Political Parties Law (PNDC Law 281)1992, and the Representation of the People (Parliamentary Constituencies) Legislative Instrument (LI 1538), outline some basic features aimed at facilitating the expression of the will of the people of Ghana through periodic and genuine elections, conducted on the basis of equal suffrage and secret ballot. There is provision of universal adult suffrage for citizens who are 18 years and above. This used to be 21 years up to the advent of the Second Republic, 1969 – 1972. These provisions meant that as long as any citizen attain the voting age stipulated in the constitution, that person is qualified to vote and to be voted for if only he or she has an interest to stand for any election. Also there is no discrimination and alienation in terms of ethnic and gender when it comes to voting. With this no particular ethnic group of people will have that kind of ill-feeling as been discriminated against.

Ghana with a large number of ethnic groups coupled with many languages, it will be difficult to choose one particular language from one ethnic group as a national language. Tension and subsequently conflict will result if this particular exercise is not done well. Justification for choosing one language will be difficult in that will the reason assigned be alright with the other ethnic groups that will not express any misgivings? Some of the ethnic groups will see that move as a form of dominance and will not support it. Ghana has 93 ethnic groups and many languages but has not one common local language. It came to light that legislation is underway to



make the Akan language as the second National language apart from the English language. The reason that came out was that, looking at the ethnic groups in Ghana, the Akan ethnic group is the largest ethnic group and the language is widely spoken by the rank and file in the country. Some ethnic groups upon hearing this went out to criticize the government of tribalism simply because the president is from the Akan ethnic group. The government upon seeing danger, decided to suspend the idea for consensus to be established. This action by the government was meant to prevent tension and conflict which in the opinion of some political observers and many of my respondents has made Ghana a peaceful country and not likely to engulf with conflicts.

Apart from constitutional provisions that gives equal rights to all citizens of Ghana and debunk the potentiality of ethnic politics and conflict, there is another area that seems to debunk the idea of potential of political conflict on the national level. Measures are seriously taken to address all conflicts be it inter-ethnic and intra- ethnic and religious conflicts in the country so as not explode to become a national conflict as was seen in Rwanda in 1994. All governments have been concerned whenever peace is endangered and any conflict in Ghana is taken seriously. For example, when the Konkomba-Nanumber conflict erupted in 1980, the people's National Party led by Dr Hilla Limann, set up the Justice Lamptey Committee to investigate the underlying causes and make appropriate recommendations to avert a future occurrence. Also when the Mamprusi-Kusasi disturbances occurred in 1988, the government in power at that time passed PNDC Law 99 which placed all land in dispute under the control of government.

Furthermore, when it was obvious that war would break out in April 1991 if the meeting of the Gonjaland Youth Association took place in Kpandai, the Northern Regional administration wisely banned the holding of the meeting. Indeed, it banned the activities of all Youth Association in the region. When finally war

broke out in April 1991 in Kpandai all Nawuri villages were destroyed. Nawuris were chased out of their land by Gonjas and their army of occupation. Apart from the Catholic Church, no one went to the assistance of the Nawuri refugees.

However, when the Nawuris struck back in June of the same year and sent Gonjas and their army of occupation fleeing, official assistance was quickly organized for them. The attack compelled the government to dispatch a peacekeeping force to the area. The government again set up the Justice Ampiah Committee to investigate the cause of the conflict. The Committee completed its work in December 1991, but realizing the volatile nature of the area. It recommended the immediate implementation of certain aspects of its report.

Again, in the wake of the 1994 conflict which engulfed most areas of Northern, Brong Ahafo and Volta Regions of Ghana, the government set up a Permanent Peace Negotiation Team on Northern Conflicts. It visited many of conflicts areas and submitted its reports. In its further quest for peace, the NDC government encouraged an inter-NGO Consortium and the Nairobi Peace Initiative (NPI) under the umbrella of the Organization of Africa Unity (OAU), now African Union (AU) to organize and facilitate a series of peace and reconciliation workshop among the warring groups in Northern Ghana. Follow-up and planning committees were from different ethnic groups to work with the NPI and the Consortium. Five workshops were held and this culminated in the signing of what has come to be known as the Kumasi Accord of March 30, 1996. The agreements have been between all the warring factions and this perhaps explains why no serious conflict has broken out between most of these ethnic groups since 1995.

Also, when the violent clashes occurred at Yendi in March 2002 which led to the destruction of the Gbewaa Palace, the NPP government set up a three member Committee led by Justice Wuaku, a retired Supreme Court Judge, to investigate the causes and make appropriate recommendations to avert what has come to be

known as the Yendi crises. The justice Wuaku Committee has submitted its report to the government and the government has issue a white paper on it. Though there are still controversies concerning the report, the government is doing all that it can to solve the problem between the two gates. From the above, it is quite clear that all governments have taken action whenever a conflict occurred in Ghana and in one way or the other has helped to prevent some of the minor conflicts generating into nationwide conflicts.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

### 6.1 Summary

This study seeks to analyze ethnic politics and its potentials for violent conflicts in Ghana. With this, the first chapter dealt with the introductory aspects, covering the research problem, objectives of the study, hypothesis, relevance of the study to the study of political science, Methodology and explanation of concepts and terms. In the second chapter, some literatures on ethnicity, politics and conflicts are reviewed. Also different theories (such as the Symbolic politics theory of ethnic war and the instrumentalist theory) were adopted as bases for tracing the underlying causes of the conflicts; explain why ethnicity is used in politics etc. The third chapter dealt with Ghana. This covered the geography and history of Ghana, Demography of Ghana's Ethnic Cleavage and Structure, location of Ethnic Groups in Ghana and an overview of political violence, pointing out that alienation and deprivation, discrimination, fear of exclusion, bad leadership, neglect and corruption which came to characterize the various regimes after independence were some of the root causes of the rivalry between some ethnic groups. Chapter four concentrated on the Politics of Ethnicity and Political Developments in Ghana. The chapter traces the political history from the colonial era to the fourth Republic pointing out where ethnicity has been involved in all the regimes and the consequences that results. The chapter also pointed out the ethnic relations among Ghanaians, the roles of Chiefs especially in Ghanaian politics and finally discusses the Ethnicity as an Explanatory Factor in Ghana's Elections. Chapter five focused on the analysis of the study. The analysis was based on the comments gathered from the respondents and that led this study to its conclusion.

## 6.2 Conclusion

From the forgone analysis, it can be concluded that the Ashanti-Ewe divide which began from the second republic has remain potent ever since and has the potential of creating conflict. The rivalry between these two ethnic groups has also persisted through out the various regimes. Voting behaviour of the two groups clearly suggests that the country is polarized along ethnic and political party lines. This perception can clearly be reflected in the 1969, 1979, 1992, 1996 and 2000 elections. The 2004 elections saw the NPP winning most of their votes and their parliamentary seats in the Ashanti region and the NDC also winning majority of their votes and their parliamentary seats in the Volta region. Of the various ethnic rivalries, the Ashanti-Ewe divide is seen to be most influential in creating national conflict. However, at least for now, the Ashanti–Ewe divide does not pose a major threat to the Ghanaian body politics largely because the two ethnic groups that are posing to create this threat have not been successful in mobilizing their groups enough to dominate the country. It will be dangerous if one of these two ethnic groups dominates the country. According to the 2000 population census, Ashanti which is a sub group of the Akan ethnic group constitute only about 15 percent of the Ghanaian population and have not been all that successful in mobilizing the other Akan sub-groups to vote along with them in elections. Similarly, the Ewe ethnic group which constitutes only about 13 percent of the entire population is not large enough to win competitive national elections in Ghana, even with the full bloc voting in the Volta region. Thus, the two groups have always been motivated to seek alliances with other major groups and regions in the country. Ethnicity and regional inequalities and rivalries are one of the causes of conflict. Various policies such as the institutional arrangements and public policies under successive governments are some of the factors accounting for the relative success with which Ghana has been able to contain ethno-regional inequalities, rivalries, fear and

conflicts. Ghanaian institutions and public policies have been generally sensitive to the complex challenges presented by the heterogeneous nature of the society. Electoral rules, decentralization programs, affirmative action and other social policies, and public service recruitment and political appointments under parliamentary and presidential constitutions and under military and civilian administrations have sought to address or at least have been sensitive to the problems of inequality and cleavage in Ghanaian society.

The constitutional provisions, notably those contained in the 1992 Constitution has also help to promote political inclusiveness and national unity debunking the idea of discrimination and deprivation of any ethnic group. While there is no formal requirement to factor ethno-regionalism into public sector recruitment, successive governments have been sensitive to ethno-regional imbalance and in practice adopted something of an ethnic mixing formulae, giving representation to all the major ethnic groups in all the sensitive institutions. This has helped make public policies supportive of political inclusiveness, civic participation and national unity.

One of the reasons for the unlikely conflict in Ghana is the facts that, Ghanaian are united. It is true that when it comes to ethnic groups, there are differences but when it comes to issues concerning the entire nation, there is always oneness. Other reasons are political inclusiveness coupled with ethnic mixing formulae provided in the constitutions in Ghana, have all made major conflict unlikely in the country at least from the day of independence to date. Comparing Ghana to other conflicts zones in Africa, it is unlikely that there will be nationwide conflict particularly due to the provisions that are enshrine in the various constitutions and the efforts of the various government to set up committees to investigate the cause of a particular fracas and more importantly to implement the recommendations submitted by the committees to satisfy both parties. The provisions in the constitution and other laws in Ghana are meant to safeguard the country against

any unforeseen tensions and conflicts. The above explanation fits into the symbolic politics theory. The theory argues that a fundamental factor causing ethnic conflicts to escalate to war is fear of exclusion and such fears justify hostile attitude. Once ethnic fears become prevalent among the members of any ethnic group, for whatever reason, they justify and motivate a resort to violence in self-defence. Such fears are necessary condition for ethnic war. In other words if such fear is prevented, conflict is unlikely. Clearly, the theory suggest that all sorts of fears be it fears of manipulations, discriminations, deprivation, dominations, threat and exclusion of any ethnic group can causes conflcits and if such fears are prevented, conflcit is unlikely. This is reflected in the constitution of Ghana. The constitutional provision such as the ethno-regional imbalance coupled with ethnic mixing formulae, are meant to give representation to all the major ethnic groups in sensitive areas such as cabinet, the council of state, the security services and other key public institutions in order not to create fear of exclusion into the smaller ethnic groups. Following this provision in the constitution, such fears will be difficult to come up and for that matter the outcome which is conflict is unlikely.

All in all, though there is undeniable fact that there is involvement of ethnicity in Ghanaian politics, the country has not experienced any major conflict as a result. Conflicts in Ghana has been contained by an over arching national identity which unifies people across ethnic boundaries. The strength of such a national identities is a major reason why nationwide conflicts have been limited and also why the risks of future violent conflicts are unlikely. However, the success of the containment of ethnicity and conflict as obtain now will by and large also depend on how political and economic power will be distributed among the political elites and the various ethnic groups in the country especially as the Fourth Republic politics progresses.

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