

# DEMOCRACY: A REFLECTION ON GHANA'S REPUBLICS, 1960-1992

## DEMOKRASİ: GANA CUMHURİYETLERİ ÜZERİNE BİR YANSIMA, 1960-1992

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### Abstract

Since 1992, Ghana has been held up as a beacon of democracy in Africa. As the country prepared for independence from Britain, educated natives formed political parties based on Western models to advance their demands. Two of the earliest political parties were the UGCC and the CPP, formed in 1947 and 1949 respectively. People from different ethnic groups joined one of the two parties to create a consensual democratic model. It was the adoption of a British type of representative government, but with a unicameral legislature. The 1951 elections gave Ghana its first taste of democratic voting, allowing the people to choose leaders they trusted to alleviate their hardships. Elections in 1954 and 1956 further consolidated this. The country is endowed with enormous human and natural resources. When the First Republic was announced in 1960, politics was all about development, massive projects, sound policies and improving the welfare of the people. By 1966, however, the rivalry between Nkrumah and the army and police introduced coups into Ghanaian politics. Since then, Ghana has experienced five coups in its young history. As a result, Ghanaian politics has been reduced to economic stagnation, corruption, propaganda, ill-conceived policies and the emergence of short-sighted and ultra-credit-hungry leaders who borrow to consume, leading to the impoverishment of the citizens. Perhaps Ghana would have been more developed than it is now if the first coup had not taken place and if Nkrumah had had enough time to realise his vision for the country. It is from this perspective that the paper assesses Ghana's republics. The paper uses archival sources, mainly newspapers, and secondary sources to explore the country's democratic trajectories to the present day.

**Keywords:** Ghana, Democracy, Putsch, Politics, Development.

### Öz

Gana 1992'den beri Afrika'da bir demokrasi feneri olarak lanse edilmektedir. Ülke İngiltere'den bağımsızlığa hazırlanırken, eğitimli yerliler taleplerine ulaşmak adına Batı modellerine uygun siyasi partiler kurmuştur. Kurulan en eski siyasi partilerden ikisi, sırasıyla 1947 ve 1949'da UGCC ve CPP idi. Farklı etnik gruplardan insanlar, uzlaşmacı bir demokratik model oluşturmak için iki partiden birine katıldı. İngiliz tipi bir temsilî hükümetin benimsenmesiydi, ancak tek meclisli bir yasama organı vardı. 1951 seçimleri, Gana'ya, insanların sıkıntılarını hafifletebileceğine güvendikleri liderleri seçebilecekleri ilk demokratik oylama deneyimini verdi. 1954 ve 1956 seçimleri bunu daha da pekiştirdi. Ülke muazzam insan gücü ve doğal kaynaklarla donatılmıştır. 1960'da ilk cumhuriyet ilan edildiğinde, siyaset tamamen kalkınma, büyük projeler, sağlam politikalar ve halkın refahını iyileştirme ile ilgiliydi. Ancak 1966'da Nkrumah ile ordu ve polis arasında ortaya çıkan husumet, Gana siyasetine darbeleri getirdi. O zamandan beri Gana gençlik tarihinde beş darbe görmüştür. Sonuç olarak, bu durum Gana'yı ekonomik durgunluğa, yolsuzluğa, propagandaya, kötü düşünülmüş politikalara ve tüketmek için borç alan dar görüşlü ve aşırı korkak liderlerin ortaya çıkışına indirgedi ve böylece vatandaşların yoksullaşmasına yol açtı. Belki de ilk darbe yaşanmasaydı ve Nkrumah'ın ülke vizyonunu gerçekleştirmek için yeterli zamanı olsaydı, Gana şu an olduğundan daha gelişmiş olacaktı. Bu açıdan, makale Gana Cumhuriyetlerine ağırlık vermektedir. Makale, ülkenin bugüne kadarki demokratik gelişimini keşfetmek için ikincil kaynaklarla birlikte başta gazeteler olmak üzere arşiv kaynaklarını kullanmaktadır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Gana, Demokrasi, Darbe, Siyaset, Gelişim.

## STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

The African continent was a scene of imperial tussle between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Several European countries were there and established their dominance over the native states. However, in the twentieth century, due largely to the consequences of the Second World War and the Cold War Era, African Nationalism came to the fore and by the mid-1950s almost the entire continent came knocking for independence from their European suzerains. The independence demands and grants converged on one crux condition: the need for establishing governments by democratic precepts. Thus, the closing years of the twentieth century ushered in a paradigm political shift from chiefship-centred administrations towards multi-party politics and the spread of democracy.

As the newly independent African countries tried to institute Western prototype democracies in their countries, along their development trajectories, the Bretton Woods institutions made it a condition for granting financial assistance to such countries which were democratic and incorporated minorities. Thus, on paper, although most African countries are democratic, in practice they are ruled by autocrats who profess politics of intimidation, gagging of minorities, clientelism, corruption, nepotism, and enacting flawed policies. For decades in Africa, public policies conducted in bad faith have been the impetus to socio-developmental failures, election choices, and military takeovers, thus, standardising it as a political-philosophical charter.

Ghana is no exception to that. Ghana was the first sub-Saharan African country to gain independence from Britain in 1957. In preparation for self-rule, the natives formed political parties along Western models and two of the earliest parties to be formed were the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) and the Convention People's Party (CPP) in 1947 and 1949 respectively. In 1951, elections were held to choose political leaders and legislative representatives for the people. The members included chiefs, who were elected indirectly by the governor, and a section of educated Africans who were elected directly at the polls. This election gave Ghana a taste of what the British democratic model was. Subsequent elections were held in 1954 and 1956, to consolidate democracy in the country and towards the grant of independence. The Ghanaian society is a heterogeneous one and so salience of cultural differences, religion, and partisanship politics exist. Nonetheless, for the sake of independence, the various ethnic groups and religious affiliations worked in hand to attain self-rule through consensus democracy.

Independence was granted on 6 March 1957 and Kwame Nkrumah was the leader who championed that struggle. Thus, from 1957-1966, he undertook massive developmental projects and pursued sound socio-economic policies towards elevating the welfare of Ghanaians. But the enmity that ensued between him, on one hand, and the army and police on the other, led to the introduction of putsches in the Ghanaian body politic when his government was toppled in 1966 by a team of army-police officers. This was followed by four more putsches, with dire consequences for the country. One of such consequences is that politics in Ghana has been reduced to economic stagnation, propaganda, ill-thought-out policies and the production of short-sighted leaders thus worsening the plights of the common citizen. It is from this perspective that this paper attempts to evaluate Ghana's democratic path to the conclusion that the putsch against Nkrumah has taken the country back and stagnated its growth because all the subsequent leaders to have followed to date had failed to mimic the socio-economic success of Nkrumah.

Democratic precepts, on the other hand, are not new to Africa. As postulated by Chuka "apart from voting formalities, democratic principles such as participation, equality, representation, local autonomy, rule of law, and accountability" (1998, p. 9) were inherent in traditional African forms of rule. But these tenets capitulated to the European model. They capitulated because of attempts to institute British colonial policy; the chiefs had become greedy because of the introduction of western capital in the mines and other

sectors, the subsequent rift that emerged between the chiefs and their subjects, and later with the educated natives when, in 1925, the chiefs felt that they were the right group to administer the country and not the educated natives and thereby decided to work with the British administrators instead of the educated natives (see Abass, 2023, pp. 497-500). The chiefs remained at the helm of affairs up to the decade leading up to independence when the educated natives formed political parties along Western models and succeeded in taking up the administrative mantle of the country, through democratic elections, at independence. In the wake of that emerged a burlesque of what exists in Europe and the USA. In such eroded democracies, “political parties use political rhetoric to politicise, problematise and frame social issues” (Helbing et al, 2013, pp. 103-105) not towards development but towards cultural distinctions. The outcome of this is that the tenets of transparency and accountability are overlooked thereby leaving the citizens who cannot hold their democratic leaders to account to turn their “trust in religious and traditional leaders” (Bratton & Gyimah-Boadi, 2006).

Democracy, instead of uniting the Ghanaian society, has rather stratified and widened the gulf between the educated and uneducated, leaders and followers, and it has become an avenue for the politicians and their compeers to enrich themselves whilst providing little returns to the populace. Ghana has been under four Republics: 1960-1966, 1969-1972, 1979-1981, and 1992 to present. However, the common themes under all the republics are nepotism, favouritism, selective justice, ethnic-based politicking, and economic mismanagement. The paper shows that charges of malversation that led to the toppling of Nkrumah’s regime and thence prevented the full realisation of his policies for Ghana are nothing compared to what transpired under subsequent administrations. Had Nkrumah stayed long enough, perhaps he could have done more for Ghana in terms of development.

#### **Introduction**

Democracy in Ghana is a recent development. Before its appearance, the various native States were ruled by Paramount Chiefs or Chiefs aided by their council of elders. These councils of Elders served as instruments of checks and balances against the traditional rulers. Whenever Chiefs contravened established laws and customs, they were reminded to uphold the established decrees and could even be deposed by the councils should they fail to heed such advice. Members of the society in tandem with the rulers were under the same norms and customs. What’s more, the rulers served as custodians of community lands and worked to ensure that their denizens were well cared for. However, the encounter with Western Europeans from the fifteenth century began to alter the function of the traditional rulers. Exposure to the wealth of the West turned them into greedy rulers who instead of advancing the welfare of their people sought to enrich themselves and their royal families. The denouements of such exposure were that the traditional rulers came to actively engage in the colonial enterprise as agents and established enterprises independent of their States. With their consent, modifications were made in the native laws to accommodate European laws which led to the capitulation of the former. Their puppet roles in the colonial enterprise fuelled a group of educated natives to form political parties along Western models in 1947 to free the country from the yoke of colonialism and have since become the basis of politics in the country. This group of educated natives succeeded the chiefs as the administrators of the country. However, their performance as administrators is no better than the chiefs they took over from. In the wake of that emerged a system of governance, which at best could be described as a parody of what exists in Europe or the USA, proffering hope and equality on paper, but undermining and hindering the progress of the people in the name of flawed policies, nepotism, stagnation, and embezzlement of the coffers of the State.

The Ghanaian political scene since the 1950s has gone through remarkable changes. It was characterised by political liberalisation, media expansion, and the participation of various groups from different walks of life. This represented the beatific vision and fad Ghanaians had about their native government after colonial rule towards political and economic freedom. However, it proved to be a mirage, for shortly after independence politics, in Africa in general, changed into one-party politics, dictatorships,

or military regimes. One-party politics was introduced in Ghana by Nkrumah in 1964, to advance the interests of the nation. This limitation of politics to just one political party aroused intense criticism from civil groups, political dissidents, and military-police cadres alike. The upshot of this was the eventual overthrow of Nkrumah's administration by a group of military and police officers on charges of arbitrary detention of political dissidents, socio-economic burden, and corruption. Thus, this paper attempts to show that charges of malversation that led to the toppling of Nkrumah's regime and thence prevented the full realisation of his policies for Ghana are nothing compared to what transpired under subsequent administrations. The paper utilises archival sources, primarily newspapers, with secondary sources in the form of books and journal articles to explore the argument. The contribution of this paper is towards understanding the dynamics of politics in Ghana.

### 1. The Concept of Democracy

Democracy thrives in societies where the rulers and masses respect the political boundaries of groups and individuals. The fundamental basis for achieving such an end is when the traits of fairness, justice, and respect for the views of individuals and groups prevail in a particular society. Of utmost importance to democracy, is the freedom, not only of the majority or dominating group, but the extent to which the minorities can freely voice their concerns without persecution, mobilize to make their concerns known, form associations, elect their representatives, and participate in national discourses that have the potency to affect the lives of both the majority and the minorities.

Democracy is widely believed to have started in classical Greek societies. According to Jack Goody (2006, p. 248), democracy in ancient Greece was referred to as "the rule of the people" and stood against autocracy and "tyranny". From there, it later expanded to other countries, first, in the Western world. Samuel P. Huntington (1991, p. 12) for instance, classified the spread of democracy into three waves; the first 'long' wave, which began in the 1820s up until 1926. The United States was the front-runner in this phase and was subsequently followed by France, Britain, Canada, Argentina, and Italy, among other countries. The second wave came into effect after the successes of the Allies in World War II and peaked in 1962. More countries in Europe, especially Eastern and Balkan countries through the efforts of the United States and the EU embraced democracies. Lastly, the third wave commenced from the 1970s to about the 1990s with Spain and Portugal and other countries in Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Africa.

Democracy seeks to provide political equality and representation by and for the masses. Goody (2006, p. 247) states that democracy is tied closely to the notions of 'freedom', 'equality', civic participation, and human rights. Regardless of the form of democracy being practised, whether the consensus (liberal democracy) model, which tries to share, disperse, restrain, and limit (political) power in a variety of ways; the majoritarian ("populistic" democracy) model of democracy, which concentrates political power in the hands of the majority (Lijphart, 2007, p. 112); or Dahl's polyarchal democracy, which seeks to promote popular sovereignty and political equality by increasing the "size, number, and variety of minorities whose preferences must be taken into account by leaders" (Krouse, 1982, p. 443), the basic goal of democracy is the degree of inclusiveness of all citizens in national discourses towards development.

However, the example of Ghana, which on paper could be regarded as a consensus democratic model, has proven to be the bane of the nation's progress. It has rather widened the gulf between the educated and uneducated, leaders and followers, and enriched the few cliques of politicians and their compeers whilst subjecting the rest of the populace to poverty. The unprecedented delict and corruption of the Fourth Republic are robbing citizens of their present and future right to exist. It is within such detrimental effects as these that this paper attempts to show that democracy in Ghana, apart from holding periodic elections, is a burden on the masses and hinders the development of Ghana through the actions of elected politicians. Three political ideological strands characterised Ghana's political space since 1949. These are state

socialism, liberalism, and populism (Pinkney, 1997, p. 34). State socialism was the ideological policy of Nkrumah and the CPP; liberalism was the ideology pursued by the UGCC, and its offshoot parties, which included the United Party (UP), National Liberation Council (NLC), the Progress Party (PP), and the Popular Front Party (PFP), all the way down to the New Patriotic Party (NPP) of the Fourth Republic. Populism characterised Rawlings' ideology starting with the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) in 1979, the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) to the National Democratic Congress (NDC) under the Fourth Republic.

But how did political democracy evolve in Ghana? The various traditional rulers ruled their native states. Each native state has a Stool. This Stool represents authority. Would-be chiefs were selected from the Stool's royal family. The selection was done in consultation with the respective council of elders, who in modern political structure constituted the "legislature", of each Stool. Once the council is satisfied with a chosen chief, he is then entooled (enthroned). Only those who entooled the chief could destool (dethrone) him if he contravened his authority and the custom of the state. Denizens could initiate the destoolment of a chief through the next senior chief in their clan, who would then take up the matter to the council of elders. However, the latter power of the people was transferred to the governor under British rule. The transfer of such power, according to Drake "released the chiefs from many of the popular checks and substituted a system of "bureaucratic tutelage" for one based on "traditional authority" (1956, p. 78). In the wake of that, provincial and legislative councils of chiefs were constituted for the chiefs to participate in the colonial enterprise. These chiefs were appointed by the Governor and served as an advisory council to the British colonial government until 1946 when it became an elected legislature (Drake, 1956, p. 78).

The educated natives opposed the establishment of the provincial councils because they felt they would eventually undermine the authority of the native chiefs. This was because, in the working structure of the provincial councils, the British administrative officers were placed above the chiefs (see Abass, 2023, pp. 504-505). However, this was not the only reason. The other reason was that the educated natives believed they were more capable of participating and representing the people because of their education than the chiefs, whom the British had decided to rule through. Thus, the gamut of this contention between the chiefs and the educated natives paved the way for the development of modern politics in Ghana. In 1947, it led to the formation of the UGCC by a group of educated natives and some chiefs and demanded that authority be returned to the chiefs in addition to the grant of "self-rule within the shortest possible time". The political change was expedited by the Ghana Revolution of 1948. In that year, an Accra chief, Baffoe Bonnie, led a boycott of European goods due to their high prices. The protest coincided with a peaceful procession of some ex-servicemen, who were on a march to present their petition to the Governor for the promises made them during World War II to be fulfilled. These officers were ordered to stop by a European police officer. Their refusal led to an order to open fire on the ex-servicemen, thus, killing three and injuring many others. It occurred on 28 February 1948. It resulted in the looting of European stores in Accra and other major towns of Ghana and the destruction of properties. In the aftermath of this, the British blamed the leaders of the UGCC for the insurrection and ordered the arrest of its leaders. Six of them, including Nkrumah, were arrested, and became known as "The Big Six". It was upon their release from prison that Nkrumah formed the CPP in 1949 and demanded "self-government NOW".

A committee, the Watson Committee, was constituted in March 1948 to investigate the causes of the insurrection and to make recommendations. A year later, another committee, the Coussey Committee, was constituted to draft a constitution towards self-rule for Ghana. "The Big Six" was exonerated and released from prison because of the findings of the Watson Committee in 1948. It found out that the people were not pleased with the role of the chiefs in the colonial administration and thence made recommendations for an election to be held to elect the people's representatives. It was based on its recommendations that the Coussey Committee was constituted to bring its recommendations to fruition. The election occurred in 1951 and Nkrumah and his party won. Nkrumah became "the Leader of Government Business". This position was scrapped in 1952 for the Prime Minister position. Another election was called for in 1954 to

do away with the appointment of chiefs to the legislative council by the governor. In 1954, every individual was to be elected directly from the polls. But the chiefs opted not to contest. This was an all-African cabinet with a unicameral legislature. The 1954 cabinet had more authority than the 1951 one. For instance, it had absolute “legislative, judicial and executive authority”, except for matters about “public order, defence, and external affairs which were reserved for the Governor” (Drake, 1956, p. 79).

In 1956, another election was organised towards the grant of independence. This election was unnecessary and only came about because of the opposition of the National Liberation Movement (NLM) to the government of Nkrumah. It was an Asante-based party and criticised Nkrumah about how he handled and regulated cocoa prices. The NLM attracted the other opposition parties and had the support of the Asanteman Council. It called for a federal form of government and went to the extent of presenting a petition to Westminster in London. Nkrumah, on the other hand, stood by his demands for a unitary state. To settle the impasse the colonial government was left with no choice, but to organise a fresh election towards granting independence by a simple majority. Nkrumah’s party won and he carried on with his unitary form of government.

According to Drake, there was an attempt to blend indigenous political institutions with Western ones. For instance, Nkrumah and the CPP were keen on “adopting Western parliamentary forms in their entirety at the national level, and of introducing a form of local government which leaves economic and political power in the hands of the electorate but gives the traditional rulers ritual and advisory status” (1956, p. 80). This was their original status under colonial rule. The restoration of the same was geared towards recompensing them for their ouster from the legislative council in 1954. The chiefs to date constitute the Council of Chiefs as an advisory body to governments.

Thus, David Apter was apt with his assessment of the role of Nkrumah in introducing democracy in Ghana. He maintained that the success of parliamentary democracy in Ghana was because of how Nkrumah “used his immense personal appeal and symbolic status to invest democratic institutions with authority”, by getting “the legislature despite its youth to function well, a judiciary not influenced by politics, a civil service relatively free from favouritism, and the protection of civil liberties” (Drake, 1956, p. 82). Thereupon, political democracy in Ghana was measured by the level of press freedom, freedom of speech and representation, and more importantly economic success. The latter indicator is the pith of all the putesches that occurred in Ghana as would be observed below.

## **2. The First Republic: 1960-1966**

Ghana was the first-ever black African colony to achieve independence, the first to become a Republic, and the first to return to civilian rule after a period of brief military rule (Clegg, 2 Oct. 1969, p. 7). Ghana became independent on 6 March 1957. The people, in their euphoria, on the eve of the announcement were hopeful for a propitious future under self-rule. However, their expectations were fugacious. Ghana was one of the wealthiest British colonies, and its former name “The Gold Coast” attested to this. As put forward by Jeff Haynes, it had an impressive transportation system, a highly educated workforce, and a professional bureaucracy (1995, p. 92). It exports cash crops and mineral resources. For instance, the main export crops are cocoa and timber, and the mineral resources include gold, diamonds, manganese, bauxite, and oil. The country’s wealth manifested in diverse developmental projects in the early years of independence. It became a Republic in July 1960. Between 1960 and 1966, Nkrumah’s government was accused of gagging free speech, arbitrary detention of political dissidents, implementing a one-party regime, corruption, and materialism (see Assensoh and Alex-Assensoh, 2001, pp. 69-70). These were not mere accusations against Nkrumah. They occurred as would be demonstrated later by citing Nkrumah’s own justification, for instance, for implementing a one-party state. The combination of these accusations evanesced all the good work he carried for the country. Consequently, on Thursday 24

February 1966, his government was toppled by a team of military and police officers who subsequently formed the National Liberation Council (N.L.C). The question is, was Nkrumah's malversation worse than what is happening currently under the Fourth Republic or the previous ones?

The above question will be answered towards the end of the paper. In the meantime, the question to ask is, what were the actual reasons for the putsch against Nkrumah? The army since 1965 had resolved to overthrow Nkrumah because of changes he made in the military hierarchy. For instance, in 1965, he dismissed the Chief of Defence Staff, Major-Gen. S.J.A. Otu and his deputy. Before 1965, he had set up the President's Own Guard Regiment (POGR), which handicapped the position of the police and left them yapping. Nkrumah's distrust of the army was vivid in his speeches years before the putsch. For instance, in 1961, in his address to cadets of the Ghana Military Academy, he emphasised that:

it is not the duty of a soldier to criticise or endeavour to interfere in any way with the political affairs of the country; he must leave that to the politicians, whose business it is. The Government expects you, under all circumstances to serve it and the people of Ghana loyally (Nkrumah, 1967, p. 25).

Regarding the one-party system, which he introduced in 1964, his objective was to consolidate Ghana's young democracy and prevent the abuse of power. In his words,

a people's parliamentary democracy with a one-party system is better able to express and satisfy the common aspirations of a nation as a whole, than a multi-party parliamentary system, which is in fact only a ruse for perpetuating, and covers up, the inherent struggle between the 'haves and the have-nots (Nkrumah, 1970, pp. 100-101).

Although with a "good intention", the decision to introduce the one-party system was followed with the passage of the Preventive Detention Act (PDA). Whilst the one-party system took away the people's right to freely participate in political discourses, the PDA was used to gag any form of government opposition. Thus, the putsch had more to do with these factors in addition to the shaky position of the police and the army because of the changes Nkrumah brought to them. Lt.-Col. E.K. Kotoka and the Commissioner of Police J.W.K. Harley schemed and carried out the putsch whilst Nkrumah was in Vietnam on a peacekeeping mission. Before the Radio announcements to broadcast the putsch, military movements were detected in Accra. A bulletin was subsequently issued justifying the putsch. According to the bulletin,

The Armed Forces, in co-operation with the Police have felt it necessary to take over the reins of power and dismiss the former President Kwame Nkrumah, the Presidential Commission and all Ministers and to suspend the Constitution and to dissolve Parliament. This act has been necessitated by the Political and Economic situations in the country. The concentration of power in the hands of one man has led to the abuse of individual rights and liberty. Power has been exercised by the former President capriciously (The Ghanaian Times, 25 Feb. 1966).

Furthermore, the putsch intriguants charged Nkrumah with nepotism, favouritism, and selective justice, thus leading the country to the brink of bankruptcy. They said:

The operation of the laws has been suspended to the advantage of his favourites and he has been running the country as if it were his own personal property. The economic situation of the country is in such a chaotic condition that unless something is done about it now the whole economic system will collapse. In fact, the country is on the brink of national bankruptcy. In 1957 when we attained independence the country had massive overseas reserves, the nominal value of which amounted to nearly £195 million. All these have been used and the country has virtually no free reserves now. The old Government claimed on many occasions that these reserves have been used to carry out the economic and social development of the country. The question is not what we have now but what we could have got(ten) had the reserves

been used wisely. By this standard of assessment, the old Government had nothing to its credit. Economic mismanagement coupled with incessant lip service to planning were the only things they gave to the country by way of leadership in the economic sphere. All of us have suffered in one way or the other from the gross economic mismanagement of the old Government. We have all been hit by shortages of essential commodities. The present mounting unemployment has affected almost every family. Rising prices have reduced the real income of all of us. Available information indicates that within the past three years alone prices have risen by nearly 66 percent implying that in effect those whose incomes in 1963 amounted to £100 per annum are now receiving only £33. We cannot for long continue with the lowering of our standards of living which these figures indicate (The Ghanaian Times, 25 Feb. 1966).

Nkrumah's budget for 1966 was seen as imposing economic burdens on the people. The leaders of the putsch said the budget only increased the economic burdens and hardships of the population. They thus decided that what they needed was a radical rethinking of the country's economic and financial policies. They opined that:

Ghana should have been a much better country than what it is now, but it had been appalled by the exorbitant prices of food in the country. We shall give top priority to this to ensure that all of us get enough to eat and at reasonable prices too (The Ghanaian Times, 25 Feb. 1966).

Ghana has always been blessed with sufficient manpower and resources. However, successive governments have underutilised or mismanaged them collectively. The Army in 1966 was hopeful that with efficient utilisation of the nation's resources, high economic growth would be achieved. They were dissatisfied with the economic growth of Ghana over the past few years by only 3 percent per annum, which they said was "really unthinkable" considering the country's vast potentialities (The Ghanaian Times, 25 Feb. 1966).

In 1966, Ghana's population stood at around 7,500,000. The people celebrated the putsch as a day of true redemption from dictatorship and looked up to the military to curb the spending spree of the politicians. A Commentary was published in *The Ghanaian Times* on Friday 25 February 1966. It ran as follows:

Today, tyranny is dead. The people of Ghana have been freed from the great burden which was imposed on them by the corrupt Government of Kwame Nkrumah. For more than a decade, Ghanaians from all walks of life have been denied their fundamental human rights, and have been subjected to arbitrary rule, injustice and undemocratic practices of a so-called peoples party which was in effect a one-man party backed by unscrupulous hirelings and hangers-on. A new class was born into the Ghanaian society after the country became independent and it proceeded to empty the state treasury of reserves exceeding £190 million and commit so many crimes on the pretext of creating a socialist state. but today, Kwame Nkrumah and his new class are no more. How was it possible that Ghanaians could put up with so many injustices and arbitrary acts for such a long time without even a formal protest? Was it not because of the fantastic so-called security system which Kwame Nkrumah created, which harassed so many innocent people and brought disaster to many families—all in the name of socialism? Today, democracy is reborn. And Ghanaians are grateful for the timely intervention of the Army and Police who have saved us from the clutches of the tyrant Kwame Nkrumah who ran Ghana as a madman would run his house. Where are the Hitlers and Mussolinis of yesterday who used the name of the people to try and build up huge empires for themselves and their families? Surely, it is not possible for the ambitions of a dictator to override the interests of the whole people. The people of Ghana forever remember this day as a day when they saw the first rays of true freedom. It is our bounded duty as people who have been witnesses to the tyranny and arbitrary rule of Kwame Nkrumah and his CPP to give full support to the Army and Police authorities in the present situation. One has only to take a short stroll through the streets of Accra to become aware that the people of Ghana fully support the National Liberation in its determination to clear up the mess created by Kwame Nkrumah. LONG LIVE GHANA (The Ghanaian Times, 25 Feb. 1966, p. 2).

A day after the putsch, people from various stratifications poured into the streets to celebrate. In



Accra, a score of market women, clad in white clothes, danced to demonstrate their appreciation of the overthrow of Nkrumah's regime (The Ghanaian Times, 26 Feb. 1966, p. 4). The lack of clear separation of powers of the three arms of government—the Executive, the Legislative, and the Judiciary—was said to have sparked the woes of the country. In an Editorial in *The Ghanaian Times*, it was expressed that the entire nation had

... been silent and ineffectual witnesses to a decade of one man's rule, degenerating into a personality cult where their liberties were taken one after the other in the name of security and order, to the extent that the flower of their manhood was sent arbitrarily into detention, whilst careerists, opportunists, and incompooops rose into power (The Ghanaian Times, 28 Feb. 1966, p. 5).

Nkrumah's cabinet members were tagged as a "set of illiterate and semi-illiterate people" ruling over the average sensible Ghanaian. Nkrumah was said to have taken the country for granted and he was reminded of his interview on the BBC in London in 1957, where he was quoted to have said: "Ghanaians could only understand by signs because the majority of them were illiterate and that they could not even understand that the country was independent" (Daily Graphic, 8 Mar. 1966, p. 5).

The Chiefs, who in the years leading to independence were at loggerheads with Nkrumah, expressed their happiness to see him removed from office. In a series of messages sent to the National Liberation Council, N.L.C., (The Ghanaian Times, 28 Feb. 1966), first, the Eastern Region House of Chiefs' congratulatory message to the N.L.C. called on the Council to accept their "hearty congratulations on this much-awaited deliverance from tyranny and injustice. ... May Ghana never be placed again with unwholesome ideologies and disregard for human rights". Also, the Volta Region House of Chief, in a message signed by Togbe Adedza II, Awoamefia of Anlo and President of the Council, pledged their loyalty and that of their people to the N.L.C. They expressed their "hearty congratulation on the release of political prisoners. This they said, "demonstrated the sympathy and readiness of the National Liberation Council to restore Ghana's glorious reputation". The Chiefs and the people of Ga Traditional Areas were not left out. They said:

We the elders and people do fully and actively support the N.L.C. which rightfully took over the Government of Ghana from Kwame Nkrumah. That we and our people fully dissociate ourselves from the person, Kwame Nkrumah and all that he stood for. That we and our people will do everything possible to assist Lieutenant-General Ankrah and his band of righting the wrongs which heroic Soldiers and Police in the old government have, for the past 15 years, inflicted on the people of this country (The Ghanaian Times, 28 Feb. 1966).

The Asantehene, Otumfuo Sir Osei Agyeman Prempeh II, also pledged his fullest support for the N.L.C. He charged the military council to work "towards the prosperity of Ghana and restore her lost liberties". The Omanhene of New Juabeng, Nana Kwakye Boateng II, on behalf of his chiefs and people congratulated the N.L.C. for the overthrow of Nkrumah and added that their action had relieved

... the country from the tyranny of Kwame Nkrumah and his gang, thieves, and hangers-on. Thanks to the N.L.C. we are now breathing the air of freedom and are no more under the wicked notorious autocratic and dictatorial government of Kwame Nkrumah (The Ghanaian Times, 28 Feb. 1966).

The Message from the National Association of Local Government Councils on behalf of all local councils in the country backed the military regime by expressing that: "Had it not been for the bold and timely action taken by the Council the country would have collapsed economically before long" (Daily Graphic, 3 Mar. 1966, p. 9). Students were not left out, especially those of the Local Government Training School, who called on the Council to "restore real democracy in Ghana". The Accra market women said, "For a long time we have been accused of supporting the corrupt regime of that tyrant and political demagogue, Kwame Nkrumah. We are now in a position to kick against his aggressive laws". At Winneba

the staff and students of the Specialist Training College thronged the streets of the town with placards saying, “Satan is away forever”, “Liberty is born”, “Down with Lucifer Kwame Nkrumah”, and “We support the National Liberation Council”. Joined by the townfolks they destroyed the sword-bearing effigy of the deposed Nkrumah. Even the chiefs and people of his birthplace, Nkroful, in a message signed by Nana Kwasi Kutuah IV, congratulated the Council for the “overthrow of the wicked regime of Nkrumah” (Daily Graphic, 3 Mar. 1966, p. 9). On 7 March at Nkroful, angry demonstrators demolished the hut in which Nkrumah was said to have been born. Before the demolition started the demonstrators were led by Nana Kwa Kutuwa IV to parade the streets with placards saying “Kwame Nkrumah, you have disgraced us”, and “Nkrumah must be tried and punished” (Daily Graphic, 8 Mar. 1966, p. 1). The Chief told reporters that “we support the Police and the Army and condemn Kwame Nkrumah’s waste of funds in establishing prestige projects” (Daily Graphic, 8 Mar. 1966, p. 3).

The Chiefs of the Gbese Traditional Area in Accra likened the fall of Nkrumah to Satan. Signed by Nii Okai Pesemaku III, Gbese Manche, they said: “The fall of Kwame Nkrumah is more spectacular than that of Satan, a most vivid warning and an appreciable lesson to all who pursue the mirage of (the) political kingdom and its volatile treasures” (Daily Graphic, 7 Mar. 1966, p. 6). Barely a week after the putsch, the Ghana Police on 2 March published what it termed as one of Nkrumah’s crimes against the people of Ghana. Here, Nkrumah was said to have lavished money recklessly on luxuries and girls but asked the people to tighten their belts. Miss Genoviva Marals, a slim fair-coloured South African woman was one of those girls. Nkrumah was said to have appointed her as the Head of Programmes of Ghana Television and as part of the riches he bestowed on her was a luxurious Ford Thunderbird car, which was air-conditioned and convertible bearing the number plate TV 4141, which the two used for their jolly-rides (Daily Graphic, 3 Mar. 1966).

The N.L.C. set up an Economic Committee under the chairmanship of Mr. E.N. Omaboe to investigate and assess the economic position of the country. To salvage the economy, the Committee came up with four areas that needed tackling: the correction of the then imbalances in the country’s foreign payments; the arrest of inflationary pressures; the provision of more jobs for the rising population, and the restoration of balance to the Government budget. Ghana needed C36 million (£15 million) in overseas aid in the interim to tide the country over foreign exchange difficulties (Daily Graphic, 4 Mar. 1966). At one of the meetings of the Economic Committee, it was revealed that Nkrumah had taken C108,000 (£45,000) from the coffers of the State for his trip to Hanoi. Aside from this, the cost of his flight, the VC10, was estimated at 2,400 cedis per hour (Daily Graphic, 4 Mar. 1966). Thus, Nkrumah was proclaimed “a black capitalist” whilst he preached socialism. Mr E. Eyeh-Kumi, a former economic consultant to Nkrumah, disclosed that Nkrumah owned the sum of about 6,000,000 cedis (£2,500,000) which was mainly in Ghana; the Guinea Press; the Lartebikorshie Estate in Accra; Republic House and NADECO Ltd., a private company at the Republic House which was worth 2,400,000 cedis (Daily Graphic, 5 Mar. 1966).

Nkrumah was in Peking when he heard the news. According to him, the Chinese Ambassador in Accra came to meet him in Peking to inform him. His words were, “Mr. President, I have bad news. There has been a coup d’état in Ghana” (Nkrumah, 1968, p. 9). Nkrumah was taken aback and asked, “What did you say? A coup d’état in Ghana, Impossible”. However, he later acknowledged that and added: “But yes, it is possible. These things do happen. They are in the nature of the revolutionary struggle” (Nkrumah, 1968, pp. 9-10).

According to Nkrumah, the soldiers were misled by their commanders who said Nkrumah had plans to send “them to fight in Vietnam and Rhodesia [today’s Zimbabwe]”, and that he had also deserted Ghana taking with him £8 million. Thus, “there was no government left in Ghana, and it was their duty to assume control of the country to maintain law and order” (Nkrumah, 1968, p. 21). It was further alleged that Nkrumah had invited Russians and their planes were landed on a secret airstrip in northern Ghana in tandem with a secret tunnel from the airport in Accra connecting the Flagstaff House, by which Russians had been

arriving (Nkrumah, 1968, p. 22). These all proved to be misapprehensions after the putsch.

Nkrumah was not enthused by the position of the intellectual and professional classes who he said had always been against his government for challenging their privileged position (Nkrumah, 1968, p. 29). Foreign countries were said to have instigated the putsch. Nkrumah remarked that:

... banners and posters prepared in advance in the U.S. Embassy were pushed into the hands of the willing demonstrators, and many of the slogans' words used in the demonstration, newspapers and bulletins issued immediately after the seizure of power were quite foreign to the Ghanaian people, and in some cases completely incomprehensible (Nkrumah, 1968, p. 30).

Nkrumah debunked what he termed "fabricated big lies" (see Nkrumah, 1968, p. 75-96) against him and more importantly the assertion that he had mismanaged the economy. He provided figures and data to prove his inculpability and blamed the N.L.C. for setting Ghana back by abandoning most of the development projects and plans already in motion. Nkrumah never saw Ghana again. He died in Romania in 1972. After his demise, the role of the CIA in his overthrow came to light. On 9 May 1978, in *The New York Times*, Seymour Hersh, a journalist, cited first-hand intelligence sources about the role of the CIA in advising and supporting the intriguants (Vieta, 1999, p. 139). Yet again, in 2001 newly released US government files showed the entrenched positions of the United States, Britain, and France in the putsch (Biney, 2011, p. 158).

### 3. The Second Republic: 1969-1972

There was an interregnum rule of the military between the first and second republics. However, the military regimes fall outside the purview of this paper and will not be discussed. The military regimes have extensively been discussed elsewhere (see Hettne, 1980; Assenssoh and Alex-Assenssoh, 2001). On 1 October 1969, Busia's Progress Party won the elections to constitute the Second Republic. It must be remembered that Busia was the leader of the Ghana Congress Party and later the United Party (a merger of all opposition parties supported by chiefs of Asanteman and Akyem Abuakwa Councils) which fought with Nkrumah towards gaining independence. Busia was on record to have travelled to London to get the British government to deny granting independence until their proposed Federal form of government had been accepted. His main goal according to him was "to enable every man and woman in our country to live a life of dignity and freedom" (Busia, 1969, pp. 3-4).

But how did his cabinet effectuate? It was a cabinet bent on borrowing. Shortly after his inauguration, together with his finance minister, J.H. Mensah, he travelled to the U.S., the U.K., and Mexico in search of aid, and ended up inviting the IMF to Ghana. The U.K. and the U.S. were to lend between \$170 and \$270 million to the country. For access to financial assistance, Ghana was required to devalue the cedi and reduce the import level (Valerie, 1973, p. 665). The country was so pressed economically that in 1971, he passed the "austerity" budget. The impact of the budget was so grievous that it led to a total ban on all imports of autos, TVs, cigarettes, soda, aluminium sheeting, and an increase in petrol duty, inter alia. The government went to the extent of abolishing civil servants' and army officers' vehicle maintenance allowances and further tried to cut military costs and increase the productivity of the forces (Valerie, 1973, p. 667).

His governance was characterised by nepotism, corruption, party patronage, and ethnic discrimination (see Maxwell, 1972). During his inaugural address in 1969, Busia said:

... rulers cannot accomplish what is expected of them unless they are invested and entrusted with adequate power. Our own recent history has taught us that the sweet heady wine of power is apt to besot and turn rulers into oppressive tyrants (Busia, 1969, p. 1).

The imperious posture of the party led Busia to believe no other group but himself could administer the country. He jabbed that even the opposition parties would concede that, if his government failed the nation, there would not be another such group of men with integrity to manage the country's affairs (Daily Graphic, 1 June 1971). In the meanwhile, as the Prime Minister imposed his austerity budget on the denizens in tandem with scrapping incentives and reducing salaries of civil servants and the military and job losses were rife, he was busily setting up a mansion of an admitted cost of C155,000 in his hometown (Maxwell, 1972, p. 57). Yet again, on 13 January 1972, the army (the National Redemption Council (NRC), and later the Supreme Military Council I&II (SMC I&II) struck to topple his government whilst he was in London. According to reports, he went to London for eye treatment from whence he left for Paris (Daily Graphic, 15 Jan. 1972) upon hearing the putsch.

Colonel I.K. Acheampong delivered a radio broadcast of the putsch. He said,

I bring you good tidings; Busia's hypocrisy has been detected. We in the Ghana Armed Forces have today taken over the Government from Busia and his ruling Progress Party. With immediate effect, the Constitution is withdrawn, Parliament is dissolved, and the Progress Party and all political parties are banned. Dr. Kofi Abrefa Busia is removed from office. The Leader of the Opposition is dismissed. All Government Members of Parliament should report at the nearest police station for their own safety (Daily Graphic, 14 Jan. 1972).

The army Colonel added that the malpractices, corruption, arbitrary dismissals, economic mismanagement, etc., that they fought some years ago had returned under Busia. He was charged with dismissing some army and police officers under the pretext of retirement; putting other officers in certain positions to suit the whims of Busia and his colleagues; taking the few amenities and facilities which the army and police enjoyed under Nkrumah; the dismissal of over 1000 civil servants; disorganising the Trade Union Congress (TUC); abusing the Constitution and making a mockery of it. Thus, the army and police resolved to stop him from "committing further blunders and to prevent him from totally collapsing the country before he runs away to enjoy the huge fortune he has acquired outside the country" (Daily Graphic, 14 Jan. 1972, p. 3). The army also undertook to review his policies. In a column dubbed "Graphic view", it was expressed that:

... the situation is precarious because we are in the throes of economic strangulation and contrary to expectation the measures Doctor Busia's government took to arrest the situation have obviously misfired. If anything, those measures especially the recent devaluation of the Cedi, have aggravated the situation and increased the hardships of the already hard-pressed Ghanaians. This unhappy situation has been brought about by the ever-growing external debts, lack of meaningful export trade, non-productive public expenditure and a massive rural development programme which has imposed an extra financial burden on the ratepayers and on our foreign reserves. Our economic plight is grave and therefore requires radical surgery if any headway is to be made towards survival (Daily Graphic, 15 Jan. 1972, p. 2).

The entire country supported the putsch. In Ho, people thronged the streets to express their support for the N.R.C. with the message "Pro Shock! Down with dialogue with South Africa, Captain A.A. Afrifa is a rogue and Busia is a thief; Down with tribalistic Government, and long live N.R.C" (Daily Graphic, 18 Jan. 1972, p. 9). By then South Africa was under white rule. Busia was slammed as "a puppet of Western powers". Thousands of workers (of the T.U.Cs., Makola markets, VALCO, Ghana-Italian Petroleum Company—GHAIP, GIHOC, etc.) and private people in Accra, Takoradi, Sekondi, Tema, Kumasi, Tamale thronged the streets to support the intriguants. In Nigerian newspapers, the independent "Daily Express" expressed that Busia

... should thank his stars that he was out of Ghana when those who appear to love Ghana more tried to rescue the country from his bunglings that he called governing. Dog, they say, does not eat dogs. Busia was loudest in denunciation of Dr Nkrumah, yet events have proved he was in all strata of government

machinery a misfit-in-chief (Daily Graphic, 15 Jan. 1972).

Under Busia, Ghanaians were classified among the highest tax-paying “people in the world”, coupled with other problems facing the country such as “unemployment, corruption, apathy, careless dissipation of funds and waste” (Daily Graphic, 17 Jan. 1972, p. 2). In a similar fashion to what happened to Nkrumah in 1966, the chiefs endorsed the putsch. For instance, Nana Attakora Amaniampong II (Mamponghe), Nii Amugi II (The Ga Mantse), Nana Kwaw Fraiku III (Shama), Nana Nyarko Eku IX (Agona Nyakrom) and their respective councils (see Daily Graphic, 19 Jan. 1972, p. 3) all endorsed the intriguants. The country remained under military rule until 1979 when the Third Republic was ushered in.

#### 4. The Third Republic: 1979-1981

The Third Republic headed by the government of Dr Hilla Limann and his People’s National Party (P.N.P.), after winning the elections supervised by the A.F.R.C., is the infant of Ghana’s republics. Under this republic, Ghana adopted an American-style presidential system. The economy he took had nothing to write home about as the interregnum military rule had left it in tatters. His reforms targeted at controlling government expenditure, improving agriculture, and taxation failed to revive the economy. He was thus left with the option of beseeching the Bretton Woods Institutions. He took a one-billion-dollar (Chazan, 1983, p. 312) bailout from the IMF. By 1981 the loan had exceeded 1.4 billion dollars (Chazan, 1983, pp. 313, 315). In simple terms, the country was in a recession accompanied by shortages of essential commodities and hyperinflation, and the President lost grip of the situation as he failed to coordinate the various sectors in tandem with his distrust of the army and rancour with student bodies (see Chazan, 1983, pp. 313, 315; Dzorgbo, 1998, p. 220).

As Ghanaians were preparing to celebrate the New Year of 1982, the military declared a “Holy War” led by Flight-Lieutenant J.J. Rawlings on 31 December 1981 to oust the Third Republic. The aim he said was “to enable the soldier, the farmer, the worker, the policeman and other poor people to be actively involved in the decision-making process of the country”, and further described the leadership of the P.N.P. as “a bunch of criminals” (The Ghanaian Times, 1 Jan. 1982). The revolution was dubbed “the people’s revolution” under the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC). The first action by this military council was to order taxi drivers and tro-tro drivers (drivers of commercial privately owned passenger vans), market women and traders of perishable food items to reduce their fares and prices, respectively with immediate effect. The rationale per the council was “aimed at enabling prices to meet the pockets of the ordinary man” (The Ghanaian Times, 2 Jan. 1982).

Limann was not a listening president. Mr. S.T. Provençal of the Kwame Nkrumah Revolutionary Guards (KNRG) said Limann had victimised the people and the Armed Forces through “corruption and elitist *laissez-faire* policies which had destroyed many homes and driven most Ghanaians out of the country to become ‘economic refugees’ in foreign countries” (The Ghanaian Times, 4 Jan. 1982). The radio broadcast followed a similar pattern to what had happened to Busia to dismiss the president and his ministers, suspend the constitution and proscribe all political parties. One other reason for the putsch was that Limann had abandoned his pledge to the AFRC which handed it power, in 1979, to purge the country of its corrupt elements. Rawlings in his speech echoed the PNP’s failure to undertake this promise and its failure to provide for the social and medical needs of the people and further denied the masses their fundamental rights. Thus, he remarked that “they have turned our hospitals into graveyards and our clinics into death transit-camps where men, women and children die daily because of lack of drugs and basic equipment” (The Ghanaian Times, 4 Jan. 1982).

Furthermore, a few political cliques possessed most of the wealth of the nation. Thus, Rawlings added that “when some people in the society have more than enough of the nation’s produce while others of the

same society cannot have their basic needs, the system doesn't make sense" (The Ghanaian Times, 9 Jan. 1982). Looters, plunderers, and profiteers were hunted and arrested; an action which caused prices to drop. For instance, prices of items locally produced and imported immediately started decreasing—a tin of milk was slashed to between C4 and C6 from C10; mackerel from C16 to C12.50; a tin of Cerelac baby food from C25 to C20; a large-sized canned tomato puree from C72 to 70; cushion foams from C120 and C150 to C80 a piece" (The Ghanaian Times, 5 Jan. 1982), etc. Yet again, people from all classes endorsed the collapse of the Third Republic. Rawlings remained at the helm of affairs and ushered the country into the Fourth Republic in 1992.

## 5. The Fourth Republic: How long can it hold? 1992-present

This is the longest republic in Ghana's young democratic history. At the end of the first elections to be organised in Ghana in 1951, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, in his speech in the House of Commons, said those elections

were accorded unprecedented publicity in the Press and Parliament in this country (the U.K.) and elsewhere and that their significance for the future both of the Gold Coast and Africa as a whole has been widely recognised", and further expressed his hearty congratulations to all members of the Government Service on "this auspicious start to the new constitutional phase in the Gold Coast (ARG 1/24/9, Circular No. 16/51 File No. SCR.1038, 1951, p. 1).

The overall expectation was for the elections "to create and establish electoral machinery that would enable these elections to be the authentic voice of the people of the Gold Coast" (ARG 1/24/9, Circular No. 16/51 File No. SCR.1038, 1951, p. 1). But have the elections been the voice of the people? The simple answer, to a larger extent, is no. Elections in Ghana, especially those under the Fourth Republic have thus far been those of mere rhetoric, propaganda, spending spree, borrowing, and politics of discontinuities. For instance, Ghana's debt as of November 2022 was 575 billion cedis, representing 93.5% of GDP (All Africa, 2023). The IMF has projected Ghana's public debt to rise above \$98 billion in 2023 (IMF, 2023) due to high government borrowing. As a matter of fact, in December 2022, the Finance Minister, Ken Ofori-Atta, admitted that debt payments were taking up between 70% to 100% of the government's revenue and that the ratio of the country's public debt to its GDP had exceeded 100% (Singh, 2023). For the first time, the government suspended its debt service payments on external debt, including commercial and bilateral loans, as it focused on restructuring its domestic debts. The consequences were dire and led to economic burdens on the people and the economy. For instance, by December 2022 inflation was at 54.1%, the highest in 20 years; housing, electricity, water, gas and other fuels rose by 82.3% year-on-year by the end of 2022, the cedi lost 54.2% against the dollar (Singh, 2023), unemployment increased, there was a freeze in hiring into the public sector- the largest employing sector of the economy, and passage of various forms of taxation.

The incumbent administration came to power in 2016 on a promise to stop borrowing, reduce taxation and propel the economy "from taxation to production" (Aziamor-Mensah, 2023) as was said by the current vice-president in rallies leading up to the 2016 elections. However, the administration has introduced more taxes and borrowed more with little progress in production. In 2017, for instance, the government introduced the VAT Flat Rate Scheme (VFRS) for retailers and wholesalers at 3%; in 2018 it turned GETFund Levy and NHIL into "straight levies" that cannot be reclaimed; in 2019 it introduced Communications Service Tax on calls; in 2021, there was the Covid-19 health recovery levy, a 1% levy on imported and exported goods and services, except those exempted, financial sector clean-up levy (5% levy on profit before tax of banks), energy sector recovery levy (20 pesewas on every litre of diesel and petrol, and 18 pesewas on every kg of LPG), and a 1.5% (but in March 2023 reduced to 1%) e-levy on all electronic money transfers (Adonu, 2023), among others. Despite all that, the government had to go to the IMF for a bailout because of its excessive expenditures on consumption instead of production.

In the early 2000s, Ghana's debt was cancelled by the IMF and the World Bank through its Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiatives. However, between 2007 and 2015 the debt began to rise again. Singh (2023) said this was due to the increases in cocoa and gold prices, which increased lending. Thus, the external loans stood at \$18.2 billion and \$8.7 billion in debt payments. Ghana was designated to be at high risk of debt distress by 2015. However, the World Bank went ahead to give another \$1.16 billion in loans to the country (Singh, 2023). These loans are difficult to account for and it is even more difficult to know or trace how they were utilised. Tim Jones said that "many lenders and governments around the world are very opaque about what loans are used for and even the terms on which they are made" (Jones, 2016, p. 16). In the case of Ghana, Jones stated that of the main external debts owed by Ghana, he had not been able to find the interest rates or terms of the non-bond private sector loans, nor for many of the loans from other governments (Jones, 2016, p. 16). Loans with multilateral institutions are only made public after they have been agreed upon. Thus, Jones put forward that in such instances, it could be assumed that "the scrutiny of such loans by parliamentarians, civil society and the media in the borrowing countries before contracts are signed" (2016, p. 17), are not duly performed. The lack of proper checks on government borrowing, especially for infrastructure like schools, roads, and health facilities, is leading to politics of discontinuities. There have been countless uncompleted projects in the country since the 1960s. Instead of continuing them, governments borrow to start afresh similar projects and only to leave them uncompleted when they lose power, and the cycle goes on like that without accountability. For instance, several structures of the E-Blocks Project, which was signed between the Government of Ghana and the World Bank Group in a \$156 million project spanning 2014-2019, towards providing and improving secondary education in deprived communities have been abandoned when the government changed hands in 2016. In addition to this loan, the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GetFund), in 2018 used 40% of its revenue to secure a loan of \$1.5 billion for the provision of educational infrastructure (The Fourth Estate, 2022). The country still faces shortages of classes to educate its children and yet these projects are left to rot. Similarly, in 2020, about 53 abandoned health facilities whose constructions started in 2017 and are 60% and above complete were brought to the attention of the president (Darko, 2020). Instead of completing them to improve access to health in the country, the president made a new commitment to build 88 new district hospitals within a year in 2020 (Ghana Web, 2020), but has not even fulfilled the promise.

Ghana has applied to the IMF for a bailout package seventeen times since 1966. The seventeenth requested bailout of \$3 billion, is yet to be granted but is expected any time soon. Rawlings' rule as a civilian president starting in 1992 started the Fourth Republic. Elections have been held every four years since then. In 2000, he handed over power to the cabinet of J.A. Kufuor who ruled for 8 years. Prof. J.E.A. Mills won the 2008 elections to form the next government, but died in power on 24 July 2012, barely five months before the 7 December 2012 elections. His then-vice-president, John D. Mahama assumed the mantle of power and went on to win the 2012 elections. In 2016, Mahama lost to Nana A.D. Akufo-Addo, who again won the 2020 elections to continue as the President of the Republic. But what do they have in common? Rawlings was known for his disrelish for corruption; Kufuor espoused zero tolerance for corruption like Mills and the others to follow suit. Rawlings was mostly accused of his human rights records and the use of fear to get the economy running. However, Mills was the one who lived up to expectations with his fight against corruption and sound economic policies even to the encomium of the opposition. Ghana's economic fundamentals have not been the same since his demise and even worse under the current regime accompanied by colossal malversation and disregard for the law, albeit the sitting president doubles as a lawyer.

Kufuor's administration was thought to be the most corrupt in the early years of the Fourth Republic, even though he introduced Free Maternal Healthcare under the Ghana National Health Insurance Scheme, built hospitals, the school feeding programme, etc. There were several cases of conflicts of interest and embezzlement. Some of these include (see Apaak, 27 Oct. 2009) the Hotel Kufuor saga involving the son of President Kufuor to the tune of \$3.5 million funded by Prudential Bank partly owned by SSNIT, and the National Investment Bank; overlooking the ruling of CHRAJ against Dr R.W. Anane following findings

of abuse of power and conflict of interest and offered him a portfolio; the several cocaine sagas—several parcels of cocaine vanished under police surveillance and some even turned into powder; eight ministries under him lost 440,814,014,679 cedis public funds due to factors such as corruption, maladministration, inefficiency and sheer negligence. On 1 July 2007, Kufuor’s government decided to redenominate the cedi by removing four zeros, due to inflationary pressures and increasing debt. Ten thousand cedis were shrunk to one cedi. Per the Bank of Ghana, the move was necessitated by “increasing difficulty in maintaining accounting and statistical records; and problems with accounting and data processing software” (PwC, 2007, p. 2). This was simply a ploy to divert public funds and to turn the public’s mind away from the increasing debts of the administration.

Under Mahama (July 2012-2016), although his administration was also characterised by enormous malversation, there were massive infrastructural programmes to advance the welfare of the people in the form of schools, hospitals, data centres, roads, etc. The cedi to a dollar under the Mills/Mahama administration was two; but deep towards the end of the Mahama administration, it sold at four cedis, three pesewas (Ghc4.3). One malfeasance that stood out was the GYEEDA saga (see Ministry of Youth and Sports Report, July 2013). It led to the imprisonment of its coordinator Mr Abuga Pele, and a businessman Mr Philip Akpeena Assibit to six and twelve years respectively, for defrauding the state to the tune of 4.1 million cedis. The youth development agency was used to divert state funds into private pockets through questionable contracts. There was also the SADA saga – a scheme meant to help and develop the northern part of the country. However, due to a lack of due diligence GhC1,059,649.04 was lost on consultancy services alone (see the SADA saga, Myjoy Online, 24 April 2014). As part of the SADA initiative, an amount of GhC47 million was blown on guinea fowl and afforestation projects in the north. SADA entered a venture with Azontaba Cottage Industry to form a Guinea Fowl Production and Marketing Company at an estimated amount of GhC15 million. However, in the end, only a handful of the birds were reared. When queried about the whereabouts of the other birds considering the amount of investment, the management said, “They may have flown to an unknown destination in Burkina Faso” (Ghana web, 19 Oct. 2015).

Another saga under Mahama’s administration was the Airbus saga. Mahama was fingered in “a case of kickbacks in the contract for the sale of Airbus military equipment to Ghana” (Holmey, 11 May 2020). This was the sale of three Airbus C-295 military planes to Ghana at £50 million (Ghana Web, 2020, 20 June). The report said that a subsidiary of Airbus had hired the brother of a high-ranking Ghanaian elected official, a friend of this said brother, and a third person to serve as commercial partners in the sale of three military aircraft to Ghana. The company, which had no experience in the military industry, took advantage of the family ties of one Samuel Adam Mahama with a member of the government. The British judge who sat on the case found that Airbus, through the kickbacks, sought to obtain an “undue favour from a member of the Ghanaian government (Holmey, 11 May 2020). A full-scale investigation into this scandal was launched by the then special prosecutor, Martin Amidu, who in his report tagged this elected official as “Government Official 1”. However, no further actions were taken thereof. While the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), the Christian Council, and the Council of Chiefs were constantly criticising him on one hand, there were threats of strikes by labour unions on the other. The president became frustrated to the extent that he said he had “the dead goat syndrome”, which meant that he was not perturbed by whatever actions the labour unions decided to pursue.

The current Akuffo-Addo administration is tawdrider than those cited above. It is engulfed in several scandals, and economic mismanagement, and has the most plenteous cabinet (with above 100 ministers, each with multiple deputies to govern a population of a little above 30,000,000) under the republics with unprecedented access to wealth and revenue than any of his predecessors. Although on paper it came with good plans such as Free SHS, One Village One Dam, its intent to build factories, etc., their implementations were ill-done and he has ballooned the country’s debt to GDP to above eighty percent of GDP, with very little to display. When he took the economy, the cedi to the dollar was four cedis, three pesewas; but it is almost thirteen cedis to the dollar currently.



In 2020, under a shady deal with his compeers, he attempted to monetise all of Ghana's mineral royalties to an offshore company, Agyapa Royalties Ltd (see Amidu, 26 Nov. 2020). The company was registered in "the British Crown Dependency of Jersey in the British Islands". The government intended to

... sell 49 percent of the shares of this company through public offering and keep a 51 percent stake, in a move, it regarded as an innovative financing solution to help ease the country's debt crisis, but it valued the gold rights at far less than they could be worth (Transparency International, 31 Mar. 2022).

But the Special Prosecutor in November 2020 released a report citing "incidences of rigging and corruption, including opening doors for illicit financial flows and money laundering", with "millions of dollars already paid out to companies without legally required approvals". Databank, a bank owned by the finance minister who is also a cousin of the president was selected without recourse to procurement laws (Transparency International, 31 Mar. 2022). For instance, they valued the mineral resource at \$1 billion, which IMANI said amounted "to undervaluing Ghana's resources by over 65%" (IMANI, 27 Aug. 2020, p. 1). In the end, it was dropped as the public outcry grew stronger.

Instead of travelling by Ghana's Presidential Jet, Akufo-Addo resorted to charting luxurious jets for his trips abroad. According to the North Tongu MP, S.O. Ablakwa, in a space of thirteen months, the President has spent a whopping GhC34 million on ultra-luxury-chartered jets (Ghana web, 26 June 2022). Recently, when a journalist contacted the RTI (The Right to Information) Commission about the procurement method used to select the company from which the President rents private jets, the cost involved, and the reasons why he is not using Ghana's Presidential Jet, the Commission responded that it has decided, for national security reasons, not to make public the cost of the President's travel (Aziamor-Mensah, 26 Jan. 2023). What's more, several decades after independence, as unemployment is raging among the youth, schools in deprived communities are without desks to sit on, soaring inflation, increasing impoverishment of the masses, etc., the President and his cousin-cum-Finance Minister are bent on building a National Cathedral to praise God. When the masses complained of hardship in the country, unlike the reaction of the people of Nkrumah's birthplace when his government was toppled, the Paramount Chief of Akyem Abuakwa Traditional Area Osagyefo Amoatia Ofori Panin, where the current President hails, asserted that:

... we should stop, we should be appreciative, we should appreciate him for his efforts; we should protect him. As for the insults, it's for children of illiterates; if you are trained properly, you won't do that unless you are a witch or wizard (Yalley, 24 Oct. 2022).

The once-vocal Christian Council against the erstwhile administration has gone dead-silent under the current cabinet. When asked about the silence, one of the members, Rev. Prof. E. Martey said he has changed his style of commenting on national issues. He said, "Those I need to communicate with them I communicate. Sometimes through text messages and a lot of things have happened because of my intervention. So, I'm still speaking" (Ghana Web, 25 May 2022). Thus, with recent waves of putsches across the African continent, -- in Mali (August 2020), Guinea (September 2021), Sudan (October 2021), Burkina Faso (January 2022), Niger (July 2023), and Gabon (August 2023) --, because of issues such as corruptions and embezzlements, security concerns, dynastic-styled political democracies, economic dependencies and bad governance, and unemployment among other reasons, one is right to be concerned about how their countries are governed and how the politicians are quick to become wealthy after only brief years in politics. Recently in Ghana, the Minister of Sanitation and Water Resources, Cecilia Abena Dapaah, lost a cash sum of \$1,000,000, 300,000 euros, and 350,000 Ghana cedis, in addition to other personal items including handbags valued at \$35,000 and \$95,000 worth of jewellery (Nunoo & Zane, 25 July 2023) through a theft at her house. She reported the incident to the police but could not explain the source of the sums. She resigned and is currently under investigation. This is just one person. How many

of Cecilia Dapaah are there in Ghana? It is rare in Ghana for a cabinet minister, or a political figure accused of corruption and malversation to resign because they know the public outcry is brief and would die down naturally. Charges of malversation take too long to be solved, if at all, and end up dying in the court of public opinion.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, to answer the question posed above whether the malversation under Nkrumah was worse than what is currently happening in the fourth republic, it is simply no, and incomparable. But first, the paper will compare the various republics. Nkrumah championed the development of political democracy in Ghana. Immediately after the grant of independence, he undertook social reforms and economic reforms that would open Ghana to industrialization. Key among them was his instrumental role in the establishment of the Akosombo Dam, textile factory, GIHOC Fibre Products Company, glass factory, sugar factory, Bonsa tyre factory, roads, etc., and enormous investments in education and other sectors of the economy. Thus, in Nkrumah's fifteen-year rule (1951-1966), Ghana was left with lasting development in all spheres of the economy, and it was the "Star of Africa" with a concrete development path. However, his decision in 1964 to introduce the one-party system ended up suppressing the civil liberties of many and brought to a halt the vibrant political space he had spearheaded. He followed this policy of his with the PDA which led to the arbitrary arrest of his political opponents and dissenters. This prevented several investors from coming to Ghana (see Attuquayefio, 1974, p. 70). Nkrumah at a point did not trust the security services and used any public space he had to remind the army that politics was not for them. He went a step further to reshuffle some army and police officers. This, together with the suppression of political freedom and selective justice was the main cause of the putsch against him because the economic charges seemed frivolous. For instance, after 15 years in power, Nkrumah was said to own £2,500,000, an estate, a Press, and a private company, which did not seem out of proportion considering the number of years he had been in service.

For Busia under the Second Republic, it was a combination of economic and interference in the security services that got him ousted. For instance, his borrowing of \$180 million and \$270 million from the West, devaluation of the cedi, his austerity budget of 1971 which led to an outright ban of all imports of essential goods, his decision to build a mansion whilst asking the masses to sacrifice for the economy, dismissal of over 1000 civil servants and forced retirement of army and police officers, complacency, high unemployment and economic mismanagement culminated for his ouster. Contrarily, Liman of the Third Republic was not a strong leader, and he was unlucky to have inherited an empty coffer. He immediately headed to the IMF and the World Bank for \$1 billion in aid. Despite obtaining the aid he failed to coordinate the various sectors of the country and was at loggerheads with the army and students. His administration was characterised by hyperinflation and corruption as a few people possessed most of the nation's wealth.

It is 31 years now since the commencement of the Fourth Republic. Almost every administration under the Fourth Republic, except the Mills administration, has been to the IMF for a bailout. The administrations of this republic are notable for malversation in increasing order. There were various reforms such as GYEEDA, SADA, Free SHS, health insurance scheme, etc., that would have changed the social conditions of many people and offered improved healthcare and education to many others had they been executed thoroughly. However, these social intervention programmes served as avenues for looting the scarce resources of the state in millions of dollars. Another notable feature of the Fourth Republic is nepotism. This undermines the precept of democratic equality, and it is dangerous for a country should these blood relatives put their heads together to siphon the state. For instance, under the current administration, the president, his cousin-cum-finance minister, and his nephew attempted to monetise Ghana's mineral royalties (at \$1 billion) and formed a company, Agyapa Royalties Ltd., for that purpose without going through due processes. They were to keep 51% and sell 49% through public offerings. They undervalued the minerals by over 65% and paid millions of cedis to the company without legal approval.

However, the scheme failed due to public outcry. Whilst Nkrumah devoted lots of energy to invest in educating the nation's youth, the incumbent is bent on building a \$400 million cathedral (Mensah, 18 April 2023) when hundreds of school-going kids do not have desks to sit on or clean water to drink. The president has spent over \$58 million to dig a giant hole for the cathedral. Also, the travelling spree of the incumbent president is alarming as he spent over 34 million cedis in thirteen months of travel. Due to public outcry, the presidency has decided not to make public such travelling costs.

Thus, Ghana's politics post-Nkrumah is without a concrete direction and there is no national target. Nkrumah was a visionary leader who ruminated on the future needs of the country and drew a progressive growth path for it. Thus, to answer the question posed earlier, the malversation of the Fourth Republic is worse than what Nkrumah and the other republics were charged with. Indeed, Nkrumah may have had his snags, but economic mismanagement was not the real cause of the putsch against him. It had to do with retroactions, especially among the elements who fought him as he prepared for independence and the apprehension of the army towards his personality and obtrusion into their affairs. Ghana has never had a clear vision since then and the country has been subjected to the politics of borrowing and a vagarious system.

Democratic institutions are still fragile in Ghana, especially those of checks and balances. There is still violence and deaths during national elections, almost every four years (see Bekoe et al., 2012; Dumenu & Adzraku, 2020). Elected officials easily get away with wrongdoings because "the police and judiciary services are among some of the most corrupt state institutions" (Fobih, 2011, p. 589) in the public sector. Therefore, getting those institutions to function properly, to borrow Fobih's phrase, will help "political institutions to be more accountable and thus more responsive to the people's needs" (Fobih, 2011, p. 585). Transparency is important in building a healthy political society. Thus, as the political and public institutions are strengthened, there is a need for enhancing civic education towards deepening the relationship between the people and their elected officials and spelling out their respective roles in the political strata. Lastly, there is the need to elect charismatic, policy-oriented and responsible leaders who are competent and not or less corrupt.

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