ETHNICITY, RELIGION AND ELECTIONS IN GHANA

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ABSTRACT

Politics in Ghana's fourth republic is an interesting phenomenon. The intricacies in Ghanaian politics is one that requires constant analysis. In this paper, we examine some of these intricacies – the question and role of identity in politics in Ghana. We particularly analyse how ethnicity and religion influence elections in one of Africa's promising democracies. The analysis is based primarily on the scrutiny of official reports and detailed review of published works. The paper concludes that the tendencies to engage in over ethnicization and excessive religious undercurrent in Ghana's fourth republic, if not properly managed, can lead to ethnic and religious clashes, especially during electioneering periods. It is in view of this that we recommend that religious and traditional leaders make conscious efforts to promote peaceful and decorous campaigns. Moreover, there is the need for political leaders to avoid inciting ethnic groups against one another, even as societal groups embark on educating and sensitizing the general population.

Keywords: Democracy, Elections, Identity, Politics, Ghana

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Overview of Ghana's Fourth Republic

The Cold War's demise and concomitant collapse of the Eastern-Communist bloc in 1989 climaxed a departure from authoritarianism, and made democracy the *'most wanted'* governance system globally.[2] Unequivocally, the last decade of 20th century witnessed numerous multiparty democratic experiments across Africa: the so-called third wave of democratization,[3] which brought to bear severe pressure on authoritarian leaders in Africa to adopt freer political systems in early 1990s[4] - an era Lucian Pye (1990) describes as the global crisis of authoritarianism.[5] Thus, most of, if not all African countries would shun authoritarianism for multiparty democracy. This also coincidentally marks beginning of Ghana's three decades old fourth democratization trial.[6]

Arguably, the history of multiparty elections in Ghana dates as far back as 1951 when Ghana's first ever democratic election was held[7] which was contested by three main political parties – the Convention People's Party (CPP), United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) and the National Democratic Party (NDP). Again, 1954 and 1956 would mark the 2nd and 3rd consecutive times elections were held in pre-independent Ghana.[8] Since independence, several elections would be held, but more importantly, it must be said, following the first military junta in 1966, Ghana would experience series of military interregnums, with failed attempts to restore multiparty democracy at least on two occasions (1969-72 and 1979-81), until 1993 when the Fourth Republic, which is currently in force, was installed.[9] However, under the Fourth Republic, electoral democracy appears to have deepened in Ghana. Since 1992, eight consecutive elections have been held (1992, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016 and 2020), with three successive power alternations (2000, 2008 and 2016).[10] Multiparty elections have

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[2] Alex Kaakyire Duku Frempong, *Elections in Ghana (1951-2016):(Elections in Ghana 1951-2012 Revised & Updated)* (Digibooks Ghana Limited 2017).

[3] Samuel P Huntington, 'Democracy's Third Wave' (1991) 2 Journal of democracy 12.

[4] Frempong (n 1).

[5] ibid.

[6] ibid.

[7] Alexander KD Frempong, 'Innovations in Electoral Politics in Ghana's Fourth Republic: An Analysis' [2008] Democratic innovation in the south: Participation and representation in Asia, Africa and Latin America 183.

[8] Frempong (n 1).

[9] Roger Gocking, *The History of Ghana* (Greenwood publishing group 2005).

[10] Thomas P Botchway and Abdul Hamid Kwarteng, 'Electoral Reforms and Democratic Consolidation in Ghana: An Analysis of the Role of the Electoral Commission in the Fourth Republic (1992-2016)' [2018] Asian Research Journal of Arts & Social Sciences 1.

therefore become important building blocks around which Ghana's democracy revolves. However, earnest efforts are still required to address some deleterious issues such as ethno-regional, and religious acrimonies that are associated with, and undermine the integrity of elections in Ghana.[11]

Research on electoral politics points to a wide array of disparate explanatory factors that influence voters' choice at polls: social class, religious affiliation, party identification, and evaluation of economic issues.[12, 13, 14] But in Ghana, people's party affiliations and electoral choices are mostly informed by such identity factors as ethno-regional, and religious affinities. It is noteworthy, however, that identity politics in Ghana predates not only the Fourth Republic but also, independence.[15] For example, in the 1954 elections, apart from the CPP, all the other parties that contested represented either ethnic, religious or regional interests.[16] Again, the formation of National Liberation Movement (NLM) immediately after 1954 elections, even epitomised identity politics in Ghana.[17] This will unfortunately continue unabated into the post-independence era.[18] Identity issues still play significant role in Ghana's fourth democratization quest, especially in electioneering (campaign) periods: from campaign strategy to elections outcome, role of identity factors such as religion, region, and ethnicity cannot be overemphasized. Largely, even the choice of party candidates and running mates are hugely influenced by these identity factors. Many believe, and same has widely been circulated that identity, particularly religion and ethnicity constitute important determinants of outcome of all past elections held under Ghana's Fourth Republic since

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[11] Kwame Boafo-Arthur, *Democracy and Stability in West Africa: The Ghanaian Experience* (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet; Department of Peace and Conflict Research … 2008).

[12] Rune Stubager, 'Education-Based Group Identity and Consciousness in the Authoritarian-Libertarian Value Conflict' (2009) 48 European Journal of Political Research 204.

[13] Michael S Lewis-Beck and Martin Paldam, 'Economic Voting: An Introduction' (2000) 19 Electoral studies 113.

[14] Ole Borre, *Issue Voting: An Introduction* (Aarhus Universitetsforlag 2001).

[15] Richard Asante and Emmanuel Gyimah-Boadi, 'Ethnic Structure, Inequality and Governance of the Public Sector in Ghana' [2004] United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

[16] Ransford Osafo-Danso, 'Beyond Elections: Ghana's Democracy from the Perspective of the Citizenry' (PhD Thesis, Walden University 2015).

[17] Asante and Gyimah-Boadi (n 14).

[18] Osafo-Danso (n 15).

1992.[19, 20] However, a systematic and holistic assessment of actual impact of religion and ethnicity on overall outcome of all eight elections previously held so far is largely lacking. This provides the background for the current paper. The question which consequently underpins this paper is: "In what ways, if any, have religion and ethnicity influenced outcome of all previously held (eight presidential elections) under Ghana's Fourth Republic between 1992 and 2020?" This paper, thus provides a critical appraisal of the respective roles religion and ethnicity played in outcomes of these elections held in Ghana between 1992 and 2020. Particular attention would be paid to the two main political parties, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP).

This research is based hugely on sourcing information from already published works. The data were sourced from the Electoral Commission's (EC) official records, media reports, and reports from civil society organizations' archives. Also, published newspapers, books, journals articles and online portals were sourced. The text data sourced were content analysed under well-organized themes.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: Section Two provides an overview of identity and electoral outcomes in Ghana; Section Three presents analysis and discussions of the emerging issues; and finally, Section Four captures the concluding remarks and recommendations for future actions.

A Review of Identity and Multiparty Elections in Ghana
This section reviews relevant literature on some major thematic issues on identity and multiparty elections in Ghana. It consists of two main parts: 1) an overview of relevant theoretical model on identity (religion and ethnicity) and voter choices in Ghana; and 2) a historical overview of identity (religion and ethnicity) and election outcomes in Ghana.

The Sociological Model of Ghanaian Voters' Electoral Choices
Since the 1940s, study of voter behaviour has gained currency in electoral politics globally. Four main models of voter behaviour are identified by Heywood (2007), namely: *the sociological model, the party-identification model, the rational choice model, and the*

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[19] J Ayee, 'Assessing the Progress of Democracy and Good Governance in Africa, the Ghanaian Case' [1998] Online resources available at http://unpan1. un. org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/cafrad/unpan008718. p df.

[20] Arthur Kennedy, *Chasing the Elephant into the Bush: The Politics of Complacency* (AuthorHouse 2009).

dominant ideology mode.[21] This paper adopts and explains the sociological model as its theoretical foundation for explaining how identity (i.e., religion and ethnicity) has influenced voter choices in the presidential elections organized in Ghana over the period 1992-2020.

The sociological model shows that long-held social factors, such as region, religion and ethnicity are key determinants of voter behaviour. The extant literature shows that sociological factors largely influence elections outcome in Africa at large and Ghana in particular. For instance, Ichino and Nathan (2013)[22] observed that ethnicity is a key influence on voter choices in Africa. Most academics share similar views on ethnic motive in African elections. Ishiyama (2011)[23] argued that voting in Africa is ethnic-induced. For Horowitz (1985), elections in Africa are nothing but *ethnic census* to show identities of people and their sense of belonging to particular ethnicities etc. On his part, Elischer (2012)[24] opines that voting in Africa is usually confined to *communal boundaries* and identity-related issues such as region, religion and ethnicity. The argument here is that, the sociological model basically explains voter choices at polls based largely on social identities such as religion, race or ethnicity and social class among others.[25] According to this model, voters necessarily vote for a particular candidate or party in an election due to common social background they share - in terms of region, religion, ethnicity and social class among others - with the party or its candidate.[26] The limitation of this model, however, is that it fails to recognize the rational calculations voters in Africa in general, and Ghana in particular make during elections before casting their ballots. Many people vote for familiar people based on social leaning because they feel their interests would be met by such groups and individuals because of their social relations. Again, this model downplays the importance of party identification and ideological effects on voter choice in Africa.[27]

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[21] Andrew Heywood, *Political Ideologies: An Introduction* (Macmillan International Higher Education 2017).

[22] Nahomi Ichino and Noah L Nathan, 'Crossing the Line: Local Ethnic Geography and Voting in Ghana' (2013) 107 American Political Science Review 344.

[23] John Ishiyama, Anna Batta and Angela Sortor, 'Political Parties, Independents and the Electoral Market in Sub-Saharan Africa' (2013) 19 Party Politics 695.

[24] Sebastian Elischer, 'Measuring and Comparing Party Ideology in Nonindustrialized Societies: Taking Party Manifesto Research to Africa' (2012) 19 Democratization 642.

[25] FES (2013)

[26] Ibid

[27] Ibid

Arguably, the role of economic rationality, party identification and dominant ideology in polls in Ghana is widely acknowledged. Even though evidence presented in the literature show mixed reactions, these models largely explain some level of voter behaviours in Ghana and Africa at large. For example, Bob-Millar (2012) observed that in Ghana, supporters of the NDC and NPP perceive their support as an *investment* that will yield *selective incentives based on the amount of one's contribution to the party* (rational choice). Some academics even explained sociological variables that influence voting behaviour in rationalistic terms. For example, Ishiyama and Batta (2012), argue that voters are rational in thinking that leaders who are members of a group they belong are more likely to dispense patronage to them than leaders who are not.[28]

Also, many scholars argue that voters in Ghana are attracted by the three main elements found by Heywood (2007) as the main components of the party-identification model that psychologically influence voters' continual support for parties, which include manifesto, personality of party leadership, and track-record of a party. For instance, the impact of manifestos on fortunes of individual supporters has attracted huge debates. Ayee (2011) argues that party manifestos play significant role in determining successes in elections globally. Many scholars support this view too.[29] Gyampo and Debrah (2012) acknowledge the salience of manifestos in elections in Ghana; they however downplay its actual impact on voters' choice in elections.[30] Also, Dunn (1975) and Bob-Millar (2012) doubt the significance of manifestos in actually deciding a winner of an election in developing countries. But they rather found a strong influence of personality of party leadership and track record of parties on voters' choices and electoral fortunes of parties in Ghana.[31] Moreover, Chazan (1983) notes that ideology in Ghanaian politics is very important and it is split between liberalism and socialism since the 1940s, and was pioneered by the likes of J.B. Danquah, K.A. Busia and Kwame Nkrumah.[32] However, Ayee (2011) notes that the emergence of the NDC and NPP has distorted this line of

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[28] George M Bob-Milliar, 'Political Party Activism in Ghana: Factors Influencing the Decision of the Politically Active to Join a Political Party' (2012) 19 Democratization 668.

[29] Joseph RA Ayee, 'Manifestos and Elections in Ghana's Fourth Republic' (2011) 18 South African Journal of International Affairs 367.

[30] Emmanuel Debrah and Ransford Edward Van Gyampo, 'The Youth and Party Manifestos in Ghanaian Politics-the Case of the 2012 General Elections' (2013) 12 Journal of African Elections 96.

[31] ibid.

[32] Naomi Chazan, *An Anatomy of Ghanaian Politics: Managing Political Recession, 1969–1982: Managing Political Recession, 1969-1982* (Routledge 2019).

distinction.[33] Obeng-Odoom (2013) argues that Ghana's body politic is influenced by three ideologies: social democracy (NDC); property-owning democracy (NPP) and scientific socialism or Nkrumahism (CPP). He observed further that the remaining political parties put forward different versions of these three key beliefs.[34] But Gyimah-Boadi and Debrah (2008) doubted impacts of ideology on elections outcome in Ghana. They argued that both NDC and NPP rely hugely on populism rather than ideology and even where ideology mattered the most, the difference between them is not too clear.[35]

Religion and Electoral Politics in Ghana

Religion plays an all-important role in the lives of most Ghanaians. Prior to the advent of European Missionaries and Muslim Merchants, Traditional religion was practiced by all Africans. But, since the arrival of the duo - Islamism and Christianity - in the 1500s,[36] Africans in general and Ghanaians in particular have embraced them.[37] Currently, Christians are in majority followed by Muslims.[38] The extant literature shows that religion in Ghana has grown and it has had both beneficial and detrimental effects on civic engagements in the country.[39] The role religion plays in civic engagements and politics in particular dates back to colonialism. During the colonial period, religious groups played important role in the struggle for independence by joining forces with other civil society groups to embark on civil disobedience for the country's demands for self-governance.[40] It serves as one of the unifying social platforms in Ghana since it is believed to transcend political affiliations and ethnic divides. Religion therefore serves as a neutral platform for citizens to engage in discussions of issues of national importance without the usual political, ethnic, gender, and social class biases. Scholars have interrogated the extent to which religion has served and continues to serve as an

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[33] Ayee, J. (2011). Manifestos and Elections in Ghana's Fourth Republic, *South African Journal of International Affairs,* 18: 367-384.

[34] Franklin Obeng-Odoom, *Governance for Pro-Poor Urban Development: Lessons from Ghana* (Routledge 2013).

[35] Emmanuel Gyimah-Boadi and Emmanuel Debrah, 'Political Parties and Party Politics'.

[36] Andy Warren-Rothlin, 'Script Choice, Politics, and Bible Agencies in West Africa' (2009) 60 The Bible Translator 50.

[37] Osafo-Danso (n 15).

[38] Asante and Gyimah-Boadi (2004); Ghana Statistical Service (GSS, 2014).

[39] Jelena Pokimica, Isaac Addai and Baffour K Takyi, 'Religion and Subjective Well-Being in Ghana' (2012) 106 Social Indicators Research 61.

[40] Emmanuel Gyimah-Boadi, 'Ghana's Fourth Republic: Championing the African Democratic Renaissance?'' (2008) 8 Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-GHANA) Briefing Paper 56.

avenue and agency for civic engagement and have concluded that religion promotes civic engagement in democratic societies.[41]

In a study of the role of religion in Ghana's national politics, Tusalem (2009) found that religion played a dual role of legitimization and protestation. The author argued that the church in particular utilizes protest as a tool for social change.[42] Under both military and civilian governments, especially the church championed the course of the poor and silent majority whose plight has increasingly worsened under both regime types. Serving as the voice for the less privileged in Ghanaian societies, religions in Ghana have stood against brutalities of military regimes in the past, and also played active role in matters concerning social justice under democratic dispensations.[43] Additionally, education of the citizenry on civil liberties, economic equality and human rights has been one of the civic responsibilities of religious bodies in Ghana. Apart from the active role that religious organizations play in social and economic issues, religious premises also serve as important public sphere for the citizenry to participate in political, social, economic and cultural discussions, and engage each other positively without fear or favour.[44]

In spite of the vibrant role religion plays, Pokimica, Addai and Takyi (2012) observe that direct political participation by religious organizations in Ghana is yet to occur due to unwillingness of religious leaders to address purely political issues. But many instances where the church has sought to protect values that are central to the Christian faith such as outlawing abortions and denying gay and lesbian rights in Ghana has been widely documented.[45] However, what Pokimica, Addai and Takyi (2012) failed to appreciate is a recent surge in religious soothsaying (elections forecast/ prophesies on who will win a particular election) in Ghana by leaders of the two dominant religious groups so as to gain political favours from politicians.[46] On their part, politicians have also found religion, and use same as important socialization and campaign platforms in Ghana. As such, both major parties (NPP and NDC) try to woo religious leaders in soliciting votes in

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[41] Osafo-Danso (n 15).

[42] Rollin F Tusalem, 'The Role of Protestantism in Democratic Consolidation among Transitional States' (2009) 42 Comparative Political Studies 882.

[43] Pokimica, Addai and Takyi (n 38).

[44] Frempong (n 1).

[45] Pokimica, Addai and Takyi (n 38).

[46] In Ghana, both Imams and Pastors or Prophets have been making predictions of elections outcome since 2000.

electioneering periods.[47] Even though segments of established religious denominations in Ghana find it difficult to adopt a wholly neutral approach, in fact religion, in contrast to ethnicity, has hardly been used as a divisive electioneering campaign tool as the efforts of organizations such as the Christian Council and others attempt to ensure sanity in the airwaves.

Ethnicity and Electoral Politics in Ghana

Ghana's ethnic composition makes it improbable to interrogate civic engagement without looking at the role that ethnic divides play in such engagements. In Africa in general, ethnic and tribal affiliations have been found to dictate the actions and inactions of the citizenry, especially on social matters.[48] Particularly, in Ghana, ethnicity provides an important avenue for social identity. The 2010 Population and Housing Census puts Ghanaians under eight broader ethnic groups: Akans (47.50%), Mole-Dagbani (16.6%), Ewes (13.9%), Ga-Dangme (7.4%), Gurma (5.7%), Guans (3.7%), Grusi (2.5%), Mande-Busanga (1.1%), and other (1.6%).[49] Contemporarily, ethnic affiliations and inter-ethnic engagements contribute significantly to drawing up contours of Ghana's social and political landscape. Inter-ethnic rivalry and cooperation has impacted civic engagement and its influence in the public sphere. On the economic front, studies have revealed that ethnic groupings have had positive impact on economic development in Ghana. The desire to see one's ethnic group develop economically has been a motivating factor in spurring on communities of the same ethnic background to initiate economic activities in their localities.[50] On the contrary, research shows many instances where ethnicity has inhibited democratic governance and has been used as a tool for discrimination for or against a particular group in Ghana[51].

Ethnicity in politics is rooted in Ghana's history and predates post-independence elections. During the 1954 elections, political parties were formed along ethnic lines. For example, the Northern People's Party (NPP) was formed to protect the northern territories from southern domination and to ensure their political, social and economic development. Again, the Trans-Togoland Congress (TC) and the Anlo Youth Organization (AYO) were also formed in present-day Volta Region to safeguard interests of their

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[47] See #Election_Predictions_and_Prophecies#JoyNewsInteractive#MyJoyOnline/Dec.4,2020 [Accessed: 16/08/2021].

[48] Asante and Gyimah-Boadi (n 14).

[49] GSS (Ghana Statistical Service), '2010 Population and Housing Census' (Assembly Press Accra, 2010).

[50] Peter Arthur, 'Ethnicity and Electoral Politics in Ghana's Fourth Republic' (2009) 56 Africa Today 44.

[51] Osafo-Danso (2015); Gocking (2005); Boafo-Arthur, K. (2008).

respective tribes.[52] But, according to Frempong (2008; 2012; 2017) serious ethnic politics actually began three months after the 1954 elections, when the NLM emerged,[53] with its leadership concentrated in the hands of the Asante people. According to its founder, Baffour Osei Akoto, a senior linguist of the Asante monarch, *the NLM was formed as attempts by the Ashantis to safeguard their national identity and reverse the trend that threatened their traditional institutions with extinction.*[54] As efforts to capture political power, the NLM struck an alliance with Akyem Abuakwa and sought alliances with other ethnic and regional parties like the AYO, and the NPP. Antagonism also began to develop in the various regions based on sectional interests especially in the events leading to independence. For instance, in spite of the May 1956 plebiscite that was conducted by the UN to find out whether the then British Togoland wanted to join the Gold Coast, and the fact that CPP, which campaigned for the area to join the Gold Coast won by 79% of the valid votes cast in favour of the union, the people of southern Togoland were still in open rebellion (which reals its ugly head even today especially leading to or immediately after major elections)[55] and even boycotted the independence celebrations. Similarly, in Accra, tensions between the CPP and the Ga people grew worse and resulted in formation of the nativist Ga Shifimokpee, (the Ga Standfast Association) in 1957. This movement later joined forces with the opposition groups against the ruling CPP government.[56]

It is against this backdrop that the Nkrumah-led CPP government introduced harsh and radical political measures as efforts to deal with the increasing ethnic tensions, which threatened to disintegrate the country. He began with the passage of Avoidance of Discrimination Act in December 1957 that forbade formation of political parties along ethnic, religious and regional lines. Nkrumah also introduced the Emergency Powers Act in January 1958; and subsequently separated the Bono and Ahafo areas from Ashanti as a separate region with its own House of Chiefs. He also went on to recognize a host of chiefs who were pro-CPP in Ashanti region as paramount chiefs. This explains some of the recurrent tensions between Ashantis and Bonos. Basically, Nkrumah and the CPP

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[52] Boafo-Arthur (n 10).

[53] Asante and Gyimah-Boadi (n 14).

[54] Frempong (n 1).

[55] In 2020 the Western Togolanders declared their independence, blocked major roads and attacked police barracks in parts of Volta Region, which resulted in scuffles between the national armed forces and the members of that group. It must be however stated that, is not the entire communities in this region that support this movement's agenda.

[56] Asante and Gyimah-Boadi (n 14).

justified the use of totalitarian measures as necessary for containing the fissiparous tendencies that threatened national unity, integration and development. However, for many people, these measures were largely meant to strengthen the CPP, concentrating power at the centre and weakening regional and ethnic sentiments and loyalties as well as opposition parties. Nonetheless, they contributed tremendously to peace, security, order and stability in Ghana.[57]

It is worthy of note that the Avoidance of Discrimination Act banned all organizations, parties and societies, which membership was confined to only a particular tribal, racial, or religious group. This law was used by Nkrumah to more or less proscribe all opposition political parties. The opposition political parties - NPP, Muslim Association Party (MAP), NLM, AYO, and the Ga Shifimokpee - swiftly responded by coming together to form the United Party (UP) in 1957 under the leadership of Dr. Kofi Abrefa Busia. But the unity forged by two of these regional parties, the NLM in Ashanti and the AYO in Volta was short-lived. In the 1966 coup which preceded the 1969 election, an Ashanti (Major Afrifa) and Ewe (Colonel Kotoka) collaborated perhaps to pursue their respective ethnic interests manifested in formation of the UP. However, the death of Kotoka in 1967 in an attempted coup by Akan junior officers, and subsequent takeover of the regime leadership by Afrifa, marked beginning of the Ashanti-Ewe divide.[58]

When the National Liberation Council (NLC) handed over power in October 1969, the military regime had split into factions with the Ashanti and Ewe poles apart. Besides, the ethnic backgrounds of the two leading parties and the voting pattern in the 1969 elections worsened the ethnic rivalry between the Ashantis and Ewes. Considerably, the absence of Ewes in Busia's cabinet and the disqualification of K. A. Gbedemah (an Ewe), the leader of National Alliance of Liberals (NAL) in parliament, the removal of most senior Ewe officers in the Armed Forces, and dismissal of 568 public servants by the Busia administration, majority of whom were allegedly Gas and Ewes deepened the already worsened situation.[59] The Ashantis (and by extension, Akan)-Ewes rivalry appeared to have resurfaced in the multiparty contest of 1979, with Ewes voting decisively against the Popular Front Party (PFP) because of a perception that its leader, Victor Owusu was an *arch tribalist*[60]. The Peoples National Party (PNP) was also very popular in the northern regions partly because its presidential candidate, Dr. Hila Limann, was *a native*

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[57] Frempong (n 6).

[58] A Adu Boahen, *The Ghanaian Sphinx: Reflections on the Contemporary History of Ghana, 1972-1987*, vol 21 (Sankofa Educational Pub 1989).

[59] ibid.

[60] Frempong (n 1).

son of the area. But the Asante-Ewe rivalry did not feature much in Limann's PNP administration. However, the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) regime and later NDC revitalized this Ashantis-Ewes rivalry and has persisted into Ghana's Fourth Republic, with Ashanti-Ewe exceptionalism in voting patterns.[61] While other regions fairly distribute their votes, Volta and Ashanti regions concentrate their votes on their perceived home-based parties - NDC and NPP respectively- in all the elections held under the Fourth Republic since 1992.[62] It must however be noted that in its early days, PNDC survived on supports of radical or populist groups deliberately created - such as the People's Defence Committees (PDCs) and Workers Defence Committees (WDCs). Yet, alienation of this faction since 1983, when PNDC started negotiations with IMF for possible economic support, the regime lost its support-base and had to re-introduce the ethnic trump-card.[63]

Ethno-Religio Politics in Ghana: The Emerging Issues

Arguably, religion and ethnicity play significant role in elections in Ghana. This section examines some of the major roles both religion and ethnicity play in elections in Ghana's Fourth Republican dispensation. The overarching aim of this study is to ascertain the roles both religion and ethnicity played in outcomes of presidential elections organized so far under the Fourth Republic since 1992. The analysis is categorized into relevant themes and sub-themes. Also, where necessary, excerpts were used to illustrate major issues or points raised.

Role of Religion in Multiparty Elections in Ghana

Religion continues to play important role in civic engagements in the country. During multiparty elections, both religious leaders and politicians use the various religious platforms to engage the citizenry in several ways. For the religious leaders, mostly, their churches, and mosques become the most important platforms to appeal to political leaders and parties as well as the youth to desist from anything that potentially can put the country aflame. Religious leaders and associations like the Christian Council, Catholic Bishops Conference, etc. organize peace talks, prayers for peaceful elections, peace walks, signing of peace agreements, etc. with politicians before, during and after

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[61] Frempong (2012; 2017); Gyimah-Boadi (2009); Gocking (2005).
[62] Asante and Gyimah-Boadi (2004); Frempong (2017); Osafo-Danso (2015); Boafo-Arthur (2008); and Arthur (2010).
[63] Baofo-Arthur (1999; 2008); Gocking (2005); Asante and Gyimah-Boadi (2004); Gyimah-Boadi and Awal (2021).

elections.[64] These activities are aimed at sensitizing the people of Ghana not to disturb the relative peace enjoyed in the country.[65] On their part, political parties and their leaders visit churches, mosques, palaces and shrines and leaders of the various religious sects for their blessings, and call for supports of their members or people during the polls. As such, especially, churches are crucial political podiums for politicians to campaign to sell their policies and candidates. They usually appeal to the various religious constituencies for votes.

Furthermore, religious calculations also largely influence how parties select their candidates and running mates. While the NDC is not much bothered about balancing religion in terms of selection of their candidates and running mates, since 2000, religious calculations have largely informed the NPP's choice of Christian presidential candidates, and Muslim running mates. The main motive is to appeal to both Christians and Muslims across the country to vote for their party. For example, in both 2000 and 2004 elections, NPP had J. A. Kufuor as the Presidential candidate and Alhaji Aliu Mahama as the running mate. Again, since 2008 (2008, 2012; 2016 and 2020), Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo Addo, a Christian has led the NPP as its candidate, with Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, a Muslim as his running mate. The motive is largely to balance religious representation among the two major religions in order to appeal to both religious sects for their support as against their main opponents.[66]

Notably, as part of both major parties' (NDC and NPP) strategy to win votes from religious constituencies, their manifestos usually try to wade into issues sensitive to various religious groups so as to score political point with it. For instance, during electioneering periods, their policy statements or manifestos capture crucial religious issues or problems such as Zongo development, Hajj pilgrimage, moral and human or religious rights appeals so as to win their leaders and members' support. For instance, both NDC and NPP have over time been supporting Muslim Hajj Pilgrims whenever they came to power in order to have the support of Muslims. Again, in order to appeal to the Zongo communities and Muslim youths, the NPP in 2016 made a promise to rebuild Zongo communities with its Zongo Development Fund, and thus have created a ministry to superintend such endeavour upon assuming office in 2017 to date. Moreover, to get the religion with majority support-base in Ghana, the NPP also promised to build a

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[64] Thomas Prehi Botchway, 'Civil Society and the Consolidation of Democracy in Ghana's Fourth Republic' (2018) 4 Cogent Social Sciences 1452840. Yin (2018) also shows how religion is used as an organising principle in prisons in Ghana.
[65] Arthur (n 49).
[66] See Acheampong (2010); Frempong (2008; 2012; 2017); Arthur (2009); Boafo-Arthur (2008).

National Cathedral for all Christians to fellowship there, which is currently under construction in Accra.[67]

Another important role religion plays during multi-party elections is the use of Christian verses and gospel songs, musicians, etc. on campaign trails to appeal to their members. However, in recent times, another development with regards to the religious politics is that, many religious leaders - pastors, imams, priests, etc. have become elections forecasters telling politicians who has got the favour of God to rule the nation. Again, some have personally elected themselves as spiritual fathers of certain political parties and their candidates and thus will always try to incite their members against the other while they appeal to the rest to vote for their favourite through *spiritual fear mongering.*[68] Indeed, spirituality and election forecasting and *political spiritual fatherism* has become an important but disturbing aspect of Ghana's democracy. Even before the 2020 elections commenced, many so-called prophets and imams predicted who wins or loses and why.[69]

Role of Ethnicity in Multiparty Elections in Ghana
Ethnicity in politics in Ghana has, to a large extent, become very divisive especially between Ewes and Asantes regarding their support for the two main parties - NDC and NPP respectively. Even though not all ethnic groups that necessarily vote along ethnic lines, ethnicity still play a major role in the selection of party candidates and running mates, campaign messages, etc. For instance, in almost all the eight elections organized in Ghana since 1992, ethnicity has played a major role in selection of candidates or running mates. For political expediency and convenience, politicians have branded their respective opponents' parties as either Akan or Non-Akan party. For example, the NDC has been branded as Non-Akans (at least, Ewes' party) by the NPP. The NPP, on the other hand, is branded Akan (at least, Ashantis party) by the NDC. As such during elections, especially the NPP tries to erase this tag by fielding at least a non-Akan running mate. The NDC has also been trying since 1992 to ensure ethnic balance in the choice of candidates and running mates. However, the NPP has being chastised most

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[67]See Acheampong (2010); Arthur (2009); NPP 2016 and 2020 Manifestos; Ministry of Finance 2021 Mid-Year Review Statement on the Floor of Parliament made appeals to Ghanaians to donate GH₵100.00 to support the construction of the National Cathedral.

[68] See Acheampong (2010); Arthur (2009); and www.myjoyonline.com/Dec.4,2020 [Retrieved on August 16, 2021].

[69] See #Election_Predictions_and _Prophecies#JoyNewsInteractive#MyJoyOnline/Dec. 4, 2020 [Retrieved 16/08/2021].

often for fielding only Akan presidential candidates since 1992 by the NDC on several campaign platforms to drum home the so-called Akan bias of the NPP.[70]

Moreover, since 1992, as elections result show, both NPP and NDC have tried variously to ensure ethnic balance regarding choices of flagbearers and running mates. The NDC has always, since 1992 (with exception of 2000 and 2008 when Prof. John Evans Fiifi Atta Mills, a Fanti from Central Region was elected the party's presidential candidate), fielded a non-Akan Presidential Candidate and an Akan running mate. In 1992, J.J. Rawlings, an Ewe (non-Akan) chose Arkaa, a Fanti (Akan) and in 1996, he again chose J.E.A. Mills, a Fanti (Akan) in order to ensure the so-called Akan-non-Akan balance. Again, when J.E.A. Mills became the NDC' presidential candidate in 2000 (Martin Amidu), 2004 (M. Mumuni) and 2008 (John D. Mahama) all his running mates were non-Akans (from northern Ghana).[71] Finally, in 2012, 2016 and 2020, John D. Mahama (non-Akan/ Gonja) was elected as NDC's flagbearer, whiles P. K. Amissah-Arthur (Akan/ Fanti - 2012 and 2016); and Jane Naana Opoku-Agyeman (Akan - 2020) served as running mates respectively.[72] In similar vein, the NPP has always fielded an Akan presidential candidate and a non-Akan running mate (with exception of 1996, where their so-called Great Alliance with CPP led to an all Akan partnership) in order to appeal to the non-Akan constituencies. For instance, in 2000 and 2004, J.A. Kufuor (Akan) led the party with Alhaji Aliu Mahama (non-Akan) as his running mate. Again, since 2008 (2008, 2012, 2016 and 2020), the NPP has fielded Nana Addo Dankwah Akufo Addo (Akan) and Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia (non-Akan) tickets in order to ensure ethnic balance.[73]

Also, ethnicity has featured significantly in election campaigns. Sometimes, the two parties' appeal in their campaigns to particular sections of Ghanaians to vote for their own if the candidate or running mate is from the area or one of their own ethnic group. For example, in 2000, 2004 and 2012 and to some extent 2016 and 2020, NDC and NPP both tried to appeal to their so-called world banks - Volta Region and Ashanti Region respectively. Again, both parties appealed to the ethnic groups of their candidates to vote for one of their own as they got to their candidates' home region or hometown and

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[70] Frempong (2012; 2017).
[71] Ibid
[72] Ibid; www.myjoyonline.com/Dec.4,2020 [Retrieved on August 16, 2021].
[73] See Frempong (2012; 2017); Arthur (2009); Boafo-Arthur (2008); EFS (2013); Osafo-Danso (2015).

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ethnic constituency.[74] Boafo-Arthur (2008) has captured this ethnic campaign during the 2000 run-off and 2004 elections succinctly:

> NDC resorted to ethnic-oriented campaigns e.g. they tried to desperately incite the Gas against NPP and Ashantis so as to win their votes. Also, Anti-Ashanti sentiments were expressed in Volta region in 2000 elections second round. Further, Kufuor's administration was accused of appointing only family and members of the Ashanti ethnic group into ministerial positions and in 2004 campaign, the NDC chastised him that Ghana is not for Ashantis alone. Summarily, the political campaign turned ugly in 2004 when both parties made specific references to ethnic slants, whiles policies took a back seat. Poor journalism also accounted for the aggravated ethnic-based campaigns in 2004.[75]

Arguably, these ethnic campaign messages are recurrent in Ghana's body politics. Even in the most recent election 2020, the ethnic trump-card was very huge. The NPP administration was even accused by the NDC for conniving with the EC to deny certain groups known to be NDC loyalists, their right to vote.[76] In relation to the above is ethnic leaders canvassing for votes for their ethnic affiliates themselves. Since 1992, there has been several occasions when some of the leaderships of certain ethnic groups use any platforms they get to appeal for support for their own. Ethnic groups and political parties and politicians identifying with specific ethnic groups and parties irrespectively have become common.[77] For example, available evidence suggests that, Ewes and Ashantis are identified with NDC and NPP respectively as their own. Thus, sometimes, even though their candidates may not necessarily be Ewes or Ashantis, they had enjoyed massive supports from their perceived ethnic constituencies because these groups see them as their own.[78] A quintessential example is the emissary of six chiefs sent from the Volta Region to meet their counterparts in the Central Region (NDC's candidate

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[74] See Frempong (2012; 2017); FES (2013) and Boafo-Arthur (2008).

[75] Boafo-Arthur (2008).

[76] Refer to the SAL (Santrokofi, Akpafo and Lolobi issue); use of the security forces to man border towns in parts of Volta Region and Western Region in the name of measures to curb spread of COVID 19. However, NDC executives reported various incidences of harassment of their supported by some of these communities by the security officers especially in their support world bank - Volta Region.

[77] See Frempong (2008; 2012; 2017); Arthur (2009); Boafo-Arthur (2008); Osafo-Danso (2015); and Asante and Gyimah-Boadi (2004).

[78] Frempong (2012; 2017).

Mills' home region) to drum home ethnic support for the NDC in the 2000 elections. In another event, Mr. Rawlings himself openly declared in Ho on a campaign platform that the region is a no-go area for the NPP since it is the NDC's World Bank.[79] Of crucial importance is the fact that, the media, especially those financed or owned by politicians, overemphasize ethnic issues at the expense of major economic and other policy issues of both parties.[80]

The Actual Impacts of Religion and Ethnicity on Outcome of Presidential Elections in Ghana Since 1992

Even though religion and ethnicity play significant roles in multiparty elections in Ghana especially during campaign periods, however, their exact impacts on outcomes of such elections are largely unclear. This part of the paper tries to ascertain how both religion and ethnicity have respectively influenced outcomes of presidential elections in Ghana since 1992.

Religion and Outcome of Presidential Elections in Ghana

Issues of religion and actual impact on elections result over the years have not been too clear and may require a further opinion survey to ascertain from the individual electorates whether they are in any way held sway by their religious affiliation to vote in favour of a particular political party. However, in an interactive section with some few Ghanaians, JoyNews found that most Ghanaians do not believe religion actually influence how they vote in any general election, especially the presidential.[81] However, religious issues such as religious bloc campaigns, spiritual forecasting, use of religious songs and slogans, discrediting candidates before religious constituencies and moral and human rights appeals - might have shifted focus, somewhat these issues still occupy important space in campaigns of politicians and political parties.[82] Both NPP and NDC focus on churches, mosques and even shrines[83] to enhance their chances of winning majority of their members' votes but it has been difficult establishing the exact relationship it has with results. This is not to however, discount the impact of the chances churches and mosques offer political parties to use their pulpits or podiums to campaign and

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[79] See Ibid; Asante & Gyimah-Boadi (2004); Boafo-Arthur (2008); and Agyeman (2013).
[80] Boafo-Arthur (2008); Arthur (2009) and Osafo-Danso (2015).
[81] See #Election_Predictions_and_Prophecies#JoyNewsInteractive#MyJoyOnline/Dec. 4, 2020 [Retrieved on 16/08/2021].
[82] Acheampong (2010).
[83] A typical example of politicians using or visiting shrines for blessings and increasing their chances of winning elections can best be illustrated by some NPP officials' presence in the Nayiri's shrines in part of northern regions.

disseminate their message through their encounter with congregations as they take turns to fellowship with them occasionally.

Ethnicity and Outcome of Presidential Elections in Ghana

Even though the Political Parties Act, 2000 and the 1992 Constitution frown on ethnic affiliations in political parties' formation or ethnicization of political parties, ethnicity is an important social factor that continues to influence the socio-political and economic decisions of many Ghanaians.[84] Ethnicity has and continues to significantly influence multiparty democratic elections and governance in Ghana. A close analysis of voting patterns in Ghana since 1992 showed that the electorates have voted on ethnic lines for a particular political party.[85] Political rivalry with ethnic undertones has also become part of Ghana's body politics under its 30-year fourth democratic experiment. It is an open secret that Ghana's two dominant political traditions in the Fourth Republic are rooted in ethnic affiliations.[86] This section will briefly outline and examine the relationships between ethnicity and outcome of presidential elections over the period 1992 and 2020.

A close look at the 1992 election results indicate that Rawlings and the NDC won in nine regions out of 10. He won massively in Volta, his home region (93.2%); followed by the Central, the home region of his vice (66.5%). On the other hand, Albert Adu Baohen and the NPP won majority only in the Ashanti, which also happened to be his home region (60.5) and lost in nine regions.[87] Again, in the 1996 elections, NDC won nine out of 10 regions; but massively in its presidential candidate's home region, Volta (94.5%); followed by Upper West (74.6%) but not in his running mate's home region (Central) this time around. NPP's Kufuor won majority only in his home region (65.8%) and lost in all the remaining nine regions. However, the NPP's votes in these nine regions improved significantly compared to its performance in the previous 1992 election results.[88] With regards to the 2000 elections, in the first round, none of the two parties passed the more than 50% valid votes cast constitutional threshold. However, NPP's Kufuor won majority in six regions and trailed the NDC in four regions. In the run-off, NPP improved upon its earlier performance in all 10 regions and won massively in Ashanti region (79.9%) but lost woefully in Volta (11.5%). NDC's Mills dropped votes in all 10

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[84] See Osafo-Danso (2015).
[85] See Ichino and Nathan (2013); Frempong (2008; 2012; 2017) and Boafo-Arthur (2008).
[86] See Adjei (2012; cited in Osafo-Danso, 2015: 42).
[87] See Frempong (2017); Boafo-Arthur (2008); www.ec.gh.gov/.
[88] Frempong (2012; 2017).

regions but won massively in Volta (88.5%), and lost woefully in Ashanti (20.1%). Again, for election 2004, NPP's Kufuor again won in six out of 10 regions. But his votes dropped in all 10 regions from what he had in 2000 run-off except Volta region where he improved by 2.8% from 11.5% in 2000 to 14.3% in 2004. The reverse is true for NDC's Mills.[89]

In the elections 2008 (first round), NPP's Akufo Addo won massively in Ashanti region (72.4%) but in the other three Akan-dominated regions, he won by a slight majority. He lost woefully in Volta region (15.0%). But the reverse is through for J. E. A. Mills and the NDC. NPP's national vote also dropped by 3.4% from what it had in 2004. Again, in the run-off, NDC's Mills won by 50.2% as against NPP's Akufo Addo's 49.8% - a slim margin of 0.4%. Except in Ashanti region, Mills' vote in the second round improved in all 10 regions. The reverse is true for NPP's Akufo Addo.[90] On the other hand, the 2012 elections presented its own dynamics. For the first time, following demise of President Mills, the NDC presented a Northerner (Gonja) as its candidate (John D. Mahama), with an Akan (Fanti) as running mate (P. K. Amissah-Arthur). However, the NPP still maintained its Akan candidate/ non-Akan (Northerner) running mate trajectory. Thus, it was used against them in the north by the NDC's candidate John D. Mahama. He conveniently appealed to his northern compatriots in all three northern regions to reject the NPP and Dr. Bawumia, since he said northerners should be tired of always been made running mates, and appealed to them to rather vote for their own to become the president to help develop their home regions since as a president, he has more decision-making powers than a vice president.[91] In the end, the NDC won eight out of 10 regions including the three northern regions and three of the Akan-dominated regions. The reverse is true for the NPP. But overall, the results show that NPP's Akufo Addo trailed NDC's Mahama by less than 3.0% of the total valid votes cast.[92] On the contrary, in 2016, the NPP's Akufo Addo won six out of the 10 regions. He won all the five Akan regions but got massive supports from Ashanti (75.7%) and Eastern (63.9%) regions - NPP's strong hold, and its presidential candidate's home region respectively. He lost four regions, but woefully in the Volta region (15.8%). The

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[89] See Boafo-Arthur (2008); Arthur (2009); and Frempong (2012; 2017); see also, www.ec.gh.gov/ for more information on the statistics of the elections results.

[90] Thomas Prehi Botchway, 'Ghana: A Consolidated Democracy?' [2018] Asian Research Journal of Arts & Social Sciences 1.

[91] Frempong (2017); FES (2013).

[92] Ibid. See also Botchway, T. P. and Kwarteng, A. H. (2018), "Electoral Reforms and Democratic Consolidation in Ghana: An Analysis of the Role of the Electoral Commission in the Fourth Republic (1992-2016)", Asian Research Journal of Arts & Social Sciences, 5(3): 1-12.

NDC's John Mahama lost in six regions and won in four, but massively in the Volta (82.5%), Upper East (59.3%) and Upper West (58.1) his party's strong hold, and two of the three northern regions where he hails from. However, Mahama and the NDC lost woefully in Ashanti (23.6%), their opponent's electoral World Bank.[93]

Finally, it must be noted, prior to the 2020 election, Ghana was divided into 16 regions.[94] This had its own impact on the outcome of the 2020 elections; however, it is not the main focus of this paper. In the 2020 election, the NPP won with almost 6.79 million (51.59%) of the valid votes cast; with the NDC polling 6.17 million (47.36%) of valid votes cast to come second.[95] Interestingly, the NDC won majority in eight of the 16 regions, and performed massively well in its traditional electoral World Bank, Volta Region (84.8%). It also did impressively well in Upper West (67.4%), Oti (63.3%) and Savanna (63%) regions. Whiles the NPP won majority in seven of the 16 regions: It unsurprisingly performed well in Ashanti (71.6%), and Eastern (60.5%) regions - its traditional support-base, but did abysmally in Volta region (14.1%).[96] Generally, it must however be noted, unlike the NDC, the NPP performed comparatively poorly in the 2020 elections in almost all 16 regions vis-à-vis the 2016 results. This trend is similar to NPP's second term bid in 2004. This also point to a trajectory in electoral politics in Ghana's Fourth Republic - any party's quest for a second-term bid had eventually ended in declined votes compared to previous performance. This also lay credence to the fact that incumbent is most unlikely with such results, to win in a third-term bid. Thus, any party having serious plans to break the eight year or two-term cycle in order to overcome the third term victory dilemma in Ghana must perform creditably well in office for the second-term.[97]

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[93] Ibid

[94] Bono, Ahafo and Bono East (from erstwhile Brong-Ahafo region); North East Region calved out of Northern Region; Savanna Region from Upper East Region; Oti Region from Volta Region; Western North from Western Region; with the remaining five regions – Ashanti, Eastern, Central, Greater Accra and Upper West as standalone regions – thus, together with the new ones and their mother regions (except Brong-Ahafo, which died for new ones to emerge), they constitute the 16 regions of Ghana.

[95] www.ec.gh.gov/ [Retrieved, 17/08/2021]; BBC News - December 09, 2020.

[96] www.ec.gh.gov/ [Retrieved, 17/08/2021].

[97] See Frempong (2017).

Implications of the 'Ethno-Religio' Politics on Consolidation of Ghana's Fragile Democracy

The ethnicization of politics to a large extent and religious undercurrents in Ghana politics have in many instances led to, and may continue to bring about ethnic and religious clashes should politicians continue to use and incite ethnic and religious groups. This is not just unhealthy for Ghana's democracy; it may actually result in serious ethnic violence and civil war when not properly managed.[98] In close relation to the above, politicization of religion and ethnic issues may result in polarization of the various ethnic and religious groups in the country for partisan interests. At least with regards to ethnicization of politics, if not religion, as the results show, NDC and NPP have been enjoying dividends of their respective supposed world banks (Volta Region (Ewes) and Ashanti Region (Ashantis). The situation has also already, to a large extent, polarized members of the two regions - Volta and Ashanti. Again, as the results indicate, even though other issues - such as economic performance, prices of fuel, etc. may influence voter choices in other regions, in some cases, particularly in the three northern regions, voters' choices are based on ethnic affiliation of candidates of the two main parties - NPP and NDC. It must also be said that, carefully examining Ghana's population disposition in terms of ethnicity, any time all the five Akan-dominated regions may decide to vote for the NPP (the perceived Akan party), they are likely to win[99]. It is also important to note that, with exception of Greater Accra, all the other non-Akan regions usually give majority of their votes to NDC. This confirms the perceived Akan-non-Akan allegations against both NPP and NDC respectively since the commencement of the Fourth Republic.[100]

Asante and Gyimah-Boadi (2004) make the following observations regarding religion and ethnicity and peaceful conduct of elections in Ghana:

> The existence and division of multi-ethnic, religious and multi-cultural society are major causes of electoral violence in Africa. Although Ghana's electoral past has not experienced intractable violence, inter-ethnic conflict and some sporadic violent clashes are rife e.g. there are several divisions among the various ethnic groups. The feuding friction between the Brong-Akans and the Asante-Akans based on disagreement by the Brongs as to

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[98] See Asante and Gyimah-Boadi (2004); Gyimah-Boadi (2009); Botchway, T.P. (2018a), "Ghana: A Consolidated Democracy?", Asian Research Journal of Arts & Social Sciences, 5(4): 1-13.
[99] See Frempong (2017)
[100] Ibid; Asante and Gyimah-Boadi (2004); Gyimah-Boadi (2009); Botchway, T.P. (2018a).

whether the Asantes are the true controllers of the Asante Kingdom. Also, there is a sharp ethnic divide in northern Ghana between the Kokombas and Nanumbas.... Instances of inter-ethnic clashes between Akan settler farmers in Akan cocoa growing areas in the Eastern and Western regions have occurred before. Moreover, Ga, Ewe and Akan enmity have also existed years back in NLC/Busia-PP 1966-1969 regimes, and other subsequent administrations including the PNDC/NDC and NPP under the Fourth Republic.

Nonetheless, in Ghana, deep-rooted Ashanti-Ewe cleavages have hardly presented a dire threat to the Ghanaian body politics. This can be attributed to some of the following factors. First, the Akan group is not monolithic. The Akans are highly fragmented, and Ashantis have not been able to mobilize the rest of the Akan sub-groups to support the NPP. In other words, the Akan group may be one linguistic and cultural group but it does not behave as a cohesive political unit. This is partly as a result of fear by the others of Asantes' domination and lingering memories of Asante pre-colonial imperialism. Also, elements of other Akan sub-groups such as Fantis, Akyems and Bonos do not always align themselves with the Asante. Should all Akan groups unite in support of the NPP, it will be extremely difficult if not impossible, for the NDC (the alleged non-Akan party) to win any election in Ghana.[101] Again, the Asantes and Ewes compositely constitute only about 28% of the entire Ghanaian population. They are therefore compelled to seek alliances with other ethnic groups and political forces. Thus, the relative peace enjoyed by Ghanaians over the years. Also, some regions are largely coterminous with ethnic groups or sub-groups of ethnic groups while others are not. For example, different sections of the Akan sub-group tend to vote differently. Consequently, Akan voters often support and vote for individuals and candidates who are not Akans. Similarly, non-Akan voters also support and vote for parties and individuals who are Akans.[102]

More importantly, although, regional patterns of voting could therefore contain hidden ethnic dimensions, the trajectory of electoral politics in Ghana as depicted above shows that, even though ethnicity (and religion) are important, it is nevertheless not the sole variable that determines the outcome of elections in Ghana. The conscious efforts on the part of the political parties to present ethnic and religiously mixed presidential slates in elections has contributed largely to the diffusion of ethnic and religious imbalances in

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[101] See Asante and Gyimah-Boadi (2004); Frempong (2017).
[102] See Asante and Gyimah-Boadi (2004); Osafo-Danso (2015); Frempong (2017).

the voting pattern in presidential elections.[103] More so, it is important to note that the 1992 Constitution frowns on discrimination based on religion, race and ethnicity. Article 35 of the constitution articulates the fact that Ghana shall be a democratic state; as a result, sovereignty resides in the people who shall be the source of governmental powers. In furtherance of this objective, Article 35 (5) stipulates that "the state shall actively promote the integration of the peoples of Ghana and prohibit discrimination and prejudice on the grounds of place of origin, circumstances of birth, ethnic origin, creed or other belief".[104] There are many other provisions in the constitution of Ghana that enforce the position of Article 35 which are aimed at building national cohesion and foster national tranquillity. However, in spite of these well-intentioned provisions of the constitution, research has found that ethnicity and religion may adversely (if not already caused), affect civic engagement in Ghana; especially on the political front.[105]

The Way Forward in Consolidating Ghana's Fragile Democracy

As the discussions afore show, both religion and ethnicity play important role in multiparty elections in Ghana - ranging from selection of candidates and running mates, through campaign periods to canvass for votes, and to some extent, at the polls as some ethnic groups and religious sects identify with certain parties and urge their members to support or vote for either the NPP or NDC.[106] Again, even though religion plays important role in multiparty elections in Ghana, particularly offering platforms for civic engagements and campaigns as well as spiritual elections result forecasts, the exact impact on outcome of elections is doubtful.

On the contrary, ethnicity has had some substantive impact on presidential elections outcomes since 1992, as both the NDC and NPP keep enjoying constant support from at least Ewes and Asantes respectively. It is also fair to say that among the other tribes, depending on the candidates of the two parties' ethnic background, they have in one way or the other enjoyed some support from one ethnic group or the other.[107]

Third and finally, the situation has important implications for the country's democratic dispensation. If managed well, it can improve participation and enhance the

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[103] Asante and Gyimah-Boadi (2004).
[104] 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana
[105] See Asante and Gyimah-Boadi (2004); Frempong (2012; 2017); Osafo-Danso (2015); Boafo-Arthur (2008); Arthur (2009); Arthur (2010); Acheampong (2010).
[106] Ibid
[107] Acheampong (2010); Gyimah-Boadi (2004); Arthur (2009).

democratization process in Ghana. However, if not checked and properly managed, the situation may degenerate into full-blown ethnic and religious violence in the future.[108]

In summary, the discussions afore have highlighted some religious and ethnic factors as important part in multiparty elections under Ghana's Fourth Republican democratic dispensation. However, unlike ethnicity that significantly influence the outcome of elections, the extent of, or actual impact religion has on elections (presidential) outcome in Ghana is not only doubtful, there is no empirical evidence as yet to link the two. Religion has however, been serving as important avenue for politicians to campaign for votes. Moreover, on the subject of ethnicity, available evidence seem to suggest that both the NPP and NDC have been enjoying significant support from Ewes in particular and non-Akans in general (NDC), and Asantes in particular, and Akans in general (NPP).[109]

Moreover, whiles there have been some ethnic clashes and limited religious sentiments regarding Ghana's electoral politics, largely, the situation has been well-managed to avoid any intractable civil war or ethnic/religious conflicts that may destabilize Ghana's democracy, as has been the case in many African countries. However, if the political patronage of these two factors are not properly checked, religion and ethnicity can plunge the county into serious flames, or full-blown conflict.

Therefore, the following recommendations are suggested to improve Ghana's electoral politics under the current three decades old Fourth Republican democratic dispensation.

Firstly, religious leaders should continue to play active role in ensuring peaceful and decorous campaigns. They must avoid inciting supporters against, or in favour of any politician, or political party. The current trend *of* spiritual forecast of election results and political spiritual *'fatherism'* by some known self-acclaimed prophets must cease.

Secondly, political leaders should also avoid inciting ethnic groups against one another. The respective ethnic groups' leadership and their various youth groups must avoid inciting any group or party against the other. The youth groups should desist from engaging in any violent activism for any political party or politician. They should rather channel their energies towards self-development and engage in industrious ventures.

Finally, the various social and political institutions such as chieftaincy, religious sects and their respective mouthpieces or groups, the media, and National Commission for

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[108] Asante and Gyimah-Boadi (2003); Osafo-Danso (2015); Frempong (2017).
[109] Ibid; Gyimah-Boadi and Awal (2021).

Civic Education, among others should endeavour to educate their members and the general population to engage in circumspective political activism and avoid any inflammatory commentary and activities.

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