Journal
of African Elections

Special Issue
West Africa

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HOUSEKEEPING NOTES

Regular readers will note that the JAE has a new editor. It is customary to provide a new editor with the opportunity of setting down thoughts: this ought not be an agenda-setting exercise but, rather, a series of loose ideas on ways to take the journal forward. I say this because this journal belongs not to the editor, or the board or even to its nominal owners, EISA, but to the community it serves.

So, and remember these words as both challenge and invitation, all who read this have a stake in the JAE and its future.

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It is appropriate to begin with a note of thanks to my immediate predecessors, Denis Kadima and Noam Pines. In many ways, Denis is the heart and soul of EISA – he is certainly at its heart and soul. Unsurprisingly then, he will continue his involvement with the JAE, initially as acting chair of the Editorial Board. He does so with the thanks of the Editorial Board, the managing editor and the incoming editor.

Noam Pines has been a champion of democracy since I sat at his feet as an undergraduate student at Wits University – he brought the same passion and compassion to these pages as he did to his teaching. Noam is always a hard act to follow.

Dr Jackie Kalley will remain in the vital managing editor's chair in which she has done such sterling work since the founding of the JAE a decade ago. The hard slog of copy-editing continues to be done by Pat Tucker, whose journalism has inspired me for decades.

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This journal's dual calling is clear: supporting Africa's search for democracy and cultivating an intellectual interest in one thread of the continent's search for democracy – elections. These goals, however, interact with the vibrant features of Africa's life as much as they do with the dark side of the continent's often dismal politics.

The JAE, in my view, must encourage a turn towards explaining African democracy and its important elections within a wider social context. So, and this I will encourage in coming editions, the JAE will foster the belief that democracy is not only form and formal elections, it is also about culture in all its forms. The point is plain: without infusing the search for democracy (and elections) within the genuine cultural life of Africa, it will fail. So, here's the first of four innovations

I will encourage in the years ahead: the JAE will carry pieces beyond the narrow formal study of elections.

Secondly, in each number I will write a brief column – what you are reading is the first of these – which I will call *Housekeeping Notes*. These will touch on the life and times of the JAE and, of course, on the more mundane but essential issues of the journal and, indeed, EISA itself. Although they do not do so on this occasion, these notes might also reflect on developments on the continent. To do so here would be to write a book. So, we might say just this: what a year this has been for Africa. Of the 54 years since the continent attached its hope to Ghana's independence surely 2011 has been the most promising.

Thirdly, from the next number each issue will carry an *Open Forum*: effectively this will be free space where prominent (and not-so-prominent) individuals may discuss elections on the continent in an unfettered, non-academic way. So, for example, we might interview prominent (and not-so-prominent) people who have been involved in African elections and encourage them to express their views on these and other matters which touch upon the continent's search for democracy.

The heart of each issue will, however, remain academically-inclined pieces which are accessible to the intelligent layperson. They will eschew, as a matter of principle, the often dense writing on empirically-inclined election studies and will favour – again as a matter of principle – African-based authors. Finally, the back of the book will not only consist of short reviews, as it does at present, but will encourage longer (and so, more worthwhile) review articles which might promote comparative insights, even from places beyond the continent – especially from the Global South. But books are only one form of communication. We will also consider reviews of websites and, of course, movies.

My earnest hope is that readers of the JAE will accept the invitation contained in the challenge in the third sentence of these notes: all who read these words have a stake in the JAE and its future.

Let the conversation begin …

Peter Vale
Editor

WEST AFRICA IN CONTEXT
Elections and the Challenges of Democratic Governance

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Somewhat paradoxically elections are fast becoming the new civil wars in Africa today. Almost two decades ago, when the so-called 'wave of democratisation' swept across the continent signaling an end to authoritarian rule and ushering in a new era of multiparty politics, there was a high degree of optimism that Africa was indeed now on track towards developing a democratic culture based on representative and participatory politics. This optimism was further reinforced by the transformation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) into the African Union (AU) and the AU's adoption in 2000 of a Constitutive Act which provided the normative direction to guide the continent on its democratic journey.

The AU Constitutive Act was substantively different both in character and content from the OAU Charter, which had governed relations among member states since the organisation was founded in 1963. For one thing, the Constitutive Act openly rejected unconstitutional changes of government and sanctioned external intervention in domestic matters on humanitarian grounds. This decision meant that in extreme cases state sovereignty, which had been jealously guarded throughout the OAU's lifespan, could be violated. This was clearly a significant departure and many observers argue that it contributed tremendously to the gradual evolution of democracy, which began with the introduction of multiparty politics on the continent, in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The adoption by the AU of complementary normative instruments such as the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance in 2003, along with the development of similar instruments at the sub-regional level, among them the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance in 2001 and the SADC Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation in 2001 (along with the SADC Principles and Guidelines on Governance and Democratic Elections in 2008), further consolidated the journey towards democratic governance.

At the national level, as far back as the late 1980s and early 1990s liberal constitutions, with entrenched clauses protecting civil liberties and guarantees of free, fair and periodic elections, were promulgated across the continent. Thus, by the late 1990s and into the early years of the new millennium it appeared that Africa was indeed reinforcing its commitment to the rule of law and social justice by putting in place normative frameworks at national, sub-regional and continental levels which would gradually facilitate this process. In effect, democratic governance, with guarantees of multiparty elections, was becoming the norm rather than the exception by the time we entered the 21st century.

Beyond these normative and procedural gains, however, it is true that events on the continent in the past decade or so seem to suggest that multiparty democracy, and electoral politics more specifically, continue to pose significant challenges to regional stability. To be clear, recent elections all over the continent, and in West Africa in particular, have raised more questions than answers about the sustainability of and long-term prospects for democratic governance in the sub-region. It appears that contestation for political power among competing elites has become so fierce and the stakes so high that virtually no election in the sub-region today is likely to pass off without some kind of dispute in which one party or the other rejects the outcome.

A combination of factors both endogenous and exogenous could help explain this disturbing phenomenon. Among these are the heightened tensions and high stakes that surround elections in West Africa. We shall limit ourselves to one only. A common but somewhat complex factor frequently adduced by observers is the battle for control of state resources for the purpose of patronage, exacerbated by the increasing inequalities that permeate many countries in West Africa today. As a consequence, in many countries within the sub-region politics and, for that matter, the public service, has been transformed into a theatre in which individuals enrich themselves from the public purse.

It is all too common these days to find elites on all sides of the political divide arguing that it is their 'turn to eat', meaning that incumbents must make way for their opponents to occupy high office and help themselves to the contents of state coffers, and vice versa, when those same incumbents find themselves in opposition.

While the elites contest so fiercely to control state power the majority of the sub-region's peoples continue to wallow in misery and abject poverty, even in countries where the economy is said to be performing well and is growing at an alarming rate. The fact that such growth does not translate meaningfully into an improvement in the lives of ordinary people is manifested in the high rates of illiteracy, youth unemployment, massive urbanisation and little or no access by the majority to social goods, thus creating a recipe for disaster.

It is not accidental, therefore, that elections, and the whole process of politicking, often create a heightened sense of tension that spills over into the post election period and leads to violence. The post-election violence in Côte d'Ivoire in 2010-11 and the boycott by Liberia's main opposition party of that country's second round of elections in 2011 and the subsequent violence, involving police and opposition supporters, are two recent reminders of how risky elections continue to be for both state and human security in West Africa.

The lessons of Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire could help inform other upcoming elections in the sub-region, in particular, that in Sierra Leone, a post-conflict country which has held two successful multiparty elections. The 2012 elections will be a decisive test of how far the country has come in building peace and consolidating democratic gains. These elections will be a fierce contest between the incumbent All People's Congress (APC), which came to power in 2007 on the platform of anti-corruption and improving the living conditions of ordinary citizens, and the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), which, as the incumbent party, lost the 2007 election in circumstances its supporters consider suspicious at best.

Four years into the APC's rule the country's president, Ernest Bai Koroma, who, upon assuming power in 2007 had promised to govern the country like a 'business', faces a serious credibility challenge as high-profile officials in his government have either been convicted by the country's Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) or are being investigated for corruption. Among these officials is the current vice-president, Sam Sumana, whose office is alleged to have solicited bribes from investigative journalists posing as businessmen in return for lifting a government ban on logging, and the mayor of Freetown, the capital city, who, along with several top aides, has also been charged with multiple counts of corruption.

This suggestion of corruption in Koroma's government is further compounded by the high level of discontent among ordinary citizens, especially the young, unemployed and urbanised youth whose living conditions have deteriorated since the last elections. These are the issues Koroma and his APC will have to face as they seek a second mandate to govern. The SLPP, for its part, will have to overcome its image as an 'elitist' party far removed from the people, although if recent events are anything to go by the party seem to be receiving increasing attention from the public. An example of this is the popularity of its presidential candidate for the 2012 elections, Julius Maada Bio, a retired military general who was head of state in 1996 when Sierra Leone held its first multiparty elections after almost two decades of one-party dictatorship.

To be sure, Bio's candidacy remains a topic of hot debate in Sierra Leone, in part because of his military background, although he has not been formally

accused of any wrongdoing. The point I seek to make here is that the stage is set for a very fierce contest in Sierra Leone in 2012 and the biggest test will be whether the incumbent will concede defeat and hand over power peacefully should he lose the election, as was the case in 2007 when the then ruling party lost and bowed out graciously. Whatever the outcome, Sierra Leone certainly has a lot to learn from the experience of other countries in the sub-region, in particular Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire.

In effect, what we have experienced in this sub-region in the past decade or so is a situation where many elections have ended up triggering more problems than they have been able to solve. While some have resulted in stalemate, with incumbents refusing to accept the 'will of the people' and transfer power to their opponents, as was the case with incumbent president Laurent Gbagbo's refusal to hand over power to his opponent, Allasane Ouattara, in Côte d'Ivoire, others have produced situations in which opposition parties have cried foul long before the first ballots have been cast, thus throwing into complete doubt the legitimacy of the outcome of those elections prior to their commencement, as was the case during the second round of Liberia's 2011 elections.

In the aftermath of such election-related disputes 'power-sharing' agreements, propagated by some as a model for accommodating all political interests in 'inclusive' governments, but regarded by others as 'elite pacts', have been crafted, with the assistance of the international community, to placate the belligerents. It remains to be seen whether this trend will continue in the coming years.

It is against this backdrop that contributions to this special edition of the *Journal of Africa Elections* should be seen. While the volume is not exhaustive in scope and content (for instance, there is no full-length article on Sierra Leone, notwithstanding the complexities of politics in the Mano River Union and no article on Liberia), it is hoped that it will be well received as a modest contribution to our understanding of the problems of elections in West Africa, within the broad context of democratic governance in the sub-region.

The contributors have provided us with a wide range of views on the issues, opportunities and challenges informing the democratic process in West Africa, analysing these through the lenses of elections. The subjects of the essays contained here include the tensions that emanate from the militarisation of politics and the implications thereof for democracy, as illustrated by the cases of Guinea and Niger; Nigeria's attempts to restore credibility to its electoral process, as seen in the 2011 elections, deemed to be generally free and fair; advocacy for a reform of Ghana's electoral system to avoid future conflicts and the challenges facing Ouattara in reconciling Côte d'Ivoire in the aftermath of the post-election crisis in that country.

The gaps notwithstanding, this volume is both useful and timely in setting out the challenges of democracy and electoral politics in West Africa, with a view to better understanding them at the conceptual, political and policy levels. It is hoped that it will further inform political and policy responses designed to strengthen national, regional and international institutions as they attempt to prevent, manage, or, better still, resolve election-related disputes in the region.

CÔTE D'IVOIRE'S POST-ELECTORAL CRISIS
Ouattara Rules but Can He Govern?

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ABSTRACT

The post-electoral crisis in Côte d'Ivoire reached its boiling point with a brief, yet devastating armed confrontation between the national security and defence forces loyal to former president Laurent Gbagbo and the Republican Forces of Côte d'Ivoire (FRCI) who supported his rival, Alasane Dramane Ouattara. The confrontation led to the capture of Gbagbo, with French troops playing an active role, under the aegis of a UN mandate. The situation has raised questions about the legitimacy of the UN intervention and of Ouattara's ascent to power. The recourse to military means to oust Gbagbo came as diplomatic initiatives, including a resolution by the African Union to resolve the crisis peacefully, were resisted and resented by Gbagbo's entourage, while the security situation deteriorated rapidly. A key question, therefore, given the controversial UN intervention, is related to the ability of the new president to govern the country effectively and to address the main problems that have caused the descent of the former beacon of stability into political violence.

INTRODUCTION

The crisis that followed Côte d'Ivoire's presidential election reached boiling point with a brief, yet devastating armed confrontation between the national security and defence forces loyal to former president Laurent Gbagbo and the Republican Forces of Côte d'Ivoire (FRCI) who supported his rival, Alasane Dramane Ouattara. This confrontation led to the capture of Gbagbo, with French troops playing an active role, under the aegis of a United Nations mandate. The situation has raised questions about the legitimacy of the UN intervention and of Ouattara's ascent to power.

The recourse to military means to oust Gbagbo came as diplomatic initiatives, including an African Union resolution on 10 March to resolve the crisis peacefully,

were resisted and resented by Gbagbo's entourage, while the security situation deteriorated rapidly. The intransigence of the outgoing president was predicated on his so-called resistance to imperialist endeavours, represented by Ouattara, the declared and internationally recognised winner of the election. With the forced exit of Gbagbo, thanks to the military intervention, what are the country's prospects of creating a new socio-political dispensation based on democratic norms?

Such norms are essential for the country, whose institutions have been weakened by a decade of conflict. The administrative capacity of Côte d'Ivoire, which has virtually been divided in half, as well as the ability of its security forces, appear to have been severely undermined. In addition, social cohesion has been depleted by the manipulation of national identity, which has affected the population's confidence both among individuals and between citizens and state institutions.

A key question, therefore, given the controversial UN intervention, relates to the ability of the new president to govern the country effectively and to address the main problems that have caused the descent into political violence of West Africa's former beacon of stability.

This article contends that post-conflict reconstruction is generally fraught with difficulties. But with real political will and efforts to promote social justice Côte d'Ivoire could overcome these difficulties and regain the stability that is indispensable for socio-economic recovery in both the country and the sub-region. Achieving this requires a clear identification of the main priorities and a coherent strategy to address them.

CÔTE D'IVOIRE'S POLITICAL CRISIS: WHERE THINGS FELL APART

Three decades of stability in Côte d'Ivoire under its founding father, Felix Houphouet-Boigny, and his Parti Democratique de Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI) came under threat with a controversial political succession debate, an ill-negotiated transition under the military junta that seized power through a relatively peaceful coup d'état in 1999, election-related violence in 2000 and a civil war (2002-2010).

A combination of economic decline and political manipulation contributed to the country's descent into instability for a decade. The recent post-election crisis can be seen as a result of the complexities, resistance and challenges associated with the democratisation processes in Africa since the 1990s. Though the peace process initiated in 2002 placed at its centre the holding of elections as a move towards reviving democratic transformation, its outcome raised important questions about the sustainability of political transformation in Africa based on democratic norms (Akindes 2004; Obi 2007; Collier 2005, 2009).

Equally important is the capacity of regional organisations to respond effectively to crises resulting from fraudulent elections and unconstitutional changes of government. Indeed, Côte d'Ivoire's armed conflict was triggered by a variety of causes, some located in its post-independence governance system, others in the manipulation of cultural diversity and especially of citizenship. Yet the intrusion of the army into the political scene has frustrated the chances of the country quickly returning to normalcy. This will remain a major challenge for the new administration.

While the electoral process could not bring a definitive answer to the multifaceted crisis in Côte d'Ivoire it was widely held that at least the legitimacy of the leadership would be restored and that could serve as an important step towards addressing other issues, including land ownership reforms, citizenship and youth employment.

This explains the insistence of the international community through the many peace agreements (from the Lomé peace initiative to the 2007 Ouagadougou Peace Agreement and its four protocols) that a transparent electoral process might provide an opportunity to begin to heal the country. The elections planned for 2005 following the negotiations in Pretoria under the leadership of President Thabo Mbeki only took place in 2010. They were postponed six times in five years owing to disagreements over such issues as voter registration, the credibility of the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) and the Demilitarisation, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) process.

On two of these issues, namely, voter registration and the DDR, tensions rose sharply (Zounmenou 2011). Some have argued that the ruling party was afraid of the verdict of the people and would only hold elections when it was certain of victory (ICG 2009, p 1; Tolou 2010, p 256). Rarely has an electoral process taken so long, cost so much (an estimated cost of 115bn CFA francs or US$7 per voter) and raised the spectre of all-out war in a West African country (Zounmenou 2010).

The ruling party's intention was to limit as far as possible the registration of northerners (whose citizenship was questioned) (Zounmenou 2008, p 75). As in some instances of fraudulent elections in Africa (Zimbabwe, Kenya, Togo) it was clear that whoever controlled the voters' roll could determine the outcome of the elections. For the rebel movement demilitarisation meant weakened bargaining power if the outcome of the election was contested. Yet, with the mechanisms in place, mainly the United Nations certification of the electoral results, which had been agreed upon, it was believed that the elections would be relatively peaceful. And indeed, the first round of voting proved to be so, with all parties accepting the results.

The results revealed the political weight of the three main actors, namely, President Laurent Gbagbo (38.30%), Alasane Ouattara (32.08%) and Henri Konan

Bédié (25.24%). The results also revealed clearly the socio-political configuration of the national electoral map of Côte d'Ivoire. It appeared that regional and ethnic patterns had defined voter alignment. Ouattara remained the dominant political figure in the north (Dioula), while Bédié dominated the centre (Baoulé) and only Gbagbo appeared to have moved beyond his traditional (Bété) ethnic stronghold in the west, winning significant support in the south (Abidjan) and east of the country (Zounmenou 2011; CEI 2010; EU 2011).

As was expected and, unfortunately, turned out to be the case, a run-off election between Gbagbo and Ouattara heightened tensions to extraordinary levels and caused the country to relapse into civil war. The hope of most of the incumbent's supporters that Bédié, former president and leader of the Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI), as well as the original brain behind *Ivoirité*, would call for a vote in favour of Gbagbo in the run-off poll was dashed when Bédié aligned himself with Ouattara, in terms of a political agreement within the framework of the Houphouëtists Rally for Democracy and Peace (Rassemblement des Houphouëtistes pour la Démocratie et la Paix-RHDP).

Even more agonising for Gbagbo and his supporters was the overwhelming support Ouattara received from opposition coalition forces in the central areas and parts of southern Côte d'Ivoire. Clearly, the electoral map was not in favour of the ruling party and its victory had become a pipe dream because of the many checks and balances put in place in order to secure the transparency of the electoral process and its outcomes.

POST-ELECTORAL VIOLENCE: THE RESURGENCE OF THE IDENTITY DEBATE

Both local and international observers (ECOWAS 2010; EU 2011; AUC 2011) concluded that, despite some tensions, the run-off election took place in a relatively stable environment. Irregularities observed during the run-up were brought to the attention of the Independent Electoral Commission, which took steps to address them. The deployment by President Laurent Gbagbo of an additional 1 500 soldiers to the north of the country and a unilateral curfew decreed to secure the elections were acceptable in the spirit of transparency. Moreover, voting materials were dispatched to various constituencies well ahead of the election date in order to avoid unnecessary delays on polling day.

Most observers recognised the fairness and transparency of the vote-casting and vote-tallying processes. But the results the CEI was preparing to announce sent shock waves through Gbagbo's supporters, who physically prevented the spokesperson for the electoral commission from declaring the winner of the run-off poll, allegedly because of 'lack of consensus' about the outcome.

When the poll results were finally formally announced the chairman of the CEI, Youssouf Bakayoko, declared Alasane Dramane Ouattara the winner, with 54.1 per cent as against Laurent Gbagbo's 45.9 per cent. However, the head of the Constitutional Council, Paul Yao N'Dré, a hardliner and one of the founders of the ruling party, immediately declared the result invalid. He went on to proclaim Gbagbo the winner, with 51.45 per cent of the vote, setting the scene for mayhem in the country.

The Constitutional Council, basing its decision on Gbagbo's claims that votes had been rigged in the north of the country under the control of the Forces Nouvelles, invalidated more than 600 000 votes from seven constituencies in Ouattara strongholds. Questions of whether the 'evidence' produced by the ruling party was indeed valid and whether the council in fact completed a thorough investigation into the matter within the prescribed seven days were elements of the ensuing controversy. Surprisingly, and quite paradoxically, the council made its decision within hours of the announcement. Moreover, even regions that were not part of the initial petition were added to the list of discards to force through a controversial victory for Gbagbo (AUC 2011).

It is possible to argue that the manipulated outcome of the elections and the post-electoral crisis in Côte d'Ivoire were among the more complex, divisive and intricate peace-building and democratic transformation exercises in Africa after the end of the cold war (Zounmenou & Motsamai 2011). More than a post-electoral imbroglio, the contestation highlights the unresolved issues that caused the Ivorian crisis in spite of a number of peace agreements and several political concessions, which include the landmark Ouagadougou Peace Agreement (OPA).

The post-electoral conflict raised two important challenges. Firstly, it brought to the fore the challenge of ensuring that elections held in post-conflict societies do not lead to renewed instability. Secondly, beyond the controversy surrounding the legality of the Constitutional Council's decision to overturn the results released by the Independent Electoral Commission, the issue of citizenship seemed to be once again at the heart of Gbagbo's refusal to step down.

Gbagbo and his supporters convinced themselves that Ouattara, despite being allowed to stand for election, is not a 'true Ivorian' and that, as 'opponents of neo-colonialism and imperialism', they would prevail. As military leaders renewed their allegiance to the outgoing president violent confrontation became inevitable and the country slid back into war.

The unusual unanimity of African leaders (the Economic Community of West African States – ECOWAS – and the AU) and the broader international community in recognising Ouattara's victory over the incumbent, Gbagbo, was mainly premised on the certification of the election results by the UN – considered by all parties to be an impartial broker in terms of the provisions of the OPA

(Zounmenou & Handy 2011, p 15). By supporting the UN's stamp of approval of the results the international community had taken a firm stance in underpinning the legitimacy of regional efforts (ECOWAS, as a facilitator, was not only central to the peace process but was also at the heart of the electoral process) as well as the rules and procedures set out in the OPA, and agreed upon by all participants.

On 10 March 2011, despite the fact that the anti-imperialist thesis developed by Gbagbo and his supporters substantially dented the initial show of exemplary leadership in Africa's democratisation process and raised serious questions about the commitment of African leaders to, and respect for, established norms of democracy and good governance, the AU finally endorsed the election results and upheld Ouattara's victory.

AU leaders stated boldly that it is more important to protect the electoral process and its outcome than to be seen to protect one of their own. The pan-African organisation called upon the Constitutional Council to swear in the internationally recognised and regionally endorsed elected president. Again, Gbagbo, a so-called defender of pan-Africanism, ignored the AU resolution, while the threat of a renewed civil war was imminent. Indeed, it was precisely the lack of respect for previous agreements and commitments that drew Côte d'Ivoire into the post-electoral crisis that later escalated into civil war. It prolonged the agony of Ivoirians and resulted in the death of at least 3 000 people, while more than a million fled the country to seek refuge in neighbouring countries (UNSC 2011).

THE UN INTERVENTION AND OUATTARA'S LEGITIMACY

There are concerns that the United Nations's intervention in Côte d'Ivoire's post-electoral crisis went beyond its mandate to protect civilians, mainly because of the active and aggressive role played by French troops in arresting Gbagbo. This argument is predicated on the notion that France wanted a regime change in Côte d'Ivoire so as to have an opportunity to regain control over the country's resources.

Critics have also argued that Ouattarra's government is likely to defend French interests. There might be some justification in these concerns, for two reasons. Firstly, Franco-African relations in the post-independence era are complex and controversial. Though there have been many calls for change, the reality is that the process remains slow, sometimes stagnant, to the extent that any action or inaction by France on the continent is judged through this prism. Secondly, some believe that the UN's interpretation of the responsibility to protect is biased, and understandably so, toward Ouattara.

To begin with, the concept of responsibility to protect (R2P) is a broad notion, about which there is disagreement among scholars and practitioners. The concept

is based on the responsibility of states to protect their own citizens. In fact, R2P outlines possible actions by the international community in terms of providing assistance and strengthening the capacity of states and lays the framework for a resolute response by the international community to serious crises (UN 2005).

According to the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) (2001, p15) R2P is generally premised not only on the importance of prevention but also on the readiness of the international community to comply with a Security Council decision taken in terms of Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter to protect civilians, with the possibility of undertaking coercive military intervention in serious cases of crimes against humanity and threats to international peace and security.

It is important to indicate that while France's role might be controversial it was played out within the framework of the United Nations's mandated peace mission. In this sense, UN Security Council Resolution 1528, adopted in 2004, provided for the involvement of UN forces supported by French troops to help Côte d'Ivoire achieve peace. In terms of the resolution, the UN's mission in Côte d'Ivoire is

> [t]o protect United Nations personnel, installations and equipment, provide the security and freedom of movement of United Nations personnel and, without prejudice to the responsibility of the Government of National Reconciliation, to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence, within its capabilities and its areas of deployment.

The narrow interpretation of this mandate left the UN undecided, while the regime unleashed its repressive machinery against unarmed civilians. Indeed, as the humanitarian crisis worsened, the incumbent government, through media propaganda, called for its supporters to attack UN peacekeepers, giving the UN Mission a dilemma. The UN was reluctant to implement the mandate provided for in Resolution 1528, which clearly spelled out the necessity to use force in order to protect civilians if government forces found themselves unable to do so.

Côte d'Ivoire had not been declared a failed state and the UN still held that the country's security and defence forces had a prime responsibility to protect their fellow citizens. This turned out to be a miscalculation, as elements of the army (Centre de Commendement des Operations de Securite – CECOS – and the Republican guard), assisted by recruited mercenaries and armed 'young patriots', targeted civilians perceived to favour Ouattara.

The passing of Resolution 1975, which was adopted with immediate effect on Wednesday 30 March 2011, was a response to the request from ECOWAS to the

UN Security Council to take responsibility in Côte d'Ivoire given that diplomatic attempts had yielded little result and the intransigence of the authorities in Abidjan did not appear to hold the promise of a peaceful resolution of the post-electoral conflict.

Former rebels, now reconverted to the FRCI, with the support of some regular army officers who had defected, opened many military fronts that overstretched the capacity of what remained of the National Defence and Security Forces (NDSF), which were loyal to Gbagbo. At the same time, Abidjan became a battleground between the so-called 'Invisible Commando', led by a disgruntled army officer, Ibrahim Coulibaly (known as IB) and the Laurent Gbagbo Special Forces. The risk of generalised violence with the potential use of heavy weapons was therefore imminent.

Regardless of the debate it generated, the UN forces' resort to military intervention to neutralise the NDSF, protect civilians and provide Ouattara's forces with the logistics to capture Laurent Gbagbo was an important step towards avoiding a generalised armed conflict with serious security implications for the country and the sub-region. Although 3 000 people were allegedly killed in three months, large-scale massacre and destruction were certainly avoided. Yet Côte d'Ivoire emerged wounded and divided, with a weak state authority and capacity. The security environment has deteriorated, with armed groups still very active.

One could also argue that the rise to power, of Alassane Ouattara, following military raids on the presidential bunker to dislodge the loser of the election, does not substantially affect his legitimacy. His electoral victory was confirmed by the African Union, reinforcing the continental consensus about the electoral process and its outcome. In fact, the Constitutional Court indicated its willingness to implement the AU resolution and proceeded to swear in Ouattara as the duly elected president of Côte d'Ivoire. It is now up to the new leaders to display independent leadership and take initiatives that define national priorities while working on strategies to avoid contradictions in the country's international relations. At this juncture it is essential to explore some of the main challenges faced by the new authorities as they engage in the process of rebuilding the country.

SECURITY AND HUMANITARIAN ENVIRONMENT

It would have been a mistake to believe that Laurent Gbagbo's downfall would immediately usher in a peaceful Côte d'Ivoire. The post-Gbagbo era is still characterised by sporadic violence and a dire humanitarian situation. A number of soldiers loyal to Gbagbo continue to pose threats in certain areas in Abidjan and in neighbouring countries (Ghana and Liberia). Abobo and Yopougon, residential areas in the North of Abidjan, were, until recently, theatres of armed battles

between Republican forces and the remaining pro-Gbagbo militias. In addition, the Republican forces had to confront soldiers loyal to Coulibaly.

The clandestine operations of Coulibaly's 'invisible commando' undermined the resistance capacity of the national security and defence forces and provided important support for the final assault that led to the capture of Laurent Gbagbo. As Coulibaly refused to disarm without obtaining some guarantees for his future and those of his alleged 5 000 men, fresh fighting broke out, during which Coulibaly was killed. The Republican forces are also battling to disarm the remaining combatants, most of whom are believed to be among the 4 500 mercenaries recruited by the Gbagbo administration to maintain power. Some FRCI members were accused of serious abuses against civilians.

These events highlight the current precarious security environment in Côte d'Ivoire. Thus far, according to the UN Mission in the country (UNOCI), almost 3 000 civilians have been killed and thousands more abducted. Most of the killings were described as extra-judiciary and were committed by supporters of both parties. It is also reported that more than a million people have sought asylum in neighbouring countries.

Worse still is the situation of the internally displaced, who do not have the minimum needed to survive. The security environment makes it difficult for humanitarian agencies to reach them and financial constraints limit the ability of such agencies to address their needs effectively. The UN agencies claim that up to $160- million is still needed to tackle the humanitarian challenges,which include food security, nutrition, education, protection, water, health care and sanitation for as many as two million people throughout Côte d'Ivoire. It would also allow UN agencies and non-governmental organisations to scale up relief programmes, notably in the commercial capital of Abidjan and in the west (OCHA 2011).

KEY POST-CONFLICT CHALLENGES

In addition to the need to respond immediately to the humanitarian situation Côte d'Ivoire's new leaders must identify key issues to be incorporated in the post-conflict reconstruction process. These include national reconciliation, the securitisation of the country through the reform of the security sector and eco-nomic recovery.

Pacification process

This is certainly one of the most difficult tasks for the new regime. While Ouattara has given himself a few months to restore peace and stability the process may be longer and more complex.

Restoring security implies neutralising the remaining armed groups and militias in the country. The fact that most of them have already mingled with citizens and move about freely, without uniforms, might make the task even more complicated. Mass graves are regularly being discovered across the country. It is alleged that mercenaries recruited by the former regime continue to wreck havoc in Abidjan and elsewhere.

A recent communiqué from the government highlights concerns about criminality and banditry and promises to take strong action to address the pillage and other atrocities committed against the population (Government of Côte d'Ivoire 2011). The occupation of Abidjan by former rebel commanders, even if the intention is to ensure the safety of the people, is not reassuring for the country and ways should be found to demilitarise society without further delay.

Dialogue and reconciliation

A decade of political violence and the debate over citizenship have left Côte d'Ivoire divided. While Forces Nouvelles controlled the north the south was in the hands of Laurent Gbagbo's government. The post-electoral crisis worsened that divide, with citizens losing trust and confidence in state institutions and among themselves.

National dialogue and reconciliation could achieve two broad objectives. Firstly, it could provide the opportunity to address divisive issues such as the identity problem by means of constitutional reform and proceed with national healing. Secondly, it could also provide a new framework for social cohesion with the elaboration of a new social contract or a socio-political consensus based on genuine democratisation.

The visit in June 2011 of three of the Global Elders – former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu and former Irish President Mary Robinson – to help define the contours of the forum on truth and reconciliation was an important initiative. The three met with various stakeholders including Gbagbo, Ouattara and members of religious groups and civil society organisations. They made clear their support for some form of transitional justice but warned that it should be put in place with full participation. Tutu in particular is well placed to assist in defining a reconciliation agenda given his role in and experience with the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Indeed, given the country's history, those involved in the process of reconciliation must prioritise the establishment and consolidation of trust as the key value of and precursor to broader justice.

Another significant area of contention remains the ongoing discussions about the possible trial of Gbagbo. One might argue that in the current context

his trial is likely to polarise the country. It is not the right step to take at this point without knowing how the reconciliation process will proceed. Ivoirians thus face the dilemma of hosting simultaneous retributive and restorative justice processes, as was the case in Sierra Leone (Lamin 2005). A prosecution of Gbagbo and his aides that takes place alongside a reconciliatory programme increases the chances of clashes among those who might be dissatisfied with the outcome of both processes. The process is potentially explosive in a context where the administration of justice and the rule of law have been undermined by a decade of political crisis. If a trial takes place in that environment the risk of abuse will be high and the new government might face difficulties with its credentials for promoting democratic norms.

Finally, the appointment as head of the TRC of Charles Konan Banny, former governor of the West African Central Bank and prime minister under Gbagbo, has not met with unanimous enthusiasm. Banny is a member of the Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire, which is allied to Ouattara. There are concerns that his political colour may undermine his neutrality in the process and lead the country on the path of 'victor's justice'.

Restoring the authority of the state

It is clear that Côte d'Ivoire emerges from the conflict with a weak state apparatus and limited state authority across the country. The redeployment of the administration stipulated in the Ouagadougou Agreement was not completed because of the absence of trust between the former rebels and Gbagbo's government. It was hoped that the 2010 elections would restore the legitimacy of the leadership and the authority of the state. For this to be effective it is essential to focus on reforming the security sector as an entry point to laying sustainable foundations for peace and democracy in the country. This implies three major undertakings including the demilitarisation, demobilisation and reintegration of former soldiers, the depoliticisation of law enforcement agencies (administrative reforms) and the restoration of civilian control over the new armed forces.

The DDR process is likely to be the most challenging. There is particular concern about the identification of soldiers, given the fact that former rebels have now been renamed as republican forces while the former national and security forces were recently heavily involved with militia groups. Perhaps the provisions of the Ouagadougou Peace Agreement might still be relevant. The current political dispensation might help complete the DDR process, which was initiated, but was undermined by the lack of trust. The integrated command centres that were established for former combatants could still be reactivated. In addition, the national army must be reconfigured. Currently there are numerous people with the

means to wage war. They are the national army (FDS), particularly the Presidential Guard and Special Security Operations Forces (Centre de Commandement des Operations de Securite – CECOS), the armed young patriots and numerous militia and rebel groups.

The UN has also reported that close to 4 000 mercenaries from neighbouring countries took part in the conflict and would have to be identified and neutralised (UNSC 2011c). A key difficulty for previous attempts at integration was the ranking of former combatants – different criteria are used to rank them and it is unclear whether all parties are willing to amalgamate. Another challenge relates to the difficulty of transforming former zone commanders (Com'Zones), who have consolidated patronage networks into regular units committed to the defence of the territory and its inhabitants.

Finally, there is the question of whether the hand of justice will reach members of the Forces Nouvelles implicated in the reports of various human rights groups for the crimes they committed. Such a complex process is unlikely to be completed in the short term as numerous other affiliated institutions such as those involved in law enforcement must be included.

For the time being, Côte d'Ivoire lacks a clear and coherent post-conflict strategy. There have been examples of countries where former adversaries have amalgamated successfully into one unit, one of them being South Africa, which managed to integrate elements of Umkhonto weSizwe and the South African Defence Force to form the South African National Defence Force.

A critical question that has been raised is who will drive, supervise and coordinate the process. Up to now this has been done by the UN mission. Since Ouattara came to power, a robust and committed government involvement has become essential. The appointment in July 2011 of the former Forces Nouvelles de Cote d'Ivoire leader, General Soumaila Bakayoko, as the new head of the army was an important step in the restructuring of one of the key sources of instability in the country since 1999. The move was widely expected to have a significant bearing on Ouattara's attempts to unify and consolidate a new Ivorian army and stabilise the country in the aftermath of the recent civil war.

General Bakayoko has the unenviable task of unifying the disparate forces and groups that have participated in the various conflicts since 2002. While President Ouattara is clearly prioritising the restoration of state security one major issue confronting Bakayoko and, for that matter, Ouattara, is how best to determine the future of the former heads of the armed factions. Some might be integrated into the new structures but close attention must be paid to those who might be discharged and might quickly become domestic security threats to the new administration.

Successful demobilisation of former combatants could advance markedly the

post-conflict peace-building process. In spite of the challenges clear foundations have been laid for the demobilisation of former soldiers. It remains to be seen whether the appointment of a former rebel leader as the national army chief of staff will dent the image of respectability and responsibility projected by such an institution.

Economic recovery

Even though most of Côte d'Ivoire's economic infrastructure was spared by the conflict there is no denying that economic activity was put on hold. The various financial and economic sanctions imposed on the regime have had a serious impact on the economic environment. The banking sector was closed and all export activities came to a standstill.

Because of the importance of Côte d'Ivoire to the regional economic framework the economic impact of the crisis there has been felt most keenly by the members of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU). Côte d'Ivoire's is the largest economy in West Africa after Nigeria's and is critical to the overall development of the sub-region (World Bank 2011).

The most urgent task for the Ouattara administration is to revive economic activity and restore investor confidence. Measures to reopen the financial administration have seen the banks resume their activities, while important ports such as Abidjan and San Pedro have begun to export cocoa. But it is crucial for the country to have a coherent post-conflict economic management strategy that identifies the challenges affecting the vital economic and financial system, including the cocoa, coffee and oil sectors, which have been crippled by corruption and mismanagement.

While the fact that the government recently convened a seminar to draw up a roadmap for the next six months might be seen as encouraging, the most fundamental issue is the implementation of that roadmap.

There are currently many pledges to assist Côte d'Ivoire in its post-conflict reconstruction process. For example, France has already approved a €400-million emergency assistance while the World Bank and International Monetary Fund have pledged €70-million. The European Union has pledged to allocate €175-million to improve infrastructure.

Two major problems generally arise from external financial support to countries emerging from conflict. Firstly, many donors make pledges without disbursing them, leaving governments unable to meet the high expectations of the people. Secondly, financial assistance without a critical needs assessment might not have much impact on a country's recovery.

CONCLUSION

Since 2000 violence has affected between 19 and 25 per cent of African elections (in Gabon, Guinea, Northern Ghana, Niger Delta, Nigeria, Lomé, Togo, Kenya and Zimbabwe among others) (Bekoe 2010). Election-related violence is becoming an increasingly significant threat to the democratisation process in Africa (Matlosa, Khadiagala & Shale 2010). Yet coherent and peaceful electoral engineering has become increasingly crucial for the promotion of democracy in divided societies and for peace in countries emerging from armed conflict and those affected by chronic political and economic instability. Irregularities in elections undermine the legitimacy of the leadership and the stability of a country's democratic system.

The experience of Côte d'Ivoire highlights the dramatic consequences of fraudulent elections and political manipulation. Far from being a neo-colonial problem the crisis in the country was caused by local leaders who failed to plan a comprehensive and peaceful transfer of power, resorting to political machinations to maintain their power and authority illegitimately.

A decade of instability has contributed to the deterioration of the socio-economic and political environment. Côte d'Ivoire now has the opportunity to chart a new course in its post-independence dispensation. The new government should seize the momentum to develop adequate policy responses to some of the structural causes of conflict in the former beacon of stability; mainly the national identity issue and socio-economic difficulties.

The resumption of economic activity depends largely on the restoration of security and efforts to promote good governance. None of these objectives is achievable in the absence of a well-defined post-conflict reconstruction strategy grounded on genuine political will to wipe away the suffering of the citizens.

It has become conventional in transitional societies or countries emerging from armed conflict that once elections are held and the president is sworn in 'democracy is said to have been established' and development partners can move out (De Zeeuw & Kumar 2010). Subsequently, the elected regime is faced with great socio-economic challenges that could undermine the fragile peace. This problem manifested itself in Burundi and in Liberia under Charles Taylor in 1997, where the regimes elected after the conflict were faced with intensified armed opposition from various rebel groups and rising social discontent.

At its 270th meeting, held on 5 April 2011, the AU Peace and Security Council issued a communiqué in which it said that 'a new page has been opened in the history of Côte d'Ivoire, which should be turned to good account in order to consolidate the newly-found peace, promote and deepen reconciliation and facilitate the socio-economic development of Côte d'Ivoire' (AUPSC 2011). This feeling expressed by the AU should be seen as a call to the new authorities to take necessary measures to consolidate peace in Côte d'Ivoire.

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GHANAIAN ELECTIONS AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT
Interrogating the Absolute Majority Electoral System[1]

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ABSTRACT

In Ghana a president is elected by an absolute majority (50% plus one vote) of the total valid votes cast in the whole country. From a conflict-management perspective this electoral system has two major flaws which can, potentially, jeopardise the fragile electoral peace that has endured since the 1992 elections. First, it gives extra and strong incentive to the two dominant parties, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) to engage in crude ethnic politics to win even when they have lost in the majority of the ten regions. Second, by turning the whole country into a single-member constituency, regardless of its ethno-regional divisions, the votes of minority regions could become insignificant in electing the president, a dynamic that can lead to political exclusion and, subsequently, conflict. To remedy this situation and to promote conciliatory politics in the increasingly acrimonious political climate of Ghana, this paper argues, a double-winning system should be introduced which requires that, in addition to the 50 per cent-plus-one vote a candidate must win in five regions with a simple majority of valid votes cast.

INTRODUCTION

The 2008 Ghana elections validated the conventional wisdom that the country is a model of electoral democracy and peace in Africa. As in the 2000 landmark elections that led to the peaceful turnover in leadership from the incumbent to the

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1   This article is based on information collected during five months of doctoral fieldwork in Ghana. The work was carried out with financial support from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Ottawa, Canada.

opposition party, the incumbent New Patriotic Party (NPP) turned over power peacefully to the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) following its razor-thin victory in the second-round presidential elections.

Amid euphoria similar to that which accompanied the landmark 2000 elections,

> [t]he outcome of the parliamentary and presidential elections of December 2008 was hailed by stakeholders, the national and international media, diplomatic missions and international scholars alike as another step forward in consolidating multiparty democracy in Ghana, and as a model for the whole of Africa.
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> Jockers, Kohnert & Nugent 2010, p 96

The choice of Ghana for the first visit to Africa of newly elected US president Barack Obama in 2009 can be viewed as the highest international validation of the country's 2008 parliamentary and presidential elections. Obama said he 'chose Ghana to "highlight" its adherence to democratic principles and institutions, ensuring the kind of stability that brings prosperity' (Nossiter 2009).

However, I argue that the absolute majority system used to elect Ghanaian presidents brought Ghana close to a post-election conflict similar to that witnessed in the aftermath of the 2007/08 elections in Kenya and the 2010 elections in Côte d'Ivoire. As discussed below, because of the accumulative or 'instrumentalist nature' of politics in Ghana, where, essentially, political office is not only the source of power but of access to resources to distribute patronage to supporters and kinfolks (Owusu 2006, p 33), both the leaders and supporters of the NDC and NPP resorted to ethno-regional politics to win the elections at all costs, particularly during the run-off presidential election.

It was this ethno-regionalist politics in the Ashanti and Volta regions that was responsible for the highly-charged political atmosphere, particularly, between 28 December 2008, when the second-round presidential election was held nation-wide, and 2 January 2009, when the 'third round' was held in Tain, and 3 January 2009, when the winner was announced (Ayelazuno 2009a). As correctly noted by one source, 'between the presidential run-off and the declaration of the final results, there was little confidence that Ghana would not go the way of Kenya or Zimbabwe' (Abdulai & Crawford 2010, p 30).

The main cause of the tension, from my eyewitness perspective, was the closeness of the contest: the results were too close to determine a winner. Despite the fact that the opposition NDC candidate was ahead of the incumbent NPP candidate in results collated from more than 80 per cent of the constituencies – indeed, some media houses like Joy FM Radio called the results

for the NDC candidate based on their collation of results from all the constituencies – the lead was narrow. With the results in some constituencies still outstanding, in terms of the majoritarian system either party could have won. In fact, the elections went into a 'third round' because of the closeness of the two candidates after results from 229 of the 230 constituencies had been collated.

Paradoxically, Tain, a tiny constituency in the Brong Ahafo Region, with 53 880 registered voters – where the run-off election could not be held because of logistical hitches – determined the winner of the presidential poll.[2] Yet in terms of regional results the winner was clear: the NDC candidate won in eight regions and the NPP candidate in only two. Essentially, because of the majoritarian system, the margin of victory of the NDC candidate – despite his landslide regional victory – was so slender (less than 1%) that the temptation for the incumbent NPP to cheat would have been irresistible, even in advanced democracies like the USA and Britain.

As documented elsewhere, the NPP did, in fact, try to cheat to offset the lead of the NDC; and not to be outdone, the NDC also tried to cheat to keep its lead (Abdulai & Crawford 2010, pp 30-31; Jockers, Kohnert & Nugent 2010, p 107; Ayelazuno 2009a, pp 17-19). Had the NPP succeeded the Ghanaian model might have unravelled, as the NDC would probably have rejected the results. In addition, the majority in the eight regions who voted overwhelmingly for the NDC would have been aggrieved that their votes did not count.

From a conflict management perspective an electoral system should try as far as possible to serve as a disincentive to parties to cheat to win when defeat is looming. The fact is, logically, most competitors, especially incumbent parties – who usually have the resources to cheat, subtly or crudely – would do so, or at least try to do so, as happened in Kenya in 2007/08 and in Côte d'Ivoire in 2010. As illustrated below, the 2008 elections showed that the Ghanaian electoral system offers just such an irresistible incentive, a potential cause of electoral conflict in a divided society like that in Ghana.

The elections drew attention to another weakness of the majoritarian electoral system, also a potential cause of electoral conflict in the specific social context of ethnic diversity in Ghana: a president could be elected by winning the popular vote nationally without winning in three, let alone half, of the ten regions into which Ghana is divided administratively and ethnically, as I will argue below (Amoah 2007, ch 3; Arthur 2009; Oelbaum 2004).

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2   This is not to underestimate the importance of the Tain elections because of the size of the electorate or constituency. Of course all qualified Ghanaians must be given the opportunity to vote, regardless of whether or not the winner has already been decided. It is the flaw of the majoritarian system that is being underlined here, namely, the way in which a candidate can hold onto the hope of winning the presidency with votes from one constituency, when she/he has lost in eight regions out of ten.

The NPP's presidential candidate, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, came close to winning the election despite losing in eight of the ten regions. Had he won he would have been the first presidential candidate to do so since the 1992 elections. While it would have been a legitimate victory according to absolute majority rule, it would not have been a conciliatory one, as the majority of regions did not vote for him.

From a conflict management perspective not only should citizens of voting age and mental capability be allowed to vote regardless of ethnicity, gender, race, class, religion or gender, they should be certain that their vote will count towards deciding the winner. If a segment of the citizenry, minority or majority, perceives that its votes do not count towards choosing the leader its members may feel insecure and excluded from government, and this could exacerbate ethnic cleavages, leading to conflict.

Ethnicity and ethnic politics in Ghana are so complex that it would be facile to say that politics there is mainly ethnic (Chazan 1982; Nugent 2001; Fridy 2007). However, drawing on renowned scholars such as Berman, Eyoh & Kymlicka (2004) and Ekeh (2004), this paper gives ontological and analytical priority to the social-historical context of Ghana vis-à-vis competitive party politics and argues that the country is, quintessentially, an ethnically divided society, both in a primordial and a constructionist sense.

Given its competitive nature party politics is bitter and tends to deepen existing social cleavages even in advanced democracies like the USA. Identity politics, including ethnicity, exists in these advanced democracies too (Berman, Eyoh & Kymlicka 2004, pp 13, 15). In the specific social-historical context of Ghana and most African countries this problem has been aggravated by the interaction of socio-economic, historical, internal, and external factors which have configured a specific state-society relationship based on kinship ties, in which political office is the easiest and the surest means to the accumulation of wealth and the distribution of patronage based on these ties (Berman, Eyoh & Kymlicka 2004; Ekeh 2004).

This makes elections a do-or-die affair where the end justifies the means, rather than the reverse; including the shameless exploitation of ethnicity as one of the means to political office.

A recent example in Ghana is the much debated 'all-die-be-die'[3] declaration made by Akufo-Addo, who told his supporters in February 2011 at Koforidua, the capital city of the Eastern Region, where he comes from, that the NDC intended to remain in power through intimidation and violence during the 2012 elections. 'They have intentions to intimidate us in 2012', he said, 'because they believe

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3   An expression meaning every death is death, so it doesn't matter how one dies.

that we the Akans are soft and cowards … So, in 2012 we need to be courageous because all die be die' (Citifmonline 2011). Other leading figures in the NPP, for instance Obetsebi Lamptey, former minister of state and current chairman of the party; Mac Manu, former chairman of the party; and Sir John, the NPP's general secretary of the NPP, have not only endorsed Akufo-Addo's battle cry but have made even more inflammatory comments about the 2012 elections.

Prominent members of the NDC are reported to have made similar inflammatory comments about the 2008 elections, and continue to do so with regard to the 2012 elections (*The Herald* 2011; myjoyonline.com News 2011). It is not surprising, therefore, that ethnicity has become, to use Mansfield & Snyder's metaphor, an 'intoxicating brew' in the democratisation processes of some countries (cited in Reynolds & Sisk 1998, p 11), making elections the cause of deadly ethnic conflicts in some African countries (Glickman 1998; Berman, Eyoh & Kymlicka 2004).

Elections are due in Ghana in 2012 and efforts should be made to avoid the high politico-ethnic tensions that characterised the 2008 elections. As indicated above any cursory survey of debates between and pronouncements by leaders and supporters of the NPP and NDC in the media makes one thing clear: the 2012 elections will be a zero-sum competition, where, as one political scientist remarked about Nigerian elections, 'winners take all while losers lose everything' (Fawole 2005, p 155).

The behaviour of the two parties suggests that, like the Nigerian elections, the 2012 elections could become 'a savage blood sport that leaves very little room for magnanimity in victory and gallantry in defeat' (Fawole 2005, p 155). Obviously, with the eyes of the politicians fixed on the billions of dollars flowing from Ghana's new oil find as a promising means of accumulating wealth and distributing patronage, the 2012 election will be 'fought as if it is the last one' (Fawole 2005, p 155) and no doubt the politicisation of ethnic cleavages will be one of the main strategies, if not *the* main stategy of both parties, as they try to win at all costs.

In these circumstances institutional engineering must be taken seriously as *one* possible strategy for consolidating Ghana's fragile electoral peace and building a democratic, multi-ethnic state. The main purpose of this article is to formulate such an institutional design, the *double-winning* system, and to illustrate the promise it holds for managing electoral conflict in Ghana.

After underlining the flaws of the present absolute majority system I will draw on theories of institutional design and conflict management (Horowitz 1991; Deng 2008; Reynolds & Sisk 1998; Reynolds 2002; Bastian & Luckham 2003; Birnir 2007) to conclude that the winner-take-all system should be replaced with a double-winning system, as practised in Indonesia, Kenya, and Nigeria (IDEA 2005, p 137).

THE GHANAIAN ELECTORAL MODEL:
A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

Elections do not necessarily produce liberal democracy in democratising countries. Depending on their deviation from the minimum procedural requirements for producing liberal democracy they have led to 'hybrid regimes' like 'electoral autocracy', 'electoral authoritarianism' or 'competitive authoritarianism', and so on (Diamond 2002). However, they have also produced models of democracy in countries which have gradually learnt the value and practices of liberal democracy. Ghana is one such country.

There is no doubt that Ghana's democratisation is outstanding by any standards. The argument of this chapter is eccentric, even alarmist, considering that most observers see Ghana's 2008 elections as an affirmation of the gradualist theory of democracy consolidation in Africa, namely, the 'electoral cycle creates a positive spiral of self-reinforcement leading to increasingly democratic elections. Third elections mark a cut-off point at which the democratic qualities tend to improve radically' (Lindberg 2006, p 71).

Ghana is, therefore, most observers contend, the poster child for the consolidation of liberal democracy in Africa. While it is entirely legitimate to showcase some of the good qualities of Ghanaian elections for other African countries to emulate, it seems this has not only been overdone it has been done with disregard for the specific social-historical context of the country, namely its ethnic cleavages and the way electoral politics can exacerbate those, potentially leading to bloody conflicts.

As Jockers, Kohnert & Nugent (2010, p 99) observe of the 2008 elections, '[t]he international community inside and outside Africa was at pains to have a positive example to hold up, a model for Ghana's African peers to emulate'. With this in mind most analysts gloss over the conflict dimension of Ghana's democratisation process. The reality, however, is that the very factors that have made elections an 'intoxicating brew' of ethnic conflict elsewhere in Africa (Kenya, Côte d'Ivoire, and so on) are also inherent in Ghana's social structure.

 Indeed, Ghana bears striking similarities to these countries in many ways: it is an ethnically divided society; elections are zero-sum contests which the political elites are determined to win at all costs because of their imperative to accumulate wealth from state resources and distribute patronage to kinfolk and party supporters; ethnic and other social cleavages (chieftaincy and land disputes) are 'fair game' for politicians both during and after elections and there are many gullible supporters ready to be mobilised by politicians or to self-mobilise to commit atrocities against each other because of ethno-political hatred.

It is, therefore, a curious paradox that while some observers romanticise Ghana

as an oasis of peace – a validation of how elections can be a conflict management tool rather than an 'intoxicating brew' of ethnic conflict – the country has actually been battling with many inter-ethnic, intra-ethnic and other bloody civil conflicts (Tonah 2007). The acrimonious and zero-sum nature of electoral democracy in Africa has escalated some of these inherent societal conflicts and even reactivated the dormant and low intensity ones in Ghana (Ayelazuno 2009b).

Notable among these are the age-old and recursive inter-dynasty conflicts in Dagbon state in the Northern Region (MacGaffey 2006; Tsikata & Seini 2004). The fixation of analysts with Ghanaian elections at the national level overshadows micro-level conflicts, since these have never really threatened to cause the implosion of the state, as happened recently in Côte d'Ivoire and Kenya (Ayelazuno 2009b).

Again, Ghana bears a striking resemblance to Kenya in this regard. The post-election conflict in Kenya took most people by surprise as few political scientists predicted it, yet, as a number of scholars have observed, Kenya 'was already on the precipice long before the first ballot was cast or President Mwai Kibaki was declared winner and sworn in for a second presidential term on 30 December' (Kagwanja 2009, p 365). Mueller (2008, p 186) argues that 'Kenya was precariously perched and poised to implode even prior to the election …' If that is true why didn't political scientists and democracy promotion agencies see it coming?[4]

My hunch is that, as is the case with today's Ghana, it was because some analysts were bent on promoting Kenya as a model of electoral peace. Like Ghana, Kenya, prior to its implosion in 2007, was 'widely viewed as a bastion of peace and stability in a volatile region' (Lynch 2008, p 542). It was viewed as a model of the way democratisation can promote 'moral ethnicity' rather than being an 'intoxicating brew' (Orvis 2001).

It seems that most observers failed to take seriously many warning signs of potential conflict in Kenya because of the complexity of ethnic politics there. As in Ghana, members of the political class have used their ethnic constituencies as bargaining chips for their share of political power and for building fragile coalitions to win political office (Ndegwa 2003; Cheeseman 2008). Once these elite pacts were working and the nation-state was not in danger of imploding from the ethnic and other social conflicts simmering below Kenya remained a model of electoral democracy until the disputes escalated into full-blown bloody conflicts in the aftermath of the 2007 elections. As they threatened to implode the state the international community rushed in with a battery of diplomatic efforts to manage

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4   Perhaps Stephen Ndegwa (2003) is a notable exception: in the midst of the euphoria that followed the 2002 landmark Kenyan elections his reading of the political dynamics of Kenya was extremely cautious, if not pessimistic.

the problem. They were too late – between 1 300 and 2 000 lives had already been sacrificed, 400 000 to 600 000 people displaced and a massive $1.5-billion lost (Kagwanja 2009, p 369).

I fear the same mistake is being made in Ghana. The international community is bent on promoting the country's elections as a model for its African peers to emulate. Hence Ghana's model elections have overshadowed the relevance of the social context in the analysis of its democratisation. For instance, whereas some scholars have done a good job of pointing out the many serious flaws beneath the surface appearance of the consolidation of democracy and electoral peace (Gyimah-Boadi, 2001, 2003, 2009; Jockers, Kohnert & Nugent 2010; Abdulai & Crawford 2010; Smith 2002), rarely do they go far enough and look at Ghana as an ethnically divided society that needs institutional engineering to maintain its peace and stability. Nor do they investigate how the existing institutions for managing political conflict have become dated or weak with time and under different political realities.

With the country viewed as a model of electoral democracy most analysts do not pay attention to the powder kegs hidden beneath the much-celebrated Ghanaian electoral model and the liberal version of democracy it has installed (Ayelazuno 2007). Both critics and admirers of the Ghanaian electoral model seem to be satisfied that the majoritarian electoral system has established a stable two-party system that has worked well, both in terms of the election of presidents and the rotation of power between the two dominant parties and in terms of the translations of votes into parliamentary seats and the consolidation of representative democracy.

Although the ethno-regional politics of the NDC and NPP worries critics and admirers, few, if any, have questioned the electoral system which has given the two parties the incentive to try to win the presidency by mobilising votes on an ethnic basis, especially when defeat seems to loom. The ethno-regionalist politics of the NDC and NPP in their so-called strongholds seems to be taken lightly. For example, scholars have not paid serious attention to the new pattern of the results of the 2008 presidential elections and its significance for the exclusion of both the minority and majority, as I demonstrate below.

Scholars seem to be convinced that ethnic politics is not salient or pre-dominant in Ghana in terms of voter alignment and the determination of the winner of presidential elections (Fridy 2007; Nugent 2001; Chazan 1982; Arthur 2009).[5] Indeed, some scholars even think that the socio-economic factors that underpin voter alignment in advanced Western democracies – education levels,

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5   This may be true, but it doesn't mean it cannot be an 'intoxicating brew' for electoral conflict. And to be fair to the analysts who make this argument, they do not say so explicitly.

the rural-urban divide, income and occupation – are what determine the party alignments of 80 per cent of Ghanaian voters and, thanks to the magic of statistical analysis, this argument has been made rigorously and persuasively (Lindberg & Morrison 2005).

In their survey of the voting behaviour of voters in the country Lindberg & Morrison (2008, p 96) sought to illustrate that Ghanaian voters have progressed towards becoming the mature, sophisticated voters of the advanced Western countries.

> On the basis of responses to survey interviews with a broad sample of Ghanaian citizens we conclude that only about one in ten voters is decisively influenced by either clientelism or ethnic and family ties in choosing political representatives, while 85 to 90 per cent behave as 'mature' democratic citizens. Ethnicity is not a key factor in determining the vote in Ghana and clientelism, when it appears, is furthered by intense competition, resulting in a dilemma for new democracies.

According to the study Ghanaian voters are 'rational and responsible actors who are knowledgeable about the reasons for their voting behavior'. They do not just evaluate parties in retrospective terms, based on their performance in the past. They are so sophisticated that they base their electoral choices on the evaluation of the programmes and policies of parties with regard to the future (Lindberg & Morrison 2008, pp 99-100).

If this were true the danger of elections turning ethnic cleavages into deadly conflict would have been minimal, if not totally absent. Being so rational Ghanaians would not be gullible enough to allow themselves to be mobilised or would not self-mobilise to commit atrocities against each other because of ethno-political grievances, as I have asserted above. The case of the rational voter is, however, a myth, even in the advanced democracies, the specific social context in which it was theorised. Its extrapolation to the social context of Ghana is a case of epistemological expediency.

Furthermore, the extrapolation is based on a Eurocentric notion of state-citizens relationships in which, in exchange for the protection of their freedom, rights, liberties, security and other services provided by the state, citizens give undivided loyalty to the nation-state – a sort of republicanist notion of citizenship and nationalism.

It doesn't work quite this way even in the advanced Western democracies, let alone in Africa (Berman, Eyoh & Kymlicka 2004; Ekeh 2004). While Ghana's exemplary democratisation provides fertile ground for scholars of African

politics to test their political theories and methodologies, doing this without paying attention to social-historical context may lead to erroneous conclusions, however scientific the methods or parsimonious the theories. Yet paying attention to specificity of social-historical context detracts from the epistemic ambitions of these scholars to explain political phenomenon in a formalistic, legalistic manner by subjecting it to 'robust empirical generalizations' that seek to generate 'higher- and higher-level generalizations' (Tilly 2001, p 23).

The value of using parsimonious theories to study politics in Africa and making 'robust empirical generalizations' should not be underrated. It is a mark of good scholarship to view social phenomena, like voter alignment, in a more sophisticated way. This is not just for the sake of analytical rigour. The point is that human beings, whom the social scientist studies, are complex. Testing parsimonious theories with empirical data can help us understand this complexity systematically and concisely and help rectify simplistic assumptions like 'Ghanaians vote en bloc on an ethnic basis' or 'Ghanaian politics is mainly ethnic'.

However, some scholars have taken this to extremes and in doing so have turned analytical rigour into another facile, modernist rendition of politics in Ghana; a clear case of what one authoritative source conceptualised as the 'ethnocentrism of social science' (Wiarda 1981). Both Marxist and liberal scholars with this perspective, some of whom are Africans, believe 'that the non-Western world would inevitably follow the same developmental path as the West' (Wiarda 1981, p 166). As felicitously put elsewhere, they 'dehistoricize phenomena by lifting them from context, whether in the name of abstract universalism of an intimate particularism, only to make sense of them by analogy' (Mamdani 1996, pp 12, 13).

Lindberg & Morrison's rational-choice argument has less to do with a sophisticated analysis of ethnic politics in Ghana than with abstraction for the sake of parsimonious analysis; abstraction that would allow for 'higher-and higher- level generalizations' in order to arrive at a legalistic explanation of political phenomena (Tilly 2001, p 23). Suddenly the social context of ethnic divisions in Ghana and the tendency for them to be politicised by the competitive nature of elections give way to a social context of rational voters whose rationality has sanitised them, removing their ethnic sentiments.

As stated above, this is a myth, even in advanced democracies like the USA. One authoritative source, using a similar rational-choice approach to that of Lindberg & Morrison, has documented that American voters, for example, 'are deeply ignorant about politics. They do not know who their representatives are, much less what they do' (Caplan 2007, p 2; see also Converse 2006).

The case of the 'mysterious' Alvin Greene, the Democratic nominee for the 2010 senatorial elections in South Carolina, lends credence to Caplan's argument.

As the *New York Times* reported:

> Greene, an unemployed Army veteran who had been completely
> unknown … inexplicably defeated a heavily favored former legislator
> and judge to become the state's Democratic nominee for the Senate
> – and the state's latest political circus act.
>
> <div align="right">Leibovich 2010</div>

While Greene's opponent, Vic Rawl, was popular, raised funds and campaigned, Greene held no rallies and hardly campaigned. Compared to his opponent he had no clear platform which would allow voters to evaluate him rationally.

This is a clear example of the myth of the rational voter in the heartland of liberal democracy. If the rational voter is not very rational in an advanced democracy like the USA, with a highly educated electorate, it is hard to believe that she/he can be rational in the social context of Ghana; a new democracy with fewer educated voters than the USA.

In any event one is not rational only when one votes for a party based on universal values like ideological doctrines or class consciousness. Voting for an ethnic party or candidate could also be based on rational analysis. What is rational is relative and varies with individuals, whose rationality, I will argue, is conditioned by their social and historical circumstances.

Ethnicity in Africa, as we are reminded by Berman, Eyoh & Kymlicka (2004, p 4), 'is not simply an atavistic or irrational attachment to kith and kin, or to blood and soil'. It is a web of social relations which shape the definition of responsibilities and rights of individuals. In my opinion, it is just such an ahistorical and acontextual rendition of Ghanaian politics that minimises, if not hides, the tendency of electoral politics to lead to ethnic conflict and, for that matter, the need to take proactive steps to manage it.

ETHNICITY AND ETHNO-REGIONALISM IN GHANA

The purpose of this section is to illustrate that Ghana is an ethnically divided society that requires institutional engineering to promote conciliatory and inclusive politics. The country's ten regions are not simply administrative units, they are ethnic ones (Amoah 2007, p 51). One factor that must be emphasised again is that ethnic divisions, membership/identity, consciousness, conflict and consensus are not merely complex in Ghana, they are also fluid and malleable (Nugent 2001; Chazan 1982). However, both the primordial and constructionist notions of ethnicity are germane to understanding the phenomenon in Ghana.

In the specific sociological and historical context of the country primordially

fixed social identity is one of the institutions that have endured social change over decades. The rich diversity of languages spoken in the country attests to these primordial ethnic divisions. It is common, for instance, for people living in nearby villages to speak different languages and be unable to communicate with each without an interpreter (Austin 2000, p 148). Ethnicity is, therefore, part and parcel of the personality fibre of most Ghanaians, just as it is elsewhere in the world.

The most cosmopolitan Ghanaian, unless he or she was not born and socialised in the country, has some ethnic sentiments. Kinship is the bedrock of this form of ethnicity (Ekeh 2004). Every Ghanaian is born into a kin group, the microcosm of ethnicity. Then one is not just born into a family but into a lineage and a clan, the two descent groups that organise and structure the behaviour of members of a particular kin group. As Nukunya (2003, p 17) has pointed out, kinship is the elemental institution of society as it is the pivot around which the fabric of social life – family, socialisation, religion, economic status, politics, and so on – is woven.

With the social changes that have come with modernisation kinship ties have frayed. Nevertheless, those ties, values, and practices endure, even in the cities (Nugunya 2003, p 18; Busia 1967, p 117). In Ghana the development of the modern nation-state, unlike that in Western Europe, has not led to the demise of kinship. On the contrary, 'kinship has grown in stature with the development of the state in Africa' (Ekeh 2004, p 28).

Stephen Ndegwa (1997, p 602) has argued powerfully that citizenship in Kenya is more complicated than the conventional and Western connotation of being or not being a member of a monolithic political community, the modern nation-state, or being included or excluded from it. 'In post-colonial Kenya', he argues, 'the socially enacted relationship between ethnic identity, authority, and legitimacy competes with the legally sanctioned membership, authority and legitimacy of the nation-state'. A Kenyan may even prioritise his/her allegiance and membership of his/her ethnic group over that of the nation-state, Kenya (Ndegwa 1997, p 602).

This is equally true about Ghanaians. Ghanaians are citizens, not only in the sense of the modern nation-state that was carved by colonialism but in terms of the nations that predated the Gold Coast and Ghana – the nation based on kinship (Busia 1967, p 19). Ghanaians are also Gas, Ewes, Ashantis, Dagombas, Nankanis, Kassenas, Nzemas, Frafras, Dagabas, and so on. Existing side by side with the administrative divisions and government apparatuses of the national state are sub-national apparatuses and divisions like chieftaincies, monarchies, kingdoms, villages, lineages, and clans.

Some Ghanaians may prioritise their sub-national citizenship over their nation-state citizenship in terms of loyalty to political authority and participation

in the affairs of the polity. As one influential Ghanaian political anthropologists put it, 'every Ghanaian citizen belongs to, and is often emotionally and ideologically attached to, a village, chiefdom, or district; indeed, one's national self-image is defined to a large extent by the sense of belonging to one's home locality' (Owusu 1996, p 325; see also Assimeng 1999, p 182).

It should be noted that there is nothing primitive about the existence of ethnic groups in Ghana, or in Africa in general. 'It is no sign of backwardness,' Kofi Busia (1967, p 119) correctly argues, 'to recognise the fact of the existence of different types and ethnic groups … Ethnic groups exist everywhere in the world' (see also Berman, Eyoh & Kymlicka 2004, p 13). It should also be noted that, contrary to popular opinion, ethnic divisions do not inexorably lead to civil conflicts such as those, like Rwanda and Burundi, for instance, with which they are popularly associated in Africa.

As Ghanaian sociologist, Steve Tonah (2007, p 14) states emphatically, '[e]thnicity and ethnic pluralism *per se,* do not contribute to the numerous conflicts on the African continent more than they contribute to the consensus found among several ethnic groups in Africa.' This is particularly true in Ghana, even with regard to the infamous Ewe-Ashanti ethnic animosity, discussed below.

Historians have discovered that rather than hostility or hatred for each other, which seem to be the case in Ghanaian politics today, 'in the pre-colonial period the Anlo Ewe were allies of the Asante, whereas the Akyem were amongst their most bitter enemies' (Nugent 1999, p 307). Ethnic conflict and consensus are, thus, socio-historically contingent and specific.

Thus far, I have tried to make a strong and one-sided case for primordially fixed ethnic divisions and identities in Ghana. However, as some influential authorities on ethnicity have warned, ethnicity in general, and in Ghana in particular, is a slippery phenomenon. 'It is simply not possible,' argues Nugent (2001, p 2), 'to take the map of Ghana and to divide it into neat ethnic compartments without doing violence to one or another aspect of social reality.' Carola Lentz (2006, p 3) has also noted that '[e]thnicity is an enigmatic, unstable and problematic notion'. For her, 'the "content" of any particular ethnicity is historically contingent … it is the product both of particular – mainly political – contexts and of the materials which history has made available' (Lentz 2006, p 3).

In a sense, ethnic identities and groups are socially constructed and not simply primordially fixed. The fluidity of ethnic groups 'allows them to be politically activated or deactivated, depending on circumstances and the interests at stake' (Owusu 2006, p 14; Chazan 1982, p 462).

It is precisely because of the fluidity of ethnicity and its constructionist notion that I consider the ten regions of Ghana not just as administrative regions but as ethnic regions, regardless of their ethnic heterogeneity. The malleability

of ethnicity is not only discernible in the way Ghanaians transcend their ethnic affiliations to join non-ethnic social groups (for example, professional associations), or the way their non-ethnic sentiments (like class consciousness and religious sensibilities) can dominate their ethnic sentiments. It is also reflected in the way different ethnic groups build coalitions and forge political links with each other in the general interest of their groups, as documented on the Dagara in the Upper West Region (Lentz 2006).

The regional divisions of Ghana are quintessential examples of such coalition building. The ideal of every ethnic group in the country would be to have a region of its own, because the creation of a region or even a district means access to a piece of the national pie, as basic infrastructure would be constructed to raise the community to regional status. Since it is impossible for every ethnic group to have a district or a region, the best option is for several to unite to demand one.

Obviously, ethnic groups in each of the ten regions – for example, the Frafra, Builsa, Nankani, Kassena, Namdam, Tallensi, Kusasi, and so on, in the Upper East Region – do not relinquish their ethnicity in favour of the constructed ethnic group; in this example, the Upper East Region. However, in terms of national politics and in competition with the other regions for development projects, they stand together. Even where such regions belong to a bigger ethnic group, like the predominantly Akan regions (Ashanti, Eastern, Western, Brong-Ahafo and Central regions), allegiance to region supersedes ethnicity. This, I will argue, is not necessarily because of the historical intra-Akan conflicts and animosities, for example, between the Ashantis and the other sub-ethnic groups like the Akyems and Fantis (see Nugent 1999, pp 307-08; Kimble 1963, p 264). It is because of the new ethnic sentiments that develop concomitantly with the new ethnic group, the region.

For example, in November 2010 the Western Regional House of Chiefs, an organisation of traditional political leaders of different ethnic groups in the region, sent a petition to the government demanding that ten per cent of the country's oil revenue be allocated exclusively to the development of their region. Obviously their petition was based on a regional sense of ethnicity as Ghana's oil is located off Cape Three Points, in the Western Region.

In the primordial sense the chiefs represent different ethnic groups in the Western Region (Fante, Wassa, Nzema, and so on), which may have acrimonious relationships because of historical or contemporary disputes over land, chieftaincy or government development projects. However, they forged a regional alliance in relation to the other nine regions and, for that matter, in relation to Ghana as a nation-state. It should also be noted that these chiefs and their people may be aligned to different parties, especially the NDC and NPP. Nonetheless, party allegiance took a back seat to ethno-regionalism.

In the primordial sense of ethnicity I will argue that, regardless of the heterogeneity of the ethnic groups in each region, they are more homogeneous and closer to each other in kinship, language, history and other primordial characteristics than they are to the adjoining regions. The point is the ten regions were not created through administrative logic alone but also with 'emphasis on maintaining the coherence of traditional states and tribes' (Oelbaum 2004, p 245).

The three northern regions are not merely close to each other geographically (see Figure 1, the regional map of Ghana), but close ethnically, despite the heterogeneity of their ethnic groups. For instance, most of the ethnic groups in the Upper East Region are more homogeneous and closer in kinship than those in the Northern Region. However, all the ethnic groups in the Upper East Region are more homogeneous and closer in kinship to the ethnic groups in Upper West and Northern regions than those in the Brong-Ahafo and Ashanti regions, and the regions further south. For example, it is easier for Fra-fras in Upper East Region to understand Dagbani (the language of Dagombas, one of the ethnic groups in Northern Region) than Twi, Fanti, or Ga (languages spoken in Ashanti, Greater Accra, Central and Western Regions in the southern part of the country).

The diverse ethnic groups in Ghana – 93 by one scholar's estimate (Ametewee 2007, p 31) – have been subsumed into eight major groups by scholars and the government of Ghana alike. The eight groups, according to the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), are Akan, Ga-Dangbme, Ewe, Guan, Gurma, Mole-Dagbon, Grusi, and Mande-Busanga (Ametewee 2007, p 30; Arthur 2009, p 52). The geographical proximity of regions and the homogeneity of their ethnic groups coincide with the geographical concentration of these eight major groups. For example, the groups subsumed broadly as Akan – Ashanti, Fanti, Brono, Akyem, Akwapim, Denkyira, Nzema, and so on – are concentrated in the southern part of the country and in the five Akan regions: Ashanti, Brong Ahafo, Eastern, Western and Central.

The ethnic groups subsumed into the Mole-Dagbon – Dagomba, Nanumba, Dagarti, Frafra,and Mamprusi – are generally concentrated in the Upper East, Upper West, and Northern regions (Arthur 2009, p 51). Similarly, the Ewe and Ga-Dangbme are concentrated in the Volta and Greater Accra regions respectively.

With the exception of Greater Accra Region this assertion is true, even when migration is brought into the equation. The Ga-Dangme people, the primordial ethnic group of Greater Accra, have been outnumbered by Akans: they constitute 29.7 per cent to the Akans' 39.8 per cent and Ewe 18 per cent. In the Ashanti Region 78.9 per cent of the population is ethnic Ashanti and in the Volta Region 68.5 per cent is ethnic Ewe (Ghana Districts 2010; see also Arthur 2009, p 52).

As stated above each ethnic group in Ghana would prefer to have an administrative region of its own. Agitation for administrative regions has, thus, both in

the past and the present, been underpinned by primordial ethnic sentiments. The Brong Ahafo Region was carved out of the Ashanti Region, the Upper West Region was carved out of the former Upper Region and the former Upper Region was carved out of the Northern Region. The Gonja and other cognate ethnic groups in the western part of the Northern Region are agitating for a separate region (Savanah Region).

Similarly, the northern part of Volta Region, predominantly inhabited by non-Ewe ethnic groups, has also been agitating for a separate region. What is significant about these demands and about those in the Brong Ahafo, Upper, and Upper West regions, is that they are based on their ethnic grounding rather than population density – the conventional and fundamental criterion for creating administrative zones and constituencies. Where they have been created – like Brong Ahafo, Upper, and Upper West regions – this has been done on the basis of ethnicity rather than population density. Indeed, it is mostly the regions with low population densities that have made these demands. To use population density to analyse the demands of ethnic groups for separate regions, districts and constituencies, as some scholars do (see Smith 2002), is to dismiss the conflict management logic that has informed their creation by Ghana's leaders.

Clearly these leaders were not working with the simplistic population-density criterion or the three northern regions would have all been one, as was the case until 1960, when the Upper Region was created out of Northern Region; or, at best, they should have been two regions, as was the case until the Upper West Region was carved out of the former Upper Region. Table 1 illustrates the population distribution and Table 2 the number of registered voters by region.

Two things are significant: inhabitants of the three northern regions are a minority in Ghana, going by the constructionist 'Northerner' vs 'Southerner' ethnicity. If lumped together their population is a mere 16.4 per cent of the national population and registered voters constitute a mere 15.32 per cent. Secondly, it is clear that if population density is the criterion for creating a region either the Upper West and Upper East regions should not have been given regional status or the Ashanti region should have been divided into at least three regions.

With a total of 1 596 800 the population of the two regions is not even half of that of the Ashanti region (4 459 400). However, in terms of the number of distinct ethnic groups that make up the Upper East Region (Nabdam, Tallensi, Kusasi, Nankani, Builsa, Kassena, Frafra, Busanga, and so on) and the Upper West Region (Dagaba, Sisaala, and Wala), they are home to more diverse ethnic groups than Ashanti Region, which is inhabited predominantly by ethnic Ashantis (Arthur 2009, p 52). As a result of migration the ethnic groups in the Upper East and Upper West regions can be found in Ashanti Region too but, as indicated above, 78.9 per cent of that region's population is still ethnic Ashanti.

The upshot of this is that, as Amoah (2007, ch 3) has documented in more detail, the ten regions of Ghana are not just administrative but ethnic – despite the complexity of ethnic identity in the country. Therefore, in both the constructionist and the primordial sense of ethnicity Ghana is an ethnically divided society. To borrow from Donald Horowitz (2001, p 48), despite the variable porosity of ethnic group boundaries in Ghana most, if not all, Ghanaians are born into ethnic groups, in which they will die.

Both the political class and the ordinary voters have ethnic sentiments, regardless of how cosmopolitan they have become. This does not mean that Ghanaians cannot transcend their ethnic divisions to join non-ethnic social groups, nor does it mean that, by so doing, they have given up their ethnic loyalty completely. Similarly, the ten regions may forge inter-regional coalitions that transcend their ethno-regional divisions without giving up their ethno-regional sentiments. The three northern regions are a notable example of this: because of historical and cultural variables, including their historical marginalisation in development and cultural / negative stereotyping by other Ghanaians, people from the three northern regions consider themselves 'brothers' and 'sisters' or 'Mabians' (Amoah 2007, p 71). In this sense, the term 'Northerners' is not just a geographical nomenclature for people from northern Ghana, but also an ethnic identity.

Politically and historically societies have devised various strategies to build multiethnic and democratic states by promoting conciliatory politics, political inclusiveness, and security for each individual, irrespective of ethnicity or any other identity. Though challenging, the success of these strategies elsewhere in the world gives hope that multiethnic democratic states are viable in Africa (Berman, Eyoh & Kymlicka 2004, p 13). The next section examines one of those strategies.

INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN DIVIDED SOCIETIES

Scholars of conflict management in divided societies have consistently been at pains to underline how democracy and democratisation can further deepen existing social cleavages if institutions are not engineered to promote reconciliation and the inclusion of all groups, both majority and minority, in the body politic of the state (Horowitz 1991, 1993; Reynolds & Sisk 1998; Belmont, Mainwaring & Reynolds 2002; Bastian & Luckham 2003; Birnir 2007; Deng 2008). Donald Horowitz (1993, p 18), for instance, has noted that:

> [d]emocracy is about inclusion and exclusion, about access to power, about the privileges that go with inclusion and the penalties that accompany exclusion. In severely divided societies, ethnic identity

provides clear lines to determine who will be included and who will
be excluded. Since the lines appear unalterable, being in and being
out may quickly come to look permanent.

This zero-sum and polarising tendency of democracy in ethnically divided
societies defies advancement on the transition-consolidation continuum of
democratisation. 'Ethnicity,' as we are again reminded by Horowitz (1993, p 20),
'poses obstacles at the threshold of democratization and obstacles after the
threshold is crossed.' Ghana is, therefore, not immune to electoral conflict because
of its successful organisation of relatively peaceful, free and fair elections in the
past 18 years. In light of this, the constitution and political institutions of newly
democratised countries like Ghana must always be scrutinised for flaws that are
likely to lead to ethnic conflict because of political exclusion – regardless of the
number of peaceful, free and fair elections they have held.

Besides the constitution, electoral systems/bodies are, perhaps, the most
important institutions with the power to check tendencies towards exclusion
of either majorities or minorities. Electoral systems/bodies are not merely
important because they shape the party system they also apportion parliamentary
representatives across the country, determine who is elected and open the political
space for holding political leaders accountable.

Electoral systems also condition the attitude of parties, their leaders and
supporters toward other parties with respect to the way voters are mobilised
and can determine whether they adopt exclusionary, racist or ethnic attitude to
politics or accommodative and conciliatory ones (Horowitz 1991, p 165; Reynolds
& Sisk 1998, p 19).

Electoral systems have, thus, been the focus of democratic conflict manage-
ment scholars, concerned with finding how they can be designed in ways which
will ensure that certain ethnic groups are not systematically excluded from the
political process, whether overtly, covertly or subtly. As Belmont, Mainwaring
& Reynolds (2002, p 3) argue: 'Institutional design can systematically favour
or disadvantage ethnic, national and religious groups.' The first-past-the-post
electoral system, in their view, is a paradigmatic case of this scenario because
it has the potential to 'systematically and profoundly disadvantage even large
minority groups, especially those that are geographically dispersed'.

However, Horowitz (1991) has argued powerfully that a good electoral
system is not necessarily one that builds a coalition between majority and minority
parties through proportional representation, as advocates of consociational
democracy would argue. The best system is one that does not merely give the
incentive to coalesce but the incentive to accommodate, to compromise, and
to conciliate. The incentive to coalesce or build coalitions places emphasis on

'seat pooling' and the presumption of statesmanship. In contrast, the incentive to compromise and conciliate is based on 'vote pooling' and the making of statesmanship. 'Consociationalism and its electoral component,' argues Horowitz (1991, p 176),

> come down to statesmanship, not electoral incentives. If the ex-
> perience of severely divided societies shows anything at all, it is
> that statesmanship alone, statesmanship without tangible reasons,
> statesmanship without rewards, will not reduce conflict. Without
> incentives, statesmanship will be in short supply.

It is an enormous challenge to design institutions that guarantee the successful management of political conflicts in ethnically divided states. Institutional design is no panacea for conciliatory politics in all countries, nor is there a specific institutional design model that works across all countries, irrespective of social context and history (Belmont, Mainwaring & Reynolds 2002, p 3).

Horowitz has unceasingly drawn our attention to the challenges of insti-
tutional design aimed at promoting conciliation in multiethnic societies. He argues that there is no cut and dried institutional framework that deals resolutely with political exclusion and the concomitant danger of murderous ethnic conflicts. While it is common for electoral systems to be targeted for institutional engineering to promote conciliation Horowitz reminds us that while '[e]lectoral systems shape and constrain the way in which politicians and constituents behave … they are only one small part of the forces affecting the total constellation of behavior, even of political behavior.' For this reason, he points out, '[m]iracles do not follow from changes of electoral systems' (Horowitz 2003, p 116).

This notwithstanding, Horowitz advocates institutional engineering as a conflict management strategy in divided and democratising societies. He argues that '[a] coherent package, even a redundant package, of conflict-reducing techniques is required' in divided societies, and that '[s]uch a package would include electoral systems to create ongoing incentives for interethnic cooperation and for preelection coalitions based on vote pooling' (Horowitz 1993, p 35).

While there is no one institutional design that promotes the politics of conciliation and tolerance in ethnically divided societies some electoral systems work better than others. For example, the presidential electoral system that Nigeria pioneered in 1979 in the Second Republic, which stipulates two winning requirements – national plurality and regional distribution – is promising for political conciliation in a divided society (Horowitz 1990, p 76; 2003, pp 118-19; 2008). Following Horowitz, therefore, I argue for the present presidential electoral system of Ghana to be changed to include a regional distribution component – a

double requirement for winning – as practised in Indonesia, Kenya and Nigeria (IDEA 2005, p 137).

THE ABSOLUTE MAJORITY ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN GHANA

Ghana's 1992 Constitution stipulates that the president be elected by an absolute majority in which the 230 constituencies of the country become one, regardless of the difference in population and the numbers of registered voters of the ten ethno-regions. Article 63(3), the substantive constitutional provision governing the election of a president in Ghana, reads:

> A person shall not be elected President of Ghana unless at the presidential election the number of votes cast in his favour is more than 50 per cent of the total number of valid votes cast at the election.
>
> <div align="right">Republic of Ghana 1992, p 54</div>

Conspicuously absent are regional distribution requirements, which literally means that if the 50 per cent-plus-one votes are obtained from one of the bigger and most populous of the ten regions, the president is elected. In reality, this is impossible, thanks to the absolute, rather than the simple majority system. In a sense, Ghana's electoral system promotes 'vote pooling' from all ten regions, hence the incentive to accommodate ethnic differences that Horowitz theorises above.

The much-praised statesmanship of the Ghanaian political elites, Horowitz would argue, is not the result of having imbibed Western values of democratic statesmanship but of the fact that the electoral system has left them with no alternative other than to adopt an accommodative and conciliatory attitude to politics rather than the crude ethnic politics practised elsewhere.

However, as stated above, the single, absolute majority winning system still promotes ethno-regional politics, especially in run-off elections when the competition is keenest. It also gives the two dominant parties a powerful incentive to manipulate results from their ethno-regional strongholds to win, regardless of whether they are losing or winning in the other eight regions.

This behaviour manifested itself to some extent in the second-round elections in 2000; was perhaps less evident in the 2004 elections because there was no need for a second round to determine a winner; but came back strongly in the second-round polls in 2008. In both 2000 and 2008 the incumbent party was more aggressive in this regard, obviously because they had sensed defeat in the first round.

As was evident in the 1992 presidential elections in Angola and Algeria second-round elections do not give the losing party any incentive to engage in conciliatory politics. Rather, the contrary is the case, and thus it becomes desperate and uncompromising, even rebelling against the electoral process/institutions (IDEA 2005, p 53). This is the scenario that unfolded in Côte d'Ivoire both prior to and in the aftermath of the 2010 elections. Laurent Gbagbo, the incumbent president, anticipating defeat in the run-off election on 28 November 2010, prepared himself politically to defy the electoral outcome and retain power at all costs.

When, in 2000, the NDC sensed that it would be defeated by the opposition NPP in the first round it became desperate and aggressive in exploiting the ethno-regional divisions discussed above. As one authoritative source put it, 'the NDC decided to go for broke in the second round with a campaign strategy strongly based on ethnic mobilization' (Gyimah-Boadi 2001, p 108). Led by its chief campaigner and incumbent president, Jerry Rawlings, the NDC severely criticised the people and the chiefs of the Central and Western regions for forsaking their own 'son', Atta Mills (the NDC's presidential candidate and Fanti by ethnicity) for Kufuor (the NPP's presidential candidate and ethnic Ashanti). The NDC asked voters to wise up and vote for their own 'son' in the second round, the principle being, '*Adze wo fie a oye*', the Fanti expression meaning 'It is better to have your own' (Frempong, cited in Arthur 2010, p 61; see also Gyimah-Boadi 2001, p 108).

There were rumours that the NDC was politicising the historically sensitive land issues of the Ga people in the Greater Accra region: the 'NPP would open the floodgates for Ashantis and other nonindigenes to take over Accra lands' (Gyimah-Boadi 2001, p 108). It has to be noted that the NDC was making these frenzied efforts to win despite clearly having lost both the popular and regional votes: it only won in four of the ten regions. Yet, because of the single, absolute majority system they were motivated to go all out because, constitutionally, they could still win.

Enter the 2008 run-off elections. From a conflict management perspective the situation was even worse than it had been in 2000. For the first time since the 1992 'founding' elections – indeed, since independence – the leading candidate in the first round presidential poll, the NPP's Akufo-Addo, had performed abysmally in the regional vote, yet was leading in the popular vote. As Table 3 illustrates the NDC's Atta Mills had won in six of the ten regions and split the vote almost equally with his opponent in the Western Region, yet he was behind in the popular vote. Indeed, his opponent almost won the election despite his commanding lead in the regional vote.

From the raw votes (Table 3) it is evident that the massive Ashanti vote accounted for Akufo-Addo's lead (1 214 350 as against Atta Mills's 438 234). In view of the fact that Akufo-Addo's lead in the first round was 102 802 Atta Mills

did very well in the other regions (including the Ashanti Region) to close the gap. His 551 046 votes from his stronghold in the Volta Region were clearly inadequate to do this. Similarly, Akufo-Addo's abysmal performance in the Volta – only 99 584 votes (14.98%) contributed immensely to his failure to accumulate the 50 per cent-plus-one which would have enabled him to win the first round. Had it not been for this failure he might have won, despite losing in the majority of the regions (see Table 3).

The run-off presidential elections, as indicated above, exposed the flaws of the majoritarian system more than the first round had. Ghana was in danger of havingthe minority decide who its president was to be. As Table 4 illustrates Atta Mills increased his lead in the number of regions he won from six in the first round to eight in the run-off. Despite this overwhelming lead in the regional vote his lead in the popular vote was so slim as to necessitate that an election be run in the Tain constituency to decide the winner.

It is obvious from the run-off election results (see Table 4) that, as in the first round, this 'third round' in Tain took place because of the huge number of votes Akufo-Addo had added to his first-round votes from the Ashanti Region, his stronghold (224 470 more), as against the smaller number Atta Mills added to his first round votes from Volta Region, his stronghold (79 853 more).

Indeed, in the run-off Atta Mills won more votes in the Greater Accra Region (83 075) than in the Volta Region. From a conflict management perspective this picture does not bode well for the future of the Ghanaian model of electoral peace. In an ethnically divided society like Ghana if two regions – Eastern and Ashanti – can overturn the verdict of eight regions some ethnic groups will be excluded from electing the government of the country.

As discussed above, these regions are not just administrative units, they are ethnic units. If the NPP candidate had won it would have meant that, in ethno-regional terms, the majority would have been governed by the minority – the procedure would have been impeccable but the exclusion would have been complete (Horowitz 1993, p 31).

As was the case with the first round the NDC candidate won in eight regions – all by more than 50 per cent of the votes cast and by more than 60 per cent in four of those regions – yet was not guaranteed victory because of the large population of Ashanti Region and, inextricably linked to that, the large number of registered voters there, as illustrated in Tables 1 and 2. For example, the 224 470 additional votes the NPP candidate won in the region was more than the total number of valid votes cast in the whole of the Upper West Region: 216 487 votes, shared between the two candidates.

Similarly, the total number of votes obtained by Atta Mills in Ashanti Region: 479 749 (just 25% of the total votes cast) was more than the total number of people

who voted in the Upper East and Upper West regions, even as turnout in these two regions (70.26% and 67.24% respectively) was just a few per cent less than the national turnout of 72.91 per cent.

As Table 4 shows the total number of votes the NPP candidate obtained from the Ashanti Region was greater by 68 135 votes than the total number of valid votes cast for the two candidates in the three northern regions together. Clearly the Ashanti Region has emerged as a majority ethno-regional group and has the dangerous potential of deciding the winner of presidential elections in Ghana to the exclusion of the other nine regions.[6] This brings to the fore the risk of the absolute majority system excluding minority ethno-regions like the three northern regions from the political process.

As mentioned above the absolute majority system has resulted in the NPP adopting an accommodative attitude toward 'Northern' voters, to the extent that, since the 1992 elections (with the exception of the 1996 elections), the vice-presidential candidate has always been a 'Northerner' (*The Statesman*, 25 November 2011) – a practice the NDC has also adopted since the 2000 elections.

Following Horowitz it should be noted that this is not an act of statesmanship motivated by the common good but a response to the irresistible incentive offered by the absolute majority system, as the NPP needs to pool votes across the country if it is to get 50 per cent-plus-one. The three northern regions pose a challenge to the party's chances of winning because they have historically voted against it and its predecessors. A 'Northern' vice-presidential candidate is, therefore, motivated by votes, not statesmanship. However, this incentive to accommodate may dissipate if the 'Northern' vote becomes less relevant to the NPP's victory, with the growth in Ashanti votes, and if the NPP is able to turn the other four Akan regions (Brong

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6   Of course, attention must be paid to the fact that the NPP won more than one-third of the votes in eight
     regions (the exception being the Volta Region). Indeed, its performance in the 2000, 2004, and 2008
     elections shows that compared to the 1992 and 1996 elections the NPP is gradually gaining ground
     in the three northern regions. There are a number of theories about why this should be, among them
     rational choice and patronage networks. It is not within the scope of this article to discuss them here.
     However, it will suffice to state that in terms of this article the regions are constituencies and regardless
     of the votes a party gets the defeat of a presidential candidate in any region means the region has voted
     against her/him; and in ethno-regional terms an ethnic group has voted against both candidate and
     party. Besides, as some scholars have pointed out, partisan national politics takes the shape of local
     partisan politics based on local issues, for example, chieftaincy or land disputes (see Austin 1964,
     pp 292-93, 359-62; Austin 2000, p 152). Typical cases are the Andani-Abudu dynastic feud which has
     divided Dagombas, one of the ethnic groups in the northern region, into an NDC-NPP alignment, and
     the Bawku chieftaincy dispute which has, similarly, divided Kusasis and Mamprusis into an NDC-
     NPP alignment. In this sense, the party alignment of voters in the three northern regions cannot be
     considered non-ethnic just because they vote for the NPP rather than the People's National Convention
     (PNC), the party perceived to be a party of 'Northerners'. In Ghana's two-party system 'Northerners'
     know the PNC has no real chance of winning the presidency and would rather place their hopes for
     remedies of their local grievances on the NDC and NPP who have a real chance of winning power.
     This is another dimension of the complexity of ethnic politics in the country.

Ahafo, Western, Eastern and Central) into a stronghold. Because of the complexity of ethnicity in Ghana this looks difficult, but it is not impossible.

The majoritarian system gave the incumbent NPP an incentive to win the 2008 run-off presidential elections through crude ethno-regional politics and legal tricks similar to those the NDC used in the 2000 run-off poll. As Gyimah-Boadi (2009, p 143) observed, '[b]oth parties shamelessly attempted to mobilize ethnic votes, virtually declaring their respective strongholds – the Ashanti Region for the NPP and the Volta Region for the NDC – as "no-go" zones for their opponents' (see also Jockers, Kohnert & Nugent 2010, Abdulai & Crawford 2010; Ayelazuno 2009a). However, as argued above, the incumbent party is often more aggressive in exploiting ethnic cleavages in the face of defeat in the second round. Like the NDC in the 2000 run-off the NPP was more aggressive and calculated in its attempt to win.

For example, while the NPP presidential candidate had declared publicly that he would win the Tain election his party, exploiting incumbent advantage, had secretly persuaded the chief justice to empanel a high court judge on a public holiday (New Year's Day) to hear a case it had filed over the election results. The case, which was brought in terms of an ex parte motion – implying that the other parties affected by the case (the electoral commission – EC – and the NDC) were not notified – was 'seeking an injunction to restrain the EC from running the Tain polls and from declaring the results of the presidential runoff until elections were re-run in some constituencies in the Volta Region' (Ayelazuno 2009a, p 18).

Thanks to the media, lawyers sympathetic to the NDC got wind of the suit and appeared before the judge to argue against it. The judge might have been summoned to do the bidding of the incumbent party but he could not do it in the face of the compelling and sound legal arguments advanced by the NDC's lawyers, who were acting as 'friends of the court', since they were not formally representing the NDC and the EC.

Whether the judge would have done the NPP's bidding had the public (including this author) and the NDC's lawyers not flooded the court is open to speculation. However, if the circumstances that led to the mayhem in Kenya are anything to go by (Kagwanja 2009) one could argue that the judge would probably have done the bidding of the incumbent NPP, just as the chief justice of Kenya hurriedly swore in Kibaki as president, in the face of the post-election chaos. As was the case in Kenya the NDC would have rejected the results and this could have ignited a bloody conflict.

Another clear case of crude ethno-regional politics on the part of the NPP, which could have led to deadly conflict, was the attempt to cancel out the NDC candidate's lead with fraudulent results from a number of constituencies in the Ashanti Region, including Old Tafo, Suame and Manhyia. What made these results

fraudulent was not just the implausible voter turnout (Jockers, Kohnert & Nugent 2010, p 107), but also the fact that they were a second set of results with higher figures than the first set sent earlier to the EC's national headquarters. It was this second set of results that narrowed the hitherto comfortable lead of the NDC's Atta Mills so significantly that a 'third round' had to be held in Tain. Even though the results were not enough to cancel Atta Mills's lead 'the NPP came close to snatching victory at the last gasp' (Jockers, Kohnert & Nugent 2010, p 107). This bears a striking resemblance to the circumstances that led to the post-election conflict in Kenya. In that case, the Orange Democratic Movement leader, Raila Odinga, held a commanding lead throughout the count until at the last minute, when results from 'President Kibaki's central and eastern Kenya turfs' narrowed that lead to a mere 38 000 votes and eventually cancelled it out (Kagwanja 2009, p 367).

Why did the NPP try so desperately to win the election when it had lost in eight of the ten regions? As supporters of the NPP were quick to point out in media panel discussions – and correctly so – the regional votes were irrelevant because under the majoritarian system the whole country became a single constituency for the presidential election. If there were a second and regional winning requirement, as has been argued in this article, the NPP would not have been motivated to engage in such desperate attempts to win at the eleventh hour, as it was clear that they had suffered a crushing and irreversible defeat in most of the regions. As it was, it was the NPP's last-minute machinations to overturn the NDC's victory on one hand and, on the other, the determination of the NDC to hold on to its lead that set Ghana teetering on the brink of conflict.

CONCLUSION

The kernel of the argument of this article is that the Ghanaian majoritarian electoral system has two major flaws which can potentially jeopardise the fragile electoral peace that has endured since the 1992 elections. First, it gives an extra and strong incentive to the two dominant parties, the NPP and the NDC, to engage in crude ethnic politics to win, even when they have lost in the majority of the ten regions. The NDC did this in 2000 when it lost in six regions and the NPP in 2008 when it lost in eight.

Second, by turning the whole country into a single-member constituency for the presidential election, regardless of ethno-regional divisions, the votes of minority regions could become insignificant in electing the president, a dynamic that can lead to political exclusion and, subsequently, to conflict. To promote conciliatory politics in a political climate that is becoming increasingly divisive and acrimonious the article argues for a *double-winning* system which requires

that, in addition to the 50 per cent-plus-one vote a candidate must win in five regions by a simple majority of valid votes cast.

Although it is by no means a panacea for preventing post-election conflict in Ghana, this system has the potential to dissuade an incumbent party that is facing defeat from going all out to win run-off polls by means that include politicising ethnic cleavages. Overall, the double-winning system would promote inclusive politics since all regions, regardless of the size of their population and electorate, would be important.

The lessons for the 2012 elections are clear. With Ghana joining the club of African oil-rich countries, gaining control of the state, as seen in the older oil-rich states (Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Chad, and so on) is the surest means of accumulating wealth and distributing patronage from the billions of dollars flowing to the state as oil revenue and the hundreds of thousand dollars from other shady deals in the oil industry. Therefore the 2012 elections will be as keenly contested as, if not more keenly than the 2008 elections.

The NDC (as the NPP has already alleged) will be tempted to go all out to win and the NPP will also be determined to regain power and gain control over the oil money, since it was under that party's government that oil was discovered.

The politicisation of ethnicity will be fair game as a strategy for victory at all costs. Signs of this are very visible in the debates in the media between and pronouncements by leaders and supporters of both parties, more than a year before the elections. If the 2008 scenario is repeated in 2012, with the tables turning on the NDC – the NPP winning in majority of the regions yet on the verge of losing the elections because of the use of incumbency advantage by the NDC to cheat to keep power – a politico-ethnic conflict may explode. Note that the clarion call of the NPP, going into the 2012 elections, is 'all-die-be-die'. With a *double-winning* system in place the chances of this pessimistic scenario being realised are significantly minimised.

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Table 1
2007: Estimated population in thousands by region

Region	Population	Percentage
Ashanti	4 459 400	19.9
Greater Accra	3 903 600	17.4
Eastern	2 251 200	10.0
North	2 121 600	9.4
Western	2 358 800	10.5
Brong Ahafo	2 120 900	9.4
Volta	1 798 200	8.0
Central	1 777 300	7.9
Upper East	978 100	4.3
Upper West	61 8 700	2.7
Total	**22 387 800**	**100**

Source: Compiled by the author with data from Ghana Statistical Service (Ghana in Figures 2007)

Table 2
Registered voters in thousands by region

Region	Registered voters	Percentage
Western	1 256 707	9.8
Central	1 048 351	8.17
Greater Accra	2 553 645	19.91
Volta	1 034 250	8.06
Eastern	1 391 063	10.84
Ashanti	2 381 214	18.57
Brong Ahafo	1 191 288	9.29
Northern	1 116 087	8.70
Upper East	513 404	4
Upper West	336 465	2.62
National/Total	**12 822 474**	**100**

Source: Compiled by the author with data from the Electoral Commission of Ghana

Table 3
Regional distribution of votes between Akufo-Addo and Atta Mills, excluding smaller parties (First round 2008 presidential elections)

Region	NPP/Akufo-Addo		NDC/Atta Mills	
	Raw numbers	Percentage	Raw numbers	Percentage
Western	376 270	47.55	372 400	47.06
Central	313 665	45.97	345 126	50.58
Greater Accra	768 465	46.03	870 011	52.11
Volta	99 584	14.98	551 046	82.88
Eastern	491 520	57.14	353 522	41.10
Ashanti	1 214 350	72.40	438 234	26.13
Brong Ahafo	392 588	50.56	370 404	47.70
Northern	303 406	38.27	450 564	56.84
Upper East	118 454	35.25	188 405	56.06
Upper West	81 137	37.72	116 922	54.36
National Total	**4 159 439**	**49.13**	**4 056 634**	**47.92**

Source: Compiled by the author with data from the Electoral Commission of Ghana

Table 4
Regional distribution of votes between NPP/Akufo-Addo and NDC/Atta Mills (2008 run-off presidential elections)

Region	NPP/Akufo-Addo		NDC/Atta Mills	
	Raw numbers	Percentage	Raw numbers	Percentage
Western	384 028	48.11	414 114	51.89
Central	325 454	46.20	378 975	53.80
Greater Accra	798 556	45.59	953 086	54.41
Volta	102 173	13.94	630 899	86.06
Eastern	536 366	57.51	396 277	42.49
Ashanti	1 438 820	74.99	479 749	25.01
Brong Ahafo	384 237	48.50	408 029	51.50
Northern	311 774	38.36	500 953	61.64
Upper East	117 477	34.40	223 994	65.60
Upper West	81 561	37.67	134 926	62.33
National/Total	4 480 446	49.77	4 521 032	50.23

Source: Compiled by the author with data from the Electoral Commission of Ghana

THE 2011 NIGERIAN ELECTIONS
An Empirical Review

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria held presidential and parliamentary elections in April 2011, the fourth since the return to democracy in 1999. While both domestic and international observers judged the elections to be free, fair and transparent it must be stated that there is more work to be done by Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in order to consolidate the gains made in 2011. In other words, if credible elections are to become a fact of Nigeria's political life, as promised by the late President Umaru Yar'Adua and his then vice-president, Goodluck Jonathan, when they ran on the same ticket in 2007 in what many agreed were fraudulent elections, INEC and other stakeholders have their work cut out for them. This article is an attempt to review empirically the 2011 general elections in Nigeria. It highlights the challenges facing INEC and recommends ways of overcoming them.

INTRODUCTION

In April 2011 Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation (the population is currently estimated at 150-million) went to the polls to participate in what was only the seventh democratic election since the country became independent 51 years ago. The elections, for both federal and state democratic structures, were judged by both domestic and international observers to have been transparent, free and fair. This is quite remarkable, especially when viewed against the backdrop of sham elections organised in 2007. However, despite the widespread commendation received by the winner of the poll, President Goodluck Jonathan, and Professor Attahiru Jega,

Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), there are indications that the results did not go down well with all the players.[1]

This is particularly true of the presidential election, where an orgy of violence greeted the re-election of Jonathan. Reports indicate that at least 300 people lost their lives in northern Nigeria in the violence that followed the announcement, on 16 April, of the results (Jones 2011). The president called for calm and tolerance, stating, however, that the federal government would not sit idle and watch the destruction of innocent lives (BBC 2011).

Since Nigeria is one of Africa's economic and political power blocs it was of keen interest to Africa and the world that the outcome of the election did not generate further violence and that the polity was maintained. This article argues that INEC needs to do more in future to deliver the much desired credible elections to the country.

It sets the stage with a discussion of Nigeria's journey to democracy, highlighting in the process the role military rule played in this journey. The historical overview is followed by an analysis of the 2011 electoral process, zeroing in on the major political parties and personalities that featured in the elections. The next section is an assessment of the elections and a review of the challenges faced by INEC with recommendations on how these challenges might be overcome. The article concludes with the outcome and future impact of the elections on the country's evolving democratic experience.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: MILITARY RULE AND THE TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY

In the late 19th and early 20th century the British administered the north and south of Nigeria as two different entities. However, in 1914, Lord Fredrick Lugard, then high commissioner for the Northern Protectorate, was also given the task of administering the Southern Protectorate.[2] For administrative convenience Lugard amalgamated the two protectorates. That act by the colonial authorities, which brought together people from diverse political, religious, social and cultural backgrounds, is considered by many Nigerians to have been the genesis of the conflict in the country.

On 1 October 1960, after almost six decades of colonial rule, Nigeria gained independence from the United Kingdom. In the country's 51 years of

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1 At the time of writing one of the presidential candidates, Major General Muhammadu Buhari of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), was still in court challenging the declaration of President Jonathan as winner of the presidential election.

2 For a good understanding of the political history of Nigeria see Falola & Heaton 2008; Nwabueze 1982; Burns 1955.

independence it has enjoyed democratic rule for about 20 years. For most of the post-independence period Nigeria has been ruled by different military dictators.

The first military coup against a civilian administration, while not technically successful, still led to the overthrow of the civilian government of President Nnamdi Azikiwe (known as Zik) and Prime Minister Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa.[3] General Aguiyi Ironsi, a Christian Igbo and the highest-ranking military office, inherited power. In the same year a counter coup brought to power Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon, a northern Christian. It was during Gowon's rule, between 1967 and 1970, that the Biafra/Nigeria civil war took place.

Gowon ruled Nigeria until July 1975 when he was overthrown in a bloodless coup and the mantle of leadership fell on Brigadier General Murtala Ramat Muhammed, a Muslim from Northern Nigeria. Muhammed ruled for a short period, during which he instituted many changes in the polity. He is best remembered for championing the fight against corruption and for making a commitment to return the administration of the country to civilian rule in 1979, a move that had started with Gowon but had been derailed. On Friday 13 February 1976 Murtala Muhammed was assassinated on his way to work. Curiously, he had no escorts with him, as was the custom.

The attempted coup failed, however, and some of the perpetrators were executed by firing squad.[4] The mantle of leadership fell on Lt General Olusegun Obasanjo, the erstwhile Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters. Obasanjo, a Yoruba from Western Nigeria, continued with the transition programme and, in 1979, made history as the first military head of state to hand over power to a democratically elected government.

Obasanjo was also the first Nigerian to rule as both a military head of state and a civilian president and the first civilian president to hand over to another civilian – Alhaji Shehu Shagari. After the elections of 1983, which were flawed and greeted with widespread violence, some citizens expressed fear and others hope that the army might take over power. On 31 December 1983 the military struck again, fulfilling the wishes of many.

The leader of the coup, Major General Muhammadu Buhari, a northern Muslim, ruled the country with an iron fist, attempting to put it back on a disciplined path. Most political leaders of the Second Republic were detained on

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3 Balewa; the Sarduana of Sokoto and premier of the Northern Region, Alhaji Ahmadu Bello; the premier of the Western Region, Chief Samuel Akintola, and a host of others were killed in the coup. Azikiwe, who was out of the country on 15 January 1966 when the coup took place, and Michael Okpara, the premier of the Eastern Region, survived – Okpara was arrested and later released.

4 Among those executed were Major General I D Bissala, Joseph Gomwalk, Col A D S Way, Lt Col T K Adamu, Lt Col A B Umoru, Lt Col B S Dimka and Lt Col Ayuba Tense.

allegations of corruption and indiscipline. The creation of an agency to tackle indiscipline in the Nigerian psyche and his anti-corruption crusade, known as the 'War Against Indiscipline' and during which for the first time in the long history of Nigeria citizens were starting to be orderly in their activities, is considered by many to have been a lost opportunity to straighten out the country.

However, Buhari was also cited for gross human rights violations (Carey, Gibney & Poe 2010, p 153). Interestingly, Buhari was the main challenger to Obasanjo in the 2003 elections and also a major contender in the 2007 and 2011 elections. Many Nigerians believe that if the political playing field had been level in 2007 Buhari might actually have won. They also believe that it would take a person of Buhari's disciplinary stature to set Nigeria on the path of both political and economic probity.[5]

However, with President Jonathan's appearance on the scene, the odds were stacked against Buhari. Between 1985 and 1993, during the military presidency of Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida (known as IBB), another northern Muslim, who overthrew Buhari in a palace coup, Nigeria experienced one of the worst and most wasteful periods in its political history. His eight years in office were characterised by massive waste and profligacy, after which he stepped aside, handing over power to an interim national government (ING).

It was Babangida who annulled the 1993 elections, judged to have been the freest and fairest ever conducted in Nigeria. Alhaji Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola, a Yoruba Muslim and a businessman, who happened to be a personal friend and business associate of Babangida, was accepted as the winner, but the military cancelled the results. Before the ING could settle down to governance General Sani Abacha, who had experience of coups, abolished it and assumed power as a dictator.

Many have argued that it was Babangida and Abacha's plan that Abacha should take over power from the ING, citing as evidence the fact that when Babangida stepped aside he retired all his military chiefs but left Abacha as the chief of army staff and defence minister. It is also interesting to note that when Babangida left office he categorically stated that he was 'stepping aside', leaving many with the impression that he would eventually come back.

His attempts to stage a comeback through the political process have been nipped in the bud and he recently announced his retirement from active politics (*Daily Times* 2011). Abacha's dictatorship is remembered best both in Africa and in the rest of the world for the fact that on 10 November 1995 he hanged writer and activist Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni environmental rights activists

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5   An opinion poll was conducted by the authors in March 2007.

who were campaigning against the environmental degradation caused by oil companies (primarily Shell) in the Niger Delta.[6]

Domestically, his reign is also remembered as the most brutal Nigerians had ever experienced – human rights were violated, political assassinations of opponents were rampant and those who got wind of their fate early enough fled the country.[7] Continuing the political process initiated by Babangida, Abacha strong-armed the five main political parties into adopting him as their presidential candidate.

On 8 June 1998 Abacha was reported to have collapsed and died in a room at the Aso Rock Villa, as the presidential villa is known. His death paved the way for Nigeria to move forward politically and, more especially, for Abiola, the official winner of the 12 June 1993 elections, who, at the time was incarcerated by Abacha for treason, to declare himself the legitimate president of Nigeria. However, on 7 July Abiola dropped dead in the house in Abuja in which he was being kept while awaiting his official release.

Many conspiracy theories have been advanced about Abiola's sudden and convenient death and the involvement in it of both domestic and international spy rings. To avoid a leadership vacuum in the military command General Abdulsalami Abubakar, the chief of defence staff, was appointed as the military head of state to replace Abacha, a position he occupied until 29 May 1999 when he, like Obasanjo 20 years earlier, handed over power to a democratically elected president. The president was Olusegun Obasanjo.

The 1999 elections and the emergence of Obasanjo as president were seen by many as a kind of political settlement of the Yorubas and more especially of the Egba clan, to which Abiola and Obasanjo belong. Others view the emergence of Obasanjo as a consensus decision between the military high command and the northern Muslim political elite.[8] In 2003 Obasanjo, under the banner of his ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) won a second term in office, which ended on 29 May 2007. A move by Obasanjo to secure a third term as president by amending the constitutional provision of two, four-year terms, was scuttled by the Senate in 2006, a move which endeared the senators to many Nigerians.

The elections of 2007, which saw Umaru Musa Yar'Adua emerge as the winner, was described by both domestic and international observers as a farce and a fraud (Obi 2008, p 71). However, despite attempts by Yar'Adua's main

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6 The other activists were Barinem Kiobel, Saturday Dorbee, Paul Levura, Nordu Eawo, Felix Nuate, Daniel Gboko, John Kpuine, Baribor Bera.

7 Abacha was implicated in the deaths of Pa Alfred Rewane, Mrs Kudirat Abiola and Alhaja Sulilat Adedeji. Nobel Laureate Professor Wole Soyinka was forced to flee the country through a land border on receiving information that he was on the hit list of Abacha's goons.

8 A cross section of people interviewed expressed this opinion.

challenger, General Buhari, to overturn the win in an election tribunal, Yar'Adua stayed in office as president of the country until his death on 5 May 2010, when his vice-president, Goodluck Ebele Azikiwe Jonathan, was sworn in to serve out Yar'Adua's term.

On 9 April 2011 INEC conducted an election for the National Assembly (which consists of the Senate and the House of Representatives). While many declared the election to have been transparent, free and fair there were still allegations of vote rigging, ballot stuffing and ballot box snatching. However, these allegations pale in comparison to those made in 2007. The presidential election of 16 April 2011 has been described as the best-organised in Nigeria's political history. Voters trooped out massively to vote in what was always considered to be a straight contest between the PDP candidate, President Goodluck Jonathan, and the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) candidate, Buhari.

Despite that perception, in reality the CPC's poor showing at the polls made the elections no contest. The PDP had won a clear majority in both the Senate and the House of Representatives, defeating their opponents in states considered to be core CPC states. The Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) presidential candidate, Mallam Nuhu Ribadu, and the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) candidate, Mallam Ibrahim Shekaru, were never considered strong contenders. However, the ACN's stranglehold on the southwest motivated the attempt by the CPC to merge with it in order to present a common candidate in the person of Buhari. This proposed 'coalition' never saw the light of the day, as talks between the two parties reportedly broke down because of their refusal to compromise. The failure of the merger talks left the south-west open for contest, giving the PDP the advantage.

President Jonathan, having secured 22 495187 of 38 209 978 valid votes and having also won 25 per cent of the total votes cast in 31 states, was declared the winner by the Chairman of the INEC and Chief Returning Officer, Professor Attahiru Jega, on Monday 18 April 2011. Hours before the declaration of the final result violence erupted in some of the northern states, notably Kaduna, Katsina, Sokoto, Gombe, Bauchi, Adamawa, Plateau, Jigawa, Taraba, Kano, Nassarawa and Niger.

THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

INEC was created by Decree No 17 of 1998 to conduct free and fair elections in the wake of the transition to democracy initiated by the Abubakar regime. The use of the word 'independent' in the electoral commission's title was a signal to the nation that there might be hope for the electoral process, as was the choice of its first chairman, Justice Ephraim Akpata, who successfully presided over the

elections that heralded the transition to democracy. However, when Akpata died Sir Abel Ibude Guobadia was appointed in his stead and was responsible for the conduct of the 2003 poll, in which Obasanjo's ruling PDP secured a landslide victory in an election that was also marred by allegations of vote rigging and election fraud. When Guobadia's appointment expired in 2005 Professor Maurice Iwu, an internationally acclaimed pharmacist, was appointed to replace him.

Many expected Professor Iwu to bring a new spirit to the decaying INEC. Many actually hoped that he would be able to repeat the feat of Professor Humphrey Nwosu, who is credited with conducting the freest and fairest elections ever in post-independence Nigeria.[9] However, many observers believe Iwu's chairmanship of the INEC was the worst in Nigeria's electoral history. The alarm that the INEC might not be ready for the free and fair conduct of the 2007 elections was sounded early in the process, when it was observed that voter registration was shoddily handled. There was also a sense that the INEC, and particularly its chairman, was partisan. The most controversial period in Iwu's chairmanship was the role he played in 'disqualifying' some politicians who were perceived to be opposed to Obasanjo. Chief among these was the then vice-president, Abubakar Atiku (Omotola 2010, p 541).

The late President Yar 'Adua acknowledged very early in his presidency the flawed nature of the election that brought him to power (Rawlence & Albin-Lackey 2007, p 501). He promised Nigerians that subsequent elections would be credible and, in attempting to fulfil his promise, set up a committee to reform the electoral laws of the country. The committee, tagged 'the Uwais Committee' after its chairman, Justice Mohammed Uwais, produced an electoral reform report. The result of these moves was Nigeria's current electoral law (the Electoral Act 2010 [as amended]).

The appointment of Jega gave Nigerians hope that the Jonathan-led government was ready to deliver a credible election. This hope and belief in Jega's ability to deliver is not unconnected with his antecedents as a university professor and an erstwhile president of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). Many perceive Jega as a 'no nonsense' and very principled man. His appointment, therefore, could be seen as one of the reasons why Nigerians, who had hitherto lost hope in the electoral process, revived that hope.

Jega immediately swung into action with a massive media campaign, promising Nigerians credible elections if he and his INEC were well funded. His first and immediate task was to call for a total jettisoning of the voters' register, which, he pointed out, was not credible enough, featuring, as it did, names such as Michael Jackson, Mike Tyson, and Dolly Parton, among others.

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9   It was Humphrey Nwosu's Option A4 in 1993 that led to Abiola's win.

Jega's action resonated well with the people. However, Nigerians were shocked when he demanded a whooping N89-billion for the INEC to deliver a credible election. He was, of course, given what he asked. His inadequacies, or INEC's inadequacies, were, however revealed when, during the initial registration period, INEC faltered. Many Nigerians immediately started questioning Jega's capacity to deliver on his promises. His subsequent request for an additional N6-billion raised eyebrows among many INEC watchers.

After the initial tottering INEC was able to conclude the registration process, capturing about 73-million voters on its database; 3-million more than it had estimated. There are doubts, however, about the authenticity of the register the commission released.

It will be recalled that in the year 2011 a new state – the Republic of South Sudan – was born in Africa through a peaceful referendum. In the same year civilian populations in North Africa and the Middle East rose up against their countries' dictators and, in what has come to be explained as popular protest, 'chased' them away. The events in Tunisia and Egypt; the enraged protests in Yemen, Syria, Saudi Arabia and the civil war in Libya all demonstrated to Nigerians that they should no longer be indolent about electing those who govern them. It is within this broader context that phrases like 'protect my vote' and 'my vote will count' began to emerge.

PARTIES AND PERSONALITIES

It should be stated that the majority of Nigerian political parties as they are presently constituted are, irrespective of their claims, devoid of ideology, a factor that accounts for the way in which politicians switch parties once they are no longer favoured by their present party. For instance, Buhari, and a host of others, were members of the ANPP until about 10 months before the 2011 elections, when they parted ways and Buhari formed the CPC. Tracing the history of political parties and politicians in Nigeria one can count very few political leaders who were ideologically grounded. The likes of Mallam Aminu Kano come to mind.[10] The section below takes a closer look at the main political parties.

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10 Mallam Aminu Kano was an astute Islamic scholar, an exceptional patriot and a political role model in Nigeria. Born in the northern state of Kano, he studied the Koran under his uncle and due to his mastery of the Koran was at one time the personal imam to the Emir of Kano. He led the funeral process of the assassinated Murtala Muhammed.

People's Democratic Party

The PDP claims that it is the largest political party in Africa. The basis upon which this claim is made is, however, not clear. What *is* known though is that the party's members include some of the richest businessmen and most astute politicians in Nigeria and that it is the country's ruling party. Presently it has control of about 20 of 36 states and it maintains a comfortable lead in the House of Representatives and Senate, while controlling the presidency.

The PDP, which emerged out of a coalition between the G34 members who were in opposition to Abacha's plan to hijack the political process in 1998 and the People's Democratic Movement headed by Alhaji Mohammed Atiku, is essentially devoid of mainstream ideology – it builds its support base not on issues but on cult figures and the rotation of power between the north and the south. For instance, during the party's presidential primaries in 1999 and 2003 the general understanding was that the candidate should come from the south. In the 2007 primaries it was generally accepted that the power base should shift to the north, hence the decision to nominate Yar'Adua.

However, the myth of zoning was shattered by President Jonathan's insistence on running for the presidency and he was eventually nominated. Generally speaking, the PDP has the most national spread of all the parties. Its attraction is due more to its assemblage of 'successful' politicians and party members than its programme of action, though voting patterns reflect that this attraction is waning, especially in the south-west.

Among the notable members of the party are Olusegun Obasanjo, Ibrahim Babangida, Alhaji Atiku, and Goodluck Jonathan, of whom not much was known until he was chosen by Yar'Adua as his running mate in the 2007 election. The extent to which the party is a party of businessmen is exemplified by the type of donations it receives. For instance, Aliko Dangote and Emeka Offor donated N1-billion to the Obasanjo-Atiku re-election bid in 2003; Dasab Airlines donated a 150-seater Boeing 727 and some companies contributed N400-million.[11] An anonymous individual donated €1-million to the campaign (*The Guardian Nigeria*, 25 February 2003).

The PDP's stated vision is to make Nigeria one of the 20 most-developed economies in the world by 2020.[12] This, of course, is a tall order, given the continued decay of the country's infrastructure. However, the Obasanjo administration launched economic reforms that were followed up by Yar'Adua. It is expected that the Jonathan presidency will continue with this agenda, which, if it is given a chance to succeed, could place Nigeria among the top 20 world economies in

11   At the time of writing the exchange rate of the Naira to the dollar was US$1 = N155.
12   Article 3(iv) of the PDP Manifesto.

the not too distant future. For instance, the power and energy sector is receiving a big boost and Jonathan has committed to following up on and intensifying power generation and distribution. It is whispered that he is interested in making his time in office memorable by delivering on the power sector.

Allied to the issue of economic reform is the security sector. In its manifesto the PDP promises to treat security as a major 'infrastructure' to be developed in order to attract much needed foreign direct investment.[13]

Before Jonathan stepped into the political limelight he was a university lecturer with a doctorate in zoology. Through providence he was selected as the running mate of Alamieseghia in the gubernatorial race in Bayelsa state and, through providence again, became governor when Alamieseghia was removed following his criminal trial in London for money laundering (Oji 2005). Providence was to play a part again in Jonathan's political career when, following the death of Yar'Adua on 5 May 2010, he became acting president, a position he occupied until he won the April 2011 presidential election.

Jonathan is one of very few politicians who do not have scandals trailing their political steps. However, many fear that he is weak and very quiet, though, given the fact that he was elected by popular vote it is hoped that he will become firmer and more confident in his governance style.

Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN)

The ACN emerged onto the political scene in September 2006 out of the merger of the Alliance for Democracy (AD), the Justice Party, the Advanced Congress of Democrats and several minor political parties. The AD was regarded as a Yoruba party during the 1999 elections, when it won a majority of the Yoruba states, including Obasanjo's Ogun state. However, during the 2003 elections the PDP was able to wrest control of these states from the AD and it won only Lagos state. The party, therefore, merged with others to form the Action Congress, which later transformed into the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), perhaps to give it a more national outlook than the south-west regional cloak in which it was dressed. In the 2011 state gubernatorial elections the ACN was able to re-capture Lagos state, Oyo and Ogun, thereby maintaining a stranglehold on the politics of the south-west as they also control Ekiti and Osun states in that region and Edo in the south-south.

The ACN is also making inroads into other parts of the country. However, the appeal of the ANC in non-south-west states has more to do with the individuals that associate with the party in such places than with the party itself. For instance,

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13   Article 3(iv) of the PDP manifesto.

in Anambra Central Senatorial Zone the people voted in Chris Ngige, not because he was an ACN member but because of who he was as an individual.

The most prominent member of the party is its national leader, Bola Tinubu, the erstwhile governor of Lagos state. There have been allegations that Tinubu sees the party as his personal fiefdom and does not believe in internal democracy; his wife and other close relations were selected to represent the ACN in senatorial and other elections during the 2011 poll (Olanrewaju 2011). The party's presidential candidate was Malam Nuhu Ribadu, once a leading anti-graft policeman and chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

Other notable members are Adams Oshimole, the governor of Edo state and a former labour leader, and Rauf Aregbesola, the governor of Osun state. As stated above the political programme is targeted at the basic problems of economic growth, infrastructural development and security. The ACN put up a good showing in the 2011 federal legislative elections, thereby positioning itself as the official opposition at the national level.

Congress for Progressive Change (CPC)

This party, which set up shop about 10 months before the 2011 elections, succeeded in showing that it is a party of intrigues. In the federal legislative elections it struggled to secure some seats, which led to the party being dismissed as a non-starter. However, in the presidential elections the party rebounded. The CPC's strongest asset, which might eventually be its undoing, is its presidential candidate, Muhammadu Buhari, a member of the military team that truncated the democratic journey of Nigeria in 1983. Analysts considered his cult-like status in the north of the country and the CPC's regional outlook as insufficient to give him the presidency.

His failure to be elected in 2011 has been indicated as the main reason why violence erupted in some northern states. Buhari and his CPC alleged that the votes in about 24 states had been tinkered with to favour the incumbent, President Jonathan (Ogundele 2011). The party has, therefore, resolved to challenge the outcome of the presidential election in court.

The CPC is, however, radically different from the other parties in that it claims not to brook corruption and indiscipline Buhari is generally perceived by Nigerians as a disciplined and incorruptible man and his record in various positions attests to this fact. However, his human rights record as the military head of state in 1984-1985 does not reflect well on him (Oko 1997, p 315). He nonetheless claims to have reinvented himself as a civilian and a democrat. Notwithstanding this claim, the CPC, like the other parties, seems to lack clear internal party democracy. Pundits believe that while Buhari might be incorruptible the same cannot be said

about his co-travellers on the CPC train. The party's very poor showing in the 2011 governorship election, after its good showing in the presidential election, even though this was only in the north, suggests that it may not last.

All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP)

The party, the second largest prior to the 2011 elections, appears to be in a shambles. Its performance in the elections suggests that its strongest support base is in the north of the country. Despite the strong appeal of the party's presidential candidate, Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau, especially after a creditable showing in a televised national debate, the party still does not have national support. After the state gubernatorial elections it controls three of 22 states and all of those are located in the north, which confirms the impression that it is a regional, if not an ethnic party. Other notable members of the party are Chief Ogbonnaya Onu, Alhaji Kashim Shettima and Alhaji Modu Sherif.

The ANPP's objectives are not radically different from those of other parties, especially since the problems of the scarcity of basic amenities are common to most Nigerians. The party plans to transform Nigeria's economy into one of the world's leading economies.

ASSESSMENT OF THE 2011 GENERAL ELECTIONS

As indicated above the 2011 general elections were generally considered to be transparent, free and fair. This assessment, however, needs to be put in context. As a result of the sham elections organised in the past and, more particularly, those of 2007, Nigeria's elections seem to be measured against the 'standard' already set, therefore people conclude that the 2011 elections were well organised. However, when measured against existing international standards the 2011 elections will be found wanting. We examine some of the areas that pose a challenge to the conduct of transparent, free and fair credible elections in order to assist the INEC to improve on its performance.

Voter registration

There has been much criticism of the voter registration exercise conducted by INEC in February 2011. First, there are doubts about whether the number of registered voters was correct. Analysts believe the numbers were inflated, especially in the north, as was borne out by the incidence of under-age voting (Ogbulafor 2011). If the voters' register is to be credible Nigeria should intensify its efforts at demographic mapping in order to record the correct population figures. This can

be done by intensifying the registration of births and deaths and by the Ministry of Internal Affairs issuing national identification cards.

Secondly, while INEC should be commended for its attempt to use direct data capturing (DDC) machines during the registration process the data that currently exist within the commission's database need to be updated constantly. INEC will eventually have to collaborate with the Ministry of Internal Affairs to compare notes on the number of registered voters and the existing population data. By linking INEC's computer database and that of the Ministry of Internal Affairs a more credible voters' register will begin to emerge. There should be an opportunity for those who have never registered to do so at INEC offices.

Political parties, independent candidates and internal party democracy

About 63 political parties are currently registered with INEC. While it can be argued that this makes for a more vibrant polity, it also leads to sectionalism or personality-cult oriented parties, as most such parties are built around an ethnic group or an individual, without the necessary political structures in all the geopolitical zones in the country.

The proliferation of parties also makes it difficult for illiterate voters, and sometimes even literate ones, to identify the party of their choice, as most abbreviations of party names sound and seem alike; for instance, PDP and PDC; CDC and CPC; UDP and UNPD. This also accounts for the lack of a viable and credible opposition, which is a very important aspect for the growth of democratic values in any country, as the opposition should act as a check on the excesses of the ruling party. INEC should consider limiting the number of registered political parties and should vigorously pursue legislation to that effect.

Some people have also pressed for independent candidacy. The workability of this within the political geography of Nigeria will be difficult since hundreds of thousands of persons will want to vie for positions. Secondly, it would run counter to the argument for the reduction of political parties and, thirdly, the cost to INEC of managing the logistics that would involve printing candidates' pictures on the ballot papers would be prohibitive.

INEC should also, as a matter of urgency, ensure that party primaries become transparent, free and fair. Despite the appearance of transparency in the primaries of most parties, there were still allegations of imposition of candidates. While it is in the nature of politicking that camps should be formed in any political forum, flag-bearers for each political office should emerge through the free will of the party members. This will curb the habit of political prostitution: a practice where candidates decamp from their political parties when they feel cheated out of a position, to pitch their tent with another party, with the intention of standing for

same office as he / she has been denied. It will also reduce the incessant court cases associated with such primaries.

Campaigns

The level of campaigning in which the different parties engaged in 2011 was more advanced than that in the past. No longer did candidates rely only on traditional political rallies held in state capitals and at local government headquarters, they made extensive use of the media and the various electronic and digital communication methods available. For instance, it was not unusual for potential voters to receive a series of text messages from different parties during the course of the day, all wooing their support or casting aspersions on opposition candidates.

Furthermore, social networking sites, especially Facebook, were used by many of the parties and those purporting to support them. Another phenomenon, akin to the Facebook factor, is the diaspora element, with numerous diaspora organisations weighing in for the campaign. Another trend seen in the campaign was the extensive use of young people. Unlike in the past, when youths were engaged as thugs, on this occasion candidates, especially the presidential candidates, engaged young people constructively. However, as the post-presidential-election violence in the northern states indicates, young people can also be very destructive as a result of negative orientation.

A major constraining factor for most parties, however, was the issue of funding. The ruling party, both centrally and in most states, seemed to have inexhaustible resources, leading analysts to wonder whether the candidates were using state funds for their campaigns. INEC needs to weigh in on the issue of campaign funds and to place a ceiling on the amount that may be spent by parties and candidates. It might, however, not be feasible to implement such a policy in the immediate future.

Voter education/awareness

There was a high level of voter awareness of the 2011 elections. This is not unconnected with the high level of campaigning and the awareness campaigns mounted by the government and civil society organisations (CSOs). The National Orientation Agency (NOA) and some of the CSOs working on the issue of democratic governance in the country were able to sensitise people about the need to be aware of and involved in the political process. The tempo had to be sustained despite the hiccups experienced.

Similarly, some international organisations provided strategic support for

the voter awareness campaign. Among these organisations were the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the Development Fund for Women, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the European Union (EU), the Department for International Development (DFID), and the National Democratic Institute (NDI). The church, too, involved itself in the awareness campaign and there is evidence that some Christian denominations ordered their congregations to register and vote. In fact, some bishops threatened that congregants who failed to do so would not be allowed to receive Holy Communion (Oseloka, 8 April 2011).

Despite widespread voter awareness, however, it appears that there was no corresponding voter education, an impression borne out by the number of invalid votes cast in the presidential election. Of a total of 39 469 484 votes cast 1 259 506 were declared invalid for one reason or another (www.inecnigeria.org/results/presidential). The government, INEC, political parties and CSOs should use the time between 2011 and the next elections to educate voters about the correct method of voting.

Security/conduct

As a result of the violence that dogged campaigns in previous elections many eligible voters shied away from participating in the electoral process. In the 2011 election, however, thanks to the greater level of sophistication and the reduction in violence, eligible voters came out in their numbers to register and vote.

The extent of the security provided by both military and paramilitary forces, however, created the impression that Nigeria was under siege. Restrictions of movement and closure of businesses on election days, while imposed with the aim of providing an enabling and secure environment, should not become the norm. Instead, sustained voter education and campaigns about civic responsibility and awareness should be used to educate citizens about the importance of participating in elections. Through such voter education the billions of naira lost as a result of the closure of businesses for the duration of the elections will be saved.

It is also suggested that INEC consider compressing all the elections into a single day, as the current practice of stretching the process over three weekends takes a toll on both the country and the people. This voter fatigue was obvious in the last of the series of elections in 2011 when voters complained of the stress involved in devoting a whole month to voting. The logistical nightmare associated with this proposal will be reduced if the number of registered political parties is reduced dramatically.

Voting/collation and announcement of results

The introduction by INEC of a modified open ballot system (MOBS) is a welcome initiative. The system is, by its nature, structured to eliminate rigging. However, it also has drawbacks. One of these is situations in which parties are unable to field sufficient agents to cover all the polling units within a particular constituency. There is a tendency in such situations for a party, in collaboration with INEC staff on duty, to rig an election in its favour.

Security agents, especially uniformed agents, aid in such vote rigging. Consider the scenario where security agents 'storm' a particular polling station when voting has ended but before the counting and announcement of results. Using their authority the security agents commandeer the ballot boxes and results sheets, using the excuse that they are providing security and protection for the electoral officers, while in fact they are helping a particular party to stuff ballot boxes and fill in results sheets.

The fact that many party agents are illiterate leaves room for vote manipulation. Party agents need adequate training in what to look out for right up to the announcement of results. The era of appointing party agents because of their ability to induce fear is gone. INEC, security agents, election observers and CSOs should collaborate to ensure that polling stations, particularly those in rural areas, are run according to the rules.

Collation officers and returning officers must be non-partisan and adequately trained. INEC's ad hoc staff, largely comprising National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) members, was not adequately trained and had different approaches to the same issues, thereby lacking uniformity of approach.

Voting

While many hailed INEC's introduction of direct data capturing machines for voter registration the system had its critics, particularly in relation to the cost and the perception that the machines were substandard. It was also expected that the same machines would be used during the voting process, but this was not the case.

We would recommend that before the next elections INEC make it possible for its database to be accessed by its staff anywhere in the country. However, control should be exercised over the uploading of information in order to avoid manipulation of data. INEC should also ensure that there are sufficient DDC machines for each polling unit to have one.

The advantage of using the machines during the election is not merely that this will increase the efficiency of staff at polling units but also that it is not

necessary for voters to travel to their place of registration. Once a voter is registered within a particular constituency and is within that constituency on election day he / she should be able to vote at any polling station because, using the code number on the voter registration card, INEC staff can pick up and verify information about the voter. This, it is argued, will enfranchise more registered voters. The drawback is that there might be more voters voting at a particular polling station than the number registered at that station. INEC should work out the logistics of re-supplying polling stations where such need arises. The commission should also consider the use of electronic voting, as this would reduce the incidence of multiple voting, which is still the bane of Nigeria's electoral democracy.

Post-election violence

The security provided by the government for the conduct of the 2011 elections was near perfect. There was, however, a problem – security experts did not envisage the post-election violence, especially the manner in which it erupted. While Nigerians and the international community were concerned about President Jonathan's response if he lost the election attention was not focused on what his political rivals would do if they lost.

The orgy of violence that erupted in some states in the northern part of the country on Monday 18 April when it became clear that Jonathan was winning was never anticipated. The government, INEC, political parties, religious leaders and CSOs, therefore, need to educate the people about tolerance and the real meaning of democracy. The National Orientation Agency (NOA) has a major role to play in this regard.

CONCLUSION

Domestic and international observers have given INEC and the Jonathan administration a pass mark for conducting a successful election in 2011. Notwithstanding this, the violence that greeted the results, especially in the case of the presidential election, is not encouraging. Although there was less violence than there was in 2007 the election did generate a new type of violence – bomb attacks. The bombing of INEC's Suleja office on 8 April added a new dimension to politicking in the country.

If the type of violence that erupted in April 2011, leading to the imposition of curfews and declarations of states of emergency – actions reminiscent of the era of military dictatorship – is not prevented in the future it will erode the gains made in the elections. Does this, therefore, portend that Nigeria will return to military dictatorship? Not at all, according to some analysts interviewed (Anadu 2011).

Questions arise, however, about the continued level of violence and more particularly the threat posed by the militant Islamists group, the Boko Haram. For instance, how will the instability affect Nigeria's plan to attract foreign direct investment? Were Nigeria to remain a democracy, but one wracked by civil unrest, are businesses secure enough to operate in the country? The president must be firmer on the issue of security, to demonstrate that he is, indeed, in control of the situation.

Nothing much is expected to change with respect to the president's style of governance. However, he might become firmer in his decision-making. With regard to the 'continued' fight against corruption it is expected that he will make a few spirited attempts to control it but will eventually allow the status quo to continue. However, he will, within the new Cabinet, issue warnings against corrupt practices.

It is expected that he will not interfere with the work of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission. Nonetheless, he will not overtly encourage it. Notwithstanding the challenges and loopholes identified above, the 2011 elections in Nigeria were a great improvement on earlier ones, more particularly, the 2007 election, and this is, indeed, a sign of the gradual maturation of the country's attempt to build a culture of democratic governance.

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THE 2011 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN BENIN
Explaining the Success of One of Two Firsts

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ABSTRACT

*Since 1991 Benin has been considered a model of democratisation in Africa.
Indeed, since its first multiparty elections in the post-Cold War era, held in
March 1991, three different heads of state have alternated at the helm of the
country, each coming and leaving according to the prevailing constitutional
norms. All of them have been 'independent' candidates, not supported by
a specific political party. Each of the presidential elections has gone into a
run-off poll and the main opposition parties have failed to coalesce behind
one of theirs in an attempt to win the presidency. But for the 2011 election,
the main political parties formed an alliance, in the hope of defeating the
incumbent candidate, who nevertheless won in the first round. It was the
first time the opposition had formed such a formidable coalition and the first
time, too, that a presidential candidate won without a run-off. This article
attempts to explain this apparent 'anomaly' in Beninese politics and, in
doing so, sheds some light on the main candidates in the 2011 election, the
stakes involved and how the poll compared to previous ones. It concludes
that incumbent president Boni Yayi may have won fairly on election day,
but that a rigged voters' roll played a role in his victory.*

INTRODUCTION

In early 1990, following decades of one-party regimes and military rule, General
Mathieu Kérékou – like most of his counterparts on the continent – was forced
by a combination of local and outside pressures to open up the political space in
Benin and allow the restoration of a multiparty system in the country (Gbado 1996;
Bratton & Van de Walle 1992, 1997; Clark & Gardiner 1997; Decalo 1997). Following
a 'National Sovereign Conference' that would later become a model in many so-
called Francophone African countries, myriad political parties were formed or

reconstituted with the aim of winning control of various levers of political power, particularly the presidency. Since the first multiparty presidential election, held in March 1991, competitive presidential elections have been organised in Benin every five years (1996, 2001, 2006) and have resulted in three changes of president (1991, 1996, 2006).

But all these changes in power benefited 'independent' candidates. Nicéphore Soglo in 1991, Mathieu Kérékou II in 1996,[1] and Boni Yayi in 2006 were supported by a broad array of political movements, parties and personalities, not by a single political party or even a registered coalition. They registered their candidacy as 'independent', without having to produce the supporting documents of the sponsorship of any political party.

Opposition disunity was thought to be the main factor in these 'independent' victories and opposition unity was therefore thought to be the bridge political parties had to cross to get to the Marina Palace in Porto Novo. For the March 2011 presidential poll, almost all the main political parties decided to try a 'unity strategy' and formed, as early as 2009, a formidable coalition, with a single candidate. This historical unity of opposition political parties aimed to achieve the first political party victory in post-Cold War Benin. But another first thwarted this ambition – the victory of the incumbent 'independent' candidate in the first round, with some 53 per cent of the vote, against 35 per cent won by the opposition coalition candidate, Adrien Houngbédji. No candidate since 1991 had ever won the presidency without a run-off poll.

This article seeks to explain this 'anomaly' in Beninese politics. Why and how did several opposition parties come together to form a formidable coalition and unite behind one of theirs even before the hypothetical second round? How did incumbent president Thomas Boni Yayi win despite the coalition and his involvement in some financial scandals and do so without the help of a run-off poll?

To answer these questions, the article is divided into four main sections. The first traces the history of Benin's political parties in their quest for the presidency; a history that shows their appreciation of the need to coalesce for the 2011 election. The second looks at the materialisation of the opposition's dream of unity and its disappointment at the results of the poll it thought it had won. The third section takes a closer look at Yayi, his record going into the polls, his stakes and his strategies. The final section offers some analyses of the organisation of the election, taking stock of some of the discussions in the previous two sections with regard to the position and views of both the opposition and the incumbent candidate.

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1   The sequence 'II' refers to the second coming to power of Kérékou after his defeat in the historical 1991 presidential election and his graceful departure from power, only to return triumphantly in 1996 through the popular vote.

POLITICAL PARTIES IN BENIN AND THEIR QUEST
FOR THE PRESIDENCY

If one defines 'regimes', for the purposes of this article, as the successive cabinets/ governments of one leader, then Benin had 11 regimes from independence in 1960 to the end of the Cold War in 1990, including the two military regimes of Colonel/ General Christophe Soglo and the two civilian ones of Hubert Maga. The military regime of Mathieu Kérékou (1972-1990) was the longest of them all.

The Popular Revolutionary Party of Benin (PRPB) that Kérékou formed became a Marxist-Leninist single party throughout the years of his rule (Decalo 1997; Gazibo 2005, pp 49-50). The few 'opposition' movements that were not co-opted and their leaders incarcerated either fled the country or took their activities underground (Noudjenoume 1999, pp 58-74; Banégas 1995; Dossou 1993). However, the socio-economic difficulties of the late 1980s, combined with recurring popular protests across the country eventually persuaded – if not forced – Kérékou to restore a multiparty system from 1990. This materialised after an historical National Sovereign Conference held in Cotonou, the country's biggest city and economic capital, from 19 to 28 February 1990 (Gbado 1996; Adamon 1995; Dossou 1993).

The first multiparty election: 1991

In line with one of the conditions for the holding of the conference various opposition movements and figures that had fallen out with the regime were given amnesty and many participated in the conference, including some of those that had gone to exile. Since this historic event these figures and movements have sought to win the presidency, in competition with 'independent' candidates and those of the ruling government of the day, starting with Kérékou himself, who stood in the March 1991 presidential election.

Nicéphore Soglo, prime minister in the transitional period (February 1990-March 1991) won this first election against Kérékou with some 67 per cent of the vote in the second round, having benefited from the support of various opposition parties and movements despite the fact that he was an 'independent' candidate. It was only after his victory that he took over the Benin Renaissance Party (RB), which had been founded by his wife (Bako-Afrifari 1995; Banégas 1997).

Soglo's election victory can be explained by a number of factors. First, as an acclaimed economist, having spent many years with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), his record during the transitional period had been impressive. Secondly, his position as prime minister during the transitional period, with enormous powers, allowed him to present the government's achievements as his

own, thus raising the hopes of the voters that he would do better as president. None of his other rivals in opposition ranks had such a privilege – most of them had been out of the country for many years or had tarnished their image through their association with the oppressive Kérékou regime. Thirdly, his only rival with a record of government was Kérékou, whose regime had been rejected by the popular uprisings of the late 1980s. Soglo, therefore, had a smooth passage to the Marina Palace, the seat of presidential power in Benin.

Subsequent multiparty elections

Although Soglo's economic record was impressive in the five years of his first term it would appear that he left many of his allies disgruntled. But given that he still had considerable support in the south of the country it became clear to most of his disgruntled former allies, who, like Soglo, came mainly from the south, that they would need a significant number of 'northern' votes to defeat him in the March 1996 election.

Ironically, it was the old Kérékou, a northerner with significant southern support garnered during his time in office, who emerged as the magic candidate, defeating Soglo. In fact, despite Soglo's inconclusive victory in the first round (35.62% against 33.94% for his main rival), Kérékou benefited from the support of various opposition movements, enabling him to win the run-off poll with 52.49 per cent of the votes (Houngnikpo 2007; Mayrargue 1996).

Kérékou's easy re-election in 2001, with an overwhelming 83.64 per cent of the vote in the second round, was the result of the main opposition parties boycotting the poll. Election boycotts are a popular strategy that opposition parties employ in many African countries, but it is a strategy that has not proved successful. On the contrary, while it has often served to cast doubt on the legitimacy of the ruling party in the short term, most ruling parties get over this liability in time (Beaulieu 2006; Smith 2009).

In the case of this election in Benin, Soglo (in a come-back), who had come second, with 27.12 per cent of the vote in the first round, boycotted the run-off poll, as did Adrian Houngbédji, who had come third, with 12.62 per cent. Both cited irregularities in the organisation of the second round to explain their withdrawal from the race, an argument that convinced neither the Electoral Commission nor the Constitutional Court. As a result Kérékou contested the run-off poll against the fourth-placed candidate in the first round, who was, ironically, a minister in the outgoing Cabinet, turning the poll into what Marsaud (2001) termed a 'friendly match' between him and his minister (see also Souaré 2010, p 78).

But it was in the March 2006 election that an opposition party candidate came closest to achieving the dream of becoming president. The main contenders were

the same as those who stood in 2011. Boni Yayi, the independent candidate, had won, with 35.78 per cent against 24.22 per cent for Houngbédji, who came second in the first round, thereby necessitating a run-off poll between the two. But due to rivalries among the various opposition candidates those who came third (with 16.29%), fourth (8.44%) and fifth (3.25%) all supported the independent candidate in the second round, giving him a landslide victory, with some 74.6 per cent of the vote, while Houngbédji only won 25.4 per cent.[2]

It has to be noted that beyond the failure of the opposition to unite, the victorious candidate had also crafted a very ingenious campaign strategy. As head of the West African Development Bank (BOAD), located in neighbouring Togo until a few months before the election, Boni Yayi had ensured for many years that he received maximum publicity from the various development projects funded by the bank in Benin. In this regard, he followed in Soglo's footsteps. But he also used his Obama-like multiethnic and multi-religious background and connections to position himself as the most consensual candidate of all the aspirants. He was born to Muslim parents but was raised by a Christian uncle who passed his religion on to him; his parents came from two different ethnic groups hailing from the north and the centre of the country and he married into a famous Christian household originating in the south.

Most importantly, he also emphasised his technocratic qualities and the fact that, unlike most of his rivals, who had been involved in Benin's 'polluted' political scene since 1990, he was an 'outsider' with new ideas, particularly for the development of the youth and women; a message that particularly appealed to many voters (Loko 2007; Seely 2007; Mayrargue 2006).

Given the failure of attempts by the main opposition candidates to win power alone and the rivalries between them, which prevented them from uniting, it became evident that the creation of a broad-based coalition had become the only viable strategy if they were to achieve their goal of acceding to the presidency for the first time since 1990. How did this coalition come to being? What was at stake for its main members? And how did it compare with Yayi when it went into the 2011 election?

THE OPPOSITION AND THE 2011 POLL

In preparation for the 2011 poll four of Benin's main political parties decided, as early as November 2009, to unite in a coalition, which they called 'Union Builds the Nation' (Union fait la nation – UN). The main parties in the coalition were

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2   Author's interviews with several Beninese political figures and ordinary people in Cotonou, Porto Novo, Abomey and Ouidah in December 2007 (see Souaré 2010, p 226).

the Democratic Renewal Party (PRD) of Houngbédji, the RB party represented by Léhadi Soglo (son of Nicéphore), the Social-Democratic Party (PSD) of Bruno Amoussou, and the African Movement for Development and Progress (MADEP) party of Antoine Kolawolé Iji (Tossavi 2010; Maoussi 2010; Brathier 2010).

To understand more clearly the importance of this coalition to its member parties it is useful to look at the role in and impact of opposition coalitions (both theoretically and empirically) on their chances of victory as well as the true political weight of the main members of the coalition.

Coalition-building and opposition victories in Africa

In discussing regime alternation as part of his broader consideration of the strengths and alliances of political parties Duverger (1963, p 299) contended that regime turnover 'exists primarily in dualist countries [where the system] is like a pendulum movement, each party moving from opposition to office and from office to opposition'.

The two-party system referred to here is a system in which two political parties, among others, effectively dominate the political scene on a more or less equal basis in consecutive elections. But Duverger does not confine his theory to dualism even though it carries more weight for him. He acknowledges that 'there is no absolute coincidence with the two-party system; alternation may be encountered in a system with electoral coalitions' (Duverger 1963, p 301). Indeed. But Duverger's conception of coalition here is more durable than the formula we will highlight and which has been best theorised by other authors.

Other analysts have expanded on the coalition hypothesis, calling it the 'bipolarised' system – system by which many opposition parties come together to form a coalition against the ruling party to create an ad hoc two-party system and facilitate change (Quermonne 1988, pp 11-15). This makes for favourable conditions for opposition victory; victory being possible with either one, and even more likely if both conditions are met.

Data available on African elections between 1990 and 2010 confirm these two hypotheses. In this period 18 'partisan' opposition victories were recorded.[3]

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3   The qualification of opposition as 'partisan' here is to restrict the data to opposition candidates presented by a specific 'political party' or a registered coalition of them in the first round of the poll. This excludes victories of 'independent candidates', even those from opposition ranks. This because their candidacy outside of party frameworks suggests their lack of trust in political parties as a means of gaining power. The victories of opposition candidates – even if they are supported by a political party – that occurred after a transitional period in which there was no candidate from the ruling regime (which often happens under transitional governments led by military juntas or constitutional caretakers) are also excluded. This is because no political party can be considered as being in 'opposition' as there is no 'ruling party'.

All these victories occurred in countries where there is a two-party system (Cape Verde 1991, 2001; Ghana 2000, 2008; Sierra Leone 2007) or where the opposition parties formed a coalition. In countries where the electoral formula is a simple majority, or first-past-the- post (FPTP) (Zambia 1991; Mauritius 1995, 2000, 2005; Kenya 2002) these coalitions were – and could only have been – formed before the first and only round of voting, while in countries practising absolute majority, two-round voting systems (Congo 1992; Burundi 1993; Madagascar 1993; Central African Republic 1993; Senegal 2000; Côte d'Ivoire 2010) the opposition almost always came together in the second round to win the poll. There are only two exceptional cases (Malawi 1994; Côte d'Ivoire 2000) in which opposition parties won elections without having to form a coalition and without their countries being two-party states (Souaré 2011). But these two exceptional cases can easily be explained.

In Côte d'Ivoire the erstwhile ruling Ivorian Democratic Party (PDCI) had boycotted the October election in question and the military junta that organised the poll had not allowed the popular Alassane Ouattara to run, on the pretext that he was not Ivorian. This meant that Laurent Gbagbo's Ivorian Popular Front (IFP) had only one serious, but unpopular, challenger in the military junta and thus did not need a coalition to win the poll. Even then, Gbagbo had to force his way into the presidential palace when it appeared that the military junta was intent on hanging onto power (Souaré 2006, pp 49-53). Gbabgo himself did the same when he lost the 2010 election (Zounmenou & Souaré 2010).

In Malawi in 1994 Bakili Muluzi's United Democratic Front (UDF) won the poll with 47 per cent of the vote against the Malawi Congress Party (MCP)'s long-term ruler, Hastings Banda (33.45%) and despite the presence of a popular third party, the Alliance for Democracy (AFORD), of trade union leader Chakufwa Chihana, who won 19 per cent of the vote (Kalipeni 1997; Van Donge 1995; Chirwa 1994). At least two factors may explain this. On the one hand, this historic election was heavily characterised by ethno-regional voting, based on the provenance of the main candidates. This situation heavily favoured the UDF, as the party was dominant in the southern region of the country, which represented about 50 per cent the population and 10 of the 24 constituencies. In addition to this dominant role in ethno-regional politics, on the other hand, the UDF also benefited from support in other regions, particularly the central region, a stronghold of the party, as many of its cadres, including Muluzi, were former MCP members and thus had a following there (Tsoka 2009; Kalipeni 1997; Van Donge 1995; Posner 1995).

This shows the importance, both theoretically and empirically, of coalition-building in opposition victories in Africa and even beyond. It should, however, be noted that having a two-party system or forming a coalition are two *necessary* but *not sufficient* conditions for an opposition victory. Other important factors

include, particularly, the weight and coherence of the parties who are members
of the coalition. How did the UN coalition fare in this regard?

The political weight of the UN coalition

The track record in previous elections since 1991 of the four main members of the
UN coalition shows that they were indeed the main political parties in Benin as the
2011 poll approached. To illustrate this it is worth noting that the PRD party and its
leader, Houngédji, had participated in all the presidential and legislative elections
in Benin since 1991 and had obtained an average of 15 per cent in presidential
elections and about 10 deputies in each legislative election. Houngbédji came fifth,
with 4.54 per cent of the vote in the 1991 presidential election; third, with 19.71
per cent in the 1996 poll; third again, with 16.62 per cent, in 2001 (although he
boycotted the second round, alleging irregularities in the electoral process) and
second, with 24.22 per cent, in the first round of the 2006 election. Nine of the 64
deputies elected to Parliament in 1991 were from his party; 18 of 83 in 1995; 11 of
83 in 1999 and 2003 and 10 of 83 in 2007.[4]

The RB party lost some of its popularity and appeal after Soglo left its
leadership after the 2001 presidential election. The often ugly succession rivalries
among his family members did much damage to the party and his son, Léhady,
who carried the flag of the party to the UN coalition, was less charismatic and
'consensual' than his father. Still, the party's track record made it one of the leading
parties in the country. Although Soglo only joined the RB after his election in 1991
it was on its platform that he contested the 1996 election, which he lost in the
second round. However, he came second in the 2001 poll, with 27.12 per cent of
the vote, only to boycott the run-off poll, as did Houndgédji.

The same assessment can be made of Amoussou's PSD. He came fourth in
the 1991, 1996 and 2001 presidential elections before jumping to third place in 2006
with 16.29 per cent of the vote. The party has had a minimum of eight deputies
after each election since 1991 even when it was part of a parliamentary coalition,
as it often was. The MADEP party was the weakest link of the four main members
of the UN coalition. As a new party it fielded its first presidential candidate in the
2006 poll and he won a mere 3.25 per cent of the vote. However, after the 1999
legislative elections the party had six members of Parliament and after the 2003
elections it had nine. A coalition named the Alliance for a Dynamic Democracy
(ADD), which included the RB and PSD parties, had a total of 20 deputies in the
post-2007 Parliament.

Taking the above into account one could argue that the UN coalition had

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4   For details of these and subsequent results, see www.africanelections.tripod.com/zm.html

sufficient political mileage to challenge Yayi and win the 2011 election. Its position was also strengthened by the fact that it had managed to designate a single candidate more than six months before the poll. With the choice of this consensual candidate, in the person of Houngbédji, the coalition conformed to some of the main factors that generally contribute to a successful coalition.

It is clear from the studies of various theorists that the main objective of a coalition is to allow members of the alliance to unite their efforts and strengths in order to maximise the rewards of their specific course of action, hence the emphasis by some game theorists on the rational calculation of members of the coalition with regard to the various costs and benefits of adhering to the latter (Riker 1962).

It is possible to deduct from the existing literature four principal explanatory factors (not exhaustive) that facilitate the formation of a winning coalition. These are:

- the pay-offs expected by the actual or prospective members of the coalition;
- the contributions required from each member;
- personal or socio-political links among members of the coalition;
- the probability of success.

<div align="right">Gamson 1961; Chertkoff 1966</div>

With regard to the first of these, Reisinger (1986, pp 553-4) notes that payoffs take different shapes in various circumstances. He argues that a payoff can involve either a distribution among some or all of the members of the coalition of some valued good or the selection of a particular course of action among a finite number of choices.

In the case of the UN coalition the pay-off expected by its members was clear – the conquest of the Marina Palace and the various ministerial portfolios and public positions its members could distribute among themselves in the event of victory.

With regard to the required contributions from each member, the choice of Houngbédji was pragmatic, for one could argue that his participation was key to the victory of any opposition coalition, given his political weight based on his previous record. Moreover, he was 69 years old on the eve of the poll, so, for him, the 2011 election was a case of 'now or never' as Benin's Constitution limits the eligibility of aspirants to the presidency to age 70 before election day.

The representative of the PSD party could not stand – he had turned 70 in 2009. The RB representative was young enough (born in December 1960) to continue standing for president until 2026 and was likely to replace Houngbédji as

the opposition's candidate in 2016, as the latter would be unable to stand. Also, given the history of Houngbéji's electoral successes, it could be argued that the coalition had in him a candidate with the ability to mobilise significant votes, even on his own, and more with the support of other members of the coalition. This made the contributions of the various members of the coalition less costly and the probability of its success very high.

But Gamson (1961, p 375) and Mazur (1968, p 198) rightly note that not all benefits are quantifiable 'utilitarian' payoffs but include such considerations as personal preferences based on interpersonal or emotional attraction and ideological preferences. In addition, ethnic and regional considerations must be taken into account in dealing with political parties in Africa. In the case of the UN coalition regional and ethnic considerations played an important role in the coming together of its principal members. But herein lies one of the factors that partly account for its loss – none of the parties has a stronghold outside the southern and central regions of the country and the northern region, which has produced the majority of Benin's presidents, including the incumbent Boni Yayi, favoured both Yayi and Abdoulaye Bio Tchané, a popular independent candidate (hailing from the region), who made the election a three- rather than a two-horse race.

THE INCUMBENT CANDIDATE

Given that Benin's electoral commission has been considered to be generally credible since its inception in 1991 (Hounkpe 2011; ECA 2009 p 41) and that the electoral processes have been quite competitive, an evaluation of President Boni Yayi's standing in the run-up to the 2011 poll should first be made through his record in office since 2006. The strategies he adopted in his bid to win will then be analysed to complete the picture.

Yayi's record in government, 2006-2010

It would appear that President Boni Yayi scored quite poorly in relation to the procedural aspects of governance. For example, the media in Benin seem to have lost much of their pre-2006 dynamism and freedom, a situation amplified by the country's regression in the rankings of Reporters Without Borders (RSF).

For a comparative analysis in this regard it is worth recalling that Benin had come top of all the African countries and was ranked 21st in the world – ahead of countries such as the United States, Italy and France – in the first global ranking of media freedom released by RSF in 2002. It retained its leading position in Africa until 2006, with the exception of 2004, when it was surpassed by South

Africa, but remained ahead of countries such as the United Kingdom, Cape Verde, Italy and Spain. However, since 2006 the country has dropped considerably in the rankings: coming 53rd in the world in 2007 (behind Togo, 49th; Mali, 52nd and Mauritius/Namibia, 25th); 70th in 2008 (behind Burkina Faso, 63rd; Togo, 53rd; Mali/Ghana, 31st and Namibia, 23rd); and 72nd in 2009 (far behind France, 43rd; Italy, 47th and Liberia, 62nd).[5]

Many of the president's critics attribute this to his alleged attempts to muzzle the press. In fact, in its commentary on Benin's record since 2006 the RSF recognised that journalists in Benin were responsible for many mistakes during this period, including defamation, but regretted the many actions of the government aimed at intimidating the press through the use of laws that had been shelved since 2004, such as those providing for heavy prison terms for journalists. The organisation condemned the arrest and incarceration of several journalists and managers of numerous papers using the pretext of defamation.

There were also many instances of conflict between the president and the legislature amid accusations that Yayi was determined either to bypass the lawmakers or to weaken them. On many occasions parliamentarians summoned Cabinet ministers to appear before them to account for certain actions, but the ministers frequently refused to appear or ignored their verdicts, with the tacit support of the president.[6]

Some of these incidents related to cases of corruption in areas which involved the work of the ministers who had been summoned. A case in point is the financial scandal in mid-2010 involving a scam company called Investment Consultancy and Computering Services. The company had, for four years, collected funds from people on the pretext that they would be invested to yield unimaginable interest rates, going up to 200 per cent, but it turned out to be a scam. Lawmakers sought to question both the finance minister and the president himself, whom they threaten to impeach, but their bid eventually failed (Robespierre 2010).

But while this constituted a minus for Yayi he seems to have fared better on the economic development front, even according to some of his dectractors. An economist himself, his main campaign slogan during the 2006 election was 'we can change, we should change, we will change' (Mayrargue 2006, pp 158-162). Economic success is very important for African leaders – as many opinion surveys have shown, many African populations tend to perceive and appreciate democracy through its economic and development 'dividends' (Coulibaly & Diarra 2004; Wantchekon & Taylor 2007; Logan, Wolf & Sentamu 2007).

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5   While a single source such as this might not give the whole picture it nevertheless gives at least a partial idea, particularly given the credibility of the organisation.

6   I visited the National Assembly in December 2007 at a time when Parliament had not sat for a long time because of a conflict between it and the executive.

In a speech to the National Assembly in December 2009 President Yayi highlighted the many achievements of his government in this field since 2006.[7] He maintained that the actions of his government had led to improvements in the living conditions of many citizens, particularly civil servants and rural peasants. By way of illustration he referred to the construction or rehabilitation of more than 1 500 kilometres of roads across the country, at a total cost of CFA 900-million; microcredit offered to half a million rural women; the funding through the National Fund for the Promotion of Youth Employment and Enterprise of some 602 small projects initiated by the youth, at a total cost of CFA 5-billion and pointed out that inflation and deficit rates had been controlled despite the global financial crisis of 2008/2009.

While this is an impressive record on the economic front, serious allegations of murky financial deals and lack of transparency were levelled against the president and many of his close collaborators. Beyond media reports and the accusations of his political opponents the largely credible Front of National Anti-Corruption Organisations (FONAC) produced irrefutable evidence establishing the truth in some of these cases and regretted the lack of cooperation from the executive in clarifying or punishing some of these acts, despite their recognition by the Council of Ministers. Some of these cases related to the administrative management and financial accounts of the Beninese embassies in Tokyo, Kinshasa, Addis Ababa and Paris, in addition to certain state and parastatal financial and commercial institutions.[8]

It is clear from the above that Yayi went into the 2011 election with a mixed record, tilted towards the negative side. This made his election strategy crucial in order to cover up or overcome his shortcomings and amplify his achievements.

The presidential strategy for the 2011 poll

Whereas he was elected in 2006 on a wave of popularity as a promising and 'unifying' political figure in the country, President Yayi knew that he needed to fight fiercely in order to be re-elected for a second term. Not only did he have to contend with the formidable UN opposition coalition he also had to ensure the continued loyalty of the majority of voters in the north vis-à-vis another popular challenger from that region, Abdoulaye Bio Tchané (ABT).

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7 The full text of the speech, delivered to the National Assembly in Porto Novo on 29 December 2009 may be found at www.gouv.bj/spip.php?article1202

8 In addition to the press conference FONAC organised in Cotonou on 6 January 2010 to release its report, a conference that was widely reported by the Beninese media, I received a copy of the report from a member of the organisation in personal correspondence on 11 March 2010. While some of the 32 cases mentioned in the report dated back to before 2006, most related to incidents during President Yayi's term of office.

ABT was a source of concern for Yayi. Hailing from the same northern region, close to former president (and a potential kingmaker) Kérékou, whom he served as finance and economy minister (2002-2006), ABT had the same professional profile as the incumbent president. He, too, had served as director of the Africa Department of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and had headed the same West African Development Bank (BOAD) that Yayi had used as the launch pad for his campaign in 2006.[9] The biggest danger for the incumbent was not so much that ABT might win but that he might seriously divide the northern vote (constituting about 35 per cent of the nationwide electorate), thereby giving an edge to the opposition coalition, with which ABT could have teamed up if there was a run-off poll.

In view of these challenges the incumbent president devised two main strategies. The first was what is generally known as 'vote buying', while the second consisted of distorting the voters' roll by means of a controversial Permanent Computerised Electoral List (LEPI) he had initiated soon after he came to power.

'Vote buying' is a common phenomenon in many African countries. In the case of Benin, many argue that Yayi laid the ground for his 2011 victory as early as 2008 when he organised the first local elections since 1991, doing so in a way that facilitated the election of many members of the political movement which supported his actions, which meant that he was assured of the support of many local councillors across the country (Perdrix 2011).

Another strategy, though it is something of a grey area, was the distribution of government positions in order to obtain the political support of various stakeholders. Although a characteristic of a functioning democracy and an obligation imposed on a ruling regime is the equal distribution of government positions and development projects among the various regions of the country it goes without saying that the way this is done, particularly when it is done close to an election, can feed into self-serving electoral calculations.

As far as the LEPI is concerned the original idea was to computerise the voters' roll to facilitate its revision, make it more accessible and smooth the organisation of future elections. However, it turned out to be a vehicle enabling Yayi to ensure massive registration in his electoral strongholds and to manipulate the census in other regions. As a result, the number of eligible voters dropped from 4.3-million in 2006 to 3.5-million in 2011, with the majority of the 700 000 voters who were omitted coming from opposition strongholds.

Opposition objections led to the postponement of the election on two occasions (27 February and 6 March 2011) and to the intervention of a joint

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9 For more information about ABT see the web site at www.bio-tchane2011.com

delegation of the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the United Nations (UN), which visited the country and urged the postponement of the poll, which was finally held on 13 March (AU 2011; Groga-Bada 2011).

It should be noted that the opposition must shoulder part of the blame because at the start of the process, in an attempt to underscore its objections to the idea of LEPI, perhaps fearing its eventual manipulation, the opposition appeared to call for a boycott of the census. As a result, many opposition supporters refused to be registered and the agents of the electoral commission sometimes had to struggle with opposition followers in order to carry out their work (Groga-Bada 2011).

In the event, the poll went ahead, using a contested and imperfect voters' roll, which was largely in favour of the incumbent president. President Yayi himself acknowledged the problem when he reportedly declared, soon after casting his vote: 'There have certainly been mistakes. This is why I present my apologies to the whole Nation and particularly those that were omitted in the voters' roll, if they exist' (*Jeune Afrique* / AFP 2011).

The organisation of the election

As noted above the March 2011 presidential election took place in a climate of contestation and mistrust among the principal actors in the electoral process (Gnacadja, Oussou, Ganye & Diallo 2011). Despite this and notwithstanding a staggering deposit of CFA 100-million (up from CFA 5-million in 2006) required from all candidates, only to be refunded if the individual obtained at least 10 per cent of the vote, there were 14 candidates in the race for the presidency.

In reality, however, the poll was a three-horse race, comprising Yayi, Houngbédji and ABT. According to the Electoral Commission and the Constitutional Court, there were 3 668 558 registered voters, of whom 3 111 833 (an impressive 84.82%) voted and 2 972 445 of those votes were valid (Constitutional Court of Benin – CCB – 2011).

According to the results proclaimed by the Constitutional Court (see Table 1) the incumbent president won the poll outright in the first round, with 53.14 per cent of the vote against 35.64 per cent for Houngbédji and 6.14 per cent for ABT, his two main challengers. This was the first time a presidential candidate had won in Benin without a run-off poll, a situation that led the opposition to contest the results vehemently.

Indeed, in view of its unprecedented unity, the opposition coalition was confident of gaining more votes than the incumbent and winning the election at least in the run-off. It was therefore not surprising that both Houngbédji and ABT

Table 1
Final results at national level

Ranking	Candidate	Number and % of votes	Remarks
1st	Mr Thomas Boni Yayi	1 579 550 (53.64)	Incumbent president
2nd	Mr Adrien Houndgbédji	1 059 396 (35.64)	Opposition UN candidate
3rd	Mr Abdoulaye Bio-Tchané	182 484 (6.14)	Independent candidate
4th	Mr Salifou Issa	37 219 (1.29)	
5th	Mr Christian Enock Lagnide	19 221 (0.65)	
6th	Mr François J Yahouédeou	16 591 (0.56)	
7th	Mr Jean Yves Sinzogan	13 561 (0.46)	
8th	Mrs Akuavi M E C Gbedo	12 017 (0.40)	
9th	Mr Prudent Victor Topanou	11 516 (0.39)	
10th	Mr Késsilé Tchalla-Sare	9 469 (0.32)	
11th	Mr Cyr Kouagou-M'po	9 285 (0.31)	
12th	Mr Antoine Dayori	8 426 (0.28)	
13th	Mr Salomon J A Biokou	7 893 (0.27)	
14th	Mr Joachim Dahissiho	5 817 (0.20)	

Source: CCB 2011

took the matter to the Constitutional Court. The incumbent president did likewise, perhaps as a strategy to avoid suspicion, as the protests of the two opposition candidates were mainly directed at him.

In his charges the incumbent claimed that some officials of the local electoral commissions in two different constituencies, including one in the capital, Porto-Novo, had tampered with the results and reduced his share of the vote in favour of Houngbédji. The Constitutional Court rejected these claims as being unfounded (CCB 2011, pp 45-46). The two main opposition candidates laid a total of 16 complaints, most of which were cross-cutting, in that they were filed by both Houngbédji and ABT.

Among Houngbédji's complaints was what he considered the 'unconstitutionality of the date on which the election was held' (less than 30 days before the expiry of the term of the incumbent president on 6 April). Both Houngbédji and ABT claimed that they had not had sufficient notification about the final electoral list or about the number and situation of many voting stations; that

ghost voting stations had been set up by the electoral commission to help the incumbent president inflate his vote and that the incumbent had abused state funds for his electoral campaign.

ABT claimed that his agents had been prevented from going to certain polling stations, thereby making possible ballot stuffing by agents of the incumbent, that the latter continued to campaign for their principal, even on election day, including by putting his photograph in one of the voting booths in violation of specific electoral laws, and Houngbédji alleged that his agents had detected many instances of minors and foreigners voting in constituencies favourable to the incumbent.

The court rejected all these complaints on the basis of its own investigations, stating that they had not been substantiated by irrefutable evidence or that they had no bearing on the results (CCB 2011, pp 47-65). While the court's ruling on the majority of the complaints appears to be appropriate it seems that irregularities which might have been instigated by the incumbent president were cleverly couched in constitutional and legal terms that made it difficult to establish them as flagrant violations of any electoral law. It would therefore seem that Yayi's win was largely fair 'on election day' but that he had manipulated certain aspects of the electoral process. The voters' roll was the main avenue for this manipulation.

Indeed, and beyond accusations of vote rigging, a careful analysis of the detailed results of the election in the 12 districts (departments) of Benin, as well as in the diaspora, shows that Yayi managed to win an absolute majority in all four northern districts (which are the biggest in the country) and to garner respectable totals in other regions (he actually won two southern districts), while most votes for the opposition coalition came from the smaller southern and central regions (see Table 2).

Table 2
Percentage of votes for the three main candidates in each department

District	Region	B Yayi	A Houngbédji	A Bio-Tchané
Diaspora		62.81	29.82	4.78
Plateau	South	40.0	53.9	1.1
Ouemé	South	22.9	73.7	1.0
Littoral	South	37.9	56.5	3.0
Atlantique	South	50.4	37.9	7.2
Couffo	South	39.3	53.4	2.5

Mono	South	65.2	28.2	3.7
Collines	Centre	77.0	13.6	5.8
Zou	South	36.5	52.5	2.8
Alibori	North	78.2	1.2	4.5
Borgou	North	83.2	3.9	9.0
Donga	North	65.2	1.6	28.9
Atacora	North	73.2	3.5	16.4

Source: Adapted from CCB, 2011

CONCLUSION

This article has analysed critically the process and outcome of the 2011 presidential election in Benin. The election is interesting for two reasons. The first is that it was the only presidential election since the first multiparty election after the Cold War in March 1991 not to have required a run-off. The second is that it was the first election in which the main opposition parties succeeded in forming a formidable coalition. The article has attempted to provide some explanations for this apparent 'anomaly' in Beninese politics and, in doing so, to shed some light on the main candidates.

It traced the history of Benin's opposition political parties in their quest for the presidency; a history that explains the factors that contributed to their appreciation of the need to coalesce for the 2011 election. It then looked at the Union Builds the Nation coalition, which brought together four of the main political parties in addition to many other parties, movements and individuals. But it was noted that almost all the members of the coalition came from the south of the country, which did not augur well for them in terms of winning sufficient votes in the country as a whole.

The political standing of the third candidate, Abdoulaye Bio-Tchané, was analysed and the record in office, the stake in the election and the strategies of the incumbent president were scrutinised.

The analysis of the organisation of the election made it clear that it took place in a climate of controversy and mistrust among the main political actors in the country and the assessment of the results and the complaints of the three main candidates revealed that incumbent president Boni Yayi may, in fact, have won 'fairly' on election day but that he had also benefited from some unorthodox electoral engineering, particularly a rigged voters' roll, which may have contributed to his victory.

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THE TENSION BETWEEN MILITARISATION AND DEMOCRATISATION IN WEST AFRICA
A Comparative Analysis of Niger and Guinea

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ABSTRACT

While there has been some progress in West Africa towards shedding the dark history of militarism that spanned the 1960s-1980s and embracing democratisation, militarism still lingers, remaining a ghost that has haunted the democracy project that began in the region in the 1990s. Thus, West Africa has faced enormous challenges in its quest for democratisation. One of the biggest of these has been the militarisation of politics and of society at large. This problem persists even today, after encouraging progress towards democratisation in the past two decades. Two countries in the region that epitomise this recurring tension between militarisation and democratisation are undoubtedly Niger and Guinea. Both of them manifest the consequences of a governance deficit and the problems of democratic transition in which the military continues to play a dominant role. This chapter examines critically the tension between militarisation and democratisation in West Africa in general, with specific focus on Niger and Guinea. In an attempt to provide a comparative analysis of the two cases the chapter assesses progress made, highlights existing challenges and draws lessons that might be relevant for other African countries.

INTRODUCTION

There is no gainsaying the fact that Africa has made enormous progress in embracing multiparty democracy, especially since the 1990s, with the end of the Cold War. This progress was not only a by-product of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 it was also a direct response to internal popular pressures mounted against dictatorial regimes, most of which were military.

Despite the region's advance towards democratisation militarism still occasionally emerges, reminding us that democracy in Africa is a work in progress, and is continuously under construction and reconstruction. This stark reality requires transformative and visionary leadership if multiparty politics and participatory democracy are to be institutionalised and entrenched on a sustainable basis. With this as a backdrop this chapter grapples with tensions between militarism and democratisation in West Africa through a comparative analysis of the recent experiences of Niger and Guinea.

The chapter examines critically the tension between militarisation and democratisation in West Africa in general, specifically focusing on Niger and Guinea, in an attempt to provide a comparative analysis of the two cases. It is divided into several sections. The second section provides a contextual background, setting the stage for the subsequent discussion; the third presents an historical overview of the military in politics in Africa; the fourth unveils the uncertain transitions in Niger and Guinea; the fifth assesses the extent to which recent electoral processes demonstrate some form of demilitarisation of politics in the two countries. The sixth section distils some lessons other African countries might learn from recent developments in Guinea and Niger. The conclusion wraps up the debate, highlighting our main observations.

One thing that is certain is that both Guinea and Niger remain fragile democratic experiments and there is still the possibility of democratic reversal and relapse into militarism. To avoid this possible reversal there is a need to build and enhance robust institutions, leadership and far-reaching security sector reforms.

THE MILITARY IN AFRICA: AN OVERVIEW

The post-colonial political trajectory of African states reveals a complex web of civil-military relations and, by extension, political power and its legitimacy. A majority of African countries achieved their political independence on a silver platter, through negotiations involving African nationalists and colonial administrations. The newly independent states were then ushered through immediate post-independence elections to choose their first national leaders.

In other cases independence was achieved through protracted armed liberation struggles which also, in some instances, led to the colonial administrations being defeated and giving way to nationalist leaders who assumed state power. In some cases liberation struggles did not lead to outright military victory but to a negotiated settlement of the armed conflict.

Irrespective of the transition trajectory from colonial rule to independence it soon became evident that the legitimacy of some new governments moved

from the will of the people to the barrel of a gun as one country after another experienced military coups. The military became a power unto itself. This trend manifested in a spate of coups d'état, especially between the mid-1960s and the late 1980s. This development triggered an enormous amount of pessimism about the feasibility of democracy in Africa.

The involvement of the army in national politics in Africa in general and West Africa in particular was not an historical accident. It had its structural roots in colonialism itself, whose authority was predicated upon conquest, coercion and violence in which the security forces were systematically used to impose foreign domination on the African people, who were considered to be colonial subjects (Mbembe 1990, p 375).

Under colonial rule the military was an instrument of social and political oppression and repression. Upon independence African states inherited weak state apparatuses predicated upon military repression and, in many senses, detached from the people. In many countries post-independence leaders failed to transform the state by, for instance, developing with their people a 'social contract' that might have served as a basis of state legitimacy and sustainable democratic governance. In a word, the necessity for political survival compelled most leaders to manipulate the army or to be manipulated by it (Bangoura 1992; Coleman & Brice 2005; Collier 2009).

While in theory new national armies were created in independent Africa to ensure defence and territorial integrity and to contribute to the nation-building project, in practice the military has evolved to play other roles, including involvement in partisan politics. Thus, a few years into self-government Africa became a theatre of military coups in which governance by the bullet took centre stage, postponing democratisation and jettisoning rule by the ballot.

It all began in 1963 when the elected governments of Togo (13 January), Congo-Brazzaville (15 April) and Dahomey, Benin (23 October) were toppled in the first post-independence military coups on the continent. It is no wonder, therefore, that between the 1960s and the 1980s more than 50 successful coups, 56 attempted coups and 102 alleged military plots took place in no fewer than 45 countries on the continent (Kieh & Agbese 2005; Collier 2005; Souare 2006). By the end of the 1980s close to 60 successful military coups had been staged and most of the 54 existing African states had experienced at least one coup or related incident. By 2010 there had been 81 successful military coups in Africa, the majority of which took place in West Africa. Table 1 provides a vivid illustration of successful coups d'état on the continent between 1958 and 2010.

As Table 1 shows there was a steady decrease in the number of military coups in Africa in the late 20th century. However, between 2000 and 2010 five coups (Togo in 2005; Mauritania in 2007 & 2009; Guinea Conakry in 2008; and Niger

in 2010) either interrupted a transition to democracy or prevented a democratic transfer of power. West Africa, which has had the highest number of coups, not only in each decade but also overall, accounts for more than 55 per cent of coups on the continent.

Table 1
Successful coups d'état in Africa: 1958-2010

Region	Country	Year	Total
West Africa	Benin	1963, 1965 (2), 1967, 1969, 1972	6
	Burkina Faso	1980, 1982, 1983, 1987	4
	Côte d'Ivoire	1999	1
	Gambia (The)	1994	1
	Ghana	1966, 1972, 1978, 1979, 1981	5
	Guinea	1984, 2008	2
	Guinea Bissau	1980, 2003	2
	Liberia	1980	1
	Mali	1968, 1991	2
	Niger	1974, 1996, 1999, 2010	4
	Nigeria	1966 (2), 1975, 1983, 1985, 1993	6
	Sierra Leone	1967, 1968, 1992, 1997	4
	Togo	1963, 1967, 2005	3
Central Africa	Burundi	1966 (2), 1976, 1987, 1996	5
	Central African Republic	1966, 1979, 1981, 2003	4
	Chad	1975, 1979, 1990	3
	Congo-Brazzaville	1968, 1999	2
	Democratic Republic of Congo	1965, 1994	2
	Equatorial Guinea	1979	1
	Rwanda	1973	1
East Africa	Somalia	1969	1
	Sudan	1958, 1969, 1985, 1989	4
	Uganda	1966, 1971, 1979, 1980, 1985, 1986	6
Southern Africa	Lesotho	1986, 1991	2
	Madagascar	1975, 2009	2
North Africa	Algeria	1965	1
	Libya	1969	1
	Mauritania	1978, 1984, 2005, 2009	4
	Tunisia	1987	1
Total			**81**

Source: Adapted from Souare 2006; ISS, African Security Review 2010

Most of these have occurred in Francophone Africa, although two former British colonies, namely Ghana and Nigeria, have also had their own (un)fair share of post-independence militarism. West Africa experienced four major civil armed conflicts, with disastrous consequences for the region. These were Liberia (1989), Sierra Leone (1992), Guinea-Bissau (1998) and Côte d'Ivoire (2002). Among the most visible impacts of such conflicts are the proliferation of light weapons and the militarisation of society, as well as the undesirable phenomenon of child soldiers.

Evidence suggests that, in comparison, Southern Africa has not been as prone to coups d'état as other regions of the continent. Of the 14 states that constitute the Southern African Development Community (SADC) only two have experienced military coups, namely, Lesotho in 1986 and 1991 (see Matlosa 1998) and Madagascar in 1975 and 2009.

In East Africa only Tanzania and Kenya have been immune to the cancer of militarism and have never experienced military coups. This cancer has afflicted the political systems of three countries in this region, namely Somalia, Sudan and Uganda. In fact, in Uganda, military coups were so frequent they began to seem like annual festivals (1979 & 1980; 1985 & 1986). Like West Africa, Central Africa has been an epicentre of military coups. All but one Central African state (Gabon) have experienced at least one coup since independence.

A plethora of literature on the military in Africa (Deger 1986; Decalo 1976; Hutchful & Bathily 1998; McGowan 1984; Collier 2005; Souare 2006) offers some insights into the main driving forces behind coups on the continent. One of these is that the army was the only organised structure able to maintain order given the supposed inability of the civilian authorities to do so.

According to Omoigui (2004, p 5):

> The military has an unrivalled capacity to project force. This makes it an important tool for asserting state authority, enforcing the rule of law, and protecting the nation against external aggression. Unfortunately, such power, if not properly managed, can also pose a serious threat against civil authority as has been demonstrated numerous times in several African countries.

The deterioration of the socio-political and economic environment has, on many occasions, served as a rationale for coups, while ideological rivalries and elite power struggles could also well feature among the explanatory variables. Even though many coups took place amid domestic tensions, external factors could not be excluded, particularly given the context of the Cold War.

A multiplicity of explanatory factors notwithstanding there is no gainsaying

that the involvement of the military in politics has transformed systematic violence into a mode of power alternation and change of leadership in Africa, with three main consequences. Firstly, the partisan intervention of the military in the national polity has severely undermined the consolidation of the state-building process based on the rule of law and sustainable democratic governance. Secondly, bad governance and the autocracy generally associated with military rule drove leaders further away from the people and their aspirations. Thirdly, military expenses contributed to the failure to invest in the more productive sectors vital for sustainable human development.

As a result of coups, argues Ali Mazrui (1996, p 177), 'power no longer belongs to those who own the means of production but is confined in the hands of the military officers who controlled the means of destruction'. The experience of military intervention in politics in Africa has shown that military coups hardly serve as a foundation stone for democratisation. If anything, they are the very antithesis of democracy.

Africa has had almost two decades of democratic experience since the end of the Cold War. In essence, political systems based on democratic norms have become more salient on the continent. Many African countries have embraced a culture of regular multiparty elections, their quality notwithstanding. Many have also established democratic institutions of varying degrees of effectiveness. These countries have also put in place institutional, constitutional and legal mechanisms for orderly civil-military relations, as well as civil control over the armed forces. Some have seen a peaceful transfer of power from one elected regime to another. However, for others, the military still remains a power broker in the national polity, if not a power unto itself in control of the state.

Electoral violence has become a serious threat to political stability and genuine democratisation (AUC 2010; Matlosa, Khadiagala & Shale 2010). In fact, many countries in Africa are still locked in a transition, with uncertain outcomes, or, what Sorensen (2010) terms 'democratic stand-still'. Some leaders, both military and civilian, continue to resist democracy as a political system, perceiving it as a threat to their survival and interests. As Muhlberger & Paine (2000, p 3) poignantly observe,

> democracy appears both as a symbol of hope and a cause for fear. It arouses strong feelings because some see democracy as a way forward to a better future for humanity while others view it as a dangerous delusion, or a threat to their own privileges.

Niger and Guinea illustrate the tension between militarisation and democratisation. It is to this subject that we devote the remainder of this article.

UNCERTAIN TRANSITIONS AND MILITARY COUPS IN NIGER AND GUINEA

Complicating the democratic transition in Niger, in 1999 its then president, Mamadou Tandja, manipulated the 1999 Constitution in a bid to prolong his hold on power beyond the mandatory two terms. This move triggered a political crisis resulting in a military coup on 18 February 2010 which dislodged Tandja and established the Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy.

With Tandja in detention a transitional election was held on 31 January 2011. The run-off poll became a fierce contest between Mahamadou Issoufou of the opposition Parti Nigerien pour la Democracy et le Socialisme (Nigerien Party for Democracy and Socialism – PNDS), and Seyni Oumarou of the ruling Mouvement National pour la Société du Développement (National Movement for the Development of Society – MNSD). Observers judged the election to have been peaceful. Issoufou won, with 58 per cent of the total valid votes, with Oumarou polling a paltry 42 per cent. Oumarou accepted the results and thus, all things being equal, Niger seems poised to outgrow the spiral of instability it has suffered over decades.

Guinea has experienced political instability virtually since independence in 1958. Politics in that country has been marked by factionalism within an ill-disciplined army, a deep-rooted culture of impunity, and decades of autocratic rule. Guinea's history has been a stark contrast to the hopes of 1958, when its first leader, Ahmed Sékou Touré, sharply rejected colonial domination in any form.

The country has been dogged by persistent instability punctuated by entrenched autocracy, thus postponing the democratic journey for decades. Guinea is still hemmed in by the tension between militarisation and democratisation. In 2010 general elections were held (first round in July and second round in November). The run-off presidential election pitted Cellou Dalen Diallo against Alpha Condé, resulting in the former winning the poll by about 53 per cent against the latter's 47 per cent. Tensions persisted after the elections as Diallo refused to accept the results, triggering the declaration by the military of a state of emergency.

Armed forces have dominated the political lives of Niger and Guinea since their independence. The military coup of 18 February 2010 in Niger was the culmination of a series of initiatives aimed at undermining the democratisation process. President Tandja's decision, a few months before the end of his second and last term in office, to hold a controversial referendum despite public opposition to this undemocratic move by key institutions (Constitutional Court, Parliament, State Council, all of which were eventually dissolved), civil society organisations and political parties, was seen as a violation of Niger's 1999 Constitution, which,

like most of those in Africa, limited the presidential mandate to a maximum of two five-year terms. It was also seen as a breach of the country's commitment to respect duly ratified regional norms (Niger was among the first countries to ratify the Economic Community of West African States – ECOWAS's 2001 Additional Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance).

Guinea's citizens initially hailed the military junta that seized power peacefully in the country in December 2008 as a 'liberator'. However, subsequent developments, including the massacre of opposition supporters on 28 September 2009 and an attempt on the life of the junta leader, Moussa Dadis Camara, brought to the fore the challenges of a peaceful post-coup political transition (Souare 2009; Souare & Handy 2009; Diallo & Takwa 2008).

The ensuing massacre of civilians and the outcry it caused throughout the region and beyond reminded ECOWAS leaders of the potential security risk posed by unconstitutional regime changes. Almost 200 people were reportedly killed and another 1 000 wounded, including many opposition leaders (Human Rights Watch 2009). Some of the bodies were hidden and witnesses lived in fear of being targeted by security forces attempting to undermine any eventual investigation and possible charges of crimes against humanity (Human Rights Watch 2009).

In contrast to Guinea, where the coup was almost expected, Niger's 1999 Constitution has in-built provisions that make it difficult to change. Article 135 of the Constitution provides that two-thirds of the national Parliament must vote in favour of any changes or the proposed changes must be the subject of a referendum. Article 36 contains special provisions regarding the presidential mandate, which may not be modified at all and Article 136 clearly stipulates that 'the Republican State, the multi-party system, the principle of separation of State and religion and the provisions of articles 36 [presidential mandate] and 141 [the amnesty for those responsible for the 1995 and 1999 coups d'état] of the present constitution cannot be the object of any revision' (Constitution of Niger 1999).

Unlike Guinea, whose political transition was delayed until much later, Niger returned to political normality following the assassination in 1999 of President Ibrahim Bare Mainassara. The elected government, led by President Mamadou Tandja, then completed ten years of reforms aimed at achieving political stability based on democratic dispensation.

Tandja ruled with the support of a coalition of political parties that collapsed as a result of sharp disagreements that emerged as soon as he made public his intention to amend the Constitution to allow himself a third term in office. The ensuing fragmentation of the ruling coalition made it difficult to pass the controversial amendment through Parliament. Domestic political actors and regional leaders were puzzled by Tandja's decision to hang on to power after two successful terms that had partially restored economic growth and political

stability in Niger, raising the prospects for successful democratic transition. But, as with all democratic transitions, there is a significant risk of reversal and leaders and political actors often seek to exploit the weaknesses of the process to remain in control.

While Tandja argued that he needed three more years to complete his 'reforms' opposition leaders believed Niger's problems were too immense to be resolved by a 71-year-old leader in just three additional years. It seemed that Tandja's plan to stay in power indefinitely was motivated more by his own self-serving interests and those of the political elite around him to control state power, which, in turn, was used as a licence for wealth accumulation and political survival.

His motivation for prolonging his stay in state house had little or nothing to do with concerns about national development. Self-preservation loomed larger than national purpose in his constitutional amendment plan. This, in itself, exposed the fragility of the democratisation process in Niger. Lucrative mining contracts signed with various companies, including French uranium giant AREVA (a €1.2-bn investment) and China, could shed some light on the problem and the attitude of Tandja's administration (Niger has the second-largest uranium site in the world, with the capacity to produce at least 5 000 tons of uranium annually).

Following the rise to power of the junta the commission against economic and financial crime ordered an investigation that revealed that Tandja and some of his collaborators had been involved in financial misappropriation amounting to nearly €98-million over 10 years (Baudais & Chauzal 2010).

It is clear, however, that beyond the anticipated financial gains from the uranium deals and oil discoveries the fear among Tandja's closest ministers and collaborators of losing access to the privileges of power help make sense of the presidential assault on the Constitution and the institutions that had made such a significant contribution to political stability in the past decade.

Tandja's moves provoked widespread protest and on 25 June 2009 his main supporter, the Convention Démocratique et Sociale (CDS) of former President Mahamane Ousmane, withdrew eight ministers from the government. A concerted opposition emerged and denounced the initiative as an institutional coup d'état. Some 200 political parties and NGOs joined to form the Front pour la Défense de la Démocratie (FDD) as tens of thousands rallied in the capital, Niamey, to challenge Tandja's bid.

The military junta that overthrew Tandja dissolved the government and with it the regime's tailormade 2009 Constitution, in which there was no mention of term limits. The Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy (CSRD), as the junta quickly styled itself, appointed a new civilian prime minister,

Mahamadou Danda, with the task of forming a new government. This largely civilian government was transitional, with the responsibility to take the necessary steps leading up to elections within 18 months.

The various decisions taken by the junta indicated that the transition was initially likely to lead to the return to a new political dispensation favourable to the democratisation process. One of the most reassuring signs was the promise by the junta's leaders and government ministers not to stand in any subsequent elections. A new Constitution and electoral code were developed and the government established an independent electoral commission. It also established a consultative committee, drawn from all parts of society, to assist in the transition process. The new Constitution reinstated the limitation of the presidential mandate and the principle of the separation of powers and upheld the amnesty law for former coup makers.

In Guinea the military coup was the direct result of the failed transition led by a civilian prime minister, Lansana Kouyaté, whose own presidential ambitions compromised the neutrality of the civilian-led transition process.

Kouayaté was appointed in 2007 following ECOWAS's mediated roadmap for neutral transition in Guinea. His inability to steer the process to a successful conclusion partly explained the early popular support enjoyed by the soldiers, which was more of a sign of exasperation caused by the political impasse than an endorsement. But, as was to be anticipated, military coups in Guinea, as elsewhere in Africa, hardly serve the interests of a successful political transition and sustainable democratic order. The coup leader, Captain Moussa Dadis Camara, called his group the Conseil national pour la démocratie et le développement (CNDD) or the National Council for Democracy and Development. Its first move was to announce the dissolution of the government and the National Assembly (Parliament) and suspend the Constitution.

REGIONAL RESPONSES AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

ECOWAS has been involved in the political crises in both Niger and Guinea since 2007. In the case of Guinea, its involvement began in earnest when a trade union-led protest was brutally repressed by Lansana Conté's regime. As for Niger, the regional organisation acted as soon as Mamadou Tandja's supporters initiated the so-called 'Tazarche' (continuity), calling on him to remain in power even as he neared the end of his second and last term in office.

The repression of the protests against Tandja threatened the fragile peace in West Africa, where Liberia, Guinea Bissau and Sierra Leone were just emerging from devastating conflicts. ECOWAS undertook a number of initiatives in an attempt to bring about peaceful political transition in Niger and Guinea.

In Guinea, the initiative of the regional leaders was aimed at creating the framework for negotiations involving the government, political parties and leaders of trade unions. Of particular significance was the mediation led by former president Ibrahim Babangida of Nigeria and the president of the ECOWAS Commission, Mohamed Ibn Chambas. It was under the auspices of ECOWAS that the defunct Transition Road Map had been agreed upon in March 2007, with Lansana Kouyaté appointed prime minister.

As would be the case with Niger in the aftermath of the February 2010 coup, ECOWAS's decision on 10 January 2009 to suspend Guinea's membership but to remain engaged with Moussa Dadis Camara's junta to promote a swift return to constitutional and democratic order was taken in accordance with its existing protocols, notably the 2001 Additional Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance.

However, that approach was not successful with Camara, who wanted to extend his hold on power beyond the transition period, unleashing his repressive machine on the citizens. For ECOWAS what was at stake in Guinea was more than the security of the country's citizens or the stability of state institutions.

Guinea is in the highly volatile Mano River region, consisting of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire, countries facing serious domestic security challenges with potential spillover effects on the wider West African region. The deliberate decision by Camara's forces to open fire on peaceful demonstrators in September, 2009 left more than 100 people dead and thousands wounded. It also demonstrated an entrenched culture of brutality and impunity as well as the threat the army posed not only to the security of the state and its citizens but to the democratisation project in the West African region at large.

Locked in his belief that he was 'the saviour of Niger' President Tandja was determined to hold a referendum on the proposed removal of the term limit so he could retain power beyond 2009. In doing so he paid no heed to calls from opposition parties and civil society leaders and multiple missions from ECOWAS or development partners to refrain from violating his country's Constitution and throwing Niger into unnecessary political turmoil. This was tantamount to reneging on his government's commitment to uphold national and regional norms of democracy and good governance.

The 2001 ECOWAS Additional Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance provides that a substantial electoral law may not be changed without the consent of a large majority of political actors, at least six months before an election. The fact that Tandja held the referendum within the six-month period gave ECOWAS the authority to intervene. Had he called for a referendum two years before his term ended the organisation might, perhaps, not have had the right to act.

As early as June 2009 the ECOWAS Commission warned that Niger could face sanctions if Tandja went ahead with the referendum. On 21 July, as a preventive measure, a delegation comprising ECOWAS, African Union (AU) and United Nations (UN) representatives went to Niger to reiterate their opposition to the president's bid to manipulate the Constitution.

In addition to the regional efforts, the European Union (EU), a major development partner of Niger, threatened to suspend financial aid, while the United States of America expressed 'deep concerns' over Tandja's attempt to retain power against the will of the people. Ignoring all these concerns the president held both the controversial referendum (on 4 August) and legislative elections (in October), even after the chairman of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS had dispatched a high-powered delegation comprising Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, ECOWAS's Mohamed Ibn Chambas and former Nigerian leader General Abdulsalami Abubakar to persuade the Nigerien leader to postpone the elections to enable the country's political stakeholders to discuss a resolution of the constitutional crisis.

ECOWAS's leaders remained firm, applying the agreed normative and institutional frameworks aimed at promoting democracy, governance and the rule of law among the organisation's member states. They demonstrated political commitment to exhausting all peaceful and diplomatic options available to resolve the constitutional crisis.

The gradual nature of the regional intervention added to the pressure on Tandja's regime to preserve the fragile political order established in the aftermath of the 1999 post-coup transition. The controversial constitution he mooted concentrated power in his hands, removed the term limit and abolished the position of prime minister in order to create an imperial presidency. It also provided for a bicameral legislature with a National Assembly and a Senate, as against the unicameral Parliament created by the 1999 Constitution. Finally, it mandated Tandja to remain in power until December 2012. There is no doubt that this constitutional manipulation would have nipped the Nigerien democratisation process in the bud.

This was the context in which ECOWAS appointed its mediation team to find a consensual solution to the crisis that would 'create an atmosphere conducive to the restoration of democratic governance, the respect for the rule of law and the creation of opportunity for all political actors and the citizenry to participate in the electoral process' (ECOWAS 2009a). The agenda of the mediators was to ensure that all Tanda's controversial initiatives, including the referendum and the new constitution, were reversed through political consensus.

The team soon realised that no progress could be made while Tandja was not prepared to make concessions. His presidential term expired on 22 December

2009, which made him an institutional 'coup maker'. A proposed plan to maintain him in power while appointing a prime minister from the opposition for a period of transition during which a new constitution would be elaborated and fresh elections held also failed. Although opposition parties found the proposal acceptable, Tandja and his supporters scorned it, a stalemate the army attempted to resolve on 18 February 2010, when a group of military officers seized power in a coup that claimed the lives of at least ten people.

As far as Guinea is concerned it was at the extraordinary session of ECOWAS's Authority of Heads of State and Government held on 17 October 2009 in Abuja that West African leaders 'expressed deep concern over the mass violation of human rights and humanitarian law' in the country and roundly condemned the brutal acts of massacre, rape and other atrocities perpetrated by the security forces against unarmed women and civilians under the authority of the junta on 28 September 2009.

The AU characterised the acts of impunity and the rapidly deteriorating political, security and human rights situation in Guinea as seriously damaging to the democratic process in the country and a real threat to the peace, security and stability of the region (ECOWAS 2009b).

Given the complexity of the political situation Burkina Faso President Blaise Compaore, the ECOWAS mediator, had quite a mountain to climb in his bid to resolve the crisis in Guinea. Regional leaders not only showed strong support for his mediation efforts, they also urged him to take all appropriate steps to re-establish dialogue among the Guinean political actors with the aim of:

- establishing a new transitional authority to ensure a short and peaceful transition to constitutional order through credible, free and fair elections;
- ensuring that the chairman and members of the CNDD, the prime minister and those who hold high office in the new transitional authority would not stand in the forthcoming presidential elections;
- setting up benchmarks in the transition chronogram already agreed and ensuring their timely achievement.

Although the mediator's mandate was clear his first draft proposal, made after consultations with key stakeholders in the country in late December, showed some partiality towards Dadis Camara's junta. Accordingly the plan maintained Camara not only as head of the transitional government but also as supreme chief of the army. The proposal made provision for a prime minister to be appointed from the ranks of the opposition and for a government of national unity.

As was to be expected the opposition categorically rejected the proposal, which, in their view, 'legitimised' Camara's military junta and ignored the events of 28 September, despite the fact that these events had been condemned by the international community and were under investigation by the International Criminal Court. In addition, they argued that it failed to address the ethnic nature of Camara's political strategy to hang onto power, including the indefensible use of mercenaries. The result, they contended, was that the proposal presented an unthinkable scenario in which the people who, after losing their right to choose their leaders freely when Camara seized power, would now face an extended period of vicious state-sponsored repression.

While discussions were under way to iron out differences Camara was wounded in an assassination attempt and was flown to Morocco for medical treatment. This episode clearly introduced a new dynamic into the political process. It is believed that the controversy around the junta leader's candidacy contributed to the deterioration of the situation within and outside his support base. In fact, Guinea could no longer afford to have one military ruler replacing another after 24 years of brutal political repression and widespread poverty, the legacy of General Lansana Conté's regime. It was becoming increasingly clear that the junta was not prepared to hand over power and would resort to violence and electoral fraud to maintain itself at the helm of the state.

DEMILITARISATION BY ELECTIONS

The presidential elections that took place in Niger in January 2011 had the dual objective of ending the post-coup transition in the country and placing the democratisation process back on track. This was the second time a post-coup election had taken place with the aim of reviving the democratisation process.

The completion of the electoral process symbolised, in principle, the withdrawal of the military and the transfer of power to an elected civilian president. The presidential and legislative elections of 31 January 2011 followed a peaceful referendum on a new constitution, which was adopted in October 2010, and local elections, which were held on 8 January 2011.

The Constitution Council provided for ten candidates to contest the presidential election. They included, among others, Mahamadou Issoufou leader of the opposition PNDS; Mahamane Ousmane, former president, speaker of the National Assembly and leader of the Convention Démocratique et Sociale (Democratic and Social Convention – CDS); Seyni Oumarou; Mamadou Tandja, flag bearer of the discredited ruling party, the MNSD and Hama Amadou, a former prime minister under Tandja and leader of the newly created Movement Democratique Nigerien (Nigerien Democratic Movement – MDN).

The results of the first round of what many observers believed was a relatively peaceful presidential contest gave an idea of the political and electoral map of the country. The PNDS took the lead, with 36.06 per cent, followed by the MNSD, with 23.24 per cent, while the newly formed MDN won 19.82 per cent and the CSD 08.42 per cent.

The run-off poll pitted Tandja against Issoufou, whose PNDS was a member of the 'Strategic Alliance', a group of 17 which included Hama Amadou's MDN and Mahamane Ousmane's CDS. Members of the alliance agreed to stand individually in the first round of the presidential election with a commitment to collectively endorse one candidate for the run-off. The initial intention was to prevent Senyi Oumarou, Tandja's representative, from winning the presidential race.

Two problems threatened the survival of the alliance. Firstly, Hama Hamadou contemplated joining the former ruling party to elbow out Issoufou. Secondly, there were fears that the two candidates with strong ethnic bases (Zerma for Issoufou and Hausa for Oumarou) might polarise the run-off.

However, the run-off proved beyond any shadow of a doubt that Niger's electorate is capable of transcending ethnicity in its voting behaviour and patterns. Issoufou performed relatively well in his opponent's Hausa ethnic stronghold, while Oumarou received votes in Issoufou's Zerma ethnic base. In addition, Oumarou, who lost the election, immediately conceded defeat and recognised the newly-elected president, while promising to play the role of a constructive opposition leader.

Thus Niger underwent a fairly successful transition through an electoral process in which the opposition leader was elected president with 58 per cent of the national vote. This epochal political development suggests that the process of demilitarisation and democratisation through elections is under way. How sustainable this trend is, only time will tell, as democratic reversals are possible, especially in volatile situations such as pertain in Niger.

Guinea's presidential election, unlike that in Niger, was marked by controversy and tension. It was also marred by violence, thereby exposing the fragmentation of the country along ethnic lines. Controversies around voter registration, the neutrality of the electoral commission and, mainly, the threat by General Sekouba Konate, the transitional president, to resign after the first round revealed the complexity of Guinea's political landscape and ethnic-based electoral tapestry.

Allegations of corruption resulted in the indictment and sentencing of Ben Sekou Sylla, head of the Commission electorale nationale independente (CENI). Despite all these challenges, the 2010 elections – the first credible elections in Guinea since 1958 – were hailed as relatively free and fair despite allegations

of fraud made by two of the candidates, Sidya Touré (leader of the Union des Forces Republicain – United Republican Forces, UFR) and Lansana Kouyaté (Parti de l'Espoir et du Developpement National – Party of Hope and National Development, PEDN), among others.

CENI published provisional results after a 48-hour delay caused by technical issues and, indeed, the supreme court concluded that the electoral process had been tampered with in some areas and invalidated close to 900 000 votes. As expected, the three main contenders in the presidential election of 27 June – Cellou Dalein Diallo, Alpha Condé and Sidya Touré – led the pack with 39 per cent, 20 per cent and 15 per cent of the vote respectively. According to Guinea's electoral laws if no candidate secures an absolute majority (50%+1) it is necessary to hold a run-off.

The absence of an outright winner, therefore, meant that Diallo and Condé had to compete in a second round, held on 18 July. Condé's first-round results took many by surprise. While he was expected to be the frontrunner because of his long history in the opposition, surprisingly, Diallo took the lead. Diallo's early success could be explained by two factors. The first was that the ethnic group he hails from, the Peulh, voted purely on ethnic lines. The second factor is the political harassment to which Diallo was subjected during the reign of Dadis Camara; harassment that may have endeared him to Guineans. His fortunes would, however, be reversed in the run-off.

It took the electoral commission almost three months to organise the run-off election due to sporadic violence that broke out and to doubts about the impartiality of the chairman of the commission. When the supreme court finally announced the results Condé had won with 52.52 per cent of the vote. Diallo received 47.48 per cent.

The election increased the ethnic polarisation of Guinea. One of the surprises was Condé's victory despite the fact that he had received only 20 per cent of the vote in the first round. Diallo was confident of his lead, particularly when the third-placed candidate, Sydia Touré, joined him, bringing with him 15% of the electorate. This alliance, called 'Cellou Dalein Diallo President' also received the support of the former ruling parti, the Parti de l'unité et du progrès (PUP), led by Aboubacar Somparé.

But Condé's aim of forming what he called a 'rainbow coalition', bringing together 16 leaders and close to 90 small parties including François Lonsény Fall's Front uni pour la démocratie et le développement and Lansana Kouyaté's Parti de l'espoir pour le développement national, helped him win the run-off. Not only did some of Touré's supporters abstain from following their leader's choice to vote for Dalein, high profile figures such as the mayor of Kaloum, an important city, defected to support Alpha Condé. Therefore, it could be argued that Condé's

first-round results did not reflect the reality of his support base. In addition, within the 900 000 votes invalidated by the supreme court there were areas where Condé was the favourite. The run-off, therefore, was the opportunity to redefine campaign strategy, refine the alliance and expand to all regions in the country.

Condé's victory was not accidental. Indeed, many observers believed that Diallo had exhausted his electoral reservoir (predominantly Peulh) and could not move beyond his 46 per cent.

Cellou had assumed various ministerial positions during Lansana Conté's presidency and allegations of malpractice, perceived or real, compromised his chances of winning, a fact that nullified his argument of ethnic ostracism. While the electoral process in Guinea, like that in Niger, demonstrated some level of demilitarisation of politics it also contained a worrying ethnicisation. Evidence abounds on the African continent that the ethnicisation of politics and the politicisation of ethnicity is a deadly cocktail for democratisation (see Matlosa & Zounmenou 2011).

LESSONS OF EXPERIENCE

Beyond the outcome of the presidential elections Niger's transition process took place in the context of fairly minimal international supervision. Unlike in Côte d'Ivoire, where a permanent consultative committee chaired by an ECOWAS representative was set up to oversee the process; or Guinea, where the transition process was marred by widespread acts of violence, in Niger the country's leaders had the confidence of their regional counterparts in their ability to return the country to a democratic path. This, in itself, was a risk. The country's food crisis had been politicised by President Tandja, who, on many occasions, publicly denied that there was one. According to several UN agencies, about 5-million people have so far benefited from food aid while over 220 000 severely malnourished children under five are now out of danger (Parker 2009).

Guinea's post-coup transition was rescued by the assassination attempt on Captain Dadis Camara, with two major consequences. Firstly, the failed attempt revealed the profound internal contradictions within the junta, which was willing to perpetuate political violence as a strategy to remain in power. Camara's political ambitions and manoeuvres to hang onto power played a role in the massacre of opposition supporters. Secondly and most importantly, it undermined the junta's ability to manipulate the transition by providing an opportunity to the second in command, Sekouba Konate, to take up the leadership. General Sekouba himself underwent a surprising transformation from one of the most radical voices of the junta into a moderate figure whose neutral leadership was necessary for the transition.

While officially opinions about the coups diverged, most observers, including regional leaders, saw in them a blessing in disguise. It is generally observed that the outcomes of a post-coup transition are unpredictable, complicated by personal ambition and fraught with security threats, as illustrated by that in Mauritania, where, in 2008, a dismissed army chief of staff, Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, immediately staged a coup against a newly elected president.

The peaceful transitions in Niger (under Salou Djibo) and in Guinea (under Sekouba Konate) have certainly shown some sense of domestic responsibility in responding to political crises. They also pose a challenge to leaders within the West African region who continue to undermine regional as well as domestic efforts to bring about peace and democratic governance.

There is now consensus that the newly-elected presidents will have to focus on the socio-economic challenges facing their countries. In Niger, while the Touareg insurgency might seem dormant if not defeated, the new authorities will need to take coherent steps against the threat posed by the army to the democratisation process.

In Guinea the army was the most important pillar of Lansana Conté's regime, which initiated, the so-called 'pact of army unity'. President Conté's control over the army was firm and his generosity to high-ranking officers helped him to limit the risk of being deposed through a military coup. At critical moments Conté lived in the camp with the soldiers in order to keep his eyes on them. He constantly reminded them about the necessity to stay united against 'civilian threat' and loyal to him, in the hope that they would avoid prosecution and would be able to take over after his departure (ICG 2007).

Niger's army is building for itself a reputation as a rescuer of the democratisation process. With the coups in 1999 and 2010 to restore democracy the army positioned itself as the guardian of the political process. Hopefully, the consensus that was built around the transition to give democracy a fresh chance will prevail and efforts will be made to strengthen national institutions, depersonalise politics and demilitarise society.

However, what is uncertain is whether or not military coups d'état have been jettisoned for good in both countries through robust institutional mechanisms and transformative leadership. In order to make coups a thing of the past, far-reaching and wide-ranging security-sector reforms are key imperatives in both countries. Initiating security-sector reform is an urgent priority as the newly elected governments in both Niger and Guinea have already experienced one attempted coup each – in July 2011.

CONCLUSION

The coup d'état in Niger against President Mamadou Tandja, and the abrupt exit of the Guinean junta leader, Moussa Dadis Camara, after he was wounded, rekindled in both countries the prospects for a transition to political order based on democratic norms. Though both crises were the result of political actors' resistance to the demands of their people and of the regional economic community, ECOWAS, they provided a further opportunity for the military to justify their continued involvement in national politics.

Niger and Guinea do not seem to be out of the woods yet. The army has become so entrenched in politics over the decades that both countries would need to complete security-sector reforms in order to restore civilian authority over the armed forces. One interesting feature of electoral politics in the two countries has been the politicisation of ethnicity and ethnicisation of politics by the political elite, a deadly cocktail which has, over the years, resulted in electoral violence.

The crises in Niger and Guinea give both ECOWAS and the African Union a platform from which to address seriously two main issues. The first of these is the problem of the legality and legitimacy of leadership. In confronting this issue regional bodies should take into consideration the conditions under which power is acquired, kept, exercised and transferred.

Should the legitimacy of leaders stem from hurriedly drafted and opportunistic laws or fraudulent elections, even if they are judged peaceful by observers? There are numerous cases in which leaders derive the 'legality' of their actions from manipulated laws and their legitimacy from fraudulent elections or coerced citizens. The legality and legitimacy of the political process should stem from the outcomes of inclusive multistakeholder consultation and citizen participation in order to ensure the credibility of a country's leadership.

The second issue relates to the role of the military in the democratic transformation process. If countries emerging from conflict and political crises undertook an effective reform of their security sectors many difficulties would be avoided. The cases of Guinea and, more recently, Niger, display a disturbing pattern of the army as the guardian of the political reform process, with compromised and sometimes violent outcomes. This should serve as a warning to other African leaders who may want to cling to power against the will of their people. The ECOWAS Additional Protocol contains principles and rules governing the relationship of the security forces with government and their involvement in politics (ECOWAS 2001).

One may argue that the legal and political environment for the full implementation and enforcement of the Additional Protocol already exists now that it has been ratified by 10 of the 15 member states. ECOWAS and African

leaders need more than a declaration to reiterate their commitment to strengthen good governance through effective institution-building, respect for the rule of law and commitment to socio-economic development. The risk of instability is even greater if the army intervenes in a partisan manner during moments of political crisis.

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