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COUNTRY PROFILE: GHANA

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I. Introduction

Ghana lies in West Africa, flanked by Cote D'Ivoire on the West, Togo on the East, Burkina Faso on the North and the Atlantic Ocean on its' South. Ghana occupies an area of 238,537 square kilometres and has a population of 25,241,998 Ghana has a low topography with a tropical and savannah regions split into ten regions: Ashanti Region, Brong-Ahafo Region, Central Region Eastern Region, Greater Accra Region, Northern Region, Upper East Region, Upper West Region, Volta Region Western Region. The regions are furthermore divided into 170 districts, with the capital Accra in the Accra metropolitan district in Greater Accra Region. According to the 2000 consensus estimate Ghana's population consists of over 100 different ethnic groups, divided as follows: Akan 45.3%, Mole-Dagbon 15.2%, Ewe 11.7%, Ga-Dangme 7.3%, Guan 4%, Gurma 3.6%, Grusi 2.6%, Mande-Busanga 1%, other tribes 1.4%, other 7.8% (figures from CIA fact book).

II. Political History

The name Ghana originated from the native title given to the kings of the Ghana Empire during the middle ages. Then the land was called Wagadugu, which was positioned slightly North-West of modern Ghana along the borders of modern Mali and Mauritania. Ghana's present ethnic population is the result of southern migration of the Wagadugu people during the 16th century.

Ghana's first interaction with Europeans came in the 15th century, with Portuguese explorers, soon joined by the British, Dutch, Danes and the French, all keen for the excessive gold deposits located in the region. Forts were built along the coasts by the Europeans for the trade of slaves, gold and other goods, while they fought one another for control of the land.

By end of the 1800s, the British asserted the area as a crown protectorate, dubbing the area with a fitting name, the Gold Coast. Avid for more territory, the British pushed further inland, causing war with the Ashanti people–a local tribe that emerged dominant in earlier years through structured military invasions of neighbouring tribes and the trade of gold with other tribes and the Europeans. Many battles were fought that saw both sides losing but by the early 1900s the British managed to establish their dominance over the Ashanti. The Ashanti's forced surrender consequently led to other local tribes yielding to the quo, though little opposition still remained between the local chiefs and the British rule.

By August 1947 Ghana saw the birth of its first political party, the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) with the aim of self-government 'in the shortest possible time'. Under the leadership of Dr Danquah, the UGCC recruited Kwame Nkrumah; a young politically ambitious leftwing man as the party's full time organiser. In 1948, Nkrumah

along with other UGCC leaders was detained for sparking antigovernment protests. By the end of the year the British Governor of Accra, Sir Charles Arden-Clarke and his administration held talks with UGCC on a 'semi responsible government'. Hoping that the collaboration between the British and the 'intelligentsia' (as the UGCC leaders were locally called) would settle the growing unrest in the country The plan allowed a general election, a national assembly with an African majority and a new executive council consisting mostly of African ministers with the authority over internal affairs. However British retained control of military force, foreign affairs and executive power.

Unsatisfied with the level of authority in June 1949, Nkrumah left the UGCC to form the Convention People's Party (CPP) demanding for immediate 'Self Government. Because of Nkrumah's persona and powerful way of addressing the local masses nationwide, the party soon had a large following. In 1950 CPP organised mass non-violent boycotts and strikes that ended up in a few violent outbursts, resulting in the arrest of Nkrumah and key members of his party. Nkrumah was sentenced to three years imprisonment for 3 charges of aggravating and inciting public disorder, a year for each charge.

In February 1951 at the time when the 1st elections were held in Gold Coast, Nkrumah registered in the electoral roll after realising prisoners serving a year sentence can register for elections. The CPP won a two third majority of the 104 with Nkrumah winning a seat, leaving the Governor no choice but to release Nkrumah from prison after serving 14 months. The Governor thereafter held talks with Nkrumah, which concluded in assigning Nkrumah as the prime minister.

During his first few years as prime minister, Nkrumah worked on removing the traditional leaders in the legislature as he saw them as agent of colonial rule used by the British to maintain control. Feeling that Nkrumah and the CPP were undermining the traditional authority and to protect the interest of the Ashanti people, a new party emerged called the National Liberation Movement (NLM) criticizing the government for being corrupt and authoritarian.

Testing Nkrumah's support before setting a date for the Gold Coast's independence, the British set another election July 1956. The CPP won 57% of the votes; inevitably the British announced the independence to take place on the 6th of March1957.

On 6th march 1957, Ghana became the 1st African state to attain its independence. After Ghana's independence Nkrumah set on modernising Ghana through an intensely ambitious infrastructure and industrialisation scheme. Millions of dollars of were spent on implementing the new plans. The early days of Nkrumah rule saw massive improvement in standards and infrastructural development including improvement in health, education and roads. However, Ghana's promising economy fell drastically with corruption and financial mismanagement. In 1964 Nkrumah, banned all political parties,

proclaimed himself president for life in an attempt to silence criticism and political opposition.

In 1966 a coup staged by Brigade, Emmanuel Kotoka overthrew Nkrumah and took over government while Nkrumah was on his way to Vietnam after receiving an invite from president Ho Chi Minh thereby forcing Nkrumah into exile in Guinea upon his return to Africa. The coup leaders dissolved the parliament, banned the CPP party, allowed the return of those in exile during Nkrumah's regime and proceeded to form a council of civil servants. In 1968, multiparty system was restored in Ghana.

A general election in 1969 saw Kofi Busia as head of the government. Expectations were high on Busia government to return Ghana into a prosperous country. However, progress could not match expectation and another military coup was staged in 1972 to remove him from office. Following no improvement in Ghana's economic and political instability, an unsuccessful coup was staged in May 1979, by flight lieutenant Jerry Rawlings. Rawlings and his officers were jailed shortly after. In June that same year another coup was staged, this time successful. Sympathetic to Rawlings and his fellow plotters, the coup stagers released them from jail.

The new administration has two years in power before flight Lt Rawlings overthrows the government and seizes control. Lt Rawlings successfully sees the rise of Ghana's economy. In 1992 Lt Rawlings is elected president and retains his position in 1996 by a 57% winning.

In December 2000, Lt Rawlings stands out of the general elections resulting in John Kufuor of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) as the new president of the republic. In 2004, John Kufuor was re-elected in the general elections making him the first civilian president in Ghana to be re-elected after finishing his first term.

In 2008 presidential elections were held and none of the 8 candidates received a majority of the votes, resulting in a runoff election between John Atta Mills (NDC) and Akufo Addo (NPP). This election resulted in John Atta Mills as the president by 50.23% of the votes. In July 2012, vice president John Dramani Mahama was sworn-in as president following the untimely death of John Atta Mills

III. Structure of Government

The main branches of government in Ghana include the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary:

a. The Executive

The executive branch is made up of (i) **the President** who is elected by popular vote for a four-year term, renewable once. He is also the head of government and Commander in chief. (ii) **the Vice President** is elected together with the president as a running mate. **(iii) Ministers** are chosen by the president with the consent of the parliament.

b. The Legislature

The legislature is unicameral (single chamber), comprising of 230 members, each member elected for a four year term. The Vice President, ministers and deputy ministers who are not members of parliament are permitted to participate in legislative affairs but cannot vote or hold an office in parliament.

c. The Judiciary

At the top of the Ghana's judicial system are the Supreme Court; High Court; Court of Appeal and ten regional tribunals established for each region. These courts are known as the 'superior courts', below are the Inferior courts and traditional courts. The inferior courts are Juvenile Courts and the \Magistrate Courts. The Traditional Courts deals solely with matters of chieftaincy. The Judicial system is headed by the Chief Justice, who is appointed by the President and approved by the parliament.

IV. Legal Framework for Elections

a. The Electoral System

A Presidential Candidate is declared president once the numbers of votes are more than 50%of the total legal votes. Run-off elections between the top two candidates are held within three weeks after the first election if no candidate receives more than 50% of the total vote. The Assembly is elected through a simple majority voting system (candidate with most votes is declared the winner) and members serve a 4 year term. Ghana is split into 230 constituencies, each with a single representative parliament member

b. The Legal Framework

The presidential election in Ghana is governed by several of laws, including; the Electoral Commission Act 1993 (451), which established the conditions and mandate of the Electoral Commission of Ghana, Laws of registration such as Articles 42 of Chapter 7 of the 1002 Constitution of Ghana that allows every qualified citizen to vote. The local government election Laws, which governs the creation of districts and their political representation; the Political Parties Act (574) of 2000, which sets out rules for founding, registering, operating and funding of political parties and the Presidential and

Parliamentary Elections Laws such as the Representation of the people Law 1992 (284), which give general provision for constituencies, nomination procedures. The poll, election petitions, election offences and legal proceedings. The Representation of the people amendment Act 2006 (699) that gives Ghanaian in Diaspora the right to vote

V. Election Management

a. The Electoral Commission of Ghana

The EC is the sole authority to prepare and conduct General Elections. The EC is composed of seven commissioners with a chairman, two deputy chairpersons and four members. Members of the EC are appointed by the president after due consultation with an advisory board. The EC is an independent body, with extended powers that allow it to regulate the activities of political parties.

The EC is divided into two bodies, each under the accountability of the deputy chairperson:

i) The Operations Divisions, which is furthermore divided into three departments: the Elections Department, the Training Department and the Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Department
ii) ii) The Finance and administration comprises the Human Resources and General Services Department, the Finance Department and the Information Technology Department.

b. The Ministry of Interior

The Interior ministry is generally responsible for ensuring Internal Security and Peaceful development within Ghana.

c. The role of the Judiciary

The Judiciary decides the policies of referendums, presidential and legislative elections and passes judgement on disputes that occur out of elections

VI. Voter Registration and Registration of Candidates

a. Voter Registration

The Electoral Commission of Ghana oversees the compilation of register of voters. An eligible voter is required to be 18 years or above and has citizenship. An eligible voter can choose someone to vote for him/her by proxy this is also applicable for a citizen that can show proof that s/he will absent from the country during the election period.

b. Registration of Candidates

Individuals can stand position of president through the following criteria: (a) must be a citizen of Ghana by birth (b) must not be less than 40 years in age; (c) is a registered voter (d) has paid all taxes or made arrangements acceptable to the right authority for the payment of taxes (e) must be an occupant in a constituency of which he can stand as a candidate for election to parliament or has lived there for a period of 5+ years out of the ten years immediately prior the election he stands.

c. Candidates for the Presidential Elections

Ghana's General Elections will be held of 7 December 2012. The following Candidates are contesting for the Office of the President; Hassan Ayariga of the People's National Party (PNC), Nana Akufo Addo, of the Progressive People's Party (NPP) and the recent elected flag bearer of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), John Dramani Mahama, following the sudden death of President John Atta Mills. Run-off elections will be held on the 28th December 2012 if necessary.

VII. Election Outcome

The conduct of 7 December Ghana General Election was adjudged free, fair, transparent and credible by most Observers group including the African Union Election Observation Mission. Eight Candidates from eight different parties contested for the Office of the President. The result of the Presidential Election is as follows:

Party	Candidate	Result
NDC	John Dramani Mahama	50.70%
NPP	Nana Akufo-Addo	47.74%
PPP	Papa Kwesi Nduom	0.59%
GCPP	Henry Herbert Lartey	0.35%
CPP	Abu Sakara Foster	0.18%
PNC	Hassan Ayariga	0.22%
IND	Jacob Osei Yeboah	0.14%
UFP	Kwasi Addai Odike	0.08%