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African Dynamics in a Multipolar World

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GHANAIAN DIASPORA AS EMERGING “GLOBAL MIDDLE CLASSES”: LINKING MIDDLE CLASS TO POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND STABILITY IN GHANA

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Short Abstract

Ghana, like many African countries has had its share of political instabilities in the aftermath of independence, in the late 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. But since the return to constitutional rule in 1992, Ghana has been noted as one of the stable countries within the sub-region and therefore a beacon of democracy for other African countries to emulate. This Political stability according to Svanikier, is due to the quality of its elites i.e. the highly educated lower and upper middle classes of the society, who seem to understand or have understood the need to maintain the status quo. The recent growth of the Ghanaian economy since 2011 (the highest 14% in 2011), made it one of the fastest growing economy in the sub-region. This growth has, however, in the past two years attracted more foreign investors and also attracted the return of highly qualified Ghanaians from the diaspora back to the country. The current economic boom has benefited some social classes and created new social categories, among those are the returned Ghanaians from the diaspora

Long Abstract

Paul Nugent also notes that, the current political stability in Ghana is partly attributed to the educated elites pertaining from a good educational system that the country has had before and after independence¹. These educated elites were the product of the education system in Ghana and the return of educated Ghanaian elites from the diaspora. Leading figures during the fight for independence all emerged from the educated class of Ghanaian elites, who returned from the diaspora with personalities such as Kwame Nkrumah, Kofi Abrefa Busia, Hilla Liman and William Ofori Atta². These historic and pioneered educated middle class and professionals elites were essentially limited to the political and administrative class, in other words those working closely with the state. Aside from this educated elites or educated middle class, there was an already established and emerging middle classes pertaining from local businessmen and women, traders and larger scale farmers within the cocoa industry³. The current political stability in Ghana has seen an increasing return of qualified and skilled Ghanaians from the diaspora who fled the country during the turbulent years of political instability. Some of these elites while in exile abroad up-graded their skills through studying to prepare their return back home to occupy influential post which in turn enables them to become part of the ruling elites .

This article explores the identification of who these stakeholders (the lower and upper middle class) are? Are they locally bred, or are they from the diaspora? What classify them as lower or upper middle class? And how does their interest, be it economic or political, relate to maintaining Ghana's political stability or democratic credentials? This paper will also make

¹ Nugent P (1995) Big Men, Small Boys and politics in Ghana, New York Print

² Clignet and Foster : Potential elites in Ghana and Ivory Coast a Preliminary Comparison, November 1964, p.349-362, American Journal of Sociology

³ Luckham R, Gymah-Boadi, E. Ahazie W et Boateng N , (2005) Middle Class and their role in National Development, CDD/ODI Policy Brief No. 3, November 2005

vital reference to the role the Ghanaian diaspora plays in terms of the establishment of these new social categories of “Global middle classes” and their political interest. Does the Ghanaian global middle class plays a role in maintaining political stability in Ghana. It traces the return of the diaspora as “global middle class” who dominate the political, and economic scene in Ghana, through the economic, educational and social capitals which puts them in a different league and therefore enables them to play a pivotal role within Ghanaian politics. Drawing on data collected between March and September 2012 where 50 individuals were interviewed from different social backgrounds living in Accra to gauge who falls in this social category and their role in maintaining political stability that Ghana is well known for now.

Keywords: Ghana middle class, diaspora political stability and participation .

Ghana, like many African countries has had its share of political instabilities in the aftermath of independence, in the late 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Since the return to constitutional rule in 1992, Ghana has been noted as one of the stable countries within the sub-region and a beacon of democracy for other African countries to emulate.

Paul Nugent notes that, the current political stability could be attributed to the educated elites pertaining from a good educational system that the country has had before and after independence⁴. These educated elites were the product of the education system in Ghana and the return of educated Ghanaian elites from the diaspora who studied in countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States. Leading figures during the fight for independence all emerged from the educated Ghanaian elites who returned from the diaspora with figures such as Kwame Nkrumah, Kofi Abrefa Busia, Hilla Liman and William Ofori Atta⁵.

These historic and pioneer middle classes, educated elites and professionals were essentially limited to the political and administrative class, in other words those working closely with the state. Aside from this educated elites or educated middle class, there was an already established and emerging middle classes pertaining from local businessmen and women, traders and larger scale farmers within the cocoa industry⁶.

The multiple coup d'états that the country witnessed in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s resulted in a massive exude of these highly educated and skilled professionals to leave the country. Many of those who left during these turbulent years settled in neighboring countries such as Nigeria, Sierra Leon and Liberia, these were the highly educated and professionals. The less educated migrants on the other settled in Côte d'Ivoire, Togo Senegal and other francophone

⁴ Nugent P (1995) *Big Men, Small Boys and politics in Ghana*, New York Print

⁵ Clignet and Foster : *Potential elites in Ghana and Ivory Coast a Preliminary Comparison*, November 1964, p.349-362, *American Journal of Sociology*

⁶ Luckham R, Gymah-Boadi, E. Ahazie W et Boateng N , (2005) *Middle Class and their role in National Development*, CDD/ODI Policy Brief No. 3, November 2005

countries within the sub-region. According to the constitutional review committee report in 2011, there is an estimate of 12.5 million Ghanaians living abroad, 1 million Ghanaians living in Côte d’Ivoire, 1 million in Burkina Faso⁷. These figures however show the importance of migration by Ghanaians during the turbulent years of political instability. In recent years, these exhaled professional and unprofessional Ghanaians from the diaspora are returning to take their place within the Ghanaian society becoming par the “Global Middle Class”⁸.

Theoretical and methodological framework

Literature on civil war and political instability in Africa has long been dominated by theories on the impact of natural resource abundance. Dismissing grievances as a driver of civil war, such theories focused either on the opportunities associated with lootable resource wealth (Collier and Hoeffler 2004) or on the political pathologies experienced by reinter states (Fearon and Laitin 2003).

As still influential, the ‘resource curse’ approach has now been significantly challenged for its methodological shortcomings (Nathan 2003; Cramer 2006) and its striking empirical inconclusiveness (Lindemann 2008). Even more importantly, two competing theoretical approaches have rehabilitated the role of grievances as a determinant of political instability.

The first approach relates violent conflict to the existence of inter-group inequalities. Taking issue with research on inter-personal inequality, Frances Stewart (2000: 246) argues that violent conflict is not ‘exclusively a matter of individuals randomly committing violence against others’. Instead, civil wars normally occur when ‘culturally defined groups’ mobilize

⁷ Constitutional Review Committee report 2011, presentation by Dr. Raymond Attuguba at the Colloquium of the Diaspora Engagement Project, Accra 22-24 August 2012

⁸ Van Hear, N. 1998. *New Diasporas: The Mass Exodus, Dispersal and Regrouping of Migrant Communities*. London, UCL Press.

against each other (e.g. ethnic, religious, regional or class groupings). It is suggested that ‘horizontal inequalities’ – inter-group inequalities in relation to political participation, economic assets and social services – provide the material basis for such violent group conflicts.

The focus on ‘horizontal inequalities’ is important in that it shifts attention to discriminatory social relationships, which seemed to have been almost forgotten about in the civil war literature. Yet, a few exceptions notwithstanding (Langer 2005, 2007), the approach is limited by the fact that it is primarily focused on horizontal inequalities at the mass level and thereby neglects inequalities at the levels of elites. This is problematic because the latter are – given the key role that leaders play in the construction and mobilization of groups – arguably more conducive to violent conflict. Moreover, it may well be that mass-level horizontal inequalities are at least partially endogenous to horizontal inequalities at the elite level. As leaders with access to positions of state power will tend to redistribute to their ‘own’ social groups, there is reason to assume that horizontal inequality at the ‘elite level’ will produce horizontal inequalities at the mass level. What is therefore warranted to complement and further develop? Stewart’s approach is a more systematic consideration of inclusive versus exclusionary elite politics.

The latter take centre stage in a second approach put forward by Andreas Wimmer and colleagues (Wimmer et al 2009; Cederman et al. 2010). Wimmer et al. propose to focus on the state as an organization that is captured to different degrees by representatives of particular ethnic groups whereby civil wars become the result of competing ethno-nationalist claims to state power. This hypothesis is tested based on the new Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) dataset, which identifies all politically relevant ethnic groups around the world and measures access to executive-level state power for members of these ethnic categories in all years from 1946 to

2005. The finding is that exclusion and competition along ethnic lines are strongly and robustly associated with civil war, with rebellions in the name of excluded ethnic groups being much more likely than violent conflict in the name of included groups.

The EPR approach has undoubtedly produced a quantum leap in the study of the relationship between group grievances and civil war. Nonetheless, it exhibits a number of problems. First, the EPR dataset relies solely on expert estimates of ethnic inclusiveness. This raises some doubts about the accuracy of the EPR data. Second, Wimmer et al. do not systematically distinguish between different forms of state power (political, economic, military, territorial), which ignores the possibility that exclusion in one sphere of state power may be offset by inclusion in another. Third, the EPR dataset provides information on absolute access to state power irrespective of a group’s demographic under or over-representation. This is problematic in that the size of an excluded group can be expected to be an important factor in explaining civil war. Fourth, due to the quantitative nature of the project, Wimmer et al. cannot distinguish between degrees of representativeness of leaders who claim to speak for an ethnic group. Finally, it is important to keep in mind that ethnicity is only one source of *social* fragmentation along with religious, regional or class cleavages.

Accordingly, there is a need to further explore the EPR hypothesis from a broader political organization perspective. In this paper I therefore propose an alternative argument that centres on the notion of the ‘elite bargain’, which was developed at the Crisis States Research Centre (CSRC). Drawing on the work by Mushtaq Khan (2000a, b) and Douglas North et al. (2009), the CSRC defines the elite bargain as the ‘distribution of rights and entitlements’ across groups and classes in society, on which any state is based (DiJohn and Putzel 2009). The elite bargain is

typically organized through political parties, which have historically been the most effective types of political organization (Duverger 1959).

Lindemann (2010) propose that elite bargains can be captured in two ideal types that describe the extent to which ruling political parties have used the distribution of access to positions of state power to accommodate the dominant cleavages in society (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). In a first group of countries, the ruling political party managed to forge and maintain an *inclusive* elite bargain by providing contending social groups with balanced access to positions of state power. Such inclusive elite bargains, which roughly correspond to what Africanist political scientists have called the ‘fusion of elites’ (Bayart 1981; Lonsdale 1981; Boone 1994), successfully accommodate the dominant social cleavages. In a second group of countries, by contrast, political parties have established *exclusionary* elite bargains by providing biased access to positions of state power. Such exclusionary elite bargains privilege certain social groups at the expense of others and therefore fail to accommodate the dominant social cleavages.

How does this new or old social categorization in the inclusiveness of the elite bargain helps to interpret the political stability that Ghana since the 1990s?

I hypothesize that inclusive elite bargains accommodate dominant social cleavages, stabilize the inter-group competition over the control of state power and thereby favor trajectories of political violence avoidance. As competing social groups enjoy inclusive access to positions of political, military and economic power, their leadership does not have an immediate incentive to mobilize protest or even violence against the state. States underlying an inclusive elite bargain are therefore likely to enjoy relatively secure and stable hegemony as a collective system. Exclusionary elite bargains on the other hand, by contrast, fail to accommodate dominant social cleavages, intensify inter-group struggles over the distribution of state power and

ultimately favour trajectories of civil war onset. As certain groups enjoy privileged access to positions of political, military and economic power, the excluded leaders will have an immediate incentive to mobilize protest and violence against the state. Seen from this perspective, the onset of political violence must be understood as resulting from the inability and/or unwillingness of ruling political parties to achieve sufficient degrees of elite accommodation.

Who are the vanguard of this political stability and why is it important that political stability prevails against all odds and to who’s advantage? While there are abundant literature on South African Middle Class and its elites, there is a near absent of literature on Ghanaian middle class and politics. The only exception in this regard is the work by Professor Gyimah-Boadi et al, (2005) “The middle class and their role in National Development” which stress the role the “middle class” has played and continues to play in national development through their involvement in politics, in business and being the catalyst for the democratic process in Ghana. In light of these shortcomings, I however, hypothesize, that Ghana’s political stability since the early 1990s has been the willingness of its economic, political, cultural and traditional middle class and elite “inclusive elite bargain” strategy to ensure political alternance between the main two political parties prevails . In order to ascertain these hypotheses, I will start by demonstrating the historical legacy that Ghana education system being a stepping stone to social mobility. In a next step, I will show Ghana’s political stability the ability of its elites forging inclusive elite bargain signing accord and declaration before and post election periods to represented by all . Afterwards, I will argue that maintenance of political stability can be directly related to these “elite bargain” since the early 1990s. I conclude with brief reflections on competing explanations and the prospects for future peace and stability.

My hypothesis can be summarized as follows:

A country’s vulnerability to political instability is determined by the inclusiveness of its elite bargain. While inclusive elite bargains facilitate political violence avoidance, exclusionary elite bargains favour the onset of political violence.

Why study Ghana to test my hypothesis? In recent years, literature on political violence has focused on African countries claiming to be democratic with multi-party elections yet some of these countries are plugged into political violence. Whereas Ghana embraced, the democratic at the same period as most those countries, yet has managed to sustain itself as model of multi-party alternance and political stability.

My analysis is based on a comprehensive set of original data on the inter-group distribution of political, military and economic posts, which was put together during recent fieldwork in Ghana between February and October 2012. To collect the data, I first tried to compile lists of all professional orientations of individuals whom I deem as middle classes or global middle categories since independence to date. In a second step, I identified the group affiliation(s) of every single individual in different professional categories. As this information is not written anywhere, I had to rely on very patient help from many Ghanaian, including former and current politicians, long-standing civil servants, former army personnel and academics. In the great majority of cases, this produced highly congruent answers, which makes me confident that my data include only marginal errors. My dataset is complemented by evidence from a total of 50 semi-structured interviews with a great variety of stakeholders.

In order to further test my hypothesis; a field work was carried out in Accra in 2012 to gage out who these middle classes are? The role they play within the Ghanaian political landscape? Does having an economic, political, cultural and social capital enable the middle class to transfer their social status from one generation to the other?

The ambiguity of defining middle class and elites: susceptible to multiple interpretations?

Many sociologists such as Pierre Bourdieu argue that a person’s social class has three dimensions: economic, social, and cultural⁹. To measure an individual’s ‘resources’ in each of these dimensions, sociologists look not only at economic capital (income, savings, house value, etc.), but also social capital (the number, and also the status of people one knows), and cultural capital (the extent and nature of cultural interests and activities).

Defining middle classes take different shapes and forms, as there is no one linear parameter to define middle class in general and to try to define an African middle classes makes it even more so challenging a task. For Easterly (2000) and Birdsall, Graham and Pettinato (2000) the term middle class can be defined in relative or absolute terms, to take a relativist approach, middle class can be define as those between the 20th and 80th percentile of the consumption distribution and between 0.75 and 1.25 times median per capita income respectively. Bhalla (2009) on the other hand takes an absolute approach, defining middle class as those with annual incomes over USD3900 in purchasing power parity terms. Banerjee and Duflo (2007) use two alternative absolute measures—those with daily per capita expenditures between USD2 to USD4 and those with daily per capita expenditures between USD6 and USD10. Ravallion (2009) takes a hybrid approach, in defining a “*developing world middle class*” as having one range of incomes (between the median poverty line of countries in the developing world and that of the USA) and a “*Western world middle class*” (above the US poverty line).

Birdsall proposes a different view of defining African Middle Classes:

⁹ Bourdieu on Status, Class and Culture <http://home.mira.net/~andy/works/bourdieu-review.htm>

I define middle class in the developing world to include people at or above the equivalent of \$10 day in 2005, and at or below the 95th percentile of the income distribution in their own country. This definition implies some absolute and global threshold (\$10 day) below which people are too poor to be middle class in any society in today's globally integrated economy, and some relative and local threshold (the 95th percentile of income/consumption) above which people are at least in their own society — rich . Below I sometimes refer to the group as the politically potent or independent middle class to distinguish it from other definitions and to emphasize the logic behind this income/consumption definition”. Meyer on the other hand defines “ Global Middle as ten dollars is the line to define the global middle class," "We think it's useful because at \$10 you have economic security and lack of exposure to global economic shocks. You're not vulnerable of falling back into poverty." Meyer continues “ "There's no consensus, in all of this mess of confused definitions, we like to think of not defining it, but identification. We think it matters more to think of concept of middle class—is it a Western idea of income security, not being vulnerable to economic shocks, general economic stability and comfort to engage in society and politics?”¹⁰

For the African Development Bank, Middle Class in Africa can be define as those with household income of \$400 - \$600 a month¹¹ These different definitions indicates the complexities involved in having one definition that fits for all in regards to defining African Middle class.

Defining Middle classes in Ghana demands a focus on a bigger picture, which regroups different sociological and economic realities and different individual trajectories: educated middle class, economic middle class, and cultural middle class. Within these classes there are sub groups : the returning migrant from the diaspora, an entrepreneur within the formal and informal economy, the educated elites, the educated professionals and the traditional rulers all these social categories forms the emerging middle class in Ghana .

¹⁰ Christian Meyer and Nancy Birdsall “ Defining Global middle class”
<http://www.nationalreview.com/agenda/301556/nancy-birdsall-and-christian-meyer-defining-global-middle-class-reihan-salam>

¹¹ Mthuli Ncube, Abebe Shimeles October 2012 , The making of the middle class in Africa
<http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Knowledge/>

Elitism on the other hand, may be defined as persons who, by virtue of their strategic locations in large or otherwise pivotal organizations and movements, are able to affect political outcomes regularly and substantially¹². Put differently, elites are persons with the organized capacity to make real political trouble without being promptly repressed. They consist not only of prestigious and “established” leaders – top politicians, important businessmen, high-level civil servants, senior military officers – but also, in varying degrees in different societies, relatively transitory and less individually known leaders of mass organizations such as trade unions, important voluntary associations, and politically consequential mass movements. “Counter-elites” are subsumed by this definition because they clearly have the organized capacity, although perhaps mainly through negation, to affect political outcomes regularly and substantially.

It is important to stress that this is a limited and specifically political definition of elites. It is restricted to persons who are at the top of the pyramid or pyramids of political, economic, and social power (Putnam, 1976, 14). It does not consider all those in a society who enjoy high occupational, educational, or cultural statuses to be elites in a political sense. As defined, national political elites are not large in number.

I/ History of Ghana’s Middle Classes: experience of expatriation and new economic growth

The history of Ghana’s middle classes dates from early twentieth century, where there existed a nascent middle class, characterized by similarities of occupation, lifestyle and status, endowed with a certain capacity for collective action. Their emergence was the product

¹² Mosac theory on elites : http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Mosca,_Gaetano

of three intersecting but at times competing processes: (i) the incorporation of Ghana into the world economy from the late 19th century; (ii) the expansion of the education system, starting with the introduction of mission schools in the 19th century; (iii) the expansion of state employment, especially in the immediate post-independence era ¹³. These intersections of past events have contributed to the emergence of a new form middle and “global middle class”.

a) Ghana’s Global Middle Class monopolized by the return of the diaspora

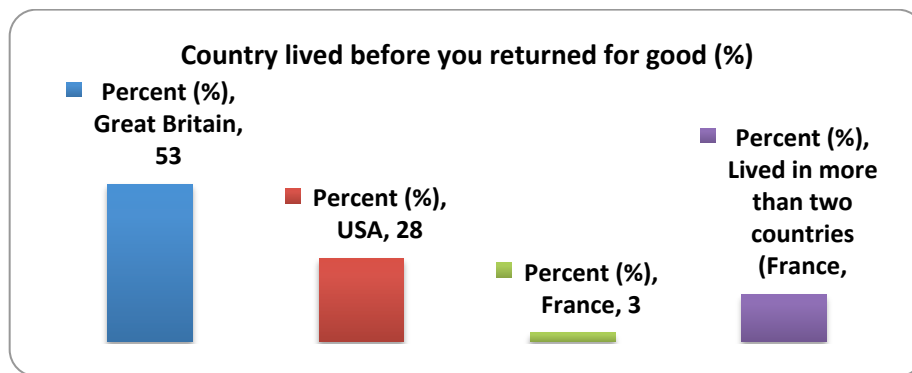


Figure 1: Countries lived in before returning to Ghana for good.

Source: Field work results : Political participation of the Ghanaian diaspora in Accra and in London, June 2012, Accra

The above graph shows an increasing number of Ghanaians residing in the UK tend to be the largest group to return home for good with 53% compared to 28% from the US, 16% from other western countries and only 3% from France indicated that they returned home for Good In the past twelve years, there has been an increasing number of Ghanaians in the diaspora returning to Ghana. The return of these Ghanaian diaspora has been largely attributed to the continued economic growth and political stability which has led to the massive influx Ghanaian

¹³ Luckham R, Gymah-Boadi EA, Azizie W et Boateng N , (2005) Middle Class and their role in National Development, CDD/ODI Policy Brief No. 3, November 2005

expatriates who are returning home to capitalize on the opportunities now available. The current mayor of Accra is fine example of these highly educated Ghanaian elites returning from the diaspora to occupy political office, after living in the US for over 30 years. Aside from engaging politics these return diaspora or “global middle class” are also an economic force as some of them are the driving force behind the current surge in “start-ups” in Ghana who tend to be self employed when they have settled back in Ghana by setting-up their own companies as the chart below shows that 41% are self-employed, 30% are teacher, 19% University lecturers and the remaining 12% are lawyers, businessmen, traders and doctors. Their professional experiences gained from working outside of Ghana for some years tend to give them a lead way within the job market. This example illustrates human capital that Ghana benefits from its returned diaspora.

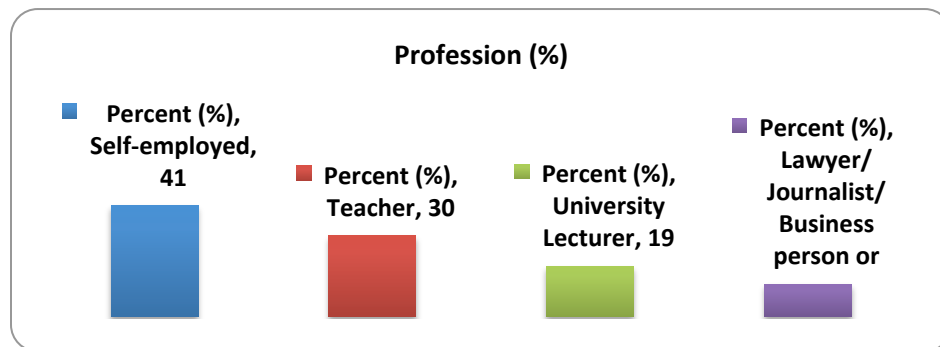


Figure 2: Professions of returned Ghanaians from diaspora .

Source : Field work results : Political participation of the Ghanaian diaspora in Accra and in London, June 2012, Accra

The benefits of these returnees could be considerable as they bring back not just skills and capital, but also transformed attitudes to established social hierarchies of status, age and gender, to work and to enterprise (Robinson 2004).

The African Development Bank’s Economic forecast Ghana’s indicates growth for 2012 was 8% and projected growth for 2013 to be 8.7%¹⁴. These economic growths in the coming years will fuel the growth of its own middle class – young professionals with families and desires for the latest technology and mod-cons. This emerging social class with a high purchasing power will however, drive a niche in the market by the creation of a whole range of businesses to provide the services and products needed to support it – and so the cycle continues¹⁵

Although Ghana is now benefiting from the return of it’s diaspora in recent years. This has not always been the case. Politically some exiled Ghanaian from the diaspora could not return due to the military rule and during the early stages of the return to constitutional rule, most exiled Ghanaians who left during the Rawlings era still feared for their lives by returning¹⁶. Economically, the job market was not conducive for a lot of them to return as the country was going through economic reforms the Structure Adjustment Program (SAP), which meant job cuts within the public sector, devaluation of the cedis¹⁷ Those who were brave to return home at that time often run into entrenched social attitudes and bureaucratic blockages, and all the other factors that make the business environment less than conducive. Returnees who stay in Ghana and succeed provide ample anecdotal evidence of their frustrations, including the so-called PHD (pull him/her down) syndrome, which ensures that habits and disciplines acquired abroad are not easily practiced, let alone transferred to others (Boateng 2002; Robinson 2004).

¹⁴ African Development Bank, Ghana Economic Outlook <http://www.afdb.org/en/countries/west-africa/ghana/ghana-economic-outlook/>

¹⁵ See, Africa’s rising star : <http://dasibatamale.wordpress.com/tag/ghanas-middle-class/>

¹⁶ Nugent Paul, Big Man small Boys politics ...

¹⁷ <http://www.rrojasatabank.info/ghana1.htm>

To illustrate the different era of political and economic environment from the 1990s to the 2000s which has facilitated the returned of Ghanaians from the diaspora is the example of a returned Ghanaian expatriate from London after 20 years of living in England. A banker by profession and his wife who is a businesswoman points out eloquently that: he considers himself to part of this new emerging “Global middle classes” pertaining from returned Ghanaian from the diaspora: *"I do feel part of a bubble,". "When I think how much it costs to pay our driver or our nanny, I know that we can go to lunch or dinner and spend the same in one night as they earn together for the month. That does make me feel bad"*¹⁸. It is interesting to note that, with a professional status as Banker which does not necessarily translates into automatically being classified as middle class in the UK, in Ghana however, with his professional status as returned a diaspora with and qualified Banker automatically parachutes his social status to an upper middle class or a global middle class category.

The professional trajectories of both the Mayor of Accra and the banker from the UK indicates that to be classified as a “global middle” from the diaspora high professional and educated level are imperative in becoming a member of this social class .

Being considered as middle class in Ghana is derived from numerous classification to borrow from Bourdieu’s social classification (Economic, Social and Cultural capital), one can be considered middle class through education, through economic means, and through traditional standard and hierarchy. However, not all returned diaspora fit into these different categories of middle classes in Ghana, nevertheless it must be noted that those who tend to, mainly fall into the educated middle classes category.

¹⁸ Ghana’s expatriates returned home to seize opportunities from economic boom: www.guardian.co.uk <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/dec/19/ghana-expatriates-return-home-economy>, the guardian 19 Decembre 2012.

Characteristics of Middle Class in Ghana in 2012

In contrast to studies on Moroccan, Egyptian and Saudi Arabian Middle classes, belonging to these social categories are mainly associated to the entrepreneur and business classes. In Ghana however, being middle Class is not only limited to the business and entrepreneur classes. The characteristics of being a middle class in Ghana constitute of having an economic, educational, political, cultural and traditional capitals. These capitals can be translated into professional status, economic status, cultural and traditional status. The below pie chart indicates 84.6% of those interviewed consider themselves middle classes, among the 84.6% who considered themselves middle class, exists these different social elements and capitals mentioned earlier on, : level of education, economic status and traditional status. Within these social categories there are also those within the informal markets who do not have higher education qualification yet identify themselves within these social categories. 13.5% answered to not being middle class and 1.9% gave no answer. This pie Chart however, illustrates the ease at which Ghanaians feel in labeling themselves middle class even when their economic, education and cultural status does not necessarily permit them to be part of the 84.6% of our sample and also those with higher income, who clearly based on their household income can be considered to be part of the “ bourgeoisie” still prefer to be considered middle class and not “ part of the Ghanaian “bourgeoisie” which makes it quite ambiguous in personal classification in social categories .

Classification of being Middle Class in percentage (%)

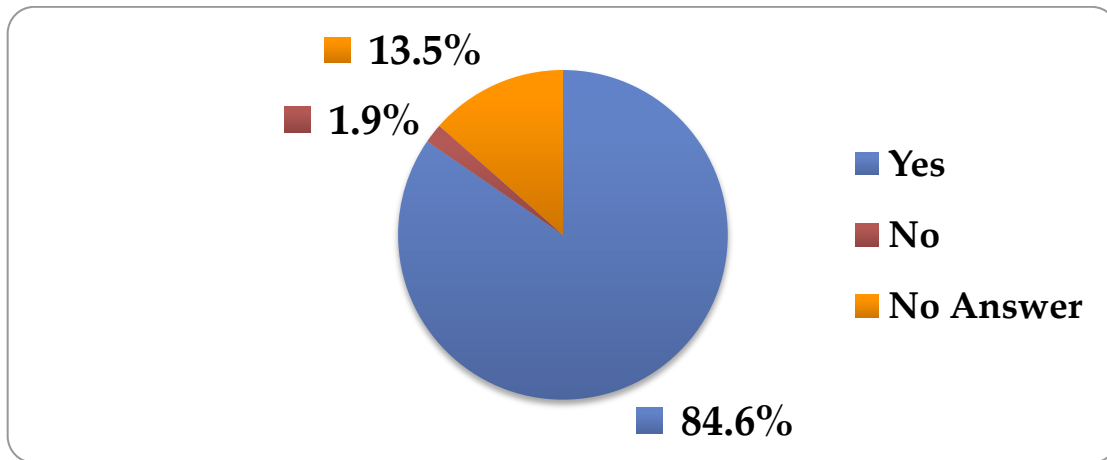


Figure 3: Classification of being Middle Classes

Source: Field Work July 2012: Middle Classes in Africa, case study on Ghana.

i) Who they are?

Ghanaian middle classes can be identified in these three typologies: (i) educated middle classes: doctors, lawyer, university lecturers, architect (ii) economic middle classes businessmen not necessarily educated but their financial status permits them to be classified middle classes, (iii) cultural middle classes: off-springs of first generations of educated middle classes, post-independent middle classes with established family names, the Nkrumahs, the Dankwah-Busias, the Akuffo-Addos, the Bawumias etc. these are established names within the Ghanaian society, who's children might not be highly educated or professionals to be considered middle classes, they might not have the financial influence to be considered middle classes, but their name and family connection put them in this category of middle classes, (Bourdieu's cultural capital) . As being the son or daughter of Nkrumah automatically classify you are middle class without have

to pass “the criteria test” of being considered middle classes¹⁹. Among these categories of middle classes in Ghana, the returned Ghanaians from the diaspora can be identified in these categories as they cut-across all these categories. Traditional rulers can also be situated within the cultural middle classes as they are considered middle class as result of their status within the traditional setting, just as the diapura traditional ruler can also cut-across the three typology of being middle classes.



Source : <http://www.ghanabar.org/>

ii) Where do they live?

These established middle or global middle classes, tend to live in “gated communities and residential areas of Accra and its suburbs with smaller life style and family set-ups. The “criteria” to live in such areas are not just limited to the educated middle classes but also: the economic middle classes, and cultural and traditional middle classes. By living the same area, they belong to the same social networks: parents either attended the same of the established schools in Ghana, such as Achimota, Mfantsipem High School, Prempeh College, Wesley Girls High School, then the University of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah university of Science and technology, University of Cape Coast and those having studied in Universities abroad. Who now

¹⁹ Field work interview with Kofi Bentil, May 20th 2013 Accra Ghana

can afford to send their children to some of the best schools in the country: Ghana International School, Lincoln community school, and thereafter to universities in Ghana and abroad. This social network or cultural capital that they acquire as a result of living in the same areas creates a professional competition and aspiration to have more than what their parents had. It must be noted that, not all the children of those living in these gated communities and residential areas end up having higher aspirations and succeeding as their parents, some have actually ended becoming delinquent and could not live up to the high expectations of their parents²⁰.



Source: Field work Middle Class in Africa, Ghana case studies June 2012: Gated Community in Cantoment, Accra

These gated communities are also areas where young professionals and the returned global middle class from the diaspora live notes Godwin Arku, assistant professor of geography at the University of Western Ontario, “ *the rise of Ghana's gated communities since the early 2000s and links much of the growth to the emergence of a well-paid professional class .Most of them*

²⁰ See Carola Lentz : Trajectories of elites in Northern Ghana

*are educated university graduates and some of them have been to school abroad, Their overall lifestyle is different and they have access to technology, cars, and houses.*²¹

Frank Gadzekpo, a resident of a “gated community” in Accra states:

*My family and I moved to Cantonment two years ago. We chose to buy a house in a gated community mainly because of security; It was also to have neighbors who were of like mind. What I mean by that is having neighbors who would take care of their house and gardens as a community. In a non-gated community, people do whatever they wish*²².

In other words living in a gated community is not only for the comfort and security, but also an area to establish and reinforce social networks and cultural capital. The vice president of Databank Group asserts:

*“In the past most people would opt to just renting a place, but this changing trend shows that there is a growing middle-income class in Ghana that wants to own a property. It has some cultural reflection as well. We used to be more communal, live with extended family, but the middle class is becoming more nuclear.”*²³.

In other words, the old belief that traditional extended families in Ghana are slowly becoming a thing of the past.

Brock Friesne of Starbow (local airline company) emphasis the purchasing power and life style of the middle classes by observing the passenger profile of his airline: « *“Our typical customer has a decent house, sends his kid to a decent school and drives a car or can afford a taxi to the airport,” “While this may not be the same type of middle class as Canada or Switzerland, there are a lot of those kinds of people now in Ghana”*. Although this observation is not representative for all the 84.6% who indicated that they consider themselves to be middle classes, there is nevertheless a pattern and a profiling of these passengers who can afford to fly on these local airlines. This observation however, indicates that to be considered middle class in

²¹ <http://af.reuters.com/article/ghanaNews/idAFL5E7MI20R20111129?pageNumber=3&virtualBrandChannel=0>

²² Fieldwork , Middle classes in Africa Project, the Ghanaian case study June 2012

²³ The Rise and Rise of Ghanaian Middle Class <http://www.thenewblackmagazine.com/view.aspx?index=3035>, Monday, December 10, 2012. Jin Lee

Ghana education level, tradition and culture status are not just the only prerequisite but financial status plays a major part in being considered within this social category. This empirical evidence are important in observing who falls within the middle classes segment of the Ghanaian society; however the lack quantitative data on the other hand makes it difficult to include other socio-economic profiles within this category.

Kofi Benti of Imani Ghana, (a local think-tank) argues that the African Development Banks figures on African middle classes in general are fragmented particularly the figures for the Ghanaian middle classes which highly underestimates the importance of the informal economy: *“When you fly domestically now, you see all sorts of passengers you would never expect to. There’s people who trade cattle, or sell clothes or hair from China. They fly because they have money, and it’s safer and more comfortable than the road”*²⁴

As Benti states, the lack of concrete and tangible data to quantify all these segments of the society as part of the emerging « Middle Classes » in Ghana, poses difficulties in having a larger view of who is or can be considered as middle class. He however, noticed the recent surge of this social category (the middle classes) in Ghana in the past 12 years, through the increase of people with higher purchasing power to match the higher cost of living in Accra²⁵.

The rapid growth of the Ghanaian economy Between 2000-2012 partly credited to the economic liberalization of the then Kufour administration and the discovery of oil in 2006 with commercial exploitation in 2010 was one of the catalyst of the rapid surge of Accra’s “

²⁴ Ghana’s modest Middle takes the skies, <http://www.ft.com> 28 Decembre 2012

²⁵ Field work interview with Kofi Benti, Accra may 20th 2013

nouveau riche” and middle classes with in Ghana .

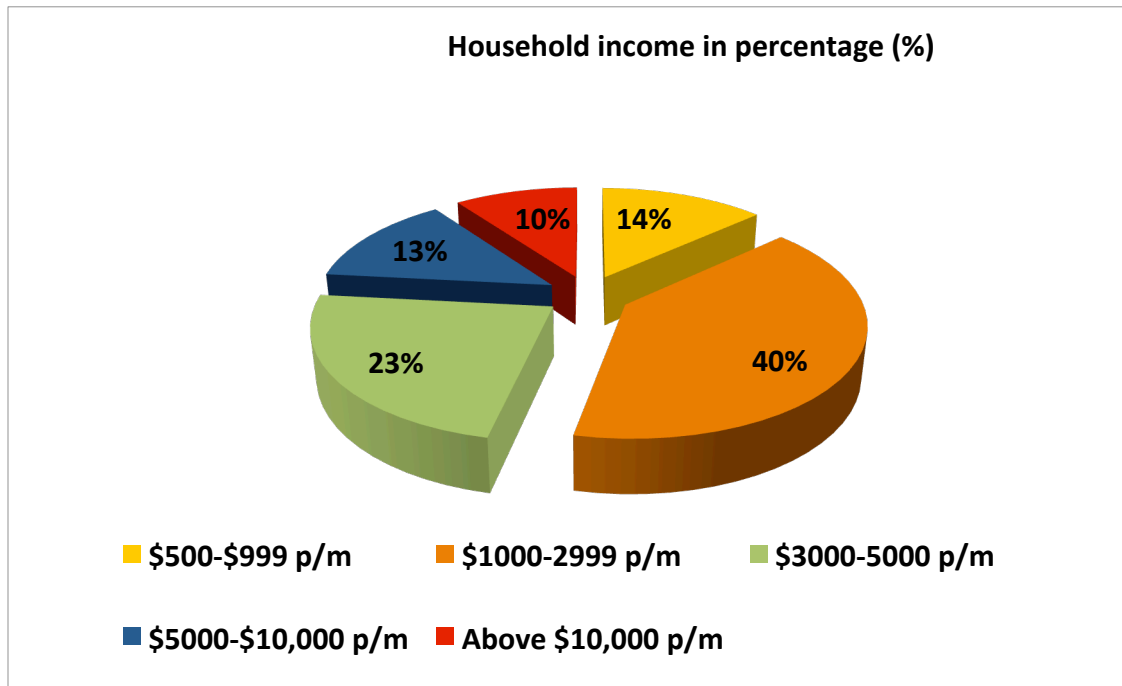


Figure 4: Household income in percentage

Source: Field work July 2012: Middle Classes in Africa project, case study on Ghana.

The pie chart above shows the breakdown of respondents household income: 10% of those interviewed indicated that they earned between \$10,000 per month, where as 13% earned between \$5000 - \$10,000 per month, 14% had a household income of \$500 – \$1000 per month, whiles 23% answered they earned \$3000 - \$5000 per month, and 40% indicated had a household income of \$1000 - \$3000 per month.

What this fieldwork findings illustrates is that the average middle class or “global middle class” household in Accra is situated within the brackets of the 40 % in other words those who earn \$1000 - \$ 3000 per month. However, with a small sample size, caution must be applied, as the findings might not be transferable to all the respondents who indicated they consider

themselves to be middle class. These monthly income of \$2000 - \$3000 per month are quite high to classify anyone of being middle in Ghana, therefore this category can be considered more of upper or a global middle class category. Contrary to this findings, the African Development Bank's studies on middle class in Africa on the other hand shows that the average monthly household income of middle class in Africa ranges between \$400 - \$600 per month, these figures might be realistic on a short term, but on a long term basis these segments of household income of \$400 - \$600 are not sustainable as in case of any external shock such as political or economic crisis these segments or the “ floating class” are the first to feel the impact of the shock and might fall back into the poverty segments again, as they earn just enough to escape the poverty line and do not have saving or investments and can easily fall back to in precarity during an uncertain event. These findings and figures for both the African Development Bank and this fieldwork findings on middle classes in Ghana indicates the complexity of using household income to measure and define an African middle class as the perimeter for being middle class in one country might differ from the other.

From the pie chart below in figure 5, it is apparent that when interviewed on financial contribution towards family members, 76% of our sample answered yes to having financial obligation towards family, whereas, 26% answered no to this question. This however illustrates regardless of the household income being high, average or low, there is this need to support family network, which could in turn either regress “ your chances of climbing the social ladder” asserts Nansata Yakubu²⁶ .

²⁶ Field work interview with Nansata Yakubu , September 2011

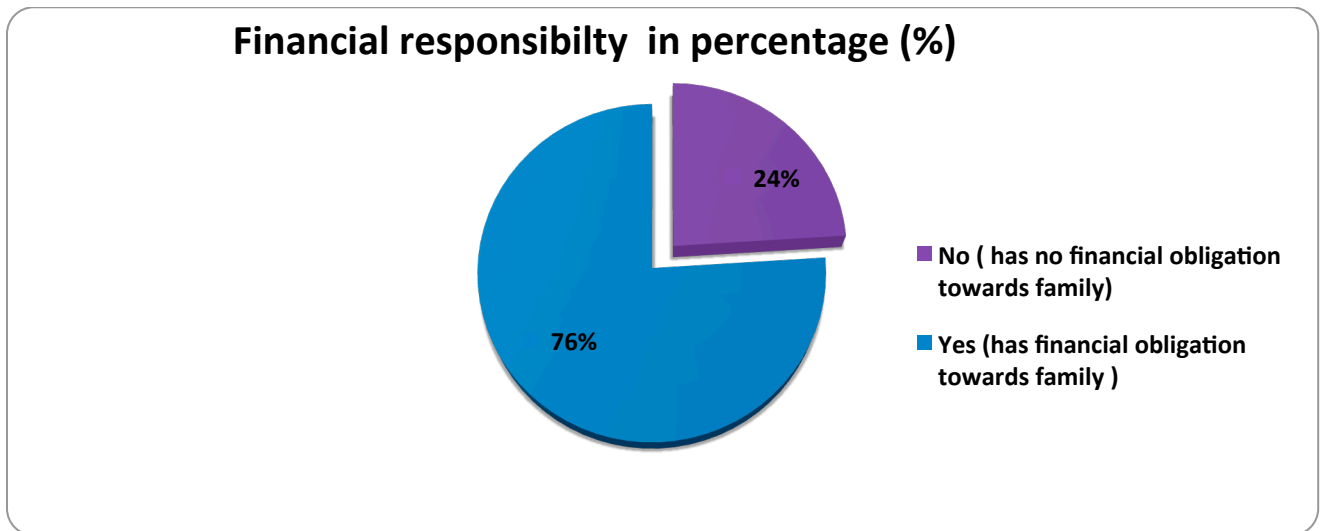


Figure 5: Financial responsibility

1= (24%) No (has no financial obligation towards family)

2= (76%) Yes (has financial obligation towards family)

Source: Fieldwork findings, Accra July 2012: Middle class in Africa project, case study on Ghana

The below chart shows in figure 6 shows classification of middle class by age percentage, 25% either 36 to 42 are the highest age group to indicate they are middle classes, 15% for both the age brackets of 30 to 54 years indicated that they are middle class, 13% for under 30 years also indicated they are middle classes, 9% of the age group of 42 to 48 years as oppose to 5% of the age group 55years plus. What is interesting in this chart is that, the middle class age group is relatively young and active in Ghana contrary to the classic notion of middle class to be middle aged men and women.

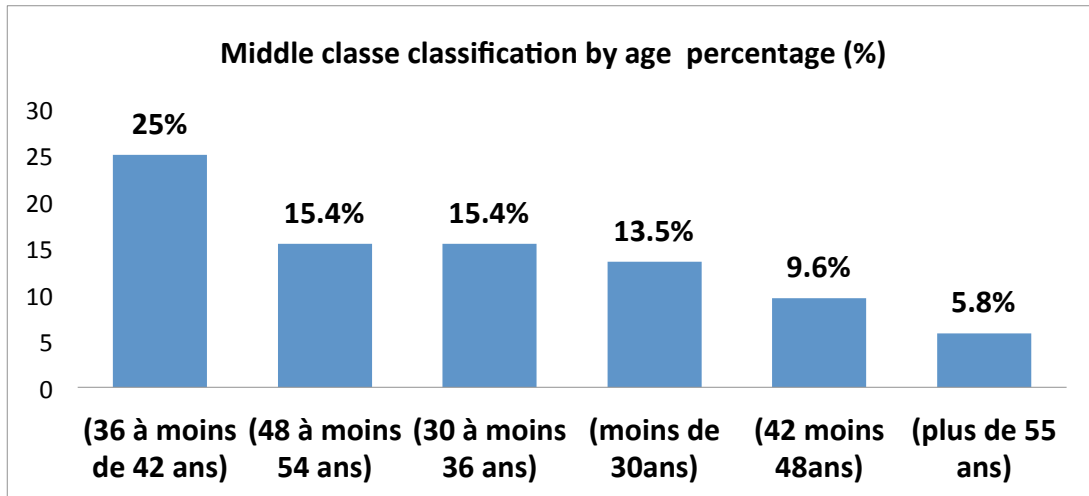


Figure 6 : Appartenance à la classe Moyennes sur Ages

Source: Fieldwork findings, Accra July 2012: Middle class in Africa project, case study on Ghana

- 1=25% (36 to 42 years)
- 2=15.4% (48 to 54 years)
- 3=15.4% (30 to 36 years)
- 4=13.5% (under 30 years)
- 5=9.6% (42 to 48 years)
- 6=5.8% (over 55 years)

In order to assess if being middle class in Ghana goes from one generation to the other. The pie chart below in figure 6 shows 38% of respondents indicated that their parents were self employed (with profession ranging from being a lawyer, doctor, businessman or businesswoman, traders, farmers etc) , 21% indicated that their parents were employed without specifying their profession, and 25% answered their parent were civil servants . What this pie chart reveals is that, there is a correlation between being middle class by age brackets of 36 to 42 years in figure 5 with parents who had professions that could be classified as middle class, since the parents themselves were middle classes and transferred some of the “values” to their off

springs. In this regard, caution must however be taken here as these percentages are not representative for all our respondents, but nevertheless this figure gives a clear idea of some of the characteristics of who is middle class in Ghana.

Employed, Civil Servant and Self Employed

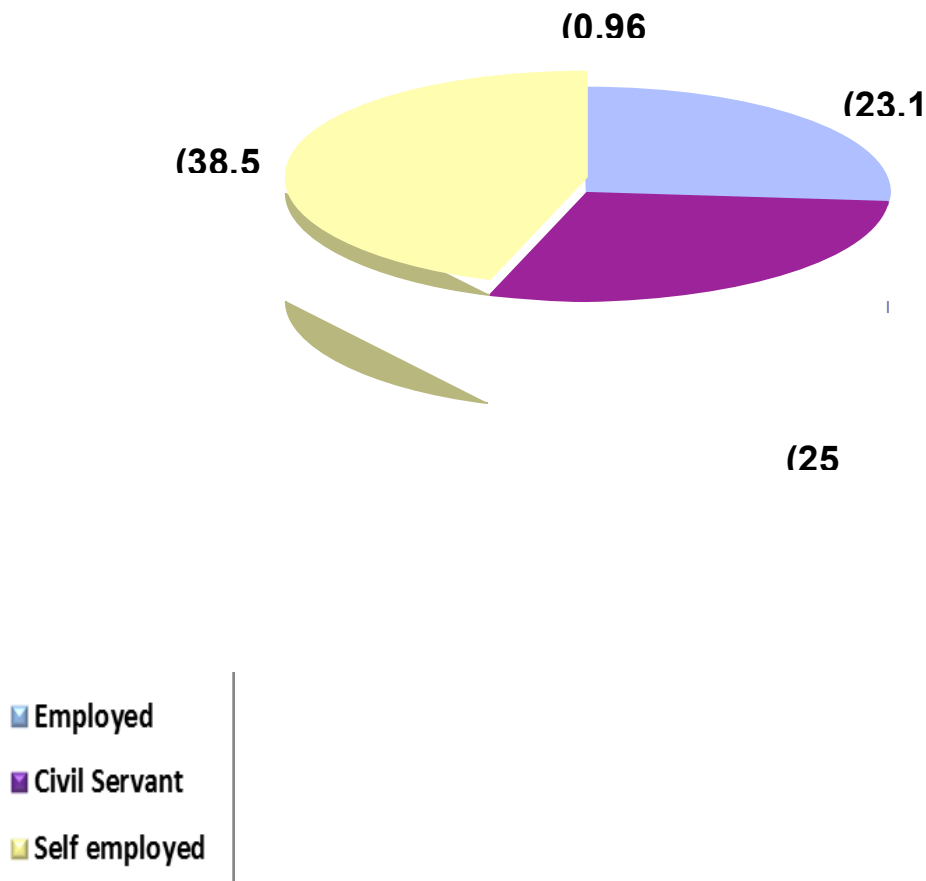


Figure 7: Profession of parents

Source: Fieldwork findings, Accra July 2012: Middle class in Africa project, case study on Ghana

1= employed

2=civil servant

3= self employed

II/ Middle Classes vector of Political Stability:

To Svanikier, the political stability in Ghana is said to be a result of highly educated elites and upper middle classes of the society who understand or has understood the need to maintain the status quo, through elites bargain. DiJohn and Putzel, (2009) defines elites bargain as the ‘distribution of rights and entitlements’ across groups and classes in society, on which any state is based. From this perspective, the strategies’ putting in place by the Ghanaian political elite to maintain power is no different from any other country.

a) First test of Political Stability : election 2008

The first threat to Ghana’s political stability since 1992 was during the 2008 presidential and parliamentary elections. The 2008 election was one of the most contested elections of all times with election results being very close. The then ruling party NPP, lost the elections by 1% to the then opposition party the NDC, this election results was the beginning of the NPP quest of questioning the electoral commission’s position as an independent body with regards electoral irregularities .

Since 1992 political parties in Ghana seem to have evolved with ideological proximity than ever. The two main political parties: the National Democratic Congress (NDC, the current party in Government) a centre-left party and the National Patriotic Party (the NPP, the main opposition Party) centre right party. They both have similar political programs which makes it difficult to distinguish one party from the other in recent years. This similarity does not end

here. The two main parties tend to derive their ruling elites from the same social background and recruit their “Big wings” from the same social class: middle, upper and global middle classes. There seem to be a unwritten accord between the political elites and middle and upper middle classes to ensure political stability prevails at all cost.

This political stability can however be explained by:

- The strong presence of civil society and other institutions such as The Law Society, the Ghana Chamber of Commerce and the associations of Ghana business, Trade Unions, political parties, the press written and audio (particularly the radio) who played an important role advocating for peace during the last three elections. Members of all the above professions mentioned all belong to the higher echelons of the Ghanaian society- the educated middle class, political middle class and the cultural middle class
- The Electoral Commission has since established itself as an independent and respectable institutional body (although the opposition party does not see it as that) amidst the entire allegation on its impartiality from the opposition party NPP, it still plays a pivotal role in mediating political disputes. In 2008, the opposition party accused the ruling party of electoral fraud and demanded a re-run. The electoral commission however demanded the opposition party to provide evidence within two weeks before any court case could be heard to verify these allegations. The lack of evidence on the part of NPP proved difficult for them to press any case against the NDC. In this instance the opposition party was unable to provide any concrete evidence to challenge the election results in court, and the chances of any legal proceedings proved futile in the aftermath of 2008 elections and the party had to concede defeat.

b) Second Test : the death of President Mills

The second test to Ghana’s political stability occurred in July 2012 with the untimely death of the then sitting president Mills. His death came as a surprise as he was the first presiding president to die in office in Ghana’s history, and again the first president to die before finishing his first mandate as president five months to presidential elections. These unprecedented events could all have been a “good” recipe for any political unrest, since the country had never experienced such an event and had to improvise to make sure that no political party uses this event to stage a coup d’état or any form of political mayhem or instability. What is interesting here is that these events were properly managed by all parties concerned : all the parties contesting in the 2012 elections, the business community, professional communities, the local rulers and chiefs all came together to advocate for peace and to ensure that no one use this delicate situation to perpetuate any political uncertainty .

The president died on July 24th 2012 at 2pm, the vice president was sworn in at 8pm, everything went smoothly as stipulated in the constitution without anyone contesting the constitutions rights. The government declared one week national mourning, in respect of the president’s death which again was respected by all the political and institutional elites. Interestingly during this event, revealed the maturity of the ruling elites to adapt quickly to this situation was remarkable.

Third test: election 2012

Alex Vines of Chatham House, states: *“These elections are important not just to Ghana, but for the growing number of states and actors seeking to benefit from increasing*

confidence in Africa”. This statement however, illustrates the importance in ensuring that the political stability in Ghana prevails.

The third test to Ghana’s political stability was during the 2012 presidential election. The sudden death of the presiding president with five months to presidential and parliamentary elections changed the whole landscape of the political campaign for both ruling party and the opposition parties. To the opposition party the NPP, the death of the president was a sad event, it was also an opportunity to attract the undecided swing voters to their camp, since all along their campaign strategy from the beginning of 2012 was to highlight on the ruling party’s inaptness of running the economy since they came to power in 2009. This was however, the opportunity to pinpoint the ruling party’s weakness of running the affairs of the country properly. For the ruling party although they had lost their commander-in-chief, they were not battered and hoped to attract some sympathy votes from the general public to boost their election momentum since they only had three months campaign till December polls.

The ruling party the NDC however, had to galvanize themselves to elect a new presidential candidate as, the deceased president was the then candidate for the party. The vice president who took over power after the death of the president was chosen unanimously as the presidential candidate of the party. The ruling party had to start from afresh with a new strategy of campaign for the elections. The ranks and files i.e. the ruling elites and upper middle classes within the party had the responsibility of ensuring that they held the party together to avoid factions within the party that could take advantage of the situation to destabilize the party.

This untimely event made the 2012 election one of the most competitive if not “the most competitive” elections since the return to constitutional in 1992. The stakes were high for

2012 elections in that, the candidates of the two main parties the NDC and the NPP were both eager to win the elections: the main opposition party leader Nana Akuffo Addo of the NPP, 68 years, who was stood for Party as the presidential candidate in 2008 and lost to President Mills. This was however his second tentative or last chance to attempt for the presidency due to his age.

President John Mahama, on the other hand, contesting the elections on the ticket of the NDC is 54 years and ascended to the presidency as result of the sudden death of the late president Mills as highlighted earlier on. On his part, this was also his chance to be elected as president on his own mandate and full right president, not a “care taker” president as some quarters of the Ghanaian media has coined him²⁷.

So here we have two combative leaders all vying for the same position with panache and since more oil had been discovered at the Jubilee offshore since 2006 both parties are as determined as ever to win the elections . Since most of their funding comes from their main party supporters especially the middle classes and elites within their respective parties, so winning an elections enables each party to compensate one way or the other those wealthy middle and upper middle classes within the party who gave them financial backing during the campaign . This eventual compensation may come in the form of attributing contracts within different industries including the oil industry itself to these elites within the party who supported them during the campaign.

Ghana’s economic growth in the past few years seem to propel these recent political competitiveness with the discovery of oil, Ghana’s political and election landscape has become even more competitive than before and the competition between both partis to win an

²⁷ Ghana elections <http://www.africa-confidential.com/news>

election and have a monopoly on decisions pertaining the oil industry and other sectors of the economy at large . As noted by Gymah Boadi of CDD Ghana: *"They know what comes with power, If you capture the presidency, you control all the machinery of the state and unlike the past, we now have oil. The state coffers will be brimming"*²⁸. These economic and personal interests of the middle classes and the elites however indicate the competitive nature of the last two presidential elections in 2008 and in 2012 election.

Damina Frontier Markets, an independent market research company predicted an outright win of 53% for the opposition in the first round, if this had happened, it will have been the biggest upset in Ghanaian politics since 1992 that a ruling party does not win an election to serve a second term mandate. On the 10th December 2012 the electoral commission announced the ruling party NDC had won the elections by 50.7%, the main opposition scored 47.7% and the remaining 1.56% went to the other smaller parties.²⁹

The main opposition party the NPP decided to contest the election results citing electoral fraud and this time round decided to seize the Supreme Court to challenge results unlike the verdict of the 2008 election, albeit the opposition party being unhappy with election results, the party conceded defeat, straight away then. This time round in 2012, the grass root supporters and some members within the leadership of the opposition party took to the streets of Accra to protest the election results. According to Kojo Yankey, *"members of the NPP protesting against the election results are not the middle and upper classes within the Party, they are actually the lower classes whose belief was that if the party come to power will have helped better their life with the free education campaign promise"*³⁰.

²⁸ , The telegraph, Article 7 Decembre 2012, Ghana’s democracy put to the test high stakes elections, consulté le 7 Decembre 2012 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news>

²⁹ Ghana elections : www.ghanaweb.com

³⁰ Interview with Kojo Yankey, London 20th December 2012

The leadership of the opposition party decided to seize the Supreme Court as the only legitimate channel to contest any election dispute, by using the courts helped to appease the tension reigning within the opposition party and its supporters. This act was symbolic, in that it was the first time an election results was going to be contested at the supreme court and set precedence for subsequent dispute to be contested at the courts which was also an opportunity to test the independent role of the judiciary system in Ghana.

On August 29th 2013, the Supreme Court hearing ruled in favor of the ruling president John Mahama as being legitimate the winner of the December 2012 polls, after eight months of court hearing debacle, the court ruling came in as unifying factor for both parties and country. The economic middle class, the educated middle class and the culture middle class as noted earlier played their role as the vanguard of the political stability in Ghana by again advocating for peace before the announcement of the Supreme Court verdict.

Conclusion

According to a survey carried out by the Afrobarometer in 2008, 80% of Ghanaians indicated that they were happy with the political system, whereas 55% considered that they lived in total democracy³¹. This consideration could be translated in the presence of the civil society who have auto-designated themselves as “the watchdog or vanguard” of Ghana’s political stability as stated by Kojo Asante of Ghana Center for Democratic Development³². Since, middle and upper Middle Classes or elites are the ones who run these civil societies and are members of this social category as it is imperative for them to ensure that peace prevails in Ghana.

³¹ Afrobarometer Ghana survey : <http://www.afrobarometer.org>

³² Field work interview with Kojo Punpuni Asante August 2012

Although these social categories dominate the Ghanaian political, it must be noted that political discussion are not only limited to the realms of the elites, but there is a collective conscious among Ghanaians of being interested in politics. Is the political stability due to the unwritten agreement between the elites to maintained power among themselves and in return ensure guarantee political stability.

This unwritten gentlemen’s agreement was more visible when CI 75 was laid in Parliament on August 14, 2012 in accordance with Article 11 (7) of the Constitution. Parliament approved the report on the Public Elections Regulation, 2012 (CI 75) that seeks to strengthen Ghana’s electoral system, and to give legal backing to the Biometric Registration and Verification System³³ . This mechanism was set to reinforce the need for all political parties to respect the electoral code of conduct and that any party leader wishing to contest an election dispute will have to use legal channels.

Other declaration and accords were signed by party leader before the 2012 polls to ensure that the peace prevails before and after the election in December 2012. The most important of all the accords was the “Kumasi Declaration” which brought together all: political elites and middle class, the economic middle class, the cultural and traditional leaders to give credibility to the declaration .

In this paper I have however, argued and demonstrated that Ghana’s political stability so far, has been maintain by the willingness of the elites within the society to play by the rules of the “democratic game” through actively participation in politics by regularly organizing election every four years, their capacity to respect the rule of law and also their willingness to surmount any unforeseen political event. The only time this stability could threaten will be:

³³ Ghana Parliament : www.parliament.gh/news

Firstly these accords have been essential, in the past, but becoming less horizontal and more vertical. Since each party recruited its support bases from the same social categories who are likely to help them win or lose elections.

Secondly, political stability depends on the capacity of the elites to foster political and economic development that will enhance the daily lives of the population particularly the lower middle classes and the floating classes or the precariat.

Thirdly, if the lives of these social classes do not improve: if unemployment rates among the youth and young professionals continue to rise and it is not addressed adequately, and they are no longer classified among the emerging middle classes. This however could cause an alliance between of the lower middle classes and the precariat to violently contest for political power and the danger of instrumentalizing of these groups by populist leaders attracted by the current oil find which could create great political instability.

The major challenges that will face the country in the coming years will be: the capacity of the upper middle classes to ensure that there is equal redistribution of the rents from the natural resources by involving directly the emerging young professionals and business men and women within the informal market.

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