Between Democratic Promises and Socio-Political Realities: The Challenges of Political Representation in Ghana and Nigeria

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This thesis titled

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Abstract

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This comparative study explores the intersection between the perversion of representative political systems in Ghana and Nigeria and the performance of resistance. It draws heavily on psychoanalytical theory (as well as structuralism and constructivism) to understand how the burdens of colonial legacies and elite fantasies overwhelm the present representative democratic arrangements. From these theoretical lenses, the study further explore how these perverted political system legitimizes the marginalization of citizens and encourages the hijack of political spaces by elites. I concluded that the encroachment of public political space by elites trigger a resistive response from marginalized citizens.

Approved: _____________________________________________________________

Dauda Abubakar

Assistant Professor of Political Science
Dedication

To my mother, Rebecca Noi

The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone
Psalm 118:22
Acknowledgments

Indeed, this is how far God has brought me and I am extremely grateful for His mercies, which are renewed every morning. I thank you Lord for constantly assuring me that You have not brought me this far to disgrace me. Thank you Lord for your blessings, favors and protection.

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And last, but not least, I am especially grateful for the patience and support I received from my family – my mother (Rebecca Noi), my aunt (Mercy) and uncles (Nii Noi and Daniel), my cousins – all of whom have made sacrifices to see me come this far.
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Chapter One: Introduction

The 21st century political environment in post-colonial Africa has evolved from perpetual or repetitive dictatorial governance and has intermittently lurched into a pseudo-democratic polity, yet the once resisted lures of dictatorial political tendencies of liberal individuality and minimized collectivism, have now become ensconced within legitimate democratic practices. The burden of individualistic polity that often characterizes authoritarian regimes is now integral to the current liberal representative political practice to produce marginalized democratic citizens from avenues of political engagements. Growing popular discontent in post-colonial countries like Nigeria and Ghana, then, stems from these protected political practices that are now redefining citizenship away from its organic political origins—of participation and inclusion. Very troubling is this popular sense that the kind of representative political system in these countries merely pays lip services to popular prerogatives with little efforts at reforming political institutions to address these fundamental issues creating this pervasive sense of citizens’ alienation. In many cases, agency of democratic citizens in political matters has been subverted, yet constantly invoked to carry, while subtly deceptive, a symbolic significance of authorization and accountability. The displacement of public agency in these political processes has created a vacuum in which the notion of representation has legitimately emerged as functional and organic. The erection and politicization of representation in these political vacuums now provides justification for the absence of the public in politics. Representative institutions in these countries have emerged to replace or, as some pro-representative democrats will argue, complement forms of direct mode of political determinacy. While the idea of representative institutionalism has quickly acquired legitimacy as an inclusive system of political organization and an effective
medium of popular interest articulation, it conceptually runs counter to presumed promises of collectivism and collective determinacy inherent in the notion of democracy.

However compelling and pervasive the institutional demands and designs in forcing the majority of democratic citizens to the margins of political life, writers like Hanna Pitkin (1967), are still convinced that political representation, in all cases, is an effective act of making present again citizens' voices, opinions, and perspectives in public policy making processes. Emerging scholarships on political representation have embraced Pitkin's propositions and have insisted that representative institutions, thus indeed, encourage citizens' participation in the political processes. This minimalist view of political representation in modern democratic scholarship recognize acts whereby the electorate select, through regular, multiparty political contestations, a leader who will represent their needs, as the bedrock in which, not only the very idea of representative democracy is massaged into popular consciousness, but also projected and exercised as inclusive and embodying collective action.

While in many instances, a perfect model of democracy (if, indeed, it exist anywhere), will insist on substantial amount of popular voice in public policy outcomes (and not merely as a site occasionally revisited to formalized and legitimize political rule), specific to many post-colonial Africa countries alone, representative democracy has acquired an elitist’s fantasy. This perception is not only evident in the capital cost associated with political participation, which places heavy financial restrictions on the majority poor in societies to participate in this political life, but also the expanding institutional bureaucratic processes discourages public participation in policy engineering. African elites, who form the core in African parliament, then deliberate and implement policy (Sandbrook 2001) that
sustains and strengthens their hold on power (Osabu-Kle 2000). Quite problematic is the shift of collective power into the hands of representatives, whose discrectional autonomy invoke sense of egoistic individualism, fractured from local communitarian consciousness, seem to exercise this power to their “selfish” (also justified as national) interests. This notion of legitimate atomized individualism has provided the driving impetus to deviate from the fundamental democratic premises. Here, political representation has acquired reformed prerogatives where the notions of the “public” and their interest articulation have given way to private fantasies. Of necessity, these private fantasies continue to shape political outcomes and these outcomes are legitimised as public values. The decreasing public voice in African politics has raised many concerns about whether political representation under democratic dispensation is or ought to even be an element in the political practice and institutional consciousness.

Indeed, democracy, as originally conceptualized, advocates for popular political inputs and projects collective decision making platforms. These democratic ideals minimize, at least in theory, the growing fascination with private individualism (predicated on liberal democratic appeals to market/capital expansion and the nuances of development) which now seem to reproduce the “public sphere”. The liberal democratic market and values of development have shaped conceptions of representative democracy; hence, instead of encouraging public input in determining the direction of national policies, elite governments (also political representatives) rather prefer or find it more convenient to abandon avenues for such forms of participation and inclusion in the political processes. The separation of the public from the democratic process has largely formed the pretext for local resistance and various forms of political instability in the region. Local expectation of national political
directions and outcome constantly clashes with governments prerogatives giving the impetus for revolt.

In many cases, inclusive and participatory policy engineering processes will give the public a sense of ownership of the political process and abort the emergence of local resistance. For Albert Bandura, “the inability to influence events and social conditions that significantly affect one’s life can give rise to feelings of futility and despondency as well as anxiety” (1997, p.153). It is in these nervous conditions that constantly fracture popular expectations to permit the formation of resistance movements to challenge the hitherto legitimate democratic states. To Bandura, “people are proactive, aspiring organisms who have a hand in shaping their own lives and the social systems that organize, guide and regulate the affairs of their society” (1997, p.vii). Of course, to Robert Putnam (2000) (also see Benjamin Barber 1984) engaging the public in political issues enhances civic loyalty and commitment.

To critically access the intersection between political representation and resistance, this study narrows focus on Nigeria and Ghana to compare ways in which these two former British colonies, have since independence organized and managed their political processes in ways that restrict or encourage political resistance. My major preoccupation is to understand how the origins and current modes of representation, by default or by design, lubricate the course for political upheaval.

**Background of Study**

The promises of democracy, often considered as utopic, are embedded in the very ideological foundation upon which it was initially theorized and many theorists have argued that the process of democracy, then, is only legitimate if in it practice these foundational
premises are reified. While a universally accepted definition of democracy is highly contested, a minimalist notion of democracy that invokes these foundational promises will suffice here. Here, the term itself derives its meaning from two Greek words: Demos, meaning the common people, and Kratos, meaning rule. The meaning of democracy, in this interpretation, suggests the rule of the people, by the people and for the people (Putnam, 1997; Osabu-Kle, 2000). In this meaning, the democratic citizen is placed as both the subject and object of legitimate power exercise. The absence or marginalization of citizens’ role constitutes (or at least should constitute) an illegitimate democratic process.

The Athenian democracy, perhaps more than any political system, best demonstrates the primacy of citizen agency. Yet many have argued that the practice of democracy in Athens is limited, in as long as the Athenian construction of the Demos was restricted to the privileged class and excluded the participation of slaves, women, farmers, and those who worked by “the sweat of the brow” (Putnam, 1997; Osabu-Kle, 2000). However, the minimal assurance of mass participation in the political processes, provide a useful lens through which the essence of polity can be conceptually recuperated and properly structured to re-claim agency for democratic citizens. Beyond this, it is also useful to note that it is not only participation which was restricted to the privileged class but also the whole idea of citizenship. This meant that citizenship created the right, and became a site for participation. As an extension into modern debate on democracy, then, the expansion of citizenship to all must also inextricable accommodates the idea of direct popular participation in political mediums. In this organic sense, then, democracy is a system of rule in which the citizens become the ultimate architects of both political inputs and outputs. In this conception, Aristotle argued that;
The foundation of the democratic constitution is liberty. People constantly make this statement implying that only in this constitution is there any share in liberty at all; every democracy, they say, has liberty for its aim. ‘Ruling and being ruled in turn’ is one element in liberty. Then there is the democratic idea of justice as numerical equality, not equality based on merit; and when this idea of what is right prevails, the people must be sovereign, and whatever the majority decides that is final and that is justice. For, they say, there must be equality among citizens (Aristotle 1967, p.236-37).

Here, Aristotle accepts the notions of equality, sovereignty and liberty as inherent promises of the democratic processes. Indeed, the notion of democracy embraces a normative principle of popular participation and displaces considerations of atomized individualism and private fantasies. As for Monika Mokre (2002), in this normative claim, conception of democracy “engenders two highly ambitious claims, namely for an effective political system and a normative desirable society” (p.2). Thus, it is a normative claim for a functional democratic system to revolve around citizens’ (in its entirety) involvement in politics.

The notion of representation only emerged in the early modern period and was a mutually exclusive category from any democratic principle. Taking England’s political development as example, where the king, needing additional revenue beyond what is acquired from the royal estates and traditional feudal dues, instructed that each shire and borough send a delegate to help ensure that local taxation processes are carried out smoothly (Pitkin 2004). In this stead, representation was imposed as a duty from above, a matter of royal convenience and administrative control. The development of the idea and practice of representation was entirely a monarchical artifact requiring no democratic considerations. Repeated practice of this processes, as it indeed facilitated taxation processes, gradually acquired institutionalized residence. Representatives were gradually given monarchical mandates and began making their “consent conditional on redress of grievances, to think of
themselves as members of a single, continuing body” (Pitkin 2004, p. 3). The selection of these delegates was outside the confines of democracy and was in no mean accomplished through elections. Pitkin (2004) acknowledged it was “only when these struggles between king and parliament culminated in civil war in England in the seventeenth century, and subsequently in the great democratic revolutions of the late eighteenth century, was the alliance between democracy and representation formed” (p.7). This alliance forged between democracy and representation was fundamentally reactionary and constructed to manage conflict. In fact, representation cannot be considered as a unit of democracy as its emergence occurred away from this mode of legitimate political organization.

Largely, early modern era claims to representation as legitimate unit of democracy perhaps accommodate John Selden observation: “the room will not hold all’, the people would rule themselves vicariously, through their representatives” (Arendt 1972, p.238). The exponential increase in population size became a socio-political reality that the democratic societies had to contend with. Expansion of populations, equally, challenged possibilities of effective political organization while keeping to the promise of direct citizens’ engagement in political process. The changing conditions of human existence demanded that democracy undergo strategic transformation while at the same time maintaining democratic citizens as both object and subject of the political process. The clash between the original democratic promises conceived in its formation and changing socio-political realities allowed for popular acceptance of the representative government.

The origin of today’s representative democracy may be traced back to an idea that John Locke developed in his famous classic, *Second Treatise of Government*. Lock’s assumption of proper system of governance asserts a “right to rule” base on the conception of a social
contract (cited from Danopoulos and Elahi 2004, p.5.). Lock asserts that in civil associations, no one is supposed to manage others’ affairs without their consent. As for Rousseau, the individuals in the state delegates authority to a government to act on their behalf and represent their communal interest. Here, the idea of delegation require significant effort on the part of the representative to articulate directly the demands of the represented in policy frameworks.

In her book, *The Concept of Representation*, Pitkin (1967) argues that;

In modern times almost everyone wants to be governed by representative (although not necessarily by a conventional representative government); every political group or cause wants representation; every government claims to represent. At the same time we are troubled by the difference between sham and real representative institutions, and by the many competing ways in which representation can be institutionalized” (p.2).

Though, his claims are arguable and structured to legitimize representative government, it is very important to note that the whole idea of representation is essentially modern (Pitkin 1967, p.2). In this system of government, the democratic citizen, while still a subject of rule, relinquishes his autonomy and sovereignty (in practice) to power and delegates his authority to a proxy or representative who will act on his/her behalf and ensure that his voice is consider in policy outcomes. In this stead, notion of collectivism and communitarianism are split and in its place the subject of power is atomized. Democracy, then, is divorced with the idea of citizenship which formed as a site of popular participation.

**The Problem**

*The Socio-Political Deficits of Political Representation in Ghana and Nigeria*

The evolution of the current political process, both in Ghana and Nigeria, asserts a historical and socio-economic-political paths that produce dynamisms beyond the question
of modern liberalism. The nature of the representative institutions in both countries developed as a multilayered phenomenon of both colonial and modern political proportions. Because of the nature of this unique system, popular reception of the systems' usefulness has been mixed. Often, you find elites, and beneficiaries of elite rule, more in favor of these forms of representative political arrangements citing instances where it is only prudent that technical knowledge should override mass engagement. On the other hand, the majority of citizens are increasingly agitated by the pressure of a system that re-produces citizens’ essence in the margin of political life. The nagging problem of representation is that it only occasionally recalls the majority of citizens into political life when their authorization becomes necessary only to substantiate the legitimacy of minority hold on power. The populace becomes a site of exploitation and manipulation for the promotion of elitist interest. Possible resistance against these exploitative and manipulative strategies is immediately squashed under the pressure of strict legal and policy demands. Therefore, in many cases, these recalls, as mandated by electoral policies, serve as the only platforms that citizens can demonstrate their discontent.

Also, elites who seek power at any cost, recognizing the vulnerability during this electoral period and the exploiting these citizens’ discontentment during these moments of recalls, they manipulates these conditions to instigate rivalry among the people. These forms of rivalry build along party line, and here the yearning desires of the public for participation are fed by making them, seemingly though, the main actors of political direction. Therefore, the “majority” (citizens) who have for most part formed as a site of shared concerns and common course are strategically divided and any opposing interests (often that of the other opposing majority group) antagonized. Once the minority elite attain power, they derive no
more usefulness in public participation any more than the occasional symbolic projection of the public as the essence of representative democracy. One such symbolic arrangement is the current policy and reform of government activities through decentralization. While these processes of decentralization substantively involve the public at the local level in policy discussions (but not those that pertain to major issue resulting in policy reform), many writers have lamented the absence or weak structural frameworks that could help incorporate the generated local concerns into national policy frames. Hence, while the decentralization process acquires some form of pacific momentum, it wanes under the charges of constant and prolonged representatives’ neglect during those occasional moments of public recalls.

In general, moments of incorporating the public in political processes ignores the historic primacy of its political development by applying universal models to unique condition. A typical example emerges when decentralization efforts ignore the challenges of possible contentions and contestations between modern elected representatives and traditional unelected ones in terms of power exercises and alignments. This condition, then, create avenues for resistance and unrest. Increasingly, then, representative democracies have polarized societies and fractured their cherished harmony beyond any legal repair.

The Need for Scholarly Inquiry

Examining the political consequences of irresponsible representative government and the consequent resistive outcomes are critical because as Brady et al (1995) argued, the voice and the social location of citizens in the political strata cannot be divorced from any discussion on democratic governance;
in a meaningful democracy, the people’s voice must be clear and loud---clear so that policymakers understand citizen concerns and loud so that they have an incentive to pay attention to what is said. Since democracy implies not only governmental responsiveness to citizen interests but also equal consideration of the interests of each citizen, democratic participation must also be equal (p.1).

Essentially, then, this research is driven by a moral imperative of both substantively and theoretically necessity to examine the pervasive political dynamics that perpetually invent and produce voiceless citizens via a legitimate representative political apparatuses. Although some efforts have been made to recuperate the deficits of irresponsible political systems through decentralization processes, the cumulative impact of these reforms does not reflect in government policy framework, neither does this reform provide mobility to transcend in and out of socio-political locations of subjectivity. Hence, the site of citizenship as a political subjective position should become not merely a fluid space, but also appealing. It is imperative, then, to investigate representative institutions beyond the rhetoric of normativity and the current decentralization reforms, to the multilayered dynamics of power exercise. It is in this concerns that this research seek to acquire relevance.

**Purpose of Studies**

The purpose of this thesis is threefold:

1. To critically access, examine, and explore ways in which democratic citizens are marginalized by representative institutions. In this purpose, I consider ways in which constitutional mandates, electoral processes, party policies, and social-political values are constructed to privilege elite in African politics.

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1 The idea of appeal that I am canvassing to define the space of the represented, resist consideration of the subject position as powerless, uneducated, demeaning. The representative should not have this sense of entitlement to the structure of power, which eventually informs their unwillingness and defiance to relinquish power.
2. To examine how and why the privileging and reinforcement of the idea of individualism within collective framework, produces a popular resistance. This particular purpose seeks to access the effect of individualism in societies with strong heritage in communitarianism. The guiding assumption here is that individualism affects sense of collective ownership, and there is a direct causal link between sense of ownership and peace in these countries.

3. To re-consider Anne Phillips (1995) question of the representation of the poor. The main question here will be whether it is possible for the elite dominated governments to adequately and effectively represent the need of the poor in both Ghana and Nigeria. Are there structures in place to ensure that the voices of the poor are heard?

**Research Question**

This comparative study aims at testing the following hypotheses:

1. In what ways does representative democracy in Ghana and Nigeria reinforce sense of citizens’ alienation and how is that linked to recurring resistance in these countries?

2. Does memory of, and longing for, the past in these countries threaten the nature of the political organization?

3. In what ways are the constructions of sovereignty and independence in Ghana and Nigeria perverted through institutional legacies?

**Methodology**

*Method*

A survey of scholarship conducted indicates that scholarly approaches to studying the relationship between liberal representative democracy and resistance in Africa, while limited, have often view this dynamic political situation through a singularly monolithic lens.
These researches also impose such specific disciplinary models and methodologies on subsequent research budding from the outcomes achieved. Certainly, these researches, though enlightening, still anchors our sense of research methodological possibilities in this unpluralistic universalized hegemonic models sacred to the field. Indeed, most of these researches still resist both methodological and conceptual pluralism. Therefore, in order to develop a clearer and deeper understanding of the current relationship between political representation and resistance, I aim to analyze these dynamic within cross-disciplinary and multiple contexts both employed within and beyond dominant frameworks. For this purpose, I employed a qualitative research method, using textual analysis of a comparative case study nature.

Babbie (2004) defined qualitative research methods as “methods for examining social research data without converting them to a numerical format” (p. 370). Judith Preissle (2002) also embrace the assumption that qualitative research, to a large degree, asserts an enterprise of scholarly inquiry of knowledge development that resides outside the rubric of scientific methodological requirements or the general assumption of inferential statistics. Critically, qualitative research reflects a similar theoretical orientation often postulated through the interpretativist frameworks. This orientation accommodates the assumption that social realities are constructed, determined and sustained wholly by subjective human experiences (Morgan and Smircich 1980, p.491-500; Little 1991, p.68). It is in this commitment to investigating the meaningful public actions and mode of resistance that is produce as an inverse reaction to representative structures, and not necessarily to establish any objective and imposing generalizable causal relation between these variable (Little 1991, p.68), that frames my research methodological choice. In this stead, qualitative researchers are design in
this research approaches to achieve (or at least attempt to achieve) accurate description of social phenomenon that shapes reality and to investigate notions of complexity, authenticity, and the subjectivity of the researched (Fryer 1991, p.3-6).

In his article, “Qualitative Research - Airy Fairy or Fundamental?” Adria Labuschagne (2003) explained that method of qualitative research, when broadly define, will include action research, case study research, life histories, hermeneutics, and general narrative enquiry, and participant observer researches, among others (p.1). It is the possibility, then, of doing a comparative case study research that informed my methodology choice. In this kind of research, significant importance is given to the observation of variables in their natural settings (Labuschagne 2003, p.1). Also, because of my assumption that social reality, within which these political conditions are mired, is entirely shaped by a subjective human experience, the qualitative method allow me to achieve a realistic view (in some cases such realistic objective is attained) of the world (Little 1991, p.68). I also employed this approach because it enables me to provide a holistic view of the social phenomena under which democratic citizens emerge as resistive to structural impositions (Bogdan & Taylor 1998; Patton, 1980).

**Analytical Approach**

This research marks an effort to move beyond normative debates concerning the requirement of democratic institutionalism and toward a more systematic and yet deep theoretical analysis of the multilayered political dynamics associated with them. Indeed, the African condition is like none other ever existed with its political origins and current form both historically and ahistorically embedded at the same time. Of course, under such considerations the application of hegemonic models merely produces interpretations that
align its relevance and depth to universalized and generalizable outcomes. However, rather than abandoning entirely (for they are very useful for ahistoric analysis) these hegemonic models with substantial intellectual authority in this field, I integrate, and sometime even subvert, the application of such models as constructivism and interpretivism, within a broad cross-disciplinary inquiry, allowing for nuanced and deep interpretations of the political dynamic of the impact of democratic representative institutionalism on public attitudes. It has become necessarily, then, to employ such approach because, this research recognize that the representative systems of democratic politics was not merely imposed as a practice, but in this processes of imposition a socio-historic conditions were also produced, which in turn produced, aided, subverted, and compromised current realities from which African political systems have struggled to consolidate.

In this study, I am interested in understanding both the institutional and the unitary demands that produce resistive mediums by focusing on these areas: the nature of state statutes (in terms of electoral policies, constitutional mandates on representation, and institutional platforms for citizens’ engagements) and the public attitudes toward such forces. As Carmichael and Hamilton (1973) argued, public attitudes are inextricably informed by the views and beliefs systems transfused by the institutional frameworks. Therefore, it is important to examine both the institutional conditions that produced and defined the conditions of the masses, as well as the resisting public attitudes that rise to challenge the legitimacy of these institutions.

Chapter Summary

Chapter two is in two parts; the critical review of literature and the definition of my theoretical framework that will subsequently undergirded my analytical engagements. The
first part critically examined various literatures to locate the origins of political representation in modern democratic discourse. However, this section recognized that the origin of representation as a modern phenomenon, largely, constructed a debate that anchors our understanding of political propriety and development within western ontology, and this quickly dismissed the alternative development of representative institutions in post-colonial states. Therefore, I investigated the emergence of representative institution in post-colonial state that developed as a result of colonial manipulations and subversions. This approach re-contextualized perception of representation in the post-colonies away from Eurocentric discourses. This permitted multiple interrogations and lenses through which one can understand the current mode of political representation as a legitimate restrictive enterprise in the post-colony. Equally, by analyzing the various historical contexts, I opened avenues for a comprehensive understanding of the trajectory of these institutional developments.

Furthermore, the theoretical framework established cross-disciplinary lenses through which the represented emerged as a site of powerlessness seeking mediums of transition from this position into power positions. Through gender theory, critical theory, psychoanalysis, Marxism, structuralism and post-structuralism, I set the frameworks to explore the representative-represented relationship as fraught with political charged possibilities for resistance.

Chapter three focused discussion on Ghana, highlighting its historical development as well legacies from the colonial past that still inform and define institutional mandate, frameworks and mediums. This chapter also is in part dedicated to contents analysis of electoral policies, constitutional mandates, and legal frameworks that sustains or undermines the very nature of the representative democratic practices. By analyzing these policies and
mandates, I entertained avenues of reading, say, the current decentralization efforts as merely aesthetic appeals, with limited concrete value to policy outcomes. It is evident that the aesthetic appeal, rather than political responsiveness, produces docile bodies who are seduced by impotent enterprise.

In chapter four, I focused on Nigeria to explore, as I did for the case study of Ghana, the historical trajectory that produced the modern Nigerian representative institution. Much like Ghana, I looked closely at the ways in which the modern political representation system has been perverted through the expansion of the rule and power of the political elites. I also focus on other avenues through which the needs of citizens are articulated, and interrogate ways by which the expansion of the power elites has encroached on these spaces. While engaging with these issues, I also dedicate, in part, these interrogations to content analysis of the changing constitutional mandate on representation and how these changes have produce mediums and justifications for discontentment and resistance.

Building upon these case studies, chapter five applies the cross-disciplinary theoretical models, interrogated in chapter two, to explore why, perhaps, liberal representative democracy in Nigeria and Ghana, much against Fukuyama concerns, should not be treated as an ahistoric process. In this chapter, I examined the theoretical implications of the research question that frames this thesis. And the final chapter sums up this critical investigation.
Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Approaches

Literature Review

The literature review critically explores the genealogy of political representation and how it developed into the structures of democracy as a legitimate practice, while at the same time highlighting why such development provokes critical interrogation. This section also reconstructs the development of political representation in post-colonial states through the lenses of colonialism and investigates how polities under those conditions have migrated into current political reforms. In this exploration, notices how the colonial development of political representation meant the perversion of the traditional political system. Finally, this section focuses attention on the modes of representation, and how these modes create avenues that allow one to think beyond current institutional designs and functions of representative democracies.

A Brief Historical Account of Political Representation

The origin of the democratic institution has authentically been traced back to ancient Greek polis. However, the act of political representation did not develop as part of the democratic processes, because the small size of the polity always permitted that every citizen directly participated in public debate and decision-making processes. In this form of political arrangements, representation violates the core principle of the democratic process. The situation, however, is different in the Roman Empire, where although they expanded to a great territory, the Roman republicans minimized participation of citizens living outside Rome. That is not to suggest that all those who lived in Rome necessarily attended assembly meetings regularly. The absence of some citizen in the assemble created “a random and skewed system of representation”, thereby those living close or in Rome, who attended
assembly meeting regularly became *de facto* "representatives" of other citizens in the Roman empire (Fairlie 1940; Edigheji 2006; Bo Li 1999; Osabu-Kle 2000).

With further development in the system of government, couple with the expansion of territory, writers like Fairlie (1940) and Edigheji (2006) have argued that, increasingly, the prince of Rome became a symbolic figure that reflected the interest of the people of Rome. Also, the medieval period saw the emergence of both the monarch – which included the King, the Emperor, the Pope and the Cardinals in the Church – and assemblies and councils of qualified citizens in organized communities, as representatives of the people. The development of such system of representation legitimized its essence away from the ritualized electoral procedures of modern democratic practices (Edigheji, 2006). While representative, at this infant stage of the system, acted in a manner deemed progressive to national interest, it is also important to realize that these approaches will later re-surface as an element in representative democracy.

On the other hand, city-states, like the Renaissance Italian city-states, due to the nature of its small size abandoned any consideration for political representation, and created room for political participation for all citizens (Bo Li, 1999). Critical to our understanding of the development of representative government, one is face with the idea of population growth or expansion of territory as a legitimate, or at least constitutes permissible, grounds for the justification of representation. Historically, then, the concept of political representation never developed within the confines of democratic doctrines. Rousseau argued that political representation cannot beattributive to democracy because “[s]overeignty cannot be represented for the same reason that it cannot be alienated” for such practices only poses as an arena of libration “only during the election of the members
of Parliament. Once they are elected, the populace is enslaved; it is nothing” (cited from Bo Li, 1999, para.4).

While there evidence of representation within the system of political organization in these empires, the institutionalization of representation as a principle in modern democratic process, Bo Li (1999) explained, has its roots, rather, in the English Civil War which changed the face of the political landscape in Europe. In a radical effort to shift system of rule from monarchical governance to a republican system, the Puritans proposed the modern institution of representative government. Robert Dahl (1989) confirmed that the beginnings of representative system of government,

are to be found, notably in England and Sweden, in the assemblies summoned by monarchs, or sometimes the nobles themselves, to deal with important matters of state: revenues, wars, royal succession, and the like. In the typical pattern, those summoned were drawn from and were intended to represent the various estates, with the representatives from each estate meeting separately. Over time, the estates diminished to two, lords and commoners, who were of course represented in separate houses (p. 29).

By the eighteenth century, political philosophers and politicians have stated, with suspicions of course, to explore the relevance of what Puritanism has initiated as substitution for monarchical rule. It is at this time that the institution of representative government provoked contested claims as to its place in practical democratic values. This contestation, and subsequent triumph of representation in democratic practices essentially—on practical and logical grounds—provided possibilities for states to displace "the practical limits that a sizeable citizenry imposes on democracy, which had been the focus of so much critical (anti-democratic) attention... Representative democracy could [then] be celebrated as both accountable and feasible government, potentially stable over great territories and time spans" (Held 1996, p.119).
By the early 20th century, the system has been popularized both in the academy and in democratic practices as legitimate form of government. Joseph Schumpeter (1976) argued that by this time it has become practically impossible to empirically define and access the confines of democracy without making references to a representative system of government. Subsequently, definition of democracy has acquired the demand for an “institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote” (Schumpeter 1976, p.269). Such development in representation led to the perversion of the classical claims of democratic governance:

Democracy does not mean and cannot mean that the people actually rule in any obvious sense of the terms ‘people’ and ‘rule.” Democracy means only that the people have the opportunity of accepting or refusing the men who are to rule them. But since they might decide this also in entirely undemocratic ways, we have had to narrow our definition by adding a further criterion identifying the democratic method, viz., free competition among would-be leaders for the vote of the electorate (Schumpeter, 1976, p.269).

Representation has, since then, become an inseparable category within democratic consciousness.

The Colonial Origin of Political Representation – The Birth of Indirect Rule

The success of the colonial occupation of Africa cannot be attributed to anything beyond the form of political, social and economic organizing systems employed to ensure that colonial subjects comply willingly, rather than by coercion. Nantang Ben Jua (1995) identified that the adoption of indirect rule created a lens through which colonized bodies re-think the act of colonial domination of “physical space”, the integration of “local economic histories into the Western perspective,” and the reformation of “the natives' minds” (para.1). In this system of government, the colonized were re-produced as either
“Anglicized” or “Francocized” (where applicable) acculturated beings led in the illusion of civility. In his book, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, Lord Lugard (1965) asserted that the system of indirect rule became an effective means of governing “cheaply while at the same time making traditional African rulers feel so comfortably recognized by the King and Queen of England that they would not be tempted to rebel against the Crown” (citing from Osabu-Kle, 2000, p.44). Indeed, idea of subservience increasingly became an important element in keeping control in the colonies, but this could alone be achieved at a cost the colonizers were not willing to pay. In this stead, indirect rule ensured that human resources used in this processes were harnessed from within as conduit whose allegiances were directed toward the crown, thus to abort any uprising.

Furthermore, the imposed system of rule created “an impression of parallel legitimacy, but this apparent legitimacy was mythical at best, because the indigenous political system and the superimposition of alien politics, which was an absolute dictatorship in which the governor was practically a demi-god whose word was power” (Osabu-Kle, 2000, p.45). The idea of inclusion of local citizens in the political process, while only mythical, preserved the “legitimacy” of the colonizers. Specifically, as of part of the politics of indirect rule, for instance, Britain decided, in their colonies, to educate and train Africans who will then serve in local colonial administration. As Fardon (1988) asserts, this decision was not arrived at because colonial administration lacked European manpower (p.271), for there were evidence to prove otherwise. Instead, this followed a carefully design policy of “Africanization” which stated that “the place of the Administrative Service should be taken by an improved system of Native Administration and local government” (Chilver, 1963, p.129). Colonial indirect rule, then, required the use of local chiefs and institutions to implement colonial policies:
“Chiefs appointed as Native Authorities were empowered to collect tax revenue within their jurisdictions for expenditure by the colonial Administrators or on their advice” (Ben Jua, 1995, para.3). Also, the cultivation of colonial interest and hold required the extension of power to sub-chiefs who were given tax disc to distribute as an act of political recognition (Ben Jua, 1995).

Indeed, the ultimate aim of this system of colonial dictatorship recognized the indispensability of social peace and cohesion in their efforts to foster unfettered exploitation. For this reason, Chilver (1963) pointed out that the Native Court systems were also empowered to arbitrate difference and punish dissidence. Above all else this system gave native sense of participation in the political system;

In Nigeria the post of president of the Native Authority court was filled by an indigene. In the Bamenda region the Divisional Officer (D.O.) acted as the final court of appeal, reversing a few judgments and modifying others. As a result, these Divisional Officers, *qua* virtual presidents, were referred to as *tafon*, i.e. the titular father of the chief (Chilver, 1963, p.116).

Additionally, the British colonial rulers introduced the “Native Authority system”, which initially took the form of clan councils and they dealt with administration and development issues (Chilver, 1963, p.128). But the inefficiency of this system became pervasive as the councils “had neither the scope nor the prestige to attract into its membership the really enlightened African of education and consequence in the community” (Chilver, 1963, p.129). This was a fundamental problem, in that these institutions selected administrators on the basis of their inherited title. To remedy this chronic problem threatening the legitimacy and interest of the colonizers, colonial heads like, Brigadier E.J. Gibbons, “proposed a system of elective county councils with subordinate Native Authorities below them, responsible to a Local Government Board which would be in charge of a unified local government staff”
(Chilver, 1963, p.129). Not only did this proposition helped improve the efficiency of local governance, but also injected the educated class into political structures.

The idea of inclusion and participation provided grounds for the colonizers to argue that their “domination” is merely an exercise of a democratic process, as the mandate to elect these official and administrator rested with the people (Osabu-Kle, 2000). The practice of political representation, though very efficient as a political practice, became implicated in the matrix of colonial domination. As an institutional practice, representation was subverted and used not for the common good of citizens, but instead for the justification of domination. Therefore, political representation in post-colonial Africa invokes, in its enactment, a symbolic metaphor of imperialism and neo-colonialism in as far as it still mimics the values and decadence of colonial domination.

**The Perversion of Traditional System – the Origin of Representation in the Post-colonial State**

The development of indirect rule in the colonial era served to undermine certain useful indigenous political systems. It changed the face of local politics entirely, while restricting local knowledge of rulership in finding an expression in modern political consciousness. The colonial era ensured that where local services and mediums were required, their (indigenous) authentic roles were perverted in order to serve the interest of the crown. As Osabu-Kle (2000) indicated, “indirect rule tended to be intensely painful for the chiefs, because they witnessed decades after decades of plunder and oppression but were so powerless (and the oppressor so ruthless) that they usually dared not complain about it” (p.45)
One of the major perversions of the indigenous system that occurred was the redefinition of the customary laws and the redesigning of the local political institutions. As Osabu-Kle (2000) cited the “superimposed system alone had the sole right of recognizing chiefs, so that the chiefs effectively became officers of the colonial administration and no longer responsible first to their own people, who had originally selected and made them chiefs. If for any reason the colonial state withdrew its recognition of a ruler, the person ceased to be a chief” (p.46). The coercive yet cohesive nature of colonial force ensured that these colonial policies were implemented without question. In cases were there appear to be opposition, colonial force was exerted on rulers. The banishment of Prempeh I of Ashanti, Ghana, to the Seychelles during the early part of the twentieth century served as a deterrent to any resistive force (Osabu-Kle 2000, p.45)

Osabu-Kle (2000) also pointed out that colonial procedures for terminating the appointment of chiefs were placed under constant revision, while “the subjects of chief were manipulated to keep these head persons in check” (p.47). As a result the power, respect, and authority of traditional rulers waned. Eventually, the colonial rulers succeeded in turning the people against their chiefs, and this immediately produced a deficit for the traditional political system. By the time of independence, for instance, the chiefs were painted as allies of the colonial system. This mistrust and suspicion seeped into the organization process for independence, as the main architects of the struggle shifted from chiefs to nationalist elites (Osabu-Kle 2000, p.47). Indeed, without the perversion of the roles of the traditional system national independence would have come sooner since mobilization of people would have been smoother and more effective. This also proves the effectiveness of representation in the controlling the action or inaction of democratic citizens.
However, once independence was achieved many modernizing elites made a mistake of substituting the distorted form of chieftaincy for the indigenous political system, and in instances where there was a call for a marriage between the western system and the indigenous form, the political system has reflected colonial legacies on both sides (Osabu-Kle 2000, p.47). Because, the colonial system of indirect rule lasted for as long as they were in power (over 3 generations or more), a whole traditional, political and economic sub-cultures emerged mired in colonial consciousness, which was later to resurface in post-colonial political doctrines as indigenous.

The Post-colonial State and the System of Political Representation

Claud Ake (1996) was quick to note that post-colonial political administration that took over from the colonial state, though saw significant changes in management, “the character of the state remained much as it was in the colonial era” (p.3). What was clearly visible was that the system of representation, besides bringing in a seemingly inclusive element of electorate determinacy, inevitably reproduced the colonial structures that it sought to abandon. As earlier indicated, the very pre-colonial values that were infused into the modern system were fundamentally tainted; hence the system produced was ironically doubly anchored in western ontology, which was later to re-echo as the rebirth of colonial domination, this time only on the mental level.

These doubly anchored Eurocentric legacies became a threat to the very nature and performance of the political institutions of the post-colonial state, albeit all efforts were directed at fracturing all ties to the oppressive structures. Bayart (1979) called this

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2 Note that this idea of electoral determinacy has equally been argued in colonial politics to figure predominantly in indirect rule. However, in post-colonial politics this system was institutionalized and reformed, at least, applied in broader and formal senses. Theoretically, elections, beyond selfish motives of the political engineers, paved the way for recycling of rulers who served other interest beyond the needs of citizens.
phenomenon a pervasive “hegemonic project” (cited in Ben Jua, 1995). Efforts of leaders to abort these deep seated ties, perhaps more than any palpable reason, inevitably alienated citizens who were by this time still acculturated and are not conflicted in resisting such Eurocentric identificatory labels. Indeed, the inherited political, cultural and economic structures perpetrated hegemonic values that created sense of nostalgia for coloniality; nostalgic for a sense of order and effective leadership; and a political space where, at least, worth of objective knowledge, rather than just blood-lineage, determines who can step into power positions and exercise power. Once the great depression (and this argument can equally be extended to the shadows of the depression marked by corruption and perpetual economic decline that emerged before the depression) hit, what was merely a nostalgic fantasy translate into excessive craven for order and efficiency, something often mistakenly symbolized as emblems of coloniality. Consequently, representatives opted for a construction of an “irresponsive” government, to limit any influence and demands for any identification that resembles “colonialism”. It is in this regard that a culture of citizens’ displacement in political life became prevalent.

Since the time of independence, many states, arguably though, have gone under an ever changing political system, mostly dictatorial regimes, as means to relocate an identity and conditions that is solely “theirs”, while always the legitimacy of such government temporarily rested with the people. But the journey from pre-colonial era into modern Africa has been long and the concept of indirect rule has become a core tenet in their democratic

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3 Here I am not arguing that post-colonial citizens necessarily craved for colonial domination, but the sense of order, discipline of government workers and ethical practices were popularly cherished.

4 “Arguable” because even scientific empirical evidence that sought to identify the source of this repetitive regime change plaguing post-colonial states, have identified multiple, and often contested, sources. Therefore, I do not intend to project a singular path in understanding this condition.
doctrine. The whole system of government has metamorphosed into a political institution where the citizens are acclaimed to indirectly manage the day-to-day activities of government through their representatives. The citizens are considered present in politics because, now the appointment of representatives rests solely with them.

However, Omano Edigheji (2006) argued that the processes of appointing representatives in Africa have failed to embrace the very idea of representation:

Often military rule; one person rule; despotic rule; ethnic conflicts (due partly to marginalization of minority groups); low participation of women, youth and the disabled; weak civil society, and patronage relationships are prominent features of Africa’s political space. Africa’s political elites use control of government for primitive capital accumulation – looting of the state coffers for personal gains and party political interest, especially by the incumbent party. As a consequence, the contest for political power has been marked by violence, intimidation, bribery and corruption (p.94).

Edigheji (2006) further argues that the very nature of political representation in independent Africa has developed a condition for habitual rigging of election and perpetual disputes over the outcomes of elections, which normally lead to political instability. This condition is further compounded by the absence of an “institutions of horizontal accountability,” such as independent electoral commissions that will check such political deficits. There are instance where such independent system of accountability exist, however their effectiveness are limited in their lack of capacity to conduct free and fair elections (Edigheji 2006, p.94).

Also, one of the major modern challenges to representative democracy has to do with allegiance and ambiguity in the roles of representatives. Remember that because traditional system of rule were not eradicated but were colonized and used as tools of colonial domination, with the emergence of the modern state, the traditional rulers still retain their place as non-elected representatives of their communities. The election of modern
political representative to work for communities where these traditional leaders still play a major role has lead to a conflict in role and in cases where traditional leadership has dictated a different path from modern representatives, conflicts have ensued. Many have argued that the place of traditional rulers are irrelevant in democratic processes, but the issue still remain that majority of citizens in African communities are still tied to their ethnic lineages, thus they nurture strong allegiance to the traditional symbols of authority (Edigheji 2006, p.94).

Conception of Political Representation – Stepping into Modern Paradigms

As categorically indicated earlier, an empirical definition of political representation does exist that will not provoke counter-claims, for, indeed, this area is a site of contestation, elaboration and redefinition divorced from a conceptual fixation. However, in a minimalist view, political representation has emerged in modern democratic scholarship as a medium where by the electorate select, through a regular, multiparty political contestations, a leader. Omano Edigheji (2006) recognized the importance of political representation to democracy and argues that it is “a key activity, a lifeline or linchpin that connects the citizenry to the government” (p. 156). Of course, a discourse of power that did not originally develop as an element in democracy, has now become a hallmark of democracy (Chamberlin and Courant 1983, quotation from Omano Edigheji 2006); a necessary condition for democracy, which in many cases legitimizes the exercise of power in democratic institutions. Thus, J.S. Mill (1862) asserts that;

The only government which can fully satisfy all the exigencies of the social state is one in which the whole people participate... But since all cannot, in a community exceeding a single small town, participate personally in all but minor portions of the public business, it follows that the ideal type of perfect government must be representative (p. 80).
Furthermore, Fairlie (1940) perceives representative democracy as a system of rule in which the “powers of sovereignty are delegated to elected representatives, who exercise them for the benefit of the whole nation” (p 456). In this stead, a reference to the concept of representation invokes a discursive undertaking that is fraught with historical trajectories, just as much as the constructions by our modern existence. The concept locates its meaning within the very structures of constructive political elements that produces the citizen, thus could be said to pre-exist the modern citizen.

**Theoretical Approaches**

*Introduction – Social/public Mood*

While the idea of public mood in political life has always been an issue and has garnered momentum in political discussion in Arica, especially after the Rwanda genocide, the theorization of public emotional disposition has often been contextualized and interpreted away its authentic political origins and effect. It is often treated solely as a cultural issue without careful attention to its trajectories and labyrinth of its excesses. Some historians of society are increasingly recognizing the relevance of “mood” as discursively constructed and constructive of political, social and economic lives. Indeed, the origins and trajectory of modern social and political reality, in itself are mired in the narratives of emotional life, hence makes it difficult for empirical researchers to quantify this unquantifiable phenomenon. But Mark Steinberg argues that, perhaps away from the statistico-empirical approaches, emotions could be read “as a text that can yield meaning, as

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5 Here I am borrowing Steinberg’s description of the years of uncertainty and drift following the 1905 revolution in Russia, before the country entered the maelstrom of total war and revolution. Steinberg indicated that, public life was thick with talk of emotions of citizen to government policies. It is in the atmosphere that the “social mood” or the “public mood” invaded scholarly concerns (p.813). It is in this idea of public mood that I situate my concerns. In this sense, I recognized the way citizens’ feel determine their reaction to the state.
a subjectivity situated in time and place, and as a form of social practice with real causative
effect in the world” (Steinberg, 2008, p.813). Specifically, the way citizens feel about their
place in the political process, especially in relation to, and position with, power structures,
helps illuminate our understanding of the future of the political life itself.

Social psychologists, anthropologists, literary scholars and historians have variously
theorized the intersection between sentimentality and political reality. Since the 1960s, the
view developed that emotions or sentiments are not a separate category from the “private,
and visceral sphere that occasionally seethes over into the world of consciousness but are
inseparably entwined with culture, language, and thought” (Steinberg, 2008, p.815). Steinberg
(2008) agrees that the spheres of public mood has always been a place of “social practice
organized by stories and images”, an experience that cannot be divorced from the “culturally
situated language and gestures in which it is conveyed” (p.815). Indeed, while Lila Abu-
Lughod and Catherine Lutz argued that “emotion discourse is only apparently about internal
state,” but more extensively, it remains an authentic discourse about “social life,” political
problems, and especially about power relations (cited in Steinberg, 2008, p.816). Without a
doubt, then, emotion discourse is fraught with interpretive capacity that can help reread
political reality; it is ”a form of social action that creates effects in the world” (Steinberg,

These theoretical approaches employed here to analyze political representation in
Nigeria and Ghana recognize that the discourse on public mood is not only produced as a
psychical enterprise, but also as sphere that sustains the representation as a sustainable
political practice. This does not underestimate the complexity of the origins and
development of public relations and sentiments toward the structures of representation
within democratic consciousness. But rather, I believe these lenses could offer a fresh understanding of the African condition. In this stead, this section crosses disciplinary boundaries to locate the multilayered sites of public discontentment as a product of the liberal representative democratic processes. This looks beyond the pervasive scholastic history of interpretation of public feeling and the trajectory of resistance within a specific disciplinary boundary.

**Hermeneutics of the Missing Signifier – The Displaced Political Subjects**

Critical approaches to theorizing the signifier recognize it fundamental binary signifier (McGowen, 2008, p.49). To Todd McGowen, failure to recognize the binary signifier leads to theoretical deficit irrecoverable by creativity or mere tact. Indeed, the presence of such a signifier sustains social harmony and prevents the perversion, corruption and colonization of the social order. It is the binary signifier that articulate the essence of the structure or the signifier: “One can envisage a different structure with a different binary signifier, but we cannot conceive of a successfully completed signifying structure or a structure without a missing [binary signifier]” (McGowen, 2008, p.49). The missing signifier undermines the relevance of the structure. For example, while many democratic structures are constituted on the fundamental principles of citizen’s engagements and participation/agency, binary signifier, which in this case is the democratic citizen, is missing. The gap created in this divorced fundamental relationship quickly become a site for contestation, strife and revolutions. It is not surprising that some psychoanalytic thinkers perceive current political practices as merely acts of reproducing and sustaining the gap marked by the missing signifier, without any urgency in reintegration or recuperation.
McGowan (2008) admits that the missing binary signifier has a structural relationship to all injustice: “it produces the imbalance that manifests itself in class society, racial difference, and male domination. But on the other hand, the absence of this signifier allows us to enter into the regime of language and escape relations of pure force. It results in an insurmountable injustice at the same time as it introduces the very possibility of conceiving justice” (p.50). Like McGowan, Jacques Derrida (1994) also recognized the virulence of missing signifier to structural stability and integrity: “To be ‘out of joint,’ whether it be present being or present time, can do harm and do evil, it is no doubt the very possibility of evil. But without the opening of this possibility, there remains, perhaps, beyond good and evil, only the necessity of the worst” (p 29). In this stead, the inaccessibility of, and to, the missing signifier pervert the sanctity of democratic institution. Not that democracies by nature are sanctimoniously pious systems without a place for injustice, for we have witnessed many democratic regimes legislate racial injustices and stiffen and supported the tightening of patriarchal grips around women’s liberation. But the idea of a displaced citizenship and the projection of political representation as counter-evidence of government responsiveness merely heightens public anxiety which often result in act that challenges government’s legitimacy.

In current politics of representation, there is an emergence of a counter ideological struggle between the elite, on the one hand, who try to eliminate the binary signifier, and the fundamentalist and liberationist, on the other, who attempts to unveil harsh treatment of the binary signifier. Elitists’ denial of the existence of the missing signifier aim at restructuring the constitution of the “social order through the unchallenged authority of the master signifier itself” (McGowan, 2008, p.52). Such a move is often characterized by invoking and
affirming the constitution as the “absolute arbiter of all social questions and views this word as unambiguous” (McGowan, 2008, p.52). As McGowen (2008) highlights, because a claim has been made via constitutional arbitration that there are no gap in the chain of signification, the need for “knowledge to compensate for the missing binary signifier” is perverted. (p.52). Elites in power then harness the ambiguity of the constitution on equality, liberty and freedom to recycle their hold on power. Therefore, rather than reform and compensation, the constitution then transforms the missing binary signifier as partially present; as meaningless signifier of moral rectitude and electoral subjects. It is only in this capacity, that democratic citizens are deemed present binary signifiers. Indeed, signifying democratic citizens as electorate and moral subjects – which is what the law work toward – eliminates the gap in the signifying chain that the missing signifier marks. Whereas the citizens enjoy the freedom they produce as moral subject, the electorate (they are transformed into every four years without fail under normal democratic process) is faced with reproducing the social order and the political representatives during election times. Elite patriarch acknowledges that this acts enabled presence of the missing signifier but ensures that it is not too empowered to reform the social order. The elite also succeed in transforming citizens into electorates and occasional participatory democrats, to authorize the presence of representatives, and this seemingly repair the structural incompleteness6.

However, the citizens have to be ideologically conditioned to believe that their presence in the structure is active rather than passive. They are groomed to believe that they are not at any point missing as signifiers in the signifying chain, and that all this while their

6 The theoretical exploration in this section was extracted in part from McGowan’s (2008) arguments and reworked through psychoanalytical frames to fit this engagement.
presence is what sustained the structure. To McGowen (2008), “the awareness of the missing signifier – the encounter with the gap within signification – emancipates the subject from the authority of the master signifier, which rules through the semblance of being a complete authority” (p.53)

**Beyond Hermeneutics: Psychoanalysis and the Missing Signifier**

In Seminar XI, Lacan indicates that “the way of developing signification offered by hermeneutics is confused, in many minds, with what analysis calls interpretation. It so happens that, although this interpretation cannot in any way be conceived in the same way as the aforementioned hermeneutics, hermeneutics, on the other hand, makes ready use of interpretation” (1978, p 8). In this claim the Hermeneutic approach to explaining the signifier resolves itself in an endless quest – “it is an unending process of seeking – but psychoanalytic interpretation finds without seeking” (Lacan, 1978, p.8). As for Lacan, then, “I [Lacan] have never regarded myself as a researcher. As Picasso once said, to the shocked surprise of those around him – I do not seek, I find” (1978, p 7). In turning to psychoanalysis, here, which does not in any way warrant the rejection of the Hermeneutic account, psychoanalytical approaches here offer a complimentary gaze, and opens the door to varying places of accounting for the missing signifier.

In this psychoanalytical account, then, Lacan, while recognizing the place of the missing binary signifier, cautioned us to approach the analysis of the missing signifier fully-and in this case not merely as inhabiting the margins or the outside of the structure but as a structuring presence. To McGowen, the hermeneutic position inhibits genuine political engagement, as it “allows the subject to avoid the political act of identifying itself with the missing signifier”. This approach does not only reconstruct the site of the missing signifier as
pleasurable capable of full citizenship but also a structure that should not be differentiated as external to the signifying structure but ensconced within “as that which give the structure form” (McGowan, 2008, p.59). Indeed, the missing signifier does not reside on a separate plane, but rather from the within the signifying structure: “Even the most banal moments of everyday life center around the missing signifier, which animates them with whatever vitality they possess” (McGowan, 2008, p.59). For example, despite the fact that democratic citizens are displaced from the democratic process, their role as laborers and their capital input still sustains the signifying structure.

To rethink the issue of the missing signifier through psychoanalysis, then, the condition of underrepresentation, misrepresentation and denial of representation are constructed as integral to the structure and will always exist in the face of growing populations, and this does not necessarily mean the denial of citizenship or rights. For this reason McGowen (2008) calls us to abandon the quest at integrating the missing signifier back into the signifying chain, for in the processes of reintegration or integration we end up producing other missing signifiers (p.61). We should, therefore, accept the condition of the missing signifier as inevitable, and also threat it as ensconced in the signifying structure;

Instead of attempting to conceive of the missing signifier from the perspective of the signifying system, one must conceive of the signifying system from the perspective of the missing signifier. By doing so, we would see that the missing signifier, despite appearances, does not concern those who are not properly represented. It concerns the system of signification itself, the law itself. The absence in the law is the founding moment of the law, not an otherness that the law cannot accommodate (McGowan, 2008, p.61).
Psychoanalysis, then, help focus our attention away from the missing signifier to the representatives, the law and the structures that sustains them. The missing signifier is merely a manifestation of the structure rather than its other.

**Theorizing Melancholia**

But what breaks the hold of grief except the cultivation of the aggression that grief holds at bay against the means by which it is held at bay?

Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*

Freud’s (1989) article, “Mourning and Melancholia”, has increasingly become a *locus classicus* for investigating the ways in which loss and trauma discursively produce a subject whose actions are driven entirely by these sentiments. While contentious, these two theoretical approaches have increasingly become progressive medium through which the dynamics and the psychical expressions of the subject can fully be interrogated. The usefulness and application of Freud’s theory of lose and trauma is purposive, as it allows this investigation to locate the origin of resistance within representative democracies, seeing that the current form of political representation in Africa is built structures and sensibilities of the traumatic colonial experience. Indeed, the traumatic experience of colonialism, which often cast its shadows in post-colonial political, economical, social and cultural spaces, and the loss of agency and sense of ownership of the political process, continually shape and determine the course of democracy in many post-colonial states.

To accurately contextualize the relevance of the concept of melancholia as a pathological condition, I first will elucidate it essence in relation to its original cognate—the concept of mourning. In “Mourning and Melancholia,” Freud (1989) makes a distinction between these two concepts, though he recognized that both conditions originate from a common source: loss and trauma. In his elaboration, Freud maintains that while melancholia
and mourning are originally reactions to loss and trauma, they differ in the way they deal with them. Concept of mourning, as indicated by Freud, is the “normal affect accomplished once all object-cathexes are withdrawn from the lost object and displaced onto a new object” (cited in Gana 2006, p.96; elaborate engagement can be found in Freud, 1989). Indeed, it is a normal grieving processes when after the period of going through the emotions of loss and trauma, the subject detaches him/her self from the object loss and reinvest the free “libido” into another object. Hence, within a post-colonial political spaces, for instance, a normal mourning process of colonial and imperialist traumas, will be for the political subject to withdraw that attachment with past conditions and invest that energy into the present building a new world as though the past never occured. In this case, memory of the past is annihilated (if possible) and in its place political subjects are forced to erect new images and memories of the present condition. This is not to underestmate the pervasiveness of past memories when it is woven into the mosaic of present conditions, so much so that you cannot experience the present without experiencing the past. However, this theoretical model suggest that because in the psychical construction of the mourning subject, the lost object is merely integrated into the texture of the psyche, it makes is easy to redraw the energy invested into the lost object and reinvest it into another object (Freud, 1989).

Alternatively, melancholia occurs when the subject deteriorate into a libidinal fixation on the loss object. This unfaltering fixation on the lost object, then, “culminates in a regressive process of incorporating, if not devouring, the lost other—a process which might eventually enact a primary narcissism” and which Freud elaborate carries a pathological disposition (Gana 2006, p.97; more elaborate engagement can be found in Freud 1989).
Unlike mourning, this fixation requires a constant recall of the past memories, for instance, of political freedom, equality, agency and justices, to challenged democratic mediums that imposes undemocratic conditions on the political subject. Alternatively, memories of traumatic colonial past necessarily exert its pressure of political spaces that mimic the past. This fixation, then, asserts a pathological condition of melancholic subject, with the lost object engraved on the psyche, “and the cathetic ties with it are intensified rather than relaxed” (Freud 1989, p.586), making it impossible for the subject to escape the lures of the memories of lost object. In other words, “the reconciliation with reality consoles the ego for its loss in mourning, while in melancholia the very denial of loss devolves into an unbreakable fixation on the object” (Gana 2006, p.97). To Judith Butler, the mechanism of melancholia is essential to the ego formation and character building, as well as the formation of identity categories. The permanently engraved lost object on the ego ensures that the subject does not betray his/her identity specification and category.

Of course, the traumas of colonialism and the lost of pre-colonial emancipated self remain dominant constructive forces in the formation of the psyche of current political subjects. In this claim, I aim to echo that the political subject is essentially a historical production, whether directly (as a result of living during the period of colonialism) or indirectly (imbibing and internalizing the cultural and social teachings that emerged as opposition to challenge colonialism/neo-colonialism). In this process of ego formation, the self emerge as a site of resistance of any structure attributed to colonial or neo-colonial emblems. Contrary, writers like Francis Fukuyama interestingly privileges the idea of ahistorical development of the state on the path to liberal democracy (in its varying manifestations); “the century that began full of self-confidence in the ultimate triumph of
Western liberal democracy seems at its close to be returning full circle to where it started: not to an ‘end of ideology’ or a convergence between capitalism and socialism, as earlier predicted, but to an unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism”. In this claim progression into liberal democracy becomes inevitable, and a pre-condition in the development process of all states. Here, I also get the sense of “inevitability”, (as argued by Fukuyama) not necessarily dictated by “external forces” exerting their demands on weaker states, but rather a condition inherent in the “historical” process that of itself will lead all nations into this sphere of liberal democracy. This view not only betray human agency as a diverse category that does not inform history linearly, but also distort ways in which the psyche is form and the trajectory of its expression. The melancholic subject will not act in a manner that the liberal democratic measures will instruct. The aggregation of such acts, therefore, will lead to an alternative historical movement away from that sense of inevitability of political representation. What, then, happens when liberal democracy, and it demands for representation, deny avenues for otherness, is that the “other” constantly seek ways to undermine the structure that eliminated it.

As Judith Butler (1997) further argues, this kind of identification with the lost object is not “simply momentary or occasional,” but rather it becomes a “new structure of identity; in effect, the other becomes part of the ego through permanent internalization of the other’s attribute” (p.74). It is the counter-identity that forms within representative political milieu that resists condition perpetrated through these political institutions such as alienation of the political subject from the political process, inequality, repressed agency, and marginalization. The forging of spaces to enact loses of loved object and traumatic experiences are merely
reactionary aimed at undermining structures that emblematize the enactment of these traumatic memories. As for Freud;

> We succeed in explaining the painful disorder of melancholia by supposing that an object which was lost has been set up again inside the ego—that is, that an object – cathexis has been replaced by an identification. At that time however, we did not appreciate the full significance of this process and did not know how common and how typical it is. Since then we have come to understand that this kind of substitution has a great share in determining the form taken by the ego and that it makes an essential contribution toward building up what is called its character (cited in Gana 2006, p.98).

Rather than the inevitability of ahistoricity, the compelling psychical development of the subject by history itself, open avenues for this research to rethink, say, the reasons of repetitive violence within electoral spaces in post-colonial states as evidence of reality that seeks alternative expression beyond (and perhaps within) the confines of democracy. Looking closely at the dynamics and prevalence of these kinds of “irrational” act, it’s fair to assume that there are forces at work that explain these conditions, perhaps beyond the well plowed empirical medium of scientific approaches that often reduce political reality to liberals fantasies.

**Melancholia and the Perversion of the Ethical Subject**

To Zizek, the law in psychoanalysis refers to the superego (Zizek 1994, p.54); “the psychical dimension through which the accusatory and normalising aspects of juridical power that are identified by Foucault successfully interpellate subjects” (Warwick Tie 2004, p.168). The idea of the law has also been used, especially in political studies, in a narrow sense to refer to the human institution of judicial command – the “public law” – through which the mechanisms of propriety is established and the ethical subject emerges as the idea of good citizen (Zizek 1994, p.54–82). While the distinction is clearly, one should bear in
mind that the super ego is only formed as a result of internalizing the law produced through the political so as to keep the ego in check from manifesting excesses. Super ego ensures that the body does not deviate from social norms, and without the super ego there cannot be any social or ethical restriction on the body (Freud, 1989).

In conformity with Zizek’s psychical formation of the law, then, and perhaps a departure from Foucaultian sovereignty, I embrace the idea in psychoanalytic analysis of power that there exist a binary structure of the law within the psychic life of the subject, which is the unconscious—a “supplement that supplies law with its dynamism, an ‘obscene superego double’” (Zizek, 2002, p.38). The presence of the law suggest that the “transgressive subject exists whose transgression of the prevailing norms warrants the exercise of juridical accusation and judgment” (Zizek, 2002, p.38). Psychoanalysis, then, radicalizes this proposition by suggesting that the transgressive “other” “establishes law such that it was there, as it were, prior to the power which named it” (Zizek, 2002, p.38).

To explore this further, Levinas (1994) argues that the ethical subject is only produced as a response to the other. To contextualize the other, Levinas, in *Totality and Infinity*, invokes the idea of the “face” as the “nexus of ethics”; the “face” being “the way in which the other presents himself, exceeding the idea of the other in me” (p.50). The other is a site

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7 In his critical text, *To the Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas*, Adriaan Peperzak assert that the “‘Face’ is the word Levinas chooses to indicate the alterity of the Other forbidding me to exercise my narcissistic violence ... The Other regards me and speaks to me; you are my interlocutor; ‘the face speaks’”(p.64). Peperzak also indicates that “The Other’s face is the revelation not of the arbitrariness of the will but its injustice ... in his face, the Other appears to me not as an obstacle, nor as a menace I evaluate, but as what measures me”(p.116). Understanding Levinas’ meaning of the face is crucial to understanding his philosophy of ethics. In this stead, while the face is largely metaphorical, also represents both the other and what one must do for the other.
of infinity\textsuperscript{8} “in its refusal to be contained. In this sense it cannot be comprehended, that is, encompassed” (p.194). In this sense, the political subject is only ethical and obedient to the law because it recognizes the creativity of the unconscious and cannily negotiates an expression away from it.

Furthermore, in “Melancholy and the Act” Slavoj Žižek acknowledges that in the subject’s persistent narcissistic identification with the lost object, the ethical position deteriorates. To Zizek, then, impact of melancholia on the ethical subject has complex and yet disabling psychological ramifications, which also, as an authentic condition, extend into the realms of the political and social. In this argument, he resist against other persuasive theoretical arguments promulgated mostly by post-colonial scholars that embrace the idea that melancholia, in fact, has a positive capacity. To these scholars, post-colonial ethnic groups “should not renounce their traditions through mourning, but retain the melancholic attachment to their lost roots” (p.658). Since these ethnic identities are contingent, predominantly, on their pre-colonial selves, resisting post-colonial identificatory links only serves to reinforce a self unique, authentic and free from subjections. He explains that the “melancholic link to the lost ethnic Object allows us to claim that we remain faithful to our ethnic roots while fully participating in the global capitalist game” (659). While being very careful not to entangle himself in the web that could easily label his work as a betrayal of post-colonial studies, Zizek, recognizing the validity in such post-colonial position, indicates that “what is wrong with the postcolonial nostalgia is not the utopian dream of a world they never had (such a utopia can be thoroughly liberating) but the way this dream is used to

\textsuperscript{8} The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy clarifies Levinas’s use of infinity: “insofar as Infinity means the not-finite, it refers to the unmasterable quality of human expression” (SEP http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/levinas/#LogTotInf).
legitimize the actuality of its very opposite, of the full and unconstrained participation in global capitalism” (p. 659). In this claim, he questions the pre-colonial realities that ethnic communities often embrace to authenticate their identities. Not only does Zizek think this is post-colonial nostalgia but also it is a reality that never at any point in the pre-colonial history existed. This idea pushes against the thriving idea of the existence of pre-egalitarian and functional decentralized democratic arrangements that existed in many African communities popularly projected by Osabu-Kle among others.

To explore further this “empty” post-colonial nostalgia, Zizek invokes the idea of Anamorphosis. To him the status of anamorphosis designates an object whose very material reality is distorted in such a way that a gaze is inscribed into its objective features. A face that looks grotesquely distorted and protracted acquires consistency; a blurred contour, a stain, becomes a clear entity if we look at it from a certain biased standpoint and is this not one of the succinct formulations of ideology? Social reality may appear confused and chaotic, but if we look at it from the standpoint of anti-Semitism, for example, everything becomes clear and acquires straight contours (p.659).

Anamorphosis, then, “undermines the distinction between objective reality and its distorted subjective perception; in it, the subjective distortion is reflected back into the perceived object itself, and, in this precise sense, the gaze itself acquires a supposedly objective existence” (p.659). Therefore, Zizek may argue that the call for pre-colonial ethnic identity, political mediums, or forms of social cohesion, is wholly determined by a distorted gaze now refined as objective existence. Often, it is this projected image that the ego internalizes and suddenly become a site of affections from which the ego has been forceful evacuated. Therefore, the ego embarks on an endless journey to relocate this site, even if it is merely nostalgic. To Zizek, then, melancholy eliminates the possibility for an ethical relationship with the distorted image, and without this relationship, the possibility for social justice is
eliminated (Zizek, 2000). The real becomes elusive, and because it is mired in colonial constructions of the real, the pursuit and performance of the nostalgic reality inevitably articulate the subjectivity of the post-colonial subject.

**The Subject, Representation and Resistance**

Gideon Baker (2005), in his assessment of Nietzsche’s idea of the constitution of the subject, concluded that “the only escape from nihilism involves the individual becoming the authority for himself, which is, at once, to become responsible for himself” (p.157). Baker, however, restricted the application of his conclusion to the broader application of the analysis of political representation. But regardless of his caution one can equally recognize that the individual is not so isolated from the political system but integral to it. The act of representation does not necessarily mean the represented willingly relinquishes his sense of responsibility to the representative. Therefore, the subject do retain that sense of agency, and it becomes more apparent, when denied representation of interest by elected representative, so he/she agitates for recognition.

For Michel Foucault, as for Nietzsche, the constitution of the subject emerges from distinct historical trajectory. In this constitution, Foucault highlights that;

> We believe that feelings are immutable, but every sentiment, particularly the noblest and most disinterested, has a history. We believe in the dull constancy of instinctual life and imagine that it continues to exert its force indiscriminately in the present as it did in the past. But a knowledge of history easily disintegrates this unity, depicting its wavering course ... We believe, in any event, that the body obeys the exclusive laws of physiology and that it escapes the influence of history, but this too is false. The body is moulded by a great many distinct regimes ... Nothing in man—not even his body—is sufficiently stable to serve as the basis for self-recognition or for understanding other men (1984, p.87-8).

The historicization of the subject, to Foucault destabilizes the idea of objective knowledge of both the self and others, in its absence the central ontological grounds for the justification of
representation is undermined: for there is no justification for representation without an objective knowledge of the needs of the represented. In the act of representation, then, Baker (2005) argues that, the subject emerges;

rather than imprinting the formal public sphere (through selection of representatives) with political identities formed more or less ‘autonomously’ and ‘authentically’ in civil society,” as an entity with “a political identity (made up as subjects who recognize themselves as citizens) through, amongst other things, the dividing practice that is the modern institution of representation (p.164).

To Baker, then, the act of representation has a dividing capacity, where the represented are constituted as a different category in relation to power from the representative. The inability of the representative to be imbued with an objective knowledge of the interest and needs of the represented, not only deepen the sense of divisiveness, but also provide legitimate ground for the represented to seek better conditions of representation. Yet idea of citizenship requires that subject, in this construction, to accept that this divisiveness is only ever formal, beyond which this formality crumbles under the pressure of practical egalitarianism. But this division does not disappear, it transforms into a structure of repression.

Foucault argues that;

If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn’t only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than a negative instance whose function is repression (1984, p. 61).

Here, not only does the act of representation works as a dividing practice that represses, but to Foucault, citizens placed in this form of relation to power are produced as docile political subject through disciplinary forces; “imposing a normalised model of the political subject, or
citizen, as someone who is represented” (cited in Baker, 2005 p.164). But the danger in this is that, these same forces responsible for citizen’s docility “can also turn the productive faculties invested in the [political subject] against regimes of power that threaten to accede to domination” (Conway, p. 65; cited in Baker 2005). This highlight instance where the political subject, as part of excluded groups—be it racial minorities, ethnic minorities, or even marginalized identity groups—are involuntarily forced to the service of hegemonic modes of representation. Here, we see how the missing signifier can transform itself into subjects of resistance to forces of representation.

The act of resistance is produced in response to imbalances in the relations of power: “as soon as there is a power relation, there is a possibility of resistance” (Foucault, 1977, p. 160.). Foucault asserts that;

One must observe that there cannot be relations of power unless subjects are free. If one or the other were completely at the disposition of the other and became his thing, an object on which he can exercise an infinite violence, there would not be relations of power. In order to exercise a relation of power, there must be on both sides at least a certain form of liberty (Foucault, 1988, p. 12.)

If representation, in its divisive nature, is bound to repress the subject—for Foucault view it is a relation of power, which requires an object to exercise infinite violence—then the resistive reaction of the represented to this violence, is only diffused with the provision of liberty for the subject. Foucault (1988) elaborated further on this liberty;

When an individual or social group manages to block a field of relations of power, to render them impassive and invariable and to prevent all reversibility of movement—by means which can be economic as well as political or military—we are facing what can be called a state of domination (p. 3.).

This echoes my earlier consent, much beyond Osabu-Kle’s, that the location of the missing signifier should not be demonized and demobilized so that there is no way of transitioning
into the state of power. Fluidity in the structures of power relation, may abort concern of resistance, for locations in political consciousness should only become temporal and open for movement, without any room for colonization by the representative.
Chapter Three: The Mode of Political of Representation in Ghana

In his book, *Discipline and Punishment: the Birth of the Prison*, Foucault (1977) argued that human beings are objects of a creative force within their historical movement, wholly shaped by their times, places, and societies, and thus, have no transcendent, or timeless identity. To buttress Foucault’s assertion, Homi Bhabha (1990) seems to construct the modern state, in his chapter, “DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation”, as a gathering of people (p.139). These gatherings of people, which Foucault claims are without timeless identity, Homi Bhabha emphasizes “are not simply historical events or parts of a patriotic body politic” (1990, p.145). They are “a complex rhetorical strategy of social reference: their claim to be representatives provoke a crises within the process of signification and discursive address” (Bhabha, 1990, p.145). For Foucault, as for Bhabha, it is problematic, then, to solely analyse any particular nation away from the complex historical events that originally produced it. National identity and political conditions become lenses through which we can discursively deconstruct and recuperate the present. The current mode of political representation in Ghana is fraught with historical underpinnings beyond the assumed rhetoric of historic linearity of liberal democratic determinacy. This chapter, then, focuses attention on the mode of political representation in Ghana, highlighting the historical contexts, through which the post-colonial nation emerged as a memory of both the past and the present. My particular interest here is how historical legacies both from the colonial past and post-colonial negotiation still inform and define institutional mandate, frameworks and mediums through which the system of political representation is organized. This chapter also is in part dedicated to the interrogation of electoral policies, constitutional mandates, and legal frameworks that sustains or undermines the very nature of the
representative democratic practices. By analyzing these policies and provisions, I entertained avenues of reading the current decentralization efforts as merely aesthetic appeal, with limited avenues to shape policy outcomes.

**Historical Trajectory**

Ghana was the first sub-Saharan African country to gain independence and since then has “experienced several diverse forms of government, including a Westminster-style of parliamentary democracy, a socialist single-party republic” (Ladouceur 1977, p.348), and five military regimes following coups d’état in 1966, 1972, 1978, 1979 and 1981. Like many other developing countries in West Africa, Ghana has constantly been plagued by post-independence political instability. Paul Ladouceur (1977) highlights that;

The ‘political kingdom’ has come to mean, not to govern, or to govern wisely, but rather to win by election or by a coup. Ghana has entered a period of political stagnation parallel to the economic stagnation of the last decade or two. Hopefully it will nonetheless find its way to... a stable form of government, perhaps different from what it might be expected (p.348).

The intermittent coup that inhibits the free flow of democratic politics, are often attributed to multiple sources, but most of these reasons emphasize the irresponsive nature of the political systems. The idea of irresponsive government has consistently been argued to trigger resistance on a large and devastating scale.

The current political condition, then, assert a complex historic formation that embraces both the structural memories of the past and the political negotiations of the present demands. The historic memory of the past political arrangements is not so alienated from the present as many will like to believe, as emblems of structural defect still typifies the failures of the past. Obviously, the political journey from the post-colonial to the present has been long and hard. This journey started in February 1951, when Dr. Kwame Nrumah, the
leader of the Convention People's Party's (CPP) struggle for “self-government now” produced opportunity, not only for the emergence of an independent state, but also the whole Africa continent to hope for change. The party emerged victorious in a national election, and Kwame Nkrumah was elected as the leader of Government's business in the British colony's first African government. Once self-government was achieved, it was just a matter of time for the colony to crumble under the pressure of popular demand for independence. On 6th March 1957, Ghana finally achieved independence—again, the first British colony in Africa to do so—and Nkrumah became its first Prime Minister. On 1st July 1960, Ghana became a republic with Kwame Nkrumah as its first President. Through a pan-Africanist’s political strategy coupled with an ambitious socialist’s political agendas, Nkrumah and the CCP administration were able to lay the necessary political foundations for a viable economic and social transformation of the new nation. However, as a result of numerous threats and a couple of assassination attempts, the Nkrumah’s administration grew increasingly irresponsible to popular demands. To prevent future threats on Nkrumah’s political life, the Preventive Detention Act (PPDA) was passed to arrest people that this administration considered a threat to the President, without trial (Ghanaweb 1994).

The growing dissatisfaction of Ghana citizens to Nkrumah’s approach to governing was soon exploited to justify the overthrow of this administration. Nkrumah was overthrown on February 24, 1966 by joint force of the Ghana armed forces and the police. The National Liberation Council (NLC), headed by Lt. General Joseph Arthur Ankrah, was formed after the overthrow to rule the nation. Subsequently, General Ankrah was removed from office in April 1969, allowing the Lt. General Akwasi Amankwa Afrifa to be appointed Chairman of the NLC. Misunderstanding and growing tension between various factions
within the NLC, placed considerable pressure on the administration to reform, hence a three-man Presidential Commission was formed with General Afrifa as chairman (Ghanaweb 1994).

In 1969, the NLC officially relinquished power allowing the course of democracy to return into the political sphere. A general election held in 1969 voted overwhelmingly for the Progress Party (PP) government, with Dr. Kofi Abrefa Busia elected as Prime Minister and Mr. Edward Akufo Addo as president (Ghanaweb 1994). The PP administration, while very young embraced certain policies that fractured core communitarian ideals. It is argued that because of the communitarian doctrines of unity and equality upon which the independence of the country was engineered, the strict neo-liberal capitalist approaches adopted dissolved popular allegiance to this regime. This then provided the impetus for the overthrow of this administration.

On January 13th, 1972, the Ghana armed forces return to power when they overthrew the Busia regime. After the overthrow, Colonel (later General) Ignatius Kutu Acheampong became the Head of State and Chairman of the National Redemption Council (NRC). As justification for the overthrow, Col. Acheampong accused Dr. Busia of permitting excessive international influence thereby alienating Ghanaian citizens from policy concerns (Boafo-Arthur, p.9). The NRC administration shifted politics back to the people by growing the economy from within. This form of politics engaged the ordinary citizen at both the macro and micro levels, where the small and big communities were encouraged to harness the potential within their communities to grow the economy. Indeed, his politics of self-reliance boosted economic growth.
Despite the fact that it took a military regime to bring back citizens into the political process and to prove that self-reliance can generate social, political and economic benefits, Acheampong was overthrown through a “palace coup in 1978” (Boafo-Arthur, p.9). The Supreme Military Council (SMC) regime led by General Fred Akuffo took political power from the NRC. This regime returned to embrace the same neo-liberal capitalist agendas that fractured citizens’ engagement. Immediately, the irresponsiveness of the regime showed, triggering massive opposition to the SMC rule. On June 4, 1979, the Armed Forced Revolutionary Council (AFRC), led by J.J Rawlings came to power after overthrowing General Akuffo. The AFRC embarked on a massive reform in the armed forces and in the Ghanaian societies. The sense of moral responsibility and the principle of accountability and probity in public life were restored. After four months in power, Rawlings handed over power, after a general election, to Dr. Hilla Liman on September 24, 1979 (Ghanaweb 1994).

The economic and political structures deteriorated under Lemann’s administration, hence creating a vacuum for overthrow. The 31st December 1981 overthrow saw the return of Flt. Lt. Rawlings as the Chairman of a Provisional National Defense Ruling Council (PNDC). The PNDC was later to become the National Democratic Congress (NDC) in its bid to restore democracy back to the national life. Therefore, after almost 11 years of authoritarian rule, the NDC officially purged its self when on November 3, 1992, this administration was elected into power in a presidential elections. Flt. Lt. Rawlings was given a political mandate in this election when he polled 58.8% of the 3,989,020 popular votes. This administration also won 198 out of the 200 seats in parliament, when the opposition National Patriotic party boycotted this election. Rawlings was reelected in 1996 for a second term to reaffirm the consolidation of Ghana’s democracy (Ghanaweb 1994).
On the December 7th, 2000, the nation successfully and democratically handed power to the National Patriotic Party (NPP), electing John A. Kufuor as President. Also very interestingly, the NPP won 100 of the 200 seats in Parliament, while the NDC had 92 seats. Independent and small party candidates won the eight seats left. In the December 28, 2004, Kufuor was reelected, and the party was able to maintain the 100 seats in Parliament. He democratically relinquished power to the National Democratic Congress (NDC) after serving his two terms in office.

The Electoral System

The general trends in the electoral processes has improved and progressed rather successfully as the process has become increasingly free and fair (Ayee 1997, Gyimah-Boadi 2001). However, the road to the current state has been rough and challenging. From low points of repetitive violence, rejection of election outcomes resulting in fighting and killing among supporters of opposition parties mostly in the Northern regions, through the 1992 massive parliamentary election boycotted by the NPP, to the period of one party domination, the political atmosphere that surrounded election period has transformed in ways that seemingly promote peace and stability in the country. Of course, while legitimacy of election results are still contested, encouragingly, these forms of contestation refrain from deteriorating into political instability. Gordon Crawford (2004) attributed such improvements to the independent nature of the Ghana Electoral Commission (EC), as established under the 1992 Constitution. While we cannot attribute entirely the transformation from a very violent resistive culture to a pseudo-peaceful milieu to the potency constitution alone, it is worth noting that prior to 1992 mandate, citizens’ who have
predominantly reacted in many violent ways to demand the abortion of illegitimate election result, have currently restrain in their efforts to such demands.

However, Smith (2002) acknowledged that with the transformations made toward a politically stable society, as reinforced by the independent electoral process, one problem that still aches this consolidating democratic process is the bloated Voters’ Register. Many have argued that, perhaps, more than any weakness in the electoral process, the ailing condition of a bloated Voters’ Register threatens the sustainability and legitimacy of election results in the country (Crawford, 2004). Indeed, the responsibility of shaping the electoral processes largely depends on government. As indicated by Map Consult (2002) “the Electoral Commission’s ability to implement such reforms depend largely on its capacity, principally determined in turn by Government funding, regarded as ‘well below the requirements and subject to unpredictable timing’” (citing from Crawford, 2004; p.5). Therefore, with government inability to provide the necessary resource to strengthen this process could mean an increase in agitation in reaction to election results that does not necessarily reflect citizens’ choice.

**Bloated Voters’ Register**

Map Consult (2002, p.18) described the registration of voters as the “Achilles’ heel of election administration in Ghana” (cited from Crawford, 2004, p. 5). The pervasive problem of bloated Voters’ Register constantly threatens the legitimacy of election results. It has constantly formed the impetus for political instability in the country. The chair of the Electoral Commission, Dr Kwadwo Afari-Gyan, openly admitted in December 2000, just before the election was held, that the register was “not in the best of shape” (Salia 2000, cited in Crawford 2004: p.6). Afari-Gyan’s major concern was that there was a substantial
“bloating” of the register. For instance, the provisional 2000 census figures that were released indicated that the population of the nation was around 18.4 million, and roughly half of whom were constitutionally qualified to vote; “yet, according to the EC’s own figures, nearly 10.7 million names appeared on the voters register, roughly 58% of the country's total population. Using the census data as a benchmark, the EC’s register was bloated with more than 1.5 million ghost voters” (Smith 2002, p.624). Crawford (2004) admitted that this problem occurs due mostly to “the failure to remove the names of deceased persons, the fraudulent registration of minors, and registration in more than one district” (p.6).

By the year 2000, this electoral anomaly has increasingly become a major concern, as Ghana had made tremendous efforts toward consolidating its democracy. Smith (2002) argued that this problem of bloated voter’s register pre-existed this particular election, and it will be naïve to assume that the voter register could be purged overnight. Smith indicated that, in 1992, for instance, “the presidential election was marred by a hastily compiled and clearly bloated voters’ register, an electoral commission appointed by President Jerry J. Rawlings that the opposition regarded as partisan, and an electoral process open to manipulation” (Lyons 1999, p.161, cited in Smith 2002, p.630). As a result, the legitimacy of the election results was threatened and the opposition party projected issue as undermining the primacy of popular rule.

By 1996, however, the conditions have slightly improved. By this time, through a collaborative effort and assistance by the Inter-Party Advisory Committee (IPAC), and the international donor community, the EC was able to clean the registration process and deleted some ghost names from the register (Smith 2002). Additionally, with the assistance
of the USAID, the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), the British
government, and several other international donors, substantial resource were raised, since
by this time government was financially crippled to assist in any meaningful electoral
improvement efforts, to “finance a pilot photo ID card exercise - embarked upon a new
compilation of the voters’ register prior to the 1996 election” (Smith 2002, p.624).

Despite all the collaborative efforts and the substantial money that was spent, Gyimah-Boadi (1999) asserted that “the 1996 elections were marred by serious lapses. The voter registration figures alone are disturbing. How could 9.2 million voters be registered in a country with only about 17 million people, many of whom are under the age of 15” (p.415)?

Table 1: Turnout in Presidential Election, 1996 and 200

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Registered Voters</th>
<th>Total Valid Votes</th>
<th>Valid Turnout %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>9,279,605</td>
<td>7,145,774</td>
<td>77.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200 (7 Dec)</td>
<td>10,698,652</td>
<td>6,500,870</td>
<td>60.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200 (28 Dec)</td>
<td>10,698,652</td>
<td>6,381,387</td>
<td>59.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Smith 2002

The severity of the bloated voter’s register that is threatening to undermine the legitimacy of Ghana’s democratic efforts resisted the pressures of the collaboration and the money spent, and by 2000 election this problem has resurfaced not only to undermine the electoral process, but also to create doubt about the robustness of the democratic process itself in marginalizing the privatization of rule. The EC attributed the pervasive condition to “an undercount of the total population by those who conducted the census. If Ghana’s population was higher than 18.4 million - say 20 million - the 10.7 million names of the
register would look more credible” (Smith 2002, p.625). However, while acknowledging the fact that the EC have removed over 120,000 ghost names from the register, Afari-Gyan still insisted that the register still suffers from “bloating”, as fraudulent registration of minors, especially in the Ga District of Greater Accra, still persist and the fact that some voters mistakenly register in two or more districts (Centre for Democratic Development 2000).

Table 2: Registered Voter by Region, 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Registered Voters</th>
<th>Population Registered %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greater Accra</td>
<td>2,909,643</td>
<td>1,845,889</td>
<td>63.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashanti</td>
<td>3,187,601</td>
<td>1,976,959</td>
<td>62.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volta</td>
<td>1,612,299</td>
<td>983,588</td>
<td>61.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>1,842,878</td>
<td>1,076,778</td>
<td>58.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brong-Ahafo</td>
<td>1,824,822</td>
<td>1,041,920</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>2,108,852</td>
<td>1,187,573</td>
<td>56.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>1,580,047</td>
<td>870,876</td>
<td>55.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper West</td>
<td>573,860</td>
<td>303,264</td>
<td>52.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper East</td>
<td>917,251</td>
<td>480,894</td>
<td>52.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>1,854,994</td>
<td>930,911</td>
<td>50.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18,412,247</td>
<td>10,698,652</td>
<td>58.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Smith 2002
Measure taken to curb forces that undermining the legitimacy of election outcome forced the EC to instruct that voters must show proof of photo identification issued by the commission in order to vote (Donkor & Ablordeppey 2000). However,

Three days before the 7 December elections, however, the Supreme Court upheld a legal challenge by a supporter of the ruling National Democratic Congress (NDC) contesting the EC's ruling. The suit alleged that as many as 2.5 million people whose names were on the register would be disenfranchised because they were unable to obtain a photo ID from the EC (Smith 2002, p.627).

The court refusal to risk disenfranchising over 2.5 million voters, allowed individuals with no form of identification but had their names on the questionable voter’s register to vote, only if the presiding officer was convinced of their identity (Smith 2000). Likewise, party agents at the various polling stations were also allowed to “question voters about their identity, but the final decision of whether an individual could vote was left to the presiding officer” (Smith 2000, p.625).

With the problem deepening with each held election, representatives seeking office (and have the money) have exploit these lapses, and there have been occasion where illegal voters have been provided with fake identifications to vote in neighboring constituencies or multiple polling centers. Also, votes are bought from people who already have these fake identification cards or those with legitimate identification but can vote in multiple centers. In this case, many people ascend to offices they are not legitimately authorized, hence diminishes the sense of accountability that sustains the whole process. Indeed, with the pervasiveness of this problem, accountability to the people is no longer the driving impetus for reelection but rather financial capabilities. The wealthy elite have now colonized these processes, and since their accountability means little for reelection, they have grown increasingly irresponsible to citizen’s needs.
Political Parties

Sandbrook and Oelbaum (1999) asserted that the consolidation of democracy requires an institutionalized political party system with substantial “support for the ‘conventional wisdom’ of a two-party system as ‘most conducive to stable democratic governance’” (p.28). Of course, multi-party system has for a long time been part of Ghana’s democratic process. However, since 1992 the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) have been the dominant forces in the national political process. In many respect these political parties are well institutionalized, yet the deficiencies in the political process still pose a threat to the promises of inclusion and thereby reinforcing the limitation of the capacity for all citizen’s to participate in the electoral process (no matter the role they choose to play—whether as represented or representative).

One major constraint of developing a strong institutional capacity of political parties is the weak financial base of the parties (Sandbrook and Oelbaum 1999, p.30). In the face of unstable financial flow to support intra- and inter-political party’s activities, the party in power have significantly benefited from state resources. While it remains illegal to use state resource to campaign for elections, mostly due to representative’ long stay in power they benefit from the constant media exposures that opposition parties do not. They build networks in communities and constituencies that will reelect them into power after every four years. This means that national project that should be fairly distributed across the country, are directed to representatives’ constituencies, especially a year before election time. This necessarily creates imbalanced developmental efforts, where constituencies of opposition parties are displaced from national development priorities. And if the national
history should be closely analyzed, one will realize how public agitations and discontents are nurtured and reproduced in these displaced environments to challenge the legitimacy of rule.

These financial constraints are further deepened by a “ban on external donations and on company donations to political parties, and a limit on donations from private Ghanaian citizens of one million Cedis per year” (Crawford 2004, p.7). However, since there is no provision for public funding to offset cost in election processes, restrictions are inevitable erected in the political spaces that restrict participation of the majority poor. While the intended purpose of this ban has a noble origin—to protect the Ghanaian sovereignty from external interference and from the excessive influence of the wealthy (Crawford 2004, p. 7)—this condition produces an unanticipated consequences. In that, now more than ever, financial restrictions are imposed and the possibilities of representation defined by whether one has the required money to participate. In fact, this provision bars over 95 percent of Ghanaians from full participation in this process.

**Parliamentary Seats and the Politics of Under/over-Representation**

The idea of mal-apportionment of parliamentary seat has received a lot of attention in current political scholarship in Ghana. The fear is that with such discrepancies in apportioning seats in parliament, the legitimization of under-representation in some regions and over-representation in the other is inevitably achieved. Kangah, after the 200 elections, expressed concerns over how improper demarcation of constituencies could be “the root cause of the problem, as malpractice begins with the demarcation of electoral areas” (GNA 2001 cited in Smith 2002, p.639). As indicated by Smith (2000), the;

Geographic apportionment of parliamentary seats in Ghana was conducted over ten years ago when the then Interim National Electoral Commission (INEC) under the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) regime drew the boundaries of the
present districts based upon population figures from the 1984 census. With the 2000 census now in place, the EC is constitutionally mandated to redraw the boundaries of parliamentary seats to make sure they are more equally balanced (Smith 2002, p.639).

The 1992 Constitution provided firm legal grounds for the demarcation and apportionment of parliamentary seats as per the Electoral Commission (EC) directives. Article 47 indicates that:

Clause 1: Ghana shall be divided into as many constituencies for the purpose of election of members of Parliament as the Electoral Commission may prescribe, and each constituency shall be represented by one Member of Parliament.
Clause 2: No constituency shall fall within more than one region.
Clause 3: The boundaries of each constituency shall be such that the number of inhabitants in the constituency is, as nearly as possible, equal to the population quota.
Clause 4: For the purposes of clause (3) of this article, the number of inhabitants of a constituency may be greater or less than the population quota in order to take account of means of communication, geographical features, density of population and area and boundaries of the regions and other administrative or traditional areas.
Clause 5: The Electoral Commission shall review the division of Ghana into constituencies at intervals of not less than seven years, or within twelve months after the publication of the enumeration figures after the holding of a census of the population of Ghana, whichever is earlier, and may, as a result, alter the constituencies.
Clause 6: Where the boundaries of a constituency established under this article are altered as a result of a review, the alteration shall come into effect upon the next dissolution of Parliament.
Clause 7: For the purposes of this article, 'population quota' means the number obtained by dividing the number of inhabitants of Ghana by the number of constituencies into which Ghana is divided under this article. (Constitution of the Republic of Ghana 1992, p.44-45)

The concern, here, is that despite population growth and imbalanced internal population shifts over the last decade, the EC has refused to adjust the boundaries of the 200 constituencies to reflect this population dynamics. In fact, “according to the 2000 census, on average 92,061 people live in each of the 200 constituencies” (Smith 2002, p.639). To Smith (2002), the imbalance in the number of people living in each of these constituencies is
On average, 132,257 people live in each of the twenty-two constituencies in Greater Accra, whereas only 71,733 people reside in the eight constituencies in Upper West Region” (Smith 2002, p.639). The problem here is that, if constitutional provisions should be followed and the national average of 92,061 should be adopted “six regions - Upper West, Upper East, Northern, Eastern, Volta, and Brong- Ahafo - should all concede legislative seats to the Greater Accra, Western and Ashanti Regions, whose populations are all under-represented in Parliament” (Smith 2002, p.639).

Table 3: Regional Malapportionment of Constituencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Registered voters</th>
<th>No. of constituencies</th>
<th>Average population per constituency</th>
<th>Average registered voters per constituency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greater Accra</td>
<td>2,909,643</td>
<td>1,845,889</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>132,257</td>
<td>83,904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>1,342,878</td>
<td>1,676,778</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>96,991</td>
<td>56,675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashanti</td>
<td>3,187,601</td>
<td>1,766,960</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>96,504</td>
<td>59,046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>1,380,647</td>
<td>870,826</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>92,444</td>
<td>51,225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brong-Ahafo</td>
<td>1,324,622</td>
<td>1,441,923</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>86,896</td>
<td>49,515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volta</td>
<td>1,512,209</td>
<td>585,388</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>84,858</td>
<td>51,768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>2,108,552</td>
<td>1,187,573</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>81,110</td>
<td>45,676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>1,254,594</td>
<td>531,411</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>80,632</td>
<td>49,487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper East</td>
<td>317,251</td>
<td>481,894</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>76,438</td>
<td>49,075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper West</td>
<td>579,860</td>
<td>303,264</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>71,733</td>
<td>37,008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>18,412,247</td>
<td>10,698,908</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>92,061</td>
<td>53,495</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Smith 2002

Indeed, the late 1980s demarcation process of constituencies, which is based on the 1984 constitution, has served a subversive political purpose, where the regime in power granted more parliamentary seats to some regions (especially the three northern regions)—more
seats than their populations proportionately deserved (Smith 2002). Obviously, the then PNDC regime profited in these arrangements in as long as most of their support came from these regions and the parliament that was formed after transitioning into a democratic state voted on party lines for any government policy.

Furthermore, Smith (2003) highlighted that;

The uneven distribution of legislative seats has resulted in equally startling discrepancies in numbers of registered voters across the regions. Reflecting the population imbalance, the average number of registered voters in Greater Accra Region's twenty-two constituencies is a staggering 83,904, well above Ashanti Region's 59,908 registered voters per constituency, the second highest regional average. In stark contrast, there are only 37,908 registered voters per constituency in Upper West, and fewer than 41,000 registered voters in both Upper East and Northern Regions (p.639).

Indeed, it is a major problem when you have some members of Parliament representing over eleven times as many registered voters as other MPs. This makes it more difficult for these MPs to properly and adequately represent their constituencies. This does not necessarily mean that under a fair demarcated constituency plan these MPs will be any responsive, for MPs of constituencies with lower number of voter are no less irresponsive than those tasked with a heavier responsibility. But in fairness to these big constituencies and providing equal legal opportunity for the articulation of all concerns of citizens require a re-demarcation.

Representatives

Oquaye (2001) acknowledged that the function of representatives has tremendously improved in terms of how constituencies are represented. He attributed this improvement to increased competition for parliamentary seats. However, one must note that this competition is only ever formal, and merely provide the environment for the wealthy/elite to reproduce themselves within the structures of power. It also produced an enabling
environment for the invocation of neo-patrimonialism. As Crawford (2004) highlighted, representatives are “scared to visit their constituencies because of the incessant demands being made upon them for cash or kind by constituents” (p.9.). Lindberg (2003) re-echoed Crawford in suggesting that with the nature of the representative system, it will only feed, rather than curb, the escalation of neo-patrimonialism. The development of the constituent’s relationship with the representatives, as that of a client and a patron, emerged from “the practice of disbursing money, gifts and promises by candidates at election time. Personal loyalty (i.e. votes) is sought through such neo-patrimonial mechanisms in exchange for looking after the needs of such clients” (Crawford 2004, p.9). And because the prime objectives of the representatives have shifted significantly to the concerns of reelection, the consequence of neo-patrimonial politics becomes the de-legitimization force of the role of the representative, as they have increasingly become intensely “embroiled in the time consuming tasks of attending to their personal, clientele networks, rather than attending to matters of public policies, the use of public resources and so forth” (Lindberg 2003, p.124). In this process, sense of public ownership of the political process diminishes and the representatives’ acts of accountability are shifted toward satisfying these clienteles. In these enactments, a separate category of citizenship is courted away from the real sense of citizenship (public citizenship) that has always foregrounded the signification of the representatives. The evacuation of public citizenship from the signifying chain creates the possibility for the public to imagine themselves as marginalized “other” fighting to reclaim their territory within the structure. And while the impact may not be felt or measured as an immediately political consequence, conditions such as diminished sense of accountability toward the public, and the increasing popular apathy in the political processes will begin to
shape expectations and policy responsiveness. And gradually, the socio-political deficit produced will inevitably provide the justification for upheaval.

Furthermore, another concern in the Ghanaian parliament points to the increased gender imbalance of representatives (Oquaye 2000, p.13). In fact, when you have more than half the population of the country as female, and yet their presence in parliament is less than one tenth at all times, the sense of marginalization is depended and entrenched. The voices of these women on female issues are constantly drowned in the masculine projections of needs and concerns. It is, indeed, possible that with such repressive force will require counter-repressive medium to demand change, if the constitution does not address this issue in a healthy way. Because of the culture of resistance that is deep seated in public consciousness (that developed as a health medium of demanding change throughout the colonial and the post-colonial eras), agitating for change often easily triggers violent opposition to government’s repressive force.

**Traditional Authority/Representation**

The once unfettered powers of traditional rulers have gone under considerable transformation since pre-colonial era. What is consistent with this transformation is that the power of traditional rulers has waned as the nation negotiates its political arrangement into modern era. Boafo-Arthur (2001) acknowledged that even the traditional rulers believe their place in modern politics to have inscrutably eroded with the expansion and development of the modern state. In fact, the erosion of the power of traditional rulers was careful designed in such a way that absolute power and legitimacy will sway toward the aggrandizement of modern political system. Indeed, realizing that the sustenance of traditional power was completely defined by the financial base that bolstered their function, Kwame Nkrumah
attempt to shift power to the modern system was not going to be achieved unless these financial systems are fundamentally modified. As Dennis Austin (1970) noted;  

Although deprived of their independence by the British, the chiefs of Ashanti Confederacy had been given considerable powers as a ‘Supreme Native Authority’. They had received generous subsidies from the central government, and acted as deliberate body for the whole of the Confederacy area with substantive law-making powers. The beginning of the end of these privileges had come in 1952 when the Asanteman Council, the Kumasi Native Authority, and Chiefs Councils within each Ashanti Division were pushed aside to make way for the new local authorities with their two-thirds elected membership. Government subsidies were still paid to chiefs, and a State Council Ordinance in 1952 recognized the chief and his traditional advisers as having authority in customary matters, but the substance of their power, including the levying of the local rate, passed to the new urban and local councils (p.260).

In this stead, once the sustenance of the traditional system shifted to the central and decentralized governments, the modern system triumphed in redefining the role of this waning power. Also, because traditional rulers controlled the land, the manipulation of the financial base of the traditional system required that they relinquish control over some of these lands entrusted under their care by local citizen through customary laws. Also, this strategic power shiftings made it possible for chiefs who opposed or considered opposing the party in power, to reconsider and realign their allegiances to conform to the interests of the modern state (Boafo-Arthur 2001).

Boafo-Arthur (2001), further, explained that certain measures were taken between 1951 and 1957 to privilege state’s control over these traditional rulers, while their main financial avenues co-opted. Therefore, what seemed at a face value as mere local government reforms, when closely evaluated became an imposing internal imperial structure fashioned at subjugating traditional authority “through the control of their economic livelihood—the land” (Boafo-Arthur 2001, para. 13). These efforts were enshrine in the Local Government

Under the Local Government Ordinance of 1951, elected local councils replaced native authorities. Powers of chiefs were consequently eroded. To facilitate unobtrusive control of stool lands, the CPP government enacted the Administration of Lands Act, 1962 (Act 123) and the Concessions Act, 1962 (Act 124). This was after the government had successfully weakened the most powerful chiefs through the enactment of the following laws: The Akim Abuakwa (Stool Revenue) Act, 1958 (Act 8), The Ashanti Stool Act, 1958 (Act 28), the Stool Lands Control Act, 1960 (Act 79). Through these laws, the state assumed powers to authorize the acquisition and use of such lands for either private or public purposes; and to regulate the collection and use of stool revenue. These laws, apart from undermining the economic base of the chiefs, created a dependency syndrome whereby most chiefs looked up to the government for economic handouts. To ensure absolute subservience of chiefs, the CPP government had earlier in 1959 enacted The Chiefs (Recognition) Act which empowered the Minister to withdraw recognition of chiefs; direct any chief to refrain from the exercise of his functions; and even prevent the chief from residing in a specific area, if need be (para. 13).

Deliberate reform measures did not merely weaken the position of traditional authority, but also legitimized the diminished role of chiefs in Ghanaian societies.

However, the 1969 Constitution sought to recuperate lost power to traditional rulers by revoking the orchestrated attempts to deprive these rulers of their land under the First Republic. For this reason, Article 164 (1) of the 1969 Constitution required that “all stool lands in Ghana shall be vested in the appropriate Stool on behalf of, and in trust for, the subjects of the Stool” (cited in Boafo-Arthur 2001, para.55; The Constitution of the Republic of Ghana 1969). Also, Article 18 (1) of the same Constitution instructed that “no property of any description shall be compulsorily taken possession of, and no interest in or right over property of any description shall be compulsorily acquired by the State…” (cited in Boafo-Arthur 2001, para.55; The Constitution of the Republic of Ghana 1969). These provisions curtailed government’s efforts at undermining and manipulating traditional
powers for political purposes. The establishment of a Stool Lands Account (SLA) further reinforced the position of traditional authority by protecting “the interest of chiefs against encroachment by the state” (cited in Boafo-Arthur 2001, para.55).

The Chieftaincy Act of 1971, among other provisions, ensured the creation of the National House of Chiefs, in addition to the already existing Regional Houses of Chiefs and the Traditional Councils, hence expanding avenues for traditional authority to re-establish its authenticity and legitimacy in Ghanaian societies. Also, Boafo-Arthur (2001) indicated that “in conformity with Article 154 (3) (a) of the 1969 Constitution and to enhance the adjudication of chieftaincy matters, the Act created the judicial committees to hear and determine any ‘cause or matter affecting Chieftaincy’” (para.56). In defining the role of such traditional juridical activities, Clause 22 (1) of Act 370 established that:

The National House of Chiefs shall have appellate jurisdiction in any matter relating to chieftaincy which has been determined by the House of Chiefs in a Region from which appellate jurisdiction there shall be an appeal with the leave of the Supreme Court or the National House of Chiefs to the Supreme Court (cited in Boafo-Arthur 2001, para.56).

The general premise under this political move was the recognition that, for majority of Ghana citizens the only means of participating in national life was through these traditional systems. Therefore, to restrict the legitimacy of such a system was to minimize citizens’ engagement in modern political activities. In fact, the legitimacy of the modern system is dependent on recognizing that these traditional institutions still represented majority of Ghanaian citizens.

The 1992 Constitution and Traditional Authority

The 1992 Constitution was designed to improve the political mandates and avenues for the traditional political system, and comparatively is the most developed in Africa
Article 270-277 of the constitution is entirely dedicated to chieftaincy and these provisions are entrenched, which makes amendment impossible except by referendum. These constitutional provisions on chieftaincy are further reinforced by the Local Government Act of 1993 and the Chieftaincy Act of 1971. In these provisions, the essence of traditional rulers is doubly enforced to resist the temptation of possibly rewriting their roles and relevance out of legal frames.

Specifically, Article 272 of the 1992 Constitution tasked the National House of Chiefs to represents the interest of all chiefs. The House must;

a. Advise any person or authority charged with any responsibility under this Constitution or any other law for any matter relating to or affecting chieftancy;
b. Undertake the progressive study, interpretation and codification of customary law with a view to evolving, in appropriate cases, a unified system of rules of customary law, and compiling the customary laws and lines of succession applicable to each stool or skin;
c. Undertake an evaluation of traditional customs and usages with a view to eliminating those customs and usages that are outmoded and socially harmful;
d. Perform such other function, not being inconsistent with any function assigned to the House of Chiefs of a region, as Parliament may refer to it. (The Constitution of the Republic of Ghana 1992, p.165)

However, despite all the efforts at readjusting the political lens to embrace all forms of mediums of power exercise that serve the interest of the public, the Constitution is silent on clearly defining the boundaries within which these rulers should function. In the absence, or deliberate vagueness, in the role of chiefs, sometimes judicial discretions overwhelm the intended provisions and this then limit or broaden the scope of traditional rule beyond what perhaps might have been intended.

Regardless, what the constitution is very clear on is what traditional rulers are not allowed to do within the broader democratic system. Article 276 (1) of the constitution states
that, “a chief shall not take part in active party politics; and any chief wishing to do so and seeking election to Parliament shall abdicate his stool or skin” (Constitution of the Republic of Ghana 1992, p.165). Furthermore, Article 94 (3) (c) reinforced this position by revoking the rights of chiefs to contest for seats in parliament. But Boafo-Arthus (2001) argues that it is difficult to reconcile Article 21 (e), which uphold the rights of the individual to free association; “freedom to form or join trade unions or other associations, national and international, for the protection of their interest”, to the provisions under 276 (1). Boafo-Arthur (2001), therefore, question the rationale behind restricting rights to association to traditional rulers and also echoed that, perhaps, more than any evidence this is a classic case of constitutional contradiction, in which case the constitution in trying to limit interference from the traditional system unintendedly perpetrates conditions that deny rights to citizens. The National House of Chiefs registered its disapproval of the disqualification of chiefs from active politics: “it condemned the disqualification of its members from active partisan politics and branded this constitutional hindsight as discriminatory and an infringement on their fundamental rights guaranteed under the 1992 Constitution” (Ansah-Koi 1998, p.144, cited in Boafo-Arthur 2001). Inversely, for most citizens (more than half the population of the country) the traditional political system remains the major avenue for political engagement and representation (AfriMAP, 2007, p.15), hence such restriction on active political participation of chief reinforces the idea of citizen marginalization in political life as legitimate.

To solve this problem, though, a proposed Chieftaincy Bill is under consideration to improve the role of chiefs under the existing legislation (AfriMAP, 2007). If this Bill should pass, chief will be mandated to actively participate in political life, hence protecting their
right as citizens. While such an initiative is very beneficial to the consolidation of the
democratic process, it could also deepen the problem of ambiguity of allegiance if the
Constitution does not also clearly define the functional boundaries of chiefs.

**Decentralization**

Decentralization efforts in Ghana pre-dated legal efforts employed during the
country’s democratic transition process in the early 1990s. During this period, the PNDC
regime, in 1988, passed a legislative tool called the Local Government Law (PNDC Law
207), which allowed the creation of 110 districts (within and beyond the 200 constituencies)
within the ten regions in Ghana. The main aim of the 1988 Local Government Law, under
which the District Assemblies (DA) were created, was “to promote popular participation and
ownership of the machinery of government...by devolving power, competence and
resource/means to the district level” (Map Consult 2002, p.35). This piece of legislation, in
part, undergirds my concern that politics of displacement has been entrenched and
government realized that its presence and rule has grown increasingly irresponsive to the
needs of citizens that a legal mandate is necessary recuperate the values of participatory
citizenship. Therefore, the creation of the DA provided the platform to inject the public into
the functions of government. Usefully, the DA elections were organized around non-
partisan principles and every four years every district vote to elect their representatives.

Also, Pinkney (1997) asserted, “in addition to the two-thirds of DA members elected
on an individual, nonparty basis, one-third were appointed by central government, along
with a chief executive for each district” (p.79). In fact, these efforts have been celebrated just
as much as it has been criticized. While the intentionality of citizens’ “participation” and
“ownership” undergird the decentralization efforts, writers like Oquaye (2001) have
suggested that this exercise was “largely introduced to satisfy donor demands”, while Ayee (1994) and others have insisted that it, in fact, embraces a self-serving motives. To Ayes, then, the decentralization policy was an attempt for representatives to “increase their legitimacy and simultaneously to rid themselves of political problems” (Ayee 1994, p 200-2, cited in Crawford, p.17). But, however political motivated this effort was—whether to score political point or not—at least a major step was taken to bring back dislocated citizens into the political process. Besides, how else can the legitimacy of the irresponsive system of representation be justified and recuperated except that there are structures in place to encourage citizens’ participation.

Furthermore, the 1992 Constitution buttressed the decentralization policy toward consolidating the 1988 reforms by “establishing a three-tier structure of sub-national government, comprising Regional Coordinating Councils (10), District Assemblies (110) and urban, zonal, town and area councils, plus unit committees (16,000)” (Nkrumah 2000, p.59, cited in Crawford p.17). The 1992 Constitution, further, highlighted that the DA is “the highest political authority in the district, and shall have deliberative, legislative and executive powers” (Article 241(3); cited in Constitution of the Republic of Ghana 1992, p.151). In this stead, the position of the DA became one of the most important positions in many communities as they now carried the burdens of the society to the central government and are the first to be attacked should the central government fail in their policies. Equally, the central government and MPs in this effort were able to absolve themselves of the increasing responsibilities they have toward the people.

Furthermore, the 1992 Constitution mandated that a District Assembly Common Fund (DACF) be established, and resources committed to this Fund annually as determined
by Parliament, and allocations “not less than five per cent of the total revenues of Ghana” (Article 252(2), cited in Constitution of the Republic of Ghana 1992, p.154). The inadequate funds for this project seem to undermine the political potentials of decentralization and this, indeed, increased the dysfunctionality of the process. However, many DAs raised additional funds to support their activities through “low-yielding local taxes” from market tolls etc. (Nkrumah 2000, p.61, cited in Crawford 2004, p.18).

Crawford (2004) indicated some pervasive conditions that threaten to undermine the decentralization process:

• **Lack of local government autonomy:** Because government had a right to appoint thirty percent (30%) of the representative on the DA board, and these appointees often occupy powerful position on the board as well as chairing the Executive Committee, the function became no more partisan than the presidential authority that now oversee their activities. To Nkrumah (2000, p.64), then, “notwithstanding the excellent legislation on decentralization and democracy, in practice …central government’s dominance is unquestionable” (cited in Crawford 2004, p.18).

• **Lack of fiscal independence and accountability:** As indicate earlier, government’s financial provision could barely support the increased function of the DAs, while alternative avenues to raise additional revenue through, say, local taxation were limited. Regardless of the lack of adequate funds to support their activities, many people constantly questioned how efficiently government funds are being used in these districts. As at present, measures are still “being put” in place to enhance accountability.
• **Poor human capacity**: In general, these DAs are crippled by lack of high quality human resource. The fact that this institutions are not well funding suggest that they do not pay well, which serve as a disincentive for people seeking better working opportunity in the face of stiffened economic hardship. Hence, the best human resources in the country will rather take up jobs in private sectors than at the local government districts.

• **Representation of women and gender issues**: Clearly, the representation in the DAs suffered from acute gender imbalance. The population of women in this system was marginal. Crawford (2004) pointed out that “figures (prior to the 2002 elections) show that women made up only five per cent of elected members, only three out of 110 Presiding Members (equivalent of the Assembly chair), only 12 of 110 District Chief Executives and only three of 110 District Coordinating Directors (the top civil servant in each district)” (p.19). He also contended that the “numbers of women Assembly members were increased somewhat by the central government directive in 1998 that at least 30 per cent of appointed members should be women” (Crawford 2004, p19). The concern here is that, the whole idea of establishing the DA system was to bring back citizens into the political process, yet it marginalized the concerns of the majority of this population (woman still remain the majority in these communities)

• **Position of chiefs**: Like the parliamentarian system, local governments, because they function in the same district and sometime within the same jurisdiction as the traditional authorities, ambiguity in allegiance either resulted in the undermining of the DA system or resolved itself in open rivalry between supporters of these power
sources. However, seeing that the chief exerted considerable amount of influence, a consideration is seriously being nursed to create meaningful roles for chiefs in local government so these power structures will be mutually reinforcing.
Chapter Four: The Mode of Political Representation in Nigeria

This chapter focuses on Nigeria and the historical trajectory that produced the modern Nigerian representative institution. Much like Ghana, I look closely at the ways in which the modern political representation system has been perverted through the expansion of the rule and power of the political elites. I also focus on other avenues through which the needs of citizens are articulated, and interrogate ways by which the expansion of the power elites has encroached on these spaces. While engaging with these issues, I also dedicate, in part, these interrogations to content analysis of the changing constitutional mandate on representation and how these changes have produce mediums and justifications for resistance.

Brief Political History

Nigeria, the most populous nation in Africa, gained its independence in October 1960. As a federation, it was then divided into three regions, which was governed by a constitution that instructed a parliamentary system of government. In October 1963, Nigeria became a federal republic and a new constitution was design to usher in the new independent nation. Under this constitution, a fourth region (the Midwest) was established. These regions were granted autonomy to self-government, while the federal government retained “exclusive powers in defense and security, foreign relations, and commercial and fiscal policies” (Bureau of African Affairs). However, this arrangement was not enough to weather off pressure from within for reform from imperial policies and misappropriation of power (Bureau of African Affairs 2008).

In January 15, 1966, the new nation was faced with its first resistance brewed from the army. While the perpetrators were a small group of discontented army officers (mostly
Igbos), they succeeded in overthrowing the government and assassinating the Prime Minister of the federation, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, as well as the premiers of the northern and western regions. Unlike the administration they replaced, the military government that took over was unable to silence growing ethnic tensions or engineer a constitution or decree that articulated the competing interests and needs of all groups within the federation. The result of this mounting tension was another coup in July 1966. Consequently, thousands of Igbos were killed in the Northern region, which inadvertently forced a massive Igbo migration from the north to the southeast to fuel growing secessionist sentiments that were increasingly becoming eminent in the Southeast (Bureau of African Affairs 2008).

The new administration realizing the potential for uprising emanating from ethnic tension, instructed the division of the four regions into 12 states, a move, often argued to have given minority ethnic groups increased autonomy within the federation. Despite this move, the Igbos rejected any form of constitutional reform and rather demanding exclusive autonomy for the east. In the absence of any pacific compensation for this demand, by May 1967, Lt. Col. Emeka Ojukwu, who was then the military governor of the eastern region, declared the eastern region independent from the federation. This triggered a bitter and bloody civil war that eventually led to the 1970 defeat of Biafra (Bureau of African Affairs 2008).

By July 29, 1975, Gen. Murtala Muhammed had led a group of fellow officers to stage another coup. The reason provided for the coup was the lack of concerted effort by Gen. Yakubu Gowon's military government to nudge the federation toward civilian rule and not to mention the increasing corruption and inefficiency that had come to characterize the administration. It did not take General Muhammed long to set the frameworks for a return
to civilian rule, once he captured power. His administration declared the resumption to civilian rule by October 1, 1979. However, this vision was short lived as General Muhammed was assassinated in an abortive coup on February 13, 1976, just about three years before the proposed plan for the resumption of civilian rule. As a result, his chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo, assumed power as the Head of State. Quite promising, Obasanjo ensured he remained steadfast to the schedule date for the return to civilian rule. Under the rule of the new leader, seven new states were established in 1976, bringing the total number of states to 19 (Bureau of African Affairs 2008).

To initiate the second republic, a constituent assembly was elected in 1977 and it task with the responsibility of drafting a new constitution. The draft was published on September 21, 1978, which paved the way for the transformation of civilian life. In this effort, political party system was injected back into political life, and citizens were given the exclusive rights to elect candidates for presidency, the two houses of the National Assembly, governorships, and state houses of assembly and local administrations. In 1979, Alhaji Shehu Shagari of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), was elected president by the people to give the promise for democratic consolidation significant momentum (Bureau of African Affairs 2008).

Furthermore, citizens reconfirmed Shagari and the NPN government for another term in office, in August 1983, in a landslide victory, which gave them a majority seat in the National Assembly and a control of 12 states. However, the results of the election were fiercely contested and violence marred the democratic consolidation efforts. As a result, Maj. Gen. Muhammadu Buhari and the Supreme Military Council (SMC) overthrew the second republic on December 31, 1983. The military government accused the Shagari's administration of economic mismanagement, corruption, election fraud, and irresponsible
attitude toward citizens needs. Despite significant efforts to bring government closer to citizens concerns, a peaceful overthrow ushered in the Gen. Ibrahim Babangida Buhari’s government, SMC’s third-ranking member, in August 1985. Babangida, very early in his rule, sought to absolve its illegitimacy through restoration of freedom of the press and the release of some political detainees held without charge in both state and federal prisons. He also, opened discussion on economic reform which seemed an efficient means of recuperating and reinforcing citizens’ voice in economic issues (Bureau of African Affairs 2008).

In early 1989, the new constitution for the third republic was completed, which subsequently restored political activity in the federation. In April of the following year, however, amidst efforts to usher in the third republic, some military officers tried and failed to overthrow Babangida. However, while in December 1990 the electoral process of electing officers began at the local government level, it was not until June 12, 1993 that presidential election was held. While electoral result initially projected M.K.O. Abiola as victor in the election but on June 23, of the same year, Babangida employed legal processes and succeeded at annulling the results of the election. Eventually, Babangida handed over power to an interim government headed by Ernest Shonekan on August 27, to calm raising tension in the country. While Shonekan was to stay in power until election were held in February 1994, the deteriorating economy provided an opportunity for a new administration to impose its military rule (Bureau of African Affairs 2008).

The Defense Minister Sani Abacha took over power and forced Shonekan to resign on November 17, 1993. Abacha quickly stalled any democratic possibilities by first aborting any democratic political institutions, while elected governors were replaced by appointed military officers. With Abacha unwilling to set a timetable for a return to civilian rule forced
many opposition figures to form the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO) that was very vocal in demanding the immediate return to civilian life. On June 11, 1994, rather surprisingly, Abiola using the platforms of NADECO declared himself president of the federation and run into hiding. He was, however, arrested on June 23 1994 and brought to justice. However, on October 1, 1995, Gen. Sani Abacha finally set a 3 year time frame as a transitional period to civilian rule (Bureau of African Affairs 2008).

General Abdulsalami Abubakar replaced Abacha and in August 1998, appointed the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to conduct electoral process in the federation. The independence of the INEC was originally perceived to limit interference and influence in electoral outcomes. The former military head of state, Olusegun Obasanjo, return to the political scene to run as a civilian candidate and subsequently won the presidency. Despite the independence of INEC, the electoral process was still accentuated by irregularities (Bureau of African Affairs 2008).

The ushering in of the 1999 democratic era ended 16 years of intermittent military rule. Obasanjo, once in office, forced the retirement of hundreds of military officers who by this time were still holding political positions. He also “established a blue-ribbon panel to investigate human rights violations, ordered the release of scores of persons held without charge, and rescinded a number of questionable licenses and contracts let by the previous military regimes. The government also moved to recover millions of dollars in funds secreted in overseas accounts” (Bureau of African Affairs 2008). In 2003, Obasanjo was reelected into office. However, in May 2005, the national Assembly turned down a proposal for a constitutional amendment that will extend the presidential term to three, which could
have permitted President Obasanjo a legal right to run for the third time (Bureau of African Affairs 2008).

On April 21, 2007, for the first time in the nation’s history there was a transition of power from one civilian administration to another, without military intervention. More than 35 political parties participated in the political process competing for various levels of local, state and federal positions. While concerns still remain over the flawed nature of electoral conduct, the fact that the transition process was successful, gave hope for a future democratic consolidation in the country. Encouragingly, the newly-elected President, Umaru Yar’Adua, has committed all effort at electoral reform that will pave the way for democratic consolidation (Bureau of African Affairs 2008).

The Nigerian State

The popular perception of the function of the state, by which it is often evaluated by the people, is anchored in the assumption that its legitimacy is only preserved in the act of projecting the needs and voice of citizens. Once that sense of responsibility to the citizens is diminished, the state is transformed into a repressive apparatus, that imposes rather negotiate the will of the people. Indeed, the repressive nature of the state in the socio-economic and political lives of citizens in Nigeria has increasingly become a central concern (see, Osaghae, 1999; Omotola and Aremu, 2007). As argued by Osaghae (1989), one cannot consider any subject without first emphasizing the role of state; “The state not only leads, it also, in a sense, embodies the society” (p.32).

While the Nigerian state, to as large extend, mimics the nature of the post-colonial African state, it is however ambivalent in its repressive objectives. The state’s ambivalence toward acts of repression underpins its legitimate commitment to a sense of rule by the
people, yet a practical deviation from people-centric polity. As Omotola and Aremu (2007) indicated, the Nigerian state does not relent in its exertion of excessive force on the society to conform it to the requirements privileged by the state, yet this “repressive” instrument has tactfully refrained from any instituting fundamental reforms that will legitimize these repressive measures. Paradoxically, this repressive structure has relentlessly guaranteed the well being of citizens and enforced social discipline, where appropriate (Omotola and Aremu, 2007). To Omotola and Aremu (2007), then, the nature of the Nigeria state, “since the rebirth of democracy in 1999, [has] been highly perverted, resulting in the deficits of its democratization accounts” (p.60). They cite examples where the state has acted “in a sea of arrogance, having assumed dominance over society” (Omotola and Aremu 2007, p.60).

In fact, Osaghae (1999) asserted that the Nigerian state has acquired a perverted autonomy away from the citizens’ concerns and needs; the state is therefore, “a set of organizing principles and an autonomous actor, which sets the framework for action in society” (p.34). The expansion and dominance of the state in all facets of social, political, economic and cultural lives assert a commitment to an autonomous power exercise that undermines some core democratic values. Ironically, while the state is essentially autonomous from the citizens’ control or influence, it lacks autonomy from vested interests both locally and externally (Osaghae 1999). In order words, the state now nurtures an obligation toward the interest of the few powerful actors, whose objectives deny citizens avenues for participation in political life. The sense of a co-opted state undermines the legitimacy of political representation, where the state is mandated to articulate the collective interest of citizens. For this reason, rather than acting independently from the interest of the majority, these interests must be upheld in the efforts at consolidating democracy.
Furthermore, Omotola and Aremu (2007) acknowledged that in the colonization of public spaces, the state conveniently abandoned “its original responsibilities of serving as the ‘guardians’ through its agents” (p. 61). As a result, the state increasingly became an instrument that promoted its own interests: “that is, the interest of its clients, the power elite, at the expense of the generality of the people” (Omotola and Aremu 2007, p.61). And since the interests of the power elites are neither stable, authentic nor monolithic, as they permeates every facets of public life, the core essence of citizenship shifts uncompromisingly to conform to the dictates of the power class. As Adekanye (2000) indicated, much against classical elitist theories, the power elite in Nigeria;

…embodies serving top government functionaries in the military, police, bureaucracy and retired military officers. More concretely conceptualized the power elite in Nigeria can be categorized into business, religious, academic, traditional, bureaucratic and military elites, all of which wield influences in their respective domains and are deeply rooted first in the colonial state and later in the successive military regimes in the country (cited in Omotola and Aremu 2007, p.62).

In a sense, the constant projection of the interest of the power elite in these spheres reinforces the dominance and repressive nature of the state to rearrange expectation and outcomes beyond the concerns of citizens. The “prebendal” (Joseph, 1987), “predatory” (Holsti, 2000), or “privatized” (Ake, 1996) character of the Nigerian state assert its irresponsiveness that inevitably becomes a condition for the production of violence or resistance in the country. In essence, the state as a possible medium to articulate the interest of citizens, is obliterated—at least in practice—and the preoccupations of the states as an authentic public good is reproduce within the elites’ objectives. In these objectives, there is no representation for citizenship if it is not powerful and able to exert that influence only preserved for the political elites.
Constitution and Constitutionalism

The framework for organizing the process of representative politics and the structure put in place to ensure the adherence to such frames (see Omotola 2004), should be “transparent, inclusive and participatory [in] processes” (Omotola and Aremu 2007, p.64). This framework should provide the platform that accommodates and projects the diverse needs, views, and opinions of the various segments of the society. While the political atmosphere is fraught with potential for democratic consolidation, Omotola and Aremu (2007) indicated that the 1999 Constitution is anchored in perverse attributes that undermine that sense of inclusion, participation and projection of popular needs. This is because, the 1999 Constitution was a military artifact produced away from the society and yet imposed on the people as though, in the spirit of democracy, it authentically originated from them. Indeed, “the constitution was drafted by the military regime of General Sani Abacha but tinkered with by the General Abdulsalam Abubakar regime with no societal input” (Omotola and Aremu 2007, p.64). Considerations for review by subsequent administrations were constantly rebuffed by the government “until late 2005 when it felt it could take advantage of the constitutional review processes to elongate its tenure of office beyond the two statutory terms” (Ibrahim 2006; cited in Omotola and Aremu 2007, p.64).

While the 1999 Constitution marginalized popular engagement in its production process, the review process by the Ibrahim Mantu Panel, that is purported to reinforce the essence of citizenship, was “for all intents and purposes, a negation of well-know principles of constitution review notably openness, participation and transparency” (Omotola and Aremu 2007, p.64). In this sense the constitution lacked the legitimacy needed for democratic sustenance as it is not “rooted in society” (Omotola and Aremu 2007, p.64). It is
fair to suggest, then, that because the process of production and review marginalized the participation of the public, vested interest of the power elite arranged mandates and provisions that reinforce their interests. The provision of minimal rights and the protection of rights, thereof, which citizens enjoy under this framework, is merely design to pacify any dissenting view arising from the constitutional evocation of marginal citizenship. To Omotola and Aremu (2007) “only a constitution that satisfies democratic conditions…can sustain democracy and is desirable in Nigeria” (p.66).

**Electoral Process and Representation**

The projected population of Nigeria is about 120 million, out of which about 60 million people are registered as eligible voters. Because it is the most populous country in Africa, population size is as beneficial to economic growth as it is a challenge to managing elections. Eligible voters are spread across 120,000 polling centers, which mean the Electoral Commission has to employ about 500,000 officials to supervise and manage these centers every electoral season. There are 33 political parties in the country, and “the Commission is still receiving applications for registration of new ones, and an unprecedented number of candidates- more than 4000 vying for 1458 seats in the National and States’ Houses of Assembly Elections alone” (Okop Umonbong, 2006). Without a doubt the registration of political parties, the registration of voters, the conduct of the elections, the collation of votes, and the declaration of results are daunting tasks that demand considerable commitment to the democratic process. The Electoral Commission’s duties are made even more challenging considering what Okop Umonbong (2006) elaborates as the;

apprehension and pessimism within the polity on the expected outcome. The apprehension is borne out of our foreboding as a people, and especially considering our nations history of many failures at managing peaceful, acceptable and credible
transition from civilian to civilian administration; late release of funds occasioned by annual budgeting procedures with antecedent delays in the procurement of materials; confusing and often times uncertain judicial pronouncements arising out of the interpretations of the legal framework which continue well into the period close to the elections (Okop Umonbong, 2006, p.3).

Indeed, the challenges of present electoral process assert a historical labyrinth of pervasive perverted electoral process that has for a long time reinforced the idea of stolen election, bought election, and irresponsible representation. The burden here is to make the process free and fair, in such a way that it will shift claims of election outcome from the perception that invoke and accentuate the illegitimacy of the democratic process (Okop Umonbong, 2006).

Okop Umonbong (2006) indicated that the Nigeria Electoral system is “the single member constituency type with competitive multiparty and the first past the post winner system” (p.4). Method of voting has essentially been the Open Ballot System (OSBS) which was used in the four of the past five elections (in 1979, 1983, 1999 and 2003). In this voting process voters go;

through a process of accreditation, receives a ballot paper from the appropriate poll official and thereafter makes the confidential thumb impression in [favor] of the political party or candidate of choice in a secret voting compartment before dropping the ballot in the box positioned in the open, in the full glare of officials, security and party agents (Okop Umonbong 2006, p.3).

A modified system of voting was adopted in 1993, which is a modification of the Open Ballot System. In this system, “voters filed behind the party symbol or photograph of the candidate of choice. Voters were physically counted at the close of polls and the results declared to officials, security and party agents” (Okop Umonbong 2006, p.5). This modification, because it imposes difficulties in terms of organization of the voters, limited party system to two instead of the over 30 party contestations. What was achieved under this
process was a unanimous acclamation of a fair electoral process; however, the electorates were restricted in their choice of selecting a representative that reflected their peculiar needs and interests. Equally challenging is that, because the casting of votes deviated from the idea of secrecy of ballot, the electoral system was inevitably exposed to voter influences and threats from opposition party, once voted against. The system opened the door for opposition parties to easily target each other in cases where the results are contested, and these exposures redefined the face of violent elections in Nigeria (Okop Umonbong, 2006, p.4).

Indeed, the weaknesses in electoral laws have enabled the gradual erosion and perversion of the electoral process. For example, there were proven cases where false documents and certificates were presented by elected officials, yet all these people were “cleared by INEC to contest elections and many of them won” (Okop Umonbong, 2006, p.9). Specifically, Okop Umonbong (2006) cited an instance where the former speaker of the House of Representatives, Salisu Buhari, was indicted for using a forged certificate to contest elections. Many other elected representatives have equally been alleged to have committed “similar crimes ranging from forgery of certificates to drug trafficking offences”, but the entrenched hindsight in the electoral process could only rewarded those who have blatantly violated the country’s electoral laws (Okop Umonbong, 2006, p.9). The pervasive occurrence of such violation leads directly to oppositional contestations that subsequently results in casualties.

Another problematic condition that has characterized the Nigerian electoral process is the culture of corruption whereby the incumbent elected representatives, whether at the local government, state or federal levels, have design ways by which they illegally use public
funds to support their campaigns for re-election. Like Ghana, because the system imposes heavy financial restrictions on participation, in order to survive reelection, representatives resort to certain malpractice that do not only abuse public trust in the democratic system, but also encourage illegal practices and political manipulation that only produces political deficits.

**Rigging and the Limitation of Political Choice**

Ben Nwabueze (2005) defined election rigging as an:

... electoral malpractices which are palpable illegalities committed with a corrupt, fraudulent or sinister intention to influence an election in favour of a candidate(s) by means such as illegal voting, bribery, and undue influence, intimidation and other acts of coercion exerted on voters, falsification of results, fraudulent announcement of a losing candidate as winner (without altering the recorded results) (p.1, cited in Ibrahim 2006b, p.11-12)

Pervasive electoral rigging and fraud have increasingly become common practices in Nigeria’s democratic process. The long history of electoral rigging and fraud have challenged possibilities for bringing citizens into the political process—in which case the citizens have the sole control of electing representatives that serve their interests. Jibrin Ibrahim (2006) acknowledged that this history has produced conditions where political tensions have mounted and violence has persisted. Ibrahim further asserts that “the outcomes of many elections in Nigeria have been so contested that the conditions for the survival of the democratic order have been compromised” (p.6). The compromised system has permitted the formation of political party politics that feed on these lapses, rather than ethically engaging citizens in ways that conforms to constitutional provisions.

One of the conditions for establishing a democratic state is the development of the party politics system. In line with this condition, the 1999 Nigerian constitution made
necessary arrangement for the development of party politics in the efforts to encourage popular participation in the political process. Indeed, Section 40 of the 1999 Constitution provides citizens the right to free assemble and association, hence permitting individuals to form or join any political party.

Equally important, the 1999 Constitution provides that the recognition of political parties by the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) is necessary in acquiring the status of legal entity with rights to advocate citizens’ interest. Therefore, without the recognition by the INEC, regardless of the importance of the function of a particular organization to the needs of citizens, it cannot function as a legal party. Also, sections 221 and 222 of the Constitution specifically;

[Limit the definition of a political party to an organization recognized by the state to canvass for votes. The law forbids any organization, not so recognized to canvass for votes. More importantly, both on the juridical and political levels, parties are no longer considered as popular organizations that aggregate and articulate interests and opinions but as corporate entities that are registered with the state (The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999: cited in Ibrahim 2006, p.6).]

This provision seeks to discourage the current efforts of colonization of the democratic process by non-party organization, and tries to institutionalize strong ethics and adherence to democratic values. Despite these provisions, one cannot ignore the fact that these provisions create the possibility for INEC to misuse these privileges. For instance, Edigheji (2006) asserted that the INEC “refused to recognize several political parties that applied for registration in 2002. It only registered three political parties plus the already existing three making a total of six” (p.107). In all fairness, the function of the INEC is only made difficult in a compromised democratic tradition.
Alternatively, the 1999 Constitutional mandate, as argued by Ibrahim (2006), permitted the subversion of internal party democracy. To Ibrahim, then, the fact that the Constitution upheld the legitimacy of parties as parties merely because “they were recognized by the state meant that party leaders were party leaders not because they were popular with their grassroots members, but because they were so recognized by the state” (p.8). Again, the culture of displaced citizenship seems to have gminated from the very nature of internal politics. Once the momentum was built at the party level, it seems inevitable that with time such politics could only permeate the national democratic process. The Second Republic, for instance, witnessed a deteriorating internal party politics where “politicians ceased trying to persuade their intra-party rivals that they deserved the political posts they occupy” (p.8), and rather resorted to illegal practices. These politicians employed anti-party practices such as using money, thugs and sometimes the police, to eliminate competition.

The National Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies report released just before the 1983 elections, suggested that the electoral system in Nigeria is clogged by unfettered fraud as parties in power are willing to employ any means necessary to ensure their hold on power (Kurfi 2005, p.101). Interestingly, the report indicates that prior to the 1983 election the only elections that were held without systematic rigging were the 1959 and 1979 elections. While encouraging, it is equally intriguing that these elections were “held in the presence of strong arbiters, the colonial state and the military, who were not themselves participants in the elections and who desired free and fair elections at those instances” (Ibrahim 2006b, p.12). It is rather dramatic that it could only take non-democratic regime to ensure free and fair elections in Nigeria. The fact that they were also independent entities with limited stake in
the electoral outcome increased the chances that these elections were held in such a free and fair manner.

**Godfatherism and Modern Representation**

The general assumption that underpins the democratic practices—that in themselves define the nature of authority and power exercise—embraces the assertion that power must only legitimately reside with the people. Contrary to this idea, the notion of Godfatherism, Jibril Ibrahim (2007) acknowledged, is defined as a concept where “men … have the power personally to determine both who gets nominated to contest elections and who wins in a state” (cited in Israel ’kelue Okoye 2007, p.3). While the concept of Godfatherism remains fairly recent, the phenomenon and its pervasiveness “is as old as electoral politics in the country” (Okoye 2007, p.8). Okoyo (2007) contended that the development of this phenomenon recognized that Godfatherism “thrives in any polity in which state power is perceived as a commodity to be possessed and used to acquire other possessions” (p.8).

Undergirding the Nigerian political system is “the continued pauperization of Nigerian citizens and their subjugation to the dictates and control of the dominant economic cum political class marginalizes them in the political process” (Okoye 2007, p.8). Ralph Miliband (2002) argued that the protection of the civic and political rights of the poor is only superficially projected by legal structures, while in “real life, however, and against the background of other forms of deprivation, this [sense of] equal citizenship is, in political terms, very largely robbed of its meaning” (cited in Okoye 2007, p.8). Audu Gambo’s (2007) concern, then, is that “when individuals in the society become too powerful to dictate for the rest, the integrity of the process of choosing leaders is compromised” (p.45). Indeed, the
idea of godfatherism is an entrenched ideology that often accentuates exclusionism and diminished entitlement to civic and political rights of citizens.

Furthermore, the 1999 Constitution clearly underscores the need for the conduct of elections “for positions in the legislature and executive in all tiers of government” (The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999; cited in Okoye 2007, p.8). The Section 221 of the 1999 Constitution also indicates that;

No association, other than a political party shall canvass for votes for any candidate at any election or contribute to the funds of any political party or to the election expenses of any candidate at an election (The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999; cited in Okoye 2007, p.8).

In this provision, the godfatherism phenomenon, emerges as an illegal enterprise, but because this practice is deeply rooted in the political process itself, it posses tremendous challenges to efforts at reclaiming democracy for the people. State power, here, is heavily commodified, and the struggle for the exercise of this power does not only restrict access to power from the majority poor, but also sometime, some of the rich who are often overshowed in the open display of wealth by those who are more affluent. These highly privileged minority class constitute the dominant class in the Nigeria political setup, who control the affairs of government.

Like Ghana, increasingly the dynamic relation between wealth and power has definitely acquired new and perverted meaning in the Nigeria political process. As Okoye (2007) suggest;

The electoral process results from the commodification of state power and the struggle to acquire it by the dominant political class. The non-recognition of independent electoral candidates has made political parties a rare commodity to be bargained for by political aspirants. Those of them that are desperate to capture the political office they crave for are often amenable to the conditionalities of those who possess the wherewithal to enable them achieve their political aspirations (p.12).
The monetization and commodification of the democratic process is endemic to the character of, and popular response to, the political process. The restriction of political and civic rights from the citizen is now legitimately justified through the heavily monetized electoral practices. While the 2006 Electoral Act of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has set in place checks against manipulation of the electoral process through wealth, Willy Mana (2007) contended that “the electoral system has become so ‘monetized’ such that political parties now insist on payment of large sums of money for party tickets” (cited in Okoye 2007, p.9).

Increasingly, the amount required to secure party nomination, in itself, poses a threat to inclusion as majority of citizens are not able to pay these amounts. Okoyo (2007) asserted that a typical example of this phenomenon occurs when;

Candidates who intend to contest for political offices under the platform of the Peoples Democratic Party are expected to pay N 10,000 as fee for Letter of Intent and then pay any of the following fees, depending on the elective office one wants to contest for:

i. President - N 10 million
ii. Senate - N 1 million
iii. House of Representatives - N 500,000
iv. Governor - N 3 million
v. House of Assembly - N 100,000 (p. 9)

What is troubling here is that, because of these heavy monetary demands, some competent aspirants, who have the knowledge and leadership capability and are entirely driven by democratic impulses, are forced to withdraw their candidacy (Okoyo 2007, p.9). Table 1 below indicates a comparative estimate of monetary demands required to participate in the electoral processes.
Table 4: Estimation for Election in Nigeria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elective Office</th>
<th>Estimated Election Cost</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Government Councilor</td>
<td>₦ 150,000 – ₦ 300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government Chairman</td>
<td>₦ 3,000,000 – ₦ 5,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Legislature</td>
<td>₦ 1,500,000 – ₦ 3,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>₦ 50,000,000 – ₦ 100,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National House of Representatives</td>
<td>₦ 5,000,000 – ₦ 7,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislator Senate</td>
<td>₦ 6,500,000 – ₦ 12,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>₦ 300,000,000 – ₦ 500,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Okoyo 2007

In many case aspirants for representative's positions who do not have the means to participate in the processes opt for sponsorship from the wealthy (Godfathers). This then becomes the ground for neo-patrimonialism, as these indebted aspirants are forced under obligations to serve the needs and interests of their patron. To Ishiekwene (2004), then;

Godfathers have in the most brazen manner hijacked the political machinery at all levels. It means then that what is called election in Nigeria is nothing but the expression of the narrowly defined will of a few dishonest individuals who feel that they have the power to manipulate the entire electoral process in favor of their anointed godsons (cited in Okoyo 2007, p.10).

The idea of neo-patrimonialism, where by aspirants because they are indebted to a particular godfather, once in office serve the interest of these godfathers rather than the public who voted them in office, creates a condition for prebandalism. Democratic efforts in this context, fractures the idea of accountability, as normal political processes (in terms of formal popular demands and civic avenues of coercion of representative to do public biddings) can no longer be recuperate except through unorthodox means, which sometimes result to violence.
As Willy Mama (2007) indicated, “the power of money has dwarfed the power of choice… Men and women of ideas without access to big money do not have a fair chance to run and win” (p.43). Furthermore, Festus Iyayi remarked;

In elections, deciding and choosing who should be included in the house of power means that those in control of the state can allocate rather than count votes or that if votes are counted the figures can be falsified; that individuals who did not even contest elections can be issued with victory certificates and given strategic positions in governance institutions (cited in Okoyo 2007, p.11).

In fact, the godfather phenomenon is a major threat to democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The diminished public in politics asserts a new path to defining citizenship away from political rights. The Nigerian political system has increasingly become a game in which godfathers install their puppets in political office to do their biddings. Olufemi Soneye and George Nduka (2007) indicate that;

Across the major political parties, elected flag bearers who emerged after rigorous primaries are being substituted with aspirants who in most cases never took part in the intra-party selection process. Worse hit by this scourge is the ruling Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, reputed to be the largest political party in Africa. As at the last count more than 50 percent of candidates originally elected to fly the party’s colors at the April polls have been substituted for one reason or the other by the National Headquarters of the Party (cited in Okoyo 2007, p.15).

It is an understatement to suggest, then, that godfatherism clogs the system of political representation. While the highjack of power in Nigeria seems alarming, it is the sense of diminished ownership of the political process that threatens to negate commitment to democratic values among citizens.

**Decentralization and Local Government**

The move toward a system of decentralized government in Nigeria, as projected in the development of the Local Government Administration (LGA), seeks to reclaim back into democratic consciousness that sense of citizen participation in political life at the local
level. The recognition of this decentralization efforts, by the various Nigerian Constitutions, echoed the commitment to ensuring that citizens legally reenter political life without any obstruction.

**The 1976 Local Government Reforms**

The military administrations of Murtala and Obasanjo, between 1976 and 1979, marked a major step toward the development stage of LGA in Nigeria. As acknowledged by Kunle Awotokun (2005), “it was the first time a concerted effort [was] made by the federal government to brighten the future of local government” (p.129). Also, Awotokun (2005) indicated that “Local Government was not only accorded its place of pride in the socio-economic well-being of the country, it was also seen as a way of bringing government closer to the people” (p.129). In this stead, the invocation of LGA provided means by which the military administration could decentralize the functions of government by relocating some of its key activities to the local centers. The irony here is that since the federation was under military control, it may seem as though bringing citizens into the political process at the local level was merely a means to absolve itself from that sense of illegitimacy that naturally characterize any administration that undemocratically assumes power, but engaging citizens at the grassroot level came with its own benefit; it ensured accountability and sense of responsibility to citizenship.

In this reform, the political and administrative structures of the federation changed significantly both at the central and the local levels. Within the local structure, provisions were made so that every local government council elects its own chairman. Rather than imposing and manipulating the function of the Chairman, the local communities were empowered to elect representatives that could serve their interest. In this provision,
government began to directly engage citizens at the local level, beyond decades of paid lip services with empty efforts at bringing in citizens to the political table. While this government is essentially undemocratic, in terms of the means by which it acquired power, it did not resist such democratic mean by which citizens can be injected into the political process.

However, as acknowledged by Awotokun (2005), “the administrative wing was headed by career administrator styled secretary to the local governments. In addition all local governments were departmentalized” (p.130). Here, the emphasize on technical knowledge, in terms of the quality of human resource employed to work within this local system, suggest a heavy demand on performance. As well, the creation of a departimentalized local government placed some emphasize on accountability, specialty and competition. In fact, these reform measures, while promoting core values of the capitalist development rhetoric, did not waver in nudging the local systems, which had traditionally been communitarian in nature, toward capitalist outcomes. The heavy emphasizes on career administrator and structural reform meant that citizens seeking local office, not only do they need to be trained in the advance specialized knowledge in some aspect of government management, but also has to imbibe the new culture of local government administrative function. Therefore, rather than building on the local traditional resources, in terms of human and local traditional ways of management, the reform, though brought citizens into the political process, subtly transformed these local efforts into agent of western democratic demands.

Also, in order for the government to ensured that these local systems are capable of functioning to their best capacities, “the then federal government made available a sum of one hundred million (N100 million) during the 1976/77 financial year to all the local
governments in the federation” (Awotokun 2005, p.130). As Awotokun (2005) further stressed, it was the first time such a huge sum of money was made available to local government. Furthermore, Ola (1984, p. 90) highlighted that;

This sum (N100 million) can easily be compared with a grant of N1 million and N1.5 million made to each state of the then existing twelve states in the federation during the 1973/74 and 1974/75 fiscal years respectively for distribution to their local government. Similarly in 1977/78 the N250 million was earmarked; in the sum of N300 million was appropriated while in 1980 N278 million was allocated. (cited in Awotokun 2005, p.131)

Unlike Ghana, with the substantial financial commitment by the Nigerian federal government to local administrations, the extent to both administrative and fiscal decentralization in Nigeria is one of the best in Africa. As the figures below indicate, Nigeria enjoys a far more decentralized system of rule than Ghana, which in extension suggests that the sense of participation in political life Nigeria has increased.

Figure 1: Extend of Administrative Decentralization in Africa

Notwithstanding, it is also imperative to notice that with such strong tradition of federal government support for local administration, necessarily generate uncomfortable oversights and ties between the two structure of administration that could only lead to compromises that do not always articulate citizens needs at the local level. Therefore, to limit interference and manipulation of the functions of local government, the reform restricted the power of the State Ministries for Local Governments to merely advising, assisting and guiding local government activities rather than controlling them (Awotokun 2005). However, the vagueness in the function of the State Ministries for Local Governments remain a compelling challenge to the limits of interference to local government activities; for how do you advise, assist and guide without shaping the direction and outcome of local government.
activities, especially when vested interests are always an issue here and government financial support are channeled to these local governments through the State Ministries for Local Governments. Hence, rather than insulating local government function, the constant reliance of local governments on the state and federal governments paralyzed it independence from vested interests.

The Local Governments under 1979 Constitution

In 1979, Nigeria was ushered into constitutional democracy, hence the military reform that paved the way for local governments to form and legally serve local citizens was aborted, and the functioning of local governments in the federation was now to operate under constitutional mandate. However, the constitutional position of local government under the 1979 constitution was essentially problematic. What is immediately evident is that the constitution did not “explicitly provided for local governments as a third tier of government” (Awotokun 2005, p.133). To Awotokun (2005), then, the mere fact that the 1979 constitution highlights the duties and functions of local governments must not be misunderstood as constitutive of a tier of government. In this hindsight, therefore, the autonomy of local government to function independent of federal interferences was removed, hence these local structures will have to depend on the federal and state governments for sustenance and direction. Therefore, while the both the federal and state governments aggrandized power, local government became subsidiary and appendages of state government. Their capacities to engage and bring in citizens to the political process gradually diminished, as federal and state prerogatives overwhelmed local efforts toward participation.
Furthermore, Awotokun (2005) indicated that while the power of local governments waned their problems also compounded, as they no longer had a “separate source of funding, recruitment and deployment of staff” (p.131). Hence, “the federal allocation of ten percent (10%) of the Federation Account of the country was to reach the local governments via their respective state governments” (Awotokun 2005, p.133). Increasingly, local governments became not only dependent on state government, as a result of this constitutional mandate, but their functions and activities were essentially controlled by the state. Also very troubling, Awotokun asserted, with the exception of Lagos, all state governments refused to channel federal supports to the local governments rather they diverted it into state’s discretionary use. Therefore, without any money coming in to support their activities, local governments grew increasingly dysfunctional and incapable of serving the communities they represented: "Indeed the local governments of that era were politically impotent and financially insolvent such that they could not pay their salaries let alone performing their statutory functions as contained in the 1979 constitution” (Awotokun 2005, p.131).

**The 1999 Constitution and Local Government Administration**

Unlike previous mandates, the 1999 Constitution is predominantly characterized as artifact of military impulse, in as far as it “was not a people's inspired constitution” (Awotokun 2005, p.131). This condition constituted a pretext for dissent and alienation. Awotokun (2005) indicated many detractor sited why the process of engineering the constitution, that essential marginalized their participation and voice, served as a legitimate reason for dissent. However, despite concerns of the engineering process of the constitution not preserving the democratic values that organically ushered in the constitution itself, it is
worth noting that the function of the LGA were preserved as well as the tripartite system of government at the local level. Awotokun (2005) asserted that;

The executive, the legislature and the judiciary. The executive is vested in the chairman, vice-chairman, supervisor or supervisory councilors, and the whole machinery of local government bureaucracy. The legislative functions are meant to be performed by the councilors, who represent the wards which make up the Local Government Area. The judiciary on the other hand is streamlined with the federal and state and local government can avail itself of the judicial process available to it (p.133)

In the unambiguous defined roles of the various arms of rule, a sense of preservation of local government was not only enforced and projected, but also was given the needed legitimacy as avenues of popular participation. As the 1999 Constitution states “The system of local government by democratically elected government councils is under this constitution guaranteed, and accordingly, the government of every state shall, subject to the Section 8 of this constitution, ensure their existence under a law which provides for the establishment, structure, composition, finance and functions of such councils (Federal Republic of Nigeria Constitution 1999, cited in Awotokun 2005, p.131). The importance and sustenance of the idea of decentralization, then, is not only obligatory under the constitution, but also provide constitutional backing for citizens’ engagement in political life at the local level.

Like the state and federal systems of representative democratic processes, the 1999 Constitution clearly mandated periodic elections to elect representatives into the councils of these local governments. This does not only ensure that power is recycled as often as possible so a person or group of persons do not highjack local democratic effort, but also to provided a sense of accountability of representative both to the citizens and to the state and federal authorities. The provision for election, rather than appointment, also reinforces a commitment to limit influences by state and federal bodies in local governing structures.
Furthermore, the 1999 Constitution enumerate the functions and duties to be performed by every local government in the country;

1. The main functions of a local government council are as follows:
   (a) The consideration and the making of recommendations to a State Commission on Economic Planning or any similar body on:
      (i) the economic development of the state, particularly in so far as the areas of authority of the council and of the state are affected; and
      (ii) proposals made by the said commission or body;
   (b) Collection of rates, radio and television licenses;
   (c) Establishment and maintenance of cemeteries, burial grounds and home for the destitute or infirm;
   (d) Licensing of bicycles, trucks (other than mechanically propelled trucks), canoes, wheel barrows and carts;
   (e) Establishment, maintenance and regulation of slaughter houses, slaughter slabs, markets, motor parks and public conveniences;
   (f) Construction of maintenance of roads, streets, street lighting, drains and other public highways, parks, gardens, open spaces, or such public facilities as may be prescribed from time to time by the House of Assembly of a state;
   (g) Naming of roads and streets and numbering of houses;
   (h) Provision of maintenance of public conveniences, sewage and refuse disposal;
   (i) Registration of all births, deaths and marriages;
   (j) Assessment of privately owned houses or tenements for the purpose of levying such rates as may be prescribed by the House of Assembly of a State; and
   (k) Control and regulation of:
      (i) out-door advertising and hoarding;
      (ii) movement and keeping of pets of all description;
      (iii) shops and kiosks;
      (iv) restaurants, bakeries and other places for sale of food to the public;
      (v) laundries; and
      (vi) licensing, regulation and control of the sale of liquor.

2. The functions of a local government council shall include participation of such council in the government of a state as respects the following matters:
   (a) The provision and maintenance of primary, adult and vocational education;
   (b) The development of agriculture and natural resources, other than the exploitation of minerals;
   (c) The provision and maintenance of health services; and
(d) Such other functions as may be conferred on a local government council by the House of Assembly of the state (The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999).

The duties of local governments are comprehensive, as they are felt in all aspects of local life. In this stead, lack of adequate financial support, in terms of state diverting federal support for local government into discretionary fund, will affect all local communities. Yet, it seems in such diversions of funds and local government’s incapacitation, the state could easily absolve itself from any blame since, indeed, such dysfunction (that causes citizens to resist) does not lie within their jurisdiction. This make local government the first point of attack and, in most cases, the only point of attack from citizens’ rage. The localization of violent resistance is, in fact, necessary for controlling national resistance. The local government system now provides avenues for citizens to articulate their concerns with limited concerns of these rages seeping over local boundaries, as citizens concerns are not monolithic and stable across the board. In this case, the possibility of a common course that could possibly bind all local communities against the federal government is displaced.

Alternatively, the centralized and common laws mandating the function of LGA seek to totalized rule and standard, knowing very well that local concern differs from place to place. In this totality, local communities find out quickly that the concerns of other communities are essentially integral and common. Forging alliance around these concerns provide the impetus to resist against both state and federal government. Hence, the local government efforts will not be able to contain local resistance in this totalized system. Indeed, the local government system those not only serve to encourage sense of ownership and responsibility to the political process, but when abused becomes a strong avenue for mobilization of citizens against government’s abuse and repression.
Traditional Authority/Representation

While traditional rulership has been a long enduring system in the Nigerian political system, the Constitutions has, largely and strategically diminished its political efficacy in modern politics. For instance, while in 1963 the Constitution allowed for the creation of a legislative chamber in each region for chiefs, the 1979 Constitution instituted a precedence, which the 1989 and 1995 constitution followed, where the provision minimized the political potency of traditional rulers. The executive, legislative or judicial roles of traditional ruling system, in these Constitutions, were denied (Agbese 2004). However, considering the role these institutions play in many Nigeria communities, the constitutional efforts at obliterating the relevance of tradition rulership, inevitable produced a situation where government’s efforts were met with stiff resistance creating political instability in the country. As Pita Ogaba Agbese (2004) indicated;

Attempt and similar efforts to relegate traditional rulers and their indigenous political institutions and practices to the political backwaters of Nigeria have been largely unsuccessful. Not only do the role and relevance of the chief or traditional ruler remain a contested terrain in political discourse in Nigeria, political disputes over particular traditional thrones frequently erupt to create serious socio-political crises in many parts of the country (para 6).

Contrary to the modern government’s effort to aggrandize its power by diminish the political efficacy of traditional authority through constitutional mandates, Agbese (2004) insisted that;

Traditional rulers continue to exercise enormous power and influence over the lives and well-being of millions of Nigerians. In addition, traditional rulers control substantial economic and financial resources including land and forestry. In many rural areas of the country, the indigenous political institutions are virtually the only institutions of governance. In such places, there is a total absence of the paraphernalia of the modern Nigerian state. Law and order are maintained through traditional political structures. Social services as they exist are provided through various indigenous mechanisms. The virtual collapse of the institutions of the modern Nigerian state within the last few years as a result of military rule,
corruption, and privatization has accentuated the importance of indigenous Nigerian political institutions in many rural communities (para 12).

Inevitably, then, the minimizations of traditional authority could imply a restriction on the efforts and roles these traditional systems play in the local communities. In fact, Olufemi Vaughan (1991) indicated that the “apparent limitation of modern state structures at the grassroots has inevitably enhanced the status of paramount chiefs as important actors in a loosely defined ruling coalition at the federal, state and local government levels.” (p. 331). The irony here is that, despite these constitutional restriction and power curbings of traditional political role, the government is still heavily dependent on these structures to connect to the people in the rural areas, which in many senses reinforce the effectiveness of this long enduring system.

Interestingly, this system of power exercise has increasingly attracted the very wealthy and powerful in Nigerians. Agbese (2004) asserted that;

In recent years, the list of victorious candidates reads like a who-is-who of Nigeria: Ibrahim Dasuki as Sultan of Sokoto, Oladele Olashore as the Oba of Iloko in Ijeshaland, Omo N’Oba Ereduwa, the Oba of Benin, to name just a few. Some Nigerians even place traditional rulership on a higher pedestal than state governorship or some other leadership position within the top hierarchies of the Nigerian state (para18).

Also, Yakubu Mohammed (1998) has noted with respect to the sultanate of Sokoto that, “Next to the presidency of this country, the office of the sultan is easily the most exalted and therefore the most coveted. The late Sarduana of Sokoto, Ahmaddu Bello, once an aspirant to the sultan’s throne, said if he was asked to make a choice between the presidency of this country and the sultanate, he would most willingly and gladly settle for the latter.” (1998, p. 6). There is no reason to underestimating the potency of this traditional system of representation, for though representatives in this system are not elected through modern
democratic means, they still exude power that many citizens identify with. The only problem here is that because they are not elected by the people, the sense of accountability and responsibility to the people is entirely dependent on the rulers’ discretion.

Unlike Ghana, the interesting thing about the Nigerian system of traditional representation, is that the state government has a right to “frequently create new ‘traditional’ thrones” (Agbese 2004, para 13). Agbese (2004) highlighted an example where the “Benue State government … created several new second-class chiefs in the state in 1997. Although created in the name of customs and traditions, these are brand new institutions that have no precedent in the political experience of the people of Benue State” (para 13). This reflects the substantial government’s continuing interests in the traditional political institutions. These efforts do not only accentuate the efficiency of such traditional system, in terms of their local and traditional appeal to the masses, but alternatively provided avenues to aggrandize the power of the wealthy in the Nigerian societies. Indeed, while effective, the masses are barred from full engagement from both the modern and the traditional systems of representation, which speak to my central concern on the nature of the agitation that form around this sense of colonization of public spaces by elite fantasies. This necessarily provides the impetus for revolt, as both systems have grown increasingly irresponsible to the needs of the public.

**Civil Society**

Civil society suggests a “realm of organized social life that is voluntary, self-generating, self-supporting, autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal or set of shared values” (Diamond, 1994). This system of representation form around specific shared values, and because it is autonomous from the state it become the most powerful tool that is
not yet entirely co-opted by the power elite (at least in theory). Many consider civil societies as necessary element in the democratic process, as in many cases it mounts pressure on states to transition into democracies as well as providing the necessary condition for democracy to consolidate (see, Diamond 1997). Its roles, under an ideal condition, include;

- limiting state power and promoting openness in governmental activities,
- supplementing the role of political parties in stimulating political participation,
- structuring multiple channels, beyond the political party, for the articulation and representation of interests. It also includes strengthening democracy through election monitoring groups, democracy institutes and think tanks; and
- enhancing accountability, responsiveness, effectiveness and legitimacy of the political system, given citizens respect for the state and positive engagement with it (Omotola and Aremu 2007, p.66).

But, as Omotola and Aremu (2007) suggested, for civil societies in Nigeria to perform these roles effectively, they must be able to resist civil limitations. The limitations include the need for most of these civil societies to resolve their problematic genealogy, as some were motivated by “primordial public realm” instead of “civic public realm” (Omotola and Aremu 2007, p.66). In this perverted civic public good they become insulated from articulating public concerns. Also, because of the nature of their organization—as they are not authorized through popular election—they are insulated from public accountability. As result;

- the [Nigerian] state intervenes in their activities, at times to create parallel [civil societies] to the so-called ‘anti-movements’, or by patronage appointment of leaders to divide and weaken their unity (Omotola and Aremu 2007, p.67).

The perversion of the role of civil society by the state makes it difficult for civil societies to function as independent entity representing entirely the interest of the public.
Chapter Five: Comparative Analysis: A Theoretical Claim

Contemporary notion of political representation suggest a liberal sense of freedom and democracy and yet defends the atomization of individuals from collective engagement, which subverts the social contract. Of course, individualism represents a break from public sensationalism, as well as the communitarian consciousness that is popularly argued by pro-representative democrats to delay political progress. Largely, liberal theories of civil liberties and democratic rights are now based on this notion of separate individuality (De Marco 2000, p.38).

While Hegel acknowledged that the individual’s strivings to fulfill his/her selfish desires represent the guiding principle of the civil society, he also assumed that the individual could at the same time transcend egoism and participate in political life as a citizen (Hegel 1998, p.302). For Hegel, as for Marx, representation (they allude to) ignores the alienation of man from social power and justifies the contradictions of democracy⁹ (Hegel 1998, p.302).

As for Robert Fatton (2002) then, democracy merely legitimizes the hijack and misappropriation of public power by bourgeois individualism. Marx also argues that;

None of these so-called rights of man, therefore, go beyond egoistic man, beyond man as a member of civil society, that is, an individual withdrawn into himself, into the confines of his private interests and private caprice, and separated from the community … he is far from being conceived as a species being; on the contrary, species-life itself, society, appears as a framework external to the individuals, as a restriction of their original independence (1990, p.164).

The nature of egoistic individualism is central to the mode of political representation in both Nigeria and Ghana. Marx is concerned that people will actually believe that they are, indeed, “free and have some power in society that they live in a ‘democracy’, but this power and

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⁹ Democracy as conceive here is in theory constructed as an institution of popular representation yet very individualistic in practice.
freedom is only ever formal” (Marco 2000, p.41). Thus, representation challenges critical admission to equality and collective determinacy. In support of this claim, Kelsen (1988) argues that representative democracy was not democratic or representative at all in as far as Members of Parliament are not accountable to their constituencies, in most cases they are probably not even known by their constituencies. How do you, then, make present the voices and opinions of these constituencies in political processes when interest articulated are mediated and a product of the representatives’ interpretation (Alcoff 1991).

In her article, “The problem of Speaking for Others”, Linda Alcoff (1991) considers the nature of popular interest articulation as a critical problem that underlies forms of representation. In her discussion, she acknowledges that the ever increasing diversity of human desires, environment and circumstance make it difficult to claim authenticity in representation. In her argument, she highlights a specific political occurrence after the 1989 election in Panama;

[after the 1989 elections in Panama are overturned by Manuel Noriega, U.S. President George Bush declares in a public address that Noriega's actions constitute an ‘outrageous fraud’ and that ‘the voice of the Panamanian people have spoken.’ ‘The Panamanian people,’ he tells us, ‘want democracy and not tyranny, and want Noriega out.’ He proceeds to plan the invasion of Panama (Alcoff 1991; p.5).

While there are no evidences that people of Panama reached any collective decision on the legitimacy or illegitimacy of Noriega’s reign, President Bush’s assertion is internationally acclaimed as reflection or representative of Panamanians’ collective desire. This analogy is a classic case of the problematic of organizing representative politics in modern democratic environments. The silent democratic citizens, in this context, are displaced, while the amplification of the voice of representation acquires a material existence and origin. Of course, “this is not to suggest that all representations are fictions: they have very real material
effects, as well as material origins, but they are always mediated in complex ways by discourse, power, and location” (Alcoff 1991, p.6). The problem of speaking for others or representing others is that the “persons from dominant groups who speak for others are often treated as authenticating presences that confer legitimacy and credibility on the demands of subjugated speakers” (Alcoff 1991, p.6). But how can the subjugated speakers’ demands be authenticated when many factors constrain the ability of representatives to claim representation of another without accounting for interpretation or mediation? Of course, the social location or social identity affects the meaning and truth of representative’s articulations, “thus that one cannot assume an ability to transcend one's location” (Alcoff 1991, p.6).

Indeed, the organization and functions of the system of political representation in post-colonial Africa poses many challenges to the sustainability of peace in the region. Through a cross-disciplinary theoretical inquiry, I explore here the theoretical implication and possibilities of deconstructing political representation and the enactment of resistance through multiple frames. In approaching these theoretical concerns, this chapter answers the guiding research questions for this thesis, exploring the possible theoretical understanding that can be recuperated in the discussion of the political representation and the production of resistance in Ghana and Nigeria.

**Question 1: In what ways does representative democracy in Ghana and Nigeria reinforce sense of citizens’ alienation and how is that linked to recurring resistance in these countries?**

The invocation of the presence of binary signifier within representative governance, which is the represented, is often deployed in representative democratic rhetoric as legitimate
in its “silence” or absence in order to resolve the deficit and contradiction inherent in the notion and practice of democracy—often as a site for popular participation and a structure of articulation of plural needs and yet marginalizes the enactment citizenship. Such deployment presumes that the alienated citizens are a monolithic category and their diverse essences can be recovered through acts of representation. While this presumption challenges the origins of representation as an effective medium of projecting citizens’ needs, the multiplicity of citizens’ location within the socio-political structure(s) require(s) that for representation of these needs, objectives, priorities, and values to be authenticated the location has to be re-constructed or even imagined as unified. In this totalized value of the state, many citizens are necessarily alienated, as the constructed values pre-exist their needs or concerns.

Both Ghana and Nigeria exhibit systems of political representation that, although are organized around democratic conditions, minimize the essence of citizens participation and their political rights in general. What is clear in both contexts is that, the space to perform that act of civic, political and democratic duties as citizen is totally co-opted by power drunk politician who will do anything to ensure their hold on power. These politicians push themselves through spaces exclusively provided for citizen—as mediums to exert their citizenship—hence damaging the real essence of citizenship. In other words, the binary structure that legitimizes the category of the representative—which is the represented—is eliminated in the democratic process and these representatives reconstruct their presence in these voids. In this case, because the binary structure is not an organic condition for the existence of the representative, the sense of responsibility and accountability diminishes rather rapidly under the weight of diminished authorization. Therefore, citizenship, in both
Ghana and Nigeria, emerges as an alienated category existing outside the structure, and this category is constantly exploited to appropriate legitimacy of the democratic system.

Indeed, as McGowen had argued earlier, the presence of the binary signifier, if not perverted or alienated, sustains social harmony within the structure. The gap created in this divorced fundamental relationship between the represented and the representatives quickly become a site for contestation, strife and agitation. For while the represented claim rights to authorizing the political process under the values of democracy, the act of political representation, as practice in both Ghana and Nigeria, limits such legitimate performance. The contradictory values projected through the structure increases the production of dissenting views and values, and in case where formal contestation process always privileges—as demonstrated in democratic means of circulating bodies within the structure—the demands of the representatives, the citizens/represented forge alternative spaces where their rights and presence could be re-asserted.

Specifically, both Ghana and Nigeria demonstrate how, increasingly, public spaces within the representative system of government have been colonized by the elite, limiting spaces available for citizens’ participation. However, while even the electoral process have significantly been colonized (and this is most elaborate in the case of Nigeria in its current practice of godfatherism), it still remain a symbolic space needed for the appropriating legitimacy. Citizens have increasingly become aware of the limited space available to them in this political process, therefore, the electoral process—a process by which they are occasionally re-called into full citizenship—becomes an opportunistic space within which to demand recognition and control circulation of bodies within the structure, except when it is
absolutely impossible to dictate terms of such circulation then this recall becomes important alternative means of reasserting citizens essence.

Indeed, it is the abuse and evacuation of the missing/alienated binary signifier, within representative governance that define the relationship between the structure and violence: “it produces the imbalance that manifests itself in class society, racial difference, and male domination. But on the other hand, the absence of this signifier allows us to enter into the regime of language and escape relations of pure force. It results in an insurmountable injustice” (McGowan p.50). And to re-echoe Jacques Derrida (1994), “To be ‘out of joint,’ whether it be present being or present time, can do harm and do evil, it is no doubt the very possibility of evil. But without the opening of this possibility, there remains, perhaps, beyond good and evil, only the necessity of the worst” (In Specters of Marx, p 29). In this stead the inaccessibility of the missing signifier to the benefits of inhabiting the structure pervert the sanctity of these democratic institutions.

Having emphasized the possibilities for violent response to alienating citizens from the structures of democracy, it is equally important to highlight that it also seem contradictorily necessary for the citizen to be alienated in order for representative democracy to function as such. Considering the fact that the functional role of representatives are argued to have increasingly become technical where issues they have to deal with have increasingly become diverse, a third category of a artificially reproduced “need” has been projected as integral to the function of representatives. Often this reconstructed need is projected as a national value but originally empty of democratic values in the way it is constituted. While these newly constructed needs mimic the origins of the real needs of citizens, it however, makes no reference to it. This artificial creation, in fact, is technically
projected as communally constitutive. While these artificiality seem undermining of the values of democracy, seemed to have become necessary for the sustenance of democracy in Ghana and Nigeria, considering the inability and incompetence that refrains the representatives to articulate the multiple and competing citizens’ interests.

The complex, multiple and competing citizens’ interests in both Ghana and Nigeria, even within a specific region, assert an institutional primacy to intervene often in the interest of the state. These forms of interventions result in the imposition of certain legislations and prioritization that marginalize popular needs. Specific to Ghana, while the need by the majority of citizen was to be integrated into the political structure, the decentralized effort created an oversight structures that immediate aborted the essence of citizens in the democratic efforts. Here much credence was given to the primacy of security and oversight, that the presence of citizens in the political system was marginalized. In this case, traditional leadership structure through which over 50 percent of citizen access political rights are still not integrated in the decentralization efforts. Also, in Nigeria, one witness the weight of government oversight exerted on plural avenues of interests articulation. The decentralized structures, by design, because they have to depend on government subsidies, fall victim to strict policy on fund utilization. Because funds tend to be directed at specific interests the federal government deems necessary, the autonomous function of local governments is demobilized.

Alternatively, without these oversights, there will be instance of representatives channeling fund to pet projects that serve few people in the community or limiting avenues of participation for some citizens. It is only is this presumption that the alienation of citizens are argued as a necessary condition for preserving the representative political institution.
However, the memory of the performance of acts of emancipation has always instructed that without resistance liberty can never be attained. Through many generations of enacting full citizenships and undermining/subverting injustices through the performance of resistance, the act of violence is de-stigmatize as senseless to rather articulate a legitimate mode of demanding rights of passage or transition (from their marginal location into the core) into the structure for full citizenship. Violent resistance then is subverted as an anti-social act, and within the body polity acquires a legitimate memory and performance to leverage the enactment of justice and recognition.

**Question 2: Does memory of, and longing for, the past in these countries threaten the nature of the political organization?**

The idea of “political representation” (especially in Ghana and Nigeria) seems to assert a historical primacy of a unified identificatory and value systems, yet threatened by the pretence of authenticating presence of absent citizens within political frames and acts of silencing of the “other” so the totality is preserved. Inevitably, the invocation of this idea—political representation—emblematize a codified set of assumptions that embrace the historical value of a notion that is neither authentic nor stable. The reconsideration of the idea of political representation, as a modern performance, and the nature of the African state, “as a metaphistorical fantasy that produces historicized constructions” (in Filewod) of multiple identity frames, enact a socio-political reality preserved through subversive class consciousness. In this performance, the projection of representation adopts an imperial gaze that threatens to represses the historicized constitution of “otherness”, not merely as alien to it, but as a distortion of an authentic expression of nationhood itself. It is only in this gaze that a totalized value nations worth and ideals are nursed, massaged, reformed, and projected
to embody an authentic performance of nationhood that can never be realized. In this sense, liberal representative government does not assert an end of history (see Fukuyama), but rather provide avenues for the reification of the past and these memories permeate the structures of government and threaten its stability.

Indeed, there is a constant longing for a performance of the past that constantly shapes present condition. As psychoanalysis instructs, one mode of reacting to past traumas (as witness in colonial projects in both Ghana and Nigeria), is the deterioration into a libidinal fixation on the past. This unfaltering fixation on the lost object, then, “culminates in a regressive process of incorporating, if not devouring, the lost other—a process which might eventually enact a primary narcissism” and which Freud suspects could carry a pathological disposition (Gana, p.97; more elaborate engagement can be found in Freud, 1917, p.584-9). The reconstruction of the ego, as a reification of the memories of the past through the act of permanently engraving the past on the ego, ensure a reaction to the present political condition through the lenses of past precedence. The re-visitation of the past challenges the linearity of history and the inevitability of representative democracy as a performance of all political paths.

Of course, the trauma of colonialism and the lost of pre-colonial self remain dominant constructive tools in the formation of the current political subjects. In this claim, I aim to echo that the political subject is essentially a historical production, whether directly (as a result of living during the period of colonialism) or indirectly (imbibing and internalizing the cultural and social teachings that emerged as opposition to challenge colonialism/neo-colonialism). In this process of ego formation, the self emerge as a site of resistance against any structure attributed to colonial or neo-colonial emblems, in as long as
the memory of the past privileges resistive enterprises against oppressive forces. The ego is conditioned to react in such resistive manner against structures that mimic the performance of past traumatic experiences—the reaction becomes a “new structure of identity; in effect, the other becomes part of the ego through permanent internalization of the other’s attribute” (Butler, p.74).

In fact, the case of Ghana and Nigeria suggest that the sense of post-colonial subject’s desiring is neither monolithic nor stable but essentially reactionary to the structure and assert a mimetic enactment of the past paths to liberation. This reactions are in themselves codified, hence the ego, having the lost object ensconced within it, deploy images of the past in response to these structural mimicry of colonial oppression. While these desiring are plural, the position from which they are deployed, specific to the countries under study, can be classified under two sites, which are problematically conflicting. On the one hand, there is the position of the subject which through the traumas of the past reconstructs it relations to the political structure as though the annihilation of the structures are the only possible liberatory avenues. Hence, the egos of citizens constantly strive for such space and avenue to re-assert itself as emancipated. The construction of the ego, in this regard, is trans-generational in as long as the structures constantly turn to lend their use for repressive (be it ideological or through physical force—see Althusser) enterprises engineered through elite fantasies. Within the body polity, ethical relations to the structure is perverted and the paths to reconciliation is fractured in ways that seem to endanger the performance of democracy as a provocative venture. Indeed, both the Ghanaian and Nigerian representative political structures, in their marginalization of citizens needs, concerns and participation, unintendedly transforms the desiring of citizens into, necessarily, resistive actions, where the
A notion of electoral violence could easily be misread as irrational, divorced from its possible psychological interpretations.

On the other hand, there also emerges a counter category of desiring from the position of the elite. Being the beneficiaries of the colonial rule and power structures—which was engineered for the power exercise with limited opposition—the class of people were severed from their love object once independence was gained. Their presence and willingness in the efforts toward independence could be argued to be contingent on an informal guarantee of power use without the stiff policing of power use by the citizens. But once in power, the demand for an egalitarian state became imperative limiting the ability of these elites to use power as their colonial predecessors. And this is not to diminish the self-sacrifice of selfless nationalists whose blood and toil paid for the emancipation these countries now enjoyed, but the fact that by the turn of the century, many African leaders who led the struggle for independence (and their predecessors) have become numb to the demands of citizens and were unwilling to relinquish power to legitimate leaders invoke my concerns. Indeed, the ego formation of elites acquires a lust for power unchecked by popular demands, which is constantly seeking avenues to reinforce and reassert its primacy. The representative political space provided such comfort in its contradiction—as it instructs the articulation of popular demands and participation, however, because the popular interests articulation in itself cannot be quantified it conveniently project an artificial need of citizens removed from democratic processes. In this stead, in cases where avenues prevail for the contesting the legitimate presence of irresponsible political elites, disgruntled elites force their way into political arenas through military overthrows. What emerges, then, is a
recycling of elites’ unrelenting hold on power as though this space is legitimately solely theirs.

It is, then, no surprise when Dipo Kolawole (2005) argued that there is a symmetric relationship between the character and nature of colonial and military rules. Both structures, specific to Nigeria, Kolawole highlighted, are predicated on coercion, used constitutional reviews as instruments for survival, are means to personalize power, and both appropriate the structures of indirect rule to mobilize support, resources, and ensure control. The possibility in reading such imitation of rule by the military regime seeks to suggest an enactment of a sort of elite egoistic fantasies of the use of absolute power. The military performance is merely an exhibition of ensconce lost object within elite ego, invoking the problem of “history” as undeniably central to the performance of national formation, existence and cohesion.

Returning to “Melancholy and the Act”, Slavoj Žižek will argue that in the continuing narcissistic identification of either the elites’ or citizens’ to their varying lost objects, ethical positions required for maintaining social and political harmonies deteriorates, and in its place violence and resistance emerge to override pacific efforts.

**Question 3: In what ways are the constructions of sovereignty and independence in Ghana and Nigeria perverted through institutional legacies?**

Under the political weight of the hijacked and manipulated state, citizens have constantly drifted to any attachment of reality that predates colonialism. The reason for this drift, often argued by post-colonial psychoanalysts, instructs that post-colonial ethnic groups “should not renounce their traditions through mourning, but retain the melancholic attachment to their lost roots” (Zizek p.658). Since these ethnic identities are contingent,
predominantly, on their pre-colonial selves, resisting post-colonial identificatory links only serves to reinforce a self unique, authentic and free from subjugation. Zizek further argues, as earlier indicated, that the “melancholic link to the lost ethnic Object allows us to claim that we remain faithful to our ethnic roots while fully participating in the global capitalist game” (659). While these commitments are still relevant, the authenticity of this lost identity remains a concern here. For the only condition under which this drift could remain legitimate is only if in the enactment of these past attachments, the authenticity of the lost object is both preserved and projected.

To Zizek, then, recognizing the validity in such post-colonial position, indicates that “what is wrong with the postcolonial nostalgia is not the utopian dream of a world they never had (such a utopia can be thoroughly liberating) but the way this dream is used to legitimize the actuality of its very opposite, of the full and unconstrained participation in global capitalism” (p. 659). In this claim, he questions the pre-colonial realities that ethnic communities often drift in order to authenticate their identities. Not only does Zizek think this is post-colonial nostalgia but also it is a reality that never at any point in the pre-colonial history existed. This idea pushes against thriving idea of the existence of pre-egalitarian and decentralized democratic arrangements that existed in many African communities popularly projected by Osabu-Kle.

Invoking Zizek use of Anamorphosis, then, let me elaborate that this concept “undermines the distinction between objective reality and its distorted subjective perception; in it, the subjective distortion is reflected back into the perceived object itself, and, in this precise sense, the gaze itself acquires a supposedly objective existence” (p.659). This, then, support Althusser’s claim that reality in itself is a representation of the imaginary divorced
from the authentic. In fact without that the real, melancholy, in this context, merely problematize the possibility for an ethical relationship to develop with the distorted image, and without this relationship, the possibility for autonomy and independence into which the citizens seek to escape is subverted. Here, historical fortresses deteriorate under the pressure of legitimacy and authenticity. What emerges is the mythology of existence projected to demobilize the treachery of political alienation and colonial imperialism (and its extensions where applicable). This mythology is neither authentic nor stable, accentuating alternative claims, away from, say, the imposed democracy.

To return to the idea of mythology, Jamesons argued that;

...the sense people have of themselves and their own moment of history may ultimately have nothing whatsoever to do with its reality: that the existential may be absolutely distinct, as some ultimate ‘false consciousness,’ from the structural and social significance of a collective phenomenon, surely a possibility rendered more plausible by the fact of global imperialism, in terms of which the meaning of a given nation-state—for everyone else on the globe—may be wildly at odds from their own inner experiences and their own interior daily life (p.282).

In this sense, myths of the past and present are merely a projection of a shared understanding of identity and reality employed to pacify rather than recuperate. But the real, in this case, has escaped reference to present identity, and mythological project rather maintains its resemblance with the real in the ways it uses time and place to institutionalize meaning of self (see Baudrillard 2005). While this myth objectifies the real as total and constitutive, the real in itself has constantly articulated a fractured and infinitely variable enactment of self and identity. This desired empty identity that is deployed through the act

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10 In “History: A Retro Scenario,” Baudrillard argued that “History is our lost referential, that is to say our myth”, and that “The great event of this period, the great trauma, is this decline of strong referentials, these death pangs of the real and of the rational that open onto an age of simulation” (p.43). Roland Barthes also define myth as: “a type of speech [...] made of a material which has already been worked on so as to make it suitable for communication: [...] all the materials of myth presuppose a signifying consciousness” (p.109-110). Myth then merely mimics the real eliminate the any connection to the real.
of mythologizing the past, places an undue burden on the self to negotiate an identity that it
never at any point inhabited. This places meaning on how citizens see their conditions and
their moral obligation and reaction to the past.

In this sense, the desiring of the past that organically constitutes a demand for space
and independence within the structure, because it is perverted, pervert the citizens’ ethical
demands. As argued earlier, because the colonial rule overwhelmed the autonomy of
subjugated identities, these identities reformed in response to this imperial gaze (see Fanon).
These responses, which often constitute the focus of post-colonial longings, were in fact
product of imperial structures. These responses also become the position from which the
myths of these historical subjects are deployed. Here, one cannot resist the temptation of
probing the implication of embracing such myths, as they are always anchored in imperial
fantasies. This is to suggest that the reification of such longings could in fact be a
performance of positions defined entirely within the frameworks of colonial and post-
colonial imperialism. Citizens’ myths deployed to challenge the imperial control of
representation erase the real, and the desiring becomes a project of unconscious departure
into imperial identificatory systems, which does not necessarily resist subjugation, but
temporarily pacifies and immediately reinforces subjugation.

Here I am concern that while political representation, as a system of government,
may appear as a structure of myth (see Grovougi), that citizens are interpellated to embrace,
may lubricate the unconscious desires for western hegemony, while the counter mythological
structure of traditionalism or autonomous identity, often invoke to undermine the legitimacy
of democracy, is equally a space of unconscious desiring for mythological re-invocation of
nationhood that is perverted and a product of western hegemony (see Zizek).
Chapter Six: Conclusion

A singularly monolithic definition of political representation does not only eludes a uniform scholarly assertion of how such political act manifests, but also produces an academic site of contestation that rejects fixed or scientific requirements as ultimate definition. Pennock and Chapman (1968), Pitkin (1967), and Schwartz (1988), among others, have all struggled to define this concept without undermining the democratic residence in such practices. Somewhat wobbly under critical pressure, Hanna Pitkin (1967) definition, “to make present again” (p.144), seem to speak directly to, and embrace somewhat marginally, some of the democratic values inherent in the concept of political representation. However, just as much as Pitkin conception enlightens, it also open a door for renewed critical engagements. Indeed, if Pitkin’s perception should warrant any fundamental critique, it may reside in the very effort that her idea seeks to recuperate back into the deficits of this form of democratic practice. For to suggest that citizens are made present again in a democratic system, is to equally suggest that previous or alternative forms of democracies limited the capacity for full citizens’ engagement. Ironically, the ideas of representation and democracy as harmonizing sites of citizen re-invocation are fraught with legitimate concerns of how in these political performances the citizen can dramatically be liberated from the fangs of the structures that made him/her absent in the first place. While an answer to this question is an ongoing debate, it will suffice here to indicate that Pitkin’s conception invokes, invariably, an idea of fruitful and mutual relationship, sense of accountability, and heightened sense of authorization, that permeate the matrix of the “union” between citizens and their political representatives. Inferring from Pitkin argument, these conditions,
seemingly though, allows the reincarnation of the citizen as present in this “alienating” political space.

This utopic view of political representation anchors our understanding of political life within western ontology of egalitarianism and liberal pacifism. The coming of age of citizens into this political space are hinged on the ideological view that these forms of “mediate” participation in public life affirms a commitment to ethics, refined civility, and reform citizens’ needs in a uniformed determinate order. These commitments, then, become the foundations upon which dissidence and political irresponsibility are theorized as absent. However, in cases where these forms of unethical political expressions seep into social actions and consciousness, often, the projection of these countries as democratically immature becomes a convenient alibi, and these states are required to strengthen their beliefs in liberalism and western models of polity even more in order to transcend this immaturity.

Interestingly, the political subjects that have historically developed as sites of multiple interests, identities and expressions cease in the enactment of political representation and are replicated into a uniform entity. In this replicated form the idea of nationalism is continually echoed, of course as imagined, but also as a totalized fantasy of diversification. The disconnection between real citizens’ needs and the totalized projections undermine not only the values of democracy but also the ways in which it is performed. De-essentializing the primacy of citizenship in democracy necessarily creates spaces within which representatives re-create and re-assert themselves as a powerful class with imperial fantasies. The sense of accountability needed to ensure that the representatives are held in check quickly wanes under the weight of diminished power of electoral authorization. This, then, liberates the representatives to act in manner that only promote their interests, rather
than articulate the demands of the represented. However, the self-serving interests are made
to mimic or pose as the real citizens’ needs, yet in its origins makes no reference to the
essence of citizenship. The perverted or artificial articulations, because it neither recuperates,
nor represents, the represented are forcefully evacuated from the structure to occupy the
margins of the socio-political realities.

While the weight of the repressive force of representatives’ imperialism overwhelms,
the represented never stop seeking ways to re-assert their independence. The struggles for
emancipation, then, assert a resistive enterprise that cannot be resolve by reproducing the
present. However, the present is entrenched in legal frameworks, allowing the state to
legitimately absolve itself from its responsibility as an arbiter seeking to resolve the deficits of
the present, and instead project and protect the selfish interest of the representatives. To
many, resolving the excesses of the present require dissolving the state, as it is popularly seen
as a structure that perpetrate these acts of imperialism of the representatives. In this sense,
the images of the representatives create a new meaning of “state” in ways that the treachery
or irresponsiveness of the representatives becomes the burden of the state. Hence, often the
represented’s resistive response to the representative has equally questioned the legitimacy of
the state.
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