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Students and Africa's Democratization Process: From Colonial to Post-Independence Eras

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Abstract:

Enough historical evidence abound which dispel the fast-held notion that suggests, pre-colonial African societies never practiced any form of democracy, until the advent of colonialism. Simplistic as the African democratic experiences might have been, these forms nonetheless, bore semblance to other known practices in the western world and did, indeed, conform to the basic principles of modern democracy. This research paper has briefly reviewed these pre-colonial practices; however, the focus is on Africa's post-colonial democratic experiences and in particular, the role of students in this whole process. In the given milieu, the main objective of this work is an evaluation of students' contributions in this entire democratic process---their achievement and also, the price they have/had to pay for. The study which adapted an analytical approach, obtained primary, secondary and tertiary data on the subject matter, having used Ghana as case study. Consequently, findings have revealed that, throughout both colonial and post-colonial eras, the activities and interventions (including peaceful demonstrations, non-violent advocacy and sometimes violent protests) of African students, have immensely contributed to the enhancement of democracy within the continent. The attendant benefits having aided the following: socio-politico-economic development of the continent; peaceful co-existence of people of varied political opinions; and the observance of fundamental human rights; inter alia. That said, lapses still persist within the context of democratic governance among African states, which students' activism are constantly striving to address with a resulting resistance from the corridors of power. Indeed, it is also significant to mention that, one major recommendation put forth by the study is that: students' activism should approach issues non-violently while at the same time authorities should acknowledge and uphold the potent contributions of students in that regard. Finally, the implications of this study are multifaceted as they do not only complement scholarly literature but are also relevant in respect of policy-direction and the enhancement of good democratic governance among the community of states, as spearheaded by the United Nations.

Keywords: Students, Africa, democratization process, colonial and post-independence eras

1. Introduction

The term, democracy which is derived from two Greek words, 'demos', meaning people and 'kratein' meaning to govern or to rule is steep in history; tracing its roots to the ancient Greek City-States in the Fifth Century BC. In literal terms, democracy encompasses the rule of the people by the people themselves and it is a government of the majority (Khan, 2005). In a similar vein, Abraham Lincoln defines democracy as, ".... a government of the people, by the people and for the people". Furthermore, as Becker (Khan, 2005) strongly posits, democracy entails a government of the people and one that is composed by the majority. In its widest meaning, therefore, the term democracy, refers to a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions within the public realm, by the indirect action of citizens and through the cooperation of their elected representatives (Dahl, 1971; Friedrich, 1968).

In essence therefore, the term that is linked with the best practices of constitutional rule and good governance in modern times, refers to a system of government wherein; supreme power of a state is vested in the citizens that can either be exercised directly by themselves or indirectly through representatives that are elected or appointed by the citizens. Thus, the concepts of democracy and good governance have come to be the basic requirements for sustainable development worldwide (Grindle, 2004; Khan, 2005). The concept though, goes beyond a set of constitutional rules and procedures that determine how a government functions, since government, is only a subset of the democratic society that contains other elements such as complex institutions, political parties, organizations and associations. It is an undeniable fact that, democratic governance enhances transparency, accountability, rule of law, adherence to fundamental human

rights, civic participation and inclusiveness in the governance system and the socio-economic development of nation-states that have so far embarked on this process (CDD-Ghana, 2001). This system over the years, has been embraced by both capitalist and socialist states and to the extent that totalitarian states have even adapted very important features of the concept, thus improving hugely on their governance systems.

The success of every democracy (be it parliamentary, presidential/direct or indirect) depends on whether the overall system is run by strong institutions. These institutions include the three branches of government---the executive, legislature and judiciary. The legislative arm makes the laws, the judiciary arm interprets laws and adjudicates justice, while the executive arm makes and implements policies of state as well as the laws (Heywood, 2011). The three arms provide effective checks and balances to each other, thereby enhancing the healthy growth of democracy which, is the *sine quo non* of development and peaceful coexistence of societies (Fukuyama, 2013; Grindle, 2004; Khan, M.H., 2005). Outside these three institutions of state, such groups as the independent media, political parties and civil society, *inter alia*, play complementary (though not main) roles in the running of democracies in societies (Benson, 2018; Benson & Ngaasu, 2020). These notable groups according to Oquaye and Drah (2000), advocate, promote and protect human rights, perform civic duties, and hold the government and its functionaries accountable for their policies and actions. Today, nearly all states across the globe have embraced the tenets of democracy in their governance systems that adopt many and varied forms. Without doubt therefore, the democratic process as Zindela and Oguunibi (2017) observe, has taken several paths, and being practised differently across the world among varied challenges. Africa is never left out in this equation as nearly all 54 African states are practicing one form of democracy or the other.

Undoubtedly therefore, democratic practises in Africa come in varied forms that have span through many eras: pre-colonial, colonial and post-independence. First, during the pre-colonial era, two political systems existed---chiefdoms, where power and authority were based on kinship; and kingdoms where power and authority were centralised with the king as the supreme ruler (Apter, 1965). Second, the colonial era was characterised by the forceful rather than persuasive neutralisation of these structures; replacing them with the held-notions of western democracy which gave no thoughts to the potency and peculiar principles of the African democratic systems. Third, democratic practices within the post-independence era for instance, has a chequered history where most independent African countries came to abandon democratic rule following rude military coup d'états and poor democratic ratings that characterised the continent between the 1960s and 1990s. To cite Ghana (the first African country south of the Sahara to gain independence) as an example, it experienced four coup d'états between 1966 and 1992 that toppled three constitutional regimes. This situation was no different in many other African countries including Ghana's next-door neighbours such as Togo, Liberia, Benin, Nigeria, Senegal and Cote D'Ivoire. Be that as it may, the restoration of democracy to these states since the 1990s has engendered relative peace that benefits Africa's developmental agenda, hugely. A period, Wani and Suwirta (2015) aptly described as a period of intense democratisation and good governance in Africa. I therefore see this period as an era that is encouraged by Africa's desire for overall development which, will only strive on the bedrock of freedom and Justice and the rule of law. Indeed, a feat that is achieved on the platform of several coordinated factors and sacrifices offered by many groups namely; politicians, traditional rulers, clerics, professionals, business societies, civil societies and students, *inter alia*. The latter's role forms the basis of this project.

In essence, the paper encompasses an introduction that explain in a passing the basic tenets of modern western democracy, as a prelude to reflections of traditional African democracies. Furthermore, it discusses how precepts of western democracy as introduced by European colonisers have had influences on the democratic experiences of both colonial and post-independent Africa till date. Moreover, it does an evaluation of student activism and how this has enhanced the democratisation process in the continent of Africa, including a brief overview of violent actions of students and equally harsh responses from authorities. Finally, the paper analysis the attendant achievements of students and lapses of the democratisation process in Africa, as well as making suggestions for the way forward. The following research questions guided this work: (1) what democratic experiences has Africa undergone over the years: spanning the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras? (2) How effective has been the role of students in the African democratisation process? (3) In recounting both achievements and failures of the democratic process, what is the way forward?

2. Democratic Experiences in Africa: Pre-Colonial, Colonial and Post-Colonial Eras

2.1. Pre-colonial Era

A misconception that transcends several decades among many western writers is that, Africa until the advent of colonialism, had no notion about what democracy is all about; in spite of all the credible scholarly expositions made by modern political anthropologists. As a matter of fact, most pre-colonial traditional African societies practiced some forms of democracies in their own rights. Basically, two political systems such as chiefdoms (where power and authority were based on kinship) and kingdoms or empires (that had centralised systems of government in which participation by identified officialdom were rapt) were firmly established in pre-colonial Africa (Apter, 1965). The latter very like many modern states, were structurally organised with bureaucracies that performed such functions as: tax and levy collection, provision of defence and the security needs of the people, enactment and implementation of laws, execution of protocol and diplomatic relations, and supervision of ceremonies, amongst others (Boahen, 1987). Even then, stateless and decentralised systems that lacked bureaucratic structures still played consequential roles such as the maintenance of law and order and the harmonisation of community resources for the over-all development of the society.

Within this context of political structure, three systems-segmental, hierarchical and pyramidal existed (and still do exist in some societies today). First, a segmental system is a stateless decentralised society in which power is diffused

and shared among the people along the line of kinship. In such a society that lacks a powerful political figure, the rulers are the elders, age-set and a council which are chosen from the configuration of the different lineages that make up the society (Hallett, 1974). Those days, a council usually consisted of representatives from every village that are appointed to take decisions that bounded societies. Decisions that could not be reached through consensus were voted upon as the last resort, where the majority took the day. However, because of the essence and importance of the kinship system, consensus-building was the preferred way of arriving at decisions (Lamb, 1984). Village squares and market places were venues where the people met to take important decisions. Many ethnic groups in Africa including the Igbos of Nigeria, the Kikuyu of Kenya, the Sissalas of Ghana and the Nuer of Sudan, exemplify segmental systems in Africa (Boahen, 1987). Among the Kikuyu society for instance, a constitution was drawn up that guided leadership on the exercise of authority; as well as guaranteed the freedom of citizens and the freedom to own family property including land. And it is significant to note that, elders were elected to form the governing council. Amongst the Igbos of Eastern Nigeria where politics and governance at the village level were direct exercises of democracy, every autonomous village (as all villages were) was segmented into lineages, sub-lineages, compounds and ending at households which were the smallest political units (Uchendu, 1965). The village political structure included a legislative assembly which held open-air meetings, just as town hall meetings (held by early New England and the United States) to deliberate on matters affecting societies in which all members were free to contribute to the debate. However, at the end of deliberations, elders who formed the assembly, retreated to a separate meeting and after considering all shades of opinions, reached decisions in the best interest of society *via* consensus building. These decisions became the law once they are in tune with custom and tradition and have received ritual binding. The channels of information regarding the implementation of laws were compound heads. Unfortunately, women were excluded from participating in such meetings within these patriarchy societies.

Second, hierarchical societies had a highly centralised political system which had a powerful King as the figurehead, and was assisted by an efficient bureaucracy and military machinery (Lamb, 1984). The bureaucratic structures and the military machinery exercised authorities and powers at the behest of the king. In this instance, citizens of every society had little said in the decisions that bind them. The figurehead arrogated all the legislative, judiciary and executive powers to himself, with clan and family heads playing no significant role in the decision-making process (Uchendu, 1965). Kings were assisted by sub-chiefs who helped them maintain law and order, collected taxes on behalf of their kings and provided social amenities for the people. The Ashanti Kingdom of Ghana, the Buganda Kingdom of Uganda, the Benin Kingdom of Nigeria and the Kingdom of Swaziland are strong examples of hierarchical political systems in Africa (Lloyd, 1965). Many of these kingdoms still exist till date. However, they play insignificant democratic roles in their various countries; except eSwatini known in the recent past as Swaziland and Morocco which are democratic monarchies.

Third, pyramidal political systems consisted of varied segmental units that are not fully autonomous as is the case of segmental systems. Nonetheless, the system of kinship was the bedrock of such political structures as well. These societies had chiefs, paramount chiefs or kings as their figureheads. However, rulership was based on hierarchies where higher-level chiefs could intervene in the affairs of those below them (Boahen, 1987). Traditional heads such as the chief, were assisted by councils of senior chiefs who made executive decisions that became law once they were assented to by the overlord. In these societies, citizens do not make direct inputs in decision-making. Examples of such systems abounded among the Yoruba of Nigeria and the Talensi of Ghana.

2.2. Colonial Era

The colonisation of the continent of Africa by the Europeans in the latter part of the 19th Century took place in discrete processes and stages. The process only got legalisation after the 1884/1885 Berlin Conference (spearheaded by Belgium's King Leopold II and represented by countries that included Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden-Norway, Turkey and the United States). These countries reached a decision where the continent of Africa was rudely partitioned by participants of the conference, without giving any considerations to the strong African ethnicity background and core values that bonded Africa. These European colonisers did not only impose upon Africans their own lifestyles, education, culture and values; but also, their democratic systems (Mazrui, 1969).

By a deliberate act, the colonial masters from the onset did never involve the people of their colonies in the decision-making processes. At best, they appointed a few into menial administrative jobs. Thus, all decisions that basically directly affected the lives of the people were taken at the headquarters of colonial masters---executive, legislative and to some extent judiciary policies and decisions. It was only by the middle of the 20th century that Africans were selectively nominated by their colonial masters to sit in legislative organs, adjudicate at colonial benches and participate as members of the executive. For instance, Ghana that was then known as Gold Coast, became a British Crown Colony in 1874, following the withdrawal of the Dutch from the colony that same year (Boahen, 1965). This was after Britain had suppressed the famous Ashanti resistance and enhanced its grip on the colony by striking varying alliances with a few states such as the Fante confederation. The result was the establishment of a permanent formal administration of the Gold Coast. The governance structure at this time embedded the traditional patterns of government where the chiefs and elders were given the role to provide the immediate needs of the local people, including the general welfare of the people and the provision of traditional law and order (McLaughlin and Owusu-Ansah, 1994).

That certainly did not suffice for the British who adopted a system of indirect rule where traditional rulers took instructions from their European supervisors in the discharge of their duties. It was only a few years to Ghana's independence that the indigenes were co-opted into the legislative assemblies by the colonial masters, most of whom were traditional rulers (Boahen, 1965). Consequently, the enactment of the 1951 constitution that implemented a Legislative

Assembly saw the overwhelming election of Kwame Nkrumah and other members of his Convention People's Party (CPP) into the new Assembly. In that election, the CPP won two-thirds of the seats. Following this electoral victory, Kwame Nkrumah was invited by the colonial administration to form a government of which he was the designated 'Leader of Government Business'. This system gradually transformed into a parliamentary form of government when in 1952, the position of Prime Minister was formerly created with Nkrumah as first occupant (Hallett, 1974). Again in 1954, a new Constitution was promulgated that replaced the election of members of the Assembly by tribal councils through direct elections per the principles of universal adult suffrage, and from within designated constituencies. In the 1954 elections, while the CPP won 71 of the 104 seats in the Assembly, the other regional and tribal based parties namely, the Asante-based National Liberation Movement (NLM), Northern-based Northern People's Party (NPP), Volta-based Trans-Volta Party secured only 33 seats. Two years after, in 1956, Britain agreed to grant independence to the colony if so, requested by a 'reasonable' majority of the new legislature (Boahen, 1965). The CPP's popularity was once more put to test in the July 17, 1956 elections, when the party again won 72 of the 104 seats across board. The new Assembly on August 3, 1956, passed a motion that requested for independence within the British Commonwealth. In accepting the motion, the British government on September 18, 1956 set aside March 6, 1957 as the Independence Day. The Legislative Assembly became the National Assembly with Kwame Nkrumah as Prime Minister, Charles Noble Arden-Clarke as governor general and Queen Elizabeth II as monarch until July 1, 1960 when Ghana became a republic (McLaughlin and Owusu-Ansah, 1994).

The Ghanaian experience replicated itself in most African countries during the era of colonization. Indeed, the entire continent of Africa was characterized by similar occurrences that led to the dilution of Africa's rich traditional democratic credentials. The colonial administrations had imposed their democratic values on the continent, where the indigenes were hardly involved in decision-making and were not even allowed to participate in key political activities (Mazrui, 1978; Hallett, 1974). And finally, independence came to Africa after a tortuous struggle, to be spearheaded by in particular, African elites, chiefs and students. Nonetheless, most of these rich African democratic experiences were lost to them as were replaced by western democratic concepts.

2.3. Post-Colonial/Independence I and II Eras

The democratisation process in post-colonial Africa can be divided into stages I and II. The first stage saw the mirror-adaptation of democratic forms that were akin to their colonial masters, without questioning. In Ghana's case again, it adopted the parliamentary democratic system where executive power was still exercised by Queen Elizabeth II in the Birmingham Palace, through her representative, the Governor-General. To that end, the struggle for independence came short of being in line with the strong desire of African states to enhance their democratic credentials; where liberated states will govern themselves in a climate of freedom other than suppression. Another important era under this stage was the rein of tyranny across the continent by military juntas who took advantage of the situation to topple legitimate post-independence governments which, they accused of bad governance and corruption. However, before long these crusaders, had through their repressive ruling style, overturned the little gains that were achieved by the immediate post-independence ruling class with impunity. No sooner than later, there arose a fierce struggle against military regimes, first at the instance of students and then from the civil society and politicians. The clarion calls on the military was to return Africa to constitutional rule.

The second stage took place in the 1990s. Before then, Africa's continuous dependence on foreign aid even after independence especially in the 1970s and 1980s, led to a situation where western donors and multilateral aid agencies influenced policy-making within the continent (Boahen, 1965). This stems from the fact that these foreign donors met frequently to discuss and devise strategies to address Africa's developmental agenda and debt issues, thereby prescribing changes in the areas of economic, social and political policies to African governments. This so-called new world order led by western states, had a huge impact on the governance style of the continent. This was further enhanced by the presence of international financial institutions namely, the World Bank, Agency for International Development and the International Monetary Fund. These institutions demanded economic and financial policy changes in the areas of currency devaluation, reduction in the size and cost of the public sector, removal of subsidies on goods and services, amongst others by African governments. It was only later in the 1990s that donors begun to show interest in the promotion of political changes in Africa. As such, political reforms at this stage were linked to economic assistance. Many western states including foremost the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as the Development Advisory Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, called for participatory development in Africa that included democratisation, good governance and the rule of law (Zindela & Oguunibi, 2017).

As mentioned earlier, the 1990s era was characterised by a strong wave of democratisation by African countries. Hitherto, most African countries were under military dictatorships. Consequently, Africans leaders and the political class came to the realisation that sustainable development of the continent could only find space within the democratisation process. This realisation was revamped during the Arusha Conference of 'Putting the People First' in the month of February 1990, organised under the auspices of the United Nations where over 500 participants consisting of governments, the United Nations, local civil society organisations and non-governmental organisations met. The conference adopted The African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation, which traced Africa's challenges to the absence of democracy. This conference and other international conferences on Africa's democratisation process, as well as pressure emanating from domestic sources (led by notable groups including student unions on military regimes to democratise), triggered Africa's democratisation process once more (Mazrui, 1978).

The transition process from authoritarian regimes to democratic rule was not without challenges. For instance, the cult of personality played a negative role where the African political culture was rift with the elimination of opponents

as a result of the zero-sum politics or winner-takes-all practice. These transitional challenges as a result of the different experiences of nation-states, especially African states, go to confirm the assertion that the processes of democratisation have had challenges because of contradictions inherent in the process itself (Zindela & Oguunibi, 2017). To that extent, every African state practice one form of democracy or the other, whereby the continent is replete with several political systems of governance; including stable and competitive democracies, single-party democracies, and constitutional monarchies. Currently, several types of governments are in place in Africa, including: full presidential systems that have executive presidents as in Angola, Ghana, Liberia and South Africa; executive presidencies that are linked to parliaments as in Burkina Faso, Cote D'Ivoire and Rwanda; semi-presidential systems (where the president and the prime minister share a number of competencies) as in Egypt, Ethiopia and Gabon; parliamentary democracies as in Algeria and Cape Verde; parliamentary constitutional monarchies as in Morocco, and Lesotho; and absolute monarchy as witnessed in eSwatini (Swaziland) and Morocco. These democracies that are either electoral or non-electoral, have both unicameral (as in Benin, Cape Verde and Ghana) and bicameral (as in Nigeria, Burundi and Botswana) legislative bodies. It also goes without saying that, while many gains have been achieved by African states that have stable democracies like Ghana, others with fragile democracies such as Mali have missed a lot.

Finally, there is no gain saying the fact that, the current refreshing democratisation processes as witnessed across the continent of Africa, came as a result of many years of struggles by student groups in particular. In those circumstances, many student leaders and members of student groups were imprisoned, killed, dismissed from studies, or maimed when authorities responded to student agitations. Even today, student agitations have known no limitations in as long as they are aimed at enhancing and deepening the democratic processes within African governments and institutions of State. And it is my firm belief that this needful struggle will ultimately inure to the much-needed development in the African agenda. Student activism in this respect go as far back as pre-independence days, when the likes of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Sekue Torre of Guinea, Boigner of la Cote D'Ivoire and Ndikiwi of Nigeria; championed the independence struggle of the continent, with measurable success. That brings us to the next stage and the main point of our discussion where we would be looking at the role students played in the democratisation processes of the continent.

3. The Role of Students in Africa's Democratisation Experiences: The Case of Ghana

Africa's entire democratisation process is one of a chequered history during which, Students' activism in protests against colonialism, tyranny and dictatorial rule, met with fierce resistance. Indeed, the role of students in the restoration of democracy and good governance spanning several decades in Africa, is nothing but immense and phenomenal. The concluding part of this paper is an evaluation of these varied activities, located within two distinct major eras namely; independence and post-independence. The post-independence era is further divided into three interconnected phases that include the following: the short-lived civilian rule that saw leaders of the independence struggle at the helm of affairs (between the late 1950s and late 1960s); the time the continent came under fierce military dictatorship championed by brute iron-fisted military officers (from the late 1960s to the early 1990s); and the current dispensation of a rapidly-growing democratic space across the continent. Justifiably, Ghana for being a beacon of democracy in Africa and the first country in South Sahara to gain independence for that matter, as well as being the home-country of the writer; makes the West African nation-state the best candidate for the focus of our discussion.

3.1. Examples of Roles of Students in the Democratisation Process

For the start and as we discuss in detail student activism within Africa in general and Ghana in particular, we wish to first of all, look at some broad concepts regarding student activism that would include: a review of actions of students; technologies and communication channels deployed by student bodies; mobilisation and consensus-building among students; students as vessels of change; the responses that student agitations ignite; and finally the achievements of students regarding the democratisation process in Africa with particular emphasis on Ghana in particular. As mentioned, time and again in this paper, the role of students in the democratisation process of Africa cannot be underestimated. In Ghana student activism within the two eras has being nothing but phenomenal. These roles are extensive to include both tactical and aggressive engagements and methods, where students at the tertiary level of the educational ladder, did constitute the vanguard of the democratisation process in Ghana. Students' activism did serve and still serve as the rallying point for political parties across the continent as they play a pivotal role in the unveiling democratisation process as well serve as vessels that create changes within the society. Gyampo (2012) posits that the youth (most of who are students), serve as foot-soldiers and the means through which, party manifestoes are relayed to the electorate especially in rural areas of the country. Moreover, students are often used by political parties and in other instances by the Electoral Commission of Ghana as polling agents and electoral officers, respectively; to ensure transparency and fairness during elections. Furthermore, Gyampo (2013) notes that, most of the political parties in Ghana and across the continent, have come to realise the immense might of students' activism, thereby encouraging them to establish political student wings in tertiary institutions as a way of getting student groups to draw more youthful members (both students and non-students) into their folds. Notable party-affiliated student networks in Ghana include: The Tertiary Education and Students Confederacy (TESCON, affiliated to the New Patriotic Party); Tertiary Institutions Network (TEIN, affiliated to the National Democratic Congress); and Tertiary Students' Charter (TESCHART, affiliated to the Convention Peoples' Party).

Since the beginning of the 1992 Ghanaian Fourth Republican dispensation, politicians and their political parties have thronged campuses to explain their programmes, ideologies, philosophies and manifestos to students by way of whipping up the latter's support in the run-off to national elections (Asante, 2012). Their relevance is also manifested in the fact that political parties use them to monitor polling centres during elections. This certainly is a depiction of the

relevance of students with regards to the business of democratic governance, since without their involvement; political parties cannot make any tangible inroads into the current political arena where the youth constitute a huge electoral college. And because students are conscious of their invaluable contributions towards the enhancement of democracy and overall national development, coupled with the fact that they serve as pressure groups within the various political parties and can therefore influence their executives in the formulation of policies; they see themselves as vessels of change in society whose voices must be heard at all times.

Student actions to this end, stem basically from two major strategies---dialogue and confrontational. Most importantly, in their quest to enhance democratic rule as inherent in open transparent governance (including the rule of law and adherence to the fundamental rights of the people), students have used the tools of advocacy, elections and even in some instances have resorted to the law courts for redress.

First, student bodies in Ghana and Africa for that matter have always embraced dialogue in their dealings with governments as a way of resolving societal conflicts. The National Union of Ghanaian Students (NUGS) did extensively engage the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) military regime, headed by Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings in the early years of the so-called revolution (1981-1993) in dialogue, believing that the outcome from their deliberations with the military regime would be a return to civilian rule. And to that extent, university students in Ghana had to vacate lectures for an entire academic year (1992-1993) just to support government's efforts at addressing challenges of the time. Students taught at the country's secondary schools which badly needed teachers at the time, took up manual jobs in cocoa plantations to help government raise the needed foreign currency from the sale of the cash crop and made their services available in all sectors of the economy. It was only when the students failed through this means to get the military returning the country to democratic rule that they adopted the confrontational posture as a last resort.

Second, the tool of advocacy has been extensively used by student bodies in Ghana, foremost by the NUGS, where it frequently organises seminars, workshops and outreach programmes in collaboration with constitutional agencies such as the Commission of Civic Education and the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice, as well as other Civil Society Organisations in Ghana, to educate the public on their rights and responsibilities; thus, deepening democratic rule.

Third, in the immediate past, students in both their individual and collective capacities have resorted to the law courts over issues that bothered on human rights abuses and unconstitutional government policies. In some circumstances, students have gone to the Supreme Court to seek interpretations of the 1992 Constitution when governments are seen to have breached provisions of the constitution. Under the John Mahamah led National Democratic Congress government, an individual student in the name of Abu Ramadan sorts the interpretation of provisions of the 1992 Ghanaian constitution which spelt out the modalities regarding the registration of voters. In this particular case, the Supreme Court ruled in favour of the individual in 2016, ordering the Electoral Commission of Ghana to delete names of people from the voters register who the Commission has registered with the National Health Insurance card, as it was unconstitutional. In the wisdom of the revered court, holders of the National Health Insurance card are not exclusively Ghanaian citizens; thus, has the capability of compromising an electoral register if allowed, since per constitutional stipulations only Ghanaian citizens are allowed to register and vote in national elections.

Fourth, student activism transcends national boundaries as students come together to oppose oppressive systems for the common goal of enhancing democratic governance and the rule of law. A classic example is the actions of students that culminated in the Arab-spring uprising in some North African countries in the early part of this decade.

Fifth, students have always relied on peaceful demonstrations to press home their grievances to school authorities and more so to government, especially when government is in breach of the tenets of democratic rule. The 2019 peaceful student demonstrations at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), and the University of Education, Winneba (UEW) are manifestations of students' rejection of governmental interference in the running of tertiary institutions in the country and also against actions of university authorities which may not be in the general interests of students. In essence, the demonstrations were in line with the cravings for intellectual freedom on campuses as endorsed by the African Charter on Human Rights as well as many other international human rights instruments. In the past, student unions especially NUGS, have embarked on a series of peaceful demonstrations to oppose decisions of both civilian and military governments. Some of these demonstrations went violent with the attendant consequences. Admittedly, the early years of student activism in Ghana were confrontational, especially after 1960. This had an influence on the main feature of national politics that characterised the relationship between students and government at the time and even beyond. Students of the University of Ghana led the charge, and the confrontation emanated largely from competing demands of nationalism and academic freedom (Emerson, 1968). In the given milieu, there was a clash between government and students over the proper definition of the latter's role in national development. At the time, the university was largely controlled by expatriates as such; President Kwame Nkrumah did not see government's action as a suppression of academic freedom but rather a necessary tool to fight appendages of colonialism, even at the educational level. To the CPP government, the resistance of university authorities to come under the full control of government meant the system was in support of the imperialist's agenda, explaining why government descended heavily on not only the authorities, but students who acted in solidarity with their lecturers. While some were dismissed from school as they were unwilling to submit to attempts by government to subject state institutions to partisan political control, others were compelled to flee the country. According to Ofosu-Appiah (1967), President Nkrumah's actions that sort to diminish the control of expatriates over our educational system, was inimical to national development. Currently, the Akufo-Addo led-NPP government has been criticised by many including students, of the making of a conscious attempt to capture state institutions *via* its actions and inactions.

Lastly, it goes without saying that, achievements of students regarding the democratisation process in Africa cannot be overstretched. The 20th century saw many African students occupying many privileged positions in national politics. Owing to their elite status in society and credentials as spokespersons of the masses, African students especially student leaders, easily found their ways into the political order (Altbach, 2006; Luescher-Mamashela & Mugume 2014). This paper makes the point that, students in Africa have chalked remarkable achievements in the process of democratisation; and that the phenomenon of student activism has worked to the benefit of Ghana in particular and Africa in large part, as students were at the forefront for the fight for independence. Even after independence most of them were seen supervising the consolidation of Africa's independence and socio-economic development. The like of Kwame Nkrumah who was a onetime leader of the West African Student Union (WASU), have had the platforms of student organisations as their training grounds, an experience that worked well for him as the first President of the Republic of Ghana. Another notable achievement is that, student activism has helped in creating a pluralist society where political parties thrive and run for elections. In Ghana for example, there are many political parties that compete for power every four years and students play a great role in making this a reality through activism (Agyeman, 1988). Furthermore, Ghana has had many military takeovers, a situation that disrupted its democratisation process and, in the struggle, to restore constitutional rule, students played critical and tremendous roles where some have even been sacrificed in the process (Austin, 1964; Agyeman, 1988; Lentz, 1995; Ninsin, 1996; Gyimah-Boadi, 2000). Moreover, students through activism have created changes in the socio-politico-economic development of the continent of Africa.

3.2. Underpinning Conceptual Frameworks Regarding Student Activism

In this entire role of enhancing democracy by Ghanaian students through activism, students never for once contradicted themselves as they fought oppression in all its forms and content, criticising the bad policies and actions of both civilian and military governments. Against this backdrop, they influenced the ousting of repressive governments and afforded improvement in the governance style of civilian governments, in particular. To achieve these feats, students deplore (d) several technologies and effective communication apparatuses. In the past, it was difficult for the leadership of student bodies to mobilise due to poor and ineffective communication systems available to them. As such, actions against the ruling elite especially in times when students were on recess, suffered many setbacks. Information on such necessary actions were sometimes sent by letters which took several weeks and sometimes months to reach the intended targets, thereby delaying actions that needed prompt attention and therefore prompt answers. This hindrance notwithstanding, students still came together and demonstrated against policies and programmes that they thought were inimical to the development of their respective countries. Fortunately, with the turn of technological advancement in this 21st century, the situation has radically changed where social media (represented by Facebook, Twitter, E-mail, Instagram, WhatsApp, U-Tube, to mention these few) are in vogue as information can be sent to any part of the world at the click of a button. For instance, through WhatsApp messages *via* smartphones, information can reach millions of people within a split of a second, making mobilisation much easier. There is no gain saying the fact that, these instruments have in no small way aided the mobilisation of students to take collective actions against anti-democratic policies and breaches by the powers that be, within short notices. A clear example that readily comes to mind is the Tunisian and Egyptian political uprisings in 2011 that were successfully staged through internet communication. Students were at the vanguard of all the upheavals that toppled the repressive governments.

The recent student demonstrations at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) and the University of Education, Winneba, owe their huge support and participation to the WhatsApp technology; as the student leadership was able to gather members to demonstrate promptly even when some members had already retarded back to their homes. This instant response would not have been possible in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and the earlier parts of the 1990s when smartphones were not in vogue. These new Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) have made the transmission of divergent political opinions and the mobilisation of social or political actions more feasible and effective. The proliferation of radio and television stations in Ghana has also helped the student body as the leaders can convey information to its members with ease. There used to be only one radio and one television station owned by the state in Ghana. And as expected, these stations did not entertain any information that will be detrimental to the image of the government of the day, as such governments turned to control information outflow. However, with the turn of events where many print and electronic media are owned privately, students have cashed on that to mobilise their members for activism, including their advocacy and educational activities, in highlighting good democratic principles for the good of the society. Many of these advocacies have positively influenced decisions of governments. Today, tyrannical rulers are circumspect when they have to take unpopular and undemocratic actions against their citizens since in split seconds, those actions would be known to the world through internet transmission. Students have applied this, to advance the democratisation process in Africa and for that matter Ghana. These new technologies transcend geographical borders as students compare notes and exchange ideas as to how to deal with a regime that is trampling on the rights of students and citizens.

This leads us to another important aspect of student mobilisation that has to do with consensus-building among student bodies. A critical tool for the growth of every democracy is consensus-building, of which students appreciate in all their dealings despite their huge membership. For their set goals to be met, students must of necessity, make sure that they are at least in agreement with whatever action they have planned to undertake. They equally appreciate that in building consensus for action and mobilisation; there must be compromises, flexibility, tolerance, conciliation, moderation and restraints among the student body. Added to this, Ghanaian students have seen the need to collaborate with associations such as the Christian Council, Catholic Secretariat, Federation of Muslim Councils and the Ahmadiyya Muslim

Mission, the Ghana National Association of Teachers, amongst others; so as to mobilise resources for demonstrations and actions on campuses. To this end, the relevance of forming reputable student bodies and associations across the various levels of institutions in Ghana to champion the course of students and ensure consensus-building among the student body and also in this, case enhance the democratic credentials of the country, have long been settled. The most potent student union in the country is the NUGS whose formation came at the heels of independence. It became and still is the main rallying point for students in respect of mobilising for actions and demonstrations. The local NUGS secretariat made up of local NUGS executives of the various tertiary institutions across the country, work in collaboration with the local Student Representative Councils SRCs and also acts as liaison between students and the National Secretariat in matters relating to the implementation of NUGS programmes (Constitution of NUGS, 2008). Broadly speaking, the organisation of the various student bodies across the country including Senior High Schools, enable consensus-building where the implementation of policies relating to student activism are not only collective but also effective. For instance, the presidents of the Student Representative Council (SRC) of a Senior High School and those of tertiary institutions are mandated to serve on the Board or Council of his or her institution, respectively. The representatives are expected to act as trustees and make inputs to reflect students' needs and interests during policy-formulation stages. However, there have been challenges that make it impossible for the SRC to offer effective and efficient representation to student interests. Gyampo (2013) argues that one of these challenges is the small size of student representation within these bodies that hinders effective implementation of students' interests at the levels of decision-making. For example, at Senior High Schools only SRC presidents are members of the boards; whereas in the universities, the presidents of SRC and the Graduate Students Association of Ghana (GRASAG) are members of the University Council. Clearly, this gives school authorities the power to treat students' issues lightly, sometimes taking decisions that may be at variance with student needs.

3.3. Student Agitations and Reactions from Corridors of Power

In both past and present times, students have mounted pressure on governments to make policy changes that suit the masses. For instance, in 2015, students in South Africa forced government to denounce an intention to increase fees by organising mass protests across the country (Gyampo, 2012). A classic example also abounded in Ghana when between 1977 and 1978; students' protests compelled the Acheampong regime to abandon the infamous Union Government proposal. But as the saying goes, 'actions begat reactions. Confrontational actions of students and sometimes non-confrontational actions of students are often met with fierce and inappropriate responses from government authorities, especially during military regimes.

Considering the violent responses that student activism somehow provokes from within the corridors of power, it is expedient that I reiterate specific cases here. This effort will specifically answer the question, 'What responses does student activism provoke within the caveat of power?' To state with, a huge population of students and student leaders have had to pay the ultimate prize with their lives. For instance, a one-time National President of NUGS in Ghana has had his youthful life terminated abruptly by the 'dark forces', when he stood up to correct ills of the PNDC regime under Flt. Lt. Rawlings. The SOWETO uprising of students and the subsequent killings of tens of young students in the height of the apartheid policy in South Africa, following a rather peaceful demonstration, readily comes to mind as well. The horrifying scenes where children were heard wailing and seen wreathing in their blood following gunshots by forces of the apartheid regime, have had parents and well-wishers of the victims, traumatised for life with some dying as a result. Furthermore, many students have been maimed for life regarding their contributions to student activism, in respect of the enhancement of democracy within the African continent. Many students have also been expelled from studies, ending their hopes in life and becoming misfits in society.

Like many other repressive governments (within Ghana and Africa), the Nkrumah-led Convention Peoples Party (CPP) government, introduced the Preventive Detention Act (PDA), which gave the government overwhelming powers to detain people without trial. And as would be expected, students protested against the Act, some of who eventually became victims of the Act. This period of the Ghanaian history in large, silenced the student body; thus, affecting its front badly. Despite this high-handedness though, the students still found voice in protesting against the ills of the CPP government, eventually leading to its overthrow in 1966. In these instances, students not only lost their lives, rights and dignity but also lost privileges in the form of student allowances, feeding grants and other grants, as also happened during the Progress Party (PP) government of Busia and the Acheampong military regime. In extreme cases, activities of student organisations in the form of demonstrations and protests were banned by military regimes in Ghana and elsewhere in Africa, so as to gag student leadership. Moreover, repressive governments came to ban some student organisations they associated with violence and vibrancy. The Supreme Military Council (SMC) government in reckoning the might of the student movement in Ghana, and in order to control and curtail the autonomy of public universities in the country, put them under the purview of the Ministry of Education. This response angered students who boycotted lectures leading to the closure of universities, thus affording the disruption of the academic calendar for a long time.

Authorities in Ghana and Africa till date, also use other subtle ploys to silence student movements by courting the support of student leadership through financial inducements and offer of scholarships to study abroad (Gyampo, Aggrey & Debrah, 2013). Somehow, authorities even use 'divide-and-rule' tactics to halt student agitations. Between 2016 and 2018, NUGS nearly collapsed as its front was sharply divided when powers that be, allegedly coerced then Ghana National Union of Polytechnic Students (GNUPS) to secede from NUGS as government sort to deal differently with each leadership. Indeed, politicians and in particular the two major parties in Ghana namely, the governing NPP and the largest opposition NDC have infiltrated the once independent student body in Ghana and are manipulating elections on campuses through the use of money to suit their whims and caprices. According to the Institute of Economic Affairs (2007), these politicians have not

only sponsored their preferred candidates to run for NUGS' elections but also weakened the student front and this has made student activism very docile. In commenting on the response of government to student activism, Asante (2012) posits that, these politicians victimise student leaders who do not agree with them on policy issues.

However, to eschew these manipulations by politicians and their political parties, educational authorities do take measures to ensure that student elections are devoid of political manipulations, where student puppets do not emerge as leaders since that will undermine the governance structure of universities (Gyampo, 2013; Nunynameh, 2012). One of the measures put in place by the University of Ghana for instance, is to apply the academic performance of students as a major requirement to stand for any SRC position. A candidate is eligible for election if he or she has a grade point average of 3.0 and above (UG Regulations for Junior Members 2014). Failure to make such a grade meant a potential candidate cannot be eligible for any election. This measure clearly is to ensure free and fair elections on university campuses that used to be the case before 1992 (Gyampo, Aggrey & Debrah, 2013).

4. A Brief Review of Specifics of Student Attempts at Instituting Democratic Rule in Africa throughout Colonial and Post-Independent Eras

4.1. Students and the Process of Decolonisation in Africa

The decolonisation process took different forms in different countries, with some countries having to liberate themselves through violent struggles of which, students played a significant role. To start with, the activities of members of the Pan African Movement (PAM) that was birthed around 1945, and had many of its members as students, have had a huge impact on the decolonisation process. The 5th Pan African Congress that took place in Manchester in particular, marked the real beginning for the emancipation of Africa from the grip of the colonialists, as representatives across Africa and Africans in the Diaspora, mostly students, pledged their support for the course (Padmore, 1956). William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (the American sociologist, historian, civil rights activists and Pan-Africanist) and George Padmore were among the outstanding delegates of the 5th Congress, who offered themselves as pillars of the movement (Rabaka, 2009). Notable students at the time who were also in attendance of the 5th Congress included: Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria, Peter Abrahams, amongst others (Azikiwe, 1970). PAM became the catalyst for decolonisation, and for that matter the re-birth of democratic rule in Africa to which students latched onto, making their voices heard globally (Soyinka-Airewele & Edozie (2010). Consequently, universities both within and without Africa also became ideal grounds for the struggle of Africa's future (Franklin, 2011; Asante, 2012; Mandela, 1995; Fenderson, 2010). The West African Students Union (WASU) and other sub-continental student bodies were formed to accelerate the struggle for independence. African students in the western world, met constantly in London with Kwame Nkrumah as one of the conveners of the forum, proclaiming that the match to independence was the surest way to freedom, justice and self-rule (anchors or bedrocks of every meaningful democracy). They replicated these calls in international conferences, lectures and seminars. Student representations were sent to international bodies including the United Nations and governments of the colonial masters themselves, to solicit their support for the course of independence.

Student activism this time mostly took the form of non-violent demonstrations which were highlighted by the media even though were selectively done. Student activists were also dispatched to their respective countries to support the campaign back home. African students in the diaspora were not left out in this equation as they engaged in non-violent protests in countries they were domiciled. These efforts were all in an attempt to get governments of those countries, notably the United States of America which has suffered colonialism itself, to pressurise or rather persuade the colonial masters to grant independence to African states (Boahen, 1965). Their activities as well instigated a marked period of workers agitation for the end of colonial rule, racial discrimination and violation of the human rights of Africans (Malisa & Nhengeze, 2018). For example, during the late 1940s and early 1950s, in the Gold Coast, now Ghana (and many other African countries), students' protests sometimes took radical turns that drew brutal reactions from the colonial authorities. In 1948 for instance, several Gold Coast student protesters were dismissed from secondary schools for their radical agitations, a development that became a watershed for further radicalism. Be that as it may, these narratives do not in any way suggest that before the advent of student activism, there were no agitations from other groups towards the set goal. Indeed, many groups as stated above were already out there 'fighting' for the course. That said, students' role in this dimension cannot be downplayed. With the intensified campaigns from all groups, the colonialists first granted minimal concessions as a few indigenes were co-opted into the decision-making processes, and were also seen sitting in the colonial legislative bodies as non-voting members (Adzahlie-Mensah & Benson, 2018). Eventually, and after a prolonged period where many leaders including student activists were imprisoned, maimed and even killed for their involvement (Some students even had their education curtailed), Africa was free at last. Yet the process was not a block package given the Africans, but one that rolled out on piecemeal, spanning through close to three decades.

4.2. Students' Struggle against Constitutional Dictatorships in Africa: The Case of Ghana

It was thought that coming from the heels of colonial rule, African leaders and for that matter the ruling class, would have eschewed many of the human rights violations that characterised the colonial era. The answer came as a big 'no' as Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana himself, subjected his newly independent country to many human rights violations. His adoption of the 1963 Detention Act which allowed him to imprison his political opponents without trial and his influence in the enactment of the 1960 First Republican Ghanaian Constitution that made Ghana a one-party state, caused disinfection among a large section of Ghanaians. Matters were no any better in many other countries such as Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe and apartheid South Africa, where some leaders ruled with iron-fisted hands as a few plundered and

looted state treasuries. And for a cover up for their atrocities, some of these leaders descended heavily on their critics. This became a recipe for agitations not only from student bodies but the labour front as well, including other formidable groups such as professional bodies, politicians, civil societies, human rights activists, religious groups and traditional rulers. They sometimes did this at the peril of their lives. These scenarios eventually led to military take-overs that simultaneously swept across the continent.

Though much of Africa's woes were blamed and are still blamed on leadership failure in the continent, it cannot be ignored that, European colonialism greatly contributed to the challenges of the continent (Benson, 2018). It was clearly demonstrated in the early days of independence that, many African leaders (excepting Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Gamal Abdel Nassar Abdel and a few others), could not immediately sever relations with their colonial masters and kept dealing with them without offering any clear-cut alternative even to this day. These few others were instrumental in the formation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), now the African Union (A.U.) in 1963, which fought back imperialism, though ineffectively. Unlike Asia, Africa was quickly balkanised because it did not have any classic state formation that could have given them the impetus to resist colonisation to the hilt, as their economies were linked to and controlled by the western world. No gain saying the fact that, this scenario made the task extremely difficult for African leaders who had to decolonise and democratise their societies, with most leaders maintaining the status quo and perpetuating themselves in power in perpetuity. For most of us, this is untenable as it still persists till date where many African leaders do care less about the attendant gains that emanate from democratisation. All they focus on is their 'self-interest and aggrandisement', having nothing to do with the 'collective-interests' of those they lead. The conduct of these 'mis-leaders' sparked a new wave of protests across the continent among notably, students and other pressure groups culminating in military interference.

In Ghana as stated above, NUGS was formed in 1959, bringing together students under one platform and offering them with one voice. A series of agitations by students confronted Nkrumah's CPP government in respect of the socialist policies that were being implemented in the country at the time, as well as the government's introduction of the Preventive Detention Act (PDA) which gave the government unfettered powers to detain political opponents (Gyampo, 2013). Another event that ignited a confrontation between the CPP government and the student body was when President Kwame tried to suppress academic freedom at the tertiary level as already submitted. Against that backdrop, students protested vehemently and in response, President Nkrumah succeeded in pitching the university against the media and the people of Ghana. And true to their plans, the university authorities became unpopular, especially as the state media came up with cooked negative stories about both the university authorities and student leadership (Nunyonameh, 2012). From this point on, it became very difficult for the government of Kwame Nkrumah to be criticised by the people openly. That notwithstanding, students did not relent but kept on pressurising the regime. Following this, student activism became credible as they established themselves as a potent force in the body politics of Ghana and has since remained so (Shillington, 1992). Student demonstrations were at their peak when the Nkrumah regime was toppled on 24th February 1966 by the National Liberation Council (NLC) led by General Joseph Arthur Ankrah. The event marked the beginning of the entry of the military in Ghanaian frontline politics.

Other civilian regimes of the Progress Party led by Dr. Kofi Busia and the People's National Party led by Dr. Hilla Limann were not spared by student agitations. Undoubtedly, students played a major role in bringing the Progress Party (PP) into power. Before then, university students enjoyed free meals on campuses and were also paid allowances by the state. These courtesies came to be abolished by the new civilian government who replaced them with a student loan scheme, immediately sparking tension between government and the student body. Students reacted through advocacies and violent demonstrations that some of those times saw the destruction of state properties, making the government they helped in bringing to power, look very bad in the eyes of the public which, was finally overthrown through a military coup headed by General Ignatius Kutu Acheampong who formed the Supreme Military Council (SMC I) on January 13, 1972.

4.3. Students' Struggle against Military Dictatorship: The African and Ghanaian Experiences

The conduct of many constitutionally elected African leaders that led to constitutional crises, unfortunately paved the way for the uncalled-for military coups; as the military leaders tried justifying the rude take-overs with accusations of corruption, and economic mismanagement against them (Mafeje, 2002). The military generals who accused Nkrumah of autocracy promised to offer better leadership to Ghanaians and return the country to civilian rule in the shortest possible time, but before long exhibited the most dehumanising treatment to those who opposed their bad policies. The take-over rather worsened the plight of the people. At the same time in many other African countries, there were multiple coup d'états that further plundered the continent into bizarre situations. In Ghana, the first, second and third republics that were led by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, Dr. Kofi A. Busia and Dr. Hilla Liman, respectively; were interrupted with military coups that never gave civilian rule a chance.

Throughout the eras of military dictatorship namely, the National Redemption Council (1966-1969), led by Lt. Gen. J.A Ankrah and later Brigadier Gen. Akwasi Afrifa; the Supreme Military Council I & II (1972-1979) led by Gen. Ignatius Acheampong and later Lt. Gen. Fred Akuffo; the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (4th June -24th September 1979) led by Flt.Lt. Jerry John Rawlings; and the Provisional Defence Council (1981-1993) led by Flt.Lt. Jerry John Rawlings, students protests against injustices were consistent. Ironically, these students hailed the military regimes each time there was a take-over, only to demonstrate against them shortly. The behaviour of Ghanaian students since independence depicts that they would only support a government that meets their expectations and on the other hand, would fight a government that they helped to bring into power when it deviates from their expectations (Benson & Ngaaso, 2019).

Indeed, students hailed the NLC military government after the take-over stemming from the perceived hostile treatment they received under the ousted regime (Chazan, 1978). The relationship between the student body and the new military regime, however, was only short-lived when the NLC passed a decree against rumour mongering and had to face the displeasure of NUGS who did not fail to point to the government that, its decree posed a threat to the right to free speech (Chazan, 1978). In response, the NLC clamped down heavily on activities of the student union; further infuriating students as they determined through rampant violent demonstrations to force the military rule to return the country to civilian democratic rule. Be that as it may, they succeeded in pressurising the military government to handover to the elected civilian government of the PP even though it had wished to stay longer in power. The second military regime (SMC I & II) had its own share of confrontations with students. Typical of student activists, they demanded that the military leaders of the Acheampong regime then perceived as being corrupt, declare their assets. They also vigorously campaigned against the proposed United Government (UNIGOV), coming into direct confrontation with the military government. Additionally, students from all the campuses questioned the human rights record of the SMC, needlessly prompting the government to unleash the police and military who molested students leading to the deaths of some. For instance, while then president of NUGS was killed during these agitations, his secretary; Mr. Totobi-Quakyi sustained serious injury which, he has been living with till date. And as expected, students were extremely angry and in paying tribute to the late NUGS president, a statue of the head of state was burnt and razed to the ground. In response, the military regime brutally clamped down on student leadership some of whom were either imprisoned, killed or maimed by military forces, dismissed from studies or were forced into exile. These were critical periods in the relationship between governments and students in the democratisation processes of the nation. Finally, the protestors who demonstrated on the streets of Accra, Kumasi and Cape Coast demanded that the military relinquishes power to a democratically elected government.

The Rawlings regimes which are the longest in Ghana's history, met several demonstrations and agitations of students. Unlike the PNDC, the AFRC was very popular with students because it was short-lived. Students, however, suffered the worst resistance and atrocities during the PNDC era that lasted 11 years, and is on record as being the military regime that committed the most human rights aberrations. Those who critiqued the military regime including politicians and civil servants had to flee the country for their lives. In addition, in 1983, public universities were closed down for a year, following the castigation of the military regime for its human rights violations and the social costs that the IMF policies were wreaking on the citizens. Be that as it may, the relentless efforts of students and other pressure groups including the Ghana Bar Association as well as other external forces compelled the PNDC to initiate the process for the return to constitutional rule. From the foregoing analysis, it is clear that the Ghanaian student and for that matter the African student, is very consistent in resisting any government that is not following the tenets of democracy or is a threat to democracy.

Elsewhere in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mobutu Sese Seko plundered state treasuries becoming richer than his country, while Iddi Amin of Uganda and the like of Gnassingbe Eyadema of Togo put iron chains around the necks of their people, killing and maiming those who dared opposing them. In the given milieu, several agitations sparked across the continent with students still playing key roles in the struggle. The ruthless military rulers reacted with fire and brimstone---many students losing their lives and fleeing their respective countries as the rest of the population looked on haplessly. The Soweto uprising, of 16th June, 1976, which comes readily to mind again, showed the power of non-violent civil disobedience against the minority apartheid regime, in pursuit of fundamental human rights and the reintroduction of the use of Afrikaans as a language of instruction in schools (Thompson, 1985). The architects of the three-day event made up mainly of children, students and ordinary black South Africans numbering about 20,000 people, shook the foundations of the Apartheid system in South Africa. In reaction, the apartheid police opened fire on the defenceless crowd where many lost their lives. The official death toll was put at 176. The event sent down shrills in the spines of millions across the globe. Today, 16th June is observed as a holiday in honour of the youth of South Africa, whilst many student martyrs including Hector Pieterse are celebrated as heroes and heroines of the struggle against the obnoxious apartheid system. And just like in the days of colonialism, students' activism coupled with the activities of other groups listed above, forced many military and oppressive regimes to return their respective countries to civilian rule.

4.4. *The Current Constitutional Dispensation and Student Activism*

The 1990s marked a new era in Africa's democratisation process, a period that is in sharp contrast with the 1960s which witnessed repressive, inefficient and dictatorial systems of governance that plagued the continent and thwarted efforts at democratisation. The downward trend of economic growth in the 1960s among African states also hampered the process, taking intensive pressure from western partners and donor countries to compel African leaders to introduce political reforms that culminated in the return to democratic rule within the continent. Many African countries today are running democratic systems of government. It came with a lot of struggle, spiralled out of control in the late 1980s when then neo-colonial policies pursued by African leaders backfired and the 1990s triggered an irreversible democratic process when things came to a head. The military were eventually pushed back into the barracks as they belonged there (Luckham, 1995). Once in a while a few of them have staged comebacks with missed results as many of such attempts failed. They met the resistance of the African Union, other sub-regional inter-state bodies, individual states and the international community, not to mention the continuous student agitations in regard to their quest for rule of law and good governance. These factors have held the military in check as students still play a unique rule within the democratisation enterprise. In the same vein, the ills of some current group of leaders regarding poor governance, issues of corruption, dictatorial tendencies and poor human rights records *inter alia*, are equally held in check by the civil society and student bodies (Ibrahim & Cherie, 2013). Today, most of these countries spearheaded by the civil society, have

resolved never to go back to the dark days of dictatorial rule where the people have no say and no representation, perhaps explaining why Wani and Suwirta (2015) did classify these periods as the era of intense democratisation and good governance, anchored on the people's desire for freedom and justice.

While concluding, let me reiterate that the campuses of universities in Africa are still the citadel of resistance and democratisation where students converge to demonstrate. In Ghana, under the fourth Republican dispensation, student agitations and demonstrations are still rift, in situations where government policies are repressive or where leaders fail to adhere to the tenets of democracy, good governance, and the rule of law. As a result, the governments of Jerry John Rawlings (NDC), John Agyekum Kufuor (NPP) under whom I served as a minister of state, Prof. John Atta-Mills (NDC), John Dramani Mahamah (NDC) and Nana Akufo-Addo (NPP) have had course to listen to the voices of wisdom, thereby; consolidating the young democracy which, is over 25 years currently (Gyampo, 2013). Indeed, since its return to civilian rule, Ghana has chalked several feats in its economy and socio-political advancement. This phenomenon radiates across the continent. For instance, the Arab Springs is yet another form of protest against repressive regimes in Africa, being driven by the youth and students across Arab countries in Africa. Such that on 17th December, 2010 a vegetable vendor, Mohammed Bouazizi set himself ablaze in Tunisia in detest of brutalities of the authorities and this sparked series of protest across the Arab world affecting Egypt and Libya. Bouazizi's cart on which he sold vegetables was impounded by the police and pleas for it to be returned to him yielded no result, and he had to set himself on fire in protest. Subsequent Arab Springs triggered democratisations in the Arab world where parliamentary and constitutional reforms started taking place; especially in areas where autocracy was the order of the day (Rosina, 2012).

5. Conclusions

The democratisation process in Africa has not been a smooth and straight one as it has been fraught with numerous challenges. Nonetheless, the continent has made remarkable progress to this end. For the first time in modern history, democratic governance in Africa has taken centre-stage in its affairs, and has dominated the agenda of the regional body, the African Union, for a very long time. All of Africa is practicing one form of democracy or the other for close to two decades now, uninterruptedly. It is only in a few instances that there are reported cases of coup d'états that have toppled constitutional governments such as was in Mali, Burkina Faso and recently in Sudan. Even in such instances the African Union and other sub-regional organisations have been swift in addressing the issues on hand and have always succeeded in returning such countries to constitutional rule. Pointedly, that is the path the people have chosen to tread, following the heels of colonialism and dictatorial military rules that have left devastating scares on the richest continent in the world, in terms of natural resources.

We have tried to submit a few of the factors that have accounted for this great feat such as the roles played by politicians, African governments, the African Union, the international community, the civil society, professional bodies and students, *inter alia*. For instance, students' activities that include peaceful demonstrations, non-violent advocacy, student involvement in national politics, to mention these few (that sometimes turned violent and saw the maiming and killing of students) have forced hitherto military regimes in the 1980s to adapt civilian rule. Yet still, it requires a lot of efforts; first on the part of Africa and then the international community to consolidate democracy in the continent, giving the spate of undemocratic practices that many African leaders still implore. Indeed, going back to the old days is nothing but disastrous, given the gains and prestige brought to the African Continent and Africans via the current constitutional practices. These gains include the rapid socio-political- economic development of the continent, good governance and adherence to fundamental human rights and the rule of law, amongst others.

We humbly submit that, for a more sustainable dispensation in Africa's democratic journey, both rulers and the ruled must observe the following: African leaders should avoid dictatorial rule; embark upon good governance; undertake policies that will improve the lot of the people and inure to their benefit; implement policies that will continuously enhance the socio-political-economic development of the continent; eliminate corruption and bring transparency to bear on governance. On the other hand, splinter student bodies should be seen to come together to promote and consolidate democratic gains made so far. Moreover, the citizens on their part must change their mind-sets and passionately work hard to liberate the continent from the quagmire of poverty, disease, and underdevelopment, elect visionary leaders who will adhere to the tenets of fundamental human rights and the rule of law and above all strive to consolidate our 'teething' democracies. That way, democratic rule will gain deep roots in Africa, where everyone in Africa including children, will collectively and individually say 'never again'.

6. References

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