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THE SURVIVAL OF
MULTIPARTY DEMOCRACY
AND
THE CHALLENGE OF
NATIONAL RECONCILIATION
IN GHANA

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and
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ECONOMIC AFFAIRS
ACCRA, GHANA

The Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) Ghana was founded in October 1989 as an independent, non-governmental institution dedicated to the establishment and strengthening of a market economy and a democratic, free and open society. It considers improvements in the legal, social and political institutions as necessary conditions for sustained economic growth and human development.

The IEA supports research, and promotes and publishes studies on important economic, socio-political and legal issues in order to enhance understanding of public policy.

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An Institute of Economic Affairs Publication

Preface

The Politics of Ghana have, unfortunately, not evolved along a smooth and steady path. In colonial times, our politics was substantially a politics of protest against foreign domination by the colonial power. There was not and could not be multi-party democracy in any real sense. A few political parties, movements and societies functioned but power was in the hands of the Colonial Government and not the people.

With independence came the hope that a system of multi-party democracy would be firmly established in Ghana. Unfortunately, this was a vain hope. Those into whose hands power fell did not believe in political pluralism. Opposition to the Government was not tolerated and was actively stifled because the Government was committed to Marxist or Communist principles. Under the Marxist/Communist/Socialist regime of the immediate post-independence Government the dominant doctrine was the one-party state and total control by an over-centralised Government. Opposition politicians were either detained without trial or driven into exile.

The fall of the first post-independence civilian Government through a military coup in 1966 could have paved the way for the firm entrenchment of multi-party democracy. Most unfortunately, the military did not allow this to happen. The fates of the Second and Third Republics are well known. Each lasted barely thirty months only to be overthrown by a military coup. As is well known, military Governments do not tolerate political activity or political parties. They see what are the usual manifestations of democracy as a threat to state security.

As a result of these developments, Ghana has missed the opportunity to develop firm foundations for multi-party politics. The advent of the

Constitution of the Fourth Republic therefore offers to the people of Ghana a unique opportunity to build those institutions and develop the traditions, which alone can ensure a lasting democratic order.

In these occasional papers an attempt is made to highlight two topics which must be of interest to all those who want to see the survival and consolidation of the new democratic order of the Fourth Republic.

Finally, I am delighted to place on record, the gratitude of the Institute of Economic Affairs to the European Union, whose generous assistance made this research and publication possible.

Dr. Charles Mensa
Executive Director
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Accra, June 1996

B. J. da Rocha

The Survival of Multiparty Democracy in Ghana

In the immediate aftermath of the end of Colonial rule in Ghana, and, indeed in all of the former Colonial territories in Africa, the trend was towards the one-party system of politics. The proponents of the system saw in it certain merits:

- 1 It was supposed to foster national unity any break down tribal barriers and differences.
- 2 It provided a strong government, which was needed to ward off any erosion of the country's new independence.
- 3 The combination of national unity and strong government would mobilize the people and ensure the rapid economic and social development of the country.
- 4 Political pluralism was, on the other hand, seen as inimical to national unity since it tended to foster tribalism and sectarianism. A plurality of parties would create instability because opposition to the ruling party would disrupt orderly government and development.

The advocates of a multiparty democracy, for their part, saw in such a system the merits of providing the people with the freedom to associate and to hold and propagate divergent views. To them the one-party system far from fostering national unity, bred intolerance and oppression Those

who refused to fit into the one-party mould were condemned as trouble makers and enemies of the state. In practical terms, the ruling party became synonymous with the state. Outside of the ruling party, a citizen had no real political or constitutional rights. Even within the ruling party a small powerful elite who progressively ceased to be in real touch with the people controlled everything. Genuine choice by the people was impossible because only members of the one ruling party could hold office. Elections, if ever they were held, were a stage-managed farce.

The tract records of the Governments of post-independence African states have demonstrated that the one-party system and the totalitarian and over-centralised government that went with it could not foster democracy. Abuse of power, deep-rooted hatred and resentment were the bitter fruits of the system rather than national unity.

The Marxist Communist system of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe was the model for the one-party system in Africa although some African leaders disclaimed communism and pretended that their system had indigenous roots. The dramatic collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and the rest of Eastern Europe demonstrated the shallow foundations of a system, which could be sustained only by fear and repression. There can be little doubt that in the greater part of the world multi-party democracy has won the debate and is now the order of the day.

Here in Ghana, our new Constitution has adopted and entrenched the right to form and join political parties. It is this right which is the basis of multi-party democracy. Article 55(1) and (2) provide:

1. The right to form political parties is hereby guaranteed.
2. Every citizen of Ghana of voting age has the right to join a political party.

The multi-party system is now entrenched by the Constitution. This, however, is not by itself enough to ensure its survival. The system must

prove its worth in Ghana. There must be a collective will in the people of this country to save the system and make it achieve its true purpose, which is, to ensure freedom of association and expression without which there can be no democracy.

The object of this paper is to explore the various ways in which multi-party democracy can be preserved.

To begin with, it is necessary to look at the political parties. The manner in which political parties are structured, organised and led has a great deal to do with the credibility and allegiance they command among the people. The Constitution provides a few important guidelines. It requires that every party should be national in character, the internal organisation should be democratic and its founding members and leaders should be persons fit to hold public office.

One must also consider the functions and the role of a political party in a democratic society. Many people seem to think that the fighting of elections is the only function of a political party. Fighting and, if possible, winning elections is a very important function of a political party. The winning of power is the greatest opportunity a party has to attempt to realise its policies, programmes, and objectives. Every political party therefore seeks to win power or have a share in the running of government. There is, however, a great deal more to a political party's role in national affairs than fighting or even winning elections. The Constitution is illuminating on the role of the political party. Article 55(3) provides: "Subject to the provisions of this Article, a political party is free to participate in shaping the political will of the people to disseminate information on political ideas; Social and Economic programmes of a national character and sponsor candidates for elections to any public office other than to District Assemblies or lower local Government units."

Article 55(10) provides that every citizen of voting age has the right to participate in political activity to influence the composition and policies of Government.

The Constitution is even-handed in relation to political parties. Article 55(11) provides that, “the State shall provide fair opportunity to all political parties to present their programmes to the public by ensuring equal access to the state-owned media.”

The survival of multi-party democracy involves several factors some within and some outside the specific provisions of the Constitution. A few of these factors will now be considered:

1. First and foremost, the existence and operation of more than party with different ideas and objectives must be accepted way of life. The Constitution recognises this in Article 56, which provides that, “Parliament shall have no power to enact a law to establish or authorise the establishment of a body or move with the right or power to impose on the people of Ghana common programme or set of objectives of a religion political nature”. No party should think that it can have any excuse to opt out of the clear provisions of the Constitution entrenching the rights of political parties to exist. The moment any party opts out, the system is jeopardised.

2. Every political party whether in power or out of power recognize the rights of other parties to exist and operate within the framework of the Constitution. Diversity of programmes and objectives need not necessarily breed hostility and mutual suspicion or exclusion.

3. Where elections are free and fair, a party voted into power must be constantly conscious of the fact that it can also be vote of power. In the latter event it must gracefully accept the v of the people. By the same token a party beaten must a defeat with dignity and brace itself for the next round. The acceptance of election results is of the essence of multi-party democracy. It is therefore essential that the electoral system should be so organised and managed and elections so conducted that the results commend universal acceptance and credit Political leaders must recognise and accept the duty to ensure free and fair elections.

4. In a multi-party system the ruling party or parties and the parties in

opposition must know that they could easily change places at the next election. In the conduct of their relations with one another therefore, the ruling party should not forget that it is potential opposition nor must the opposition forget that it is a potential Government-in-waiting.

A tradition whereby the ruling party tries to crush the opposition or the opposition tries to make it impossible for the ruling party to govern undermines the multi-party system and will eventually discredit and destroy it. Opposition may be strong even uncompromising, on serious matters of principle but it must be understood always that this must be done within the constitutional framework. The government party must also realise that it is no sign of weakness to listen to what the opposition has to say neither is it prudent to dismiss out of hand opinions expressed by its opponents. Neither the government nor the opposition has a monopoly of wisdom or good ideas.

5. Leaders of political parties must recognise their responsibility to build bridges across party lines and to treat one another with courtesy and decorum. All citizens are equal in the eyes of the law. The election or appointment of a person to a high office of state does not overnight turn him into some superior being. Political leaders must realise that in a free, democratic republic, the respect, which goes with public office, must be earned. Respect may be and has often been commanded and exacted by force and fear, but such respect is really a kind of hypocrisy, not genuine respect.

6. If political leaders treat one another with mutual respect and frankness their followers and supporters cannot fail to take notice and be influenced.

7. Political leaders must be able to identify matters of national importance on which consensus among them is possible. It is a good thing for the public to know that on some particular issue of national importance all political parties are of one mind. Even in areas where there are irreconcilable differences the art of reasoned discussion and debate must be cultivated instead of the exchange of invectives and abuse.

8. An encouraging feature is the enthusiasm Ghanaians have for political parties. One revealing aspect of the forums conducted by the National Commission for Democracy in 1990 was the overwhelming expression on the part of the people for a return to multiparty democracy. Ghanaians like their political parties. There is great hope for the survival of multiparty democracy if all will make the effort, politicians, chiefs, the military and the general populace to preserve it.

The Politics of Accommodation in the Fourth Republic

It is rare in any community of human beings to have everyone thinking and behaving in the same way. Even in societies that are of the same ethnic origin or profess the same religion, differences invariably will be found to exist in the thinking and behaviour of people. All attempts in the history of mankind to force people into a uniform mould or pattern of behaviour and thought have ended in failure in the long run.

The various religions of the world afford an example of this failure. They start in their pure and orthodox form but with the passage of time sects develop within them. Where these sects manifest behaviour and thought, which are too radical, a departure from orthodoxy, they either break away or are expelled. In many instances, this results in deep and enduring hostility and has been from time to time, the cause of much strife and even bloodshed.

Where even religion has failed, it is hardly likely that politics would succeed. The belief that all the people in a society can hold the same political ideas, and condition themselves uniformly in their behaviour on the basis of such ideas led to systems like communism and the one-party state.

The failure of communism in Eastern Europe and the rejection of the one-party system in most of Africa is a clear indication that in civilized human society total conformity is not possible. Even when imposed by force, such conformity merely suppresses, but cannot extinguish, the desire and urge

of many people to think for themselves.

It is only when a society recognises that divergence of opinion and behaviour is inevitable and natural among human beings, that true democracy can be practiced. Without such recognition those who do not conform are persecuted in one-way or another and often denied their rights, even as human beings.

One of the great advances in human behaviour may therefore be said to be the recognition and acceptance of pluralism. Pluralism implies that people within a society can hold different opinions, but nevertheless, live peacefully together. Without pluralism in politics, democracy could never have developed.

Political pluralism is not, however, easily achieved, nor when achieved, sustained, unless people develop the habit of accommodation. Where there is pluralism without accommodation the inevitable result is bitter strife. Much of the violence and bloodshed that have engulfed many societies around the world arise from the inability or unwillingness of people of different religions, political parties or ethnic origins to accommodate one another. Accommodation goes beyond mere tolerance. You may tolerate someone by simply accepting the fact of his existence and yet having nothing to do with him. You can tolerate without interacting.

The politics in a multiparty democracy must be characterised not by mere tolerance but by accommodation between different parties. Tolerance can be coupled with indifference and even hostility. Accommodation requires peaceful interaction and communication between different parties. Even within the same political party, differences of opinion and clashes of personality may, and frequently, occur. It is only by a spirit of accommodation that clashes of ideas and personalities within political parties, and between different parties, can be contained and prevented from tearing the political system apart.

In practical terms, accommodation requires that citizens are good to the

extent that they can put their personal feelings aside and deal with one another on national issues in the national interest. They need not be intimate friends. They must, however, be able to meet and communicate, and do business together, seriously, peacefully and with fruitful results. This is particularly important where they all profess to have a common objective i.e., the well being of their country, but differ as to the ways and means of attaining that objective.

What does this mean in the context of Ghanaian politics of the Fourth Republic. In the first place, there is general consensus that the new Constitution provides a workable framework for a democratic order. The concept of political pluralism is clearly entrenched in Articles 3 and 55 of the Constitution in the following words:

- 3 (1) Parliament shall have no power to enact a law establishing a one-party state.
- (2) Any activity of a person or group of persons, which suppresses, or seeks to suppress the lawful political activity of any other person or class of persons generally, is unlawful.
- 55 (1) The right to form political parties is hereby guaranteed
- (2) Every citizen of Ghana of voting age has the right to join a political party:

There is also, presumably, complete agreement among all parties that the Constitution should be preserved and defended. The whole of Article 3 of the Constitution is devoted to the defense of the Constitution. A duty is imposed on all citizens to resist attempts to suspend or overthrow the Constitution, and to restore the Constitution in the event of its being suspended or overthrown by unlawful means.

Against this background, it seems that conditions are ripe for the practice of the politics of accommodation during the Fourth Republic. It must be remembered, however, that in spite of expressions of the desire on the part of all concerned to make the Constitution work, there are obstacles, which must be recognised and overcome.

To begin with, Ghana has not had multi-party democracy practiced long enough to allow for the growth of the attitudes, traditions and conventions, which underpin the politics of accommodation.

For example, the recognition by the party in government that it rules for a fixed term at the sufferance of the people and must bow to their wishes if the day comes when the people want change. Or to give another example, the recognition by opposition parties that they are potential parties in government but can make that potential a reality only by persuading the people that they are a better alternative than the ruling party.

In the absence of this kind of awareness, a party once in government thinks it is loss of face and disgrace to lose an election, and therefore resorts to all kinds of dubious expedients to remain in power. Opposition parties, believing that they cannot ever get a fair deal from the governing party, see hostile confrontation as the only way to deal with it and force it out of office.

If one considers that since independence, the predominant tradition in Ghana has been one-party and military rule, then the task of cultivating the politics of accommodation in the Fourth Republic assumes formidable proportions. Neither under -party rule nor under military rule is there room for genuine accommodation in politics. The politics of one-party and military rule is generally the politics of conformity and repression.

How then can the politics of accommodation be cultivated and made to develop such deep roots that it will become a tradition taken for granted in our politics?. A few guidelines may be suggested. These are:

1. A commitment to the Constitution by all parties and a readiness to ensure that it is respected and observed, not subverted.
2. Recognition that multi-party democracy implies the existence of more than one party and the mutual recognition by opposing parties of the right of each party to exist and operate under the Constitution.

3. A commitment by all parties to a free and fair peaceful electoral process, and co-operation between them to ensure that elections are conducted in a manner which will not raise any doubts as to acceptability of their outcome.
4. Acceptance by all parties concerned of the results of elections if such elections are free and fair.
5. Realisation by the party, which wins an election that electoral victory is nothing more than a mandate from the people for a term, and that this mandate, is subject to revocation or renewal.
6. Acceptance of the principle that when in government a party should not do things to its opponents that it would not wish its opponents to do to it, if the roles are reversed.
7. Recognition that the concept of "enemy" is a negative and corrosive factor in multi-party politics. Political parties contesting for the mandate of the people must see themselves as citizens of the same country offering their services to the nation, not as enemies fighting over a prize or booty.
8. Efforts to ensure free communication and contacts at all levels between political parties. This is healthy for the democratic process and should be encouraged. The notion that consorting with members of other parties is a sign of disloyalty should have no place in democratic politics.
9. Recognition by the opposition that the party in government is entitled to carry out its policies and programmes during its term of office. It is not bound to accept every proposal made by the opposition, though common prudence may suggest that some opposition proposals deserve attention. The opposition has a duty to criticize and put forward alternative proposals and programmes, but it should not expect the government to accept everything it proposes.
10. A free flow of information on all matters of national and public interest. Secrecy in government is not compatible with democracy

and invariably tends to generate suspicion and distrust, and foment rumour-mongering and wild speculation. The interests of national security may well require that certain matters are not exposed to the public. In a country such as Ghana, which has no hostile intentions towards any of its neighbours and therefore no external enemies, such matters must be minimal.

11. Capacity in politicians, especially in government, to cope with criticism. The concept of “constructive” criticism, which is often pronounced by some politicians, must be viewed with care. According to this concept, criticism is not constructive if it is embarrassing or offensive to persons in high office and therefore must not be expressed. The proper distinction to draw is not between constructive and non-constructive criticism, but between criticism based on facts, which are true or can be proved, and criticism, which has no factual basis. Any person holding public office, or indeed any responsible position in society, must recognise that he is accountable for his conduct. If he does anything which is improper or dishonourable, or displays incompetence, he cannot, in a democratic society, expect to escape the consequences of this behaviour. One such consequence is his exposure and disgrace. Exposing the truth can never be unconstructive. The truth may hurt someone, but concealment or suppression of the truth hurts the whole of society.
12. The awareness that those who criticize must know that it is dishonest and cruel to make criticisms, which are based on falsehood or fanciful speculation, especially if such criticisms impute improper conduct to another person. That, indeed, is destructive criticism. It undermines political accommodation and harmony, disrupts democracy and should be avoided.
13. An appreciation that governments are human institutions and can make mistakes. Those who run the government must expect that their mistakes may be exposed and be made the subject of attack and criticism. The proper reaction to such attack or criticism is not force or a cover-up, but a genuine effort to correct these mistakes. No government anywhere in the world ever succeeds in satisfying everybody or fulfilling all its electoral pledges. There are so many factors,

some natural, some man-made, which the government can not foresee or control. If it fails to live up to public expectation, it is only natural that its failure should create disaffection. In a democratic order, such disaffection must find expression in peaceful methods sanctioned by the Constitution, and ultimately in the vote of the people at an election. The people of Ghana must know now that violent intervention and seizure of power by the military has not really solved our problems, but has had the effect of disrupting the evolution of democracy. An unfortunate tradition seems to have developed over the past three decades in which people expect a government to be overthrown by the military if they think it is not performing well or they do not like the personalities in it. As a result, non-soldiers who see in this a straight short-cut to the attainment of their political ambitions have invariably egged on military coup-makers to stage coups. Politically ambitious Ghanaians must learn and be prepared to wait for their turn to play the political game within the ambit of the Constitution. That is the only way in which democracy can survive in Ghana.

14. A general willingness by the people, especially political leaders, to accept the fact that the Constitution and the democratic order it produces, is not an instant cure for problems or for conjuring prosperity. It merely creates an atmosphere in which citizens enjoy a freedom which enables them to apply their energies and talents for the well being of the nation, and gives the people the strength to face the problems of the nation, knowing that they are citizens who can choose and change their rulers and not the subjects of an aloof, unchangeable and uncaring ruler. The nation's problems do not lend themselves to easy, quick solutions. The government must perform its functions with honesty, fairness and such competence, as it is capable of the people must be alert in monitoring the activities of the government and deliver their judgement at elections. In the end, it can be seen that all governments, organisations and individuals can do is to try and cope with problems and difficulties, be they social, economic or political. As one difficulty is overcome, others invariably arise. The great merit of democracy is that it produces the capacity for society to cope with problems and difficulties without disintegration.

15. The consciousness that Ghana is lucky to have been spared, so far, the deep and bitter religious, ethnic and class divisions which have afflicted many African countries, and produced so much strife and bloodshed. The politics of accommodation, above all, requires Ghanaians to strive for national unity and peaceful coexistence. Political leaders, chiefs, religious and other leaders of opinion in our society must therefore make conscious efforts to produce national harmony and avoid all those things which tend to foster suspicion and hatred.

The Government, in particular, must be scrupulous in conducting its affairs that it fosters, rather than undermines, national unity and harmony. If the Government lays itself open to just criticism of discrimination on political, religious or ethnic grounds, it thereby puts national unity at risk and makes the politics of accommodation impossible. Similarly, if the Opposition is too narrowly sectarian and obstructive in matters of national concern, if it makes the country ungovernable, there can be no basis for accommodation. We the representatives of the registered Political Parties, namely, National Convention Party (NCP), National Democratic Congress (NDC), New Patriotic (NPP), People's Convention Party (PCP) and People's National Convention (PNC) met at Akosombo from December 2 to 4, 1994 under the auspices of the Institute of Economic Affairs and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation to deliberate on issues of political accommodation and survival of arty democracy.

Having looked at the issues likely to endanger our democratic order and mindful of the fact that we have the capacity to resolve these issues, we agree that there is the urgent need to build institutions and conventions that would meaning to the realisation of the democratic ideals enshrined in our Constitution.

In the interest of removing all the obstacles that impede the strengthening of the practice of multi-party constitutional democracy, we stress the need for Government and the Political Parties to build bridges of mutual respect and understanding to promote co-operation and consensus on issues of national interest.

The forum created by the convening of the meeting of representatives of the registered Political parties, designated as the Akosombo Colloquium, now therefore agrees that the issues outlined below need urgent national attention.

1. That a dialogue between the Government and the registered Political Parties should start as a matter of urgency.
2. That in the supreme national interest, Government should invite the involvement of the Political Parties in the search for a solution to the ethnic conflict in the Northern Region and in other simmering areas of Ghana and that the Government should establish a National Mechanism for conflict avoidance, prevention and/or resolution.
3. That the Government, in consultation with the Political Parties, establish a National Reconciliation Commission to create an environment for healing wounds and building bridges for reconciling and uniting our peoples.
4. That the Government should consider granting unconditional amnesty to all Ghanaian political exiles, detainees and persons imprisoned for security-related offences in the PNDC era, as a means of ensuring that the past is forgotten and left behind us.
5. Homelessness and widespread unemployment should attract the urgent attention of government.
6. That there is a need to create a forum for generating National Consensus on major economic issues, and to identify permanent national interests which should be protected by all political parties, irrespective of ideological leanings.

Unfortunately, this declaration of the Akosombo Colloquium has not been followed up. It is hoped that the political leaders and their parties will sooner rather than later direct their minds again to the issues raised.

¹The Institute of Economic Affairs in collaboration with the Friedrich Naumann Foundation organised a three-day colloquium for representatives of the major registered political parties at the Volta Hotel, Akosombo from December 2 to 4, 1994 to deliberate on, "The Politics of Accommodation" and "The Survival of Multiparty Democracy in Ghana."

The parties present were led by their respective National Chairmen.

Mr. Roland Atta-Kesson	-	The National Convention Party (3)
Mr. Issifu Ali	-	The National Democratic Congress (6)
Mr. B. J. da Rocha	-	The New Patriotic Party (4)
Alhaji Asuma Banda	-	The People's Convention Party (4)
Dr. Hilla Limann	-	The People's National Convention (3)

Ghana: The Challenge of National Reconciliation

1. Introduction

There are three phenomena, which are predictable and almost unavoidable in modern life. These are death, conflict and taxes. Our whole existence as mortals is, in a way, an exercise in conflict management. Once the clock of life begins to tick, from the moment of our birth until the day of our interment, it all becomes a matter of avoidance and the management of the sure and inexorable coming of death. Our working life is a matter of a precarious balancing act and management of our disposable income and avoidance of the tax burden governments see to love to impose on us. A very wise man once told me as I was bemoaning assaults from unfriendly quarters, that the very day we are born, our enemies also arrive in the world. And since man is a social being and must of necessity communicate with others, our whole life tends to revolve around conflict management; a careful balancing of our rights and obligations vis-à-vis those of our neighbour.

The theme for discussion is “Conflict Management and Resolution” in Africa. There are four main sources of conflict in Africa, to wit, political, communal, religious and ethnic. Since man began to live in organised society, the objective of political organisation has been to come up with structures and modalities for avoiding, minimising, resolving, and managing conflict. And where there is trust, and expectation of justice and fair play, conflict management becomes feasible. Where there is mistrust and suspicion, conflict management becomes difficult. The smallest source of contention degenerates into open conflict.

1.3 In societies where there have been open conflict such as civil wars, revolutionary eras pitching certain classes against others, or general mistrust based on ignorance and fear, national reconciliation becomes an urgent necessity if the institutions of conflict management are to be able to function. Ghana is blessed with a rich cultural, religious and ethnic diversity. These different characteristics, which can be a source of strength and strands in weaving a rich and colourful tapestry of a united nation with one destiny, may, in an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust, constitute elements for tension and strife. Smooth and routine conflict avoidance, resolution and management become possible only in a reconciled nation. Without measures and programmes for reconciliation based on fair play, justice and respect for the rule of law, conflicts may continue to simmer, or openly sap energies and resources otherwise more productively applied to nation building. National reconciliation is therefore the foundation upon which one can build a society's capacity for conflict management.

1.4 The challenge of national reconciliation in Ghana is the challenge of building a peaceful and prosperous nation. We in Ghana have opted for a system of governance based on multi-party constitutional rule with separation of powers. For us to develop and nurture the culture and spirit of democracy, which is based on tolerance, give-and-take and respect for differences, we need to do away with remnants of suspicion and mistrust. Without national reconciliation we cannot build an enduring peace. Without political stability and peace we cannot have an environment conducive to broad-based accelerated and sustainable economic growth. And without a vibrant economic growth and its attendant economic opportunities for improving standards of living, our new attempt at multi-party constitutional rule may become prey to demagogues and degenerate into anarchy.

2. What is national reconciliation?

2.1 Those of us who are religious have been taught that there are certain acts of omission and commission, which raise barriers between our Creator and us and between others and us in our community. The act of reconciliation breaks down these barriers and restores communication. National reconciliation may therefore be viewed as measures and programmes calculated to rebuild trust and confidence among the diverse communities which make up a nation. These differences may be of cultural,

ethnic, political, social, sectional, or of class origin. The frictions between the civil and military sections of the nation have necessitated sometimes national reconciliation.

2.2 Within a nation, national reconciliation has been necessitated after fratricidal strife such as in Ethiopia and Bosnia. Ethiopia is now involved, with the help of Argentinean experts, in reconstructing the magnitude of the Mengistu atrocities to bring the culprits to book. Argentina itself had a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to tackle the aftermath of military dictatorship, which witnessed the disappearance of thousands of citizens for political offences. South Africa is engaged in its own Truth and Reconciliation Commission to unearth the human rights abuses of the Apartheid Regime. El Salvador and Haiti are similarly engaged. South Korea and Malawi took a judicial approach when they brought to trial former rulers to account for atrocities committed under their rule.

2.3 After the Second World War, a machinery was set up in Germany for national reconciliation with the trial of Nazi war criminals by the Allies, and by the institution of reparation payments to the Jews and to the Jewish State of Israel for crimes committed against Jews under the Nazi regime. An interesting development in the accounting for the Nazi era is the rehabilitation by a Berlin Court on August 1, 1996, of five individuals hanged for high treason by the SS War Tribunal in April 1945. The Court held that the Pastor and Theologian Bonhoeffer, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris and the others could not have been of high treason since they committed no offence against either the suspended Constitution of the Weimar Republic or their country. Their actions merely sought an end of the war and the overthrow of Hitler and his Nazi regime. The Berlin decision was a complete reversal of a 1956 decision of a Federal Court, which had held that since the actions of Bonhoeffer had elements of high treason according to the laws in existence at the time of Hitler, the sentence was legally binding. The rehabilitation of those hanged for resisting the actions of Hitler and his gang who had seized power, is viewed as part of the process of national reconciliation.

2.4 National reconciliation is therefore a process for rectifying the errors of the past. Sometimes it has involved punishing the perpetrators of the crime and making amends to those who suffered both materially and in

their psyche. It is an act of exorcizing the wounds of the past in order to confront the future together as a group with a common objective. There is an element of revenge and retribution. The presumption is that without exacting justice, the wrongs cannot be fully expiated. These processes have invariably taken place in a transition to constitutional rule.

2.5 One thing, which must be borne in mind, is that most national reconciliation measures incorporating revenge, retribution and criminal procedures have been put in place in transitional periods when the perpetrators have been ousted through military or electoral defeat. In Argentina, the trials of the military high command are said to have facilitated by the humiliation they suffered in the Falkland Island war on their defeat by the United Kingdom. In South Africa, apartheid had been defeated through international solidarity and sanctions against the regime. And President de Klerk and the Nationalist Party were prepared to rebuild a new South Africa on the basis of a multiracial society and universal adult suffrage in order to end decades of suffering and bloodshed. Perhaps, it is only in South Africa where the offending party took an active part in ushering in an era of reconciliation and collaboration as part of the transitional period.

3. The need for National Reconciliation in Ghana.

3.1 There are some politicians in the governing NDC whose routine response to the idea of national reconciliation in Ghana is that there are no warring factions and therefore there are no parties to be reconciled. Most often these are people who were conveniently in/or fortunately outside Ghana during the dark days spanning the second half of 1979 and the revolutionary excesses of the PNDC era. But for any objective and keen observer of Ghanaian society, there seems to be something wrong with the very spirit of the nation. The national confidence, the trust, the national pride, and the proverbial Ghanaian easy smile for one another and for the foreigner, seem to be wilting. The ethnic, generational, and class frictions fanned in the so-called revolutionary days, are still simmering. The spate of ethnic, religious and political tensions seem to be indicative of the fact that this dear nation of ours is sitting on a time-bomb which, if not defused through reconciliation, may degenerate into fratricidal strife. And this is not scare-mongering. The issue is raised so that it can be addressed to avert a potential national disaster.

3.2 The violent overthrow of governments since 1966 especially the holy wars waged on successful Ghanaians and on ordinary women traders in the 1979 to 1992 revolutionary period, have left in their trail festering wounds which need to be healed if our new attempt at constitutional rule is to succeed. Businessmen who were dispossessed without the benefit of due process, and Ghanaians who were forced into exile both voluntarily and through fear of persecution, need their cases reviewed in the new constitutional dispensation.

3.3 In Ghana, the most important, though so far, not the most threatening source of conflict, is partisan politics. At the base of the potential for strife are the revolutionary origins of the NDC Government and its leaders. The leadership's view of political opponents has until recently been that of 'enemies of the revolution'. For the first time in the history of Ghana a military dictatorship handed over power to itself and granted itself immunity from the excesses of its previous non-constitutional regime. The "them" and "us" mind-set of the AFRC and PNDC eras, have yet to be thawed. The boycott of the opposition parties of the 1992 Parliamentary elections closed the opportunity for the creation of a minimal operational communication between the government and their political opponents. It is almost unheard of in a democratic system that the President and his political opponents have not exchanged words socially, formally and face to face, ever, for almost a decade and a half. In the absence of physical contact and communication the demonisation of political opponents becomes possible. A detente at the political leadership front is an absolute necessity in Ghana.

3.4 The second front needing reconciliation is the relationship between the President and large segments of the Ghanaian society. The extra-judicial killings, the trauma most average citizens were put through in the revolutionary excesses of the AFRC and PNDC eras, which were chaired by President Rawlings, has generated bitterness and opened physical and emotional wounds in a wide segment of the Ghanaian society, which need to be healed. People have perforated ears and other physical scars to remind them daily of tortures endured. There are daily reminders of properties seized and being enjoyed by others. There are Ghanaians who fled into exile either voluntarily or as a result of fear of persecution for alleged white-collar crimes. Without an open and publicly announced unconditional general amnesty for all categories of offenders under the illegal regimes of

the AFRC and PNDC, the leadership of the NDC will continue to have outside this country, aggrieved persons who are antagonistic to them. The clandestine release of confiscated properties to people, especially non Ghanaians, without clear-cut guidelines for modalities for appeal and for review, will just aggravate matters and deepen the suspicion and mistrust of the Government.

3.5 It is unfortunate that, so far, the attitude of the successors to the PNDC, is that they have been given immunity under the transitional provisions of the 1992 Constitution, and no court of law can entertain any action which aims at seeking redress from some of the excesses of the dark days of the revolutionary era. Sections 34 and 35 of the Transitional Provisions of the 1992 Constitution not only gave indemnity to the AFRC and PNDC regimes, but also seems to cast in concrete the confiscation and penalties imposed by the two Rawlings regimes. Only public servants can claim back confiscated properties through the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice, if the individual can establish that “the property or that part was acquired before he assumed the public or political office, or that it was otherwise lawfully acquired then, the property shall be returned to that person” [Section 35(2)]. Section 37 states clearly that the representatives of the sovereign will of the people, Parliament, “shall have no power to amend this section or sections 34 and 35 of this schedule”.

3.6 Section 34(3) makes it illegal for any legislative, judicial and executive action of the AFRC and PNDC to be questioned in any proceedings whatsoever and “accordingly, it shall not be lawful for any court or other tribunal to make any order or grant any remedy or relief in respect of any such act”. And the incredible aspect is that this non-questioning of these acts are supposed to apply “notwithstanding that any such action as is referred to in that subsection was not taken in accordance with any procedure prescribed by law”. In the face of admissions by President Rawlings and some of his colleagues that there were excesses and miscarriage of justice, the challenge for national reconciliation in Ghana lies in fashioning judicial reviews and administrative actions, which while rectifying the errors, will not raise unnecessary fears of persecution among those suspected as the perpetrators of the ills.

3.7 If we fail to get action to remedy some of the ills in a transparent and equitable manner, all we shall then be signaling loudly and clearly to aggrieved Ghanaians and others, is that the only recourse for rectifying the

errors of the AFRC and the PNDC, the most oppressive, unfair, and bloody regimes Ghana has known, is to throw out the constitutional era as guided by the 1992 Constitution. This is tantamount to throwing the baby out with the bath water. It is not necessary to put Ghanaians through the trauma of another uprising in order to remedy the errors of the past.

3.8 The celebration of June Fourth and the 31st December uprisings is not only indicative of the intransigence of the NDC Government, but also demonstrates their insensitivity to the need to forget the inhumane treatment meted out to people, and to reconcile the people of this country to forge ahead as one people. For me, the 1979 to 1992 period was as if this country had been put through a civil war. Those who do not see the need for reconciliation may live to rue the day of reckoning, which shall surely come "as the waters cover the sea". One really does not need to establish that there are warring factions before reconciliation becomes necessary. If there is a feeling of alienation among sections of the community, if the spirit of pulling-together, the spirit of belonging together as a nation, is weakening, then there is a need to seek reconciliation. And this is why some of us believe that the search for national reconciliation should be given the urgent priority that it deserves.

3.9 The recent ethnic discomforts emanate from the perception; less openly stated and more quietly and ominously whispered, that the PNDC and the NDC Governments have a preponderance of back-room advisers and beneficiaries from one ethnic group whilst those who have suffered most have tended to belong to another tribe. This misconception if not openly challenged and corrected might fuel the least spark into a fratricidal strife disproportionate to the immediate cause.

3.10 The other causes of ethnic tensions have been of economic origin and related to land rights and chieftaincy matters. The Northern Region ethnic conflict is of this origin. The same applies to the Krobo settlers on Akim land in the Eastern Region. Even the normally peaceful Lartehs and the Akwapims, have joined the fray of ethnic conflicts over land and suzerainty in traditional allegiance. The Ashanti and Brong-Ahafo misunderstandings about administrative borders and traditional allegiance, the simmering jealousies between the Brong and Ashanti farmers in Western Region, these are all part of the potential sources of ethnic conflict which need addressing. These problems can and are sometimes fanned by unscrupulous politicians for political advantage in spite of the dire consequences in terms of loss in

property and human life.

3.11 The spread of evangelical “born again” churches and Moslem fundamentalism, with their zeal for conversion and open testimony, have a potential for religious conflict. The ugly incidents in Ashanti and Brong-Ahafo involving Christians and Moslems in the former, and rival Muslim factions in the latter should be indicative of the seriousness of this source of conflict.

4. The generational source of tension.

4.1 According to a CIA study on causes of political instability, poor democratic states which fail to improve the living standards of their people tend to be prone to instability. It also found that countries with a high percentage of adolescents are more prone to ethnic conflicts. The combination of poor economic performance and an increasing army of unemployed youth concentrated in urban centres is just a recipe for fanning conflicts.. A poor and a hungry people make very bad material for democracy. As the cost of living continues to rise relentlessly and unemployment continues to mount, especially among the youth, the very fabric of our fledgling democracy may come under very strong pressures and social tensions.

4.2 Another source of generational conflict is the annual ritual of confrontation between tertiary institution students and the Government over students’ loan amounts, and now, the contribution of student to their education in the form of tuition payment. We need to evolve a system and machinery for objective assessment of funding requirements of students and the machinery for managing the loan facilities with the involvement of the students, TUC, Employers, and Universities. This may put an end to the annual spectacle of confrontation between Government and students, which has resulted in the disruption of the educational year and adversely impacted the creation of the critical manpower needed for development.

5. National reconciliation; the peculiar case of Ghana.

5.1 National reconciliation in Ghana must be fashioned from a different perspective and on different premises. The experience of other countries with regard to reconciliation seems to suggest that the process of bringing a nation together has tended to exclude those who were responsible for the creation of the alienation. In Ghana the NDC Government is an extension

of the AFRC and PNDC regimes, which are perceived as being responsible for the basic source of tensions. Our problem is how we can persuade President Rawlings and his colleagues that the best form of indemnity is the removal of the sources of injustice arising from the actions of the regimes they presided over. The key for reconciliation therefore seems to be held, to a large extent, by President Rawlings. He also holds the administrative and executive powers required to implement any decisions taken for reconciliation. The pervasive influence of the Executive over the other arms Government also seems to suggest that even the initiative for national reconciliation lies with the Presidency.

5.2 Because those perceived as being responsible for the excesses of the revolutionary past are still in power, the nation will have to forego the retributive aspect of reconciliation. Any attempt to even dig up the past in order to show the nature and extent of the abuses committed may frighten those in power to resort to cover-up tactics. There are just not enough courageous and principled men and women in this nation to look into the past and come out with the facts unmindful of whose ox is gored. Our "Truth Commission" will have to be limited to identifying those who have suffered abuses and give them relief. We have to leave the judgement of the wrongdoers to their God and their conscience. Let us look after the wronged. Moreover, the opportunity cost of digging up the past may prove burdensome.

5.3 We also need to convince the present rulers that the spirit and the letter of the Transitional Provisions of the 1992 Constitution granting them indemnity will be respected. But this respect should not exclude the use of judicial review and administrative procedures to rectify some of the wrongs. In fact, Chapters Five and Six of the 1992 Constitution dealing with Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms, and The Directive Principles of State Policy, may be constructed in such a way as to bring relief to those whose human rights and economic rights were abused in the AFRC and PNDC eras. Once goodwill is forthcoming, a way will be found. Nothing is beyond the administrative and legal ingenuity of Ghanaians.

6. Lessons from the experience of other countries.

6.1 The issue of national reconciliation has attracted the attention of the international community anxious to minimise the senseless killings and strife plaguing the world. The major victims of these conflicts have largely

been innocent women and children. In South Korea, South Africa, Malawi, Ethiopia and Haiti, to cite just a few examples, there are soul-searching initiatives. And national reconciliation has been viewed as an integral part of the efforts involved in the transition from dictatorship to constitutional rule. There seems to be a belief that one has to seek out the truth surrounding the atrocities perpetrated in tumultuous times, bring the perpetrators to book, before a nation can be ready to move forward. It is not clear whether what one seeks is revenge or the pursuit of justice. Of course, we have all witnessed the search for, and, sometimes, the kidnapping of Nazi war criminals by the Israeli security services to bring them to justice. As we indicated earlier, these punitive measures were made possible by the fact that the perpetrators had been forcibly removed from power, or that they had left power voluntarily or through loss of office in an electoral defeat.

6.2 The recent trial of two former Presidents of South Korea for their involvement in “crimes against the nation”, a mutiny which led to the 1979 coup, the quelling of student riots by using guns on protesting students, and acts of corruption -are indicative of the type of judicial rituals which a bitter people may resort to in order to exorcize the wounds of the past. In the case of South Korea even the statute of limitations for mutiny and treason had to be extended in order to make it possible to indict President Chun and Roh with the offences for which the Prosecutor called for the death penalty or long jail sentences.

6.3 In Ethiopia, the ruling party is engaged in trials of the Mengistu regime. The trial seems to be taking up management and administrative man-hours, which could otherwise be devoted to rehabilitating the war-torn country. The Truth Commission of South Africa chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the Haitian National Truth and Reconciliation Commission are busy trying to unearth the human rights violations of the previous regimes. The objective is apparently, to force people to come to terms with the past, to forgive and forget, before moving on into the future. Argentina also had a Truth Commission. While some nations seek to smoke out the wrong doers and to punish them, in Argentina, the culprits were identified, put on trial, sentenced and then given a presidential pardon. This approach has been termed a “morally shabby solution”, but it achieved the objective of national reconciliation.

6.4 The experience one can draw from these trials is that they generally

lack due process. The people on trial have already been found guilty in the “court of public opinion”. Not unlike revolutionary tribunals, the trials are more or less a formality. Since the courts are generally not independent of the ruling powers who tend to be victims of the previous regimes which are on trial, the courts tend to give out verdicts which they think the powers-that-be want them to give. And we know from the Ghana experience with our various Committees of Enquiries into Governments, which have been overthrown, that those who are down have no defenders. There are not enough brave men and women who will intercede on their behalf with the truth. It is not justice, whom the victors seek; it is revenge.

6.5 These trials and commissions, as far as I am concerned, are not essential to the process of repairing the damage done and compensating those wronged. It is difficult to create an atmosphere within which due process can prevail. The trials and commissions may just serve to reopen wounds better left closed. They also send the wrong signals to the Abachas of this world; “Dig in deep, my friend, for leaving office is a death sentence.” For the “dictators turned democrats”, the message is that an electoral defeat might prove to be a matter of life and death.

7. The contours of an approach to national reconciliation in Ghana.

7.1 The approach and underlying thinking for bring national reconciliation in Ghana must of necessity, be construed different by those of the experience of other countries. The nation as a whole, and especially the political leadership, has to convince the President that it is in his enlightened self-interest to reconcile this nation whilst he is in power and standing tall. If he is perceived as having been magnanimous whilst in power, then he will be judged in future with magnanimity. As the Good Book puts it in Luke 6,38; “Whatever measure you use to give, large or small, will be used to measure what is given back to you.” We need a preemptive move to rectify the errors of the past in order to obviate the need for future reckoning.

7.2 The nation as a whole should accept responsibility for the excesses of the AFRC and PNDC eras. We are all guilty through acts of commission or omission. The good men who kept silent whilst injustice was being committed are just as guilty as the perpetrators of the ills. Some of the most militant against the PNDC record and the NDC Government now, were active participants during the period. Where are the students and the workers who urged the regime on to “LET THE BLOOD FLOW”? It has

been said that in evil times the place of the moral man/woman is in jail, on the ramparts, or in exile. Where were we when the "Kangaroo" courts and Citizens Vetting Committees were dishing out inhuman sentences, and the thugs were whipping Women on their bare buttocks for allegedly selling above the control price? And we are involved in resisting these acts, where were we when the injustices perceived by the revolutionaries were being committed in the pre-revolutionary days?

7.3 Once we all accept part of the responsibility for the wrongs done, then it becomes easier for us to seek reconciliation without the precondition of a confession, and a demand for retribution. The leadership of the political opposition needs to reassure the President and his colleagues of the PNDC and AFRC, that the Transitional Provisions, as far as they protect them from persecution, will be totally adhered to. We should agree to let by-gones be by-gones, and move together to remedy the excesses so that we can forge ahead as a nation. To those who say that there can be no reconciliation without confession, and a show of contrition by those they hold responsible for the excesses of the past, one can only say that such an attitude is unchristian. And they can be referred to Christ's reaction to those who had brought the, woman caught in adultery. "Let those of us without sin cast the first stone." Ghana is basically a religious nation. And all religions subscribe to the Golden Rule of love of neighbour. To me the burden and the glory of shaping a national reconciliation to suit the peculiar conditions of Ghana rest on the shoulders of those committed to a peaceful and prosperous Ghana, and who are therefore ready to put an end to the usually interminable cycle of vengeance and retribution.

7.4 It is proposed that in order to end the vicious cycle of retribution and revenge, which has characterised changes of governments, we need to revisit all the violent overthrows of governments beginning with the 1966 military take-over. The objective is to lay the foundation for measures for healing some of the festering wounds inflicted on the national psyche in the course of our old habit of changing governments by cutting instead of counting heads. The beginning of an enduring peace and political stability rest on three main pillars with national reconciliation as the fulcrum, the strengthening of our institutions for conflict avoidance, resolution and management as instituted under the Constitution, and accelerating economic development as an important reinforcing condition for political and social stability. National reconciliation is therefore the foundation, so that we can remove the suspicion and mistrust, be able to look one another in the

eye and join together for the challenging but exhilarating task of nation building with all hands on deck.

8. The Ingredients for National Reconciliation.

8.1 The ingredients for national reconciliation with the initiative from the Government must include, among other initiatives:

a) an unconditional pardon for Ghanaians in exile so that they may feel free to return home without fear of persecution. This should include the Ghanaians who lost their citizenship in the exchange with the USA over the alleged espionage activities.

b) an unconditional amnesty for those still in prison on national security related offences up to the coming into effect of the 1992 Constitution.

c) the review, with the assistance of internationally competent jurists, of grievances in respect to seizure of properties and businesses with a view to returning those which can be proven to have been wrongfully seized. The non-transparent return of selected properties without clearly stated modalities and criteria for deconfiscation is causing more problems than it is solving.

d) the establishment of a National Reconciliation Commission to vet appeals from those who lost parents/relatives and who may need assistance with the education of children, resettlement and other forms of reparation to ease the problems related to their physical and mental loss.

8.2 In order to offer an olive branch to encourage such an initiative from the Government, it is proposed that two gestures be made. The Government should undertake to stop celebrating 31st December and June Fourth as dates worthy of commemoration. For some, these celebrations are a reminder of the intransigence and insensitivity on the part of the NDC Government. In order to meet the NDC part of the way the Bar Association should put a stop to the Martyrs Day celebration, which commemorates the abduction and murder of three Judges and a retired Major in 1982. These events should be put together as Ghana's own Remembrance Day and be designated National Reconciliation Day. On this day the whole nation will take a pause, ponder upon our past failures and our inhumanity to one another, and resolve to spare future generations these avoidable agonies.

8.3 The challenge of national reconciliation in Ghana is how to convince the political leadership of this nation both in Government and in the

Opposition, that it is in our long-term enlightened interest and in the supreme interest of our nation, to collaborate to remove the sources of tension. We need to convince the Government that any initiative to solve the problems of the past will not degenerate into an opening of a Pandora's box. And that it is in our collective enlightened interest to adopt the course of action outlined above. This is the only indemnity that shall endure. Because, it may command the blessing of the nation.

8.4 Once the building blocks for national reconciliation have been put into place, it will provide a fillip for economic development. The PNDC forged together a populist coalition of workers and students, to push through the revolutionary programmes, which alienated the business and professional communities. National reconciliation will facilitate the forging of a new coalition for development based on a genuine partnership between the state and the business community. We need to replace the strong arm tactics of economic management which characterised the stabilisation phase of the Economic Recovery Programmes, with a new style of governance based on management by explanation, persuasion and encouragement.

8.5 A move towards reconciliation will facilitate the conversion of the perception of peace and stability in the country into genuine peace, which will be a major selling point of Ghana as a destination for foreign direct investment in partnership with a confident, and government-supported group of economic investors. Such a state of affairs will also facilitate the discussion and agreement upon the long-term permanent interests of the nation, which must be protected irrespective of the political make-up of a government. And commercial, rather than political, ethnic, and/or religious considerations, will inform government decisions, policies and programmes, in support of the development of the private sector as the engine of growth of the economy.

9. National reconciliation, the platform for social stability.

9.1 One of the findings on the CIA study on the causes of state failure and instability was that democratic nations tended to be more stable than autocratic ones. This is mainly because democratic governments tend to have safety valves for systematic and orderly letting out of steam, whilst the non-existence of avenues for letting out steam in autocratic regimes, leads to steam buildups which inexorably end in an explosion. Once national reconciliation has been put in place, the conditions would then be ripe for

building up the nation's capacity for conflict avoidance, resolution and management. Communication among people will always involve conflict that will need to be managed.

9.2 The Constitution of the Fourth Republic puts in place six main institutions whose tasks were, conflict avoidance, prevention, resolution and management. These institutions are the Council of State, the Supreme Court, with its original jurisdiction for constitutional interpretation and as the apex of the whole adjudication system of the Judiciary. The Electoral Commission is the referee for the peaceful expression of the people's inalienable right to determine periodically their choice as to who should govern them. Then there is the Media Commission which is charged with the monitoring and nurturing of the Fourth Estate and its vital role of informing the people and keeping the vital organs of state and all arms of government on their toes, by exposing their activities to the merciless and revealing searchlight of publicity. Last but not the least, is the National House of Chiefs at the apex of the traditional institution of chieftaincy which, being placed above partisan politics, is supposed to be the embodiment of our culture and traditions, and the guardians of the permanent national interests. As long as the chiefs and members of the Council of State are perceived as not involved in partisan politics, and they project themselves as fathers and mothers of us all, irrespective of our political, religious and social affiliations, they become a formidable and credible force for conflict management.

9.3 Whilst the appointment of most of these conflict resolving Constitutional bodies is the prerogative of the President, it is important for the perception of these organs as independent, that there should be broad consultation especially with the opposing political parties. This is a way of reinforcing and strengthening their conflict management functions. The perception of the Electoral Commission as independent, and therefore an honest broker, is vital for political and social stability. In most countries in the third world, the outcome of elections has been the cause for conflict as elections have often been viewed as failing to reflect the sovereign will of the people as to their choice of who is to govern them.

9.4 Perhaps a less antagonistic approach to politics at the national level may be achieved through decentralization aimed at blunting the edge of

our winner-takes-all approach to politics. In a multi-ethnic society this attitude generates strife. It is important that serious consideration be given to making positions such as Regional Ministers and District Chief Executives/Mayors, among the parties and the current deadly competition for national office will be defused. Parties will have Regional District record to defend. Genuine decentralization may minimise ethnic tensions and provide a healthy competition among Regions for development.

9.5 At the centre the whole social refereeing machinery is the Judiciary. The ability of the Judiciary to deliver justice is an important ingredient in any conflict management structure. The root cause of most revolutions and conflicts is the perception of the existence of injustice. It is important that the nation be educated and encouraged to protect, with their very lives, the Courts and their rulings, however painful and seemingly misguided. For the Constitution to become a living document and part of the conflict management process; then we need judicial review with a long-term view of issues.

9.6 The independence of the conflict management institutions and their ability to be fair and just are often suborned by the animosity and acrimony, which characterise politics. The manner in which politics has been carried on in the Fourth Republic so far has tended to poison the body politic and make it confrontational. A less antagonistic approach might facilitate informal consultation on issues of national import. To begin with, politicians should view one another as worthy opponents with equal concern for, if different perspectives on, the national interest. Social interaction among politicians may remove some of the prejudice and mistrust. The absence of the main opposition parties in Parliament robbed the nation of the opportunity for such an interaction and its potential for forging informal channels of communication.

9.7 It is hoped that the presence of all parties in the Second Parliament of the Fourth Republic, will put pressure on the governing party/parties to consult with the opposition to ensure passage of bills and the clearing of appointees for public office. And the President's new attitude to his political opponents whom he addressed for the first time in his political life as "brothers and sisters" in the Opposition, instead of "enemies of the people", may portend well for broader consultation and politics based on issues and not on personalities and name-calling.