

ASHESI UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

**"THE BATTLE IS THE LORD'S"- RELIGION AS A TOOL FOR POLITICAL
BRANDING IN GHANA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC**

BY:

JESSICA NAA AHINEY BOIFIO

APRIL 2014

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BY:

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degree in Business Administration

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature:

Candidate's Name:

Date:

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by Ashesi University College.

Supervisor's Signature:

Supervisor's Name:

Date:

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ABSTRACT

Religion is woven into the culture of the Ghanaian people, so much so that it was evidently exploited in the election campaign of the 2012 general elections. According to Dovlo (2005), "it belongs to the African tradition that we cannot easily distinguish between the secular and religious realm, even in politics". Political elections are usually contested in a democratic state such as Ghana to determine who rules or governs the people of a state. This is the best way by which the electorates' say will be expressed. Representatives of Ghana's biggest political parties, the New Democratic Congress and the New Patriotic Party were used in the research so as to utilize insights and explore their expertise on the Ghanaian political terrain. In this research, the phenomenon of the use of religious elements used in election campaigns was interrogated to gain deeper understanding. Two main results; Ghanaians are religious and every campaign message has to be consistent with their values and morals which are more often than not influenced and informed by their religion in order to gain traction. It is recommended that any individual who seeks to run for public office, factor in the social dynamics of the Ghanaian society, especially religion as it informs the core beliefs and value systems of the Ghanaian people so as to get a shot at winning elections.

Keywords: Political branding, Election campaign, Religion

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.0 - Background

After three turbulent phases of military rule spanning twenty-one years since independence, Ghana, beginning 1992 is now a democratic state. The country has had its two main political parties, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), ruling it for almost 21 years. Democracy from its Greek origin is a composite of *demos* and *kratos*. Translated, *demos* could mean 'the people' and *kratos*, 'power', thus, democracy has its root meaning as 'the power of the people' (Ober, 2007) which is to say that it is the people who determine who is to rule them. Modern political democracy is described as a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives (Schmitter & Karl, 1991). This is done in Ghana through multi-party elections. Being democratic means that the country has a set of rules by which it is governed, enshrined in a constitution. Ghana has been using its 1992 Constitution throughout its 21 year period of stable democracy with amendments made over time.

Constitutionally, Ghana is depicted as a secular state but not an atheistic one. The introduction of the preamble in the 1992 constitution; "IN THE NAME OF GOD ALMIGHTY" lends credence to this. The word 'secular' suggests that politics and religion are essentially on parallel tracks and do

not and cannot operate in the same space together (Dovlo , 2005). Article 56 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana states:

"Parliament shall have no power to enact a law to establish or authorise the establishment of a body or movement with the right or power to impose on the people of Ghana a common programme or a set of objectives of a religious or political"

This further reiterates Ghana's state of secularism given that the constitution which is the fundamental law of the land prohibits the elevation of any one religious body to a State religion.

There is no denying that religion permeates the social fabric of Ghanaian society. In every corner there is a church or three filled with congregants either offering praise and thanks to God or asking for some miracle to happen in their lives. Events and meetings, even national occasions are started with and ended with prayer. This phenomenon does not end at social gatherings. It spills into the politics of the country such that any politician who claims to be non-religious or without faith and belief in God is likely to be met with disapproval and most likely will not survive the political terrain. In a country where about 71.2% of its 24, 652,402 citizens claim to be Christian, 17.6% Muslim, 5.2% traditionalists and 5.2% stating no affiliation to any religion (indexmundi, 2013), it is safe then to refer to Ghana as a religious country and quite easy to see why the ambitions of such a politician as described above will die a natural death. As a matter of fact, in a worldwide poll conducted by WIN-Gallup International used to measure

global self-perceptions on beliefs using the 'Religion and Atheism Index', Ghana was ranked as the most religious country in the world with 96% of people interviewed viewing themselves as religious (WIN-Gallup International, 2012)

According to Hans Haselbarth (1976 cited in Dovlo, 2005),

"It belongs to the African tradition that we cannot easily distinguish between the secular and religious realm, even in politics". In practices and thoughts steeped in tradition, leadership has always been intertwined with religion. Chiefs and community leaders functioned in priestly roles during certain ritual occasions long before the British colonized the Gold Coast. They were considered sacred; as a bridge between the people and the gods or divine ones. Their authority as leaders often had religious meanings, thus this made it difficult to draw the line between their religious and secular duties (Dovlo, 2005).

Even after decolonization, this phenomenon remains to date. Jeremiah John Rawlings more popularly known as J.J. Rawlings was referred to by the people as 'Junior Jesus' perhaps because of his charismatic nature and his interaction with the masses, going even to the extent of fixing railway tracks with the people. With the majority of the population being Christian, he was by default likened to Jesus, son of God in the Bible who displayed similar traits of humility. Even then, he could not be and was not accorded the full 'Jesus' title- he could only be afforded the junior rank.

John Agyekum Kufuor was accorded the title 'Gentle Giant' thanks to his calm, cool and collected demeanor. The late Professor Atta Mills was no exception. His title, 'Asomdwehene', which when literally translated means 'King of Peace' was related to his unassuming and calm demeanor as well as his aversion to inciting passions. During his tenure as president, his beliefs (Christian) to a large extent influenced decisions made; a national day of prayer was declared and libation was banned from being poured at national events. He made statements such as "It is God who rules this country" and made no secret of his belief in God. All of the above show the blurred lines between religion and state if there are any at all.

For the first time in recent times during the 2012 general elections, religious branding was employed particularly by the New Patriotic Party deliberately as part of its campaign strategy. It did this by painstakingly trying to portray its flag bearer Nana Addo Dankwa Akuffo Addo as a pious man, contrary to the popular perception of him as arrogant and violent which was fuelled by the comment "All die be die" made by the candidate in the run-up to the 2012 elections. This was read into as he being willing to become president at all cost even through violence. The NPP went to the extent of putting up huge billboards showing its adoption of the slogan "THE BATTLE IS THE LORD'S", blatantly appealing to the Christian vote.

The subject of religion's influence on the political terrain in Ghana has been explored albeit not a lot of scholarly attention has been given to the relationship between religion and voting patterns exclusively. Even lesser

attention has been given to the use of religion as a political branding tool during campaigns and whether or not it influences voter choices.

1.1 – Problem Statement

During election campaigns especially in the Ghanaian political terrain, more often than not, speeches made are full of religious innuendos and symbolisms. Campaign songs are mostly religious in nature, with the candidate in question being portrayed as God's chosen to lead the country. The discussion of ideas and policies are not very detailed except during the readings of manifestos and post-elections when the opposition seeks to criticize the government. Why is this so? Exactly how is this put in place and how does it work? Does it have any effect on voter choice?

This research thus seeks to understand the dynamics of religion and its influence on political discourse. It will attempt also to explore the impact of religious branding of presidential candidates on voter choices in the process, adding to the wealth of knowledge available concerning the political terrain in Ghana. The duration considered as the Fourth Republic, 1992 to date with emphasis on the 2012 general elections, will be the focus of this analysis.

1.2 – Relevance of Study

There are very few studies done on the role of religion in election campaigns. This study aims to understand why throughout the period of the Fourth Republic and especially in the last general elections, religion has played a central role in campaign messages- with presidential candidates specifically being branded as pious. Does this affect or influence voter choices in any

way? If it does, does it do so negatively or positively? This study will add to the wealth of knowledge of what the political elite in Ghana think of the populace and how they marry what they perceive the people want and what the party stands for. In addition to this, a better understanding of how the Ghanaian voter makes his or her choice will be gained which will in the long run help political party campaign strategies.

1.3– Research Questions

R1. To what extent does religion influence election campaign messages in Ghana?

R2. Does religious branding of politicians influence voter choice in Ghana?

1.4 – Research Objectives

The objective of this research is to understand the extent to which religious innuendos and symbolisms are used in election campaigns and to investigate why religion has become so prominent in political discourse especially in campaign messages.

1.5 – Outline of Proposal

This paper is divided into five chapters.

Chapter one - Introduction: This chapter gives a brief introduction and background to the topic under discussion. It explores very briefly Ghana's position as a secular state but not an atheistic one and goes on to explore religion as part of the country's social fabric, particularly its politics.

Relevance of the study, research questions and objectives as well as sources of data is covered in the chapter.

Chapter two – Literature Review: The review of existing literature related to the topic is done in this chapter.

Chapter three - Methodology: Research methods to be employed in this research, validity and reliability are covered in this chapter.

Chapter four – Data Analysis: The data collected is presented and analyzed in this chapter

Chapter five - Conclusion: This chapter envelops discussion and summary of findings, conclusions, contribution to knowledge, recommendations, limitations and suggestions for further studies.

CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

A brand in marketing is defined as the “psychological representation” of a product or organization; it has symbolic rather than tangible use-value. It acts as a shortcut to consumer choice; enabling differentiation between broadly similar products at the most basic level. The American Marketing association defines a brand as a ‘name, term, symbol or design or a combination of them which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or a group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of other competitors’ (Smith & French, 2009).

Scammel (2007 cited in Adolphsen, 2009) posits that a brand’s internal structure comprises two elements, the functional and economic value gained when buying a product and the emotional value. The functional and economic value in essence is the product- the hard, tangible benefit gained by a consumer. The emotional value or ‘brand differentiators’ refer to the various connotations connected to a purchase. These can be classified into different types- psychological brand differentiators which appeal to consumers’ self-reflexive capacities and value preferences, social brand differentiators which relate to their socialization or standing in society, and cultural brand differentiators tap into their customs and traditions. While these categories might be overlapping, they demonstrate that the perception of a product - the brand image - can be tied to various aspects of human life (Adolphsen, 2009). A brand therefore is not the product; it is what the consumer perceives the product to be. Brand marketers can and do influence the perceptions of a product, however, in the end, the brand is only a projection

of a product in consumers' minds- where it can be cultivated or contaminated (Adolphsen, 2009)

Branding then can be described as any organization's activities aimed at the creation and fostering of a distinct brand image in consumers' minds. These activities involve a focusing of resources "on selected tangible and intangible attributes to differentiate the brand in an attractive, meaningful, and compelling way for the targeted audience" (Grimaldi 2003 cited in Adolphsen 2009). Brand intangibles transcend the physical product and cover a wide range of brand associations such as purchase and consumption imagery, actual or aspirational user imagery, history, heritage and experience according to Keller (2001 as cited in Keller & Lehmann, 2006). These are also common means by which marketers differentiate brands with consumers (Park, Jaworski and MacInnis, 1986 cited Keller & Lehmann, 2006). Branding however is not limited to consumer goods and services. It extends also to politics.

Political branding according to Scammel (2007) is an all-encompassing marketing and image identity campaign and not just the use of traditional advertising. She goes further to describe it as strategically employing consumer branding tactics in building a political image in order to gain popularity and election (Scammel, 2007 as cited in Sonies 2011). French and Smith (2010) argue that given the 'catch-all' approach adopted by political parties in many western democracies, they tend to fight increasingly over the middle ground. In so doing, the parties end up offering 'valence' policies(Nelson, 1984 as cited in Smith and French, 2010) to the voters

where they all agree on what has to be done with the only difference being how they intend to go about implementing those policies. In order to get the votes of the electorates, there is the need for increased efforts to differentiate between the parties (French & Smith, 2010) hence, political branding.

According to Keller (2008 cited in Downer, 2013) good brands do not only identify and differentiate; they also create emotional connections so as to take on special meaning to consumers in the process, creating a decision making shortcut for purchases for consumers. Both rationality and emotion are important in branding and a brand's strength is built on how consumers 'think, feel and act with respect to that brand' (Keller 2008 p.74 cited in Downer, 2013). This ties in to Scammel's assertion that a brand's internal structure is made of two parts- functional and emotional values. It can be deduced then that rationality will be applied to the functional composite of a brand and emotion, to the emotional part. Burkitt (2002 as cited in Downer, 2013) suggests that brands and brand perceptions are as compared to commercial markets, more important in political markets and as such a political party may be "the ultimate form of brand." It can be inferred then that voters determine the success of a political brand.

Political products are made up of the political party, the political candidate and policies. Increasingly, there are signs of growing personalization in politics which has caused the party leader to become the 'center of its brand image' and voters' choices progressively are becoming dependent on the individual relationship with the candidate (Harris, 2001 as cited in Ismail &

Yaacob, 2014). Campbell (1983 as cited in Ismail & Yaacob, 2014) argues thus that political candidates need to convey a preferable image in order to appeal to voters. A politician's image consists of how people perceive him based on his characteristics, leadership potential and surrounding messages conveyed through the mass media and word-of-mouth. (Cwalina & Falkowski, 2008) Creating a particular type of representation for a particular purpose (voting) which, by evoking associations provides the object (political candidate) with additional values and contributes to the emotional reception of the said object is referred to as 'candidate image' (Falkowski & Cwalina, 1999 as cited in Cwalina & Falkowski, 2008).

Religion is one of the most important facets of society given that it is the basis upon which many cultures are built. It reflects deeply held human values which have great potential for influencing behavior. A wide range of social and political beliefs which include achievement aspirations, work ethic, life-style norms, parent-child relations, morality, social relations, attitudes towards authority and acceptance of the state are all related to religious values (Knutsen, 2010). Religion and its role in politics have changed in recent years. In the United States for example, differences within religious denominations have displaced divisions between major religions (Hunter, 1991 as cited in Weber & Thornton, 2012) and party polarization has been linked to religion where religious traditionalists have sorted themselves into the Republican Party and liberals, the Democratic Party (Layman, 2001 as cited in Weber & Thornton, 2012). Religious traditionalism, has increasingly predicted party identification, issue positions, vote choice and presidential

approval over the past decades relative to the predictive power of denominational identification. Voters increasingly rely on religion to formulate political decisions thanks to the dramatic increase in the use of religious themes and symbols in elite rhetoric. American presidents have, since the 1980s invoked God far more than in prior decades (Domke & Coe, 2008 as cited in Weber & Thornton, 2012).

Coe and Domke (2006) according to Weber and Thornton (2012) note a marked increase in religious rhetoric beginning with Ronald Reagan with more recent presidents such as President George W. Bush relying more heavily on religious themes in order to court conservative Christian votes. In Political speeches Republicans are known to have drawn on Biblical passages such as "An America that finds the infinite worth of every individuals and leaves the ninety-nine to find the one stray lamb" and "we have this land and are told to be good stewards of it and good stewards of each other" (Calfano and Djupe, 2009: 329 cited in Weber and Thornton, 2012). It must be noted however that many of these religious appeals draw on coded themes and images that resonate with religious voters but do not alienate secular voting blocs (Weber & Thornton, 2012). Religious expression from a political leader to some extent might bring to mind a positive image of him or her, making that part of the individual more salient (Albertson, 2014).

In other instances, the role religion plays goes beyond innuendos and symbolism to being the identity of the political party and thus by extension, its candidate. A country such as Germany is a clear example of this with political parties hinged on religious organizations such as the Christian

Democratic Party and the CSU. It would appear however, that the religious cleavage in the country is diminishing and society has become more secular with fewer children attending denominational institutions, which is critical as it affects the political socialization of children which in turn affects their adult voting behavior (Schmitt, 1990:180 as cited in Roberts, 2005). The political agenda has as well become almost entirely secular with just a few issues pertaining to religion. However, voting behavior still seems affected substantially by denomination and religiosity (Roberts, 2005). This is so even though classes, religion, the urban-rural divide among other factors are all potentially strong influences on the voting decision or even the decision to vote at all. The Christian Democrats still gain from an above average level of voting support from catholic voters and the Social Democratic Party, from Protestant voters albeit to a somewhat lesser extent. Schmitt (1989 as cited in Roberts, 2005) has suggested three factors which work in combination to explain the tendency for Catholics to vote for the Christian Democrat candidates; the connection to the church, where Catholics are persuaded to vote for the CDU or CSU by church teachings and other messages such as the bishops' letters. The second is group identification whereby any Catholic influenced by the awareness that other Catholics tend to vote for the Christian Democrats is more likely to also vote for them. The third factor is the sharing of a common set of values which might seem best met by the policies of the Christian Democrats outside of church attendance (Roberts, 2005). These show that to a large extent at least in Germany, religion does influence voter choice.

Two sub-varieties of religion in politics are peculiar to West Africa: religious nationalism and political manipulation of religion (Dovlo, 2005). Related to the latter according to Dovlo, is the pervasive use of religion during elections. In Ghana, elections are a prime example of this relationship between politics and religion. Politicians who are fully aware of the all-encompassing influence of religion on the Ghanaian populace employ various religious forums and sometimes even go to the extent of employing religious leaders to campaign for them in order to win elections (Dovlo, 2005). It is during elections that one hears of and sees most political candidates 'visiting' churches to worship with congregants and paying some respect to Muslim leaders across the country. In 1992 during the first elections, the political candidates invoked religion to tell the people to vote for a 'God-fearing man' as president. The 2000 election had as its main topic of discussion whether or not political parties with Christian presidential candidates should have Muslim running mates (Dovlo, 2005).

In this same year, the NPP used Cindy Thompson's hit song *Awurade Kasa* on the campaign trail as the official campaign song. In 2004, it was Prophet Seth Frimpong's *Mehuri So* which was used. These were already popular and fit into the most popular genre of music in Ghana - gospel. There also was the prayer festival organized by the NPP in 2000 themed 'Jericho Shall Fall' where Cindy Thompson and many other gospel artistes performed and prayed among other activities. The NDC in 2008 used *Double Double* and *Taka Tika* by Michael Adangba in 2012. Then there was the introduction of billboards which had various religious inscriptions and symbolisms. The NDC

had billboards with then Presidential candidate, John Mahama pointing with his index finger up to the sky (which could signify that he was dependent on God above to win the elections) and the NPP, billboards with the inscription, "THE BATTLE IS THE LORD'S" along with the Bible quotation, 1 Samuel 17:47 which reads; "All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD'S, and he will give all of you into our hands." Pictures of Nana Akuffo Addo in Jerusalem praying at the 'Wailing Wall' surfaced as well in the media during this campaign period. These all highlight how intense the relationship between politics and religion is in Ghana's political arena and demonstrate the constant and pervasive nature of the influence of religious beliefs on political discourse.

There is a Muslim-Christian divide in voting patterns in Ghana with the Muslims, located mostly in the Northern part of Ghana aligning more towards the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) garnering a large proportion of its supporters and votes from the Christian community (Takyi, Opoku-Agyeman, & Kutin-Mensah, 2010). Reasons for this divide are unclear as neither of the parties is a religious one or has strong religious views. The authors posit that the trend could be as a result of the Muslims' relations with the Danquah – Busia tradition from which the NPP has its origins where under the Aliens Compliance Order of 1969 during the Busia administration, their kin and relatives were expelled from the Zongo areas. The NDC, according to this study, exploited this occurrence heavily especially in the 1996 elections to foster good relations with the Zongo communities, often reminding them of a possible repeat expulsion by

the Danquah-Busia tradition (Takyi, Opoku-Agyeman, & Kutin-Mensah, 2010).

Every two out of three interviewed Protestant, Pentecostal and other Christian denominations were of Akan origin. The Akans accounted also for about 53% of interviewees who were Roman Catholic. 75% of Muslims generally are from the Northern Region and tend to be poorer than their southern counterparts. The NDC operates based on a social democratic ideology and brands itself as the party which represents the poor and oppressed and the NPP, more of a capitalist ideology based party. Thus, the NDC is more likely to appeal to those in society who feel marginalized (Takyi, Opoku-Agyeman, & Kutin-Mensah, 2010). This link to ethnicity perhaps could explain the trend as stipulated above and agrees with the assertion that there may be other factors which influence voter choices like class, urban-rural divide among other factors mentioned by Roberts (2005) discussed above.

The research findings will add to the literature and will support the assertions made in previous work with specificity to Ghana.

CHAPTER THREE – METHODOLOGY

3.0 – Research Purpose

Exploratory research is conducted to provide a better understanding of a situation. It is not designed to come up with final answers or decisions. Researchers hope to produce hypotheses about what is going on in a situation. (Brown & Suter, 2012) This study was exploratory in nature as it sought to gain insight and a deeper understanding of the prevalent use of religious elements in election campaigns especially in the 2012 general elections in Ghana. It also looked to understand the Ghanaian voter and how he or she makes voter choices from the perspective of the political elites.

3.1- Research Design

Qualitative data was used in this research. This was derived from elite in-depth interviews conducted. In-depth interviews were chosen to tap into the knowledge and experience of those with information relevant to the question at hand. The respondents, as per the type of interview conducted were among the political elites of the two main political parties; NDC and NPP. They comprised campaign managers for the 2012 elections and members of the communication team of the political parties. Out of a potential number of twelve respondents, five responded positively to requests and granted interviews.

The face-to-face interviews were purposely chosen to ensure thorough communication of ideas between the respondents and me. The interviews were semi-structured in nature which gave me control of the order of questions and the conversation and helped make sure that the questions

asked were answered. Flexibility is another reason this form was chosen; I got to repeat questions, probe further for more information and redirect the conversation when it was going off track and use discretion as to which questions I asked. The interviews took place in settings where the respondents were most comfortable which included mostly offices and homes. This was deliberate as well to allow for easy flow of information where they felt like they were in control of their environment.

Open-ended questions were also used in the interviews. These allowed the respondents to read into the questions however they wanted to and give answers based on the understanding of the questions. It also gave room for them to express their ideas in ways that carried the meanings across effectively. The different perspectives they had, also came to fore thanks to the open-ended nature of the questions asked. Detailed explanations of certain factors that affect campaigns were also given. The respondents also drew attention to other areas not explored which gave further insight into the subject matter.

The questions followed a sequence where respondents were asked first what election campaigns were and which traits were the most important in choosing a presidential candidate to set the context for further questioning. A series of questions then followed which centered on how and why religion had become more of a critical factor in election campaigns and also whether election outcomes would be different should religion be taken out of campaigns. The implication of religion factoring heavily in Ghana's political

discourse on the country's sovereignty was also explored. Finally it was asked whether an atheist would ever be able to make it to the presidency.

Billboards and campaign literature were also tracked.

3.2 – Sample Size

The target sample size was twelve however, the response rate was six. One of the respondents was excluded from the study because he asked that my thesis topic be changed before he would grant a full interview. Thus, the number of respondents who took part in the in-depth interviews was five. This number was made up of campaign managers and members of the communication teams of both parties.

3.3 – Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was used in this study which means that only targeted samples which had a specific trait or purpose which lent to the research were selected. Expert sampling specifically was used. This involves the assembling of a sample of persons with known or demonstrable experience and expertise in some area. One of the reasons for the use of expert sampling is that it would be the best way to elicit the views of persons who have specific expertise (Trochim, 2006). In this case, the campaign managers and members of the communication teams who were representatives of the two parties and had first-hand knowledge of what went into the campaign strategies employed. They also had a wealth of knowledge about the political terrain having been active participants in Ghana's political terrain for a long time and were the best people to give insight into the subject matter.

3.4 – Data Analyses and Representation

Data retrieved from the in-depth interviews were recorded and transcribed. Thematic analysis was used to analyze of the responses from the interviewees. This involves the searching through data to find recurrent patterns (Whitelock, 2010). This was employed to determine trends in campaign strategies and also to find out the underlying reasons why if at all religion was used.

3.5 – Limitations of Study

There were quite a number of limitations involved in this study. Not as many of the potential respondents agreed to give interviews. Thus, the conclusions drawn were done from information gotten from a smaller number of people. Given that the respondents were representatives of the political parties, there were some responses which were partisan in nature and some respondents were very evasive with their answers hence, undermining the objectivity of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR – DATA RESULTS & ANALYSIS

Out of the potential and desirable 12 respondents made up of political party representatives and newspaper editors and social commentators, 5 responded positively to requests to be interviewed comprising campaign managers and members of the communication teams of the two political parties, NDC and NPP. In the main text of the thesis, the responses of the interviewees are referred to as 'PR' meaning party representative in accordance with the offer of anonymity offered respondents prior to data-collection. Numbers 1 through to 5 were used to indicate responses from the first respondent and it follows in that order. Thus, 'PR1' refers to the first respondent and so on. The interview questions are denoted by 'IQ'

The in-depth interviews

4.0 - IQ1: What is an election campaign?

This question was asked primarily to give context to the research. Based on the answer given by the respondent, the follow up question was either modified or maintained as the questions used served as an interview guide. All five respondents in answering this question mentioned that campaigns involved getting the party's message across to try and get the electorates to vote for the said party. **Couching a good message** was the common theme across board in all the answers.

The following are some of the responses:

An election campaign is when politicians employ mechanisms to get the attention of the electorate and get them to vote for them. Of course this is a broad description. There are so many mechanisms

employed. Being able to couch a message that will attract floating voters is important. Going beyond your base means reaching out to floating voters who are considered very discerning and do not just take your message on face value; they don't need anything from you as a politician and so you have to prove to them that you have their best interests at heart with your policies. Your ability to buy into that constituency and to have them consider you will be described as a successful campaign. Messaging is key. (PR1, personal communication, March 2014)

Another respondent acknowledged that:

Basically a political campaign is a set of arrangements that a political party puts in place to ensure that it mobilizes the electorates to a certain course of action that is, to vote for them in a general election or any election for that matter using certain messages and symbols to- I hate the word manipulate- but to get the electorates to act in accordance to their wishes. It has various structures and process [sic] that we go through in order to make this happen but, basically what we are trying to do is get electorates to vote for you by the use of messages and symbols. It is not very different from marketing any product. You are basically looking at your electorate and saying that I am marketing a candidate or party to them to buy. Their purchasing power is their vote. (PR2, personal communication, March 2014)

From the same respondent, on messaging:

You always have to make sure that your messages and symbolisms are consistent with the beliefs and values of the electorates. If they are not consistent, you've already lost or it takes extra work to convince or manipulate them. Keep in mind that any person has other things to compete with your message; whether they can get food, whether their children are safe and so their attention span is also reduced (PR2, personal communication, March 2014)

PR2 further makes the case that the average voter has an attention span of 30 seconds and if this is not captured within the time frame, they may have been lost or more effort has to be put into capturing that attention. He goes on to suggest that messaging should be snap and must have carefully selected scenes and elements which are consistent with the voter's values and outlook as a party's campaign message is competing with other issues the voter is grappling with.

PR3 agrees with this and expresses the idea that campaigning is no different from selling any product except that at the core of any political campaign is the perceptions of what the voter's expectations and needs are. He describes it as a moving target half the time because people's needs change as well.

The objective of a political campaign is to win elections. The idea is to get your message, multiple or single which could rely on multiple themes across to the people so that it will encourage them to vote for you. These messages are developed based on what has happened in the country in the last election

cycle and what the peoples' needs are, and therefore, how that political party brand can deliver what the peoples' needs are within the context of their own brand or ideology. Sometimes a little bit outside of their political brand as well because whereas it might not be something that they ordinarily be doing, because it is a political need and politics is about giving the people what they want so that they keep you in power there is that as well. (PR3, personal communication, March 2014)

PR4 and PR5 included strategy in their definition of what an election campaign is. In addition to there being a message, and it being a bid to win over electorates, an election campaign according to these two was described as follows:

If it is about political power you will be telling the electorates what you have to offer as against the current situation. If it is good you will say that you're going to improve it, if it is bad you tell them to kick out the bad and bring you in. so basically you're selling yourself to the electorates (PR4, personal communication, March 2014)

You need to have an election first of all; you must have a candidate, voters, a message and a strategy. Those are the key things. If you have all these, then a strategy evolves depending on the circumstances. The way you will campaign in Ashanti region is not the same way you will campaign in the Volta region. Even depending on the various segments of society, if you're in the Zongo area, you have to know how to campaign and respond to their needs. If you go and

visit the Imam, you say the Muslim prayer. (PR5, personal communication, March 2014)

The five respondents also agreed that winning an election campaign is done by sending the right kind of message which is determined mostly by the needs of the electorates. In order to gain their vote, one must speak their language. For most of these respondents, the message is the essence of the brand, and a worthy brand ambassador must be chosen to sell this brand.

4.1 - IQ2: What are the key characteristics and traits looked out for in a potential presidential candidate?

Most political parties in Ghana have congresses to elect their presidential candidates. There are thousands of people (members of the political party) who gather to elect the flag-bearer usually after each candidate's attempt to "sell themselves" as the best option. Much time and care is taken to choose the presidential candidates of these parties. A lot of cost is incurred as well. The respondents as a follow up question were asked for what they looked out for in the selection of the brand ambassador.

All five candidates had differing ideas on what makes the ideal candidate, however, the overarching theme in the depiction of this candidate was **perceived personality traits**. This plays a role one way or the other in the acceptance of a presidential candidate by the electorates. Perceptions influence to quite a large extent the decisions people make especially of others.

According to PR3,

In Ghanaian politics, I get the sense that people want someone just like them to lead them. However, when it comes to corruption, people want somebody not like them; they want someone with integrity to lead them so there is a paradox and it is only resolved when you are able to find somebody that the people think is just like them and also has integrity. They want someone coming out of their background and circumstances but better than them because they won't steal or bribe the police and will look after resources. It is in developing countries where the educational level is low that we're not going to get people interested in a presidential candidate because he is the smartest guy or because he understands the issues and can solve the problems rather, they won't like you for intractable issues like 'he doesn't smile' or 'he doesn't dress well' or 'he speaks like he's talking down to us'
(PR3, personal communication, March 2014)

PR2 makes the argument that much as the message is important, the carrier of the message and what he represents is more important as that could be the deal breaker as to whether the electorate will buy into the message or not. He uses the NPP's theme, "THE BATTLE IS THE LORD'S" as a case study to make his point.

The thing is that the credibility of the messenger matters even more than the content of the message. So if your message is "The Battle is The Lord's" and your messenger is an atheist, immediately everybody will worry about it. So compare Atta Mills and Nana Akuffo Addo. Atta

Mills would have been a more credible candidate selling that message because he had presented himself - wrapped himself -with the flag of God. Nana Addo even if he goes to church does not wrap himself with religion so if you compare the two, the message will resonate better if it is coming from Mills. (PR2, personal communication, March 2014)

With the large number of delegates who take part in the selection of presidential candidates at congress, PR4 and PR5 point out that it will be difficult to specify what each delegate will be looking out for.

Every party, generically speaking has a competition candidates go and sell themselves. People want a winning candidate and this differs for everyone. Candidates have different appeals (PR5, personal communication, March 2014)

PR4 buttressed this with his response saying:

The presidential candidate is not appointed; he is elected by thousands of people. If it is an appointment then you have criteria. This is a choice going to be made by 100000 people so you go and sell yourself to the party based on your contribution, your stand in the party, your personality. (PR4, personal communication, March 2014)

Insight however, was given by PR1 into what he believes is generally looked out for by party members in a candidate as well as specifics as to what females in Ghana look out for in a presidential candidate.

Certainly you want to make sure that the candidate is loyal to the party otherwise there will be rancor if people feel like they haven't paid their dues. Also he has to be someone who will help the fortunes of the party, that is, to be attractive to the outside world. In the NDC there is a silent consciousness on some regional balance. For example, Rawlings was from the Volta Region so we didn't think it would be expedient to get someone from the Volta region so we got Mills who was from the central region who in turn chose his running mate, Mahama from the northern region and we got him without any opposition. We like to go round because we believe we are a national party that cuts across. Of course the candidate must have personal qualities that are appealing; he must be dignified, he must be considered affable, reachable - virtues that you can easily market about the candidate. It's like going to market a product; you want good things to say about your product. Looks play a role in Ghanaian politics. A lot of polls commissioned and studied, showed that female voters generally tend to favor candidates who are charismatic and good looking. (PR1, personal communication, March2014)

Having defined the context of the research, I sought to explore further the trends in election campaigns especially the one leading up to the 2012 general elections. Questions were centered on the use of gospel music, religious innuendos and symbolisms and the heavy presence of religion as a whole in the campaign season.

4.2 - IQ3: Music has the ability to influence people's decisions and moods so it is understandable why it will be used in campaigns. Why is there however, a trend of gospel music and artistes being used?

The answers given pointed to the fact that music was essential to campaigns and served as an effective medium of carrying a message across. Gospel songs were especially used because they are **popular** with the electorates. Some respondents did not hesitate to establish the fact that other genres of music have been used over the past years and that gospel music cannot be said to be the only kind of music used.

From PR2's perspective and experience:

Well because it is a multi platform you have to adapt to demographics, I mean if you are dealing with 80 and 70 year olds rap music will not work and music may not work at all. And if you look at the voter demographics from the voter register for last elections, 68.23% are in the youth category so you ask yourself how do you deliver a message in the religious context to that population? It is the gospel artistes, Ohemaa Mercy and the rest are very well listened to. Those people are not going to listen to long sermons and so a song like GO HIGH immediately catches on because firstly, there is a religious connotation to it as well as the political connotation. So you have to look at the demographics and then decide on what the best means of addressing the message is (PR2, personal communication, March 2014)

PR1 attempted to answer this from exploring what politicians know of the Ghanaian people:

Politicians the world over try to use what is popular and what can catch on easily and I will admit that we are a religious nation and politicians know that the people want to put the affairs of the state in the hands of people who are god-fearing and who believe in religious values so gospel music is quite a natural tool because of these prevailing conditions in the country and so a lot of political parties employ this.

There have been other genres of music used to be fair not just gospel music. In 2008 the NDC used the secular song "Come Back to me' by Lucky Mensah because it aligned with the message. It delivered the message. They had been in power before, was voted out for eight years and the lyrics of the song were suitable and fit. (PR1, personal communication, March 2014)

Attribution to the religious nature of Ghanaians was made by PR4. PR5 acknowledged this but also pointed out that the songs must be relevant and relatable and in consonance with the candidate's perceived character and values. He makes the argument that although Ghanaians are religious; they can see through deceit and attempts to con them. In his opinion, the songs don't necessarily influence whether one party will win or not.

The church community is very big. By church community, I'm talking about those who go to church and those who are not active church

goers but consider themselves as Christians. It is a very religious community. If there is the large number of Christians then you want to talk to them in a mode that they will understand and the church hymns are very popular in this country. We don't have a state religion but the people are very religious (PR4, personal communication, March 2014)

In 2000 Kufuor had 'Awurade Kasa' as their campaign song and won. In 2008 they tried to use a gospel song which didn't work for them. The NDC adapted the 'Double-double' song. It worked for the NDC and not the NPP even though they also were using gospel. The songs must be relevant and relatable. It must also be in consonance with your character and values. In communication, there is dissonance and people will see through if you're the way you act and the message you're sending across don't match. The NPP branded their candidate as a tough person and the NDC, as a humble person. When they realized that humility worked on the Ghanaian populace they attempted to rebrand their candidate and this didn't work. The NDC played on the differences between Mills and Nana Akuffo Addo. Subconsciously Ghanaians are God-fearing but they cannot be deceived. It all has to do with context. (PR5, personal communication, March 2014)

From the responses of the interviewees it could be inferred that gospel music is considered an effective tool of communicating a party's message in a short period of time. This is generally because the songs are popular and relatable.

It also is as a result of the religious nature of Ghanaian society. It must be noted that the songs used in campaigns are either taken wholly or are modified to fit into popular gospel songs.



Figure 1.0 - Sample CDs made by sympathizers of the NPP. According to the respondent, PR2, there were over 400 CDs delivered to the party such that a special committee had to be created to vet them. In his own words, "We had to set up a special committee headed by the music director of a church to vet them. That is how many CDs we got so we had to create a whole committee of musicians to select the theme songs and in fact even the non-gospel artistes, Daddy Lumba and co, were looking to collaborate to create music to align with the theme. We only paid for the studio to produce. To the artistes we paid nothing."

4.3 - IQ4: Why did religion play such a central role in the 2012 general election campaigns?

On how and why religion played such a prominent role in the 2012 general elections, the common theme that cut across all responses was that **Ghanaian society is very religious. Politics as a whole is more emotional than rational and religion is the most emotive tool that can be used to cut through to the hearts and minds of the electorate.** All of the respondents felt that religion is critical as it is ingrained in the Ghanaian and as such affects value systems and morals and in turn perceptions and how they read into messages. Some shared the belief that in order to be accepted by the people, they need to see you as a representation of themselves. One respondent explained the phenomenon as being as a result of the hypocrisy of Ghanaians with regard to religion.

According to him,

I think that people use religion because Ghanaians are pseudo-religious. Everyone goes to all nights, and have prophets who prophesy to them all of which comes out of our superstitious nature. They want a good job, school, a contract - they will go to pastors to pray for them. There is a pastor who asked the young women who want to get married to buy white gowns to church and they did. As

cynical as politics is, they tap into these things because that is what the people want. (PR3, personal communication, March 2014)

On religion as a tool to get one's message across,

Religiosity finds expression in politics because we are being hypocritical about it. You want religiosity; we will give you a God-fearing man so that you can feel good about yourself that you're voting for a Christian or God-fearing man. What role it has to play with politics which is concerned about the development and well being of the people I'm not sure but someone will quote you a verse from the Bible stating that if your leaders are not God-fearing your country will not prosper. Religion is big. Politics is always exploitative. You're supposed to exploit people's emotions and intellects so that they will vote for you. That is what it is. Same as any program or device by which you want to get peoples' attention. It is always exploitative always exploits their emotions and mind. (PR3, personal communication, March 2014)

PR2 hones in on the relative ease of using religion as a tool in politics given its emotional characteristic and the fact that it is a huge part of the life of many in the country. He also points out the hypocrisy of this factor in the lives of Ghanaians.

Politics largely is emotional rational so therefore when you start talking policies you are appealing to the rational and not the emotion except of course you can emotionalize the policies. If you are approaching

your electorate on the emotional plane, there are two ways of doing this: either by stoking their fears or stoking up their hopes. These are the two key fundamental emotions or pathways that you can play with and religion does both. Ghana tends to be a religious country but as to whether we mean it or not is another thing. If you look at statistics, only 6% of Ghanaians claim that they have no religious affiliations at all so that tells you that a large number of our people claim to have some religious belief. It clearly tells you that in this segment, people have a certain faith which dictates their value and how they accept products and messages. If you have such a small percentage of people who do not have any religious affiliation then it tells you that religion is a powerful pathway of selling a product or sending a message and if the message is not couched in ways that are consistent with religious values, that message will not be accepted.

We have even moved from the sublime to the ridiculous where a famous religious leader is arresting the cedi and when he is criticized people are offended that a man of God is praying for the cedi to stabilize- arresting the cedi- and you are upset. It tells you how dominant religion is on our minds and therefore our values, our attitudes and how we accept things so it becomes the easiest way to deliver a message and to get people to act in ways consistent with how you want them to. That is the fundamental thing. Religion is a powerful tool. (PR2, personal communication, March 2014)

He goes on to cite an example of this influence using a case study involving a religious leader and a member of a rival political party:

The influence of religion over individuals is so fundamental and deep that it becomes the most effective conduit of delivering hope or fear. Adwoa Safo's father is Apostle Safo and when he told his congregants to vote for NPP, in my constituency of Lower Manhyia, the NDC organizer attends his church and he vowed to vote NPP because the apostle said so and he couldn't go against the man of God who is the representative of God on earth. For that election, because the apostle had weighed in, even though he was an NDC member, he voted NPP. That, is the power religion has and if you can tap into that, you go right to the heart of people's core fundamental beliefs (PR2, personal communication, March 2014)

PR3 also explained how religion works as a tool of propagating a party's message. He mentions that going to churches which is one way political parties engage with religion, is more of the exploitation of the groupthink nature of congregations:

Also because of our church going nature and because politics depends on groupthink and also relies on congregating people those are easily places to congregate people. They are a ready audience. You go to one church and there are 5000 people there you can sell your message to so on and so forth and they will listen to you because they think you are a Christian Brother or sister. Getting people together to sell your

message is also another reason why people use religion because you go to a church and ask for permission to sell yourself and you have a ready audience and you don't have to go around telling people to congregate anywhere. There are two aspects of it: painting yourself as a god-fearing person and so by default an honest man or someone with integrity and then using it as a vehicle to spread your message.
(PR3, personal communication, March 2014)

The fourth respondent implied that religion as part of a campaign only seeks to re-assure the electorate of the idea that the candidate acknowledges God. PR1 expressed similar sentiments and stated that Ghanaians like to believe that God chooses the leaders of the country and so including the God-factor in one's campaign doesn't hurt.

You see Ghanaians are religious. In fact in the third world, people tend to be more religious such that before embarking on a trip they put the sign of the cross, upon arrival they thank God. If they fly, the Ghanaians pray and white people don't do that; when they land safely they clap for the pilot and say a word of prayer. It doesn't hurt to let them know that God is central to your campaign and all the parties do it. Mahama will deliberately point to the heavens to show that he recognizes the centrality of God to his campaign and it doesn't hurt. We just assume that because a large number of Ghanaians are religious if you involve your acceptance of God in your campaign in might assure them. (PR4, personal communication, March 2014)



Figure 2.0- Mahama pointing up to the sky on one of his campaign tours.

In the words of P1:

The politics here is a reflection of what the people desire, what the people want so once the people like this kind of politics which uses everyday stuff, what is considered popular and in tandem with the teachings of the religions we abide by it. You have to remember that many Christians believe that it is God who chooses leaders and so no matter what the politicians or the people try to do, in terms of trying

to exercise choice, we believe that it is essentially what God wants that matters the most and that is why you will see billboards with "The Battle is the Lord's" and hear songs like "Awurade Kasa" used in campaigning. There is a heavy dose of playing on emotions and religion is very emotive. It is said that religion is the opium of the masses. (PR1, personal communication, March 2014)

In a spin-off question where PR5 was asked if religion could be taken out of election campaigns in the Ghanaian political terrain, he posited that it cannot be taken out because it is an integral part of the people. However, he had words of caution on how to go about incorporating religion into campaigns:

Then we probably have to campaign in a country where there is no belief in God. God is part of our culture. The average Ghanaian believes in God. You cannot run a campaign from a communications point of view that is not relevant. You are communicating to a group of people within a society and for the communication to be effective you have to take into account the values, the norms, the beliefs and the aspirations of the people otherwise then you will be speaking to robots. So in crafting a campaign strategy, you craft the music, messages, themes, imagery that are relevant to the people. It so happens that religion is one of the very powerful tools that Ghanaians easily identify with and communicate through so in doing a campaign you just have to include religion because it is part of the communication. Within the Ghanaian context, people believe in God and want to see people brought up in God-fearing manner. But as I have said you can't do it in a shambolic

manner as a con. People will see through it and probably punish you for trying to deceive them. (PR5, personal communication, March 2014)

4.4 - IQ5: How was religion used in these campaigns?

As observed in Chapter 2 in the literature review, according to Dovlo (2005), elections are a prime example of the political manipulation of religion, one of two sub-varieties of the relationship between religion and politics. He posits that politicians who are fully aware of the all-encompassing influence of religion on the Ghanaian populace employ various religious forums and sometimes even go to the extent of employing religious leaders to campaign for them in order to win elections. This was evident in PR2's response to how religion is employed in campaigns.

With relation to the message chosen by the NPP,

As mentioned already, religion is a powerful tool that can be used to stoke up fear or hope. We chose the hope angle, "The battle is the Lord's" and the idea is that the battle being the Lord's evokes hope that there is divine deliverance because if you look at Samuel and all the other places in the Bible where the battle of the Lord is mentioned, it is an invocation of hope where the children of God are looking to get out of dire situations, the odds were completely against them they did not believe that they could win the battles themselves. They looked at the enemy and he was daunting and they appealed to the Lord and to their emotive senses and decided that the battle wasn't theirs but the Lord's and in the Ghanaian political context whether we accept it or

not we are in a state of stress, we are in distress and the people have lost hope in their own ability to deliver themselves. They've lost a certain faith in the political system to deliver them the goods that they are looking for. What they have not lost hope in is the deliverance of God. So if a political party goes to say that they will deliver them, it doesn't jive with their expectations. They are expecting some miracle and so if you say the battle is the Lord's and therefore the deliverance the Lord's, it opens up their minds to hear the next line as it is consistent with their expectation of hope and deliverance. (PR2, personal communication, March 2014)



Figure 3.0- NPP Billboard (2012 General Election)

As to how it was presented,

When we were unveiling the theme "The Battle Is the Lord's" it wasn't Nana Addo who did the unveiling. The leadership of the Church of Pentecost did. We assembled 150 reverends, priests and pastors largely from the Pentecost church, Methodist, Presbyterian and Episcopalian churches who gathered at Essipong and they unveiled the theme. (PR2, personal communication, March 2014)

This was in relation to having a credible messenger to carry the message of the party. It also arose according to him out of the church's need and desire to be a part of the politics of the country.

Because the church for a while has been looking for a way to impact the politics of the country and somehow they felt that our politics was going wayward, corruption, greed, indecency and a lot of men of God had come to talk to us I believe both sides, about how the nation was adrift and that all the manifestations of the difficulties we are seeing are really as a result of the nation being adrift, the sins of a nation being visited on us and so the clergy had always been looking for a way to talk into our politics. When we told them what we were thinking, they were the ones who provided us with the specific verses. We described our situation and they picked the verses out of the bible for us. They wanted to be a part of this and we found them more credible than any politician to unveil the theme. Pastors stand in churches and make all kinds of political speeches and so pastors

standing on a political platform and making a religious speech isn't strange (PR2, personal communication, March 2014)

It is evident that there is a certain symbiotic relationship between religion and politics; politicians depend on religion to make them more credible and relatable to the electorate and religious leaders attempt to influence politics so as to influence how perhaps the nation is ran. During election campaign periods, one sees and hears of politicians worshipping at one church or the other, paying homage to the Imam, all in an attempt to carve a certain image of them which the Ghanaian will appreciate.

We did a lot of church visits and anytime we went on campaigns, we devoted Saturdays to SDAs so in the communities we went to if there were any SDA (Seventh Day Adventist) churches we would visit and Sundays were for other churches. (PR2, personal communication, March 2014)

Another thing is that political leaders campaigning make a great show of attending church on Sundays. They go with the cameras- they want to be seen attending church, praying for victory or thanking God for victory and because of that you will see all kinds of prophets who have also waded in making all kinds of prophecy. The religious element in our politics has become strong and to me this is worrying (PR1, personal communication, March 2014)



Fig 4.0 – Mahama kneeling in reverence of God at a national event



Fig 5.0 – Akuffo Addo at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem

(Photo Courtesy: Peace Fm Online)

There seems to be a strong bias towards Christianity through the use of gospel music, the presence of pastors at political events, the picking of quotations from the Bible to be used in selling a message and just generally references to God and Christian religious symbolisms and innuendos in speeches. However, according to PR3, there is great attention paid to the Muslim faith as well as they make up the next largest proportion of the population after Christians.

You will be surprised how for the lack of a better word, we pander to Moslems. We always insist as a party that we must have a running

mate who is Muslim. I have gone to places where the rally isn't going well and I stand up and start reciting a verse from the Qur'an for example, Asalamalekum Jama and then I call out Fathia and start the recital. There is shock at first and they don't follow but then they start to recite with me suddenly as I go on to other Qur'anic verses. People then assume that I am Moslem and when they hear that I am not, they are shocked that I am Christian and know their religion and some of them will vote NPP because of the attempt made. So there is that. They embrace you because you've embraced their religion. On Fridays we go to the mosque with them for Juma prayers and seeing as they appreciate it more when you learn about their religion, usually, there is no need to say anymore. (PR2, personal communication, March 2014)



Fig 6.0 – Akuffo Addo with National Imam Sheikh Nuhu Shaributu

One other way that religion is incorporated into the politics of the country is the trend of having the running mate be at least from the Northern part of Ghana which comes with the presumption that he can relate better to Muslims or having a Muslim in the position in an attempt make the party more representative of the electorate. Even then the Christian presence and influence is strong in the making of this decision. Being more organized and having a larger following, the sentiments of these groups are taken into account.

If you look at the dynamics, it is difficult to have a Muslim candidate as president because all my surveys among the Christian communities show that they are adamant against it and they are the overwhelming majority. Moslems are 17% of the population and the Christians especially Pentecostals are so vehemently against it. Take someone like Bawumia, fine material but you try to get Bawumia as our presidential candidate and the Christian community will move against you. A particular group made such strong protestation against Bawumia as running mate - even as running mate. I had to go and meet them I told them that we do this for the unity of the nation not because we want to sell out the nation to Muslims; they are part of the country. 17% of our population and for the unity of this country every segment must see themselves in the mosaic. Rawlings did it without Moslems but you see Northerners and Moslems take Rawlings as their own for whatever reason so he represented them. So you get all these signals and you have to pay attention to it. Development Economics

stipulates that you cannot grow faster than your sociology and you cannot ignore all the complaints and anxieties and say you will buck the trends. You have to pay attention to all of these because politics is about timing the moment so the time might come when the trends will change and that might become possible but you cannot impose it.
(PR2, personal communication, March 2014)

4.5 - IQ6: Does the use of religion influence voter choice?

Seeing how the respondents all highlighted the importance of religion in the country's make up, one could attempt to deduce then that religion would influence the electorates' choices. This however was not the case. It was quite **unclear** according to the respondents whether this was the case.

Well that is a subject of enquiry that people like you should explore, talk to people about it. We haven't had a chance to evaluate it. But like every advertising campaign, half of it is wasted and half of it works so you throw everything in there because the electorate is quite diverse. (PR5, personal communication, March 2014)

It is very difficult in our circumstances to get accurate data of voter choice. Somehow people are very reluctant to talk about it and it is not in our history and tradition to have that but there are proxies by which we measure these. One is whether religious leaders have an affinity towards your party. If you can assemble 150 priests and pastors in one place to showcase your message and your party and your leader, well that is a proxy of acceptance. We had churches call and invite us;

as campaign manager they would call me and say we hear you will be in our community on this day can you make sure you are there on Sunday so you can be in the church, so that is an indicator of acceptance. As to whether members of the church will vote for the NPP that is difficult to tell because people are not very open. The ability to attract religious leaders, clergy and gospel artistes to our platforms and to do things for us is a proxy of acceptance. (PR2, personal communication, March 2014)

It is uncertain thus whether or not the effort put into building an image that resonates with the electorate (being religious) succeeds in drawing people to vote for one party over another. But the parties insist on using that strategy, for reasons which are raised in the next set of responses.

4.6 - IQ7: If religion is taken out of election campaigns, will the outcomes be different?

Asked whether the outcomes of elections would be different should religion be taken out, the responses ranged from outcomes not being much different to they being very different to some respondents not even being able to grasp the idea, only stating that “we will get there”. PR3 was quite confident that if the playing field was level with no party being able to leverage the religion card, not much of a difference would be made. The prevailing theme however was that **religion is too important to be taken out.**

If nobody is using them (religious innuendos, symbolisms) then it won't matter. It'll level the playing field. No one would be able to say that this group is more Christian so I'll vote for them. No religious

choice. If some do and others don't well, I could see people, those who are devoutly religious, saying that this party uses gospel and brings in pastors so they're Christian and I'll vote for them. Then again, like I've said, most people vote more emotionally than in terms of what is on the ground. And the most emotionally charged things include religion, tribe, race and sexual orientation (PR3, personal communication, March 2014)

PR2's views contradicted those of PR3.

Extremely different because now there will be no core values upon which to hang a message and upon which people will bond their values if you will. The audience out there finds an affinity in the religion. If you took religion out you are taking a central 94% of the people's fundamental values out and if you disturb an equation by 94% of these variables, you have no equation so religion is essential to our politics. If you take religion out you only have chieftaincy which comes a distant second because it is the embodiment of our traditional and secular values. One can identify themselves better as a Ga for example than as a Ghanaian. It is because right from birth, all the nurturing and acculturation processes you go through that has given you your identity has been the Ga values, naming ceremony, Homowo. Ghana as an entity has not nurtured anybody and therefore our affinities and prime loyalties are to our tribes and those prime values are enshrined in our chieftaincy and that is why our politics also tends to be tribal.

There is no overarching value system beyond religion and tribe that is given the individual to form and shape their identity. Religion is overwhelming and it cuts across pretty much whereas chieftaincy is localized. You can have a Protestant, Presbyterian here but at the end of the day it is about the same thing. Even in Islam at the end of the day it is about the divine- about God -and therefore when you come to the bottom of it they will subscribe to the same thing. (PR2, personal communication, March 2014)

The short, curt answer from PR1:

We will get to that point. It is gradual but eventually we will get there where will not see a lot of religiosity (PR1, personal communication, March 2014)

PR4 and PR5 put forward the idea that religion will not be taken out of the political campaign rubric anytime soon and make the case that it is not exploitative at all, instead , just a way of showing the electorates that there is some commonality between them.

Religion is here to stay and it will even grow stronger. The Christian community is large so it helps to know that the person who wants their vote has their bent, they will feel more comfortable. Because it has to do with integrity because like it or not we associate morality with religiosity. We're not living in a mechanical world. (PR4, personal communication, March 2014)

Religion is part of our life and until we all die maybe. Look at the USA they are very religious, they have a national day of prayer, look at their currency IN GOD WE TRUST , the world's largest democracy, they are developed but they are still religious (PR5, personal communication, March 2014)

The latter part of PR5's answer was in relation to a follow up question asked as to whether as Ghana develops, would the religious element of politics become less important in the discourse.

It can be inferred from the answers given that not only do politicians think that religion as part of the politics is important and so can change the results and the terrain of politics in the country, there also is the belief that it is here to stay and will remain a part of the discourse for as long as Ghanaians remain religious. Literacy rates and the development of the democracy here in Ghana will do nothing to change the religious aspect of campaigns. With respect to the secularity of the state being undermined given the heavy influence of religion, all respondents answered in the negative stating in a variety of ways that secularity does not mean the strict sense of separation of state and religion especially in the Ghanaian context where religion is a part of the culture of the people which shapes their expectations, values and morals, religion cannot be absolutely separated from state.

PR3 points out that in a country where the government supports the pilgrimage to Mecca of Muslims, there really can never be total separation of

state from religion. He also makes the case for appealing to the personal sentiments of people to vote for a party.

This business of separation is a very difficult proposition but it could not possibly mean that the state itself cannot be seen as unable to tolerate religion. It simply comes down to the state not preferring one religion over another. Again even if there were a strict separation of church and state such that the state could never ever get involved in any religious matters, that is State programs can't have prayers, it does not mean that in our private capacities our zeal for religion cannot be used as a political tool. The politicians will say that vote for this man because he is Akan in the case where they figure that majority of the population about 55% are Akans; if they can do this, then why can't they say vote for this man because he is Christian seeing as Christians make up the majority of the population which has nothing to do with the church and state. It is just appealing to the private sentiments of the people. It cannot be said to undermine the secularity of the country. In a country where the state sponsors pilgrimages to Mecca, there isn't much of a separation of church and state. I am quite sure that should it be taken to the Supreme Court it will be upheld as not unconstitutional because that's the way we are. Of course, it is so because the government of Saudi Arabia does not deal with any other group than the state thanks to their strict immigrations rule. The courts will most probably state that simply because the state is assisting people to go to Mecca, it does not mean

that it is placing more importance on Islam as a religion or making it a state religion (PR3, personal communication, March 2014)

All five respondents place emphasis on the focus being more of avoiding the imposition of one factor over the other.

4.7 - IQ 8: Could an atheist ever become president of Ghana?

This was the final question asked the respondents. Primarily asked in an attempt to measure and gauge the influence of religion on the political psyche of Ghanaian society. The views on this subject matter were mixed with some respondents suggesting that it could never be possible and others stating that it hinged on factors such as change and tolerance.

No. what do you mean? That will we ever consider not involving God and Christianity in our campaign? What do you mean atheist? No, no! How can anyone come out and say they don't believe in God? Can you do that? How can you do that? Even the assembly man, the church will invite you and can you say you don't believe in God? It will be the height of folly. People are comfortable when they know that God is in your life. We tend to equate religion with morality. So please never go and say anywhere that you're an atheist. I mean what do you gain from it? (PR4, personal communication, March 2014)

In this country? No. Not ever. If you look at the numbers, atheists make up 6% of the population and if you are an avowed atheist I don't see it happening. Even Nana Addo who doesn't wear his religion on his sleeve, the Christian Community found it difficult to accept him in

2008 because his speeches were not littered with God. Atta Mills understood the political psyche of Ghanaians that being avowedly religious he could sprinkle his speeches with God and the rest. Listen to his speeches from 2000 to 2007 you don't hear a mention of God. But when it came to the 2008 elections, Nana Addo wasn't talking about God so he capitalized on that and decided to incorporate God into everything. I mean if you asked him to drop on his knees in the middle of a street and pray he would do it. So the Ghanaian political psychology will not accept an atheist given the numbers we have now. If in another 100 years, another 1000years or whatever we move from being a religious nation to an atheist nation then the tides would change and it would be impossible for a religious person whether Christian or Muslim to become head of state because the numbers would have reversed. Anybody who tries to mobilize through religion will lose. (PR2, personal communication, March 2014)

Contrary to the two respondents above, the other three believe that it is possible to have an atheist in Ghana albeit not anytime soon.

We will get there nobody believed that America could have a black president but tolerance rose to a certain level that allowed it. So I believe that as people get to understand democracy, it will happen and Ghanaians generally are tolerant people. We have had MPs being elected in constituencies where they do not hail from. Even I, who just hails from my constituency; I'm not fluent in the language, not born

there, opponents tried to use that against me but the people just wanted someone who could do the job. This is a people who also elected Hilla Liman and Mahama when nobody thought it was possible. Next stage perhaps is to see if people from other religions can be elected as president. All presidents have been Christian. I believe that we are getting there. Nothing is impossible in Politics. Obama came at the right time. There are many factors involved. Prevailing circumstances play a key role. You always have to consider these; issues, economy, what message are they looking for what kind of leader are they looking for? If politicians come to appreciate that the electorates are looking for people with a certain background and reputation and if they show them that they want to make a difference in their lives, religion won't matter. (PR1, personal communication March 2014)

It is possible. It depends on how it is communicated. There's a difference between one not being able to relate through one's experiences but having respect for other peoples beliefs, that shows a certain respect for others. If he has a proven track record, has morality, not a closeted homosexual because a homosexual will never rule the country and is not anti-God, maybe in ten-fifteen years down the line, if he is seen as tolerant, it is possible. You see Ghanaians are very conscious of their morality. There is a difference between not believing in God and being anti-God. A president is a representative of the people. He must fulfill the aspirations of the people and people

must be able to identify with him. Now if 70% of the populace is Christian or Muslim and you say you don't believe in the God why should they give you their vote when there is another candidate that believes in their God? Especially if they have to choose between two people of the same qualities where one believes in God and the other doesn't. It is very likely that they will choose the one who believes in God because they see that person as reflecting their values and aspirations. Again, you don't vote for a robot, you vote for a person. (PR5, personal communication, March 2014)

PR3 shares this idea and thinks that it hinges on the level of tolerance that the Ghanaian people will cultivate over time.

Oh yes, that could happen depending on the other qualities that that person has. It will also depend on the level of religious tolerance that we have developed over the fifty years. People could come to believe that religion is a deeply personal choice and therefore no one can force you to conform. It's the same way that some Voltarians will vote for an Ashanti. So we have come to that point where tribe doesn't matter. In the next ten years however should anyone stand up and say they don't believe in God they won't win. (PR3, personal communication, March 2014)

He goes further to explain that religion wasn't the focus of religion until the late Atta Mills managed to explore this option.

Before Atta Mills, there really wasn't a focus on religion however with him being religious became associated with humility and service orientation and the religious community helped get him into power. This opened up a whole new area post-Mills to be explored. And look, if people don't understand the issues they tend to make emotive choices (PR3, personal communication, March 2014)

The common theme from the above responses demonstrates that **the God-factor is crucial** and even in not believing, one must show a certain level of respect for religion and the belief systems of the electorates. Many don't believe this will happen soon however and so it is unlikely that political campaign strategies will change anytime soon. For as long as religion remains a major issue and the best and most effective method of communication with the Ghanaian populace, the use of religious innuendos, symbolism and in attempt to create the desired political image will be at the fore as posited by Cwalina & Falkwoski (2008) in the literature review in chapter 2.

CHAPTER 5- CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATION AND FURTHER STUDY

5.0 - Conclusion

Elections can be likened to a battle where each political party involved employs tactics and strategies that will help them win the battle – in essence, be voted into power. From the findings and analysis, it can be concluded that in Ghana where religion is at the core of the society, political parties will have to find a way to incorporate it, which they do in many ways into their campaign strategies to have a shot at winning the presidency. Politics is emotive and involves the exploitation of hopes, values, and expectations of a people to believe that their needs and desires can be satisfied by one party. Religion tends to be the most effective tool used to exploit these factors seeing as they are informed by religion itself. In essence, the increasing focus on religion by politicians more so since 2008 is as a result of the strong relationship that Ghanaians have with their respective religions. Although this has been the case for a while there is now a deliberate attempt to incorporate this into campaigns for more effective results.

Thus, in order to win elections in Ghana, any political party must seek to win over the electorates hearts first and then minds. Some respondents mentioned that the politics in Ghana is not one of ideas, policies and ideologies and that as a matter of fact, according to election results, spoiled ballots accounted for more of the votes, coming in third after NDC and NPP in the last election in stark contrast to those parties whose candidates excelled at the IEA Debates (Acheampong, 2013). This could be accounted for by the

fact there are low literacy rates and even those who tend to be educated place religion above all else.

Of course there are other factors that affect or influence voter choice such as economic situations and so religion on its own cannot influence voter choice. However, religion has the strongest effect as it is emotive and connected to the core principles and beliefs of the electorates.

How is religion used? Representatives of political parties visit churches and mosques and even go to the extent of praying with the various factions to show a certain connection to the people. Religious leaders are approached as well and serve as a bridge to connect their congregants and the politicians. Seen as representatives of God on earth, their opinions hold sway in matters such as choosing leaders for a people. Music - gospel music especially is employed in campaign efforts thanks to their popularity and the ability of Ghanaians to relate to the songs. There have been prayer festivals organized by political parties and National prayer groups approached in the selection of presidential and running mate candidates. All efforts are made to make candidates appeal to the electorates by molding them in ways that reflect the values and morals of the people. Billboards with religious inscriptions and symbolisms are put up all over the country as well.

It is unclear as to whether voters are influenced by religion in making their choices. What is however evident is that should religion be taken out of the political discourse, respondents feel that there will be no common ground to get all electorates' attention as religion is a unifying factor for most

Ghanaians. Also the large number of people who claim they are religious will be exempt from the equation. This will make it more difficult for political parties to reach their audience.

In response to whether an atheist can become president, most respondents doubted that it will happen anytime soon because of the social demographics now. The probability of it happening is however not disputed, except that it is slim to none.

In summation, religion is a major driving tool used to capture the attention of electorates and has proven effective at least in the last two elections and will be continued to be used. Politicians find ways to connect to their electorates and sell their agenda to them by incorporating the peoples' belief systems.

5.1 - RECOMMENDATIONS

Any politician who would like to compete for a seat in government as per my research findings must have knowledge of the social dynamics of the Ghanaian society and people and must incorporate these elements into their strategies to have any chance at all of winning the competition.

To try and buck the trends might backfire and cost you the votes of the electorates. They must see themselves in the politician, thus, if the people under question are religious (being the subject focus of my thesis), one must brand him or herself consistent with the values that represent those of the people they seek to govern. Religion is an integral part of the social construct and must be paid attention to.

5.2 - FURTHER STUDY

Attempting to find literature to serve as a basis for this research in the Ghanaian context was difficult with very little work done on the relationship between religion and voting patterns of Ghanaians. I propose that further research should be conducted on this area. Suggested research questions include:

- To what extent does one's religious affiliation influence voter choice?
- How does religious branding by political parties affect voter patterns?

APPENDIX

INTERVIEW GUIDELINE:

If you had to describe in your own words what an election campaign is, what would you describe it as?

What to you are the essentials of a campaign? What makes a campaign, a campaign?

Every campaign must have an endpoint, a goal. In an election campaign, the goal is obviously to get the presidential candidate voted for by the people. They have to love him and buy into the brand. He/she is the embodiment of the political party.

What goes into the selection of a presidential candidate? Which factors are looked at and which are the most critical?

There is a trend of using music during campaigns. More often than not it's either formatted to fit into a gospel song or it is made by a gospel artiste. Classic example: Cindy Thompson in 2000 *Awurade Kasa* for the NPP, Prophet Seth Frimpong's *Mehuri So* in 2004 by the NPP. *Taka Tika* by Michael Adangba 2012 for NDC used in the campaign rally before the president spoke at any rally. There were elements of religion where God was mentioned, Mills' humility transferring on to Mahama.

Talk about music being influential and ask why gospel music.

There was an NPP prayer festival themed Jericho shall fall where Cindy Thompson among other gospel artistes performed. There were prayers said among other religious activities. Nana Addo going to Jerusalem pictures came out showing him at the Wailing Wall praying.

And then there were the rumors of President Mills turning the seat of government into a prayer den.

Ghana is not a religious state. It is secular so why so much focus on religion and using religious innuendos and symbolisms? Does that not undermine the secularity of the state?

President Mills went as far as saying that God is the president of the country. Mahama during rallies and on billboards would be seen pointing his index finger up to the sky denoting that God will make him victorious. Mills and Mahama (Mills' religiosity rubbing off). And then there was the putting up of Billboards by the NPP stating boldly that The Battle is the Lord's.

Is this deliberate? What is this strategy informed by?

Does it have any impact of voter choice in your opinion? Positive or negative?

Presidential candidates are given 'terms of endearment' such as 'Asomdwehene' (Mills), 'Ahobrɛaseɛhene' (Mahama), 'Nimdiɛfoɔ' (Akuffo Addo) These are very subtle but obviously are important

Why is this element so important? If it were taken out would outcomes be different?

Should an atheist stand for elections, would they have a chance?

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