



Ghana

Ghana: Introduction

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Chart 1: Political map of Ghana



Chart 1 is a political map of Ghana.

Ghana is one of the lower-middle-income countries in Africa. It is located in West Africa along the Gulf of Guinea, bordering Burkina Faso in the north, Côte d'Ivoire in the west and Togo in the east, all of which are members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The national capital, Accra, is located in the Greater Accra Region of southern Ghana. The country has a total area of 238 535 km² and a tropical climate with two major seasons consisting of a rainy season and a dry season. Ghana is divided into six ecological zones, namely: Sudan savannah, Guinea savannah, Coastal savannah, forest/savannah transitional zone, deciduous forest zone, and the rain forest zone. Ghana has abundant natural resources such as gold, bauxite, diamonds, timber, manganese and oil, and it is the second-largest producer of cocoa in the world. The country is divided into 16 administrative regions, after a 2019 referendum which increased the number from 10 to 16, consisting of 261 districts.

Since Ghana gained independence from the British in 1957, it has oscillated between military rule and democratic governance, experiencing four successful military coups and numerous attempted coups. After independence, Kwame Nkrumah who led the country to attain independence assumed the role of Prime Minister on the ticket of his party, the Convention People's Party while the Queen of England remained the Head of State. Three years after that, the country officially became a republican state in 1960, which made Kwame Nkrumah both the head of state and the head of government. Nkrumah's rule as president only lasted for 6 years after he was overthrown in a military coup on 24 February

1966 leading to the truncation of the First Republic. This coup was led by military officers Colonel E.K. Kotoka, Major A.A. Afrifa, Lieutenant General (retired) J.A. Ankrah, and Police Inspector General J.W.K. Harlley. Following the coup, the National Liberation Council (NLC), the resulting military junta, assumed control of the country with Joseph Ankrah as the President of Ghana.

The NLC ruled for three years and facilitated a transition to democratic rule through the August 1969 general elections. The Progress Party (PP) won the elections establishing the Second Republic with its leader Kofi Abrefa Busia as the prime minister and Edward Akufo Addo as president. On 13 January 1972, the PP government was overthrown in a military coup led by Colonel Ignatius Kutu Acheampong. Following the coup, the newly established National Redemption Council (NRC) assumed control of Ghana, with Colonel Acheampong appointed as both the head of state and the head of the NRC. By 1975, the NRC was transformed into the Supreme Military Council (SMC), and the palace coup in July 1978 replaced General Acheampong with General F.W.K. Akuffo as the leader of the SMC. On 4 June 1979, an uprising by young military officers overthrew the SMC and established the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) with Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings as its leader.

The AFRC supervised the 1979 general election which was won by the People's National Party (PNP) establishing the Third Republic with its leader Hillia Limann as President. The reign of Limann was cut short when on 31 December 1981 his administration was overthrown in a military coup led by Flight Lieutenant Rawling who had earlier relinquished power to him. After the coup, Rawlings established the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) with himself as the Chairman marking the beginning of the longest military rule in the country. By 1991, Rawlings agreed to implement a new constitution and hold elections.

A new constitution was enacted in 1992, introducing multiparty democracy and general elections to establish the Fourth Republic thereby returning the country to constitutional rule in 1993. Since the 1992 election, the country has fully embraced liberal multiparty democracy and has successfully organised eight successive presidential and parliamentary elections every four years. These elections have led to the alternation of power between the two dominant political parties in the country, that is, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) – a feat which has been highly acclaimed both locally and globally. So far, Ghana has had five presidents under this republic, namely, Jerry John Rawlings of NDC (1993-2000), John Agyekum Kuffour of NPP (2001-2008), John Evans Atta-Mills of NDC (2009-2012)^[1], John Dramani Mahama of NDC (2012-2016), and Nana Addo Danquah Akuffo-Addo of NPP (2017-2024). This has made the Fourth Republic the most enduring, longest and stable republic in the country's history. Since 1992, the party that wins the presidential elections also wins majority in parliament with the only exception occurring during the 2020 general elections. For the first time, both the NDC and NPP secured 137 members of parliament each with one independent candidate leading to a hung or split parliament. Ghana is scheduled to organise another presidential and parliamentary on 7th December 2024 to choose a leader that will replace the incumbent President Akuffo Addo whose tenure will expire on 6 January 2025. The two leading candidates are the main opposition NDC's candidate, former president John Dramani Mahama, and Mahamudu Bawumia, vice president and candidate for the governing NPP.

Endnotes

1. who died in office on July 2012 before completing his tenure in January 2013.

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Mr Enoch Randy Aikins joined the AFI in May 2021. Before that, Enoch was a research and programmes officer at the Institute for Democratic Governance in Accra. He also worked as a research assistant (economic division) with the Institute for Statistical Social and Economic Research at the University of Ghana. Enoch's interests include African politics and governance, economic development, public sector reform, poverty and inequality. He has an MPhil in economics from the University of Ghana, Legon.

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