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2013

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BUILDING NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURES FOR PEACE IN AFRICA: UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF THE NATIONAL PEACE COUNCIL IN GHANA

Emmanuel Wekem Kotia and Festus Kofi Aubyn

ABSTRACT

In this article, we provide an analysis of Ghana's infrastructures for peace using the National Peace Council (NPC) as a case study. The article focuses on the composition, structures, tasks, achievements and challenges of the NPC. It argues that the NPC has made significant contributions in preventing and managing acts of violence that could have plunge Ghana into conflict. Its unique roles during the 2012 elections in Ghana are a testament to this assertion. Although some forms of violence did occur during the elections, our argument is that the violence would have become far worse if the NPC had not existed. Two key factors explain why the NPC was relatively successful in this regard. The first is its national mandate, independence and adoption of a bi-partisan approach in dealing with violence which has enhanced its credibility, legitimacy and sustainability. The second is the calibre of the members of the NPC who are not only respected and trusted but have the competence, knowledge and experience in matters relating to peaceful conflict resolution. These are some of the exceptional characteristics that underpin the relative accomplishments of the NPC which other Africa countries can emulate in establishing their architecture for peace.

Introduction

ALTHOUGH MANY COUNTRIES IN AFRICA FACE VARIOUS FORMS of conflict and violence, they do not have the capacities and structures to adequately deal with them. In countries where these structures even exist, they often failed to prevent or resolve conflicts because of their polarization along political, religious and ethnic divides. Consequently, the establishment of national infrastructures for peace has emerged during the past decades as one of the major strategic frameworks adopted by states to overcome this conundrum. Paul Van Tongeren defines an infrastructure for peace as a *'dynamic network of interdependent structures, mechanisms, resources, values and skills which, through dialogue and consultation, contribute to conflict prevention and peacebuilding in a society'*.¹ The model according to Lederach emphasizes a multi-track approach and a multi-stakeholder involvement in peacebuilding that ensures that issues are addressed at different levels of society.²

In Africa, Ghana is at the moment one of the few countries that has a well developed national infrastructure for peace. Specifically, the National Peace Council (NPC), which is the umbrella title for Ghana's infrastructure for peace is currently the first official national level architecture for peacebuilding in Africa.³ Since its establishment in 2006, the NPC has

¹Paul Van Tongeren, 'Increasing interest in infrastructures for peace' *Journal of Conflictology*, Vol. 2, (2011), pp. 45-55.

²John Paul Lederach, *Building peace: sustainable reconciliation in divided societies*, (United States Institute of Peace, Washington, 1997), pp.112-127

³ Tongeren, Increasing interest in infrastructures for peace, pp. 45-55; Chetan Kumar, 'UN assistance for internally negotiated solutions to violent conflict' in Susan Allen Nan,

made significant contributions towards national peace and stability. Yet, little is known about its mandate, functions and modus-operandi both internally and globally. This knowledge gap is due in part to the dearth of literatures and the fact that the NPC itself is new and still evolving its structures and mechanisms. More worrying is the fact that even at the local level the role of the council is always confused with that of other key state institutions such as the national security council and the security agencies especially the police whenever there is any conflict. This article seeks to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of the NPC focusing on its composition and structures, functions, achievements and some of its present challenges. We argue that the NPC has inimitably contributed significantly towards national peace and stability through conflict resolution approaches that are not only proactive and participatory but inclusive, transformative and non-violent. An attestation to this is the unique roles played by the council in diffusing and preventing violence before, during and after the 2012 parliamentary and presidential elections in Ghana. Although some forms of violence did occur during the election, our argument is that the violence would have escalated and become far worse if the NPC had not existed.

The article proceeds in six sections. The first section provides a brief review of the academic literatures on infrastructures for peace. This is followed by a discussion of the security milieu within which the NPC operates in Ghana, and the historical trajectory leading to its formation. The significance of this discussion is to show the value of the NPC's work within the overall context of the national security architecture of Ghana. The composition, structures and functions of the council are provided in the subsequent section. The fourth and fifth sections examine the factors behind the NPC's relative success and some of its

Zachariah C. Mampilly and Andrea Bartoli (eds.), *Peacemaking: from practice to theory* (Praeger, New York, 2011), pp. 384-399.

achievements using the 2012 elections in Ghana as a case study. The last section discusses some of the challenges facing the NPC and concludes with some practical proposals on how to make work of the NPC more effective and efficient.

Review of the Literature

There are few studies on national infrastructures for peace because the concept itself is relatively new. However, a general review of the literatures reveals the following features: they are dominated by conceptual issues, the objectives and the main components of a peace infrastructure, and some brief country case studies of infrastructures for peace. The review in this section will focus primarily on these strands of literatures.

There is no universally accepted definition of an infrastructure for peace. In view of this, most of the definitions given by scholars are based on their backgrounds, work experiences and knowledge. Several authors used diverse names such as *peace and dialogue structures*, *peace support structures*, and *architecture for peace* to describe an infrastructure. Lederach first introduced the concept in his book *Building peace: sustainable reconciliation in divided societies in 1997*.⁴ He conceptualized it as basically consisting of a functional network that spans across the divisions and levels of society which ensures optimum collaboration between the main stakeholders in the resolution of conflicts with minimal external contribution.⁵ It conveys the idea of linking and galvanising a wide array of resources within

⁴ Lederach, *Building peace*, pp. 112-127

⁵ Ibid

a society to enable the prevention of violence and the building of peace.⁶ The concept mirrors the peacebuilding and conflict transformation paradigm that aims to transform negative destructive conflict into positive constructive conflict. It focuses on the structural, behavioural and attitudinal aspects of conflict and the rebuilding of relationships between conflict parties and the constructive changes in attitudes.

The creation of an infrastructure for peace according to Kumar is to allow societies and their governments to resolve conflicts internally and with local indigenous skills, institutions and resources without any intervention by external actors.⁷ Similarly, Odendaal also argues that the objective is to mobilize the internal capacity of a nation to build peace.⁸ That is to say that it strengthens a nation's self-reliance and confidence in its ability to deal with its own conflict which results in a strong sense of local ownership of the peace process. The former UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, also posited that the aim is to allow societies and their governments to resolve conflicts internally and with their own skills, institutions and resources.⁹ Although the components of an infrastructure for peace are not universal in scope, it is usually determined by a country's socio-political context as the experiences of conflict differ from country to country. But in general terms, the following components have been identified by Kut George, Andries Odendaal and Paul Van Tongeren – a national,

⁶ Andries Odendaal, 'The political legitimacy of national peace committees', *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 7:3, (2012), pp. 40-53.

⁷ Kumar, 'UN assistance for internally negotiated solutions'

⁸ Odendaal, *The Political Legitimacy*, p.41

⁹ UN General Assembly, 'progress report on the prevention of armed conflict', http://www.undp.org/cpr/documents/prevention/build_national/N0639322.pdf (12 January 2014)

regional and local peace councils; national peace forums, government unit on peacebuilding; bill on infrastructure for peace; peace education; building national capacities for peace; and the promotion of a shared vision of society and a culture of peace.¹⁰ While these components represent possible pillars of an infrastructure for peace, they are by no means mutually exclusive because infrastructure for peace might take different forms depending on the context of the country.

Several case studies of infrastructure for peace in Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Nepal, Philippines, and Nicaragua have been documented in the works of scholars such as Tongeren, Kumar, Hopp-Nishanka and Odendaal.¹¹ However, most of these studies are not in-depth. More significantly, in all these studies however, four basic characteristics distinguished the various country-level infrastructures. First, varieties of names are used as an umbrella title for infrastructure for peace. These include names such as local peace committees (South Africa)¹², local peace council (Nepal), national peace council (NPC), national peace commission (Kenya and Nicaragua), and high peace council (Afghanistan).

¹⁰ Kut George “Kenya: towards the national policy on peace building and conflict management” in Paul Van Tongeren and Christine Van Empel (ed.), *Joint action for prevention: civil society and government cooperation on conflict prevention and peacebuilding*, European Centre for Conflict Prevention, The Hague, 2007.; Tongeren, ,Infrastructure for peace, ; Andries Odendaal, ‘An architecture for building peace at local level: A comparative study of the use of local peace forums,’ discussion paper, UNDP-BCPR.

¹¹ Ibid; Ulrike Hopp-Nishanka, ‘Giving peace an address? reflections on the potential and challenges of creating peace infrastructures’ *Berghof Handbook Dialogue Series* No. 10 (2012)

¹² South Africa’s local peace committees only operated from 1991-1994.

Second, whilst some of the peace infrastructures have formal state recognition through either a national peace accord or legislation, others are informal, thus established by civil society without formal state recognition.¹³ For example, while the peace infrastructure in Ghana is backed by a legislative instrument that of Kenya was initially informal (it was formed by civil society) but it was later adopted by the state. Nevertheless, whether it is formal or informal, both have their own strengths and weaknesses. For instance, when the peace infrastructure is formal, it gives it access to engagement with government and political leaders at the highest level which is sometimes impossible when it is informal.¹⁴ Conversely, informality also means that the peace infrastructures are less indebted to political interferences, which is a major challenge with regards to formal peace structures.¹⁵

Thirdly, whilst some of the peace infrastructures only exist at the local level, others exist at the local or district, regional or provincial and national levels with varying links to formal government structures. Nepal for instance has local peace councils which are closely linked to its ministry of peace and reconstruction.¹⁶ But, this is not the case with respect to the peace infrastructures in Ghana, Kenya and Nicaragua which exists at the national, regional and local levels.

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Andries Odendaal, 'An architecture for building peace,

¹⁵ Andries Odendaal and Chris Spies, 'You have opened the wound, but not healed it- the local peace committees of the Western Cape, South Africa', *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 3 (3), (1997).

¹⁶ Tongeren, 'Infrastructures for peace'

The last feature which is perhaps the most distinguishing characteristics of all the country-level peace infrastructures is their mandates, principles, structures and composition. In Kenya, the mission of the national peace commission is to promote sustainable peace through a collaborative institutional framework between state and non-state actors.¹⁷ It comprises 13 commissioners including representatives from each province, women, academia, youth, civil society, and persons with disabilities. In South Africa however, the mandate of the local peace committees (LPCs) was to create trust among community leaders, police, and the army; and resolve disputes that could lead to public violence. With respect to its composition, the LPCs consisted of representatives of all signatories to the national peace accord, civil society, religious organisations, trade unions, business and industry and traditional authorities. The police, army and some relevant government ministries were also included. Though some similarities exist, the mandate, composition and structures of the South African and Kenyan infrastructures differ from that of Ghana. Unlike the Kenyan and South African peace infrastructures, the mandate of Ghana's NPC is to foster national cohesion through peacebuilding and to provide mechanisms through which Ghanaians can seek peaceful, non-violent resolution of conflicts.¹⁸ In terms of composition and structure, Ghana's infrastructure does not specifically include trade unions, business and industry, youth, people with disability and gender representation as the case of Kenya and South Africa. Additionally, there are no representatives of the security agencies and government ministries. Ghana's infrastructure rather includes specific number of representatives from Christian bodies, Muslim bodies, traditional bodies, identifiable groups and two nominees by the president. A unique aspect of the composition is the specific term limits given to members

¹⁷ Tongeren, Infrastructure for peace,

¹⁸ The Ghana National Peace Council Act 818, Articles 2, 3, 11 and 14

of the council, how the members are nominated and how the chairperson of the council is chosen. Indeed, this particular feature is at variance with other peace infrastructures elsewhere where both the government nominate the chair and all members of the peace councils. Or where all parties in a conflict and civil society organisations are automatic members of the peace infrastructure without any term limits.

While the relevance of the existing literature on infrastructure for peace in general is incontestable, they often overlook the essential dynamics of Ghana's peace infrastructure. Besides, none of the existing studies have discussed Ghana's infrastructure for peace in-depth or in a more holistic fashion. This lacuna in the literatures forms the basis of this article.

The Domestic Security Context and the Importance of the NPC's Work

Ghana is currently perceived to be one of the most peaceful and stable democratic countries in Africa. Nonetheless, there are myriads of debilitating and often violent inter and intra-community conflicts, that threatens the stability of the country. Particularly, since the past two decades, several parts of the country have been plagued by complex conflicts. The roots of these conflicts are diverse with causes ranging from legacies of colonialism, poor governance and economic marginalization to ethnicity, religious differences, chieftaincy and land disputes.¹⁹ Some examples of these conflicts include: the ethnic conflicts between the Nanumba's and Konkombas; Konkombas against the Gonjas, Dagombas and Nanumbas in the northern part of Ghana, the Nkonya-Alavanyo land conflict, the Tsito-Peki land dispute and

¹⁹ Stephen B Kendie, Kweku A. Boakye, Emmanuel Mensah, Patrick Osei-Kuffour and Kwadwo Addo Tuffour, 'Mapping conflict zones in Ghana: an exploratory study of northern Ghana' (Background study for the national peace council of Ghana, 2013).

the rival Moslem conflict at Kete Krachi in the volta region of Ghana.²⁰ Others include chieftaincy conflicts in Dagbon between the Abudus and the Andanis; the Bawku chieftaincy conflict between the Mamprussi and Kusasis; the Anloga Chieftaincy dispute and chieftaincy disputes in the Ga-Adangbe area in the Greater-Accra region, Winneba in the central region and Gushiegu, Buipe, Bimbilla and Kpandi in the northern region of Ghana.²¹ In terms of the geographical spread, the examples above clearly point to the fact that the northern part of Ghana where strong perceptions of economic and political marginalization exist has the substantial share of conflicts in contemporary times compared to the more prosperous south. Increasingly, the complex nature of these ethnic, land and chieftaincy disputes coupled with the introduction of external elements such as political interference has made their management and resolution very difficult and challenging.²² For example, most of the conflicts in the north such as the Dagbon and Bawku conflicts have taken political dimensions with the two major political parties in Ghana, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) aligning themselves to certain factions for votes.²³ In view of that, during election periods, any slight provocation by one faction against the other leads to communal violence.

²⁰ N.J.K. Brukum, *The conflicts in northern Ghana* (University of Ghana, Accra, 2004); Kwame Boafo-Arthur, 'Chieftaincy and politics in Ghana since 1982', *West Africa Review* 3, 1(2001).

²¹ C. Lund, 'Bawku is still volatile: ethno-political conflict and state recognition in northern Ghana' *Journal of Modern African Studies* 41, 4 (2003), pp. 587-60; Ozonnia Ojielo, 'Designing architecture for peace: a framework of conflict transformation in Ghana' *Legon Centre for International Affairs, Lejia*, 7 (1) (2010)

²² Kendie et al, Mapping conflict zones in Ghana

²³ Ibid

Apart from the ethnic, land and chieftaincy disputes, another alarming trend is the growing nature of economic violence involving settler farmers, pastoralist thus, Fulani headmen and illegal Chinese miners against host local communities. The other is the increasing nature of political violence in the form of election-related disputes.²⁴ For the political violence especially, it is instructive to note that all the previously held presidential and parliamentary elections since 1992 were characterised by violence. For example, the 2008 and 2012 elections were particularly characterised by violence in the form of open confrontations between the political parties, death threats, mob actions, intimidation, molestations, abductions, lynching, murder and destruction of properties worth millions of Ghana cedis.²⁵

More importantly, although these widespread conflicts have not yet exploded into full-blown conflicts, they are constantly threatening the peace and stability of the country. Yet, responses to them have at best been reactive without addressing the root causes of the issues at stake. In most cases, the first response has been the deployment of the police and military to maintain a peacekeeping presence and also to suppress violence through the use of force. But this in itself has not led to the resolution of the underlying causes of conflicts rather than just managing tensions. Again, the use of the court system to resolve conflicts especially land disputes has also not helped as many judicial cases remain unaddressed. And

²⁴Festus Aubyn, 'Election observation and democratic consolidation in Africa: the Ghanaian experience' in Kwesi Aning and Kwaku Danso (eds), *Managing election-related violence for democratic stability in Ghana* (KAIPTC/FES, Accra, 2012)

²⁵ Festus Aubyn and Mustapha Abdellah, 'Sustaining peace and stability in Ghana: appraising the role of the national election security task force in the 2012 elections' *Journal of African Elections*, (2013), pp. 132-153; Emmanuel Gyimah-Boadi, 'Another step forward for Ghana' *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (2009).

even for the inter-ethnic conflicts such as the chieftaincy disputes in Yendi, Kpandi and Buiepe which the court has pronounced judgement, the losing parties have either failed to accept the results or decided to fragrantly ignore them.²⁶ Efforts through inter-ethnic peace committees and the use of traditional Chiefs such as the Asantehene Otumfuo Osei Tutu II (king of Ashanti), *Nayiri* (king of Mamprusi) and *Yagbonwura* (king of Gonjaland) for the Dagbon conflicts has also only yielded short-term stability without guaranteeing long-term peace. In cases where a commission of enquiry has been set up to look into a particular conflict, their recommendations were either not or partially implemented due to their political consequences.

Clearly, the deficits in current approaches to conflict prevention, conflict management and conflict resolution in Ghana calls for what Lederach terms as a “long-term commitment to establishing an infrastructure across the levels of society, an infrastructure that empowers the resources of reconciliation from within that society and maximizes the contribution from outside.”²⁷ This is the reasoning behind the establishment of the national peace council of Ghana. That is, the NPC’s approach seeks to uncover the root causes of conflict and focuses on dialogue, mutual understanding, joint problem-solving and reconciliation for a sustainable conflict resolution and transformation. And unlike existing approaches which is essentially conflict resolution based; the focus of the NPC is on conflict prevention, management and

²⁶ Kendie et al, ‘Mapping conflict zones in Ghana’

²⁷ Lederach, Building peace,

resolution outcomes that lead to conflict transformation, social, political, cultural and religious reconciliation.²⁸

Historical Trajectory to the Formation of the National Peace Council

The NPC was set up administratively in August 2006 by a government decision as part of the Ghana's national architecture for peace. However, it was legally recognised under the Constitution of Ghana by an Act of Parliament called the National Peace Council Act 818 in 2011. Therefore, though the NPC was in existence, it was only provided a constitutional recognition in 2011. Currently, the council has finalized, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), its maiden five-year strategic plan (2013-2017) for operationalizing the 2011 legislative instrument (Act 818). Under this plan, the NPC expects to operationalize Act 818 in its entirety by establishing regional and district peace councils together with their respective Secretariats by 2017.²⁹

The decision to establish the NPC was based on the experiences gathered from the activities of the Northern Region Peace Advisory Committee (NRPAC), a group made up of representatives of Christian and Muslim bodies, Traditional Chiefs, Women and Youth groups and security agencies.³⁰ The NRPAC was set up after the 2002 Dagbon Chieftaincy

²⁸The Ministry of Interior, National peace architecture, (Ministry of Interior, Ghana, Accra, 2006)

²⁹ National Peace Council, 'Five-year strategic plan -2013-2017' (NPC unpublished document, 2013).

³⁰ Draman Rashid, Janet Adama Mohammed and Peter Woodrow, *The conflict prevention and resolution portfolio of UNDP Ghana* (CDA Collaborative Learning Inc, Cambridge, MA, 2009).

conflict as a mediation and conflict resolution mechanism to foster trust among the factions and restore confidence as well as relationships. With the success of the council particularly, following its role in ensuring a relative peaceful election in the highly volatile northern region in 2004, the government of Ghana decided to explore the possibility of extending it to the rest of the country.³¹ This decision was subsequently given an impetus by the successes of the peace committee established by the Volta regional coordinating council in 2005 to mediate on the Nkonya-Alavanyo conflict in the Volta region of Ghana. Consequently, with the technical and financial support of the UNDP, a review workshop on the successful experience of the NRPAC was convened, with relevant key national stakeholders. Indeed, it was this review workshop that provided the turning point for the Ministry of Interior to push for the establishment of the NPC. Unsurprisingly, the proposal did not face any political opposition. It received broad political consensus among the various political parties and other important stakeholders due to the successful experiences of the NRPAC and the peace committee in the Volta region. Incidentally, the establishment of the NPC was also in consonance with the resolution signed by African Leaders at the *first standing conference on stability, security and development in Africa*, held in Durban in 2002. At this conference, it was resolved that each African country should endeavour to establish a national framework for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts by December 2004.³² More importantly, this call was recently reiterated at a regional meeting in Accra, Ghana on 10 September 2013 where both

³¹ William Kenyirege, '**Error! Main Document Only**.Ghana's infrastructures for peace and building resilience: the national peace council' (unpublished paper, 2013)

³² The Ministry of Interior, National peace architecture,

state and non-state actors who attended the conference entreated all African states to establish national infrastructures for peace within the next three years ³³

Composition of the national peace council

Membership of the council includes renowned and respected individuals of distinction from identifiable groups in Ghana. These individuals are people who enjoy high levels of trust, moral standing, respect and professional integrity in society (see table 2 for list of current members). Moreover, they are also seen by the public as non-partisan, impartial and have the gravitas to provide leadership to any national peace process. The national peace council Act 818 provides for the nomination of 13 eminent persons by organized and religious bodies as identified in table 1 below.

Table 1. Membership of the Governing Board of the National Peace Council

Christian bodies	Muslim bodies	Traditional bodies	Others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Catholic Bishops Conference ▪ Christian Council ▪ Ghana Pentecostal Council ▪ National Council for Christians and Charismatic Churches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission ▪ Al-Sunnah Muslims ▪ Tijaaniya Muslim group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Practitioners of African Traditional Religions ▪ National House of Chiefs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The President of the Republic, (2 nominees) one of whom must be a woman ▪ Two other persons nominated by identifiable groups.

Source: National Peace Council Act 818, 2011.

It can be seen from table 1 that the Christian bodies are supposed to provide four individuals whilst the Muslim bodies and the traditional bodies are also required to provide three and two persons respectively. The number of persons provided by each of these religious bodies is a

³³See the Declaration on strengthening national, regional and continental coordination towards building national peace infrastructures for conflict prevention. Accra, Ghana, 10 September 2013.

reflection of their percentage distribution of the population in Ghana. The dominance of religious bodies mirrors the high level of reverence Ghanaians give to religious leaders, because they are often seen as impartial, non-partisan and capable of bridging political divides. Nomination of members to the council is done on the basis of consensus by each of the religious groups. The rest of the NPC members include two nominations by the president of the republic of whom one is supposed to be a woman and two other persons from identifiable groups. Unlike the Kenyan and South African peace infrastructures, the NPC Act 818 does not specifically provide for the representation of groups such as trade unions, academia, business and industry, youth, people with disability and women though they fall under the two nominations from identifiable groups. This deliberate or inadvertent exclusion of these groups has serious implications for the future particularly, whenever there is any religious conflict. The question is who will mediate and broker peace in case there is any religious conflict in Ghana given the predominance of religious bodies in the council? The contrary view to this will be that the council members will appeal to their constituency for peace if such a situation ever occurs. But how effective will this be principally when the level of trust is lost during such periods?

Many analysts have also queried the nominations by the president as having the tendency to compromise the neutrality and independence of the council. However, we present a different view on that claim. Specifically, out of the 13 members of the council, the president's nominees are only two and this cannot in any way compromise the independence of the 11 other members. Comparing it to other state institutions in Ghana for example, the president appoints the heads and members of institutions such as the electoral commission (EC) and the commission on human rights and administrative justice (CHRAJ).³⁴ Yet, this has not in any

³⁴ The 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana

way compromise their independence. The EC for instance has organised six national level elections with political power alternating between two political parties. In any case, members of the NPC elect their own chairperson without government interference and this is not the case with respect to the EC and CHRAJ where the chairpersons are imposed on them by the president.³⁵ Surprisingly, one other important aspect of the president's nomination which seems to be missing in all the debates is the clause that one of his nominations should be a woman. That provision was deliberately put there based on the possibility that all the identifiable groups may nominate only male representatives to the council. Sadly, this is the present situation in the current membership. The only female on the NPC governing board is the president's nominee as none of the other groups nominated a female representative. So the president's nomination has rather had the consequences of including gender representation in the council. This notwithstanding, it is imperative to note that the general composition of the NPC is not gender sensitive. Surprisingly, of the 13 member council, there is only one female, though females constitute about 51 per cent of Ghana's population.³⁶ This is odd and diminishes women's role in fostering peace and stability and ought to be revisited.

³⁵ The 1992 Constitutions of the Republic of Ghana, Article 70 clause 1(e)

³⁶ Ghana Statistical Service, *2010 Population and Housing Census* (Ghana Statistical Service, Accra, 2010)

Table 2. Current Members of the National Peace Council as at February 2014

Name	Religious Group/Organization
Most Rev Prof Emmanuel Asante	Christian Council of Ghana
Maulvi Dr Wahab Adam	Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission
Apostle Dr. Opoku Onyinah	Ghana Pentecostal Council
Nana Susubribi Krobea Asante	National House of Chiefs
Most Rev. Dr. Joseph Osei-Bonsu	Catholic Bishops' Conference
Sheikh Mahmoud Gedel	Al-Sunnah Muslims
Alhaji Adam Abubakar	Tijaaniya Muslim Group
Rev Gideon Titi-Ofei	National Council for Christians and Charismatic Churches
Nii Otokunor Sampah	African Traditional Religion
Mr Shaibu Abubakar	Ghana Network for Peace Building (CSOs)
Mr Mumuni Abudu Seidu	Educationist
Mrs Florence Mangwe Hutchful	Nominee of the President
Rev. Dr. Nii Amoo Darku	Nominee of the President

Source: Secretariat of the NPC

Once appointed to the governing board, a member can hold office for a period of four years but is eligible for re-appointment if his/her nomination is sustained by the identifiable group concerned. However, there are four main conditions under which an individual can cease to be a member of the board. The first is when a member resigns from office in writing addressed to the president. A member who absents him/herself at three consecutive meetings without sufficient cause also forfeits his/her membership. Thirdly, a person may cease to be a member of the board if that member has an interest in a matter before the board but fails to disclose that interest, or participates in the deliberations of the board in respect of that matter. Act 818 bans a member from participating in the deliberations of the board if he/she has an interest in the matter. Lastly, membership is declared vacant when a member dies.³⁷ The governing board of the council meets at least once a month to deliberate on issues or matters of concern. But upon the request in writing of not less than one-third of the membership of

³⁷ National Peace Council Act 818, 2011, Article 5

the board, an emergency meeting can be convened by the chairperson. Act 818 also allows the council to co-opt resource persons to act as advisors during their meetings or establish committees made up of both members of the board or non- members to perform a particular task when necessary.

The three-tier structure of the council

In terms of the configuration, the NPC is created as a three-tier structure existing at the national, the ten administrative regions and the 212 districts of Ghana. This is to ensure the broad participation of all stakeholders and inclusiveness at all levels of society in the prevention, resolution and management of conflicts. At present however, apart from the national governing board, only eight regional peace councils (RPCs) have been established.³⁸ Plans are far advance to establish the district peace councils (DPCs).

At the national level, there exists the governing board of the council which is the highest decision-making body consisting of thirteen eminent persons nominated by organized and religious bodies (see table 2). At the regional and district levels are the RPCs and the DPCs.³⁹ Currently, the only RPCs yet to be established are the RPCs in the Ashanti and the central region of Ghana. In term of membership, The RPCs and DPCs follow the same representational pattern as the national level but the appointing authorities are different. In both the RPCs and DPCs, the governing board of the NPC in consultation with the regional

³⁸ They include the regional peace council's in the Upper East, Upper West, Northern, Brong Ahafo, Volta, Western, Greater Accra and Eastern region of Ghana.

³⁹ National Peace Council Act 818, 2011, Articles 9, 10, 11 and 12.

co-ordinating councils and the district assemblies appoints the members after nominations by various identifiable groups.

Each office of the council from the national to district level is managed administratively by an executive secretary appointed by the president in accordance with the Article 195 of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana. The executive secretaries are responsible for the day to day administration of the councils and also act as technical advisors to the councils.⁴⁰ However, some have argued that the appointment of the executive secretary by the president risks compromising the independence of the council. We think otherwise. This is because there is no where in the NPC Act 818 that states that the executive secretary should report to the president for him/her to be loyal to the president and lastly, the executive secretary only manages and coordinates the day to day administration of the councils and has no power or locus to influence the decisions of the council. Therefore, the assertion that the appointment of the executive secretary will compromise the neutrality of the council is flawed.

The NPC Act 818 also provides for the establishment of a peace building support unit (PBSU) within the ministry of interior of Ghana. The ministry serves as the link between the government and the NPC and ensures that all the material and logistical support needed by the council is provided.⁴¹ Although the PBSU is yet to be established, it is envisaged among others to serve as liaison on behalf of the government and facilitate support from

⁴⁰ National Peace Council Act 818, 2011, Articles 18, 19, 25 and 25.

⁴¹ Kenyirege, 'Error! Main Document Only.Ghana's infrastructures for peace and building resilience'

government institutions for the work of the NPC. It is also to facilitate the implementation of the council's recommendations addressed to the government or its agencies; and manages government's early warning and analysis.

Functions of the national peace council

The underlying principle in the work of the NPC is volunteerism, bipartisanship and impartiality. Unlike countries such as Nepal, Philippines and Costa Rica where the peace infrastructures are situated within the government, the NPC of Ghana is an independent national institution. The decisions of the NPC are not binding and also they have no legislative or executive powers to enforce it. It only uses soft power to appeal to conflicting parties for peace. Moreover, the NPC cannot also arbitrarily intervene in any conflict unless it is explicitly invited by the parties to the conflict or the government.⁴² Its mandate is different from the role of the national security council (NSC)⁴³ which has the constitutional authority to intervene in any conflict situations. But more often than not, the mandate of the NPC is confused with that of the NSC and the security agencies.

Principally, the mandate of the NPC is to foster national cohesion through peacebuilding and to provide mechanisms through which Ghanaians can seek peaceful, non-violent resolution of conflicts.⁴⁴ It is mandated to facilitate and develop mechanisms for conflict prevention,

⁴² The Ministry of Interior, 'National architecture'

⁴³ The NSC is the highest decision-making body with respect to peace and security matters in Ghana.

⁴⁴ The National Peace Council Act 818, Articles 2, 3, 11 & 14

management, resolution and to build sustainable peace in Ghana. In performing these tasks the NPC collaborates and complement the work of other state institutions such as the NSC, the EC, and the National Council for Civic Education (NCCE). Over the years, the council has accomplished its mandate by creating and facilitating spaces for dialogue between national actors and interest groups in conflicts. Other strategies employed by the council include engagement in negotiation, confidence building and reconciliation, mediation and other processes including indigenous mechanisms of conflict resolution. Another important function of the NPC is the promotion of understanding about the values of diversity, trust, tolerance, and increasing awareness on the use of non-violent strategies to prevent, manage and resolve conflict. Again, as an independent institution, the council is also tasked to make recommendations to the government and other key stakeholders on actions to promote trust and confidence between and among groups.

Due to its limited capacity, it often cooperates with local civil society organizations (CSOs) such as the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), the Institute of Democratic Governance (IDEG) and Institute for Economic Affairs (IEA) in the fulfilment of its mandate. Before the 2012 elections for example, the NPC together with IDEG for the first time brought together all the presidential candidates to sign a peace pact to pledge their commitment to peace and violent free elections.⁴⁵ A more recent NPC collaboration with CSOs in a similar fashion involved a one day national summit in July 2013 in Accra, under the theme: *Justice, Peace and Reform will Strengthen Ghana*.⁴⁶ This meeting was organised

⁴⁵ Graphiconline, 'Ghanaians Laud Kumasi Peace Pact - But doubt its effectiveness' <http://graphic.com>, (20 July 2013).

⁴⁶ Graphiconline, 'Forum on post-Supreme Court Verdict' <http://graphic.com.gh>, (20 August 2013)

in collaboration with IDEG, the Manhyia Palace of the Ashantehene in Kumasi and the Civic Forum Initiative (CFI) to raise awareness on the importance of inter-party dialogue to manage the substantive issues that was predicted to arise from the Supreme Court verdict of the 2012 election petition.⁴⁷ WANEP has also been instrumental in building the capacity of the council members and staff through broad-based skills training programmes in conflict analysis, early warning systems, mediation, and dialogue.

What has contributed to the relatively success of national peace council of Ghana?

The accomplishments of the NPC of Ghana have been widely acknowledged by scholars. But the question one would ask is what has really facilitated its relative success? We put forward three main arguments to support this claim. This includes the composition of the membership; the independence of the council; and the consistent funding and support from donor agencies.

With respect to the composition, its membership is inclusive of at least all the relevant stakeholders who are not only respected and trusted but have high integrity, competence, knowledge and experience in matters relating to conflict resolution and peace. Moreover, they are accomplished eminent individuals who have reached the highest pinnacle of their professional careers and therefore do not need to do what we call '*political idol worship*' or get instructions from any political leader to prop them up into fame. These characteristics

⁴⁷The outcome of the 2012 presidential was challenged at the Supreme Court by the Opposition NPP. The party claimed that the ruling NDC tampered with results to boost President John Mahama's share of the vote to 50.7 percent, handing him a first-round victory over Nana Akufo-Addo, the NPP flagbearer who had 47.7 percent. However, the Supreme Court ruled on 29 August 2013 in favour of President John Mahama.

have been the key anchor upon which the NPC has relied on to bridge political divides and pull conflicting parties together. Put differently, the calibre of individuals of the council has added credibility and local leverage to the work of the council.

The independence of the council is another reason underlying its relative success. Despite the fact that the NPC is a quasi-state institution with access to state resources, its activities, programmes, and decisions are not dictated by government. In fact, the NPC Act 818 guarantees the independence of the council in the performance of its activities which is not the case with respect to peace infrastructures in other places like Nepal. The lack of government interference has promoted and strengthened the legitimacy and acceptance of the council's work and decisions by the public and the political divides in Ghana. However, what may possibly compromise the neutrality and independence of the council is the determination of salaries of the NPC board members by government and the funding of their activities through the consolidated fund. What this implies is that the government can choose to withhold funding for the NPC if it thinks its actions are not favouring the policies and programmes of government. Although, the NPC can access funding from external donors, this provision may indirectly give the government some form of control over the activities of the council.

Lastly, there is no doubt that the council would not have been relatively successful without the technical, material and financial support of donor agencies. Since 2007, the NPC has benefited immensely from technical and financial support from the UNDP, the European Union (EU), the Department for International Development (DFID), Swiss Cooperation, and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). Arguably, the

contributions to the Peace Fund⁴⁸ by these donors together with the small funds from government are what have kept the NPC in operation till today. It is instructive to note that most of the activities and interventions of the NPC could not have been possible without the support of especially the UNDP.

Empirical case of the NPC interventions: the 2012 elections in Ghana

The NPC has made a lot of gains towards the de-escalation and reduction of violence in Ghana. So far, the council has actively engaged in finding sustainable solutions to chieftaincy and land disputes, communal violence and election-related violence. But the most visible achievement of the NPC is the exceptional role it plays in preventing and defusing violence during elections in Ghana. The 2012 parliamentary and presidential election is a graphical case in point. In this particular election which this section focuses, the NPC did not only help reduced heightened political tensions but also helped averted potential violence that could have plunge Ghana into conflict. It was one of the most competitive elections under Ghana's fourth republican constitution. Whilst the incumbent NDC was keen to maintain power, the opposition NPP was very anxious to defeat it at all cost. Right from the pre-election period, the political landscape was inundated with acts of violence including, assault, malicious and wanton destruction of properties, molestations, defacement of posters, death threats through anonymous phone calls and text messages, hate speeches, defamation or insults.⁴⁹ Against the backdrop of these acts of violence, ensuring that the election was peaceful remained a veritable challenge.

⁴⁸ Act 818 establishes a Peace Fund with contributions from the Government of Ghana, foreign governments, local private and public organisations, international organisations as well as gifts and contributions from other sources.

⁴⁹ Aubyn and Abdellah, *Sustaining peace and stability in Ghana*, pp. 132-153.

As one of the major stakeholders in the elections, the NPC undertook a number of activities to diffuse political tensions and to ensure that the electoral process was peaceful as any other event in the country. First, to deal with intra/inter party conflicts, the NPC provided capacity building programmes for the political parties on how to manage diversity and conflicting interests. Also, the chairperson of the NPC was part of the national enforcement body put together by the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), a public policy think tank based in Ghana, to supervise the enforcement of the 2012 political party code of conduct adopted by all the political parties to guide and regulate their activities.⁵⁰ The council augmented this with media (print, radio, television) campaigns for peace across the country, peace education in communities, schools and universities and public peace forums and symposiums. In fact, through these programmes, Ghanaians increasingly embraced a culture of peace, tolerance, dialogue, reconciliation and the rule of law. One important event of the NPC that received remarkable public eulogy was the peace forum organised in Kumasi, Ghana together with IDEG. At this forum, the council used its convening powers and credibility to bring together all the presidential candidates of the parties to sign a peace pact and to pledge their commitment to peaceful and violent free elections.⁵¹ This event which was christened the ‘Kumasi Declaration’ was very unique in two aspects: (i) it was signed and witnessed by the Otumfuo Osei Tutu II (king of Asante), former President Jerry John Rawlings and former President John Agyekum Kufuor and lastly, (ii) it was historic as it was the first time in the history of Ghana that political parties committed themselves to such a peace accord. Though

⁵⁰ Institute of economic affairs, *Political party code of conduct* (Accra: IEA, Ghana, 2012)

⁵¹ Graphiconline, ‘Ghanaians Laud Kumasi Peace Pact’

the impact of this event is very difficult to measure, one can confidently affirm that it helped calmed the charged political atmosphere at the period.

Another important intervention of the NPC that is worth noting was the role it played before the declaration of the 7 December 2012 elections results by the EC. Constitutionally, the EC is the only body mandated to declare the results of presidential of elections. However, prior to the declaration of the 2012 election results, the NPP General Secretary, Mr. Kwadwo Owusu Afriyie made a press statement on 8 December 2012 that the NPP's Akufo-Addo had won the presidency with 51 percent of the vote and so the party supporters should jubilate.⁵² In a sharp response, the NDC also threatened to declare their elections results which showed President John Mahama as the winner of the elections. This incidence raised high political tensions until the timely intervention by the NPC.⁵³ As the most trusted and respected stakeholder in the country at that sensitive time, the NPC led by its chairman, the Most Rev. Prof Emmanuel Kwaku Asante, issued a press statement on 9 December 2012 at midnight describing the NPP General Secretary's declaration as "premature" and inconsistent with the constitution of Ghana.⁵⁴ He further called on all Ghanaians especially the NDC to exercise restraint and admonished the media not to provide its platforms for such 'premature' press conferences. The NPC's statement calmed the heightened political tensions and prevented any violent clashes that would have followed a similar declaration by the NDC.

⁵² Nana Karikari-Apau, 'Ghana president re-elected, a result opposition claims was 'manipulated', <http://edition.cnn.com>, (30 January 2014).

⁵³ Graphiconline, 'NPP's election declaration premature, unlawful – peace council', <http://graphic.com.gh>, (30 January 2014).

⁵⁴ Ibid

Again, just before the EC's announcement of the election results on 10 December 2012, the NPP lodged several complaints of electoral malpractices and accused the EC of conspiring with the NDC to falsify election results.⁵⁵ Anticipating the possible violence that might erupt after the EC's declarations if these accusations were not resolved, the council facilitated a closed door meeting between the NPP, NDC and the EC. At this meeting, it came out that the NPP lacked enough evidence to prove its claims. Therefore, the EC advised the NPP to seek proper redress in court after it announces the winner of the elections which it agreed. The council did not end the dialogue there but spoke covertly and overtly to the parties individually to accept defeat after the announcement of the results. Eventually, the NPP lost the elections when the EC announced the results. The question is what would have happened if the results were announced without the understanding of all the parties? It would certainly have led to open dissatisfaction of the results and possible violence. Clearly, the NPC's interventions opened the space for the parties to engage in constructive discussions, although later the NPP took the matter to the Supreme Court of Ghana for adjudication. And even throughout the processes in the supreme court, the council through dialogue and mediation urged the NPP and the NDC to accept the final verdict of the court.

Challenges facing the national peace council

Two main challenges confront the NPC. The first is how the NPC can effectively implement its five-year strategic plan (2013-2017) which involves the creation and recruitment of staff for its regional and district peace councils. It has the difficult task of rolling out a clear implementation strategy, networking strategy and synergy especially in the area of early warning and analysis among the national, regional and district councils.

⁵⁵Deborah Wiafe-Agye, 'Seek redress in court - EC tells NPP' <http://www.citifmonline.com> (30 July 2013).

Furthermore, the council has to also fashion out a resource mobilization strategy as its expansion will have financial implications.

Secondly, the council lacks institutionalized capacities (i.e. human, technical and financial) to effectively carry out its responsibilities. The human resource constraint is basically symbolised by the lack of adequate support staff and professional skills training in early warning, conflict analysis, resolution and management. Also, the council lacks adequate offices or workplace environment for its key staff. All these challenges are as a result of lack of adequate funding. At present, though its expenditure is charged to the consolidated fund, majority of its funds comes from few donors. For the council to effectively execute its activities, it requires adequate financial capacity.

Conclusion

As a model peace infrastructure in Africa, the NPC'S contribution to peace in Ghana is indisputable. Its bi-partisan approach to peacebuilding, national mandate and the inclusiveness of its membership has helped build its credibility and legitimacy and facilitated its continuity and sustainability in spite of the government in power. Moreover, its roles in preventing violence has been remarkable especially during elections with the 2012 elections been a clear case. The experiences of the NPC can indeed serve as a model for other African countries to emulate. Moving forward, the integrity and the trust that many Ghanaians have in the council have to be protected and safeguarded. Once it loses its credibility and neutrality, the council would become just like any other institution in Ghana which will negatively impact on its decisions. The gender composition of the council also needs to be revisited probably with the amendments of Act 818. The NPC also needs to extend its activities beyond the predominant focus on election-related issues and build effective synergies with

other state institutions involved in issues of peace in Ghana and the regional and continental level. Additionally, the council needs to fashion out a good resource mobilization strategy as it seeks to expand to all the administrative regions and districts in Ghana.