

Sycophancy, a Tool for Upward Mobility, Self-Efficacy and Resilience in Africa

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Abstract

Background: The study aims to shed light on sycophancy as a mechanism for survival in the political economy in Africa, due to the systemic inequities in the distribution of wealth and income. It aims to show that sycophancy is a constitutional and legal construct, and to understand the motivations of the “Yes-man or -woman”. Finally, it will attempt to establish the linkages between sycophancy and corruption, underdevelopment and poor accountability standards. Sycophancy allows obsequious flattery of officeholders, in order to win favors and circumvent meritocracy and those with solid qualifications in competing for economic opportunities. **Method and Methodology:** The case-study method was used with Ghana as the case for the analysis. The methodological approach of phenomenology, buttressed by ethnographic information adopted, enabled the author to investigate the presumed national negative trait of sycophancy in the broader Public Service. **Results:** The emergence of sycophancy in the political economy can be traced to the content of Chapter Eight of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, mandating the power to appoint and fire to the executive in Article 57(1). All appointments, emoluments and fringe benefits are also vested in the mandate given to the President in Articles 70 and 71 of the Constitution. Sycophancy, is not only a social construct but constitutional and legal constructs. **Discussion:** It appears the people of Ghana are willing to sacrifice social cohesion in exchange for subjective upward mobility, self-efficacy and resilience. This requires the idolization of political officeholders, because of the lack of economic opportunities. To estop the conduct, employment in the private sector will have to grow to nullify the power of the officeholders in wealth and income re-distribution. **Conclusion:** Objective performance, loyalty and disinterested generosity are unreliable norms and unattainable goals in Ghana’s moral landscape and interpersonal dealings. The cultural and ethical trait of sycophancy, it appears, shall continue to undermine Ghana’s pursuit of financial independence, economic sovereignty and achieving high per capital income. The latent defect in the constitutional framework, has helped to weaponize sycophancy as a tool for upward mobility, self-efficacy and resilience building.

Keywords: sycophancy, public service, political leaderships, supervisors

1. Introduction

I. Sycophants are not born, but nurtured by the environment and the System

The goal of this work is to fill a few missing gaps in the literature on the subject of sycophancy. The first re-statement of the misunderstanding of the concept is, a sycophant’s emergence in any social group: political, academia, corporate, security agencies, public service, appears to be situated in the Theory of Planned Behavior, (TPB), conditioned by situational dynamics. The theory, TPB was designed to improve the predictive power of the Theory of Reasoned Action, (TRA) by Icek Ajzen, (1985; 1991) within the intersectionality of social relations. This means individuals have control over their behaviors and need to make intentional decisions as to the direction they desire to move to achieve the goal they intend to obtain, when dealing with officeholders and superior decision-makers. The theory establishes the links between a person’s or a group’s belief system in relation to their behavior and the outcome they obtain from others or in dealing with others. This is motivated by subjective and attitudinal consideration or evaluation of exogeneous factors, bearing on the group or the person’s perception of safety and wellbeing, and tapering on the promotion of self-efficacy and resilience, within the zone of protection motivation of one’s safety and security (Bandura, 1977; 1995). It also means the actions of a sycophant are predictable, based upon the reward-punishment or neglect-equity-equality treatment meted out to the sycophant in the distribution of the national wealth and income by the officeholder or authority figure such as the President of the nation. The opposite side of a sycophant is a direct saboteur, enemy of progress.

The second gap that the literature has not captured positively or emphatically, but often dances around the concept, is the outcome from this research that, the emergence of sycophancy in the political economy can be traced to the content of Chapter Eight claims of rights and privileges of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana. The defectively designed chapter, vests the power to “appoint and fire” to the executive with the statement in Article 57(1) that, “There shall be a President of the Republic of Ghana who shall be the Head of the State and Head of Government and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ghana”. The other national constitutions in the common-law nations of Africa have similar provisions and presidential mandates. By making the President the Quartermaster of goods and services, agency, and the distribution of wealth and income, the Constitution naturally built into the political economy and governance system, sycophantic tendencies. All appointees’ emoluments and fringe benefits are vested in the mandate given to the President in Articles 70 and 71 and their related subclauses in the 1992 Constitution. Therefore, in Ghana and in the other African nations with similar mandates vested in the Presidency, sycophancy, is not only a social construct but constitutional and legal constructs. This observation weakens any attempt by researchers, political commentators, and others to put any blame on the citizens, for operating within the confines of the legal framework that negatively and, or, positively; affect their autonomy, professional progression, and *eudemonia* or human flourishing.

Although in the published literature, sycophants are not castigated as dim-witted, they are generally seen and characterized as seekers of self-interests, persons with immaturity in rendering services to the community, and people who are unethical (Baturo, et al., 2023; Lu et al., 2021; Wintrobe, 1998). The constitutional design of the mandate vested in the Presidency to appoint and fire, did not lay out any normative ethical standards for the selection of candidates for jobs, but left that decision to the discretion, or, to the whims and caprices, and to the personal preferences of the individual elected as president. In Ghana, new job openings advertised in the public space, often is a message to the potential applicants that the position has already been filled with hand-picked select candidates. The advertisement is just a show or pretention that the agency or company or government ministry is an equal opportunity employer. The Human Resource departments in Ghanaian public space are, probably the most insensitive group of professionals, who never write back to job applicants whether there are opportunities or not and leave them in desperation (Kwong, et al., 2021). The conduct of some individuals in Africa nations, particularly the authoritarian regimes, who fall into this category of Public Service workers and political appointees, are generally described as sycophantic, due to the apparent social and political loyalty, praise-singing, and attribution of all positive developments as being caused by the ‘fearless political leader’.

The same group of sycophants tend to attribute every piece of negative information in the political economy to the opposition political party and its presidency, no matter how long that party may have been in opposition. This is because in most African countries as well as in authoritarian regimes, political appointments to high offices are not merit-based, and promotions in the Public Service to higher ranks and salary augmentations, are not based on Performance Evaluation and role assignments, but simply justified on the strength of the beneficiaries political support, campaign contributions, political party activities, consanguinity, and affiliation by affinity with the President, Chief of Staffs, sector Ministers and Board Chairmen and Chairwomen. It is therefore not unusual to find, for example, an administrator in a rural clinic to be promoted to the rank of deputy director in charge of Monitoring and Evaluation of programs at the headquarters of the national Health Service, or Ministry of Health. When this happens, who then is the sycophant, knowing full well that the individual being promoted, does not have the skill-set and competencies to perform the new assignment? Is it the one who promoted such a person or the person who was promoted? Are Presidents who appoint, hire and promote unqualified persons to roles for which they have no competencies, themselves not sycophants? Does sycophancy work in one direction or has bifurcated capabilities? The sections below help to explain these questions.

I. a. Re-consideration of a Sycophant

A sycophant is a person who is, probably, wicked-but-without-meaning-to, intentional enough, and manipulative enough, but certainly wise enough to act obsequiously towards someone important in order to gain advantage; or exploit that so-called important individual to the exclusive benefit of the “Yes-man or woman” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2025). The label sycophant is a derogatory nomenclature on opportunism and avaricious conduct. The main purpose of a sycophant, is how best he or she can benefit from his or her interactions with an officeholder or someone society considers as important. However, it is important to also consider the observation that, a sycophant is not a weakling, but one driven by personal need for upward mobility and survival, despite the circumstances or the political climate in which he or she finds himself or herself. A sycophant appears to possess adaptive qualities, which may not be available to those driven by morality, objectivity and egoism as well as the fear of self-approbation. The difference between loyalty and sycophancy is not determined by the duties and functions each may perform. Loyalty entails genuine support, healthy dealings without corruption and rent-seeking goals, driven

by supererogational deeds, honesty and, even virtue as well as constructive criticism whenever it is demanded, or appropriate (Egorow & Sonin, 2011; Svolik, 2012; Zakharov, 2016). Sycophancy is powered by excessive flattery, empty praises and slogans as if the object of praise and adulation, is not fungible, or replaceable as a leader or officeholder. Meaning he or she is someone, who needs to be merchandized, or possesses messianic qualities, the hope without him all efforts will fail, and, therefore, packaged with lies, puffing, obscurantism and subterfuge. Such measures often come with intentions to harm the object of the flattery. The sycophant must then marry his or her 'actus reus' with 'mens rea' into a unit of planned or reasoned action: praise, promote, and idolize the leader until the sycophant is noticed and rewarded (Ajzen, 1991). Sycophants within the political space in Ghana and in other African nations, may be considered as morally twisted achievers of their planned behavior or reasoned action, yet, they should not be taken for granted. They may even be respected for their wicked, consequentialist's creativity, manipulative skills, passionate commitment to their goals and the realization of their goals for their self-efficacies and resilience (Ajzen, 1985; 1991, Bandura, 1977; 1995, Norman & Kpeglo, 2023).

I. b. Sycophancy as a universal political and developmental challenge

To be fair, it is not only Ghana or Africa where this phenomenon has emerged. Writing for the Guardian, David Smith titled his piece, *Republicans put the sick in sycophancy as they compete to fawn over Trump* (Smith, 2025, Feb 22, para. 1-5). In that piece, several Republican congressmen fawned over President Trump, with Congressman Addison McDowell of North Carolina introducing legislation to rename Washington Dulles International Airport as Donald J. Trump International Airport. Congresswoman, Marjorie Taylor Greene, (a former self-described Trump devotee) is reported widely to have 'repudiated her role in inflaming the country's poisoned politics in her latest sharp break with President Donald Trump and his provocative rhetoric'. This was also reported on CNN under the title, *What Marjorie Taylor Greene's political revolt may say about Trump* (Collinson, 2025, Nov 17). Some of these congressmen and women fawned over President Trump for consideration for large federal financial subsidies to their various states. That is to say, the actions of these congress men and women were driven by the efficacies of their states and to enhance the resilience of their communities against hurricanes, flooding, disaster risk management and funding. Leaders with dictatorial tendencies or who are autocratic demand loyalties over competency (Baturu et al., 2016). Baturu et al., confirmed what has been suggested by Wintropbe, (1998, pp. 20-25) that, sycophancy thrives among authoritarian elites, which may explain the increasing public notice of sycophantic tactics among some members of the Republican party in the United States under President D. Trump (Smith, 2025). In African democracies, including the ones allegedly within the international democratic system, (such as the often-touted Ghana's model of democracy, where presidential directives trump legal and constitutional mandates), the evidence points to the influence of "Yes men and women" behind the rulers like Ghana's Akufo-Addo's regime from 2017 to 2024. That is to say, in a nation with high incidence of sycophancy like Ghana, the law itself; the judges that interpret the law, CEOs of public institutions, university Dons, heads of public service agencies, departments and units, and the security apparatchiks, follow political decisions contained in presidential directives without demurring. Seldom does any public service worker, manager, director, CEO or board member resigns from his or her position because of disagreement with a presidential directive. This confirms the invasive reach of sycophancy in the Ghanaian political economy (Egorow & Sonin, 2011). Realistically, in every governance system, there is the overwhelming agreement among researchers, degrees of bootlicking. "[...] Some degree of bootlicking among (political) elites can be considered a universal norm", which is not found only in the African brand of democracy, "where power is highly concentrated in the hands of the ruler" (Egorow & Sonin, 2011, Svolik, 2012; In Baturu et al., 2023, p. 1180). Akufo-Addo's sycophants were his worse enemies, due to the systematic corrupt practices a considerable number of his appointees engaged in, rather than prosecute the development agenda of his administration. Human behavior may differ from one political climate to the next, but the differences are not drastic but marginal because human beings are motivated by self-protection, self-efficacies and resilience irrespective of race, ethnicity, gender or religious proclivities or, the level of progress or development of the nation in which they live, whether it is a periphery, semi-periphery or core nation. The goal is always attuned for: survival, happiness, and human flourishing (Sen, 1993).

I. c. Underlying rationale for Sycophancy in Ghana and Africa

The underlying rationale for sycophancy in Africa, is largely attributed to the economic opportunities and choices available to the people of Ghana and quite a number of nations in Sub-Saharan Africa. Sycophancy appears to be well-inbuilt into the system of governance and human security. The system relies on the practice of neopatrimonialism in the distribution of the wealth of the nation, economic opportunities and human advancement. Each African President enjoys the unique status of being the quartermaster in the distribution of the wealth of the nations over which they preside. Each of the African Presidents knows the social and economic value of being appointed to a ministerial position or managerial position as the chief executive officer of a public institution or a

bank. The employment system in Africa appears to be designed for sycophantic penetration and diversification of the workers' praise and promotional foci of leaders, depending upon the level of work and influence the worker enjoys in relation to the status of the commanding officer for the Security Services, or supervising officeholder for the rest of industries (Turner, 1985; Treisman, 2000; Verdery, 2023).

Such goals are also executed in education and in other training avenues through identity politics, ethnicity, partisanship and bigoted intellectualism even in the universities and training institutions, particularly those with respected academic journals for the publication of faculty research papers the world over. In many of these institutions, the research papers of the friends of the editor-in-chief (whether in the West or in Africa), often get priority in publishing, no matter how poorly written the piece may be, compared to those of the lesser-known academic researchers with better written research papers. This is part of the reasons why a lot of so-called scholars, even professors, who lists publications in their curricula vitas, sometimes, have no clue of the content of those papers at all. They never contributed anything towards the development of the concept, questionnaire design, data collection, data analysis, the writing, literature review and analysis and or editing. This author has noticed this phenomenon as a common practice among some institutions and vowed not to be listed on any research paper as a co-author, if he had not contributed significantly to the product, to the sycophantic, praise-singing of how great that professor may be, besides being dishonest and unethical (Amponsah, 2023). Today in the Ghanaian university system, lecturers who are known to conduct critical evaluation of students' dissertations and thesis, whether at the marking or oral examination defense stage, are being disallowed or excluded from reviewing, marking or being members of academic evaluative panels during dissertation and thesis defenses or *viva voce*. All the universities appear to want, is to clear the potential graduates like fungible goods on a conveyor belt on their production lines, so that they can boast quantitatively with the number of students they have churned out. This author has been excluded from lecturing, supervising, and marking dissertations in two Ghanaian public universities or educational institutions precisely for demanding from the students' quality and original works before awarding the deserved grades based solely on the work presented. In some of these public universities in Ghana today, lecturers who are known to be sycophants and follow instructions given by the Deans, the department heads to clear the students, even if the work they have produced is mediocre so that the university can graduate them, are often the ones empaneled to review and evaluate students' dissertations and thesis (Amponsah, 2023; Yussif & Mante, 2024). Ghana has a huge number of unemployed graduates, perhaps, due to their lack of marketable skills and competencies, as a result of the poor quality of their university education. It is not unconscionable to predict that, very soon unemployed graduates in Ghana may begin legal suits against universities in Ghana for inuring them with poor quality of education; as was the case of a suit filed against Ohio State University in 1976. In that case, *Ojalvo v. Ohio State Univ., No. 75-0602 (Ohio Ct. Cl. 1976)*, the plaintiff took a two-year course in order to qualify to teach the mentally retarded only to find out that more education is always required by the state for such a position. Under the "consumer protection and higher education" law, "a number of legal theories have been advanced in an attempt to recover for alleged losses" (Drushal, 1976, pp. 4-26). The point underscoring this case is, sycophancy has legal and pecuniary weight which may be difficult to evade or avoid.

In employment selection, the wicked national practice in role assignment and job offers, demands ingratiation, brown-nosing, and opinion conformity, for competitors to move ahead of their peer. In other words, the public administrative culture of Ghana or many nations in Africa, is not driven by ethics and morality, meritocracy, performance objective, prior achievements and the possession of unique skills, but opportunistic and avaricious interests, the ability to say, "Yes, Sir, Yes, Mom", built on the wheels of sycophancy and ass-kissing as the modus operandi (Nebo, 2025; Norman, 2023, 2024; Grossman & Helpman, 2021; Okibe, 2020; Fukuyama, 2018).

Such practices may be the root cause of why Ghanaians are fond of idolizing their Presidents, or Ministers of State or even CEOs of public agencies and companies, many of whom under-perform their roles as accountable leaders (Wiarda, 2014; Williams, 1998) and in Nigeria (Okibe, 2020) as well as in Liberia (Nebo, 2025). There are many Presidents in Africa, who do not deserve to run even medium size companies, let alone a whole nation with a huge national budget in a complex multilateral and bilateral system with complex decision-making challenges. Idolizing politicians has become so rampant, aided by social media, Podcasts and other medium of propagandizing political and social personalities, Mr. Samuel Abu-Jinapor, a member of Ghana's Parliament for Damango, and the New Patriotic Party, admonished Ghanaians "to stop idolizing politicians; they are supposed to serve you...". That the power in democracy belongs to the citizens not the politicians" (GHO TV, 2025). Such mindset has led to shielding political and corporate leaders in Ghana from being exposed, when corrupt practices are noticed by the same subordinates around the politician. It appears similar phenomena have been experienced in Liberia. Nebo, (2025) raised the concern that "the pervasive issue of sycophancy, the act of excessive flattery and uncritical compliances towards authority, [...] has historically undermined effective leadership" (p. 29). Okibe, (2020)

addressing the phenomena in Nigerian political landscape, also reported, "... sycophancy haunts many political systems, infests governance with demeaning behaviors, and [...] destroyed or destroys career of many leaders (p. 144). Part of the claims made by Nebo and Okibe point to the reality of quid pro quo concept. When subordinates, for example, in the corporate world idolizes the CEO or supervisor, in reverse, the corporate leader cannot punish or even query the worker that idolizes him or her and allows indiscipline and irresponsible behaviors to fester. The relationship that emerges is engulfed in a conspiratorial ringfence, where anything is acceptable so long as one does not sequel on the other. It is, therefore, no wonder that nations that have high frequency for idolizing politicians, also have low gross domestic product and low per capita income all round. In some cases, through statistical revisions to satisfy the whims and caprices of the ruling government, data and information could be manufactured, revised or re-interpreted to favor government policy and development outcomes. For example, the Gross Domestic Product per capita in Ghana was USD\$2,169.67 in 2025, which is equivalent of 17% of the World's average. The nation's GDP per capita, PPP, was estimated at \$8,020 while that of Singapore, is \$150,689.30 with Malaysia being \$38,779.30 (World Bank Open Data, 2024). The data on Ghana's GDP PPP per capita is conflicting between what the World Bank has provided and what the World Economics, which recorded it at \$11,296 in 2025 (World Economics Research, 2025). GDP per capita (PPP based) is "calculated by converting a nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) into international dollars using Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) exchange rates, which reflect the actual cost of living within a country. The adjusted figure of GDP is then divided by the total population to determine the average economic output per individual. On the World Economic data, Singapore has PPP of \$145,968 and Malaysia has \$49,469 GDP PPP as of 2025. The reason for citing Singapore and Malaysia in this section of the paper is due to the historical reason of Ghana gaining independence in 1957 with Singapore becoming independent in 1965 when it separated from Malaysia and Malaysia gaining independence in 1957 and marking the federation of Malaysia and Singapore in 1963. Relatively speaking, these two nations of Singapore and Malaysia have a more advanced economy which can be attributable to the single concept in recruitment, job retention, and promotion based on meritocracy. Singapore is generally believed to be more meritocratic nation than Malaysia. Meritocracy in governance, equal opportunity employment, rewards innovation, hard work and individual skills and ability, without consideration to ethnicity, social antecedents and corrupt practices of bribery. Such psychological proclivities, help to minimize the need to engage in praise singing, flattery and sycophantic activities to attract the attention of the officeholder.

I.2 Frustration of Developmental agenda: Corruption activities among high-income officeholders

The role of sycophants in Ghana's political landscape has the capacity to frustrate Ghana's journey into the economic zone of high middle-income nation. Although Ghana was declared a middle-income nation in November of 2010 with a miserably low per capita income of \$1,225 dollars as declared by the Government Statistician, after revising the nation's Gross Domestic Product upwards to 44 billion Ghana Cedis, (30 billion dollars), which was over 60% of the previous estimates or US\$13bn worth of economic activity, pegged against a total population of 24 million (GSS: Ghana a Middle-Income Nation, 2010). The Guardian newspaper described the declaration as "Lies, damn lies and GDP". "Or how Ghana went from being one of the poorest countries in the world one day to an aspiring middle-income one the next" (Smith, 2012). The World Bank's Chief Economists, Shanta Devarajan, for Africa called it "Africa's statistical tragedy" (para 2, 2012). There is the apparent link to opinion conformity or self-promotion in the sycophantic interpretation of national policy, and perhaps, allowing statistical expertise to succumb to the direction and mischievous political goals of the ruling class. The fact still remains; the purchasing power of the citizenry then and now renders the label pre-mature. It is not uncharitable to say it would take an inordinate amount of time, or may never happen, for Ghana to arrive at a good economic station as a high middle-income nation like Malaysia. For example, as long as the people continue to employ sycophancy as a mandatory national pathway to policy analysis, appointments into the public service, job retention, promotion, and many other considerations for the re-distribution of the national wealth. Such conduct has contributed significantly to the under-development of the nation since its independence to this day as well as the humongous institutional corruption cases reported in the news media so frequently. Many of such cases are active court cases being tried not only by the Attorney-General's office, but by the Office of Special Prosecutor, (OSP); Economic and Organized Crime Office, (EOCO); and the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justices, (CHRAJ) in the various national courts of competent jurisdiction. In the civil service domain, the actions of a multitude of the workers, turns them into political and economic sycophants and partisan public servants. This allows them to deploy public assets, time and other resources to prosecute the planned actions of their political masters such as the incumbent Vice President using official vehicles, petrol and other assets to campaign for political office while still working as the designated vice-present of Ghana as was seen in 2024 by the then sitting Vice-President, Dr. M. Bawumia. For example, the Public Relations Officer for the "Movement for Change", Mr. Solomon Owusu,

filed a petition in the office of the Special Prosecutor in September of 2025, to investigate the sources of funds for over 300 pickup trucks Bawumia, Vice President of Akufo-Addo until 2025, January 6th which were allegedly purchased by the New Patriotic Party campaign. Apart from Mr. Owusu's actions, no other person raised any issues about what the then Vice President's actions with respect to his acquisition of the 300 pickup trucks. Such developments provide inculpatory evidence to support the notion proffered by this paper that identity and ethnic politics promote sycophancy.

II. Deepening Sycophancy through Identity Politics and Ethnicity

There appears to be a strong link between identity politics and sycophancy, in the sense that, both concepts tilt towards relational abuses and exploitation for selfish gains. "Identity politics has deleterious effect on nationalism and patriotism because it promotes bigoted group interests over the national interests and disincentivizes volunteerism, altruism and the pursuit of supererogational initiatives" (Norman, 2023, pp. 8-10, 2024).

Fukuyama's thesis in his book, *Identity: The Demand for Dignity and Politics of Presentment*, (2018), talks about the apparent decay of American institutions due to the fact that major parts of these institutions have been "progressively captured by powerful interest groups and locked into a rigid structure that (is) unable to reform itself" (Fukuyama, 2018, p. 6). Though he was speaking about American society, probably more specifically during the administration of Donald Trump's first term, it resonates with Ghana's political portraiture under both the NDC and NPP governments but more under the NPP's Akufo Addo's administration, in terms of the systematic destruction of nationalism in favor of tribal identity politics. This is because of the undue attention these two political parties pay to special interest groups, issues of consanguinity and the doling of opportunities and contracts to affiliates and associates, including ex-lovers. Ghana is also guilty of "populist nationalism", where "the leaders seek to use the legitimacy conferred by democratic elections to consolidate power", "by claiming direct charismatic connection to the people, who are often defined in a narrow ethnic terms (of being either Ewe, during J. J. Rawlings' NDC administration; Ashanti, during J. A. Kufuor's NPP; Gonja, during John D. Mahama's first NDC administration or, Akyem during Akufo Addo's NPP administrations respectively) that exclude big parts of the collective nation" (Fukuyama, 2018, p. 7). Political parties self-describe as social movements with the aim of changing the status quo through new approaches (Norman, 2023, p. 10).

Ghana is "a multicultural, multi-ethnic, religious and political society represented by majority of its tribal make-up of the Akan, Ewe, Mole-Dagbani, Guan, Ga Adangbe, Grusi, and the Mande-Busanga (Ghana Statistical Service, 2000, 2010, 2022). Ghana also boasts of inter-ethnic, inter-tribal marriages, cooperation and co-existence that projects strong inter-tribal bonds despite the heterogeneity of the nation. However, some researchers apportion blame for tribalistic conduct to colonial history, with the assertion that "ethnic rivalries during the colonial era, the effect of colonialism on different groups and regions, coupled with the uneven distribution of social and economic amenities in both the colonial and post-independence period, have all contributed to the inequalities, and to some extent, some of the present-day ethnic tensions within and among the various ethnic groups in the country" (Asante & Gyimah-Boadi, 2004, p. 7). To these researchers, nationalism, perhaps, has never been part of the cognitive awareness of the people of Ghanaians when it comes to their collective sense of statehood. [...] This is certainly not borne out by the narrative of the independence struggle. They further alleged that the Akans in the South appear to have overwhelming economic and resource advantage over the Northern sector. In addition, there exists the perception that there is "a divide in Ghanaian politics between the populist and the elite strands in society and between the rural and urban populations" (p. 7). Their argument continues thus, due to the apparent superior resource and material advantage the South appears to have over all other parts of the nation, there has been seemingly constant North-South flow of migration. "The North-South flow of migration is emblematic of the ethno-regional inequalities that have developed in Ghana since colonial times when infrastructural development and productive projects had been concentrated in the South and left the North relatively underdeveloped" (Asante & Gyimah-Boadi, 2004, p. 8). But the north-south flow of migration is independent of infrastructural development in any nation because migration is part of the inquisitive impulses of man (Norman, 2023).

Note that the view expressed by Asante and Gyimah-Boadi in 2004 was the prevailing perception of researchers and scholars in discussing the differential disparities among the regions in Ghana. The reality is that, there are many swaths of the South that also suffer from differential inequalities such as those communities in the South of the Volta Region. In their paper, Kwabla, Norman, Kweku, et al., (2015), conducted Investigation into the Perceived Neglect of the Volta Region, Ghana, under Millennium Development Goal 7. MDG goal #7 had four dimensions, which were: the integration of the participation of the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs and reverse the loss of environmental resources. The second goal was to reduce biodiversity loss, achieving by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss. Third goal was to halve by 2015,

the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. The final goal was to achieve by 2020 a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers in the respective countries. Water and Sanitation issues considerations fall under Goal # 7.

In that study, the authors found that, “many households in the region at both rural and urban places and spaces had no in-door, built-in toilet facilities. Waste management at the municipal and household level was a challenge. Open defecation and reckless discharge of domestic waste were twin threats to the public health in the region. This study validated the earlier suspicion that the Volta Region was being neglected in terms of the provision of basic social and communal amenities. The MDG goal #7 was not attained with respect to the Volta Region and most of Ghanaian communities with similar vulnerabilities by 2015 due to the actual neglect of the region” (p. 3-5). These challenges are identical to the sanitation and environmental neglect of the Northern Region as evidence in the South. Similar findings have been noted in the Central Region, Western Region, Ashanti Region and Bono, Ahafo and other regions, (Kwabla, et al., 2015, p. 6-7). Although on paper, the government of Ghana produced flowery achievements reporting that it achieved most of the targets, it also at the same time reported that, the country is still faced with series of problems towards actualizing these goals in some parts of the country most especially in the rural areas” (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). In addition, government was not able to eradicate extreme poverty, “that the chance of improvement in the three Northern regions that are below the target is high due to the review of poverty in the regions (Olasupo, & Plaatjie, 2016, p. 628).

Additionally, Asante and Gyimah-Boadi (2004, p. 11) appear to have anchored their paper on conflictual internal disconnection with the exposition that, “four decades into independence, inequalities are still pervasive in Ghana society”. That, “the Akan dominance of the political system has largely persisted from Nkrumah’s time to the present, notwithstanding the perception that, the Rawlings’ Provisional National Defence Council, (PNDC) had ushered in a new period of Ewe predominance, especially in politics and in the public sector” (p. 9 – 10). The trouble with their paper is that, it appears to have lost its focus or the right nomenclature to characterize the nature of identity politics in Ghana and the key actors that play defining roles in a political system designed by default or with intentionality to benefit first the political elite and subsequently, symbolically benefit the vulnerable and the economically disenfranchised members of society. Noticed that, “even if the claims of an emergent Ewe dominance were valid for the 1980’s and 1990’s, the pattern appears to have been reversed with the coming into power of the New Patriotic Party, (NPP) government, which is largely perceived as a pro-Akan government” (Asante & Gyimah-Boadi, 2004).

II.1 Sycophancy, Tribal Mafioso and Corrupt Officeholders in the upper echelon of Ghana’s political class

A government of family and friends, as was noticed during Akufo-Addo’s eight-year administration, created the fertile ground for sycophancy as the prevailing public value to be observed not only those with common bloodlines and affinity, but all public workers. It led to a dangerous uptick in corruption by government leaders, officeholders and presidential appointees, and propelled the nation into huge domestic and external debts. During Akufo-Addo’s administration, Ghana performed badly on the Afrobarometer corruption indices of 2020, 2021, and 2022. Before getting into the details of corruption related offences by officeholders under ex-President Akufo Addo as a case study, it is important to also take note of the types of sycophants that emerged out of each of the Presidents Ghana has ever had. In Ghana, tribal mafioso is another word for tribal sycophants, who, due to tribal politics, cannot simply see or notice any harm their tribe’s man at the helm of affairs of the nation does or can do.

“Identity predicts attitudes towards activities such as trade”, employment opportunities, access to finance, and so on, “with different salience in different political, economic and cultural environment”, “after accounting for a host of other individual-specific, economic variables” (Grossman & Helpmann, 2021, p. 1102 - 1103). By packing large number of his family and friends, Akufo-Addo’s government did not only normalize nepotism, corruption and tribal politics, but also weaponized sycophantic and obscurantist propaganda to clear those suspected of corrupt activities to be clean and moral. “Sycophancy in governance occurs when performance of legitimate functions of government is erroneously exaggerated to invoke unwarranted stream of praises on a public officeholder of government in power”. The practice [...] is “deceitful, misleading and highly opinionated” and “beguiles the masses to believe failed government actions, which a sycophant points in different colors and [...] makes government wane significantly in integrity” as it happened to the Akufo-Addo’s government from January 7th, 2017 through Janu’ 6th, 2024 (Okibe, 2020, pp. 144-171; Sinha, 2016). Unfortunately, the outcome of this investigation does not reveal that a paradigm shift may happen any time soon.

2. Method and Methodology

The case-study method was used. The principal case is Ghana. The reason for choosing Ghana as a case for this work is simply due to its self-approbation of being the first nation in Sub-Saharan Africa to be independent from colonial rule in 1957. Despite the attainment of this feat, Ghana's political and economic development has been retarded by mismanagement, corruption and sabotage by its own political leaders, with the elite class and assisted by rent-seeking intellectuals and opportunism. The middle-class value system is probably the least admired value system in the nation, like the bourgeoisies that Franz Fanon described in his seminal book *The Wretched of the Earth*, (1961), where consequentialism takes precedence over established moral norms. This has morphed into what is generally referred to as Sycophancy. The conduct of sycophancy has been a predominant social burden in Ghana, within the intersectionality of dealing with the key actors in the nation with the intention to enhance their social mobility and self-efficacy by kowtowing to the political power and officeholders, whether the governance system is under military or civilian administration. The observed political reality of sycophancy in Ghana, required this investigation to be conducted in order to diagnose the national predisposition towards sycophantic tendencies and behavior, which undermines accountability and transparency in the governance system.

The methodological approach of phenomenology, buttressed by ethnographic information adopted, enabled the author to investigate the motivations for sycophancy in the broader Public Service sector. The author has been an active participant in the affairs of the nation in academia for the past twenty years, hotel and building industries, the national security services, and the legal profession for considerable length of time. As a general observation, sycophancy exists in the perambulations of life in Ghana, without regard to whether the phenomenon exists out of necessity or the need to sustain life and well-being. Although sycophancy destroys a part of the self-esteem of the perpetrator, like most moral conundrums, it is justified by the perpetrators, or the practitioners on the reasoning that, in so long as beneficial reward can be extracted in a deontological sense, sycophancy is allowed into the mundane affairs of the people.

Specially designed phrases were used to search for pertinent literature opportunistically, such as "Do Ghanaians believe they have bootlicking predisposition?" "How does the Ghanaian worker see his relationship with officeholders?" "Is the deferential reception of political leaders' or officeholders' direction, evidence of sycophancy?" "How do Ghanaians manage loyalty-competency trade off in role assignment", "Is possibility of re-shuffle or being made to proceed on leave another cause for sycophancy?" "Are Ghanaian workers "weak", "strong" or simply "Yes-men and women"? "Why do public workers promote the political goals of officeholders?" After the selected papers were read and analyzed, important citations or knowledge were used as guide to inform the focus and expanse of this paper. Appropriate cases in the public annals of Ghana's political and media space were relied on to give consideration to deep analysis of pertinent aspects of the topic. Due to the use of phenomenological and ethnographical approaches adopted for this work, the discussion section has been combined with the results section for efficiency and brevity.

3. Result and Discussions

I. Overview of the Findings

The results are fused with the discussions; to avoid repetition and to place the empirical findings in the proper political and sociological context. One cannot discuss the issue of sycophancy without using both subjective and objective appraisal skills in analyzing the phenomenon within the geographical location of the event and the strengths and weaknesses of the key actors, the community and the underlying legal and constitutional framework. As has already been mentioned in the introduction, the emergence of sycophancy in the political economy can be traced to the content of Chapter Eight of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, mandating the power to appoint and fire to the executive with the statement in Article 57(1) that, "There shall be a President of the Republic of Ghana who shall be the Head of the State and Head of Government and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ghana". All appointments, emoluments and fringe benefits are vested in the mandate given to the President in Articles 70 and 71 and their related subclauses in the 1992 Constitution. Sycophancy, is not only a social construct but constitutional and legal constructs which may not put any blame on the citizens for operating within the confines of the framework that negatively and positively affect their autonomy, professional progression, and personal flourishing.

The findings from the phenomenological and ethnographical investigation into sycophancy as a tool for upward mobility, self-efficacy and resilience, situate the analysis on survival and economic hardships experienced by the Ghanaian population over a long period of time. Some of the findings are painfully real, when viewed from the historicity of the outcomes of conduct of the national political elites. Sycophants are not born but nurtured by the environment within the society to assume those characteristics. Two key points can be raised as the causal agents

for the promotion of sycophancy in the case of Ghana, which may be similar to how the phenomenon became a fad in many other African nations:

- a). the first observation emanated from the events that occurred after Kwame Nkrumah's deliberate suppression of the autonomy of the citizens of Ghana through fear with him as the authority figure by;
 - i. Using the Preventive Detention Act of 1958 as the instrument of intimidation, arrest, and
 - ii. Detention without trial, causing opponents to
 - iii. Flee into exile and,
 - iv. Simply comply with any order given by any officeholder

- b). The second observation also arose from the Military rule, which also
 - i. Introduced extreme fear in the populace through the
 - ii. Firing squad of Judges, Military Generals who were previously Heads of States of Ghana; and
 - iii. Public exhibitionism of parading captains of industries suspected of being rich by stripping them naked in public; or
 - iv. Whipping them with canes and belt in public to disgrace and punished them for all to see.

These activities were purely Niccolo Machiavellian (1531) inspired, very brutish, and achieved the purposes for which it was deployed. The developments emerging out of military takeovers, back to civilian rule and back again to military takeovers, helped to negatively frame the intersectional relationships of the population with the political, military and civilian elites since independence in 1957. This lasted through twenty-five year long stretch of military regimes, interspaced with two short-lived civilian rules of Kofi Abrefa Busia, from (1.10.1969 – 1.13.1972). Ignatius Kutu Acheampong disrupted Busia's regime with the National Redemption Council. Hilla Liman from (9.24.1979 – 12.31.1981). In December 1981, Rawlings longest military rule started with the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC), which ruled until January 7, 1993 when Constitutional system began to take hold until now. "Yes Sir, Sir", or "Yes Sir, Madam", are common parlance in all security agencies and military bases. When military men and women are running the country, they do so with a mixture of despotism, authoritarianism and democracy, which renders the entire nation as order takers, "Yes men and women", because the entire nation becomes a type of a military base and with coercive practices in interpersonal and intra-organizational conflict management. The civilians more or less, and for survival, adapt the military language, as part of coping mechanism, when the system is under military rule. From that moment on, transitioning to becoming a "Yes man or woman" and demurring to superior authority, is only a matter time, through acculturalization, cultural appropriation and misappropriation.

I.1. Proof of Concept

Proof of concept as articulated above which ascribes the growth of sycophancy to both the prolonged military rule and Kwame Nkrumah's reign is: - Ghana was prior to 1957, filled with individuals who understood their subjective rights. It was because of the collective autonomy of the population that was why they were able to bind together to fight for independence. Kwame Nkrumah noticing the power of the population soon after independence from colonial Britain, introduced the Preventive Detention Act as a direct government attack to subdue the growing sense of autonomy among the Ghanaian populations and to suppress dissension. He wanted to curtail the economic independence of captains of industry and substitute them with socialist corporate paradigm of State-run business and manufacturing enterprises. Kwame Nkrumah appears to have single-handedly destroyed the national zeal for entrepreneurship which had worked so well for Ghana since the 1400s, with state-sponsored companies and businesses. The Prevention Detention Act was introduced in 1958 barely one year after independence to ensure the voices of the opposition remained muted, and to allow the President the unfettered right to govern from a paternalistic and patriarchal standpoints. Added to the foundations laid by Kwame Nkrumah to control the autonomy of the masses, to suppress free-will, to commoditized national conduct into a form of fungible product common to all, the military regimes sealed the remaining angst of the population towards individuation, autonomy

and personalized quest for greatness and simply decided collectively to succumb to the State apparatus for direction, jobs, and agency. Hence: the birth of Diffused National Sycophancy syndrome, as buried in Articles 51, 70 and 71 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana.

I.2. The Etiology of Modern “Yes man and Yes woman” Syndrome in Ghana (1966 – 1991)

Having laid the background story to how sycophancy became an integral part of the Ghanaian culture, we proceed to delve deeper into the phenomenon as a matter of universal concern for Africa and, perhaps, the world. Sycophancy is about pursuing parochial interests as raised by some researchers like Okibe, (2020) in Nigeria and Nebo, (2025) in Liberia in the African context. In other places where authoritarianism is the main system of governance as raised by Svolik, (2012) and Baturo, (2023), sycophancy has a more dynamic fervor and operates in a multilayered way, where it is not only the President of the nation that may be idolized, but also surrogates of the Presidents such as political appointees and even ministers of state. These players get their share of idol worshippers who come from various segments of a given society: chiefs, queen mothers, pastors, community elders, students, women and even children. In Africa, the overwhelming number of the public service workers demonstrate loyalty to the Presidents of nations first, in most public speeches and presentations whether they are speaking at a national event or international event. The speech is often started with “On behalf of the President of So and So nation ...”. Though it is not the President who directs that the appointees, civil servants, even army commandants and police chiefs and others all the way down to the lowest rank, should attribute everything to him, it is a common behavior bordering on sycophancy the more repetitive the praise is announced in a single speech. This phenomenon which even university Professors and Senior Lecturers, and some traditional leaders seeking to attract development funding to their constituencies, are also guilty of such brown-nosing behaviors. This kind of praise-singing, according to Parker and Parker (2012), reported as a “period of spectacular bowing and scraping, in which White House staff compete publicly in stroking the ego of their flattery-addicted boss”. They added, “sucking up takes a variety of forms, from petty compliment, to cloying flattery, to outright treachery”. “Sycophancy combines with other vices – hypocrisy, lying, manipulation and fraud...”

Sycophancy prevails more or so in hierarchical systems as it is in traditional societies, or as may be implied in the security agencies such as in the military and security services settings. Due to the nuanced position of the label in the security agencies, it requires a careful examination of military or police discipline in order to differentiate it from what happens in civilian settings. In a system where loyalty, obedience to the intra-organizational structural discipline and *modus vivendi*, it is not simply about sycophancy for the purposes of gaining advantage, nor is it about praises of the commanding officers or officeholders from the point of view of deceitful, misleading conduct. It is simply about the duty to obey legitimate instructions or command of the superior officer, failure of which entails disastrous professional consequences. In the security service, subservience to legitimate command to leadership helps to build a more cohesive, controlled entity, without which, there could be chaos. What happens in politics and in the corporate world in Africa, cannot be compared to the military or police disciplinary doctrine which is systematic, and can be objectively verified and independently evaluated to assess compliance. Nonetheless, there are some military and police officers as well as others in the other security agencies; from the lowest rank to the highest echelons of power, who; for the need for promotion, have managed to combine pure military or police discipline with sycophancy. In such a situation, the Civil-military or Civil-police relationship particularly with the political elites, is no longer based on objective relationships, but rather predominantly subjective controls over the entities. Huntington’s “Subjective” and “Objective” Civil-Military Relations focuses on the qualities of civil-military relations. In a way, it was to caution the professional soldier against being a sycophant, a phenomenon that is common in just about every political system, due to parochial interests and the desire for upward mobility. In *The Soldier and the State* (1956), Huntington considered the nature of the relationship between the civilian power brokers, politicians and the role of the soldier in the modern state vis-à-vis societal expectations. He cautioned that it is imperative to view Civil-Military Relations “as a system composed of interdependent elements, the principal components...” of which “... are the formal, structural position of military institutions in the government, the informal role and influence of military groups in politics and society at large, and the nature of the ideologies of military and nonmilitary groups” (Huntington, 1956a: viii). Huntington described the optimization or maximization of institutional controls over the military on one hand and under-utilization of the professional soldier on the other hand as “objective civilian controls” and “subjective civilian controls”. These phrases were meant to show the opposite ends of how the efficiencies and effectiveness of the professional soldier is supposed to be harnessed, the role he was supposed to play in collaboration with civilian authorities, and how he is supposed to conduct himself as an adviser. Huntington in a 1956 paper, *Civilian-Control and the Constitution* also provided that to ensure effective civilian control of the armed forces, and to ensure the absence of military interventions, for example, the officer corps ought to be professionalized (pp, 678-679).

Huntington's treatise adulated the modern military officer that in sum, 'the modern officer corps is a professional body and the officer a professional man' (Huntington, 1956b:7). He advocated that the process of professionalizing the officer corps entails "Objective Civilian control" within the Civil-Military Relations, which grants the Officer corps with autonomy or military expertise, political neutrality and professional competences. His "Subjective" and "Objective" demarcation of the role between the military and the civilian political powers, led to the Separation theory or model. The Separation Model of Huntington advocated for separate institutional role for political institutions and separate military institutions from the political roles in order not to civilianize the military but to professionalize the officer corps. "Subjective Civilian control" transforms the military into a tool of the State. It also civilianizes the military, which is to say, the military plays an independent role in setting national priorities. "In subjective control, the military is one among other groups contending and competing for influence in setting policy and ranking national priorities (Mandele, 2009, p. 3-4). Huntington's casting of the attributes of the professional soldier appears to fit into how the army in Ghana and those in other Common Law nations in Africa characterize their officer corps, with respect to training, hierarchy and promotions: - every facet of the development of the professional corps of the military is scripted by the Constitution of Ghana and other legislation which are, of course, in consonance with the Constitution. For an officer to be considered as a professional soldier, he ought to have specific skills-set in a specific area of the military establishment and operations. He ought to be a responsible man or woman. "Responsibility" is not limited to only the military but to the whole of society. "Corporate consciousness" deals more with commitment to duty, honesty, transparency, probity and accountability than with just been a team player or an obedient, order taker from superior officers, though those values too are part of possessing the corporate mind-set or conscience (Huntington, 1956a). At any rate, this paper is not about the civil-military relations or security services subjective or objective civil controls. The reality in Africa is that, due to the Constitutional Prescriptive controls of the security agencies, the civilian controls over the security services is more subjective than objective (Norman, 2024, 2025). From this stage onwards, the focus is turned in specific periods of massive sycophantic conduct of a significant section of the national population under certain leaderships and reign.

II. Exploring the Concept of Diffused Leadership Sycophancy: Case Study of Acts of Sycophancy under Ex-President Rawlings' military regime (Circa: 1981-1993)

Although sycophancy is a natural phenomenon in human relationships, under the Rawlings military regime, which was meant to be a house cleaning exercise essentially silenced a lot of the populace and re-enforced sycophancy. Sycophancy became more entrenched and diffused position in the political awareness of Ghanaians, due to the fear of being called to the firing squad, or stripped naked and marched across the length and breadth of city, or being publicly whipped for being corrupt. "Some innocent businessmen and women, were abhorrently humiliated and their businesses seized or destroyed by Rawlings followers" (Badu, 2024). Particularly after the firing squad of Justice Fred Poku Sarkodee, Mrs. Justice Cecilian Koranteng-Addow, and Justice Kwadwo Agyei Agyepong, together with retired army officer, Major Sam Acquah, the public's fear of the military rose to the highest octane. The population developed deeper affinity to idolizing and brown-nosing leadership through sycophancy as a means of survival, self-efficacy and resilience. To Rawlings himself, every Tom, Dick and Harry, wanted him to notice him or her as a supporter or admirer and followed him with the commitment of a captive audience, as if operating under the Stockholm Syndrome. The reasons for the murder or killing of the judges is generally agreed to be politically related.

At any rate, the stretch of the military regimes in Ghana beginning from 1966 through to 1991, a period of a quarter of a century, made sycophancy part of the survival skills of Ghanaians. Psychologically, the Ghanaian population was already prepared for parochialism by the foundations laid by Kwame Nkrumah's regime for the mistrust of one's neighbor due to the effect of the Preventive Detention Act. Nkrumah's security apparatus arrested "enemies of the regime" based on reports given by neighbors, friends and relatives of those declared as enemies of progress. Those victims were imprisoned without trial for years, all due to reports given on them by their friendship, neighbors and even family members. This event with singularity heightened parochial interests and self-efficacy of the population from harm. The most powerful driving force was the fear of being lined up at the military shooting range along Kpeshie-Teshie link road or at Bundase Military Training Camp and being shot for stealing, embezzling state funds and many other reasons, such as hoarding of provisions such as sardine, milk, toilet role or sugar, although none was shot by the regime for these reasons (Clark, 1984; 1979, pp. 57-59). "Price control and related commercial issues have been among the most controversial national political issues in Ghana" (p. 1). AFRC accused General Akuffo's government for not dealing with the perpetrators of corruption. The housecleaning

exercise started with government officials, private formal sector enterprises [...] and market traders, and hit those traders with the least resources to survive such attacks... (Clark, 1984; 1979, p. 58-60).

Official and semi-official violence reached levels unknown since the days of party politics. Price control offenders were officially beaten, caned and flogged naked and unofficially shaved with broken bottles. One was shot. Rumors circulated about women who had miscarried or had babies beaten to death on their backs. Traders who had taken previous economic losses philosophically became obsessed with repeating these stories of beatings and humiliations (Clark, 1984, p. 62).

“Yes men” and “Yes women” syndrome in Ghana today as it is now known and understood to be, appears to be part of the legacy of the twenty-five year-long military regime imposed on Ghana by a section of the Ghana Armed Forces personnel in the past.

Sycophancy as a dynamic social trait, traditionally does not run in a bifurcated direction, but runs in one-way between the ruled and the ruler. Or, runs between the officeholder and the subordinate. However, it can turn into a multi-directional phenomenon, when it is combined with advocacy, where the one being idolized, succumbs to the seduction of the idolizing masses or the idolized is motivated by the need to respond to masses’ demands, to trigger heightened praise-singing and social acceptability. Political leaders can fall victim to sycophantic tendencies, where their own morality, leadership, performance and discipline become subjects of criticism by falling victim to satisfying unreasonable demands of the masses. When the ruler falls victim to sycophancy, he often moves in tandem with the ruling class or the parliamentarians, many of whom are already political sycophants to the Presidency or political leadership. This creates a serious leadership dilemma since at that critical point, there is virtually no one in charge of the affairs of the nation. This also means the ruler has lost control of reality, wisdom and critical decision-making ability to decipher what is good from what is bad. The ruler may take drastic steps to decapitate the opposition, silence dissent, kill judges and others perceived as “strong” voices or members of the populace. The Cronies Influences over leaders has been the bane of the demise of many leaders whose programs for success were abated midway and deviation from the direction which could have led to greater dividends (Nebo, 2025; Fratiloiu, et al., 2023; Harsh, 2017). The killing of the Generals in the history of Ghana marks a period of Diffused Leadership Sycophancy in the military-civil relationships with disastrous consequences to the military than the weight of the guilt placed on the civilians “*ex post facto*” or “*post factum*”.

II.1. Case Study of Sycophancy under Ex-President Kufour’s Democratic regime, (Circa: 1.7.2001-1.7.2009)

Ex-President John Agyekum Kufuor’s administration was not spared the allegations of the existence of both Asante-Manhyia Mafioso/Sycophants, on the account of the fact that many of his appointees were from these locations. This was based on the power struggle divide within the NPP government between the Asante/Manhyia-Kumasi Mafia and Akyem Mafia associated with Kufuor and Akufo-Addo respectively. Both of these the two capos have been disputed vehemently by supporters from each wing as well as NPP party (Okoampa-Ahoofe, Jr., 6.25.2020). The supporters and parliamentarians of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) were generally accused as being sycophants because they did not resist or speak against some of the unpopular decisions taken by Kufuor to increase fuel and utility tariffs by as much as 200% according to Kwadow Mpiani, former Chief of Staff for Kufuor (Sangaparee, 2023, 22. Dec). Speaking to the degree of sycophancy in Kufuor’s government, Mr. Mpiani, is reported to have said “everyone in the NPP became a sycophant”. This is because, according to him, “they looked on even when things were going bad but could not tell truth to power”. That, “since everyone wanted to be in the good books, they could not say it to his face when things were wrong”, [...] “those who could speak up, were made outcasts and described as individuals who did not like the President and the government”. These statements were made during interview on Good Morning Ghana (Modernghana, 2025). Leadership becomes weak in correcting the infractions and criminal deeds of their devoted and sycophantic followers and appointees. Key officers and appointees of Kufuor’s government were accused of buying up previous state houses and properties in the Ridge and Roman Ridge areas of Accra, and some others in East Legon, but no investigations were conducted to verify the allegations. It appears the NPP’s internal politics is fraught with many fractured fractals in a network of forces that end up in isolated silos of power bases within the party due to intra-party conflicts.

When it comes to speaking truth to power to counteract government conduct that is inimical or pernicious to development, democracy and the rule of law, most of Ghana’s intellectuals and opinion leaders are not only cowardly but a significant portion of them is also dangerously nonchalant, while others are obscurantist (Spivak, 1988). Most importantly, the conduct of a great number of the judges in Ghana appears to undermine national development, the interests of the nation and the majority of the people of Ghana. This assertion is based on the

general observation that a significant number of Ghana's Judges have the propensity to support government's position, act and decide cases on partisan lines than any other interests, unless the position of the government is by all subjective and objective standards clearly indefensible. It is believed that if the judiciary in Ghana was strong, non-partisan and truly independent and, perhaps, and not as corrupt as they are perceived to be, the political class would have been more accountable to the people and normative ethical values of the Ghanaian public would have been observed more intimately. Partisan interpretation of the laws in Ghana, led the Minister of National Security, Albert Kan Dapaah to caution Ghanaian Judges to stop taking "one-sided approach". The caution was issued at a meeting with the judiciary to discuss the role of the judiciary in Ghana's national security architecture. In addition, "if you [judges] are going to be able to address security challenges that we have, especially the domestic ones, we need to ensure that there is a judicial system that works. If you do not have a judicial system that works, many people will simply take the laws into their own hands and misbehave and do what they want". He added that, "if the interpretation of the law is tilted in governments favor all the time, people will start accusing the judiciary and will not have the confidence that they need" (Kan-Dapaah, 2022; Transparency International, 2022, Afrobarometer Institutions and Leadership Survey, 2022, Norman, 2023). The expression "speaking truth to power" invokes the courageous confrontation of establishment order or authority, calling out injustice, abuse of power, corruption, embezzlement, or neglect of duty such as poorly resourcing health facilities in the nation, the abysmal conditions of some of the nations' road net-work, basic schools building and physical infrastructure while government officials ride around tarmac roads with little or no potholes in the city in four-wheel, V8 powered vehicles, and human rights abuses under their leadership with the purpose of demanding change. Its approach is non-violent, social and political tactic employed by men and women of conscience, political opponents, social activists, and change managers. In Ghana, one of the political leaders that demonstrated this concept more vividly than any other person is, probably, Kwame Nkrumah, prior to his evolution into the dictatorial entity that he later became (Serunkuma, 2023). The community organizers that came after him, whether in the political or social history of Ghana can be described as "adjunct subaltern intellectuals". This is due to the lack of continuity in their commitment to the causes they may have been known to be promoting or promoted (Gramsci, 1971).

II.2. Case Study of Ex-Presidents Evans Atta Mills (Circa: 1.7.2009 - 6.24.2012), and Ex-President and President John Dramani Mahama (Circa: 6.24.2012 – 1.7.2017, and 1.7.2024 - present)

Prof. Evans Atta Mills' government came with him the "Fanti Mafia" or sycophants, who, it was wildly alleged, owned the big houses in East Legon, also an influential as well as affluent suburb of Accra, and off the Spintex Industrial Road and in gated communities such as the Regimanual Estates. Although Prof. Mills was a more balanced moral politician, there were a few people around him who let the whole world know that they were unabashed sycophants of President Mill's. The President introduced the concept of Team A and B to describe his political appointees between 2009 and 2012. Team B was in relation to those appointees and ministers in his initial administration. It was then alleged by personalities like Ex-President and Founder of NDC, Jerry John Rawlings and also the former vice-chairman of the Party, Honorable Ekow Spio-Gabrah that the Team B appointees were not competent and that they were "mediocre" and "greedy". Both Rawlings and Gabrah were speaking truth to power. Honorable Alban Bagbin described the members of Team B as "sycophants and boot-lickers". Prof. Mills begun reshuffling his cabinet and ministerial appointments to bring into his administration the Team A players, due to increasing corruption, sycophancy and deceitful activities being perpetrated by his appointees and ministers, some of which included illegal payments to NDC financier, Alfred Woyome, the STX housing fiasco (Manu, 7.2.2012).

Prof. John Evans Atta Mills died in office half way through his administration and this misfortune paved the way for the emergence of the alleged "Gonja Mafia", led by Mr. John Dramani Mahama as the President of Ghana. Mr. Mahama ruled Ghana until December 6th, 2016, and when Mr. Mahama left office, he allegedly left with the Gonja Mafia. But his too was accused of buying up the lands in East Legon and building large multileveled buildings to display their new found wealth in the armpit of Burma Camp as well as the questionable acquisition of the Merchant Bank, once a public bank owned by the government of Ghana.

President John Dramani Mahama was defeated in the 2016 general elections in a way which just about everyone thought that was the death-knoll to his political ambitions. His first administration was labeled with scandals including the Ameri Power deal which was alleged that his brother, Ibrahim Mahama stood to gain from the \$600 million sole-sourcing and inflated contract. There was the Bus branding saga, where in 2015, some 116 Metro Mass Transit buses were rebranded at a cost of GHs3.6 million, leading to the resignation of the then Minister of Transport, Ms. Dzifa Attivor in December, 2015. In 2013 Manasseh Azure Awuni's investigation revealed Gyeeda scandal, where millions of cedis were discovered to have been illegally paid to contractors of the Ghana Youth

Employment and Entrepreneurial Agency, (GYEEDA). President Mahama took steps to have payments made to contractors under GYEEDA to be retrieved, and all payments under that deal to be suspended, including setting up a committee to investigate the scandal. Yet, this was not the end of the scandals. This was soon followed by the Savannah Accelerated Development Authority (SADA) missing millions of dollars to the tune of some GHs47,498,000 involving the planting of five million trees in the savanna zone but were able to plant only 700,000 trees with the sum. Some GHs15million was meant to be invested in Guinea Fowl farm but only a few of the birds could be accounted for. The full lists contained some personal infractions on the part of the President himself, which in hindsight, may not wish to have those events repeated (Pulse, 2016). Some of such scandalous events if sycophancy was not an active part of that administration would not have occurred.

In 2024, President Dramani Mahama had the opportunity to correct the mistakes of his past administration by winning the December 7th Presidential election by huge numbers which was completely unbelievable. The NDC with President Mahama gained as much as 183 out of the 275 Parliamentary seats, which completely affirmed the total and disappointing disgust of the Ghanaian public and voters with the Akufo Addo government and his posse. The 2024 NDC Manifesto under the label, Resetting Ghana Agenda was designed to reduce sycophancy, corruption and internal political wrangling, which are very common traits in Ghana's political parties. Although President Mahama had promised to eschew "friends and family" governance conduct, evidence emerging during the first year of his second administration, has remained largely a hollow pipe dream. In addition, it is emerging that sycophancy has been part of the *modus operandi* and *modus vivendi* of the second Mahama administration, with the creeping determination of hubris and corrupt practices to the chagrin of senior party officials. On December 31, 2025, the General Secretary of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), Honorable Fiifi Fiavi Kwetey, "cautioned party members against sycophancy and the arrogance of power, urging them to remain faithful to the founding ideals of the 31st December Revolution". He quoted Ex-President Rawlings that, the ultimate aim of creating the NDC was [...] "to build a system so resilient that even a corrupt leader would be constrained by the vigilance of the people". That, "that is the bedrock of the revolution, a spirit that rejects sycophancy, rejects bootlicking and places the welfare of the people above all else" (Xornam Glover, 31.12.2025). This admonition confirms the presence of corruption and sycophancy within the ruling NDC government, perhaps, despite their best efforts. Political parties' manifestos are simply guidelines but they do not provide standards for self-assessment of the conduct of the players that implement the manifesto guidelines for better or for worse. The analysis of the history of sycophancy as a survival tool in Ghana's politics, should inform all senior political party members that sycophancy is endemic to the national political system arising out of the 1992 Constitutional framework. It shall always be present in Ghana's politics as a mechanism for coping with economic and social stressors, against the content of Articles 51, 70 and 71. This means; before any political attempts to eliminate it, the administration must first create multiplicity of jobs, to dilute the power of central government in the apportionment of opportunities and jobs for livelihoods.

II.3. Case Study of Ex-President Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo (Circa: 1.7.2017 – 1.6.2025)

Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo became the President of Ghana on January 7th, 2017 after ex-President Mahama had completed his scandal ridden first administration which definitely contributed to the NDC's political loss to the NPP. With this move came also, the "Akyem Mafias" with the determination to sing the praises of Akufo-Addo, no matter how corrupt some of his appointees became, or no matter how badly the economy was managed or how polluted the environment of the mining areas and regions would become. Galamsey mining exposed Akufo Addo as a weak and sycophantic president, who was willing to sing the praises of illegal miners at the risk of harming the Ghanaian population in exchange for political votes. Akufo Addo's presidency in the annals of Ghana's modern or current history, has probably, taken the status as the most sycophantic administration ever experienced by the people of Ghana. This is due to the negative impact of nepotism, cronies, and the involvement of "family and friends", in critical decision-making on running the nation, using subjective standards for performances and output evaluation. Such label is not subjective and merely political, due to the sheer number of his "family and friends" appointments, intolerance for criticisms, presidential and ministerial hubris, and impunity to the rule of law. The Member of Parliament for Assin Central, Honorable Kennedy Agyepong was recorded to have said, "[...] most of those he (Akufo Addo) surrounded himself with were sycophants whose sole interests was to use his name to further their corrupt agenda". Speaking on Oman FM's Polling Point, Mr. Agyepong said, "[...] part of the reasons why the National Democratic Congress lost power to the New Patriotic Party in 2016, was because of the refusal of the party members to speak out against the corrupt behavior Ibrahim Mahama" [...] and "that he will not sit and allow that to happen to" the Akufo Addo presidency. Ibrahim Mahama is the blood brother of President Dramani Mahama, who was reported to have benefited immensely from his brother's presidency between 2012 and 2016.

Mr. Agyepong added [...], “Duke Ofori Attah and Gabby Asare Otchere-Darko have hijacked the president from everyone and are using their position to engage in acts that could derail the party’s fortunes and sink the president’s image”. Both Ofori Attah and Otchere-Darko shared a consanguine relationship with Akufo Addo.

There was overwhelming evidence against Akufo-Addo for having employed too many of his relatives, family and friends, which was rapidly countered with the reasoning that, each one of those relatives, family and friends in Akufo-Addo’s government was qualified. They had been deemed qualified by the Akufo Addo, that was why they were hired, although no independent assessment was done before their hire.

“Akufo Addo’s team includes names that invoked power and money, in-built sycophancy, cronyism, nepotism, ethnic politics and abuse of office: Ken Ofori Atta, (Cousin and Minister of Finance); Gabby Okyere Darko, (Cousin but with no portfolio); Presidential Secretary and lawyer, Asante Bediatuo, (Cousin); Samuel Atta Akyea, (President’s cousin and Minister of Works and Housing); Virginia Hesse, (Ex-lover and Baby Mama of President’s daughter, now Ambassador to Czech Republic); Eno Ofori-Atta (Sister in law of Finance Minister, and appointed Deputy MD for Finance of the State Insurance Company); Alhaji Ramadan (Father-in-law of Vice President Dr. Bawumia and Father of Second Lady Samira Bawumia appointed Ghana’s Envoy to UAE); Abu Ramadan (Brother-in-law to Dr. Bawumia, and brother of Second Lady Samira Bawumia, Deputy Director General of National Disaster Management Organization); Gina Blay, (Wife of Freddy Blay, NPP Chairman till 2022, appointed Ghana’s ambassador to Germany) and many others of consanguinity and direct family relationships that were appointed in 2019 (Norman, 2023).

As a general fact of life, Mafioso, like criminal gangs, do not simply emerge and die off with the passing of one presidency to the next. They continue in the fringes of power and in the corridors of money, because they tend to be well entrenched, well-imbedded in the political system and in the stream of commerce. Considering the widespread allegations and actual records of the sheer number of related persons employed in the Akufo Addo government, it is fair to say that sycophancy destroyed Akufo Addo’s presidency massively (Grossman & Helpmann, 2021; Fukuyama, 2018; Osei, 2013; Bernstein, 2005; Asante & Gyimah-Boadi, 2004; Kriesi, Koopmans, Duyvendak & Giugni, 1995).

4. Conclusion

It is made clear in this paper that sycophants are creatures of the constitutional and legal framework of the nation. It is a phenomenon imposed on the nation by the framers of the 1992 Constitution, in the case of Ghana, with the key perpetrators of sycophantic tendencies as the Presidents of the nation. They have been given the mandate to appoint and fire thousands of workers to ministerial positions, chiefs of defence staffs, promotion in the security services to higher ranks, appointments to the broader public services agencies and institutions, from the rank of Chief Executive Officers to Directorships, Corporate Board members, appointments to foreign service jobs including those of ambassadors, chiefs of party, common embassy workers, defence attachés, mayors, district chief executives, university boards and chancelleries, and just about every conceivable public institutions, departments and agencies in Ghana. Naturally, such a design calls for lobbyist and those who cannot afford lobbyist because such personalities cannot even be trusted, they resort to boot-licking, praise-singing and un-interrogated endorsement of officeholders despite their performances. Instead of adopting meritocratic standards of appointments, the Presidents of Ghana, from Kwame Nkrumah through the self-imposed military leaders and their reign; to J. J. Rawlings; John Agyekum Kufuor; Professor Evans Fifi Atta Mills; to Akufo Addo and back to President John Dramani Mahama even today, each of these men had or has appointed significant number of ‘square pegs’ and put them in ‘round holes’. In addition, each of these Presidents has appointed “friends and family” members into their government as if it is part of the norms of government in Ghana, justified on political party affiliations, consanguinity, loyalty and identity politics of ethnicity and religious affinities. This is a huge part of the reasons for the systemic mediocre performances of the public institutions, and the persistent overall under-development of the nation. In every political business cycle, the history of perpetrating sycophancy repeats itself, despite the public declarations by these Presidents that they are not running “family and friends” government. The mere political rhetoric against the practice is not going to cure the conduct because it is linked to the individual’s sense of self-efficacy, personal protection motivation and the pursuit of *eudaimonia*.

It has also been noted in this paper: if society wants to get rid of sycophantic tendencies, then there ought to be a constitutional delimitation of the mandate to appoint and fire given to the presidency, and that more economic opportunities should, by necessity, be created for the people of Ghana to compete for jobs and positions, rather than relying on officeholders for upward mobility, self-efficacy and resilience.

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