

**AFRICA CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES**  
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GABERONES, BOTSWANA

## **OVERSIGHT MECHANISMS & INSTITUTIONS**

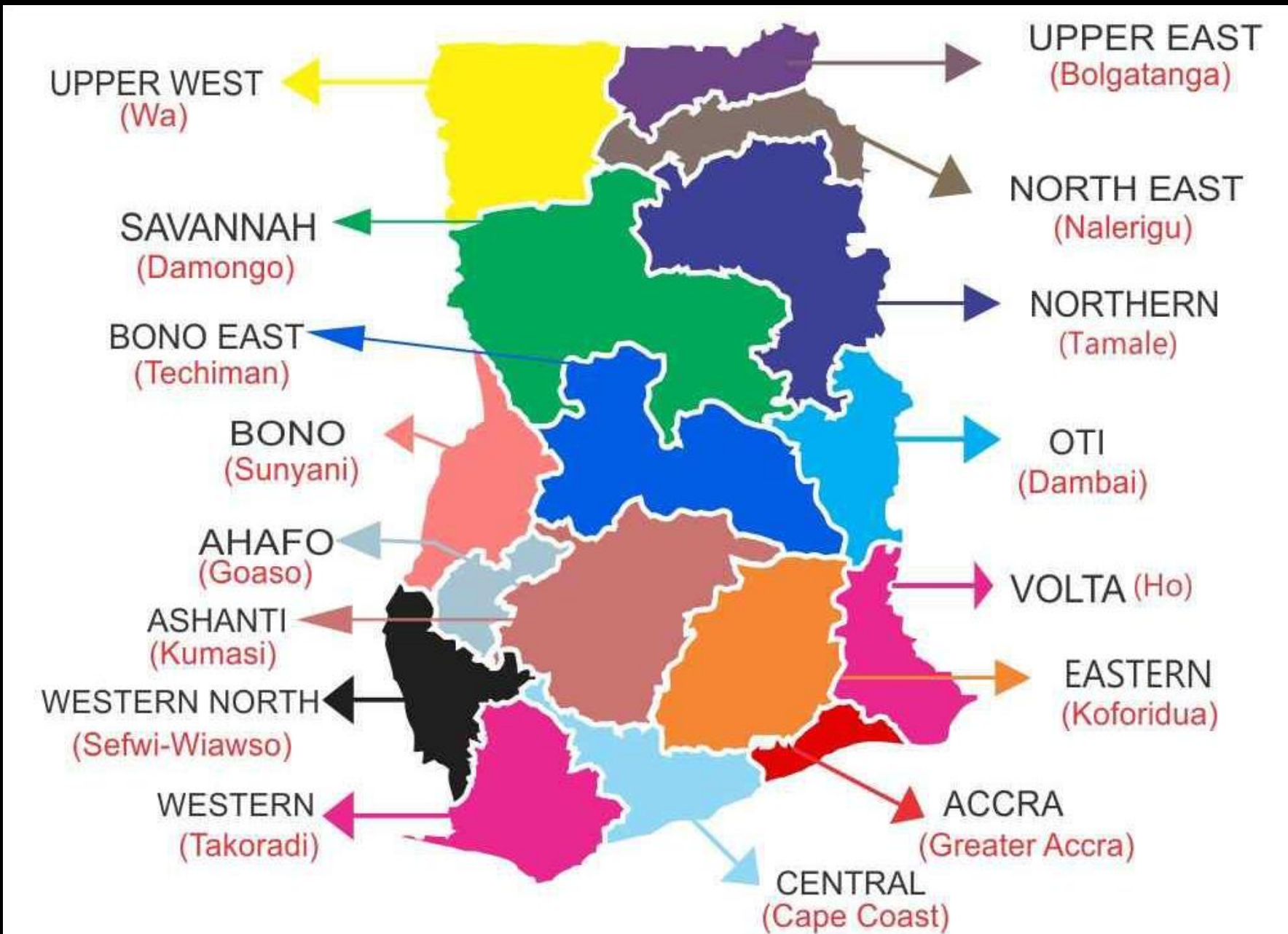
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# Introduction

- 8 years as a Member of the Parliament of the Republic of Ghana
- Served on various Select and Standing Committees
- Immediate past Chair of the Select Committee on Defense and Interior

# The Republic of Ghana (Regions & Capitals)



# Parliament

- Parliament: 275 members who elect a Speaker every new term
  - Speaker is not a Member of Parliament
  - Speaker assisted by 2 deputy Speakers (MPs from different political parties)
- Business in parliament is undertaken mainly on two fronts
  - Plenary sitting in the Chamber: often in full view of public
  - Committee meetings: normally held in camera
- 2 main types of Committees:
  - Standing Committees
  - Select Committees
- Committees established at 1st meeting of every session
- Parliament of Ghana: 14 Standing Committees and 16 Select Committees

# Parliament (Continued)

Ghana's Constitution mandates Parliamentary Committees with "powers, rights and privileges of the High Court or a Justice of the High Court" at a trial for:

- a) Enforcing the attendance of witnesses and examining them on oath, affirmation or otherwise;
- b) Compelling the production of documents;
- c) Issuing a commission or request to examine witnesses abroad (Act 103, Article 6)

# Parliamentary Select Committee On Defense & Interior

Ministries, Departments & Agencies under Select Committee:

- Ministry of Defense
  - responsible for Ghana Armed Forces—Army, Navy and Air Force.
- Ministry of Interior
  - responsible for Police Service, Immigration Service, Prisons Service, Fire Service, National Disaster Management Organization, Economic & Organized Crime Office, Narcotics Control Board, Small Arms Commission, Gaming Commission and Peace Council.
- The Ministry of National Security
  - responsible for National Security Agency and Bureau of National Investigations.

# How does Parliamentary Select Committee On Defense & Interior work?

- 19 members—10 from majority caucus, 9 from minority parties
- Majority group provides chair and vice-chair
- Minorities provide ranking and deputy ranking members
- Decisions mostly through deliberations and consensus
- Regular visits made to Ministries, Departments and Agencies
- Meetings also held with Command staff, other ranks and personnel
- Some committee members travel to countries where Ghanaian contingents are deployed.

# Institutional Memory and Training

- Members of Parliament are a transient group
- Retention of institutional memory is vital to work of parliament
- Clerks of Parliament are well qualified and subject to constant training
- Daily record of sittings—the Hansard—is a valuable source of information for Committees
- Committee members attend conferences and seminars



# Oversight Institutions Outside Parliament

## **National Development Planning Commission (NDPC)**

- Presidential appointees and representatives from key government agencies
- “to make proposals for the protection of the natural and physical environment” and to “monitor, evaluate and coordinate policies, programs and projects.”
- A strategic partner and participant in every sphere of government endeavor
- Plays a major quality assessment and assurance role in governance system, including defense and security sector

## **Auditor-General’s Department**

- Function: to audit every public entity
- The Auditor-General’s annual report is used by Public Accounts Committee in Parliament to investigate anomalies and malfeasance.

## **Civil Society Organizations and the media**

# Challenges

- Unbridled political partisanship
- Large numbers of unemployed youth who can easily be recruited to exacerbate civil strife
- Weak government institutions starved of the necessary logistics and inputs thus making them functionally ineffective,
- Wanton corruption which leaches much needed resources for implement policies and projects for positive national development.

# Conclusion

- Constant interaction with all major stakeholders concerned: the military, police and other security agencies.
- Formal and informal meetings with Ministers, top brass, security personnel and the general public
- Fact-finding and inspection visits to facilities, areas of operations, etc.
- Parliamentarians should also avail themselves of opportunities to meet with and exchange ideas with colleagues from other regions
- Monitoring and evaluation mode of parliamentary work can be enhanced by employing qualified backroom and research staff and seeking the input of specialists and experts in relevant fields of endeavor.
- There must be sustained upgrading of knowledge base of all stakeholders.
- Finally, Parliament must seek consensus amongst members, based on the work of its committees.