

The State of Political Party Development in Ghana

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Introduction

Ghana—the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to gain independence from British colonial rule, on 6 March 1957—remains the trailblazer of democratic governance in the continent. Except during periods of military interregnums that truncated the development of democracy, even if temporarily, multi-party politics has dominated much of Ghana's political history. Vibrant party politics had taken root as early as 1947 with the creation of the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) by Dr J. B. Danquah, from which the Convention People's Party (CPP) was formed in 1949 by Kwame Nkrumah. Although subsequent political competition before and during the immediate post-independence epoch recorded the appearance of dozens of parties with different interests that put stress on the political process, only the UGCC and CPP traditions have prevailed. Even when party politics was resurrected with the third wave of democratization that surfaced in the early 1990s, the parties that emerged have all had at least one leg in either the UGCC, CPP, or both. Therefore, the vibrant political party engagements that characterized post-democratization politics in Ghana owed much to the two parties' traditions. While the parties affiliated to Nkrumah's CPP have splintered¹ and only the New Patriotic Party (NPP) is historically UGCC, its arch-rival, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) is a conglomeration of the two traditions (see Figure 25.1). Its life leader, Jerry John Rawlings, until his demise in 2020, sought to propagate Nkrumahism as his political agenda in the 1980s; while doing so, he also attracted support from those among the Danquahist family. Indeed, the elite that ushered the country into multi-party politics in 1992 carried the political tags of these two traditions. Hence, the Constitution

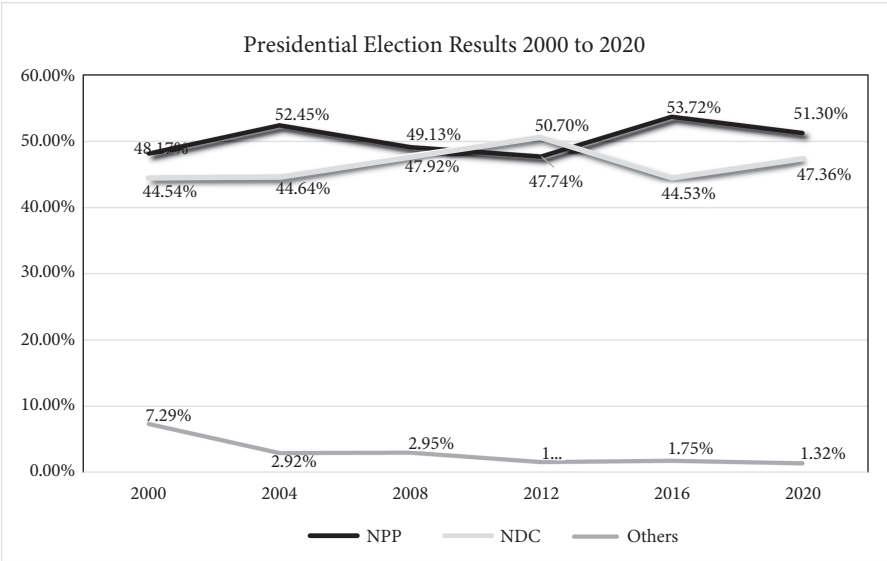


Figure 25.1 The performance of political parties in presidential elections, 2000–2022: The two main contending parties

NPP—New Patriotic Party; NDC—National Democratic Congress

Source: The Electoral Commission of Ghana

promulgated in 1992, although liberal, also embodies the social principles of equality and elements of a just society.

Political parties are prominent among the institutions that have influenced progress towards democratic consolidation in Ghana since the return of multi-party governance in 1992. Although regarded as organized voluntary and informal groups, political parties in Ghana have exerted great influence over various facets of the democratic process. Besides shaping the decision-making process for the management and distribution of the nation's wealth, they are instrumental in orienting the people's behaviour and attitudes regarding democratic norms and values that are necessary for political stability and development. They also provide the structure to incubate the political ambitions of the elite and harness their potential for national political offices. Through their political education programmes, the parties have mobilized the electorate to respond to their civic duties of participation in national decision making. The relatively high voter turnout at the polls every four years exemplifies their effective voter education programmes (see Table 25.1). Thus, through their progressive participatory activities, the parties have ensured that elections have become the only acceptable mechanism to legitimize the assignment of national leaders to political offices. Indeed,

Table 25.1 Ghana's Core Political Party System Indicators

Year of elections	ENEP	ENPP	Voter turnout (%)
2000	2.35	2.19	61.19
2004	2.21	2.10	85.12
2008	2.19	2.12	69.52
2012	2.13	2.04	80.01
2016	1.98	1.89	67.55
2020	2.00	2.01	77.83

ENEP—effective number of electoral parties; ENPP—effective number of parliamentary parties; Turnout—percentage of the share of all registered voters

Source: IDEA (2022); International Foundation for Elections Systems (2022); compiled by authors

today, the parties' platforms are the only legitimate arenas to confer political power on national leaders as well as ensure their removal. Leaning on their particularistic ideologies, the parties have intermediated and created opportunities to aid upward social and political mobility through elite consensus, which, albeit limited, can help to sustain the new democratic order.

The Legal Regime for Party Development

In democratic jurisdictions, party systems are shaped by the legal system. Thus, the nature of the party system in a country depends largely on the prevailing legal regime. In Ghana, political parties' existence and authority are rooted in the national Constitution. The 1992 Constitution remains the supreme legal framework that defines the character and functions of political parties. Important provisions in the Constitution have established the institutional architecture for the effective functioning and growth of political parties. Most importantly, they provide the freedom to form political parties and ensure the unrestricted rights of all citizens to make their own decisions regarding which party to associate with. The Political Parties Act, 2000 (Act 574), has guaranteed the parties' role in national development. While individuals are free to associate to form a political party, they must formalize it through the legislative process. An organization qualifies to be registered by the Electoral Commission as a political party when it has promulgated a constitution and established the names and addresses of all national officers, who must be registered Ghanaian voters (at least one from each constituency). The party must present evidence of the party's presence in all regions and

not less than two-thirds of the districts/constituencies. Moreover, the party must provide its name, emblem, colour, motto, and symbol, which must bear no ethnic, regional, religious, or sectional connotations or identities in accordance with the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana. Upon satisfying these legislative requirements, a certificate of registration is issued by the Electoral Commission (see Article 55 (7) of the 1992 Constitution). These laws (the 1992 Constitution and Act 574) as well as other legislative instruments provide a sound enabling environment for parties to conduct their lawful activities.

Party Organizational Life

Political parties in Ghana are organizationally structured. At least three levels of the party structure may be discerned, namely, the national, regional, and constituency levels with sub-constituency structures only existing as offshoots of the constituency. The formal structures of both the NDC and NPP provide for five to six clusters of organizations at the branch, ward, constituency, district, regional, and national levels. However, the parties' organizational structures have been developed with emphasis on the local organization, where constituencies are the hub of party activities because they are the focus of parliamentary election contests. Consequently, the parties have had to design their structures to coincide with the centres of electoral action. At election time, the parties' constituency machinery works out modalities by performing several tasks, including arranging the communities' meetings with presidential and parliamentary candidates to cement the supporters' loyalty to the parties and candidates; campaigning by expanding the parties' operations to the electorate; disseminating the parties' campaign information to supporters; and proselytizing new members. The intermediary party structure is at the regional level, where the prime function is coordination and supervision of the branches in the jurisdiction. The parties' constituencies function under close monitoring of their regional party executives, yet the parties' structures are pyramidal, with their respective national organizations at the pinnacle even though the parties' constitutions envision grassroots party development.

The parties' structures have created formal institutions. The constituency executive committee (CEC), a partly elected and partly appointed body of local party hacks, is composed of sub-constituency representatives, usually presided over by a chairperson and associates; a secretary; treasurer; and women's and youth organizers. These local institutions are replicated at

the regional and national levels. The parties' organizations at the national, regional, and constituency levels are run by the office of their respective secretaries, or general secretaries in the case of the national party, who assist their chairpersons in the day-to-day running of the parties and traditionally act as the parties' spokespersons.

Salient among their structures are the youth and women's wings. In recognition of the special role women and the youth play in the party organization, Ghanaian parties have assigned a special place to these groups. The women's wings are noted for their caucus activities, including advocating for quotas in the distribution of internal vacant positions and filling legions of political offices when their parties win national elections, even though none of the parties' constitutions have entrenched female quotas. The youths are active on the campuses of tertiary institutions across the country. They devote much time to serving as volunteers to campaign for their parties during elections. The most influential campaigners are often rewarded for their service to their parties' activities with national and local posts.

Party Membership

It is widely acknowledged that the vitality of political parties is based on their membership. Hence, a salient element of the parties' organizational efficacy is the membership. Membership of the parties is heterogeneous in complexion. One group is labelled the 'founding members'—persons who have shared attitudes regarding the vision and philosophy of their party, who connect well with its history and traditions, and who are regarded as 'elders of the party'. Usually, people who have high pedigree in community life and belong to the top echelon of the social-economic ladder in society remain key financiers of the parties and hold the centre together. While they are not involved in the day-to-day running of the parties, they remain the unseen decision-makers of the party. Ordinary members are also known as activists (foot soldiers)—the most politically driven members, the equivalent of militants in the Communist Party—and they are found throughout the branches. They execute many of the parties' grassroots decisions and activities, including undertaking house-to-house campaigns (Gyimah-Boadi and Debrah 2008).

To be a member of a party, the person must be registered. The parties' formal machinery for enrolment reveals procedures that involve filling in a form—name, address, date of birth, ward residence, other details, and a signature—ending with the issuance of a photo ID card. (Since 2016, the

NDC and NPP have incorporated biometric registration into their registration systems.) The parties' constitutions have many rules related to loyalty and procedures for punishment for disloyalty. When the applicant's membership registration is accepted, the member is strictly obliged to conform to the party's discipline and rules of conduct. The most undisciplined members who brought the name of the parties into disrepute have been expelled. Since 2000, some members of both the NDC and NPP have faced expulsion orders on grounds of indiscipline and 'flirting' with opponents (Debrah 2014).

However, parties in Ghana have not been able to provide an 'organizational encapsulation' of the structure and social environment in which their members and voters lead their lives. Hence, in each election year, the parties have to start building membership support anew to prevent the erosion of their support base. Moreover, whereas the parties' leadership at the national level is heavily skewed towards the upper class and the regions have a high concentration of the middle class, the constituency levels are dominated by peasants, farmers, unemployed people, and people with lower educational attainment; this mirrors the elite's dominance over national-level party politics in Ghana. It is a fact that the growth of parties in Ghana has revolved around their core membership, most of whom are the parties' founders or elders. It is also evident that the spirited membership drive that characterized party activities in the early formation years has waned. Thus, there are now fewer dues-paying and card-bearing members, and the parties have survived by relying on those regarded as supporters (sympathizers who vote for the parties in elections) from multitudes of backgrounds, such as small business owners, peasants, students, members of civil society/voluntary/non-governmental organizations, public servants, employees of private organizations, and self-employed citizens.

The behaviour of Ghanaian political parties' leadership depicts them as entrepreneurs who have joined the parties to advance their particularistic rather than organizational interests. To this end, it is visible from the parties' organizational establishment and the way they have been shaped that the elite are the suppliers of public policies in response to the demand of the electorates. Thus, the parties are managed as businesses in which individuals who have entered as members pursue their particularistic interests rather than being altruistic (Strøm 1990). Thus, at all levels of the party organization, the members—both leaders and ordinary members (particularly the youth, as reflected by the wings in tertiary institutions)—have essentially been attracted to the parties for the perceived benefits they can derive from them.

Moreover, Ghanaian political parties may be classified into vote-seeking, office-seeking, and policy-seeking parties. The first category includes parties with narrow objectives to maximize votes. These parties, such as the People's National Convention, Progressive People's Party, and CPP, among the smaller parties, have largely organized their activities towards mobilizing voters to vote for them during elections. Consequently, they lack organizational coherence in terms of campaign messages and manifestos and are structurally feeble and less competitive. Second, office-seeking parties, such as the NDC and NPP, have been structured towards vote maximization to capture political power and control the public offices (Strøm 1990). These parties regard the acquisition of power and control of political offices as paramount and have treated electoral or policy goals as means to an end. Despite their belief that politics is akin to the acquisition of private goods—that is, conferment of political appointments on their members—the NDC and NPP have not underplayed the relevance of policies and programmes to their survival and organizational efficacy. Thus, while seeking to mobilize voters as well as capture power and consolidate it, they have utilized the instrumentality of their particularistic manifestos (Debrah 2014).

Party Financing

Given the centrality of funds for an efficient party organization, Ghanaian parties have prioritized funding in their activities. In particular, the parties need money to run their offices, employ personnel, conduct election campaigns, and communicate with their membership and the electorate at large. This is because, to a large extent, the parties' survival hinges on money. Money is now regarded as 'the mother's milk of politics' because there is fear that if it is not regulated, it could influence democratic distortions by corrupting the process. The situation is more volatile for emerging African democracies such as Ghana, where party financing is largely a private activity. The overwhelming funding for parties comes in the form of contributions or donations from their members, who must be Ghanaian citizens; the law disallows donations by non-citizens (Republic of Ghana 1992). Although parties require their memberships to make contributions to maintain their operational costs, the burden has fallen on a few wealthy individuals, most of whom are local entrepreneurs or part of the diaspora. It is common knowledge about party financing in Ghana that membership dues constitute an insignificant fraction of the monies that parties generate for their operational activities.

The dwindling of membership dues means that a few wealthy individuals who provide funding to the parties also control the decision-making processes (Debrah 2014). The law makes provisions for state support, but this is largely in the form of allotting to all parties time and space on state-owned media, enabling them to present their campaign programmes to their supporters (Republic of Ghana 1992, 2000). Lack of well-structured state financial support to the parties is part of the reason that smaller parties have failed to make an electoral impact on the democratic process. The laws on party financing promote transparency in the financial administration of the parties' organizations. Parties are required to declare their assets, liabilities, and expenditure at least 21 days before the general election and six months after (Republic of Ghana 2000). In addition, they are expected to file their financial accounts with the Electoral Commission by 31 December, the end of the financial year. They must also publish the declared audited accounts for public scrutiny. However, important provisions of the laws that promote transparency and financial accountability seem to be in abeyance because they lack authoritative enforcement. The Electoral Commission has demonstrated it is incapable of holding the parties accountable for non-disclosure of their financial accounts. Apart from lack of personnel to carry out the assignment, there is also an unwillingness to enforce the law. This failure to enforce party financing laws has not only denied the public the right to know or question the financial impropriety of parties but also anecdotally resulted in abuse of public resources by incumbent governments to ensure their re-election.

Party Ideology and Programmes

Ideologies have shaped party formation. Traditionally, politics in Ghana has been marked by a high degree of ideological rhetoric. Moreover, parties in Ghana historically identify with liberal capitalism and socialism. Drawing its lineage from the UGCC, which was founded on liberalism, the NPP is incurably centre-right, while the NDC and smaller parties that also trace their ancestry to Nkrumah's CPP are socialists and gravitate towards the centre-left. However, changes in domestic politics occasioned by the radical transformation of international politics, as well as financial donors' redefinition of the goals of nation-states including Ghana, means that, as the two parties (NDC and NPP) rose to political power, differences between them have shrunk gradually. Thus, in ideological terms, both the NDC and NPP are close to each other (Gyimah-Boadi and Debrah 2008). Today, all parties display a kind of pragmatism that allows them to organize their

programmes and appeal to the electorate. The parties are more concerned about the practical ways of improving the lot of the people—protecting the vulnerable, providing basic amenities, providing employment, and expanding the market base for socio-economic development—rather than about the left–right ideological continuum, even though on paper they maintain their ideological leanings. For instance, the NDC and NPP are aligned with the global coalitions of ideological parties with their corresponding regional and sub-regional parliamentary groups (the NDC and NPP belong to the Conservative and Socialist Parliamentary international groups, respectively).

Political Ecumenism

Intra-party democracy is a core feature of a party's organizational life. Both the Constitution and Act 574 mandate parties to adhere to democracy in their internal affairs. First, rules on internal party competition prohibit discrimination on the grounds of gender, ethnicity, religion, or social and economic status. Only the legal stipulations regarding suffrage—voting age of 18 years and above—and a minimum age of 40 years for candidates to contest for the office of the president are enforceable within the parties' selection processes. Moreover, the democratic principles laid out in the pages of the parties' constitutions require that leadership at all levels of the parties' organization be elective, frequently renewed, collective in character, and weak in authority. Members are allowed to choose their local executives, and an electoral college elects the constituency, regional, and national executive members. This procedure cascades to the regional and national levels. For instance, the nine branch executive members of the NDC are elected by all branch members. Two delegates from each branch, along with the other members, constitute the electoral college to choose the CEC. Five delegates chosen from the CEC, together with other political appointees within the regions, in turn elect the regional executive committee (REC). Elected members from the constituencies, various affiliates, and representatives of regional parliamentary groups, among others, attend and vote for the national executive committee (NEC) and presidential candidate of the NDC once every two years. Similar elective structures exist in the NPP, where representatives of polling station executives elect CEC members, and two delegates chosen at the party's annual delegates' conference in each constituency form the electoral college to elect the REC members. Two delegates from each constituency, members of the national council, representatives of patrons, and founding members, *inter alia*, have the mandate to elect the NEC. A larger electoral

college comprising 10 delegates from each constituency and a representative of patrons, founding members in each region, and overseas branches comprise the electoral college to elect its presidential candidate.

In theory, decision making and accountability enforcement are formalized, with annual congresses and conferences at the apex of the parties' organizational structure. For instance, the NDC congress determines the policy direction of the party by subjecting its annual report, budget, audited accounts, and any reform proposal to scrutiny and approval. The NPP regards its national annual delegates' conference as the supreme governing body with deliberative and sanctioning powers in matters of finance and discipline, among others. Further, dissent is permissible within the privacy of the parties' 'family' so long as the dispute can be presented as disagreement over means rather than ends. Hence, channels of dissent and redress as well as open competition for leadership are dogma for the parties (NDC 1992; NPP 1992). A significant amount of intra-party competition exists, and vacant positions are widely advertised through the parties' internal structures for aspirants to file their nominations to contest any of the posts. Selection of the presidential and parliamentary candidates follows acceptable democratic practice: at all levels, election of the parties' officers is supervised by the Electoral Commission, the authoritative body established by the Constitution to conduct all elections in the country. To the extent that the constituency, regional, and national executives report to delegates at the parties' congresses or conferences regarding their stewardship, accountability occurs at all levels of the parties' organizations.

The parties are anxious to maintain the appearance of democracy and accountability: On paper, election is the rule. The executives and officers are always elected and given a fairly short period of office in accordance with democratic rules. Processes allow delegates to the parties' congresses and conferences to scrutinize their activities. However, oligarchic tendencies have developed within the parties' organizations without any constitutional warrant. The parties' organizations have manifested *embourgeoisement* tendencies in their inner corridors through manipulation, corruption, and membership alienation to sidestep the accountability processes. First, the manifestation of rivalries as conflict and corruption ('moneycracy') has become widespread within leadership contests (presidential and parliamentary primaries). In the absence of laws regulating campaign spending in primary elections, contestants have resorted to clandestine methods, thereby turning the political game into a zero-sum struggle for power. This has taken the form of personalized clientelism, in which candidates contesting party primaries or leadership positions extract resources from their personal

savings, loans, and other sources to influence or bribe delegates to party conferences and congresses to enhance or secure their election or re-election.

Competition in the parties' primaries has become an occasion for contestants to distribute largesse—clothes, cars, agricultural implements, lanterns, etc.—to guarantee their victories by buying political clients—constituency, regional, and national party executives, and members of the Electoral College. Consequently, personalized clientelism has turned the election primaries into 'harvesting seasons' for party delegates and influential executive members who could even utilize a greater room to manoeuvre for voting blackmail. Optimism about winning means that a contestant renders multiple social services to delegates and party officials, including attending clients' birthdays and wedding ceremonies, giving out 'chop-money', etc. as part of the game plan. Then, in Ghana, the more patronage candidates can distribute during in-party executive elections or primaries, the higher their chances of winning. Thus, incumbent members of parliament (MPs) or executives whose meagre resources hamper or slow their patronage distribution to their clientele may lose their chance of re-election. Such patronage has not only undermined intra-party competition because other contestants with little financial resources are disadvantaged in the primaries, but it has also made the enforcement of leadership accountability palpably difficult. Indeed, in several cases, party leaders who were expected to demand accountability from the contestants were the main culprits of corruption in the primaries.

Moreover, the procedures for selecting the parties' leadership and other officers at all levels are far from being democratic. Co-optation and the widespread use of indirect representation or delegation via conferences and congresses deprive the entire membership of the opportunity to choose their leaders. In many cases, the parties' executives or some invisible officials often enunciate consensus on who should be elected. The so-called delegates' congresses and conferences themselves present a pyramidal structure with top executive members, MPs, founding members, patrons, etc. nominating themselves to supervise their own elections or promoting their favourites to leadership positions without the active participation of the general membership.

Form of Party Communication

Intra-party communication also reflects the parties' hierarchical structure and orientation. Information flows in a top-down continuum, even though the parties' formal procedures permit bottom-up processes of control and

influence. Besides being nebulous and with cumbersome utility, the processes of channelling members' grievances and resolutions from the bottom up remain exercises in futility. Moreover, the amount of information emanating from the national executives to sub-national executives rarely gets to the ordinary members. The latter's reliance on information about their parties through a few activists and rumour mills demonstrates the extent to which the rank and file are alienated from their parties. It is commonplace for Ghanaian politicians to go to their parties and supporters every four years when they need them to renew their mandates to national offices. After manipulating delegates to secure their re-election, the relationship and any form of communication end.

Inter-party Conflicts

Ghanaian parties are characterized by excessive partisanship. The result is inter-party acrimonies, which are most pronounced between the NDC and NPP. Their intense acrimonies have manifested in the national decision-making process. Since 1992, there have been fierce and uncompromising stances between the NDC and NPP on the passage of several bills in Parliament. Yet these differences are more about promoting partisan interest than auditing the ruling party to achieve quality legislation. Moreover, the stalemate on some of the legislation has proven to be counter-productive to the national development effort. Indeed, in many cases, the escalated inter-party conflicts and ambitions of the parties' leadership have been reflected in intense out-manoeuvring in the vetting of presidential nominees for several national and international posts. These inter-party conflicts have emerged from behind the walls of Parliament into society, where it is now evident that the population is sharply divided between the NDC and NPP on all matters of national importance. The excessive NDC–NPP conflicts have been obstructive to consensus on national issues. Inter-party partisanship is now recorded in the state security services, public service recruitment, and tertiary students' elections. The NDC–NPP cleavages are noticeable in the media and civil society arenas too. Demonstrable behaviours (unprofessional conduct of some media anchors) and partisanship colouration of civil society activism exemplify the depth of the inter-party conflicts. Compounding the cleavages is the growing intra-party manoeuvring over several activities of the parties. The intra-party rivalries become worse during the selection of presidential and parliamentary candidates. The development of factionalism within the parties, with each grouping having a specific agenda to stress, has

been particularly marked since 1992. Many factions within the parties have developed strategies consisting of efforts to undermine other nominees to ensure the rival faction gains a slate of sensitive positions with a view to turning the recruitment fortune in favour of their own candidate(s) and to carry out political engineering where powerful groups sponsor the disqualification of the candidacy of arch-rivals who pose a severe threat to their electoral victory.

The Challenge to Democratic Consolidation

Certain dimensions of multi-party politics pose a grave danger to the survival of democracy. Ethnicity remains an unresolved phenomenon in the political game. Although, in theory, the complexion of the parties' organizations is ethnically diverse, their campaigns project ethnic mobilization. While the Ewes in the Volta region are electorally aligned to the NDC, the NPP derives its strength from the Akan groups in the Ashanti and Eastern regions. It would not be an overstatement to say that without the Ewes and Akans voting for the NDC and NPP, respectively, their organizational efficacy and electoral success would be in limbo. Moreover, patron–client relationships have hindered the parties' move to institutionalization. The membership's mobilization is largely driven by neopatrimonialism and clientelism. Registering to become a member of a political party is regarded as a vehicle to access state resources. The elite embedded in the parties' apparatus have developed informal relationships with the so-called foot soldiers whom they would use to accomplish their political goals and, in turn, supply public goods to their clients. Membership of these parties remains the surest way to acquire employment within state institutions. Therefore, unemployed youths are motivated to join parties as insurance to get employment when their preferred party secures political power. Yet, this patron–client relationship that has emerged within the parties' organizations now serves as the veritable vehicle, channel, or breeding ground for political corruption. The intensity of membership mobilization for personal benefit has been conditioned by the situation of growing poverty in the country. For personal economic interest, voters are willing to accept money to vote for any party or candidate. Hence, monetization has been an entrenched behaviour in the membership and vote mobilization within the parties (Hoffman and Long 2013; Kosiara-Pedersen et al. 2017; Poletti et al. 2019; Achury et al. 2020), even though the parties are sustained by the activists (foot soldiers) on whom the elite depend at any time to access local political fortunes—that is, votes.

Furthermore, salient among the issues submerged within competitive multi-party politics is the phenomenon of party vigilantism. The existence of vigilante groups, which normally comprise young individuals, is not bad in itself, but these groups' *modus operandi* involves engaging in political fanaticism. Political vigilantes who are ordinarily regarded as the most ardent supporters of their groups have now been turned into the likes of anarchists with an agenda of terrorizing their opponents, thereby reducing electoral competition into a zero-sum game.

Although the emergence of political vigilantes pre-dates independence in 1957, recent developments indicate that they have become a political nuisance group whose activities have the capacity to turn back the clock of democratic progress. These groups of young party activists are often used as para-security forces for the parties' elite. Their deployment with the assignment to watch the polls and protect the ballot has been the source of electoral conflict.

Moreover, the monetization of politics is a lingering issue in the country's multi-party politics. Excessive use of money in Ghanaian elections is not a new occurrence; however, this practice is fast deteriorating into a common feature, thus making democracy more expensive than usual (Saffu 2003). Irregular engagements between MPs and their constituents have been attributed to the monetization syndrome—MPs regard it strategic to keep away from their constituents because regular visits would imply the distribution of largesse to them. As constituents often regard politicians as suppliers of public goods—because the politicians have unlimited access to state resources by virtue of their political office—the visits become occasions for them to receive their share of the patronage pie. Although high expenditure is required for regular visits to constituents, politicians who have avoided the electorate have suffered the constituents' wrath in their re-election bid.

Summary and Conclusion

While the prevailing multi-party politics in Ghana is largely responsible for democratic development (peace and stability), there are still growing inequalities between the elite and ordinary voters, which can be blamed on the parties' activities. The adoption of manifestos has adorned the parties' election campaign programmes; yet, after winning power to form a government, there has been a disparity between the documents and reality. The parties' inability to translate their manifestos into implementable programmes and policies has undermined public trust in party politics. The

parties have served as instruments of collective action by the elite to propagate their parochial interests to control state resources and personnel for their own benefit. The evolved two-party model appears to have been institutionalized. Since the resurgence of party politics in 1992, only the NDC and NPP have proven to be prominent in the electoral arena. Attempts by smaller parties to engineer methods to become relevant have proved futile due to deepening divisions within these parties. Personal acrimonies among the leaders, with each claiming to be capable of winning national elections to offer better leadership, have undermined unity among them. Yet if they had united, a third force would have emerged. Given the current electoral dynamics, there is no way of witnessing any ideological shift among the parties. The NDC and NPP have been strategic by promoting programmes that reflect both capitalism and social interventions (welfarism), even though they use ideological rhetoric by identifying with liberal and social ideologies, respectively.

Prospects for Democratic Development

Ghana has enjoyed a stable democracy for the past three decades, earning the admiration of both domestic elites and the international community. Political parties have remained a principal pivot around which the current democracy revolves. Without their involvement, the democratic system would have suffered irreversible setbacks. Thus, the parties can be described as the soul that has kept democracy in Ghana flourishing. Their platforms continue to serve as grounds for political participation by the citizens. The active involvement of women and youths in the political process is the direct result of their mobilization by the parties: these groups have been at the centre of political recruitment. After every election, the parties have provided human resources capable of filling the legions of vacant political office positions. Similarly, they have contributed to policymaking through manifesto drafting, which has served as a framework to develop post-election public policy instruments that direct national development. While partisanship has produced tendencies that have engendered inter-party conflicts and acrimonies, the activism of the parties' foot soldiers has kept democracy alive not only by stimulating high voter attendance but also by encouraging opposition oversight of the ruling government's activities.

Given the synergy between active participation and democratic institutionalization, the vibrant party politics that political parties' engagements have engendered among the populace points towards an optimistic outlook

for democratic progress. Thus, it would not be an understatement to say that democratic consolidation is imminent because the political parties have offered the needed platform for the mobilization of talent and cross-fertilization of ideas that can be harnessed for the socio-economic development of the country.

Note

1. They have splintered into the National Independent Party, Peoples' Heritage Party, Democratic People's Party, New Generation Party, Ghana Democratic Republican Party, Every Ghanaian Living Everywhere, National Convention Party, People's National Convention, People's Party for Democracy and Development, National Justice Party, and National Salvation Party.

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