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Understanding party factionalism and fragmentation: The case of two Nkrumahist parties in Ghana

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ABSTRACT

It is widely argued that intra-party struggles for leadership and the emergence of factions within any political party are inevitable. However, it becomes problematic when cooperative factionalism within political parties turns out to be degenerative. This article sets out to illuminate some possible triggers that have contributed to the inability for Ghana's Convention People's Party (CPP) and People's National Convention (PNC) to overcome their fragmentation. The argument here is that excessive personality cults, coupled with the exploitation of warring factions within the CPP and PNC, have undermined the electoral prospects of these two Nkrumahist-inspired parties. The article notes, among other dynamics, the need for these parties to build robust party structures, tone down on excessive personalisation of party leadership, and minimise political opportunism.

KEYWORDS

Factionalism; Convention People's Party; People's National Convention; Nkrumahists; Ghana

Introduction

Many political scientists and scholars who conduct research on political parties tend to reiterate the assumption that political parties are made up of members that act in unison.¹ For instance, Schumpeter defined a political party as 'a group, whose members propose to act in concert in the competitive struggle for political power'.² Classical writers like Burke also conceptualised the term as 'a body of men united, for promoting by their joint endeavours the national interest, upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed'.³ These scholars omitted, or perhaps failed to capture, the tendency for some actors or individuals within such 'organised like-minded' groups to disagree or dissent from the party's opinion or course of action, leading to the development of competitive factions. Other scholars have noted, however, that 'factionalism remains a fact of life within most political parties ... and that; it is not uncommon for rival factions to engage in struggles for control of their party's apparatus'.⁴ Similarly, Françoise Boucek posited that '[p]olitical parties are not monolithic structures but collective entities in which competition, divided opinions and dissent create internal pressures'.⁵

Increasingly, intra-party competitions and schisms have characterised the politics and leadership of political parties in Ghana since the pre-independence era.⁶ A brief history reveals that a number of highly-placed party members, either serving in

official party positions or as former leaders of certain political traditions or movements in Ghana, have either defected to other parties or formed splinter parties with some of their supporters. From the late 1940s to the inception of Ghana's Fourth Republic in 1992, the parties associated with the three main identifiable political traditions in Ghana – identified as (1) Danquah-Busia-Dombo; (2) Nkrumahist and (3) PNDC/Rawlings – have experienced internal conflicts and have sometimes degenerated into party splits (see Table 1).

However, a cursory analysis of the situation as highlighted above reveals that the Nkrumahist tradition in Ghana is the most affected of all. The excessive factionalism and fragmentation that have continually occurred affect the fortunes of the two notable parties arising from that tradition: the Convention People's Party (CPP) and the People's National Convention (PNC). This study attempts to chronicle some possible factors that have possibly exacerbated the factions and schisms within the Nkrumahist tradition of Ghana.

Admittedly, intra-party factions as well as fragmentations in Ghana are not particular to the Nkrumahist parties. As pointed out earlier, other political traditions have also had their fair share of some of these problems. However, its prevalence and subsequent erosion of the political relevance of the Nkrumahist parties in the Ghanaian political space make their case worth probing. Accordingly, the study adopted a case study approach,⁷ and explored some of the causal factors of the re-current fissures within the CPP and PNC. The study combined both fieldwork and desk review to generate some data to analyse the veracity of the Nkrumahist problem. The author adopted a purposive sampling technique to select seven respondents, comprising present and past party technocrats from the CPP and PNC, academics with special interest in Ghanaian politics, and media practitioners. Primary data for the study was obtained using semi-structured interviews conducted during the period February to June 2020. The intention of the purposive sampling was to gauge the ideas and experience of individuals who are directly involved in the case studies. The author obtained secondary data through a review of the extant literature on

Table 1. Intra-party fragmentation in Ghana: From 1949 – date.

Political tradition	Parent party	Splinter parties
	United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC)	Convention People's Party (CPP)
Danquah-Busia-Dombo	Progress Party (PP)	United National Convention (UNC) Popular Front Party (PFP)
	New Patriotic Party (NPP)	United Ghana Movement (UGM)
Provisional National Defence Council/ Rawlings	National Democratic Congress	National Reform Party (NRP) Democratic Freedom Party (DFP) National Democratic Party (NDP)
Nkrumahist	CPP	People's National Convention (PNC) National Independence Party (NIP) Peoples' Heritage Party (PHP) National Convention Party (NCP) Progressive People's Party (PPP)
	PNC	All People's Congress (APC)

Source: Author's compilation.

intra-party conflict, factionalism and fragmentation in Ghana. The aim was to complement the fieldwork by bringing to fore the nuances, complexities and intricacies at play in Ghana's political space.

Aside from this brief introduction, the rest of the article is organised as follows. First, there is a review of the relevant theoretical debates on intra-party conflicts, factionalism and fragmentation, with a focus on Ghana. This is followed by a brief historical account of intra-party schism and party fragmentation in Ghana from the late 1940s to the current Fourth Republic. Next is discussion of the Nkrumahist tradition and the emergence of the CPP and then the PNC, and analysis of the tendency toward schism identified. Based on the literature review and research interviews, the article argues that ideological differences, ethnic rivalries and leadership struggles largely account for the recurrent schisms within the CPP and PNC.

Theoretical framework on party factionalism

Several scholars have highlighted various explanations on the nature and scope of intra-party factionalism, possible triggers, and how it degenerates into party fragmentation. Before these explanations are chronicled, it is imperative to explain the concept of factionalism. Boucek, in her 2012 work *Factional Politics: How dominant parties implode or stabilise*, conceptualised factionalism as the segregation of a political party into sub-groups in pursuit of party dominance.⁸ However, Raphael Zariski's definition, given over six decades ago, sums it all up. He defined a party faction as:⁹

Any intra-party combination, clique, or grouping whose members share a sense of common identity and common purpose and are organized to act collectively – as a distinct bloc within the party – to achieve their goals. These goals may include any, several, or all of the following: patronage (control of party and government office by members of the faction), the fulfilment of local, regional, or group interests, influence on party strategy.

These observations somewhat challenge the unitary assumptions that political parties always consist of like-minded individuals.¹⁰ Boucek's 2009 work, *Rethinking Factionalism: Typologies, Intra-party Dynamics and Three Faces of Factionalism*, further provides a typology of three major phases of factionalism – 'cooperative, competitive and degenerative' – experienced by political parties.¹¹ She theorised cooperative factionalism as a 'factional structure that has the potential to increase the aggregate capacity of political parties and to facilitate intra-party cooperation where centripetal incentives exist'.¹² For Boucek, cooperative factions often manifest during periods of 'transition to democracy, party formation, splits, mergers and party system realignment'.¹³ In contrast to cooperative factionalism, competitive factionalism involves 'centrifugal forces that coalesce into cleavages', owing to 'internal disagreement or the effects of institutional incentives'.¹⁴ She argues that such factionalism creates internal 'splitting pressures' and affects intra-party cohesion but does not necessarily lead to explicit fragmentation.¹⁵ However, Boucek upheld that '[t]his type of factionalism can be episodic but destabilizing for parties and for governments ... [and] may produce negative outcomes that threaten party unity'.¹⁶

Boucek opined further that factionalism within a party reaches the degenerative phase when existing factions within the party proliferate, become self-seeking and operate for

the most part as channels for the distribution of patronage.¹⁷ Despite the relevance of these theorisations, Boucek stops short of providing a clear picture of the factors that can exacerbate party factions and culminate in fragmentation.

Other scholarly works¹⁸ have sought to provide some elucidation on this question. As noted earlier, the struggle for control of party apparatus remains inexorable.¹⁹ Robert Harmel and Alexander Tan speculate that the deliberate displacement of one faction by another will often – depending on party structure, identity, organisations and even ideology – culminate in some form of party change.²⁰ These changes include party fissures, emergence of splinter parties, mergers and coalitions with other major parties, and even the dissolution of the parent party.²¹ Adriano Nuvunga and José Adalima, albeit regarding South Africa specifically, offer a useful summation:²²

Lack of internal party democracy, elite competition for power, personal differences, intolerance and failure to handle factionalism within parties, personalisation of power and the premium placed on personal loyalties led to the formation of breakaway parties in South Africa.

Saaka Yakubu, writing on Ghana's political history, has theorised on the phenomenon of excessive personality cults within political parties, noting an associated tendency toward a party being 'hijacked' and experiencing unwarranted factionalism.²³ The term was popularised in 1956 when then leader of the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev cautioned the Communist party of the Soviet Union on the divisive tendencies of such practice on party unity. Cynthia Vinney, as well as Klaus Heller and Jan Plamper,²⁴ have sought to define the concept of 'personality cult'. Vinney calls it an 'exaggerated devotion to a charismatic political, religious, or other leader'.²⁵ Personality cults can precipitate leadership crises and defections within the strata of the parties, allowing co-optation by external forces.²⁶

Other scholars have maintained that excessive clienteles' politics and unbridled political opportunism inherent in political parties can deepen existing factions and degenerate into party splits. Giovanni Satori described such clienteles as 'factions of interest',²⁷ and others surmise that these groups are commonly subject to the control of their patrons, be those internal or external to the party, and co-opted sometimes into other groups.²⁸

Finally, Ronald Johnston has argued that party support as well as struggle for party control are mostly grounded in social cleavages like ethnicity and regionalism.²⁹ As noted by Janda et al, dissent and the struggles for party control are inevitable in politics.³⁰ Aside from differences in ideology, other factors that induce party factions and splits include ethnocentrism or ethno-regional associations. Accordingly, Wondwosen Teshome averred that '[e]thnicity could be the basis for unequal treatment of people and it may be the cause of ethnocentrism and prejudices against members of other ethnic groups'.³¹

These assertions might be considered in light of Donald Horowitz's observations that individuals are motivated by the intense desire for self-esteem, and as such, political entrepreneurs tend to exploit social cleavages or 'ready-made clienteles' to achieve their political ambitions.³² If these assertions hold true, they resonate with the earlier evidence of party ethnic-rivalries in Ghana as recounted by scholars like Naomi Chazan, Kwadwo Fordwor and George Bob-Milliar.³³

The foregoing theoretical discourse provides a framework for understanding the endless schisms and unwarranted fragmentation within the Nkrumahist tradition, resulting in the CPP and PNC in Ghana. These theorisations have emphasised the nature and

scope of party factionalism and fragmentations. The next section will consider intra-party factions and schisms in Ghana historically before a subsequent section discusses the CPP and PNC cases within the above theorisations.

Intra-party factions and schisms in Ghana: The historical context

Excessive party factionalism has induced party splits right from pre-independence Ghana to the current Fourth Republic. While the phenomenon is not unique to Ghana,³⁴ scholars on Ghanaian politics have noted the high incidence of party divisions and the proliferation of splinter parties. Dennis Austin recorded in 1964 how the CPP emerged as a splinter party from the UGCC, due to ideological factions and rifts – whereas the conservatives advocated for a gradual approach to the quest for independence from Britain, the radicals led by the party's General Secretary Kwame Nkrumah subscribed to immediate self-government.³⁵ Naomi Chazan writing 20 years later revealed how factionalism affected the Progress Party (PP) and the National Alliance of Liberals (NAL) in Ghana's Second Republic.³⁶ She recounted:³⁷

The PP's house was divided not only ethnically but also on an age basis. Similar cleavages developed in the NAL, as young educated Ewes, disconcerted with the leadership, revolted against the party hierarchy.

Obed Asamoah writing in 2014 echoed Chazan's claims, chronicling other instances of Ewe-Akan rivalry within the NAL and PP.³⁸ Writing on the Danquah-Busia tradition, Donkor Fordwor recorded how the Asante-Akyem rivalries culminated in internal party rifts and fragmentation ahead of the 1979 elections, as well.³⁹

From these scholarly observations, it is fair to argue that ethnically-based party factionalism has the tendency to breed what Boucek described as competitive factionalism, where each group seeks to protect the interests of their ethnic group at all cost, either by conventional or unconventional means.⁴⁰

George Bob-Milliar equally contributed to the literature by drawing inferences from the evidence of factional blocs and politics within Ghana's two major parties – the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) in Ghana's Fourth Republic. He chronicled how the old Akyem-Asante ethnic factions within the Danquah-Busia tradition, for instance, were rekindled during the 2007 presidential primaries between Alan Kwadwo Kyeremanten, a 'protégé' of J A Kufour and an old NPP party stalwart, and Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo Addo, Akyem royalty. The acrimonious undercurrents that characterised the campaign by the NPP because of the divisions between Akufo Addo and Alan Kyeremanten and their followers ultimately affected party cohesion and, according to Bob-Milliar, contributed to the electoral defeat of the NPP in the 2008 general elections.⁴¹

Similarly, the NDC has also had its share of intra-party squabbles and factions in the past. Alexander Frempong provides an account of how issues of political succession within the NDC ahead of the 2000 general elections culminated in the development of factions for and against the NDC leader and President Jerry Rawlings.⁴² Bob-Milliar posits that the NDC's excessive factionalism moved from a competitive to a degenerative phase after the National Reform Movement splintered and transformed into the National Reform Party (NRP) in the run up to those elections.⁴³ The NDC experienced yet another intra-party schism that resulted in the emergence of another splinter party, the

Democratic Freedom Party (DFP), ahead of the 2008 and 2012 general elections in Ghana.⁴⁴ Similarly, acrimonious rivalry between the groups under the labels of 'Get Atta Mills Elected' (GAME) and the 'Friends of Konadu Agyeman Rawlings' (FONKAR) in the 2011 NDC presidential primaries resulted in the subsequent defection of some members of FONKAR to form the National Democratic Party (NDP).⁴⁵

The CPP and PNC have also had their share of internal party fallings-out. As noted earlier in the introduction, the Nkrumahist tradition failed to present a united front at the inception of Ghana's Fourth Republic in the early 1990s. Addae-Mensah attempted to provide some insights into the problem when he bemoaned how the struggle for leadership, dearth of consensus and selfish political ambitions of some old CPP guards contributed to the split in party ranks. Specifically, Addae-Mensah noted how '[t]he re-emergence of factional inner-party struggles of the sixties and the competition for leadership contributed to the divisive nature of the Nkrumahist front ahead of the 1992 general elections in Ghana'.⁴⁶

Subsequently, splinter parties like the National Convention Party (NCP), Peoples' Heritage Party (PHP), National Independence Party (NIP) and People's National Convention (PNC) emerged, with the NCP going into an electoral alliance with the Rawlings-aligned NDC.

What becomes clear is the prevalence of factionalism in Ghanaian politics, and the examples of cooperative, competitive and degenerative factionalism present in the country's history. Scholars note that excessive intra-party factionalism may destabilise a party system and can lead to growing cynicism on the part of voters.⁴⁷ Against this backdrop, discussion turns more specifically to the CPP and PNC.

Developments within the Nkrumahist tradition: The evolution of the CPP and PNC

The Nkrumahist tradition traces its genealogy to the socio-political beliefs and writings of Ghana's independence torchbearer, Kwame Nkrumah. The ideals promoted by Nkrumah were later popularised and referred to as 'Nkrumahism' in notable writings such as *Class Struggle in Africa*,⁴⁸ *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for Decolonization*,⁴⁹ and *Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*.⁵⁰ The Nkrumahist tradition emerged as a counter to the political traditions of the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) when Nkrumah, then general secretary of the UGCC, parted ways with the party.⁵¹ The CPP emerged in August 1949 as the first splinter party in Ghana when some vibrant youth and other influential members of the UGCC, including Nkrumah, K A Gbedemah and Kojo Botsio, defected from the party.⁵²

The CPP, with a broad base of membership covering all sectors of Ghanaian society at that time, became a national party overnight.⁵³ The CPP very quickly overtook the UGCC and managed to dominate Ghana's electoral politics from 1951 to 1965, albeit through the unconventional means of such steps as the Avoidance of Discrimination Act (ADA-1957), the Preventive Detention Act (PDA-1958), and the one-party⁵⁴ state declaration of 1964.⁵⁵ After nearly fourteen years of CPP electoral dominance, the National Liberation Council (NLC) in a coup ousted it in 1966.⁵⁶

After the overthrow of the CPP, the NLC barred close associates of Nkrumah and the CPP from active politics or holding public office. The affected individuals included

'Members of the Central Committee of the CPP, Ministers of state, Special Advisers to Nkrumah, Regional and District Commissioners, Regional Party Secretaries, [and] Regional Education Secretaries'.⁵⁷

It is clear that the intent of the NLC coup was to ensure that the CPP never revived. The CPP as a party resurfaced in 1998 to contest the 2000 general elections after a successful court petition to overturn the 1966 NLC decree that proscribed it in the 1966 coup.⁵⁸ By that time, another splinter group, the PNC, had emerged, just ahead of Ghana's 1992 general election.⁵⁹

As aptly captured by Addae-Mensah, the emergence of factionalism and unbridled struggles for leadership within the Nkrumahist tradition culminated in the emergence of several parties, including the PNC.⁶⁰ Just like the CPP, the PNC emerged as a fragment or splinter group within the Nkrumahists, owing to the inability of the old CPP guard to forge a united front.⁶¹ The PNC traces its roots to the People's National Party (PNP), an Nkrumahist-inspired party led by Hilla Limann which emerged and won the 1979 general elections. This was after nearly thirteen years of political extinction experienced by the Nkrumahist tradition after the coup of 1965.⁶² Abeeku Essuman-Johnson⁶³ writing in the early 1990s noted:⁶⁴

The leader of the PNC – Dr. Hilla Limann – left the CPP fold to form his own party on realizing that he might not get the leadership if he stayed in the fold. The rumblings and various reasons being given for not staying together in the CPP fold smacks of an internal party machine being manned by people whose minds have been made up on who should be the presidential candidate, and of the lack of a spirit of compromise.

Thus, internal rifts characterised the Nkrumahists ahead of the 2000 elections. Obed Asamoah captured it best when he noted, 'The CPP and NCP were glued to the past and were in competition for supremacy in the Nkrumahist family'.⁶⁵

The turn of events within the Nkrumahist tradition between 1992 and 2000 clearly illustrates Boucek's competitive and degenerative factionalism theorisations. Following the outcome of the general elections of 2000, the squabbles within the CPP and PNC worsened, and resulted in major defections and the emergence of further splinter parties. A cursory analysis of the situation easily leads the observer to echo Addae-Mensah's observations on avarice, greed and hypocrisy within the Nkrumahist tradition.⁶⁶

The PNC has exhibited similar factionalism. For instance, the party's 2012 presidential candidate, Hassan Ayariga deserted the PNC to form his party, the All Peoples Congress (APC) after he lost his presidential candidate re-election bid in 2015.⁶⁷ The circumstances leading to his defeat and subsequent breakaway were attributed to his excessive association with the NDC.⁶⁸

In 2016, the deep-seated rancour within the CPP leadership ultimately culminated in the ostracism of the former chairperson and daughter of the founder, Samia Nkrumah.⁶⁹ This and other divisions within the Nkrumahist parties have no doubt contributed to the poor performance of the CPP and PNC (see [Table 2](#)).

An analysis of party factions and fissures within the CPP and the PNC

Based on the theoretical framework and context provided above, this section of the article attempts to analyse three possible triggers for the excessive factionalism and

Table 2. Electoral performance of the CPP and PNC (1992–2020).

Year	Presidential		Parliamentary	
	CPP	PNC	CPP	PNC
1992	–	6.7%	–	*
1996	–	3.0%	–	1
2000	1.8%	2.9%	1	3
2004	1.0%	1.9%	3	4
2008	1.3%	0.9%	1	2
2012	0.2%	0.2%	–	1
2016	0.2%	0.2%	–	–
2020	0.1%	0.1%	–	–

Notes: * The PNC together with other parties like the NPP boycotted the parliamentary elections on suspicions of widespread electoral fraud in the 1992 presidential elections.

Source: Author's compilation of electoral results (1992–2020) from the Electoral Commission of Ghana's data.

fragmentation within the CPP and the PNC. These are (1) Personality cults and egotism; (2) Political patronage; and (3) Ethno-regional undercurrents.

Personality cults and egotism

From the earlier theorisations, scholars like Saaka and Addae-Mensah argued that excessive glorifications of personalities within political parties serve as a major source of intra-party divisions. The unbridled nature of some of these acts tends to breed greed and a blatant display of egotism among certain personalities who command some following within parties. This dynamic left unchecked, according to Kwame Ninsin, often culminates in excessive factionalism and the total control of the party machinery by a cabal of individuals who seek to promote their interests at the expense of the group interest.⁷⁰ Owing to the level of resources such individuals command within the party, they easily attract the support of members and use wealth as a tool to control party apparatus. Such individuals seek to pre-empt defections or divisions, as this will undermine their control of the party apparatus. A former national executive member of the CPP echoed these observations in an interview. He averred:⁷¹

When people are bent on pursuing their interests, there is very little you can do about it. For instance, Kwesi Nduom, a former flagbearer [for] our party [CPP] left with some elected officials to form the Progressive Peoples Party (PPP) after realizing he had lost grounds and his sponsored candidate for the chair position had lost in our 2011 congress at the Trade Fair site. The council of elders spoke to them but they were determined on what they were doing. Again, we have our Flagbearer for 2012, Dr. Abu Sakara who has decided that he is no longer interested in CPP politics but national interest politics and has subsequently formed the National Interest Movement (NIM) to galvanize some electoral support on his own.

Though personality cults are not particular to Nkrumahist parties, the continuous evidence of party 'hijack' by some personalities, mostly businesspersons to launch their political careers, is worrying. The absence of effective party structures within the CPP and the PNC to counter this control driven by a personality cult has contributed to the weakening of the parties. This is because 'if parties are not run as institutions with effective structures, but personalised, they run into crises'.⁷² In effect, there is an absence of effective party machinery and leadership. Hence, individuals who lead the parties do so for their parochial interests. An old Nkrumahist expounded these claims:⁷³

The main reason for the fragmentation over the years has to do with the selfishness and greediness on the part of some members. Everyone wants to be the leader of the tradition, so they can enjoy the prerequisites of being seen as leading political parties. These ... traits tend to affect both the CPP and PNC and will most likely persist if the problem is not salvaged.

Abu Sakara, the presidential candidate for the CPP in 2012, in his resignation letter to the CPP in 2016, hinted at the evidence of personality cult dynamics within the party and their adverse effects on the renaissance of the Nkrumahist brand.⁷⁴

My resignation is because; I no longer believe that the Convention People's Party abides by the values and principles that drew me to it. Consequently, the party's focus has shifted from a collective effort to build the party to the pursuit of positions for fulfilment of personal ambitions. Indifference to the collective good for the cause of the party is pervasive and has subsequently spawned a culture of intolerance and indiscipline that is rooted in reckless factionalism. This trend has now reached its peak and I fear it has eroded all CPP's institutions and systems that were built over the years. What is left is the semblance of a personality cult club built around the ambition of an individual. The sole purpose of this seems to begin a process of leadership by dynastic succession. The fact that several leading members support this dynastic project is a testimony to the fact that we have lost our way and probably the spirit of our cause.

From the above narrations, it is fair to argue that the absence of effective party structures and the dearth of leadership and conflict resolution mechanisms within the Nkrumahist parties contributes to the worsening state of the Nkrumahist parties in Ghana. In congruence to this, a Ghanaian media practitioner who has covered and published extensively on Ghanaian politics and elections hinted:⁷⁵

There is no unifier or a political 'god-father' to unite the Nkrumahists. You look into their tradition and its associated parties, and there are virtually no respected leaders or elders to call them to order. Hence the needless squabbles and unwarranted defections. Though, the major parties experience internal conflicts, feuding parties or factions are mostly called to order by their respected elders of the party and through a robust conflict.

Similarly, columnist Ade Sawyer⁷⁶ provides some astute observations about the divisive tendencies within the CPP, which, to him, point to a degenerative factionalism within the CPP. Such factions within the party are not policy or ideologically driven but solely on the 'idiocies' of personalities.⁷⁷ These same factors are believed to have stalled possible unity and merger talks between the CPP and PNC. According to one interviewee for this study:⁷⁸

A merger between the CPP, PNC, and other parties would mean that individuals who occupy top positions in these parties and are in the limelight politics of Ghana would have to submit their interest to the collective goal of the tradition. This is quite a herculean task to achieve because some individuals are likely to have their political ambitions suppressed.

Political patronage

As noted earlier, excessive personality deification and egoistic tendencies within the CPP and PNC often exacerbate the competitive factional politics within the parties, resulting in a more degenerative factionalism in which leaders of the various factions become self-seeking. As such, these groups become more susceptible to intrusions by other groups. In his 'catch-all-party' thesis, Otto Kirchheimer theorised that most major parties adopt

all-embracing ideological positions for the purpose of co-opting others, and with the spoils of power, they sustain their dominance.⁷⁹ Scholars like Addae-Mensah, Bob-Milliar, Debrah⁸⁰ and Agomor⁸¹ have maintained that, to consolidate the political duopoly in Ghana, the NDC chose to fragment the Nkrumahist tradition in 1992 by capitalising on the existing factions and by co-opting some of their key members into their fold. Accordingly, Bob-Milliar posited that:⁸²

Functionaries of the PNDC engineered the splintering of the Nkrumahist tradition into competing factions and ensuring that the various Nkrumahist factions would fail to merge by exploiting existing rivalries and cleavages, mainly personal, but also involving ideological, and policy differences.

In recent times, Bob-Milliar has further argued that the major parties – the NPP and NDC – capitalise on the degenerative nature of the factionalism within the CPP and PNC to further deepen the cracks by offering what he described as ‘political crumbs’ of power to entice some leaders of the tradition to defect from their parties. Most of these inducements come in the form of political appointments as ministers and deputy ministers, board chairs or executive directors, among others (see [Table 3](#)).

This observation by Bob-Milliar supports Boucek’s theorisations that when factionalism within a political party degenerates, factions within proliferate, become self-seeking and operate mainly as channels for the distribution of patronage.⁸³ To wit, some party officials have engineered the Nkrumahist tradition as a conduit to amass political wealth in Ghana. A national executive member of the PNC reiterated these observations:⁸⁴

Some of us [PNC and CPP] have paymasters outside the party who tend to control their actions in exchange for political rewards. This cabal of individuals tends to do everything within their capacity to gratify these external forces within the major parties. When major decisions are taken at the party level, these unseen forces influence certain individuals to reject party positions.

Similarly, another interviewee, this time from the media, expressed the view that:⁸⁵

The monetization of the formation of political parties in Ghana influences some members within the Nkrumahist tradition to break away to form their parties or support others to form parties. For instance, parties and political movements with Nkrumahist orientations keep coming up with the recent ones being the Ghana United Movement (GUM), Economic Fighters League (EFL), and National Interest Movement (NIM) which from all indications are being sponsored by some known members of the Nkrumahist tradition. These movements are not in to make any significant impact on our elections but are in for the patronage.

In addition, an academic strengthened the evidence of political intrusions within the CPP and PNC by the two major parties in Ghana:⁸⁶

Major parties [NPP and NDC] in Ghana have realized that electoral competition is keen and the only way to win is with the support of the Nkrumahists. Therefore, NPP and NDC always capitalized on their proxy factions within the CPP and PNC. Their clients within the Nkrumahist fold are mostly reward based on a patron-client relationship.

Ethno-regional undercurrents

Political mobilisation, as indicated earlier in the literature, is also achieved by capitalising on social cleavages. Evidence from Ghanaian politics, as recounted by Chazan and

Table 3. Nkrumahists who have benefited from the NDC and NPP Administrations.

Name	Party	Position in party	Administration	Portfolio	Period
Dr. Kwabena Duffour	CPP	Committee Chairman	NDC	Finance Minister	2009–2013
Bernard Monah	PNC	General Secretary	NDC	Member, Local Olympic Committee	2009–2012
Dr. Sulley Gariba	PNC	Founding member	NDC	Policy Advisor to the Vice-President & High Commissioner to Canada	2009-2013; 2013–2016
Prof. Raymond Atuguba	PNC	Party Lawyer	NDC	Executive Secretary to the President	2013–2015
Dr. Edward Gyader	PNC	Former Parliamentary candidate	NDC	Member, Council of State	2013–2017
Prof. Nii Noi Dowuona	CPP	Former General Secretary	NDC	Member, N.C.T. E	2009–2013
Mallam Issah	PNC	Financier	NPP	Minister for Youth and Sports	January-May 2001
Moses Dani Baah	PNC	Former MP, Sissala East	NPP	Deputy Minister of Health	2001–2004
Ambrose Dery	PNC, Defected to NPP	Party Lawyer, NPP MP for Nandom constituency	NPP	Regional Minister, Upper West & Interior Minister	2005–2007 2017-date
Dr. Edward Mahama	PNC	Former Flagbearer	NPP	Ambassador-at-large	2017–2020
Alhaji Ahmed Ramadan	PNC	Former National Chairman	NPP	Ghana's Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates (UAE)	2017-date
Abu Ramadan	PNC	Former National Youth Organiser	NPP	Deputy Director, NADMO	2017-date
Prof. George Hagan	CPP	Former flagbearer, 2000 elections	NPP	Chairman, National Commission for Culture Board Chair, Energy Commission of Ghana	2001–2007 2017–2020
Kojo Armah	CPP	Former MP, Evalue-Gwira	NPP	MCE, Nzema East	2001–2004
Dr. Paa Kwesi Nduom	CPP	Former MP, KEEA	NPP	Energy Minister; and Minister for Public Sector Reform	2003–2004; 2005–2007
Frederick Blay	CPP, Defected to NPP	Former MP, Ellembelle	NPP	1st Deputy Speaker of Parliament National Chairman, NPP	2005–2009 2018 – Date
Prof. Agyemang Badu Akosa	CPP	Former, Flagbearer Aspirant	NPP	Director-General, Ghana Health Service	2003–2007

Source: Bob-Milliar, 2019, with author's additions.

Fordwor, highlights how ethno-regional factors exacerbate internal party schisms.⁸⁷ Addae-Mensah hinted on how some innate levels of ethnocentrism within the Nkrumahist tradition stalled the tradition's re-birth in 1992 and subsequently led to the proliferation of new splinter parties.⁸⁸ The subsequent hijack of the Nkrumahist tradition by some longstanding CPP members, coupled with the scramble over the control of the tradition in 1992, took an ethnic twist, specifically between Akans and non-Akans. It is interesting to note that though Gbedemah belonged to the non-Akan group, he was never in support of Limann (another non-Akan) in his bid to lead the Nkrumahist tradition after being ousted on the PNP's ticket in 1981.⁸⁹

Subsequently, Limann was compelled in 1992 to break away to form the PNC, a party predominantly made up of Nkrumahists from the north who expressed concerns on how their own were treated.⁹⁰ This situation marked the rift that grew between the two Nkrumahist parties: the CPP and PNC. After attempts at unity talks stalled in the past,⁹¹ it is clear that positions are entrenched, resulting in deadlocks on everything from the selection of electoral tickets to the adoption of party symbols and slogans. Clearly, the ethno-regional dynamics between the CPP and PNC often marks a sharp distinction between the two:⁹²

The CPP's position of regarding itself as the true Nkrumahists with the PNC and the others as just an offshoot has been a major factor that has stalled unity talks in the past

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the article concludes that the political misfortunes of the Nkrumahist parties, mostly the CPP and PNC, are largely self-inflicted and deeply rooted in the excessive personalisation of the parties, unbridled voracity and patronage among members and leaders of the party and utter display of ethnocentrism. To salvage the situation, the article recommends the following changes be made.

First, the article recommends a total overhaul and re-organisation of structures within the Nkrumahist parties, instituting effective conflict resolution mechanisms to help allay fears of unfair treatment and to avoid the unwarranted proliferation of more splinter parties.

Second, the article revealed that the major source of the recurrent schisms among the numerous factions between the CPP and PNC can be traced to the exploitation of the degenerative nature of the factionalism within these two parties, mainly through patronage. Accordingly, the article recommends the need for committed leadership that aims at fostering cooperation and unity by ensuring that leaders or popular figures wean themselves off selfishness and political patronage.

Third, for the Nkrumahist tradition to regain its past glories and possibly revive its relevance in the Ghanaian electoral space, the article strongly recommends the need for committed leaders who will see to the realisation of a possible merger of all Nkrumahist parties in Ghana, both parent and splinters. This will go a very long way to inspire hope among Ghanaians for a possible third force to break the current NDC-NPP political duopoly.

Finally, in view of the developments that have brought Ghana to a very different position by 2022, the study recommends that Nkrumahists re-engineer and re-brand

Nkrumahism into a more pragmatic ideology to attract undecided voters and the youthful electorate in Ghana.

Notes

1. See Schattschneider Elmer Eric, *Party Government* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., 1942); Schlesinger Joseph, *Political Parties and the Winning of Office* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1994).
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5. Françoise Boucek, 'Rethinking Factionalism: Typologies, Intra-party Dynamics and Three Faces of Factionalism,' *Party Politics* 15, no. 4 (2009): 455–85.
6. See Dennis Austin, *Politics in Ghana: 1946–1960* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964); Naomi Chazan, *An Anatomy of Ghanaian Politics: Managing Political Recession (1969–1982)* (Boulder, CO: West view press, 1983). George M. Bob-Milliar, 'Party Factions and Power Blocs in Ghana: A Case Study of Power Politics in the National Democratic Congress,' *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 50, no. 4 (2012b): 573–601; Kwame Donkoh Fordwor, *The Danquah-Busia Tradition in the Politics of Ghana: The Origins, Mission, and Achievements of the New Patriotic Party. Mission and Achievements of the New Patriotic Party* (Accra North: Unimax Macmillan, 2010).
7. John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003).
8. See Françoise Boucek, *Factional Politics: How Dominant Parties Implode or Stabilize* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
9. See Raphael Zariski, 'Party Factions and Comparative Politics: Some Preliminary Observations,' *Midwest Journal of Political Science* 4, no. 1 (1960): 27–51, 33.
10. Scholars like Edmund Burke have generally defined a political party as 'a group of like-minded individuals who aspire to capture political power through elections.'
11. See Boucek, *Rethinking Factionalism*.
12. Boucek, *Rethinking Factionalism*, 469.
13. Boucek, *Rethinking Factionalism*, 470.
14. Boucek, *Rethinking Factionalism*, 473.
15. Boucek, *Rethinking Factionalism*.
16. Boucek, *Rethinking Factionalism*, 473 & 474.
17. Boucek, *Rethinking Factionalism*, 477 & 479.
18. See Robert Harmel and Kenneth Janda, 'An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change,' *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 6, no. 3 (1994): 259–87; Robert Harmel and Alexander C. Tan, 'Party Actors and Party Change: Does Factional Dominance Matter?' *European Journal of Political Research* 42, no. 3 (2003): 409–24.
19. Harmel et al., 'Performance, Leadership, Factions and Party Change'.
20. Robert Harmel and Alexander C. Tan, 'Party Actors and Party Change: Does Factional Dominance Matter?' *European Journal of Political Research* 42, no. 3 (2003): 409–24.
21. Harmel and Tan, 'Party Actors and Party Change'.
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33. See Chazan, *An Anatomy of Ghanaian Politics*; Fordwor, *Danquah-Busia Tradition*; Bob-Milliar, 'Party Factions and Power Blocs in Ghana'.
34. R. Jackson, C. Rosberg, and T. Young, 'Personal Rule,' *Readings in African Politics*. London: IAI (2003): 28–32.
35. Austin, *Politics in Ghana*.
36. Chazan, *An Anatomy of Ghanaian Politics*.
37. Chazan, *An Anatomy of Ghanaian Politics*, 53.
38. See Obed Yao Asamoah, *The Political History of Ghana (1950–2013): The Experience of a Non-conformist* (Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2014), 146.
39. Fordwor, *The Danquah-Busia Tradition*.
40. Boucek, *Rethinking Factionalism*, 469.
41. Bob-Milliar, 'Party Factions and Power Blocs in Ghana,' 582 & 583.
42. Alexander K.D. Frempong, *Politics and Elections in Ghana: A Reader* (Accra: Digibooks Ghana Ltd., 2016), 223–301.
43. See Boucek, *Rethinking Factionalism*; Bob-Milliar, 'Party Factions and Power Blocs in Ghana'; Asamoah, *The Political History of Ghana (1950–2013)*.
44. Asamoah, *The Political History of Ghana*; Bob-Milliar, 'Party Factions and Power Blocs in Ghana'.
45. See Alex Kaakyire Duku Frempong, *Elections in Ghana (1951–2016): Revised & Updated* (Tema: Digibooks Ghana Limited, 2017).
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49. Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for De-Colonization* (London: Panaf Books Ltd, 1964).
50. Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1965).
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52. Obed Asamoah noted this in his autobiography when he wrote: 'Until he [Kwame Nkrumah] broke away to form the Convention People's Party (CPP) in 1949, the nationalist movement was united under the banner of the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC). Nkrumah's haste for independence made him break ranks with his colleagues of the UGCC, at whose invitation

he returned to Ghana to join the independence struggle.'

See Asamoah, *The Political History of Ghana (1950–2013)*.

53. See Austin, *Politics in Ghana*; Frempong, *Elections in Ghana (1951–2016)*.
54. In early 1964, the then President, Kwame Nkrumah sought for a constitutional amendment that could 'for the sake of national unity' proposed for a 'one party' rule, with the CPP being the only national party. The CPP-dominated legislative Assembly upheld the proposal and all other existing opposition parties subsequently banned.
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57. Asamoah, *The Political History of Ghana*, 133.
58. Frempong, *Elections in Ghana*.
59. Frempong, *Elections in Ghana*.
60. Addae-Mensah, *Hilla Limann*.
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72. Interview, a national executive of the NDC, 15 April 2020.
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76. A Social and Political Commentator in Ghana.
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81. Agomor, 'Origins of Political Duopoly'.
82. Bob-Milliar, 'We run for the crumbs and not for office'.
83. See Boucek, *Rethinking Factionalism*.
84. Interview, a national executive from the PNC, 10 June 2020.

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88. See Addae-Mensah, *Hilla Limann*.
89. Addae-Mensah, *Hilla Limann*; Essuman-Johnson, 'The Democratic Ethos and Internal Party Democracy.
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91. Interview, an academic who research Ghanaian politics, 11 February 2020.
92. Interview, an academic who research Ghanaian politics, 11 February 2020.

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