

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE FORMATION AND STRUCTURAL ORGANIZATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN GHANA: A DIAGNOSIS OF THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS

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Abstract

Political parties, particularly the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), have been vibrant in Ghana's democratic space in the Fourth Republic. This paper examines the historicity of the development of the NDC. It establishes how the structural organization of the NDC pitches its appeal and attracts electoral support as a supplementary variable. Scholarship on the variables of the electoral fortunes of political parties in Ghana in the Fourth Republic has focused essentially on factors such as ethnicity, clientelism, ideological positions, retrospective voting, and rational voting. Little space has been given to the extent to which the structural organisation of a party plays an important role in electoral outcomes. This paper shifts the discourse from the traditional narrative that focused on the factors of the electoral fortunes of political parties in Ghana in the Fourth Republic to the study of the structural organization of political parties. Adapting the political development model to the study of the historicity of the structure of the NDC, this paper examined the historical formation and structural organization of the party. Employing an explanatory case study design, data for the analysis were drawn from textual studies and key informant interviews. The paper argued that the voting Ghanaian public and citizens in general seemed to be heavily tilted towards the attributes, values and principles the NDC represents as a 'Third Political Force.' The paper recommends that the philosophy of the NDC and its identity should be intricately grounded in real social democratic ideals, principles, policies and activities with definite levels of certainty. This could define the Ghanaian public's identification with the NDC, its organization, mobilization, and support in elections in Ghana.

Keywords: Party, Democracy, Election, History, Politics, National Democratic Congress, Ghana

INTRODUCTION

Until independence on 6th March 1957, modern Ghana was known as the Gold Coast - a name that depicted the wealth of the country in gold. Modern Ghana is one of the countries in West Africa with rich historical heritage (Ward, 1948; David, 1963; Davidson, 1972; Buah, 1998). The country was named after ancient Ghana empire - one of the three Western Sudanese empires with magnificent historical heritage (Ward, 1948; Buah, 1998). Between the 15th and the 19th centuries, European powers ventured into the Gold Coast for commercial purposes. European presence in the Gold Coast altered traditional trading patterns, and shifted the focus of economic power from the interior to the West African coastline. Trade in legitimate goods, such as gold and ivory, eventually gave way to trade in slaves (Ward, 1948; David, 1963; Davidson, 1972; Buah, 1998). At the same time, European influence in the Gold Coast changed the traditional political landscape of the peoples and states. European powers' scramble for territorial space in the Gold Coast led to the division of hitherto united traditional states and territories into European-controlled ones. For instance, Komenda was divided into Dutch Komenda and British Komenda while Accra was divided between the British and



the Danes (Davidson, 1972; Buah, 1998). While the European penetration in the Gold Coast altered the traditional political space of the states, it was the imposition of British rule on the country that led to the emasculation of the political power of the traditional states (Davidson, 1972; Buah, 1998). In 1874, the British proclaimed the southern part of the Gold Coast as the British Crown Colony (Ward, 1948; David, 1963; Davidson, 1972; Buah, 1998). Overtime, British colonial rule was extended to the entire present-day modern Ghana when the Ashanti Protectorate, the Northern Territories and Trans-Volta Togoland were eventually brought under British rule.

Despite the imposition of British colonial rule on the Gold Coast, some states, particularly the Asante, struggled to exfoliate British political control in order to maintain their traditional political space, as well as to maintain the sanctity of their political institutions. Overtime, British colonial policies steered up anti-British sentiments in the Gold Coast leading to, first, the formation of protest movements (Agbodeka, 1971; Boahen, 1975), and later, leading to the mushrooming and crystallization of nationalist political groupings or movements (Amenumey, 2008; Webster and Boahen, 1980; Austin, 1964; Fordwor, 2010). While the crystallization of nationalist movements hastened the decolonization of the Gold Coast, it was the formation of the CPP that revolutionized nationalism that subsequently resulted in the independence of the country in 1957. Since independence on 6th March 1957, the political space in Ghana has witnessed various forms of governments and political structures. From a multiparty state at independence, Ghana relapsed into a one-party state in the 1960s (Boahen, 1975). Since Nkrumah was overthrown in a coup in 1966, Ghana went through different phases of military and civilian governments for over a quarter of a decade until the reintroduction of multiparty democracy in 1992. It should be emphasized that, in both the colonial and post-colonial political spaces, the educated Ghanaians, and to some extent, the uneducated Ghanaians, participated actively in the constructive movements that shaped the political landscape of the country. In other words, in both the colonial and post-colonial political spaces in Ghana, both educated and uneducated nationalists, politicians, war veterans and traditional chiefs played crucial political roles by marshalling the conventional and non-conventional political structures, nomenclatures and resources to shape and reshape the country's political landscape (Austin, 1964; Buah, 1998; Fordwor, 2010).

It has already been said that Ghana's Fourth Republican Constitution was promulgated in 1992. Prior to its promulgation, a number of political activities were carried out. In 1990, the National Commission for Democracy (NCD) was commissioned to come out with proposals for the introduction of democratic rule in Ghana. After obtaining views from Ghanaians in forums organized in parts of the country, the NCD submitted its report to the government of the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC). The report established that Ghanaians wanted multi-party system of government. Acting on the report of the NCD, the PNDC government set up a Committee of Experts to fashion out constitutional modalities for a Consultative Assembly to consider (Republic of Ghana, 1991; Gyan 1995; Gyimah-Boadi, 1998). Having studied previous constitutions of Ghana and the proposals of the Committee of Experts, the Consultative Assembly drafted the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, which Ghanaians approved in a referendum on 28th April 1992 (Republic of Ghana, 1991; Gyan 1995; Gyimah-Boadi, 1998). Since the promulgation of the Ghana's 1992 Constitution, eight democratic elections have been conducted in the country.

DESIGN, METHOD AND DATA SOURCES

The paper employed explanatory case study design. Data for this study were drawn from secondary and primary sources. First, the study reviewed published documents of the Government of Ghana on constitutional developments, party politics, democracy and national elections. This was supported by the review of journal articles, monographs, and other relevant documents on discourses on Ghana's political history and democratic development. The aim of the review of the documents was to ascertain the historical background, formation and structural organization of political parties in Ghana. Secondly, the textual data from secondary and primary sources were supported by primary data collected through interviews with key informants. The key informants for the interviews were selected based on their knowledge and the roles they played in the formation and structural



organization of the NDC since 1992. The aggregate of the data helped in the diagnosis of the formation and structural organization of the NDC.

LITERATURE ON PARTY POLITICS AND ELECTIONS IN GHANA

The reintroduction of democracy in Africa in the early 1990s has reinforced party politics on the continent (Huntington, 1991; Buitenhuijs and Thriot, 1995; Linz and Stepan, 1996; Bratton and Van de Walle, 1997; Bob-Milliar, 2012; Osei, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2016). The reintroduction of democracy led to the proliferation of political parties as catalyst for multiparty democracy. This development caught the attention of scholars in their diagnosis of the variables (ethnicity, clientelism, ideological positions, rational voting, etc.) responsible for electoral outcomes in the new democracies (Huntington, 1991; Buitenhuijs and Thriot, 1995; Linz and Stepan, 1996; Bratton and Van de Walle, 1997; Bob-Milliar, 2012; Osei, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2016). Beyond these factors, structural organization of political parties also occupies a catalytical space in multiparty electoral competition. Despite the extent that the clout of structural organization exerted on political parties, it has not received much scholarly attention. This paper examined the historical development, formation and structural organization of political parties in Ghana in the Fourth Republic. It focused on the historical formation and structural organization of the NDC, and interrogated its birth, philosophy, nature and its place in the Ghanaian electoral politics.

Ghana is an excellent case to study party organizational politics and elections in the post-Cold War democracies in Africa. The country is viewed as extraordinarily successful in terms of her democratic performance since 1992. Since the promulgation of the 1992 Constitution, Ghana has successfully conducted eight general elections, leading to three turnovers (2000, 2008 and 2016). The first presidential election was held on 3rd November 1992, and the first parliamentary elections were held on 28th December 1992 (Ayee, 1998). Moving from holding presidential and parliamentary elections on different dates, the Electoral Commission of Ghana has successfully held same elections on 7 December in 1996, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016 and 2020. The National Democratic Congress (NDC) won four (4) of the presidential and parliamentary elections, and formed the majority in the first, second, fifth and sixth Parliaments of the Fourth Republic of Ghana. On the other hand, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) won the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2000, 2004, 2016 and 2020. It should be pointed out that the electoral system of Ghana is thoroughly majoritarian, and it is dominated by two large parties, namely the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP). Literature on the study of elections and politics in Ghana abounds. There are basically four strands of literature on voter-party alignments in Ghana. The first strand of literature focuses on ethnicity in Ghana's party politics. The overarching argument of this strand of literature is that, though Ghana is ethnically diverse, two ethnic groups have tended to lean towards a certain political direction (Gyimah-Boadi 2001; Nugent, 2001a; Fridy, 2006; Lindberg and Morrison, 2008; Whitfield, 2009; Jockers et al., 2010; Anaman, 2016a; Bukari, 2017; Anaman and Bukari 2019b; Alidu and Bukari, 2020; Bukari, 2022). The second strand of literature underlines the patterns of elections in rural and urban areas in Ghana. This strand of literature argues that rural and urban dwellers in Ghana have particular party preferences. It is these differences in the preferences of rural and urban dwellers that account for the differences in the patterns in which they vote in elections in the Fourth Republic (Ayee, 1997; Bawumia, 1996; Nugent, 1999; Fridy, 2006; Bukari, 2017). The third claim uses economic variables as determinants of the voter-party alignment in Ghana. Proponents of this thesis argue that economic conditions or their effects impact significantly on election outcomes in Ghana (Youde, 2005; Lindberg and Morrison 2005; Nugent, 2009; Whitfield, 2009; Gyimah-Boadi, 2010; Fere 2010; Anaman, 2016b, Bukari, 2017, Anaman and Bukari, 2019a, Bukari 2022). Contemporary scholars examine the performance of political parties in elections in Ghana in the Fourth Republic based on party structures. This fourth strand of literature claims that the influence of party organizational structure and intra-party politics on the outcome of elections in Ghana cannot be ignored (Bob-Milliar, 2011; Osei, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2016; Dodsworth et al., 2022; Daddieh and Bob-Milliar, 2012, 2014; Ichino and Nathan, 2021). Building on the fourth claim, this paper interrogates the historical formation, organizational structure, and philosophy of the NDC. It established the empirical relationship



between the NDC party branding as a social democratic party/mass party, and its support-base and place in the Ghanaian electoral politics in the Fourth Republic.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The guiding principle in academic discourse is theory. In this analysis, the paper used the political development model to explain the formation and structural organization of the NDC in the Ghanaian political discourse. This model derives hypotheses about the changing linkages and appeals of successful parties in election from a particular rendering of the relevant societal context in terms of economic affluence and technical capability. In this paper, the model was adapted to the study of the formation and structural organization of political parties in Ghana. Though this model is empirically far off the mark, it is insightful for the identification of party structural organization as a supplementary variable that explains how parties pitch their appeal through their philosophy, nature and organizational structure to attract electoral support.

Formation and Structural Analysis of the National Democratic Congress

Historical Settings and Roots of NDC

The National Democratic Congress (NDC) was formed on 30th June 1992, and traces its history and evolution to three main political events in Ghana's political history. These events were the uprisings of 15th May 1979, the 4th June 1979 Revolution and the 31st December 1979 Revolution. On 15th May 1979, Flight Lieutenant Rawlings (Flt. Lt) of the Ghana Air Force, with few disgruntled men in uniform, attempted to overthrow the regime of the Supreme Military Council II led by General Fredrick William Akwasi Akuffo. The Supreme Military Council II owes its history to the military government of Colonel I.K. Acheampong. On 13th January 1979, Colonel I.K Acheampong, who was later promoted to the rank of General, overthrew Dr Abrefa Busia's government of the Second Republic of Ghana, and established the National Redemption Council (NRC) of which Col I.K. Acheampong was the Chairman and Head of State of Ghana. The NRC ruled Ghana from 13th January 1972 to 9th October 1975, and later metamorphosed into the Supreme Military Council I (SMC I) on 9th October 1975 to 5th July 1975. Acheampong again led the SMC I until he was ousted in a palace coup d'état on 5th July 1978. General F.W.K. Akuffo formed the government of the Supreme Military Council II (SMC II). The SMC II was short-lived (July 5 1978 to June 4 1979). On 15th May 1979, Flt. Lt. J.J. Rawlings led a military junta to overthrow the government of the SMC II, but it was aborted. Members of the uprising, including Flt Lt Rawlings, were arrested, and put before a military tribunal, which sentenced them to death by firing squad. During the trial, J.J. Rawlings espoused his ideals of egalitarianism, social equity, desire to rid government of corruption, etc., which later formed part of the philosophical ideals of the NDC (Chanzan, 1983; Gyimah-Boadi, 1998; Fordwor, 2010; Bob-Milliar, 2011, 2012; Daddieh and Bob-Milliar, 2014; Osei, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2016).

The second political event that contributed to the evolution of the NDC and its philosophical ideals was the coup d'état of 4th June 1979. While J.J. Rawlings and other members of the failed coup of 15th May 1979 were awaiting execution, some officers of the Ghana Armed Forces overthrew the regime of the SMC II. Flt. Lt Rawlings and his colleagues were released from prison. The coup plotters formed the government of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) with Flt. Lt Rawlings as the Chairman and Head of State of Ghana (Chanzan, 1983; Gyimah-Boadi, 1998; Fordwor, 2010; Bob-Milliar, 2011; Osei, 2013). The AFRC, which ruled Ghana for 112 days, stood for two key ideals - probity and accountability. These ideals - probity and accountability - became the fulcrum of the 'house cleaning' exercise implemented by the AFRC government to rid the Ghanaian society of corruption. Having presumably concluded the 'house cleaning exercise', the AFRC conducted multi-party elections on 18th June 1979, which were won by the People's National Party (PNP) led by Dr. Hilla Liman. Accordingly, the AFRC handed over power to Dr. Hilla Limann on 24th September 1979, and returned to the military barracks. The swearing-in of Dr. Hilla as president ushered in the Third Republican constitutional rule in Ghana (Chanzan, 1983; Gyimah-Boadi, 1998; Fordwor, 2010, Bob-Milliar, 2011; Osei, 2013). Though the government of the AFRC lasted for about four months, it established two key ideals - probity and accountability - which later became the overarching philosophical tenets of the NDC.



The third political event to which the historical evolution of the NDC, its structures and philosophy are traced to, was the 31st December 1981 revolution. On 31st December 1981, Flt. Lt. J.J. Rawlings led a coup, which ousted the government of PNP under Dr. Hilla Limann. The military junta formed the government of the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) with Flt. Lt. J.J. Rawlings as the Chair and the Head of State. The PNDC was made up of a chairman and more than ten (10) other members. The PNDC was the Supreme Executive and Legislative body in the country and ruled Ghana for 10 years (31st December 1981 to 6th January 1993). The military regime (PNDC) at the time had a Committee of Secretaries, and this committee was made up of all the PNDC Secretaries. The secretaries were the political heads of the various government ministries and departments, regional and district secretaries in the country (Gyimah-Boadi, 1998; Ayee, 1998; Fordwor, 2010; Osei, 2013; Daddieh and Bob-Milliar, 2014). At the grassroots, the PNDC had People's Defence Committees (PDCs) - renamed Cadres for the Defence of the Revolution (CDRs) - that superintended over the operationalization of its ideals (Nugent, 1995; Amenumey, 2008). In the local political space, members of the PDCs/CDRs, known as the cadres, "served as support to the regular army. They were created to help the regular security organs to protect order and security in the country. Their members wore uniforms and carried weapons" (Amenumey, 2008: 266-267). At the same time, the PNDC opened up the political landscape in Ghana by institutionalizing and mainstreaming the sociopolitical activities of the 31st December Women's Movement (Nugent, 1995). It is a well-documented fact that the 31st December Women's Movement was a force to reckon with in the era of the PNDC, both in terms of membership and its sociopolitical activism (Shillington, 1992). Between 1983 and 1987, it was estimated that the membership of the 31st December Women's Movement rose from 50,000 to 250,000 women, and it was more likely that the number was higher (Nugent, 1995). It should be pointed out that the PNDC re-echoed the principles of probity and accountability, making them its philosophical tenets. These philosophical tenets and the new structures that emerged in the PNDC (CDRs and the 31st December Women's Movement) became building blocks utilized by the NDC, and they became an integral part of the party's informal structure when it was formed.

Birth, Philosophy, and Aims of the NDC

It has already been pointed out that the NDC was formed on 30th June 1992. Article 2, Chapter 1 of the constitution of the party anchored the motto of the party on three key ideals - "unity, stability and development" (NDC Constitution, 2010: 1). Article 5, Chapter 1 espoused the democratic and philosophical ideals of the party. It identified the party as a social democratic party, and it upholds the principles of equality and the egalitarianism (NDC Constitution, 2010: 1). That is, the party is a centre-left social democratic party that seeks civil liberty, social justice, equal rights and opportunity for all Ghanaians before the law - ideals that were essentially drawn from the revolutionary ideals of the 15th June 1979, 4th June 1979 and 31st December 1981. Apart from these ideals, the NDC also shares in an economic ideal that upholds a mixed economy in which there is state ownership/participation, and/or regulation of critical productive resources of the country. The party upholds and commits to an economic system where public and private ownership play both competitive and complementary roles in rapid economic transformation (NDC Constitution 2010; Bob-Milliar, 2011, 2012; Daddieh and Bob-Milliar, 2014; Osei, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2016).

The Chapter 2 of the party's constitution spells out its aims and objectives. Essentially, the aims and objectives of the party cover a repertoire of issues - mainly political, social, educational, economic and cultural issues (NDC Constitution, 2010: 2-3). Furthermore, the constitution of the NDC aligned the aims and objectives of the party to the need to uphold human rights and the need to pursue policies that would enhance the achievement of the educational and other objectives of Ghana as enshrined in the 1992 Constitution (NDC Constitution, 2010: 3).

Organizational Structure of NDC

The NDC was formed to contest and win public elections, and to form government and steer the affairs of the State of Ghana. The party is organized and structured at several levels, and has offices in all the 275 Constituencies in Ghana including the National Headquarters. Article 11, Chapter 4 of the NDC established the ward, constituency, district, regional and national structures of the party



(NDC Constitution, 2010: 7). Both the elected executives at all levels of the party organization, as well as co-opted members, hold office of four years and shall be eligible for re-election or selection. The branch level of the party is its basic unit, which comprises the party members resident at a polling station (NDC Constitution, 2010: 7). The branch level has 9 elected executives, made up of the branch chairman, secretary, organizer, treasury, woman organizer, youth organizer, communication officer (formally propaganda secretary) and two others members, often considered as party elders (NDC Constitution, 2010: 7-8).

The ward level is the polling division, and it is the electoral area of the party at a district or constituency. The ward level has elected executive members as chairman, secretary and organizer and a coordinator from within the ward executive members (NDC Constitution, 2010). The ward level executive members of the party are responsible for coordination of all party activities at the branch levels within its jurisdiction.

The constituency level of the NDC party is also responsible for party activities in the constituency, as well wards and branches within the constituency. A constituency has elected and co-opted members of the party. They consist of a constituency chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, deputy secretary, treasury, deputy treasury, organizer, deputy organizer, youth organizer, deputy youth organizer, women organizer, deputy women organizer, communication officer, deputy communication officer, Member of Parliament (MP), District Chief Executive (DCE) who is also a member of the party, and other thirteen members chosen by the Constituency Executive Committee (NDC Constitution, 2010, Article 17: 9-10).

The district level of the party refers to a structure in a district, which has more than one constituency in that district, metropolis or municipality. In this case, A District Coordinating Committee is formed, and it comprises a chairman, secretary, organizer, Member of Parliament and the District Chief executive if he or she is a member of the party and two representatives of each Constituency Committee in the Constituency (NDC Constitution, 2010, Article 18, p12).

The regional level organization of the party coordinates and implements decisions of the party, monitors and evaluates party activities in all constituencies in the region. It also devises party strategies for the conduct of elections and campaigns, and submits a written report on party activities in the region to the national headquarters. The regional structure of the party has Regional Executive Committee that included the regional chairman, two vice chairmen, secretary, deputy secretary, treasurer, deputy treasurer, organizer, deputy organizer, youth organizer, two deputy regional organizers, regional woman organizer, two deputy regional woman organizers, communication officer, deputy communication officer, one representative of each constituency of each Executive Committees, all Members of Parliament from the region who are members of the Party, Ministers of state from the region, including Deputy Ministers, District Chief Executives of the Region who are members of the party, and three others co-opted in consultation with National Executive Committee (NDC Constitution, 2010, Article 20: 14-15).

The national level of the party is the highest decision-making structure in the party. The national level structure consists of the National Executive Committee, Functional Committee, Council of Elders, National Chairman and Vice Chairmen, and National Secretariat. The national headquarters, which is the highest decision body in the party, makes and unmakes decisions of the party, formulates party policies and strategies, and also directs, supervises, monitors and evaluates party policies, decisions and activities at all levels of the party in the organogram (NDC Constitution 2010: 16-32).

Just like other political parties in Ghana in the Fourth Republic, the constitution of the NDC created positions for women. It is axiomatic that, in the scheme of democratic affairs, positions should be created for women to contribute in garnering a broad-based support for the NDC. However, one cannot underestimate the role that the 31st Women's Movement of the erstwhile PNDC played in creating space for women in the NDC. As one informant pointed out:

The 31st Women's Movement created a gendered space for women in the NDC. In the early years of the NDC, especially the NDC under the leadership of J.J. Rawlings from 1992 to 2000, the 31st Women's Movement was instrumental in selling the NDC as a brand to women in Ghana. Its leaders worked with national, regional and constituency executives of the NDC, thus, creating a symbiotic relationship



that created space for women to participate actively in NDC politics. The active role of the leadership of the 31st December Women's Movement in the early years of the NDC helped to demystify the narrative that politics in Ghana is male-gendered, a situation that emboldened women to venture into politics - whether in NDC or in other political parties ((Interview with a female NDC card-bearing member, Accra, 20th March, 2023).

In short, "though the constitution of the NDC did not formally create space for the participation of the 31st December Women's Movement in its affairs, the structures of the party and its executive members made tacit endorsement of the participation of the 31st December Women's Movement in the affairs of the party in the early years of its formation. In most instances, it operated as an integral part of the women's wing of the party (Interview with a female NDC card-bearing member, Sunyani, 7th April, 2023). In effect, the 31st December Women's Movement was informally an integral part of the party structure of the NDC in the early years of the party.

Apart from the 31st December Women's Movement, the Committees for Defence of the Revolution (CDRs) also played and continue to play vital roles in the NDC. The structure of the party did not clearly demarcate the positions and roles of the members of the CDRs, known as cadres. Nonetheless, "given the enormous roles the cadres of the CDRs played in the erstwhile PNDC, unofficial spaces were created for them to participate in the politics of the NDC" (Interview with a male NDC card-bearing member, Ho, 10th March, 2023). As a group of people that previously wielded a pseudo-military or internal security powers in their respective local domains in the erstwhile PNDC government, "the cadres seemed to exist as a parallel security force of the NDC, especially between 1992 and 2000. To legitimize space in the NDC, the cadres, or at least, some of the cadres, soon metamorphosed into foot-soldiers that sought to galvanize social, economic and, to some extent, brute force to protect, safeguard and advance the ideals and objectives of the NDC in their respective local domains and nationally" (Interview with a male NDC card-bearing member, Accra, 20th March, 2023). In short, the cadres found space to operate in the structure of the NDC, and though the party acquiesced to their functions, the cadres existed and operated informally within the structure of the NDC.

Identity, Mass or Elitist Party: What do we know?

Mention has already been made of the political events that contributed to the evolution of the NDC. Given that the NDC evolved from revolutionary traditions and their philosophical ideals, it quickly received a considerable support of the masses, particularly the masses in rural Ghana (Interview with NDC a male card-bearing member, Ho, 10th March, 2023). The masses' support for the NDC was due probably to the fact that "the party identified itself with ordinary Ghanaians than the NPP, which appeared traditionally elitist in character and membership" (Interview with a male NDC card-bearing member, Accra, 18th March, 2023). Chapter 3, Article 8 of the NDC Constitution underscores the party's mass-orientation when it extended membership of the party to all Ghanaians, irrespective of their religion, ethnicity and social and economic status (NDC Constitution, 2010). Beyond the above ideals, the NDC possesses many attributes that serve as catalyst for the attraction of the masses, middle class, elites and groups of diverse backgrounds. According to Alidu (2022), the NDC's attraction to Ghanaians lies in the fact that it provides the fecundity for the homogenization and accommodation of different views and groups, as well as the fact that it prosecutes policies that inure to the benefit of the country and the general public. In his own words:

The NDC is an ethnically and socially diverse party; The NDC is ideologically centre-left; The NDC is state-led in policy orientation; The NDC practices a decentralized leadership; The NDC guarantees media freedom; The NDC expands civic space; The NDC allows societal participation in decision making; The NDC promotes social justice and equal rights; The NDC is an equal opportunities party 10. The NDC has a diversified community of association The NDC's leadership has hands-on competence; The NDC practices good corporate governance principles; The NDC guarantees the basic human needs of everyone; The NDC is a transparent and accountable party; The NDC's policies target a defined "needy" group; The NDC is responsive to the needs

of every Ghanaian; The NDC stands for the rule of law; The NDC is a social equality party; The NDC supports common property ownership 20. The NDC provides a socially-diversified leadership; The NDC provides distributive democracy; The NDC creates wealth for every Ghanaian; The NDC is a listening party; The NDC has elected much younger party leaders in the Fourth Republic; The NDC convinces with reasoned arguments; The NDC guarantees freedom of speech; The NDC tolerates divergent views; The NDC provides responsible leadership when in government; The NDC is consensus-oriented; The NDC espouses a policy of good neighbourliness when in government (cf: Alidu, 2022 pp 22-23).

NDC: A Political Third Force in Ghana?

A political party is a voluntary political institution that seeks to capture political power and form government with the intention of prosecuting the content of its manifesto for the betterment of party members and the entire citizenry at large (Mainwaring and Scully, 1995). Political parties are appropriate vehicles to political power, and the presence of active political parties engaging in competitive elections is generally perceived as a necessary step towards democratic consolidation (Duverger, 1954; Mainwaring and Scully, 1995; Randall and Svasana, 2002; Bob-Milliar, 2011; Osei, 2012, 2013 2015, 2016; Daddieh and Bob-Milliar, 2014). Also, Dix (1992) observed that assessing the degree of democratic consolidation depends largely on political parties. Similarly, Ware (1996: 1) rightly pointed out that “in contemporary states, it is difficult to imagine there being politics without parties.” Political parties are therefore political institutions for building a democratic pluralism because of the crucial role parties play in shaping democratic governance as a medium through which citizens aggregate and articulate their interest (Duverger, 1954; Mainwaring and Scully, 1995; Randall and Svasana, 2002; Bob-Milliar, 2011; Osei, 2013; Daddieh and Bob-Milliar 2014). Political parties systemize the process of political participation and art of electoral choices. Political parties are formed based on certain tradition or philosophy, and the absence of distinct political tradition in a state means citizens will resort to cleavages, and in particular ethnicity and personalities (Duverger, 1954; Mainwaring and Scully, 1995; Randall and Svasana, 2002; Bob-Milliar, 2011; Osei, 2013; Daddieh and Bob-Milliar 2014). Political traditions delineate various societal groups into political factions, and are more likely to fall on these factions as the basis for political competitions in a democracy.

Sambrook and Oelbaum (1999) argue that personalistic tendencies have permeated Ghanaian politics, as elsewhere in Africa. It is a known documented fact that the two dominant political traditions in the embryonic period of party politics in Ghana between 1949 and 1950 were the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) and Convention People’s Party (CPP) formed on 4th August 1947 and 12th June 1949, respectively. This was the beginning of opposing political factions or groups, though it should be mentioned that UGCC was a nationalist movement with its motto of ‘self-government in the shortest possible time’ (Fordwor, 2010; Bob-Milliar, 2011; Osei, 2013; Daddieh and Bob-Milliar, 2014). The ‘conservative’ nature of UGCC and its leadership led to the break-away of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, who, seen as ‘radical’, formed the CPP with the motto ‘self-government now.’ In the 1950s, other political parties emerged in the democratic space in Ghana. Key among them were the National Liberation Movement (NLM), Ghana Congress Party (GCP), the Northern Peoples Party (NPP), Democratic Party (DP), Anglo Youth Organisation (AYO), Muslims Association Party (MAP) and Togoland Congress (TC), which contested in the elections in 1951 and 1954 (Austin, 1964, 236; Daddieh and Bob-Milliar, 2014). The NPP and other parties later joined hands with the NPP/NLM/GCP to form the United Party (UP) led by Dr. K.A Busia as the opposition leader against Dr. Kwame Nkrumah’s CPP. In spite of the opposition, the CPP remained the most vibrant and most-oriented party with Dr. Kwame Nkrumah as first the Leader of Government Business (1951-1952), Prime Minister (1952-1960) and later in the 1960s (July 1, 1960-1966), as an Executive President of the First Republic of Ghana (Fordwor, 2010; Bob-Milliar, 2011; Osei, 2013; Daddieh and Bob-Milliar, 2014).

Arguably, there were two political parties, and could be identified by their unique traits and orientations. Dr Kwame Nkrumah who broke away from UGCC to form CPP was seen as radical and militant in his political approach and ideology (Oliver and Atmore, 2005). The CPP had mass followers



from all ranks of less-educated youth referred to the as ‘Standard Seven Boys’ and ‘Veranda Boys’ in Ghana’s political history. The UP group, on the other hand, was conservative, elitist and liberal, and was modest, professing gradualist approach to politics. In terms of political philosophy, the CPP articulated socialist political ideology. Thus, Nkrumah’s economic and political approaches were more of a state social-welfare-orientation., if not outright socialism., while the UP group professed a liberal and capitalist approach to political and economic issues and policies (Killick, 1978, p.37; Fordwor, 2010; Bob-Milliar, 2011; Osei, 2013; Daddieh and Bob-Milliar, 2014).

Throughout Ghana’s political history up to 1980, political contestation pitted these groups against each other (Sandbrook and Oelbaum, 1999; Fordwor, 2010; Bob-Milliar, 2011; Osei, 2013; Daddieh and Bob-Milliar, 2014). With the overthrow of CPP in 1966, the military occupied the centre-stage of Ghana’s politics. Out of this political interregnum emerged a ‘Third Political Tradition’ on 31st December 1981, of which Jerry John Rawlings and his Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) were the fulcrum (Osei, 2013; Daddieh and Bob-Milliar, 2014). The emergence of this new political tradition was an amalgamation of large segments of the CPP and an entirely new political group (Sandbrook and Oelbaum, 1999; Osei, 2013; Daddieh and Bob-Milliar, 2014). The PNDC metamorphosed into the National Democratic Congress (NDC) when the party was formed on 30th June 1992, following the lifting of the ban on political activities upon the promulgation of the 1992 Fourth Republican Constitution in a referendum on 28th April 1992. The emergence of the NDC in the democratic space in Ghana gave rise to the ‘political third tradition.’ The political philosophy of the NDC as a social political movement was not markedly different from the CPP ideology of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. Hence, most of the older Nkrumahist lent or allied themselves with the ‘Rawlings’ NDC Third Force’ as the new dominant political tradition after the UP and CPP traditions in the Ghanaian political space (Bob-Milliar, 2011, 2012; Daddieh and Bob-Milliar, 2014; Osei, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2016).

NDC and Ghana’s Elections: Does Political Tradition Matter?

The NDC’s philosophy is to institutionalize state welfare politics, and this has resonated with the masses in elections in the Fourth Republic of Ghana. The belief in the egalitarian politics is something Ghanaians have identified as a distinguishable epithet of the party. It was for this reason that the NDC was able to win four (4) of the eight (8) general elections organized under the Fourth Republic of Ghana since 1992.

In the presidential election held on 3rd November 1992, Fit-Lt- Rawlings of the NDC won with 58.3 percent (58.3%) of the 3,989,020 votes cast. Prof. Albert Adu-Boahen of the NPP came second with 30.4 percent (30.4%) of the votes. Other presidential candidates that contested the election were former president Dr. Hilla Limann of the People’s National Convention (PNP), Kwabena Darko of the National Independence Party (NIP), and Lt-Gen. Emmanuel Erskine of the People’s Heritage Party (PHP), who polled 6.7 percent (6.7%), 2.8 percent (2.8%), and 1.7 percent (1.7%), respectively. The parliamentary elections were held on 28th December 1992 with the Progressive Alliance, an alliance made up of the NDC, the National Convention Party (NCP) and the Egle Party, won 198 seats out of a total of 200 (189 seats for the NDC, 8 seats for NCP, and 1 seat for the Egle Party). The remaining 2 seats were won by independent candidates. Four parties - the NPP, PNC, NIP and PHP - boycotted the parliamentary elections over alleged infractions and electoral fraud (Daddieh and Bob-Milliar, 2014; Bukari, 2017; Anaman, K. A. & Bukari, G. A. 2019b; Alidu and Bukari, 2020; Bukari, 2022a; Bukari, Mbowura and Arah, 2022a and 2022b).

Flt. Lt. J.J. Rawlings took over the reins of government as the first president of the Fourth Republic with K.N. Arkaah, as the Vice President. On the same day, the First Parliament of the Fourth Republic was inaugurated. The NDC with Flt. Lt. J.J. Rawlings as its presidential candidate again won the 1996 presidential election, but the NPP with John A. Kufuor as its presidential candidate won the 2000 presidential elections. As no candidate won with over fifty percent of the valid votes in 2000, a run-off was held for John A. Kufuor of the NPP and Prof. Evans Atta Mills of the NDC on 28th December 2000, which John A. Kufuor of the NPP won with 56.73 percent (56.73%) of the valid votes cast; Prof. Evans Atta Mills of the NDC polled 43.27 percent (43.27%). In the parliamentary election, the NPP also won 100 of the 200 seats in parliament; the NDC won 92 seats; independent candidates and candidates of the other political parties won eight (8) seats. The NPP snatched a seat from the NDC

in a by-election in 2022 to increase its seats to 101 while that of the NDC reduced to 91 seats following the resignation of Hon. Dr Mohammed Ibn Chambas as the Member of Parliament (MP) for the Bimbilla Constituency in 2002. On 7th January 2001, John A. Kufuor was sworn in as the third president of the Fourth Republic - the first time in the political history of Ghana that the country experienced the succession of an elected president with another. He was re-elected in December 2004 for a second four-year term. In the December 2008 general elections, Nana Akufo-Addo of the NPP polled 49.1 percent (49.1%) with his closest competitor, Prof. John Evans Atta Mills of the NDC polling 47.9 percent (47.9%). The second round and later the Tain Constituency elections put the NDC's Prof. Atta Mills with 50.23 percent (50.23%), and the NPP's Nana Akufo-Addo at 49.77 percent (49.77%). Prof. Atta Mills was, thus, pronounced the President. In the 2012 elections, the NDC won with a victory margin of 50.7 percent (50.7%) as against NPP with 47.74 percent (47.74%), while the other minority parties secured 1.56 percent (1.56%) of the valid votes. The NDC, however, lost the 2016 and 2020 general elections to the NPP. In the 2016 elections, the NDC garnered only 4,771,188 votes, representing 44.53 percent (44.53 %); The NPP won the election with 5,755,758 votes, representing 53.72 percent (53.72%). The other presidential candidates garnered 186,788 votes, representing 1.75 percent of the valid votes cast. In the 2020 elections, NDC again lost, garnering 47 percent (47 %) of the total valid votes cast to the ruling NPP, which won with 51 percent (51%). The remaining 2 percent (2 percent) went to other participating political parties and independent candidates (Bukari, 2017; Anaman, & Bukari, 2019b; Alidu and Bukari, 2020; Bukari, 2022; Bukari, Mbowura and Arah, 2022a and 2022b). The table below shows the periods NDC was in government and in opposition.

Table1: NDC in Government and-in-Opposition

Period	In -Government	In-Opposition
January 7 1993- January 6, 1997	NDC was in government, and Ft Lt Rawlings was the president	
January 7 1997- January 6,2001	NDC was in government, and Ft Lt Rawlings was the president	
January 7 2001		Opposition journey with Prof. John Evans Atta Mills as its Opposition Leader
January 7 2005		Began first opposition journey with Prof. John Evans Atta Mills as its Opposition Leader
January 7 2009	NDC was in government, and J.E.A Mills was the president	
January 7 2013	NDC was in government, and J. Dramani Mahama was the president	
January 7 2017		Opposition journey with John Dramani Mahama as its Opposition Leader
January 7 2020		Opposition journey with John Dramani Mahama as its Opposition Leader

Source: Authors' Construct, 2023

CONCLUSION


The National Democratic Congress (NDC) is an offspring of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) of 1979 and 1981, respectively. It was formed out of the revolutionary ideals and philosophy of Ft. Lt Jerry Rawlings and his comrades in 1992. It was formed on the principles of 'probity and accountability.' The party identified itself with the



common people, and it is seen as a mass-based political party. This identification and the philosophy it espoused are grounded in real data and its activities with certain level of certainty that define the party's mobilization, organization and self-belief. Since 1993, the NDC emerged and demonstrated itself as the third political tradition in politics in Ghana after the CPP and the Busia-Danquah traditions that had hitherto monopolized Ghana's democratic space since the colonial era. The NDC's tradition, philosophy and, to some extent, its informal structure have leanings with the revolutionary dictates, flavour and philosophies of three revolutions in Ghana spearheaded by Ft. Lt. J.J. Rawlings - 15th May 1946 uprising, the 4th June 1979 revolution, and the 31st December 1981 revolution. Essentially, these revolutions shaped the ideals and philosophy of the party, particularly its overarching ideals - egalitarianism, probity, accountability and its socialist and mass-orientation ideals. By fusing together ideals borrowed from the aforementioned revolutions with new tenets about party organization, the NDC established a unique brand that appealed to the masses. In addition, the informal party structures - the activities of the 31st December Women's Movement and the activism of the cadres of the CDRs - opened up space for gender and mass participations in the party. Given the structure of the NDC - its formal and informal structures - the NDC has succeeded in couching a niche for itself and establishing itself as the 'third force' in the democratic history of Ghana. It has won elections in Ghana since 1993, and its socialist, egalitarian appeals, as well as its appeal to the masses, serve as key variables that would continue to brighten the party's chances of winning subsequent elections in Ghana in the Fourth Republic. The political fortunes of NDC can be activated at two levels. First, an activation of grassroot-based policy formulation for manifesto development, and second, an activation of decentralized campaign operations to all levels of the party organization and structure.

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