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While political parties are indispensable mechanisms for promoting democratic governance and mobilizing people for participation, parties in Ghana face organizational and institutional challenges relating to internal democracy, grassroots participation, and patron–client relations resulting in widespread corruption in the parties.

# Dynamics of Political Parties' Administration in Ghana

Nick Fobih

*The second half of the twentieth century witnessed the introduction of the party system in Ghana and many countries in the developing world. As in many African countries, the effort to develop Ghana's party system and democracy in the postcolonial era has undergone various transformations. This paper considers the dynamics of the administration of these parties in terms of their ideological underpinnings, institutional framework, and organization, and the numerous bottlenecks to managing parties in Ghana, which became more apparent after the reintroduction of multiparty democracy in 1992. Examination of these issues could serve as a foundation for understanding the internal dynamics of Ghana's parties, and could help promote reform measures where necessary.*

## Introduction

The introduction of democracy in Ghana in the postcolonial era led to the formation of political parties and the emergence of party traditions, inspired by Eastern and particularly Western political ideologies. In most postcolonial African states, especially Ghana, besides the external ideological influences, the development of the party system mainly emerged from the growth of nationalism and the struggle to end colonialism, first under the Aboriginal Rights Protection Society in 1898, and later, the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) and the Convention Peoples Party (CPP), which led the country's struggle for independence in the 1940s and 1950s. While parties played significant roles in Ghana's struggle for independence and against authoritarian regimes in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, the dominance of military regimes in the 1970s and 1980s not only delayed the development of the party system in Ghana, but also undermined its importance and democracy in general. The delay in developing the party system in Ghana and Africa as a whole can be attributed to the lack of focus by many contemporary theories on African democratization on the party system in terms of the challenges they face and their administrative procedures. As Mehra (2003) noted, because of the Eurocentric focus of theoretical studies

on modern party systems and democracy, many Western theorists have paid little attention to the evolution of parties in many developing countries.

The importance of political parties in Ghana's democratic transition and consolidation processes is evidenced in the fact that some leading members of the defunct parties greatly contributed to the democratic transition. Parties were banned under the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) regime, but leaders of the banned parties were instrumental in resisting authoritarian rule and advocating a return to democratic rule. Albert Adu-Boahen's memorable speech at the Danquah Memorial Lectures in 1988 broke the "culture of silence" that was imposed on the Ghanaian polity by the PNDC regime. This speech set the tone and pace for popular agitation for transition to multiparty democracy in Ghana. Political parties generally serve as major rallying points for the electorate, the main political institutions that grease the wheels of democracy, and Ghana's parties are no exception. Membership in parties offers opportunities for influencing decision making or rising through the parties' ranks at the local and national levels that would otherwise not be easily available to those who are not party members. As political organizations, parties are more effective means for people to articulate their views and influence the political process than people who enter politics as independent candidates. For example, only a limited number of independent candidates are elected to Ghana's parliament, and no independent presidential candidate has ever been elected in Ghana. Randall and Theobald (1998) underlined the important roles of parties, which include political participation and serving as the medium for political recruitment, thus creating opportunities for upward social mobility. Dalton and Wattenburg (2000) argued that parties are indispensable in promoting and sustaining democracy. These views are relevant to parties' roles in democratic development, but they could be the source of constitutional crisis, infringement on citizens' rights, abuse of power, and even democratic destabilization, as noticed in Zimbabwe in 2007, Kenya between 2007 and 2008, and in the political crisis in Honduras in 2009.

Since independence, Ghana's party system has undergone several transformations through military interventions and bans on party activities, leading to overall political instability. After almost eleven years of banning party activities in Ghana, because of external pressure and internal agitation by members of the defunct political parties and prodemocracy civic groups, the PNDC regime lifted the ban on multiparty democracy in 1992. The lifting of the ban before Ghana's 1992 democratic transition saw the resurgence of parties of all sizes and ideologies, and leaders of the defunct parties organized their supporters to revitalize their old party traditions, or to form new parties. Like parties elsewhere, the fundamental aim of Ghana's political parties is to gain a competitive edge in elections, and to control or influence the conduct of government by getting candidates elected to public office. In this paper, I argue that while political parties are indispensable mechanisms for promoting democratic governance and mobilizing people for participation, parties in Ghana face organizational and institutional challenges relating

to internal democracy, grassroots participation, and patron–client relations, resulting in widespread corruption in the parties. The paper is divided into four sections. Following the introduction, the second part discusses the ideological influence, structure, and organization characteristics, as well as the membership-drive strategies of the four main parties in Ghana: the New Patriotic party (NPP), the National Democratic Congress (NDC), the Convention Peoples Party (CPP), and the Peoples National Convention (PNC). The third section focuses on administrative challenges confronting Ghana's political parties, and the concluding part provides a summary and recommendations that address the challenges identified, which party leaders could implement to strengthen Ghana's party system.

## The Management of Political Parties in Ghana

### *Political Parties' Ideological Influences, Policy Initiatives, Structures, and Organizations*

The 1992 Constitution of Ghana outlines basic conditions for the formation of political parties, and sets forth requirements that all parties must meet. Articles 7 (55 & 56), together with the Political Parties Law, PNDCL 281, provide the legal and institutional frameworks for the formation, operation, and regulation of parties in Ghana—such as guaranteeing the right to form political parties and the state's responsibility to provide fair and equal opportunity for all parties to present their programs to the public. A major provision of the political parties' law is that the name, emblem, color, motto, or other symbols used by political parties must not have an ethnic, regional, or religious connotation, nor give the appearance that its activities are confined only to a part of the society based on ethnicity. Parties in Ghana are influenced by ideological perspectives, policy initiatives, and organizational strategies that have striking similarities and differences. Below is a discussion of each of the four major parties' ideology, policy initiatives, internal structures, organizational processes, and administrative procedures, as well as the challenges posed by these internal dynamics.

### *The Danquah-Busia's United Party (UP) Tradition: New Patriotic Party (NPP)*

The root of the NPP, the Danquah-Busia United Party tradition, emerged from the UGCC, formed by Paa Grant and members of the "Big Six."<sup>1</sup> The NPP prides itself as the epitome of the liberal democratic tradition and associates itself with right-conservative parties in the advanced democracies, such as the Republican Party in the United States, and it has the elephant as its symbol. Like its predecessor parties of the Danquah-Busia tradition, such as the UGCC (1947), the Progress Party (1969), and the Popular Front Party (1979), it bases its constitution on respect for civil liberties and the rule of law; hence its catchphrase, "Development in Freedom." Since its leadership

believes that getting the economic fundamentals right is the ultimate feature of successful free-market reforms, which could create the enabling environment for the private sector to flourish and as the basis for growth, wealth creation, and national progress, it emphasizes free enterprise as the foundation of social development. Its overriding economic policy objective is to create macroeconomic stability through fiscal discipline, low inflation rates, low interest rates, and a strong currency. During the “golden age of business,” the period between 2001 and 2008, when it was in power, it implemented economic policies directed toward achieving high economic indicators based on its agenda of strengthening the private sector. It implemented extensive social policies, such as the National Health Insurance Scheme and the National Youth Employment Program, to address development challenges and social inequalities.<sup>2</sup>

In structure and procedures for electing officers, article 5 (2) of the NPP constitution states that the party's organizational structure is based on unit, constituency, overseas, regional, and national organizations, and executives are chosen through party primaries at all these levels through an annual conference of delegates. At the national level, the National Executive Committee (NEC) consists of the chairperson, three vice-chairpersons, a national general secretary, a national organizer, a communications officer, electoral or research officers, a *nasara*<sup>3</sup> coordinator, a men's organizer, a women's organizer, and a youth organizer, all based at the national headquarters in Accra (NPP Constitution, 2009, Article 9). The NEC oversees the activities of the party at the national level and delegates authority to the regional executive in the administration and organization of the party's affairs in all ten regions and 230 constituencies (NPP National Vice-Chairman, 2005). Article 14 of the party's constitution provides for additional structures, which include the National Youth Wing and the Tertiary Educational Schools Congress, as well as various regional and constituency branches of the youth wings known as the Young Elephants. Article 15 of the party constitution provides for a national council of elders.<sup>4</sup> The national organization consists of the annual conference of delegates, the National Congress, the National Council, and the National Executive Committee. Besides the National Executive Committee, bodies such as the Finance Committee, the Constitutional Committee, the Organization Committee, the Research Committee, the Disciplinary Committee, and the Vetting Committee constitute the intraparty decision-making institutions. Apart from paid staff, such as a secretary and a driver, the party's executives at all levels of the hierarchy and other party members work in the national, regional, and constituency offices on voluntary basis, but they may receive incentives or benefits from the party in situations where the party can afford to offer them (NPP General Secretary, 2005).<sup>5</sup>

The organization of the party at the national level has the national annual delegates conference as its supreme governing body. At this congress, a broad spectrum of party members—comprising representatives of the bodies, overseas branches, and 230 constituencies—vote to elect members of the National Executive Committee (NPP Constitution. 2009, Article

9:35–49). In accordance with the provisions of Article 12 of the party's constitution, the National Congress is held once a year, at least four weeks after the last of the regional annual delegates' conferences, and not later than twelve months before the date set for electing its presidential candidate. The general secretary is mandated to call for nominations not later than six months before election. Based on the party's 2009 constitutional review, voting to elect the presidential candidate takes place nationwide in all the party's 230 constituencies, and the final results are announced at the National Congress (NPP Constitution, 2009, Article 12:54–60; *Ghana Web News* 2010a, 2010b).<sup>6</sup> The NPP has offices in all ten regional capitals. Each regional branch has ten elected executive positions: a chairperson, two vice-chairpersons, a secretary, an organizer, a communications officer, electoral or research officers, a *nasara* coordinator, a men's organizer, a women's organizer, a youth organizer, and a financial secretary. An arrangement similar to the National Congress is used to elect the regional executives. Ten members of the party consisting of four executives and six members from each constituency in the region vote to elect the regional executives. When the party was in power, the regional party executives worked with the regional minister on issues that affected the interests of the party at the regional level (NPP Central Regional Chairman 2006). Apart from the elected executives, the party's structure at the regional level consists of the constituency chairpersons, a representative of the Regional Council of Elders, and sitting parliamentarians or parliamentary candidates from the region, but the latter do not have voting rights at executive committee meetings, and regional officers are elected annually at a regional delegates' conference (Articles 7 & 12).

Article 6 (2) of the party's constitution provides for the establishment of an executive committee, consisting of nine elected executives and a financial secretary at each constituency. The leader of the constituency-level executives of the party is the chairperson, assisted by a vice-chairperson, a secretary, an organizing secretary, a men's organizer, a women's organizer, a youth organizer, paid staff, and volunteers. The constituency executive committee appoints the financial secretary and consults with the MP on issues at the constituency level. The election of the constituency executives takes the form of an electoral-college system. To represent the constituency as an MP in the national parliament, one has to meet the conditions set in the party constitution regarding parliamentary candidacy: being a party member in good standing, being a citizen or resident in the constituency or community for at least two years, having no criminal record, and being of sound mind. Article 11 (51–54) of the party's constitution states that parliamentary primaries shall be announced not later than eighteen months, and the primaries will be organized twelve months, before national elections. A prospective candidate files for nomination at the constituency level by completing the party's application forms and attaching his or her curriculum vitae with a required nonrefundable fee, which may vary every four years. The nominee is then vetted by the party's constituency, regional, and national councils. Selected executives from polling stations within the constituency vote to

elect the parliamentary candidate. Below the constituency level is the grassroots-level party organization, which consist of wards, mainly small cells or polling stations, often called zones, which are responsible for organizing support at the grassroots level. Each ward has five local executives, consisting of a chairperson, a secretary, a women's organizer, a youth organizer, and a treasurer; some members from the wards or units vote to elect the ward executives (NPP Constitution, 2009, Article 5:18).

*The Nkrumahist Tradition Parties:*

*The Convention Peoples Party and the Peoples National Convention*

The Nkrumahist tradition emerged in 1949, when Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah, left the UGCC to form the CPP, which led Ghana to independence in 1957. CPP and PNC, the two main parties that maintain the Nkrumahist tradition, pride themselves as revivals of Nkrumah's socialist ideals. Other Nkrumahist parties include the National Alliance Liberation Party (1969) and the Peoples National Party (1979). The CPP and the PNC have a cockerel and a coconut tree as their symbols, respectively. At the national level, working in the party's national headquarters in Accra, are a chairperson, two vice-chairperson(s), a general secretary, a national organizer, a women's organizer, and a youth organizer. Like the NPP and the NDC, the CPP and the PNC have other bodies, such as a national women's wing, a national youth wing, and the Tertiary Educational Schools Congress, but unlike the NPP and NDC, because of financial constraints, the CPP and the PNC have few paid staff in their national and regional offices, and staff members are mostly volunteers (interview with CPP General Secretary, 2005; interview with PNC General Secretary, 2005; PNC Constitution 1992). An arrangement similar to the NPP and NDC's procedures is used to elect the national, regional, and constituency executives and the presidential candidate, but the Nkrumahist parties have less national appeal and competitive spirit than the two major parties. The national executives oversee the activities of the party at the national level and delegate authority to the regional executives, who organize and administer the party's affairs in all ten regions.

Although the CPP and the PNC do not have nationwide party offices and party structures in many constituencies, they have some form of party organization at the country's regional capitals. Each regional branch of the two parties has a chairperson, two vice-chairpersons, a secretary, a district organizer, a women's organizer, and a youth organizer. The structure of their national and regional leadership is similar to that of the NPP and NDC parties, but they do not have nationwide constituency offices, reflecting the lack of their nationwide support—which partly accounts for their poor showing in all the presidential and parliamentary elections that have been held since the democratic transition. Where the PNC and CPP have constituency offices, like the two major parties, there is a chairperson, assisted by a vice-chairperson, a secretary, an organizing secretary, a men's organizer, a women's organizer, a youth organizer, a few paid staff, and mostly volunteers. Below



the constituency level is the grassroots-level organization—the units, which have the responsibility of organizing grassroots support (CPP Constitution, 1992). Despite its popularity and a wide spectrum of mass grassroots support in the 1950s and 1960s, the Nkrumahist tradition over the last three decades has lost a considerable amount of its support to the Rawlings NDC party tradition. As Panebianco (1988) noted, the importance of institutionalization in party organization is underscored by the degree of interdependence and participation among its internal actors. One of the main difficulties facing the Nkrumahist parties is how to merge the small parties together to constitute a formidable opposition to the two major parties. For example, when the NRP and CPP merged to form the New CPP, the PNC refused to join the new alliance. This continues to divide the base of the Nkrumahist tradition.

### *The Rawlings Tradition: National Democratic Congress (NDC)*

The Rawlings tradition NDC party emerged from the AFRC and PNDC regimes, which came to power after the 1979 and 1982 military coups, headed by Jerry John Rawlings. The NDC party claims to be a social democratic party, embracing the ideology espoused by the Nkrumahist parties (the CPP and the PNC), and it uses an umbrella as its symbol. It associates itself with democratic-left parties in some Western countries, such as the Democratic Party in the United States. Despite its socialist background and its claim to be a social-democratic party, it strictly implemented neoliberal economic policies when it was in power between 1992 and 2000, and it continues to implement such policies since it took over power in 2009. It claims to balance the pursuit of tough macroeconomic stabilization measures with social policies that the party terms “human-centered market reforms.” At the national level of the party’s hierarchy are a chairperson, two vice-chairpersons, a general secretary, a national organizer, a research officer, a national treasurer, a women’s organizer, a youth organizer, and a propaganda secretary at the national headquarters in Accra. The party structure consists of the National Executive Committee (NEC), regional executive committees, district-coordinating committees, constituency committees, and ward committees. Apart from a few paid staff (drivers, secretaries, bodyguards), executives work in party offices as volunteers, but are compensated when the party can afford to compensate them. The NEC has a broad mandate with various functions, which include carrying out the policies and programs of the party adopted by the National Congress; it presents an annual report to the National Congress on the party activities and accounts, as stipulated in the Political Parties Law (NDC Constitution, 2005).

The party has a council of elders and disciplinary committees at all levels, and other bodies such as the Tertiary Educational Institutions Network, the 31st December Women’s Movement, the Veranda Boys and Girls Club, the Cadres, and remnants of the June 4 Movement. The power of approving candidates to contest national elections is vested in the NEC. Executives are chosen through party elections at the national, regional,

constituency, and ward levels. At the National Congress, some members and executives from each constituency participate in the election of the national executives. The NDC has regional offices in all ten regional capitals. The structure of its regional leadership is similar to that of the national level. The regions have eight functional executives, and each regional branch has a chairperson, two vice-chairpersons, a secretary, an organizer, a women's organizer, a men's organizer, a youth organizer, and a propaganda secretary. An arrangement similar to the National Congress is used to elect the regional executives. Five members from each constituency within the region, consisting of executives and party members, vote in the primaries to elect the regional executives (NDC General Secretary 2005).

Like the NPP, the NDC has 230 constituencies. The leader of the constituency or district-level executives of the party is the constituency chairperson, assisted by a vice-chairperson, a secretary, an organizing secretary, a men's organizer, a women's organizer, a youth organizer, paid staff, and volunteers. The election of the constituency executives takes a similar format at the national and regional levels, except that only representatives from the parties' branches within a specific region or constituency participate in the election of the constituency executives. The chairpersons from the wards or polling stations within the constituency vote to elect the constituency executives. To stand as an MP, one has to meet the conditions set in the party's constitution regarding parliamentary candidacy. The basic conditions for qualifying as an NDC parliamentary candidate are to be a party member in good standing and a citizen or resident in the constituency, to have no criminal record, and to be of sound mind. An aspiring candidate registers his or her nomination at the constituency level by filing application forms and a nonrefundable fee, as determined by the constituency. A confidential report on the nominee is submitted, and he or she is then vetted and approved by the National Council before he or she qualifies to participate in the primaries. Party nominations are normally open for thirty days. Two members from every polling station form an electoral college to elect the parliamentary candidate at the constituency level. Below the constituency level is the zone-level party organization, which consists of wards, which organize grassroots support for the party. The zones have local executives or zonal officers, such as a chairperson, a secretary, a women's organizer, a youth organizer, and a treasurer, totaling about fifteen executive members, elected through the same procedures (NDC MP for the Assin North Constituency 2006). Table 1.1 shows the structures of the four major parties in Ghana.

Besides the similarities in the parties' policy initiatives, structure, and organization, significant differences are worth discussing. With regard to the parties' structure, the posts of *nasara* coordinator and communications officer are unique to the NPP, while the NDC is the only party that has a propaganda secretary. In organization, because of the AFRC and PNDC regimes grassroots mobilization, the NDC has dynamic grassroots-mobilization strategies, and thus has more grassroots support, while the NPP's support base is often based in the big towns and cities. In origin, whereas current

**Table 1.1. The Structure and Organization of the Four Main Political Parties in Ghana.**

<b>NPP</b>	<b>NDC</b>	<b>PNC</b>	<b>CPP</b>
<b>National Executive</b> Chairperson Vice-Chairpersons General Secretary Treasurer National Organizer Communications Officer <i>Nasara</i> Coordinator Electoral/Research Officer Women's Organizer Men's Organizer Youth Organizers Council of Elders Disciplinary Committee Finance Committee Paid Staff Volunteers	<b>National Executive</b> Chairperson Vice-Chairpersons General Secretary Research Officer Treasurer National Organizer Women's, Men's, and Youth Organizers Propaganda Secretary National Council Council of Elders Disciplinary Committee Finance Committee Paid staff Volunteers	<b>National Executive</b> Chairperson Vice-Chairpersons General Secretary Treasurer National Organizer Youth Organizer Women's Organizer Limited Paid Staff Volunteers	<b>National Executive</b> Chairperson Vice-Chairpersons General Secretary Treasurer National Organizer Women's Organizer Youth Organizer Limited Paid Staff Volunteers
<b>Regional Level</b> Chairperson Vice-Chairpersons Regional Secretary Regional Organizer Communications Officer <i>Nasara</i> Coordinator Electoral/Research Officer Financial Secretary Women's Organizer Men's Organizer Youth Organizer Council of Elders Disciplinary Committee Paid Staff Volunteers	<b>Regional Level</b> Chairperson Vice-Chairpersons Regional Secretary Regional Organizer Treasurer Women's Organizer Youth Organizer Propaganda Secretary Council of Elders Disciplinary Committee Finance Committee Paid Staff Volunteers	<b>Regional Level</b> Chairperson Vice-Chairpersons Regional Secretary Regional Organizer Treasurer Youth Organizer Women's organizer Paid Staff Volunteers	<b>Regional Level</b> Chairperson Vice-Chairpersons Regional Secretary Regional Organizer Treasurer Youth Organizer Women's Organizer Paid Staff Volunteers
<b>Constituencies</b> Chairperson Vice-Chairperson Secretary Organizing Secretary Treasurer Women's Organizer Youth Organizer Disciplinary Committee Paid Staff Volunteers	<b>Constituencies</b> Chairperson Vice-Chairperson Secretary District Organizer Propaganda Secretary Treasurer Women's Organizer Youth Organizer Disciplinary Committee Paid Staff Volunteers	<b>Constituencies</b> Chairperson Vice-Chairperson Secretary District Organizer Treasurer Youth and Women's Organizers Paid Staff Volunteers PNC does not have structures in some constituencies.	<b>Constituencies</b> Chairperson Vice-Chairperson Secretary District Organizer Treasurer Women's Organizer Youth Organizer Paid staff Volunteers CPP does not have structures in some constituencies.
<b>Unit/Wards</b> Chairperson Vice-Chairperson General Secretary Treasurer Ward Organizer Women's Organizer Youth Organizer Disciplinary Committee	<b>Wards/Branches</b> Chairperson Vice-Chairperson General Secretary Treasurer Ward Organizer Women's Organizer Youth Organizer Disciplinary Committee	<b>Unit/Wards</b> PNC does not have structures in some constituencies.	<b>Unit/Wards</b> CPP does not have structures in some constituencies.

parties in the Danquah-Busia and Nkrumahist traditions such as the NPP and CPP are revivals of parties spanning four generations, which emerged from democratic processes of anticolonial party formation, the NDC is the first-generation party of the Rawlings tradition, and it has its roots in authoritarianism and populism, which emerged from the 1979 (AFRC) and 1981 (PNDC) military coups staged by Rawlings.

### Political Parties' Membership-Drive Strategies

A membership drive is an important aspect of party administration. The survival and competitiveness of any party largely depends on its organization, coupled with the importance of having a majority in representative institutions and branches of government at the local and national levels. The process of winning popular support for a party's platform involves a great deal of energy and expense, involving communicating with the electorate, formulating and disseminating the party's platform, and engaging in programs and activities for securing public support. In countries like Ghana, where the technology for communication is not well advanced, parties that have a large following often meet these needs more easily than independent candidates. National, regional, and constituency leaders base their membership-recruitment strategies on informal and formal means. Hence, parties in Ghana depend on the vote of a large pool of uncommitted members whose vote they seek to capture through campaigning strategies, including providing financial and material inducements to voters. Since a party's base determines its strength and electoral fortunes, all the parties in Ghana use diverse membership-recruitment strategies and are organized along the lines of any of several models. In the mass-party model, Duverger (1964) argued that a party's organization is defined largely according to its relationship with society, its organizational strength is measured primarily in terms of the size of its membership, and party structures are assessed mainly in terms of the modes of internal representation and accountability. Epstein (1980) claimed in his electoral-party model that parties provide a basis for electoral choice; hence structuring the vote involves a vast educational and campaigning apparatus, the main focus of contemporary political parties. The catch-all model advocated by Kirchheimer (1966) contended that the emergence of a new middle class with a homogenized mass culture and the development of mass media have enhanced parties' capacity to reach a wide electorate—which affects all arenas of party organization.

Apart from members who join parties on their own, parties in Ghana use common strategies, such as organizing rallies, to educate the public about the parties' programs, manifestos, and policies, and to recruit new members. Each party combines formal, card-carrying, or fee-paying membership with informal or floating membership. Membership in Ghana's parties does not imply paying dues and having a party-identification card. Citizens are free to join any party of their choice and leave when they wish to do so. A large

majority of informal supporters do not attend party meetings, but spring to political life during the campaign season in election years. Hence, political-party membership does not imply a rigid contractual obligation. According to the Centre for Democratic Development (2005), its poll conducted in 2002 shows that a substantial majority (71%) of Ghanaians identified with political parties, but only 26 percent are registered or card-carrying members. Formal and informal membership in political parties is consistent with the Ghanaian political tradition that began in Ghana in the 1950s (interviews with CPP, NDC, NPP, and PNC constituency chairpersons, 2005–2008). The 1992 Constitution and the Political Parties Act (2000:574) recognize that parties have formal and informal membership. Open and flexible party membership is consistent with the liberal ideological orientation of Ghana's party system, since party leaders understand that membership in a party is not compulsory.

The members of parties in Ghana can be classified into three categories, which play significant organizational roles at the national, regional, constituency, and unit levels. The first category is the national, regional, and constituency leaders, who constitute the mainstay of the party and contribute to party organization by providing essential funds in the form of dues and fundraising. The second category is the party workers and party activists, consisting of paid staff and volunteers who work in various capacities in the parties' offices; their role is vital and indispensable to the leaders and the party's electoral fortunes. The third group is the grassroots members who have a strong allegiance to the party, but many of them are not card-carrying members and do not pay dues.<sup>7</sup> The grassroots members and the leaders constitute the mainstay of the party in terms of its organizational setup. Many grassroots members are staunch supporters of the party's ideals and will support the party whether in power or in opposition, or whether they favor the party's policies or not. Grassroots members serve as a link between the party and communities. They provide vital services, such as attending party meetings, rallies, and campaigns; canvassing for votes; distributing leaflets and party memorabilia; and serving a role as "opinion carriers." They organize town-to-town, village-to-village, and door-to-door, and persuade supporters to vote for the party. Other methods used to solicit membership are outreach programs to promote the party's agenda and advertising through print and electronic media. Members may be recruited by the youth, women's, and students' wings. In recent times, some parties have provided transportation to convey supporters to and from campaign rallies to boost the parties' visible support, and in some cases to polling centers to enable them to vote, especially where a party does not have a strong local base.

To attract support through psychological appeal and propaganda, parties may use their symbols on uniforms, flags, caps, scarves, banners, and other emblems or paraphernalia, as well as in songs and slogans. These advertisements have become indispensable parts of campaigns in Ghana, as some voters in rural communities base their voting decisions on them, rather than issues. The practice of using party slogans and symbols to broaden parties'

bases has been utilized extensively since independence. In the 1960s, the CPP presented itself as the party for the grassroots, in what was termed the Veranda Boys and Girls Club. In 1969, supporters of the Progress Party, a second generation of the Danquah-Busia tradition, campaigned on bringing development and freedom to the electorate's doorsteps. During the 1979 election campaign, supporters of the Peoples National Party, a reincarnation of the CPP, convinced some voters that their symbol, the palm tree, which can serve as both food and a cash crop, is more useful than the opposing parties' symbols. In the 1992 and 1996 elections, the NDC campaigned on the benefits of their symbol—the umbrella—as against the NPP's symbol—the elephant, which allegedly destroys farmers' crops. In the 2000 and 2004 elections, the NPP used its popular slogans "Positive Change" and "Positive Change II" respectively to convince voters of the party's agenda of furthering development, respect for civil liberties, and the rule of law. In the 2008 election, the NDC's popular slogan, "Yere Sesam," meaning "We Need Change," replicating Obama's campaign message of "Change" in the U.S. presidential election, contributed to the NDC's electoral success. Regardless of the symbol of the party, its ideology serves to distinguish it from the other parties and to publicize its agenda to make it more appealing to voters.

### **Major Challenges in the Administration of Ghana's Political Parties**

Political leaders in Ghana have made frantic efforts to strengthen their administrative structures since the country's democratic transition, and parties' competition for power and their leaders' quest for support and votes have accordingly brought new challenges to the party system. A closer examination of how parties are managed and organized shows that numerous challenges hinder party administration in Ghana. In the promotion of democracy, a central issue, one that shapes party administration, is internal party democracy, which presents tools and enabling conditions needed for addressing the challenges facing parties in Ghana, but it has not received sufficient attention by party leaders. Internal party democracy reflects how power is organized and distributed within the parties. As Aryee (2002) noted, the concentration of policymaking power in the hands of party members might prevent abuse of power by overzealous party officials, who might exploit their power advantages in the party over the grassroots members. An important challenge relating to internal democracy that affects party administration in Ghana is membership representation, found in the realm of participation, which constitutes some of the integral aspects of the effective management of parties. Close observation of the organization of the major parties' activities and campaigning strategies during the 2004 and 2008 elections showed that the level of participation of grassroots members in the parties is restricted to insignificant roles. Parties in Ghana integrate the minority groups and rural-based grassroots supporters in a subordinate way

to make them play minor roles, such as attending political rallies, canvassing for votes, and voting. Related to the grassroots-participation issue is the level of unbalanced gender representation, which shows that the country is far from achieving gender equality in its party system.

The need for internal democracy for the development of the party system and promotion of democracy is underlined by the need for people to freely join or leave parties, contest elections, participate in decision making, or present their views on issues within the parties and in national affairs. Internal party democracy helps instill a sense of democratic values in members, especially those who may aspire to assume public office at the national level, and vital for establishing sustainable parties, as well as promoting participatory practices in Ghana's democracy. As Rahat and Hazan (2001) noted, the level of internal democracy within a party and the nature of a party's dispensation toward promoting democratic principles such as respect for civil liberties and the rule of law when it wins power is apparent in the processes used in selecting its leaders and candidates. During my research, some interviewed NDC constituency executives acknowledged that lack of internal democracy within the party had led to the secession of the National Reform Party and contributed to the NDC's electoral defeat in 2000. Many NPP constituency leaders expressed dissatisfaction with the party's national leadership's handling of conflicts and other major issues at various constituencies in the period leading to the 2008 elections (focus-group interviews with NDC and NPP regional and constituency leaders in Sunyani, Koforidua, Cape Coast, Ajumako, and Assin Foso, 2005–2008).

Promoting internal party democracy involves the process of candidate selection, a significant aspect of parties' internal organization. An effective candidate-selection system strengthens the base of a party, promotes popular participation, and helps the party grow its membership and policymaking capabilities. In *Determining the Contestants*, Ohman (2002) highlights the role internal party democracy plays in parties' candidate-selection processes. Lack of internal democratic procedures in a party's organization could lead to limited voter support because of the waning of disgruntled members' support. As Essuman-Johnson (1993) noted, a major benchmark of a party's internal democratic structure is how party leaders are chosen to contest national office and run the party's affairs. Issues related to lack of internal democracy occurred at the NDC's national leadership congress held in 2000, 2005, and 2006. In the 2000 elections, many NDC candidates contested the parliamentary elections as independents to challenge the party's nominees. For example, in Anlo in the Volta Region, the former foreign minister in Rawlings' NDC government, Victor Gbeho, stood as an independent candidate against Kwasi Sowu and won with a huge margin. Nationwide, newspaper reports in more than twenty constituencies indicated that conflicts within the NDC regarding the selection of candidates led to demonstrations, conflicting public statements, mass defections, candidates standing as independents, and even violent confrontations. There were reports of intimidation, harassment, and bullying against supporters of candidates who opposed



Rawlings' favored candidates in the 2005 primaries in Accra (*Ghana Web News*, 2005). Similarly, there were allegations of intimidation and assault at the NDC's sixth national delegates' congress at Koforidua. This eventually led key personalities, such as the national chairman, Obed Asamoah, the national women's organizer, Frances Essiam, and the second vice-chairman, Kwaku Baah, to resign from the party (*Ghana Web News* 2006). Internal democracy hindered the NPP's 2008 parliamentary candidates' selection processes in some constituencies, as occurred in Bekwai and Suhum.<sup>8</sup>

Corruption adversely affects the parties' ability to operate transparently and fairly during party primaries and national elections—which further retards the governments' ability to promote anticorruption measures, thus weakening its institutional performance and adversely affecting the country's democratic consolidation. While the Political Parties' Financing Law stipulates the guidelines for funding parties, the lack of transparency and laxity in enforcing the laws has generated widespread corruption at all levels of the parties' organization. In an interview, a leading member of the NPP 2008 election campaign team stated categorically that money allocated to some officials at the regional and constituency levels for the 2008 electoral campaign expenditures at the grassroots level were kept for their personal enrichment. Personalities and clientelist networks predominate in Ghana's party system, and some politicians and public officials regard politics and public office as a means to personal enrichment at the expense of public interests. Widespread corruption in the parties has encouraged a high degree of patronage and patron–client relations in parties' election campaigns—which constitute a central issue in Ghana's party administration. The patron–client relationship is fundamentally a relationship of exchange, in which a superior (patron), provides financial and material benefit to clients, who in turn, provide support for the patron. It is common knowledge in Ghana that parties and their candidates offer voters financial and material incentives in the form of bribes. Such financial and material inducements often create patron–client relations. These inducements may influence would-be members or guide voters' decision to support one party over another. As Ninsin and Drah (1993) noted, through this kind of relationship, voters create opportunities for their communities' improvement by soliciting development programs and simultaneously trying to achieve the maximum material gains to improve their living conditions.

At the constituency and unit levels, patron–client relationships between party leaders and grassroots members are strongly present. The parties and some voters see patron–client relations as an exchange of favors between the parties and the electorate, but the relationship is unequal, and the benefits accruing to the patrons and clients from the exchange may be uneven. As Fox (1994) rightly noted, clientelism is a form of social and political control. Patron–client relationships between party elites and grassroots members lead to the establishment of two main classes of participants, the “big men” and the “small boys” (Nugent 1996). The “big men,” who constitute the leadership and wealthy members of the party, enter politics to acquire wealth and/or increase their wealth to enable themselves to play



key roles within the political parties. They distribute part of their financial and material acquisitions in the form of patronage to the lower classes, the “small boys,” uneducated, poor, grassroots, and minority supporters in mostly rural areas (Clapham 1985)—what Bayart (1993) termed “politics of the belly.” In this way, power is concentrated in the hands of the “big men,” and the members in the lower ranks of the party serve their interest and have limited chances of upward mobility in the parties’ leadership. These acts are clear manifestation of pervasive patron–client relations in Ghana’s party system, and often lead to undue abuse of incumbency, exploited by ruling governments to the detriment of the opposition parties.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that parties are integral aspects of contemporary democratic practice, and play important roles as a rallying point for members to compete for votes and power, as well as the channels through which members find opportunities for political mobility. It cautions us that while Ghana’s parties have the potential to develop their internal organizations effectively, the dangers of prevalent corruption, lack of participation, and internal democracy leading to political intolerance in Ghana’s party system could result in more party breakups, or threaten Ghana’s democratic consolidation process. From the perspective of this study, factors crucial to strengthening parties’ institutional capacity and for accelerating Ghana’s democratic consolidation process are stable and predictable political institutions that promote democratic values to encourage fair competition in party primaries and national elections. The internal organization of parties must be strengthened, and measures toward reducing corruption must be instituted. Incorporating grassroots members and rural-based supporters into the lower strata of the party structures without allowing them to occupy key positions reduces their decision-making influence. If parties are undemocratic and socially unrepresentative, their grassroots members will be less willing to generate electoral support for them, and may alienate some potential voters. In this regard, it is important that the parties in Ghana explore the potential strengths of democratic initiatives “from below and within” by empowering their grassroots members—a process that can help strengthen Ghana’s party system and its democratic consolidation. This study recommends strongly that, to promote transparency and internal democracy in all the parties’ processes of selecting their presidential and parliamentary candidates, parties replicate the NPP’s newly introduced presidential candidate-selection process, as discussed above. Implementing these measures and other strategies not discussed in this paper could help increase participation, inclusiveness, transparency, and accountability in the internal administration of the respective parties in Ghana, and help resolve critical problems that need serious attention and reforms. By successfully dealing with issues raised here, Ghana’s democracy and the administration of political parties can move forward to a new and unprecedented level.

## NOTES

1. The “Big Six” (Ebenezer Ako-Adjei, Edward Akufo-Addo, Joseph Boakye Danquah, Kwame Nkrumah, Emmanuel Odarkwei Obetsebi-Lampitey, William Ofori Atta) were the pioneers or original architects of Ghana’s Independence.
2. The political parties’ internal organization often remains the same, but their policies vary over time to keep pace with the changing international environment. Recent decades have seen an increasing trend in convergence of all the parties’ policies. Like many parties in Africa and the developing world, Ghana’s political parties’ commitments to the international financial institutions’ conditions on national policies have made social implications of public policy secondary to the achievement of the objectives of free-market reforms.
3. *Nasara* is an Arabic term meaning victory. The Nasara Coordinator of the party is responsible for organizing support to enable the NPP to win more votes and victory in Ghana’s Zongo communities that are mostly inhabited by Muslim groups.
4. The councils of elders in all the political parties are prominent members of the parties, appointed by virtue of their political and professional experience or social position.
5. The number of volunteers and paid staff in all the political parties’ national, regional, constituency, and ward offices depends on the season. It increases dramatically during election periods and decreases drastically after or between elections.
6. By creating the enabling environment for the 230 constituencies to vote nationwide in the party’s 2010 presidential primaries, the NPP took a major important step in the right direction toward enhancing grassroots participation.
7. Leaders of the NPP, NDC, CPP, and PNC interviewed in Ghana acknowledged that while formal membership in a party implies a responsibility to contribute and support the party’s activities, many supporters do not register or obtain identification cards, nor do they pay regular dues, but vote and help support the party in its campaigns during elections. It is only a few party members that are fully committed and motivated to contribute financially and materially to the parties who help organize the parties on a day-to-day basis.
8. During my research, some members of the NPP at the grassroots level expressed serious disappointment with the national executive’s attempts to impose candidates on some constituencies, as in Suhum and Bekwai. This disappointment contributed to the emergence of independent candidates who ran against some of the candidates supported by the national headquarters and the loss of support in the affected constituencies. General discontentment at the grassroots level before the 2008 elections shows that this trend partly accounted for the NPP’s loss of votes and power to the NDC by a narrow margin.

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