



The Rising Cost of Politics in Ghana: Are the Revelations from the NPP Flagbearer Race Worth Reflecting on, or It's Politicking as Usual?

By Joseph Oti Frimpong

Introduction

Political power, according to Herbert E. Alexander “is built upon three constituencies: the electoral, the financial, and the organizational”¹. Therefore, a political party's strength hinges on its ability to mobilize funds, maintain a large membership base, and a well-defined workable philosophy. Money plays an essential role in inter and intra-party politics and affects our governance system. However, in the discourse on the upcoming presidential primaries, concerns raised about monetization have not been discussed sufficiently. The role of money in political party formation cannot be overemphasized. It is an indispensable grease for the wheels of multi-party democracy, but if it is left unchecked or unregulated, it affects the effective working of multi-party democracy. The cost of political party campaigns is on the rise. Recent Studies by the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) show that it costs approximately US\$ 100 million and US\$693,000 to effectively fund presidential and parliamentary campaigns, respectively². This rising cost of politics negatively affects the country's governance, such as an overrun of budget during an election year³ and political entrepreneurs holding politicians to ransom to award dubious contracts.

On Saturday, November 4, 2023, New Patriotic Party (NPP) delegates will be going to the polls to elect a flagbearer for the 2024 general elections. Two of the four candidates have gained a lot of media attention during their campaign: Dr. Alhaj Mahamudu Bawumia, who is currently the Vice President of the Republic of Ghana, and Hon. Kennedy Agyapong, the Member of Parliament for the Assin Central Constituency. The former is the ‘establishment candidate’ for the flagbearer of the NPP. He has the incumbency advantage and has the support of the appointees of the

¹ Alexander, Herbert E. "Money and politics: rethinking a conceptual framework." *Comparative political finance in the 1980s* (1989): 9-23.

² <https://cddgh.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Final-Report-CDD-Campaign-Financing-FCDO-11th-June-2021.pdf> ; <https://citinewsroom.com/2022/02/presidential-campaign-cost-100m-in-ghana-galamsey-cash-contributes-cdd-ghana/> (accessed on November 2, 2023)

³ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ghana-economy-idUSKBN15U0XT> (accessed on November 2, 2023) ; <https://forum.futureafrica.com/managing-fiscal-overruns-in-an-election-year/> (accessed on November 2, 2023)

government and party officials. The latter is popularly known to be the grassroots man and a financier of the party. The grassroots admire him for fighting on their behalf, he is also touted as someone who speaks the truth no matter the consequences, he is therefore called the 'Maverick'.

As their elections draw closer, many have analyzed the candidates' dynamics and chances. This blog, however, focuses on the interesting and sometimes wild revelations about vote buying and monetization of the process that have not been formally denied during the campaign periods and their impact on the democratic development of the country. How serious are these revelations in terms of the integrity of our multi-party democracy or is this just politicking?

Revelations during the campaign period

In an ailing economy that triggered a request for a bailout from the IMF for 3 billion US dollars, Kennedy Agyapong claims he was promised 800 million USD to step down for Vice President Bawumia⁴. His statement was in response to the former Suhum Member of Parliament (MP) Fredrick Opare-Ansah's accusation that the maverick requested a 500 million USD annual contract from the Vice President before he would step down from the race.

There have also been claims of incidents of vote buying in the lead-up to the presidential primaries. Hon. Agyapong's camp alleged that Dr. Bawumia's camp has given money (alleged to be GH¢ 100,000) to party chairmen⁵. During his campaign in the Sagnarigu constituency, the maverick publicly made the allegation of vote buying and when the constituency chairman denied the allegation, he showed a video to the delegates to buttress his argument.⁶ In the run-up to the primaries on November 4, some delegates have alleged that they received money from the camp of both Dr. Bawumia and Hon. Agyapong, and they hope to receive more on election day⁷.

What is the implication for multiparty democracy in Ghana?

To what extent are these revelations true? Whether or not he was offered such a huge amount of money should be a matter of public concern and a source of interest and the degree of veracity of that revelation should be established due to its impact on multi-party in the country.

The monetization of political campaigns undermines the significance of honesty and integrity in politics and promotes corruption. Whenever candidates purchase votes, they always recover

⁴ <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/NPP-race-I-was-offered-US-800-million-to-step-down-Kennedy-Agyapong-alleges-1871285> (accessed on October 31, 2023)

⁵ <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Showdown-in-Sagnarigu-as-constituency-chairman-clashes-with-Kennedy-Agyapong-1866377> (accessed on November 3, 2023)

⁶ https://fb.watch/o0Sc_DjCGH/?mibextid=Nif5oz (accessed on October 31, 2023)

⁷ <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/We-re-taking-money-I-ve-received-GH-100-from-Ken-and-GH-200-from-Bawumia-NPP-delegate-confesses-on-live-TV-1872242>

their expenses and set aside money for future vote-buying endeavors in future elections. Financiers of campaigns lobby to control some significant decisions in government. An example is that Hon. Agyapong revealed that he was responsible for the creation of Hon. Hawa Koomson's Ministry of Special Development Initiatives in President Akufo-Addo's first term⁸ and he together with the Ashanti and the Central regional Chairmen confirmed the majority of the ministers from their region⁹.

Actionable Recommendations

1. Ghana needs a campaign and party financing reform. Conversations about campaign and party financing are relevant to our democratic development. Campaign financing in Ghana is not adequately regulated, and many people, including some prominent politicians¹⁰ and CSOs, have lamented the monetization of the politics in Ghana.
2. Vote-buying should be of concern to antigraft institutions in the country. The incidents of voters demanding gifts in various forms from aspirants in exchange for votes should be addressed. Although the revelations from the campaigns might be mere allegations, it will be an interest of the anti-graft agencies to investigate to determine if these public officers are engaged in corrupt acts.
3. Awareness creation on the part of both the givers and receivers is paramount in addressing the monetization of politics in the country. The emphasis should not only be placed on politicians who lure people with money and other incentives to vote for them but also on voters who exchange their votes for money.
4. The internal politics of political parties in Ghana should be of major concern for all democracy supporters. Stakeholders should not only be concerned about general elections but also give the internal democratic affairs of political parties the kind of attention they deserve. Issues related to their internal democratic practices, and how they mobilize and spend financial resources should be well monitored because of their spillover effect on the governance of the country. The health of political parties in the country is directly related to the kind of democracy being fostered in Ghana.

Conclusion

Money plays a vital role in party formation and multiparty politics, but if it's unregulated, it negatively affects political development. Money is vital in shaping a country's political system.

⁸ https://fb.watch/o0Sc_DjCGH/?mibextid=Nif5oz (accessed on October 31, 2023)

⁹ <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Except-Asenso-all-Ashanti-ministerial-slots-were-decided-in-my-house-Kennedy-Agyapong-1858055> (accessed on October 31, 2023); https://fb.watch/o0T6N8R_X6/?mibextid=Nif5oz (accessed on October 31, 2023);

¹⁰ <https://3news.com/monetisation-in-ghana-electoral-processes-alarming-majority-leader/> (accessed on October 31, 2023) / <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Stop-excessive-monetisation-of-politics-Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu-1383820> (accessed on October 31, 2023); <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Monetization-of-politics-a-problem-in-Ghana-Alban-Bagbin-1330987/> (accessed on October 31, 2023) / <https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/politics/speaker-attacks-politics-of-monetisation-speaker.html> (accessed on October 31, 2023)

Political finance impacts how parties, politicians, and electorates interact. Monetization of politics relegates those without a deep pocket to the background in terms of significant decision-making within the party. The revelations by the maverick during the NPP flagbearer race have not attracted much public attention and discussion, but they should reignite our conversation about how political parties and their campaigns are financed in the country. Allegations on campaign financing should not be swept under the carpet. The rising cost begins with intra-party politics and culminates in the monetization of general elections. We need to build a consensus on our campaign financing laws and effectively implement it. The internal financial operations of political parties in Ghana should be of concern to stakeholders in elections so as not to let the governance of a country be hijacked by ‘political entrepreneurs’ who spend money on parties and candidates in their bid to run for office.



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