POLITICS & INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Party’s presidential primaries and the consolidation of democracy in Ghana’s 4th Republic

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Abstract: Democracy under any system of rule is associated with vibrant political parties and credible elections. Both are indispensable in a representative democracy. The good conduct of elections within a political party promotes and consolidates democracy. Political parties in Ghana have suffered internal conflict resulting in factions, break-away, and the formation of new parties because of undemocratic party operations especially in the conduct of primaries. This act threatens the country’s attempt to consolidate its democracy. Internal party reforms are adopted to ensure democratic practices and operations. The reforms include widening the electoral base of the party in the selection of candidates, simultaneous conduction of polls across constituencies, and restriction of candidates eligible for elections. These reforms are to reduce vote-buying, intimidation, physical assault, and fierce competition to enhance legitimisation of election results and the acceptability of candidates. The paper assessed how the various reforms adopted by the two major political parties in Ghana have influenced and legitimised the conduct of presidential primaries. The paper adopted a qualitative research design through interviews and reviewed extant literature to set the theoretical basis of the study. It is realised

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Michael Amoako Addae is an Mphil candidate at the University of Ghana, Legon with the Department of Political Science. He holds a Bachelor in Arts (BA) degree from the same University. His research interest covers elections, governance, democracy, gender and national development. This paper was based on the author’s research in shaping and contributing to effective party politics in Ghana. The work examines how political parties can contribute to the consolidation of democracy in Ghana.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Given the stable democratic journey in Ghana’s Fourth Republic with a pivotal role played by political parties, it is imperative to evaluate the institutional and electoral reforms of political parties in Ghana.

The paper assesses the two major political parties in Ghana, thus, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP).

Political parties are perceived to be the bane of the country’s development in the democratic dispensation as they seek their parochial interest to the neglect of the wellbeing of the larger society. The paper found that these political parties have contributed to the gains of our democratic success in Ghana’s Fourth Republic. They have incorporated reforms in the political processes which have promoted and widened participation in our political engagement hence legitimising our democratic dispensation.

The paper notes that, political party’s commitment in reforming party structures and processes irrespective of challenges will further consolidate democracy in Ghana.

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that the operationalisation of the reforms in 2014 and 2019 of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC), respectively, has reduced the rancour associated hitherto with primaries. This exercise has gone a long way in consolidating democracy with a peaceful conduct of presidential primaries notwithstanding vestiges of vote-buying, security breaches, party executive biases, and high party nomination fees.

**Subjects: Comparative Politics; Politics & Development; African History**

**Keywords: Primaries; democratic consolidation; reforms; elections; parties**

1. **Background of the study**

There is contention as to whether political parties are essential in building and solidifying democratic governance in a country or otherwise (Lupu & Riedl, 2013; Sandbrook, 1996; Van Biezen, 2012). The fragile and unstable democracies in Eastern Europe and Latin America are attributed to the absence or weak political party organisation (Gherghina, 2014; Stokes, 1999).

Political parties’ activities are indispensable in the promotion and consolidation of democracy. They serve as a means by which members are trained to occupy leadership positions and in governance. They also express political participation, representation, pluralism, and competition. Therefore, democracy cannot suffice under weak and unstable party systems (Fobih, 2011; Van Biezen, 2012).

Ghana’s quest to solidify its teething democracy since 1992 has revolved around two relatively stable political parties in alternating power (Brierley, 2012). The presence of these parties which has ushered in competitive elections with vibrant opposition party serving as a watchdog on the government indicates the potency of Ghana’s democracy because no fully-fledged modern democracy lacks political parties who perform these functions (Morrison, 2004; Osei, 2013).

But political parties in African societies are porous and not ripped to execute the aforementioned functions due to military interventions in politics (Lupu & Riedl, 2013). According to Wahman (2014) who terms it competitive authoritarianism, it neutralises the electoral and party systems inhibiting effective party’s internal and external organisational functions (Lindberg & Lindberg, 2006; Mainwaring, 1991). Ghana is among the many nations whose political parties have structural and organisational problems such as internal party democracy with emphasis on the mode of selecting candidates (Aye, 2008).

Poor organisation of political parties has negatively affected its electoral fortunes on membership mobilisation and voter turnout, hence the adoption of internal reforms to include ordinary people in the candidate’s selection process. This approach legitimises party operations and attracts more votes (Faucher, 2015; Fobih, 2011; De Luca & Venturino, 2017).

Some political parties across the globe realising the importance of wide party membership have replaced closed primary elections with core or ordinary group member participation, thus One-Member-One-Vote (OMOV) to address the challenge of nepotism, cronyism, and political patronage. This approach solidifies internal party democratic politics (De Luca & Venturino, 2017; Ramiro, 2016).

According to Faucher (2015), political parties in United Kingdom (UK) and France have disposed-off constrictions relating to party membership with the use of primaries as engagement mechanisms with new members. According to Ramiro (2016), in his study of PSOE, a Socialist Spanish party, he indicated that an OMOV primary had a positive relationship on its electoral outcomes especially at the local level politics. Better electoral results were recorded by an average of 1.7 points of votes as a result of wide membership base.
The same line of argument was espoused by Scarrow (2005) that in Taiwan, Kuomintang (KMT) which introduced limited delegation in primaries immediately after the end of their military rule in 1987 caused their defeat in the general elections. The reflections of the party’s defeat signalled the adoption of OMOV to harmonise or mutualise interest among party officials and the electorate.

However, the aforementioned strategy of incorporating mass membership may result in electoral loss if the electoral process is not managed properly. With wide electoral base, fierce competition may be heightened among candidates. This will lead to intra-party conflict and consequently have a negative effect on electoral performance. It is of this negative image of primaries that PSOE in Spain and Green party in Germany were reluctant in pursuing this candidate selection method in its local elections. The Green party in Germany withdrew all membership congregations to a delegate form of assembly (Ramiro, 2016; Scarrow, 2005).

Hazan et al. (2010) argue that inclusive membership in primaries has an effect on quality participation with the influx of passive and uninformed members who may not have any affection for the party. This view is corroborated by Faucher (2015), using the “law of curvilinear disparity” which means that party activists are more ideologically extreme than party supporters.

According to Scarrow (2005), open primaries could be infiltrated by people not committed to the ideals, philosophies and the vision of the party. So the antidote to infiltrators is to screen members with good standing measured by card bearing members with regular payment of dues.

Again, a sequence of primaries may cripple party’s finances especially when the time frame of primary and general elections are distant. It becomes difficult for parties to keep electoral promises (Ramiro, 2016).

With the paradoxical nature of open primaries, De Luca and Venturino (2017), in their study of parties in Italy and France, were in a quandary as to the functionality and efficacy of widening membership in primaries to the good of the party in its electoral outcomes. They recommended more studies to this phenomenon to ascertain the importance of inclusive party internal democracy.

2. Research problem
Political parties have retained exclusive control over candidates’ recruitment in political institutions including parliament and in governance. It has far-reaching consequences of the nature of democracy including representation, instruments of mobilisation and channels of interest articulation (Van Biezen, 2012).

According to Ichino and Nathan (2012), political parties are conduits for voters to their representatives. The power of choosing these representatives may be reserved for few people who lead the party terming it as “iron law of oligarchy” coined by Mitchel in 1915. This practice becomes entrenched making it impossible for the larger populace to partake.

Political parties have been levelled with complaints with respect to how they select their candidates. They have failed in promoting internal democracy in choosing candidates and have resulted in factions within parties in Ghana (Ayee, 2008; Bob-Milliar, 2012). Personalising and relegating party operations to few members, which are prominent in most African countries, may not be widely accepted for the enhancement of democracy. It makes citizens passive members of the polity (Osei, 2013; Sandbrook, 1996).

Ghana has made significant progress in developing its party system since 1992 transition to democratic rule notwithstanding the dearth of internal democratic procedures in party organisation which continues to be battled with by party leaders. There has been a loud call for intra-party democracy because parties are seen to be mobilisers with a core goal of capturing political power. The conduct of primaries to select party candidates’ exemplifies internal party democracy but has
turned out to be a problem for the two dominant parties in Ghana. This has played significant role in the defeat of these parties in general elections. The significant step is to revise party internal structures and organisational strategies (Fobih, 2011; Meissner, 2010).

According to Ichino and Nathan (2016), both parties in Ghana have embarked on reforms to stop the internal wrangling that has characterised the conduct in their parliamentary primaries by expanding their electoral base.

This research, therefore, argues that, while Ghana has strengthened the consolidation of democracy and party system since 1992 (Debrah, 2011), the paper seeks to find out; what are the dynamics in the conduct of presidential primaries by the two dominant parties in Ghana that has stabilised the selection of party’s presidential candidates which hitherto was crowded with problems.

3. Objective of the study
The work turns attention to evaluate some of the institutional and electoral reforms of the dominant parties in Ghana’s democratic practices which is integral in the running of party’s presidential primaries and in furtherance consolidating democracy in Ghana.

4. Review of literature
Democracy hinges on elections because the latter builds legitimacy, transparency, openness, effectiveness, responsiveness, and gives legal backing to government. So I believe if primaries which give voters the chance to select leaders are conducted in a fair and fair manner, the ingredients required for a delicious democracy could be achieved in Ghana (Sandbrook, 1996; Daddieh & Bob-Milliar, 2012).

4.1. Conceptual issues on democratic consolidation
Elections are pivotal in countries democratisation process according to the minimalist school of thought who place emphasis on electoral democracy. It fosters self-reinforcing power as numerous elections are conducted. The third wave of African democratisation and its transition to democratic consolidation embraces participatory, competitive, and legitimate elections. This process enhances peaceful change of government and brings into fruition the electoral turnover test measurement of democratic consolidation in African countries especially Ghana (Lindberg & Lindberg, 2006; Przeworski et al., 2000; Wahman, 2014).

Przeworski et al. (2000) augment the position of the “electoralist”. They posit that democracy is consolidated with at least one electoral turnover. They stressed that governmental institutions must itself be occupied by elected officials in a competitive free and fair elections and subsequently allow opposition parties to win elections and ascend to the seat of government.

Ghana’s peaceful and stable elections in its 7th time have furthered its democratic credentials. It is as a result of people’s trust, familiarity, and understanding of the political system and its electoral rules. The plurality rule associated with the majoritarian system both in the presidential and parliamentary elections in Ghana is devoid of complexities and contributes to certainty of electoral rules and its outcomes (Amoako, 2019; Baturo, 2007; Karp et al., 2018).

However, the maximalist school of thought posits that democratic consolidation goes beyond “electoralism”. According to Levitsky and Way (2010), electoral outcomes cannot consummate democracy. Elections may be characterised with manipulations and prevent equal level playing field especially by incumbent government in democratising countries.

Democratic consolidation encompasses electoral uncertainties, accountability, and party institutionalisation in conjunction with human right protection, enfranchisement, or full adult universal suffrage, vibrant civil society operations, and a free media. Alternation of power through elections does not guarantee transition to democracy but rather a path to democratic consolidation.
Therefore, democratic consolidation cannot entirely be based on elections (Arthur, 2010; Svolik, 2013; Wahman, 2014).

According to Linz and Stepan (1996), democratic consolidation can be behavioural where there is no opposition to alter democratic gains including a plan of secession; altitudinal where people appreciate governance irrespective of harsh economic conditions which may result in dissatisfaction of managers in the country; and constitutional, where all political and non-political actors resort to the institutions created by the constitution or making constitutional provisions workable in a democratic dispensation.

These criteria have been attained in Ghana. There is no secession due to the constitutional order of a term limit of the presidency. An election turnover in 2000, 2008, and 2016 is a replica of Linz and Stepan definition of democratic consolidation. Democratic and designated conflict resolution institutions are always utilised in addressing grievances. A classic example is a court petition of electoral malpractices in the 2012 presidential elections by the opposition New Patriotic Party (NPP). The pronouncement of the verdict by the court of law was accepted by the parties involved in the electoral litigation (Abdulai & Crawford, 2010; Randall & Svolik, 2002).

However, according to Abdulai and Crawford (2010) and Graham et al. (2017), Ghana has not enjoyed a fully fledged democracy let alone its consolidation. They attribute it to factors which include: incapacitation of State bureaucracies to fight corruption; excessive powers of Ghana’s presidency which weakens oversight roles by mandated institutions; ethnic and tribal politics; post-election violence; politicising civil society activities in a way of gagging them; and reliance on external bodies such as International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank in dictating its economic policies. This inadvertently neutralises the country’s sovereign will and contributes to the woes of its democracy. Therefore, Ghana seen as consolidated in its democracy lowers the bar of democratic consolidation.

But Van Gyampo (2015) posits that democratic consolidation cannot be measured at a definite point in time. It is therefore imperative to make assessment of a country’s democracy with the commitment level of State institutions to abide by democratic principles.

4.2. How political parties contribute to democratic consolidation

Political parties contribute to democratic consolidation through representation, integration, interest aggregation, recruitment, and training, making government accountable and organising responsible opposition to the government (Ayee, 2008).

An institutionalised political party system is critical in democratic consolidation. The manifestation of a three-turnover of power following 2000, 2008, and 2016 elections clearly depicts a strong party system (incumbent and opposition) in Ghana. Political parties in Ghana have had alliances in projecting high standard of democracy by forming Inter-Party Advisory Committee (IPAC) in bringing political parties together to foster harmony and regularity in the conduct of inter and intra party operations (Abdulai & Crawford, 2010).

According to Sandbrook (1996) and Mainwaring (2016), political parties are pillars holding the democratic structure. It broadens participation and mobilises voters for elections. With vibrant opposition parties, they are able to hold the government accountable. Therefore, party institutionalisation consolidates democracy.

Randall and Svolik (2002) also argue that political parties contribute to democratic consolidation based on how they operate. Political parties need to be national in scope and therefore have to incorporate and institutionalise their base or roots to have a national character and not to be identified with a small segment of the people.
The significance of political parties in Ghana's political landscape is manifested in the inconsequential votes obtained by independent candidates who feature in the presidential elections of the country. Candidates under the banner of political parties to capture political power are mostly a possibility especially between the two major parties (Fobih, 2011).

4.3. Ghana’s brief democratic development in the Fourth Republic

Ghana has undertaken its 7th set of parliamentary and presidential elections in December 2016 which was another showcase of two dominant parties in Ghana, the New Patriotic Party (NPP), and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) notwithstanding the multi-party system of rule (Yobo & Gyampo, 2015). This may be attributed to the electoral system and other factors such as ethnicity, party manifestos, and financial capacity of the two dominant parties (Amoako, 2019; Arthur, 2010; Ayee, 2011; Gyampo, 2015).

Ghana has had successful elections with a peaceful turnover of power for the third time since its constitutional rule began under the Fourth Republic in 1992. Given the criteria of the minimalist on democratic consolidation, Ghana with its 7th consecutive successful elections could be seen as a huge leap in attaining democratic consolidation (Abdulai & Crawford, 2010).

Presidential and parliamentary elections were held first in 1992 under the Fourth Republic. It was hotly contested between the National Democratic Congress (NDC) led by Jerry John Rawlings and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) led by Albert Adu Boahen. The former had 58.4% as against the latter who had 30.29% with other contestants enjoying a paltry of 11% of the presidential elections. The parliamentary elections which were scheduled to take place on 23 December 1992 were boycotted by the main opposition party (NPP) attributing their reason to flawed presidential elections (Arthur, 2010; Haynes, 2003).

The disputed elections in 1992 called for electoral reforms by political parties and civil societies. The Electoral Commission heeded to the petition and adopted some reforms with active participation of political parties which included the following: compilation of a new voters register to enhance transparency and legitimacy; the issuance of voters identity cards to registered voters; provision of transparent ballot boxes to disabuse the minds of people with suspicions of pre-stuffed thumb-printed ballot papers and voting screens in the full glare of the public to ensure open-secret voting. The Electoral Commission was also innovative in bringing about an open administration of election results. Presiding officers were charged to count and declare results at the polling centres before it is transmitted to the collation centres. These reforms were implemented in the 1996 elections (Deborah, 2011).

The 1996 general elections which were largely seen as credible were with no contestations. The NDC led by Jerry John Rawlings won again by 57%. The NPP also secured 39.6% led by John Agyekum Kufuor with a corresponding 134 seats for the NDC and 60 seats for the NPP, 5 seats for the People’s Convention Party (PCP) and one seat for the People’s National Convention (PNC) (Arthur, 2010; Frempong, 2012; Haynes, 2003).

The subsequent election years of 2000, 2008, and 2016 have been remarkable in the history of Ghana’s Fourth Republic. These elections have witnessed a peaceful change of government and transfer of power from a constitutionally elected government to another constitutionally elected government. The NDC handed power to the NPP after it won the general elections in 2000 with 56.9% as against NDC with 43.1% in the presidential elections after a run-off voting. The election also reflected in the parliamentary polls with NPP having the majority of 100 seats as against NDC with 92 seats out of the 200 available seats. The rest of the seats were occupied by smaller parties and independent candidates.

The 2008 elections followed a similar trend as the 2000 with power changing hands and the table turning again in favour of the NDC. The presidential candidate John Evans Atta Mills won the
poll after a run-off over the NPP candidate Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo by pulling 50.23% and 49.77% respectively. This election also had NDC having majority seats with 116 in parliament as against NPP of having 107 seats out of 230 available seats. The rest of the seats were again occupied by smaller parties and independent candidates (Debrah, 2004; Frempong, 2012).

In 2016, the NPP recaptured political power led by Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo as against his contender John Dramani Mahama who led the NDC as the incumbent president. It was the third time Ghana has experienced an alternation of power between the two major parties. The NPP candidate had 53.9% of votes whereas the NDC candidate had 44.4% of votes. This election again corresponded with the parliamentary elections. The NPP had 169 majority seats and the NDC had 106 seats out of 275 available seats (Ayee, 2017). It is important to note that 2016 parliamentary results did not feature any other party or independent candidate. It was solely between the NPP and the NDC.

4.4. Ghana’s internal party democracy

Direct participation of the grassroots of the party in its decision-making, organisation, and leadership selection processes is vital to the party’s effective organisation and democratic credentials (Fobih, 2011).

The concentration of power in the hands of few party leaders breeds and promotes self-seeking and dictatorship leadership at the detriment of the grassroots interest. It is in this vein that some new democracies have decentralised and democratised the candidate selection process, allowing nominees to be selected through primary elections (Ichino & Nathan, 2012).

According to Essuman-Johnson (1993) and Daddieh and Bob-Milliar (2012), one of the conditions for measuring a party’s internal democratic structure is how party leaders are chosen to contest national office and run party affairs.

Scarrow (2005) explains internal party democracy as a wide range of methods for including party members in party deliberations and decision making. She indicated that parties with this approach of selection sift competent, capable and appealing leaders from the crooks. This makes electoral success a surest possibility. She further enumerated three options in cementing internal party democracy. It includes selecting party candidates, leaders, and defining policy options. But selecting party candidates is the focus of this research work.

Ichino and Nathan (2012) and Lindberg and Lindberg (2006) have suggested widening the conduct of primaries to ensure transparency and unity in the party. They posit that party leaders and candidates must depend on local party organisations and members to induce supporters to turn out and vote in general elections. They realised that the linkage between parties and voters is not primarily ideological but relations of patronage especially in Africa. Therefore, party leaders and candidates need to funnel resources to reach out to voters in order to succeed at the polls.

Again, party primaries may contribute to the reputation of transparency and foster unity in a party. A political party with a weaker past and expecting good electoral performance is more likely to use primary elections to select its candidates while ruling parties are more likely to avoid primaries and allow party leaders to decide who becomes a candidate (Ichino & Nathan, 2012).

As long as parties remain elitist and prevent the grassroots from the feeling of being part of the party, effective representation and participation will not be achieved. It is on this premise that participants in candidates’ selection during primaries should be broadened to encourage active participation of party members at all levels of the party’s hierarchy (Fobih, 2011).
There is another proposition by Kemahlioglu et al. (2009) that primaries are more used to bridge differences in a party. They argue that public nomination process instead of backroom deals will install legitimacy and provides information about the relative strength of competing factions.

Article 55(5) of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana stipulates that “internal organisation of political party shall conform to democratic principles and its actions and purposes shall not contravene or be inconsistent with this constitution or any other law”. Political Parties Law Act 574, 2000 makes provision for political parties to promote internal democracy. Section 9(a) of the Act compels the electoral commission not to register a political party unless the internal organisation of the party conforms to democratic principles. It also maintains that the Electoral Commission will super-intend over electoral affairs of parties.

4.5. Party internal democratisation challenges
Lack of democratic procedures at the level of party organisation cannot guarantee the promotion of democratic principles in terms of encouraging participation in decision-making, respecting the rule of law and civil liberties, and promoting checks and balances in government when it assumes power. Internal party democracy has a major impact on a party's unity and support base. Lack of internal party democracy which includes unhealthy and bias internal electoral competition has destabilised some parties in Ghana. This has led to the existence of factions and internal rivalries affecting its programmes and policies (Ayee, 2008).

Lack of funds by the state to support political parties in its operations has crippled political parties. They are dependent on external donors or party financiers who in turn monopolise decisions and party preferences. This has created leadership gaps and culminated in violence between leadership and party financiers. This has eventually affected party’s internal democracy and in general democratic consolidation (Gyampo, 2015; Meissner, 2010; Ninsin, 2006).

4.6. Internal problems of National Democratic Congress (NDC)
The two dominant parties in Ghana have gone through a myriad of conflicts in party primaries. The NDC in its historical path has suffered internal wrangling during party primaries. Since the NDC traces its root to the PNDC, Rawlings was unopposed in his bid to lead the party for the 1992 and 1996 general elections. But the problem arose when Rawlings single-handedly declared his successor to lead the party with the least expectation from other party members. The poor, unstructured succession plan and a fractured presidential primaries of the party over the years have led to the disintegration of the party with the formation of different parties which include National Reform Party (NRP), Democratic Freedom Party (DFP) and National Democratic Party (NDP) in 2000, 2005 and 2011 respectively (Bob-Milliar, 2012; Osei, 2016).

A congress organised by the party to choose a flagbearer was marred by intimidation and violence arising from factions between John Evans Atta Mills and Dr Kwesi Botchwey which had its connection with the founder of the party in 2002. In 2005, intimidation and conflict arose and split the party out of which Democratic Freedom Party (DFP) was formed.

The problem of internal democracy resurfaced in 2011 party primaries which led to a splinter party, i.e. National Democratic Party (NDP). This was occasioned by “Get Atta Mills Endorsed” (GAME) and “Friends of Nana Konadu Agyemang Rawlings” (FONKAR) factions within the party. This primary was attended by about 3000 delegates who decided the candidature of the party (Bob-Milliar, 2012; Osei, 2016). The rift experiences sought attention from party executives and called for reforms.

4.7. Internal problems of New Patriotic Party (NPP)
The NPP is not out of hook when it comes to tensions and conflicts in organising primaries. The 1992 NPP delegate congress was peaceful with 2000 delegates at the Great Hall of the University of Ghana but tension mounted between Albert Adu Boahen and John Agyekum Kufuor. It was the first time a presidential candidate has been elected through direct participation of delegates in the
country. Adu Boahen won the race with 52% of the votes. In 1996 and 1998, John Agyekum Kufuor won both primaries with 51% and 64.8% respectively. In 2004, the party decided to acclaim John Agyekum Kufuor who was then the sitting president of the country. This means he was unopposed (Bob-Milliar & Bob-Milliar, 2010).

However, the party came to a crossroad during and after their presidential primaries in 2007 after Kufuor has exhausted his tenure of office in 2008. The delegates’ conference was attended by 2285 members who assembled at the Great Hall of the University of Ghana. The delegates voted for Nana Akufo Addo although with less than 50% which could not guarantee him a majority win. He was subsequently given the green light to lead the party as a presidential candidate after the close contender Alan Kyeremanteng conceded defeat. The party was fractured after the Congress following the resignation of Alan Kyeremanteng from the party after issuing a resignation letter to the party chairman. He attributed his action to intimidations and assault meted out to his supporters. The fierce presidential primary among 17 aspirants and aftermath division led to a defeat of the NPP in the 2008 elections. The post-election defeat survey and interrogations of the party called for reforms (Bob-Milliar & Bob-Milliar, 2010).

5. Theoretical framework
Adams et al. (2005) influenced by Downs Spacial-Proximity theory asserted that if party elections are run on high or wide electorate, the chance that any single voter will be pivotal is very small.

Downs special-proximity theory on voter choice stipulates that the likelihood of friendship with a person decreases with distance. We are less likely to meet people who live further away. A total number of friends decrease as distance increases. Therefore, there is dissipation of intimacy. This has been expressed simply as a decrease in the probability of coming into contact with one another (Backstrom et al., 2010).

According to Ichino and Nathan (2016), small groups may attract vote buying which advances the problem of patronage in new democracies. They opine that when the electorate is small, individual voters have significant leverage to extract rents in the form of upfront payment from aspirants.

I believe taking a cue from this theory, the expansion of the electoral college of both the dominant parties in Ghana has the potential of reducing the tendency of physical contact or personal engagement between candidates and voters hence reduction in voter influences and physical assault associated with party primaries.

Sanders et al. (2011) focused on Down and Stokes Spacial-Proximity theory to ideological proximity between parties and supporters. The assumption is how political parties or actors manoeuvre in search of public support. There are reforms to expand the Electoral College to draw more people or mobilise more support to win elections. This makes the party attractive to people and legitimises the selection process of candidates in political parties.

Primary elections come with openness, transparency, legitimacy, and internal party democracy in the selection of candidates (Carey & Polga-Hecimovich, 2008). Effects of broad-based primaries include, unifying party factions in dispute and legitimising the choice of the party after primaries (Hortala-Vallve & Mueller, 2009).

6. Methodology
The goal of the study was to assess and evaluate the institutional and electoral reforms of the dominant political parties in Ghana in addressing and stabilising parties rancour associated with the organisation of primaries.
The study adopted a qualitative research methodology in the data gathering process. It involved better assessment of altitudes, opinions, and behaviours of respondents and participants which were better situated in the study (Denzin et al., 2006).

It was augmented with qualitative data through open ended questions to give in-depth and better understanding of the dynamics of party’s organisation of presidential primaries (Driscoll et al., 2007).

Primary and secondary data sources were relied on. The primary source of data was done qualitatively through field interviews to clarify the purpose of the study to participants in order to obtain cooperation. Twelve (12) participants were considered in the study. Four national officials each from the main political parties which comprise the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), two electoral officials from the office of the Electoral Commission mandated by law to organise elections and two security personnel from the Police Service head office who man security during primaries were also interviewed.

The primary data were complemented by secondary data with books, articles, and journals on political party activities and its role in consolidating democracy.

The study adopted purposive sampling as the mode of selection of interviewees. The purpose of choosing this sampling method was to select a particular group of expert with sufficient knowledge on the research topic (Kothari, 2004; Kumekpor, 2002). Assessment of party operations and the peaceful conduct of elections cannot be done by ignoring ideas behind such activities. It was, therefore, prudent to interview top officials who initiate, formulate, and implement policies of these establishments.

The scope of this study is limited to the Ghana’s Fourth Republic. This spans from the period from 1992 to 2016 presidential primaries. The paper reviewed extant literature that set the theoretical basis of this study. The study made inferences from the interviews and reviews and made conclusions. Consequently, the paper analysed relevant responses by generating various themes from the data gathered, especially through the interviews.

7. Findings of the study
The discussion in this section was based on the primary data collected from interviews. The theme for the discussion included reforms adopted by the major political parties in enhancing party internal democracy as well as challenges that confronted these institutions in adopting such reforms. This section also discussed major roles the Electoral Commission and the Police Service played in the conduct of party’s presidential primaries.

7.1. NDC institutional and electoral reforms
The NDC called for expansion of Electoral College to enfranchise and empower their grassroots. In 2015 the NDC undertook a nationwide registration to drive and mop-up party membership. It has now embraced all party executives from the branch to the national level numbering about 280,000 to exercise their franchises in presidential primaries. The primaries are also not organised in a confined area as previously practised but at constituency levels across the 275 constituencies in the country. According to Ichino and Nathan (2016), these reforms were to curb the tensions as a result of direct association of delegates and aspirants which most at times breeds vote buying, corruption, and physical assault. This expansion has legitimised primary election results.

The party organised its recent presidential primaries on 23 February 2019 with eight contestants including the former president of Ghana John Dramani Mahama. Elections were held at various constituencies in the entire country. With about 280,000 delegates consisting of all party executive officers at all the levels of the party’s hierarchy from branch to the national level across the country, there was a massive voter turnout and a resounding victory for the former president with
95% of votes. Rancour and misunderstanding were less witnessed. All the other seven competitors conceded defeat and congratulated the winner and promised of their unflinching support.

7.2. NPP institutional and electoral reforms

In 2009, the NPP increased its presidential primary delegates from 2340 to 115,000 and the number of presidential candidates limited to five (5). It was to conduct the primaries at every constituency simultaneously. The justification of the reforms was to transfer ownership of the party to the grassroots (Ichino & Nathan, 2016). It increased the polling station executive (the base of the party's organisational hierarchy) from 1 to 5 as would-be voters or delegates in presidential primaries per article 12(6) of the party’s constitution.

The party operationalised the reforms enshrined in its constitution with the primary organised on 18 October 2014. The primary also witnessed a massive voter turnout. The presidential primary election results were hugely accepted with a resounding victory for Nana Addo Danquah Akufo Addo who gained 117,413 representing 94.35%. There were not any contestations because competitors felt the party which had more than 114,000 representatives have indeed made a preferred choice.

In responding to the rationale behind the institutional and electoral reforms and its consequence on party operations and elections, the party officials indicated that;

Though all the two major political parties agree in principle that political parties are pivotal in democratic consolidation, our programs and policies are equally important in cementing the democratic credentials of the country. The most important aspect of party organisation is its mobilisation prowess. So every decision taken is measured by its potential of incentivising and arousing the interest and commitment level of old and new members. There are always opportunities for active participation (Interview, 2020).

Our reforms have worked to perfection with the intended plan of embracing more people in the candidate’s selection process. Expanding the electoral base of my party has not only legitimised the conduct of elections but has also become a reconciliatory platform as both winners and defeated candidates see the need in working together for greater good of the party (Interview, 2020).

The involvement of state institutions has also helped in the successful conduct of primaries in my party. The Police Service was admirable in providing security. The conduct of polls across the 275 constituencies could not be successful without the police who assigned roles to their men in the various constituencies (Interview, 2020).

However, the inclusive membership in primaries has ramifications that cripple effective functioning of political parties. The cost involved in running elections involving all party executives at the local, constituency, regional and national level concurrently in 275 constituencies is capital intensive. To find convenient ways to circumvent the financial difficulties in running primaries on high number of electorates, party leadership is at times tempted to increase filing fees of presidential aspirants or manipulate decisions of the party’s candidature. These actions are sometimes faced with stiff opposition from within the party and in the media landscape (Interview, 2020).

Again, widening membership in primaries has boosted confidence and enhanced electoral legitimacy. But the politics of patronage has not been completely tackled. It is left for party members to commit themselves to eschew and disdain the act and come to the realisation that the root cause of perceived corruption in politics emanate from the act of patronage (Interview, 2020).
8. Institutionalising reforms by utilising State institutions

The mandated institutions required to administer some functions in political parties face daunting task of cooperating harmoniously with internal structures established by political parties. This is what Lupu and Riedl (2013) refers as institutional uncertainties. It means “democratic political institutions are in flux and may not be reliable avenues for expressing voter preference”. They argue that irrespective of how collaborative formal and informal institutions could be in an outfit, their co-existence could be catastrophic. It creates uncertainties about which rules would govern what kind of political interactions. Informal structures can subvert formal rules and procedure creating parallel structures and determining decision outcomes. This institutional uncertainty has a dire consequence on mobilisation strategies for voter support. Party leaders may resort to party’s informal structures or networks to achieve their parochial interest through relations of patronage.

The 1992 Constitution of Ghana in article 46 stipulates “except as provided in this constitution or in any other law not inconsistent with this constitution, in the performance of its functions, the Electoral Commission, shall not be subject to the direction or control of any person or authority”. Again the same constitution in article 45(c) says “the Electoral Commission shall have the function to conduct and supervise all public elections and referenda”. Based on the conflicting functions of party structures and state created institutions in executing its functions, the Electoral Commission (EC) suffers the fate of institutional uncertainty.

The Electoral Commission (EC) officials I engaged recounted the difficulties they encountered in executing their constitutionally mandated functions in supervising and officiating political party primaries.

The political parties have their internal mechanisms in organising elections. They have created portfolios with the duty of superintending internal electoral issues of the party including elections. The Election Directorate headed by the Director of Elections in political parties duplicate and conflict the role of the EC. The parties at times revere the institutions created by themselves than the nationally recognised ones especially a party in opposition who sees the EC as an ally to the governing party (Interview, 2020).

The party’s reliance on its internal institutions and officials is also borne out by the cost involved in elections. To be prudent in the management of party’s expenditure in presidential primaries, political parties resort to party members to officiate elections in most constituencies and consequently side-line the Electoral Commission. The party officiating officials eventually expose their biases as party fanatics. This behaviour questions their neutrality and credibility as electoral officials thereby creating misunderstanding in electoral results (Interview, 2020).

The nature of party politics in Ghana characterised by patronage has inadvertently engendered political vigilantism (Gyampo et al., 2017). They reiterated that the two dominant parties have created this militia group and co-opted them into the political party’s organisational structure. They comprise amongst others party foot-soldiers who work to ensure the election of their parties into power. They have also assumed the role of party security officials that are trained to provide security in their party operations especially in elections.

The Police Service that ought to provide security for the conduction of elections is also faced with the phenomenon of institutional uncertainty. The parallel party structure created to superintend security issues in the party conflicts with the role of the police. The security officials also recounted their difficulties;

There is lack of collaboration especially parties in opposition as they tag police administration as partisan and puppet of the government in power. Therefore the Police Service should not be disclosed to security details of the party in its presidential primaries. But it is imperative to note that the police is a professional body and ready to ensure incident free conduct of polls across the political divide (Interview, 2020).
Irrespective of the impressive reforms adopted by the two major political parties which is telling with the outcomes of presidential primary results by the NDC and NPP in 2014 and 2019 respectively, the sterling performance of the Electoral Commission and the Police Service in these electoral activities cannot be ignored in assessing the whole picture of institutional and electoral reforms of the political parties in recent years.

9. Summary
Upheavals that may inhibit countries desire to consolidate their democracy even after completion of its cycle of elections (Lindberg & Lindberg, 2006) may be attributed to the poor party succession plan and primary organisation. In Zimbabwe, the overthrow of Robert Mugabe after several years of rule by the military as a result of the suspension of the Vice President and an attempt to manipulate for his successor is a testament to this assertion. Ghana has faced myriad of political party disintegration due to poor conduction of presidential primaries across the dominant parties of the political divide. This gives a shred of evidence that the conduct of presidential primary is critical to the stability of a country’s democracy.

Ghana’s democratic transitioning has been zig-zag but with strong institutional capacity of the Electoral Commission, it has robustly stood the pressures of parochial interest of political parties and election stakeholders to bring out reforms which include: instituting the same day for parliamentary and presidential elections, introducing coloured voter identities, transparent ballot boxes to replace the opaque ones, biometric voters register, biometric verification device to prevent multiple voting. This has purged our electoral system on free and fair footing (Debrah, 2011; Frempong, 2012).

The political parties who are vehicles and agents of democracy have not been precluded from institutional and electoral reforms in their pursuit for internal party democracy. There have been several reforms by the dominant parties in Ghana to reflect the goals stipulated in the Political Parties Act 574, 2000. The widening of Electoral College to ensure legitimacy of electoral outcomes, embracing wide leadership to control party affairs (empowering the grassroots) at all levels of the party’s hierarchy and concurrent running of presidential primaries in all the 275 constituencies across the country are some major highlights of party’s institutional and electoral reforms. These are all geared towards the stoppage of rancour, intimidation and vote buying in primaries.

10. Conclusion
The practice of widening the scope of electors has drastically reduced tensions, conflicts, factionalism in the recent presidential primaries of the two dominant parties in 2014 and 2019 by the NPP and NDC respectively. The aftermath of these elections has ended up a unified front poised for action to realise the objectives of these parties.

The legitimacy and acceptability of election results and candidates has greatly been accomplished with the right institutional and electoral reforms of the major parties in Ghana. Notwithstanding the widening of the electoral base, simultaneous conduct of polls across constituencies and restriction of candidates for presidential primaries which has seen positive outcomes, the Electoral Commission and the Police Service in conducting elections and adherence to security protocols respectively has cemented the gains of these electoral reforms adopted by the two major political parties in Ghana.

However, parties in Ghana are still faced with challenges of party executive biases, vestiges of vote buying, high prices of nominations fees for presidential candidates which inadvertently give party ownership back to the elites as Scarrow (2005) refers to “party inner leadership”. The party militia created by the parties to take over control of the security of primaries instead of the Ghana Police Service has created problems for the effective provision of security in party primaries (Gyampo et al., 2017; Ichino & Nathan, 2017).
To ensure neutrality and autonomy of state institutions in the conduct of party primaries, state institutions must be equipped to execute functions related to the conduct of primaries. The Electoral Commission whose mandate is to referee party internal elections as stipulated by the constitution in article 45(c) must be adhered to. The Police Service instead of party militia must be allowed to provide security for primaries (Adejumobi, 2000).

In furtherance to peaceful primaries, the parties should ensure that the adopted reforms are well enforced irrespective of the cost involved because Ichino and Nathan (2016, 2017) posit that, when primary electorate is high and dispersed, securing support through private benefits can become expensive which will eventually lead to deterrence of vote buying and physical assault.

According to Scarrow (2005), the adoption of wide membership in presidential primaries has a consequence on free and fair conduct of elections and has proven to benefit society in ensuring a stable democratic rule. I believe with the commitment of parties in adhering to institutional and electoral reforms in ensuring internal party democratisation, Ghana’s democracy will be consolidated and become a beacon of hope in Africa.

11. Recommendations

There is a loud call by Gyampo (2015) that there needs to be a new funding regime of political parties in Ghana. According to him the lack of funds to operationalise their activities has rendered them as private entities. This could be attributed greatly to affluent people at the helm of party affairs manipulating decisions and operations.

Osei (2013) opines that party monetisation has two consequences. It keeps the rural and the urban poor outside of the decision making process and brings about little internal party democracy. Therefore, public funding proposal should be revisited and considered.

The funding of political parties will ease the burden of capital intensive open primary presidential elections, relieve political parties of financiers whose interest is to lubricate the political party structures to their advantage and ensure transparent operations of political parties. To a large extent, public funding coupled with institutional and electoral reforms would curb monetisation in Ghana’s politics in general and political parties in specific.

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