
The Regional Balance of Presidential Tickets in Ghanaian Elections: Analysis of the 2008 General Elections

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Introduction

Ghana's Fourth Republican Constitution prescribed a hybrid of the presidential and parliamentary systems of government to be practiced in a multi-party democracy. This is a clear departure from the country's previous attempt at constitutional government in the first three republics. The country experimented with the presidential system of government in the first and third republics, and practiced the parliamentary system under the second republic. It is reported that the constitutional experts assembled by the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) government to produce a draft constitution for the fourth republic were guided by the lessons learned under the first three republican constitutions. For example, the requirement that the majority of ministers of state shall be appointed from among members of Parliament as prescribed by Article 78 of the 1992 constitution was recommended because of lessons learned under the third republican constitution. The president, under the third republic, failed to get his budget passed by parliament in 1981. This was largely blamed on the fact that no member of parliament was a minister of state under the 1979 constitution. The framers of the 1992 constitution, therefore, recommended hybridization to cure the mischief of members of parliament of the ruling party sabotaging the president's agenda. Nonetheless, Ghana's current hybrid system of government could easily pass for a presidential system (Ninsin 2008).

The institutional arrangement and power dynamics between the executive and the legislature sanctioned by the 1992 constitution has inadvertently created what is gradually becoming an 'imperial presidency' in Ghana. The 'hybridization of the parliamentary and presidential system has given the executive a huge and unequivocal presence in parliament' (Ninsin 2008:2). It is, therefore, not uncommon to find Ghana listed among the countries practicing a presidential system of government in comparative studies literature (Van De Walle 2003:309). Like most other countries with presidential constitutions, political power in Ghana is highly concentrated in the presidency. This makes the office of the president a highly coveted prize. Consequently presidential contestations are always highly competitive. Presidential candidates running for election, therefore, meticulously explore and exploit every opportunity that can enhance their electoral fortunes. The selection of a running mate by a presidential candidate is undoubtedly one of the major decisions that can make or break the political ambition of a presidential candidate and the dream of a political party.

The conventional wisdom in Ghana's elections is that northerners are likely to vote for a party that has a northerner on its presidential ticket. This has guided presidential candidates in the selection of a running mate since 1992. With the exception of Rawlings who contested the 1992 and 1996 elections with a running mate who did not hail from the northern part of Ghana, all presidential candidates from the two major parties have had a northerner as running mate. As discussed in detail below, both the NPP and the NDC have followed this convention. This paper focuses exclusively on these two major parties, NDC and NPP, because they are the ones that have won a presidential election and formed a government since 1992.

This paper will do a qualitative analysis of the 2008 elections to determine whether the conventional practice of balancing a presidential ticket by partnering a southern presidential candidate with a northern politician as a running mate has the potential to enhance the electoral fortunes of the party. The study relied on secondary literature and primary data on electoral strategy, political behaviour and voting outcomes during the 2008 elections. The primary data are election figures obtained from the Electoral Commission (EC). A questionnaire was not administered and formal interviews were not conducted for data collection. Nonetheless, the study benefitted from information obtained by the author in his interactions with some key players in the December 2008 elections as a consultant for the Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) and the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA). The author analyzed the election results of the Northern region¹ with the objective of finding out which of the two running mates – Bawumia of the NPP and Mahama of the NDC – added more value to his party's ticket in terms of votes. The study shows that the conventional wisdom alluded to above may be true in some elections, but not in all elections. That is, northerners do not always vote along ethnic lines.

The study is divided into six main sections. Following the introduction is a discussion on the office of vice president; section three presents the regional balance in Ghanaian elections. The fourth section is devoted to the drama of running mate selection in the 2008 elections. Section five examines ethno-clientelist politics in the northern region, while the last section is devoted to the findings and conclusions of the study.

The Office of Vice-President

The 1992 constitution stipulates that ‘a candidate for the office of Vice-President shall be designated by the candidate for the office of President before the election of the President’ (Article 60:2). Even though some commentators and politicians have questioned the relevance of the position of Vice President in most democracies, the selection of presidential running mates has always generated interest and inflamed passions within certain political parties and the country in general. It would seem that the choice of a presidential running mate is of some consequence only if it engenders controversy in the political discourse. However, Article 60: 6 of the 1992 constitution makes a vice president only a heartbeat away from presidency. This article states that ‘whenever the President dies, resigns or is removed from office, the Vice-President shall assume office as President for the unexpired term of office of the President with effect from the date of the death, resignation or removal of the President.’ Accordingly, political parties and their flag bearers have always taken the search for a running mate very seriously. Several factors often come into play in any consideration of a potential candidate for the position of a running mate.

One major factor that normally weighs heavily on the minds of presidential candidates in selecting a suitable person to partner with in an election is the need to balance the presidential ticket by expanding its appeal across ethnic, ideological, gender, religious and geographical boundaries. Other critical factors in the selection process include the voting behaviour of the electorate of the prospective running mate’s traditional base (region); the need to unite the party by selecting someone who was a viable rival to the flag bearer at the party’s primaries; and the need to select someone who can compliment the candidate’s age by bringing on board someone younger to partner an older candidate and vice versa.² Above all, the competence of the potential running mate and his ability to step into the presidency in the event of the absence of the substantive president is paramount in the consideration (Frempong 2010; Goldstein 1982; Hiller and Kriner 2008). Various presidential candidates may put more emphasis on a different set of factors depending on their own strengths and weaknesses.

Regional Balance in Ghanaian Elections

The political map of Ghana has over the years been conventionally categorized into ‘north’ and ‘south’. The three regions of the savannah belt (Northern, Upper-

East and Upper-West) are lumped into what is commonly referred to as 'the north', while the seven coastal and middle-belt regions (Greater Accra, Western, Central, Volta, Eastern, Ashanti and Brong Ahafo) are categorized as 'the south'.³ The major political parties in the Fourth Republic have so far seriously factored the need for regional balance in the equation in the selection of a running mate. It is believed that having a partnership between a southerner and a northerner on a presidential ticket brings a broader appeal to the ticket and has the potential to win votes across ethnic groups all over the country.

Since 1992, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) has religiously followed this convention in all the elections in which it has contested for the presidency. The only time the issue of regional balance was not up for consideration was when the party went into alliance with other opposition parties to contest the 1996 Presidential elections.⁴ In 1992, the party had Adu Boahen, an Akan from the Ashanti region and Issifu Alhassan, a Dagomba from the northern region on its ticket. In 2000 and 2004 the party had Agyekum Kufuor, an Akan from the Ashanti region, and Aliu Mahama, a Dagomba from the northern region on its ticket. In 2008, the NPP had Akufo Addo, an Akan from the eastern region, and Bawumia, a Mampruga from the northern region, on its ticket. Out of the four elections the party contested with a south/north-balanced ticket, it won two and lost two.

The NPP argued in *The Stolen Verdict* (1993) a publication chronicling election malpractices during the 1992 elections, that victory was stolen from them by the incumbent president Rawlings and his NDC party. They concluded that the irregularities of the 1992 elections were so grave that the conduct of the elections could not be described as free and fair. The party boycotted the 1992 parliamentary elections to protest the conduct of the presidential election. In the 2008 elections the NPP took a commanding lead in the first round of voting, but lost in the second round of voting, albeit with a narrow margin. But, for the constitutional requirement of 50% plus one vote for presidential elections, the NPP candidate would have been declared the winner of the 2008 elections in the first round. It, therefore, appeared that the north/south partnership had served the party well at the polls.

The National Democratic Congress (NDC) has had a south/north partnership on its presidential ticket in three out of five elections since 1992. The party's founder and its presidential candidate for the first two elections (1992 and 1996) did not comply with this convention of regional balance on presidential tickets. For both elections, he ignored competent and good candidates from the north as a running mate and opted for an Akan from the Central region. The founder and leader of the NDC, Jerry John Rawlings, could afford to go without a northern partner because he did not need a politician from the area to help him win votes in the three regions. Rawlings had played clientelist politics

in the area as the country's Head of State from 1982 to 1992, and had won the hearts and minds of the people of the north for three major reasons. First, as Chairman of the PNDC, Rawlings sanctioned the creation of a third region (Upper West) out of the hitherto two regions of the political north. Second, his government launched the Northern Electrification project which extended hydropower to the three northern regions. This, some have argued, put the north on the path of modernization and development. Finally, the establishment of the University for Development Studies (UDS), the first and only university in the north, by the Rawlings' government, with its campuses spreading across the three administrative regions of the political north was highly regarded by the people as a significant share of the 'national cake'.

Rawlings maximized the dividends from this political capital in the form of electoral votes. His name and picture alone on the ballot was enough to win the votes of most of the electorate from the north. Rawlings could, therefore, take the northern votes for granted and rather go after Akan votes, in order to weaken the electoral support of his opponents in their strongholds. Nonetheless, the NDC, without Rawlings, had to factor into the political equation the conventional regional balance thesis when considering a presidential running mate. Hence, in all three elections that he contested as the NDC's presidential candidate, Atta Mills partnered with northerners as his running mate. In the 2000 elections he had Martin Amidu, a Builsa from the Upper East region as his running mate; in 2004 candidate Mills partnered with Mohammed Mumuni, a Dagomba from the northern region; and in the 2008 elections he chose as his running mate, Mahama, a Gonja from the northern region. The party's presidential candidate has won one out of the three elections it contested with a south/north ticket.

The Selection Drama: Who Gets the Nod?

The selection of presidential running mates has always generated interest within the political class. Political parties in democracies across the world have a different mode of selecting a candidate to partner their flag bearer at general elections. In Ghana, most of the major political parties have very similar rules and regulations (with minor variations) on the selection of a running mate. The constitutions of both the NDC and the NPP clearly stipulate the procedure to follow in selecting the presidential running mate. In both cases, the flag bearer has the prerogative to select a running mate in consultation with, and upon the approval of, the party's National Executive Committee (NEC). Even though the presidential candidate has discretionary powers in the selection process, it is often the case that various competing interests within the party vigorously mobilize party activists in support of potential candidates perceived to represent their group interest. Intensive lobbying of the presidential candidate by power brokers within the party for their preferred candidate normally takes place.

It is usually during the selection process of a party's running mate that intra-party factional interests emerge and seriously threaten or undermine party unity and cohesion. The internal party democratic institutions and structures are challenged and the management of potential cleavages within the party becomes paramount at this time.

Mills and the Trinity

For the 2008 elections the NDC was the first party to initiate the process of selecting a presidential running mate. There were various groups and power blocs within the party championing the candidature of the three short-listed persons. The only woman among the three, Betty Mould Iddrisu, had the blessing and support of the founder of the party, Rawlings, and his wife Agyeman Rawlings. Moslem and northern groups within the party preferred Mumuni and campaigned for him. Some splinter northern groups and youth movements within the party favoured Mahama as the running mate of Mills. All three personalities are very successful and accomplished professionals in private life. Iddrisu is a lawyer of international repute. Mumuni is a legal practitioner and former Member of Parliament. He had the added advantage of being the running mate of the presidential candidate in the 2004 general elections. Mahama was a Member of Parliament and former Minister of Communication.

As the date scheduled by the party for the flag bearer to submit his choice to the National Executive Committee drew closer, it became clear that the candidate was leaning toward a north/south ticket. It was widely reported that the race was between Mumuni and Mahama. On the other hand, the former first lady continued to push for the choice of Iddrisu as Mill's running mate. Commenting on the prospects of the NDC flag bearer choosing a northerner over a woman, the former first lady expressed her displeasure on various Accra-based radio stations (Joy fm, Peace fm, and Radio Gold) on Tuesday, 1 April 2008.⁵ She threatened that there would be trouble in the party if her favourite candidate was dropped from the list. Uncharacteristic of her stature as a former first lady, she warned that the presidential candidate would not be 'treated with kid gloves' this time around as was the case in 2004. According to her, the 2008 election was too crucial to be left to the whims and caprices of the candidate.

Making her case for Iddrisu, the former first lady argued that there is no political merit in choosing a northern candidate to partner the flag bearer. She contended that politics is a game of numbers and that Iddrisu was likely to pull more votes for the NDC from the Ashanti region because of her ethnicity and gender. In her estimation, the northern votes, for which one may choose any of the two gentlemen to partner the candidate, was nothing compared to the votes Iddrisu was capable of pulling from Ashanti and other Akan speaking areas. What the former first lady failed to appreciate was that it was equally possible for the

young and affable Mahama to also pull votes from the youth across the country, including Akan youth. It was estimated that over sixty per cent of the country's population would be below the age of 45 years by 7 December 2008 (Daily Dispatch, 31 March 2008). This translated into a large segment of potential voters being within the youth bracket. It was clear therefore that selecting a youthful candidate to attract the youth vote was a compelling reason in the mind of the presidential candidate.

The youth factor notwithstanding, it must be emphasized that northern votes have always been crucial for an NDC victory in all general elections since 1996. For the 7 December 2008 first round ballot, the NDC had 763,541 valid votes from the three northern regions, representing 19 per cent of the party's total valid votes of 4,056, 634 (EC 2008). This figure is by no means insignificant in the general scheme of NDC votes in the election. It was clear in the first round that, but for the wide margin between the NDC and NPP votes in the three northern regions, there would not have been the need for a second round.

Even when it came down to choosing between two northerners, the NDC presidential candidate was confronted with the need to take cognizance of religious alignments in that part of the country. Some NDC youth in the northern regional capital, mobilized by the Azorka boys⁶, vehemently protested the likely selection of Mahama because of his religious background. The group expressed support for Mumuni because he is a Moslem. Mahama, a practicing Christian, was forced to extol his association with the Islamic religion by invoking his relationship with his godfather, a highly respected Moslem mallam in Kumasi and also emphasizing the fact that his mother is a practicing Moslem.⁷ In the end, the presidential candidate was not swayed by pressures from all the vociferous interest groups. He selected Mahama as his running mate for the 2008 elections. Clearly, the two most compelling factors in the NDC flag bearer's decision were the need for regional balance and the youthful appeal of Mahama.

NPP's Selection Quagmire

Contrary to what most political pundits had predicted, it was rather the flag bearer of the then ruling NPP who had the most difficult task in selecting his running mate. The academic question today is whether his final selection was a calculated surprise or a desperate move by a candidate trying to prove to party and country that he was his own man. After openly expressing his preference for selecting a woman and a northerner to partner him in the December 2008 elections at a forum organized by the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), the candidate was greeted with loud protests from strong and powerful voices within the party. The target of the protests was the person of Alima Mahama, a member of parliament and a minister of state for Women and Children Affairs – who was strongly rumoured by people close to the presidential candidate to be a preferred

choice. Alima Mahama did not help matters when she allowed women groups to champion her bid by openly campaigning and putting pressure on the party and candidate to select her as the running mate.

The pressure from both sides of the divide on the potential selection of Alima Mahama was so unbearable that the candidate succumbed and reverted to 'plan B'. An infamous letter by a former national chairman and founding member of the party, B.J. Da Rocha, was the final nail in the coffin of Alima Mahama's candidature. In the confidential letter addressed to the flag bearer, the party's National Chairman and other leading members of the NPP, Da Rocha said that Alima Mahama did not have what it takes to be a running mate. According to him, it would be difficult, particularly in the north, to sell an unmarried woman to the voters. Rejection of her potential nomination by powerful women in the party such as the then first vice chairperson of the party, Ama Busia, did not help her case. Some Moslem groups within the party also protested against her potential selection on grounds that Alima Mahama was a single woman and could not be a good role model to young Moslem women in the country.

The candidate soon realized that his 'plan B' was no less problematic for some party leaders than his first preference. Staying with the NPP's tradition of presenting a north/south regional balanced ticket, the candidate turned his eye on the then second deputy speaker of parliament and MP for Yendi, Malik Alhassan Yakubu.⁸ The problem with Yakubu was that he was a Dagomba and a leading member of the Abudu gate. Incidentally, the NPP had selected a Dagomba to partner a southerner as a running mate in all three preceding general elections. There was therefore a visible 'Dagomba fatigue' in some NPP circles. There were those who believed that other ethnic groups from the three regions should be given the opportunity this time to be selected as the running mate of the party's flag bearer.

There was also a school of thought within the NPP that held the view that the Dagbon conflict had negatively affected the electoral fortunes of the Party in the north. According to this group, selecting a Dagomba as running mate would rather compromise the party even further, and would affect the electoral fortunes of the party in the area. This contention is contradicted by the famous words of Tip O'Neal (former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives,) that 'all politics is local'. Those who believed that the Dagbon conflict negatively impacted the NPP's electoral fortunes in the north were mostly southerners who erroneously thought of 'the north' as a geographical region inhabited by one homogeneous group of people. On the contrary, Dagombas are only one of the several ethnic groups inhabiting the three northern regions, and the Dagbon conflict is limited largely to what is commonly described as the Dagbon Traditional Area. The Dagbon Traditional Area has only 12 out of 49 constituencies in the political north. Also the Abudus/Andanis divide in the Dagbon conflict has a zero effect

on the voting pattern of the Gonja, Wala, Kusasi or Frafra as it is on the Asante, Fanti, Ga or Ewe. No Dagati or Sisala voter will cast his or her vote based on the Dagbon conflict, just as no Akyem or Nzema voter will cast a vote for one party or the other because they support the Abudus or the Andanis.

In sum, the impact of the Dagbon conflict, in terms of the electoral fortunes of political parties, is limited largely to the Dagbon Traditional Area and some settler communities in the south populated by Dagombas. Moreover, even in the Dagbon Traditional Area, the conflict has only reinforced the two strategic voting blocs that have traditionally dominated Dagbon politics. The voting pattern of Dagombas since independence has been that the Abudus and Andanis have always voted in the opposite direction on national elections. Traditionally, the Andanis have demonstrated their loyalty to the CPP/Nkrumaist tradition while the Abudus have placed their loyalty in the United Party (Danquah/Busia) tradition (Staniland 1973; MacGaffey 2006; and Tonah 2012). Even in non-partisan elections, the two factions have consistently pitched camps with opposing candidates. In the UNIGOV referendum, for example, the Abudus voted largely 'No' while the Andanis voted 'Yes'. Furthermore, in all four national elections under the Fourth Republic, the Abudus have consistently voted for the NPP while the Andanis have consistently voted for the NDC or any Party other than the NPP. All things being equal, the Andanis will always vote against the NPP for 'ideological utility value', irrespective of what the Party's performance in government has been, or what the other Party's probability of winning is. Admittedly there are some swing voters among the two factions, but they are of marginal significance.

Nonetheless, the pressure to drop Yakubu in the selection of a running mate for Akufo Addo was so great that the NPP presidential candidate had to change his mind at the eleventh hour. The candidate was in South Africa with Yakubu a week to the day he was to announce his running mate. He reportedly informed Yakubu that he was his preferred choice and that when they returned to Ghana his name would be presented to the NEC⁹. On his return to the country, the flag bearer was confronted with serious lobbying and maneuvering by surrogates of the then sitting President, J.A. Kufour, to select one Zakaria Adam as his running mate. Adam was a member of the party, a Gonja from the northern region and the then Principal of Bagabaga Training College in Tamale. The candidate vehemently resisted this move to impose an unknown party member on him as a running mate. He, however, could not overcome the growing opposition to his preferred choice (Yakubu). At this juncture, Akufo Addo was getting more desperate and frustrated by the day. With the rejection of his first two preferences by NPP power brokers, he was inadvertently creating the impression of a waffling leader who suffers from indecision. To prove to all that he was his own man and that he was too big for others to push around, the flag bearer made up his mind

on his vice-presidential candidate and kept the decision secret. On a fateful August night at the Alisa Hotel, Accra, in a room packed with the top brass of the NPP, Akufo Addo surprised a lot of the party stalwarts in the room with his announcement of the young Bawumia as his running mate.¹⁰ The candidate prefaced his announcement by informing the august party members in the room that his preferred choice was Yakubu. Akufo Addo assured the NEC of the party that his selection of Bawumia over Yakubu was influenced by his determination to unite the party and the country behind him. Hence, it was prudent for him to select someone who would not be perceived as a divisive figure in the Dagbon conflict. A debate ensued among members of the party assembled in the room, with an overwhelming majority speaking in favour of Yakubu. It was reported by sources at the NEC meeting that if the process was purely democratic and put to a vote, then Yakubu would have carried the day over Bawumia who was not known in the party. The then sitting president, J.A. Kufour, had the final word, and he reminded party members that it was under the watch of Yakubu, as his interior minister, that the unfortunate events of 25-27 March 2002 that led to the assassination of the king of Dagbon happened. He, therefore, supported the candidate's decision not to select Yakubu and endorsed his choice of the young Bawumia.

Ethno-Clientelist Politics in the Northern Region: Counting the 2008 Votes

Does ethnicity and regionalism still play a significant role in Ghanaian voting behaviour? Is the Rawlings factor a rare exception or compelling evidence that clientelism weakens ethnic voting in Ghana? There is debate in comparative scholarship as to whether ethnicity is still a driving force in the voting behaviour of most of the African electorate. There are those who argue that ethnic groups in Africa are not primordially fixed, but are constructed in the course of social, economic, and political interaction (Mozaffar, Scarritt and Galaich 2003:379). Arguing from this perspective, Anebo concludes that ethnicity is becoming less significant in Ghanaian politics. In his analysis of the 2004 elections, he argued that Ghanaian voters were largely influenced by the issues at stake in the elections, but were not voting simply on ethnic grounds. According to Anebo, 'the process of societal modernization and heightened political awareness are strenuously eroding the traditional social identities, based on ethnicity, dialect, tribe, region, and religion that had predicted the mass basis of party support in Ghana during the earlier decades' (Anebo 2006:107). In his opinion, 'geographical mobility and urbanization have engendered crosscutting cleavages based on location, occupation, and communication, thereby weakening linkages with tribal groups...' (Anebo op. cit.). This assertion may be true to some extent in the case of the 2004 elections. There is, however, no preponderance of evidence to support

the decline of ethnicity in Ghanaian elections. Even in the 2004 elections, there was documented evidence of the electorate in some regions voting solely on the basis of ethnicity.¹¹ According to Ben Ephson, between four and five per cent of Ghanaian voters base their choice of who to vote for on ethnicity (The Daily Dispatch 2009).

The other side of the argument is those who believe that primordial ethnic cleavages reinforce group solidarity in Africa. They believe that politicians will continue to maximize the advantages derived from group identity, including winning votes by manipulating group interest and grievances. Group identity is still the basis of most voting in poor countries. It is by far the easiest basis for political mobilization (Collier 2009:26). According to Ake, 'ethnicity has a preponderant influence on voter choice. This is because in the conception of primordialism, ethnicity serves to bond a particular group together and it is within such primordial cleavage that they [the group] realize its identity' (Ake 2003:93). In Ake's opinion, 'ethnic groups are real, at least in the limited sense of solidarity, of consciousness, however misguided or spurious' (ibid.). Commenting on ethnicity in Ghanaian politics, Bofo-Arthur observed that notwithstanding the effort by Ghana's first president, Nkrumah, in dealing with ethnicity by 'the promulgation of the Avoidance of Discrimination Act ...the 'ghost' of ethnicity and ethnic influence in voting, especially in the Volta and Ashanti Regions of Ghana have refused to die as the general elections of 1969, 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004 portrayed' (Bofo-Arthur 2008:63).

In this section, we will examine the role of ethnicity and clientelism in the 2008 elections in the home region of the two gentlemen selected to partner the presidential candidates of the NPP and NDC. We will rely on election results from the region to determine the voting pattern in some selected constituencies. Ethnicity played a significant role in the Gonja traditional area of the northern region in the 2008 general elections. The major tribes in the northern region include Dagombas, Mamprusis, Nanumbas, Gonjas and Konkombas. The first three tribes belong to the Mole-Dagbani group and are known to be descendants of one great-grandfather (Naa Gbewaa).¹² In the 2008 elections, the NDC's running mate was a Gonja from the Guan-speaking group, while the NPP's presidential running mate was a Mamprusi from the Mole-Dagbani-speaking group. The NDC's campaign strategy in Gonjaland was reduced to using ethnic/tribal sentiments to rally Gonjas behind a 'son of the soil' in the elections. They told the Gonja people that the Mole-Dagbani group had their vice-president in the person of Aliu Mahama, and that it was their turn to produce the next vice-president. Gonjas were constantly reminded that the NPP by-passed two prominent Gonjas (Abubakari Sadique Boniface and Nurudeen Jawula) for a Mamprusi. The NDC was touted as a party that listened to the concerns of Gonja chiefs to select a running mate from Gonjaland. The voters were, therefore, asked

not to let their chiefs down by coming out in their numbers to vote massively for the NDC. Some leading members of the Gonja Youth Association and the Gonja Students Union who are NPP members were recruited from Accra to join the NDC campaign team in the area to help win votes for Mahama in NPP strongholds. As far as they were concerned, the general good of Gonjaland was over and above their individual interest and ideology. They concluded that an NDC government with a Gonja as its vice-president was good for Gonjaland.¹³

The results of the 2008 elections in all the constituencies of Gonjaland clearly indicate that the voters in the area did not disappoint their favourite son and his party. The NDC swept all six constituencies, including constituencies previously won by the NPP. The NDC's victory in Salaga and Damongo/Daboya – the two largest constituencies – was a big blow to the NPP in the area. These constituencies were represented in parliament by NPP members and the MP for Salaga (Saddique Boniface) was a Minister of State and a leading member of the NPP campaign team. In three of the six constituencies (Bole/Bamboi, Sawla/Tuna/Kalba, and Yapei/Kusawgu) the NPP parliamentary candidate had more votes than the party's presidential candidate. This suggests that some NPP voters in these constituencies indulged in what is now commonly known in Ghanaian political parlance as 'skirt and blouse'; that is, they voted for the NPP parliamentary candidate based on their party ideology, but turned around and voted for the NDC presidential candidate based on ethnicity. In the Kpandai constituency, the NDC presidential candidate obtained 15,126 valid votes while the party's parliamentary candidate received 10,391 valid votes (EC 2008). This suggests that about 4,729 Gonjas in the constituency voted for the NDC presidential candidate for reasons other than party membership: they voted on the basis of ethnicity. For the first time since 1996, all six Gonja MPs in the country's legislature were members of the NDC.

Ethnicity was apparently not a factor in the voting in constituencies populated by the Mole-Dagbani tribes. By selecting a Mamprusi to partner their presidential candidate, the NPP were probably expecting to do well in the northern region. If one were guided by Ake's conceptualization of ethnicity and voting behaviour in Africa (Ake 2003:93), or Collier's theory of group identity as the basis for political mobilization (Collier 2009: 26), the selection of a member of the largest ethnic group in the region (mole-dagbani) as a running mate was an excellent strategy for the NPP to carry the region. Out of 894,342 registered voters in the northern region for the 2004 general elections, the 17 constituencies of the Mole-Dagbani ethnic group alone recorded 624,220 voters (EC 2004). This represented seventy per cent (70%) of total registered voters in the region. Based on election results from the 2004 elections, 189,197 of the total NPP valid votes of 273,897 in the northern region came from the 17 constituencies of the Mole-Dagbani ethnic group (*ibid.*). This represented 69 per cent of NPP votes in the region. It is not,

therefore, surprising that since 1992 the NPP has always selected a running mate from the Mole-Dagbani group.

As in previous elections, the selection of Dr. Bawumia was not enough to change the voting behaviour of the people in the Mole-Dagbani constituencies. Since 1992, the voters in the 17 Mole-Dagbani constituencies have voted on the basis of considerations other than ethnicity. The Rawlings factor (clientelism), as discussed above, and chieftaincy have been significant factors determining voting outcomes in these constituencies.¹⁴ In the 2008 elections, the NDC presidential candidate won 12 of the 17 constituencies in the area, including all the three large constituencies of Tamale South, Central, and North. The difference between the votes obtained by the presidential candidates of the NDC and the NPP in the three Tamale constituencies alone was 81,897 valid votes during the 7 December first round ballot (EC 2008). This figure is significant against the backdrop of the number of votes needed by the NPP to reach the magic 'fifty-plus-one vote' for a first round victory. Out of the 8,465,834 total valid votes cast for the first round of the December 2008 elections, the NPP presidential candidate recorded 4,159,439 valid votes. This was only 73,479 votes less than the 4,232,918 votes needed to win the election (*ibid.*). What is more, The NPP could only manage to win 3 of the 17 parliamentary seats in the Mole-Dagbani traditional area. The party lost in all three constituencies of the Mamprugu area, including Bawumia's own constituency (Walewale), which had been previously won by the NPP.

From the outset, it was clear that Bawumia faced an uphill battle in his bid to win votes from his ethnic group for the NPP. Even members of his own family were sharply divided between the NDC and the NPP.¹⁵ The clientelist politics of Bawumia's father and his NDC party consolidated voter support for the NDC. As pointed out by Bratton and Van de Walle (1994 and 1997), electoral politics in most African societies is inherently clientelist. The patriarch of the Bawumia family, Mumuni Bawumia, built a political empire in the area through his many years of public service as a politician. For over a period of five decades, the elder Bawumia delivered private and public goods to the people through his association with almost all post independence governments in Ghana. His political influence in the region is unparalleled in the history of Ghana. The last political association of the elder Bawumia before he passed away was with the NDC. He was the chairman of the Council of State and a stalwart of the party in the northern region.

The Akufo Addo campaign team did not make things easy for Bawumia in his effort to win the northern votes. Even though his selection was hailed by northerners in the party as a great honour,¹⁶ the campaign team had a different agenda. The strategy was not to market the running mate as a northern candidate, but as a generational candidate and a successful professional to attract the votes of the youth and the middle class voters. To this end, every effort was made

to distance him from northerners who were already managing his day-to-day affairs. A campaign specialist, Yofi Grant, was tasked with the responsibility of managing the candidate. His itinerary was prepared by Grant and the Akufo Addo campaign team, thus his campaign tour was heavily skewed in favour of southern appearances. Bawumia's presence was not felt in the northern sector in the days closer to the elections. The NPP in the northern region did not organize the usual last big rally in Tamale before election day because the running mate was shipped out of town to be with the presidential candidate in Accra for the party's last rally. The marginalization of northerners closer to the candidate and the trivialization or sometimes outright disdain for northern protocol demonstrated by Grant, Yonny Kulendi, and Ofori Atta negatively impacted the electoral fortunes of the party in the north.

While the NPP vacillated between marketing their running mate as a 'northern boy' or a generational candidate, the NDC's Mahama was consistent and comfortable with the image he presented to the electorate. He obviously had the advantage of being a known public figure and a seasoned politician. The NDC used him to attract northern votes for the party, marketing himself to the people of the north as one of their own.

For the 2008 elections, it is safe for one to conclude that clientelism and loyalty to the 'big man of northern politics' weakened ethnicity in the three constituencies of the Mamprugu traditional area. Unlike the six constituencies of the Gonja traditional area where the electorate voted overwhelmingly for the NDC's presidential candidate because of Mahama, the voters in the three constituencies of the Mamprugu traditional area disappointed the 'son of the soil' and his NPP presidential candidate. They voted for the NDC's presidential candidate because of their loyalty to his father's legacy and clientelism.

Voting outcomes in the other fourteen constituencies of the Mole-Dagbani ethnic group was largely influenced by a combination of chieftaincy and clientelism. The Abudu/Andani chieftaincy conflict heavily influenced the voting trend in the 12 constituencies of the Dagbon Traditional Area (DTA). Just as in the 2004 general elections, the voting pattern in the area was highly skewed in favour of the then opposition NDC. The NPP continued to suffer electoral defeats in Dagbon constituencies because of the alleged involvement of some leading members of the party in the gruesome murder of the overlord of the Dagbon kingdom (MacGaffey 2006). The NPP only managed to win 2 of the 12 constituencies in the Dagbon Traditional Area with a very slim margin. The NDC has been very astute in using the Dagbon conflict to energize its base and win more votes from undecided voters in the Dagbon Traditional Area. Faced with the daunting challenge of overcoming his father's legacy to win votes for the NPP from his people, the younger Bawumia failed the test.

Findings and Conclusion

The excitement of the 2008 elections was not limited to the presidential candidates alone; it permeated the entire trajectory of political party electoral activities – from the choice of their running mates to party parliamentary primaries and finally to voting. The wait-and-see strategy adopted by the two major political parties in the selection of a running mate ended with the NDC presidential candidate making the bold selection of Mahama as his running mate. This was against the preferred choice of the founder of the party and it came as a disappointment to the former president and founder of the NDC. Mills demonstrated to the Ghanaian electorate that he is decisive, and that he is his own man and not the ‘poodle’ of the founder of his party. The NPP candidate, on the other hand, had to contend with a creeping perception of indecisiveness and lack of control over his preference for a running mate in the selection process. In the end, Akufo Addo had to settle for his third option.

This paper revealed that presidential elections in Ghana subject presidential candidates to considerable pressure during the selection of a running mate. Second, it has argued that, contrary to the claim of direct correlation between ethnicity and voting in Africa, the determinants of voting behaviour are complex. Using the voting pattern in the 2008 general elections among Gonjas and Mamprusis in northern Ghana, it has been shown that in Gonjaland the people voted overwhelmingly for the NDC. The fact that NDC’s presidential running mate was a son of Gonjaland played a decisive role in voter choices and enabled the party to sweep all the parliamentary seats in the area and substantially increase the presidential votes for the NDC. The story was not quite the same for the NPP and its running mate in his home base of Mamprugu and the extended Mole-Dagbani traditional area. The selection of a true son of Mampruguland was not compelling enough to change the voting pattern in the area. Party loyalty, not necessarily ideological, was much stronger than ethnic loyalty. Loyalty to the NDC in the area has been natured over the years through the clientelist politics of the elder Bawumia. The strong perception by the electorate in the area that the NDC is the party most likely to deliver both personal and public goods than the NPP has been developed through the politics of Mumuni Bawumia. His son fought an uphill battle against a party that invokes the memory of the father. The result was that the NPP lost all the three parliamentary seats in the area, including the constituency where the running mate voted.

It is, however, noteworthy that the presidential running mates selected by the NDC and NPP in the 2008 elections to complete a north/south balance pulled additional votes from the three northern regions to their respective parties. The NPP made significant gains in terms of the percentage of votes it obtained in 2004 and 2008. The party increased its votes by 5 per cent, 3 per cent, and 1 per cent in the Upper West region, Upper East region, and Northern region respectively.

What is more, the party gained two parliamentary seats in the Upper West region, the first time in the Fourth Republic that the NPP had won a parliamentary seat in that region. Above all, it was only in the three northern regions that the NPP's presidential candidate obtained more votes than President Kufour had obtained for the party in 2004.

The NDC also enhanced its performance in the north during the 2008 elections. The party had carried the three regions in all the elections under the Fourth Republic. However, its performance in the north in 2008 was spectacular and crucial to the party's chance of winning. The party recorded an increased number of votes across the three regions, with very high figures coming out of the three constituencies of the Tamale metropolis. It was evident that between the two presidential running mates, Mahama was the most valuable partner in terms of winning votes. The freestyle, three-pronged campaign (with the three Johns) adopted by the NDC allowed Mahama to do intense grassroots campaigning in the north to win the heart and minds of the people for the NDC. The party had the luxury of keeping him up north to campaign while Mills and Rawlings concentrated on taking votes away from the NPP in the south.

The fact that the Dagbon conflict was still a big campaign issue in the Dagbon traditional area also benefitted the NDC. The running mate himself did not make it his campaign mantra, but some NDC parliamentary candidates in the area exploited the sentiments of the people on the conflict to their party's advantage. The Mahama factor in winning votes for the NDC in the region was equally profound in Dagbon constituencies highly populated by Abudus who are traditionally aligned with the NPP. In the Tamale Central constituency for example, a stronghold of the Abudus in the Dagbon chieftaincy divide, the NDC obtained 40,640 valid votes, representing 64 per cent of total votes in the constituency. The NPP presidential candidate obtained only 21,136 valid votes (EC 2008). This election victory in the constituency was a great feat for the NDC considering the fact that the party was running against an NPP parliamentary candidate who was the sitting Tamale Metropolitan Chief Executive. The cumulative effect of the total votes from the three Tamale constituencies was very significant in tilting the outcome of the 2008 general elections in favour of the NDC.

Notes

1. Home region of the two personalities selected to partner the presidential candidates of the two largest parties in the 2008 elections – John Dramani Mahama and Mahamudu Bawumia.
2. One of the compelling factors considered by both the NPP and the NDC candidates in their selection of a running mate for the 2008 election was the youthful appeal of their respective choices. At 47 and 50 respectively, Bawumia and Mahama were better

positioned to attract the vote of the youth for their party than the two septuagenarian politicians.

3. It must be noted that this north/south geographical divide can be varied in some other considerations. For example, some parts of the Brong Ahafo and Volta regions are sometimes conveniently classified with the three northern regions.
4. In the 1996 presidential elections, candidate J.A. Kufour from the Ashanti region partnered with fellow Akan and sitting Vice President Nkensen Arkah from the Central region on the ticket of the opposition alliance.
5. These interviews were widely reported and carried by ghanaweb on its General News of Wednesday, 2 April 2008.
6. The Azorka boys is a notorious gang of young unemployed market boys who are organized by Azorka, a leading member of the northern regional branch of the NDC. They have been variously associated with acts of election-related violence in the area. The group gained notoriety at the NDC's national congress in Koforidua when they attacked NDC members perceived to be opponents of their preferred candidate (Atta Mills) and prevented some leading members of the party (including the then chairman, Obed Asamoah, and Wayo Seini, a then NDC member of parliament) from leaving the congress hall, not even to attend to nature's call.
7. What the Hon. Mahama failed to add about his affinity with the Islamic religion is the fact that he had his secondary education at a Moslem dominated school where most of his friends and classmates were practicing Moslems. He had both his G.C.E. Ordinary and Advanced level education at Ghana Secondary School in Tamale where he was year mates with the likes of Sulley Gariba; Alhassan Yakubu, MP for Mion; Prince Imoro Andani, former northern regional Minister and presidential advisor under the Kufour administration; as well as Mosses Asaga, former MP for Nabdam.)
8. Malik Yakubu was the party's first national youth organizer in 1992 and later the Minister of Interior under the first Kufour administration. He served with the flag bearer at the party's national secretariat when Akufo Addo was the party's national organizer. It is reported that Akufo Addo sponsored Yakubu to contest for the party's presidential ticket in 1998 as a strategy to take the northern votes away from Akufo Addo's main challenger in that contest, Agyekum Kufour.
9. Interview with Malik Alhassan Yakubu Yakubu
10. Bawumia's selection did not completely come 'out of left-field' (to borrow a baseball terminology). The only people who knew about the bombshell were a select group of the candidate's closest advisors who for a long time had been quietly canvassing for the young banker and deputy Governor of the Bank of Ghana. This group of mostly young financial securities and investments wizards was championed by Ken Ofori Atta, a cousin of the flag bearer. As the one entrusted with the enviable responsibility of controlling the campaign purse of the candidate, Ofori Atta had the ear of the flag bearer and he never stop trumpeting and extolling the virtues of his banker friend to the candidate. It was reported that Ofori Atta made a compelling case for the next president to have a strong economic management team with the young accomplished banker as head of the economic team working with himself (Ofori Atta) as the finance minister. Many were those who heard the rumours and ruled it out as impossible. In the end, as they say, 'money talks' – he who pays the piper calls the tune.

11. In Ghana, the Ashanti and Volta regions are noted for voting largely along ethnic lines. The Akan votes in the Ashanti region largely go to the NPP, while the Ewe votes in the Volta region go to the NDC. This has been the voting pattern in the two regions since 1992. This phenomenon of voting has led to the regions being euphemistically refer to in Ghanaian political parlance as the 'World Banks' of the two parties.
12. Dagombas, Mamprusis, and Nanumbas are descendants of the three sons of Naa Gbewaa – Sitobu, Tohugu, and Mantambu respectively. The three tribes speak the same dialect and practice the same customs and traditions. The Gonjas are Guan-speaking and have had historical battles with the Mole-Dagbani group for territorial dominance.
13. In an interview with Braimah I. Awaisu, a former president of Gonja Students Association, Legon chapter, he bemoaned how most of his NPP colleagues on the Legon campus joined the NDC campaign solely because the party's presidential running mate was a Gonja.
14. Rawlings and his NDC specialized in neo-patrimonial politics in the three northern regions. That is, they capitalized on the poor socio-economic environment in the area and engaged in 'vote-buying' through the use of private interest delivery.
15. Bawumia's elder brother, Mandeya Bawumia, openly campaigned for the NDC in the area. Some family members of the running mate felt that it was a betrayal of the Bawumia legacy for the younger Mahamudu Bawumia to run against the NDC. Mandeya Bawumia has since been rewarded by the NDC with an ambassadorial position for campaigning and supporting the party in the area during the 2008 elections. Some have argued that there was a sibling rivalry in the house of Bawumia between half-brothers in the polygamous family.
16. The northern Region NPP issued a press statement to the effect that they were 'grateful to the NPP for always taking into consideration the religious and geographical divides of our country in matters of the selection of running mates' (GNA 21 August 2008).

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