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# Manifestos and Agenda Setting in Ghanaian Elections<sup>1</sup>

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## **Introduction**

There is a longstanding scholarly debate over the factors that influence electoral outcomes or voter behaviour in elections globally (Downs 1957; Blais 2000; Schram 1991; Butler & Stokes 1974; Kanazawa 1998:974-995; Geys 2006:16-35; Kiewiet & Mattozzi 2008:313-326; Caplan 2007). In his seminal work in 1957, Downs, for instance, argued that voters in established democracies choose a party or candidate on the basis of the benefits that they are likely to enjoy when that party or candidate wins power. This is the 'rational-choice' perspective. In other words, electoral choices are based on the policies, ideologies and philosophies of the parties. Other factors that are known to influence voter behaviour include party identification, social background and psychology, lifelong attachment to parties and candidates' or parties' records (Butler and Stokes 1974). With regard to elections in Africa, however, many scholars (Bates 1974:457-484; Horowitz 1985 and 1991; Lonsdale 1994; Chabal & Daloz 1999; Young 2002; Posner 2005) have attributed the voting behaviour of the electorate to ethnicity or what Lonsdale (1994) referred to as 'political tribalism'. Emphasizing the role of identity politics and ethnicity, Horowitz (1985 and 1991) referred to elections in sub-Saharan Africa as ethnic 'censuses'.

As a contribution to the debate over the factors that influence electoral outcomes in Ghana, this chapter examines how manifestos of political parties have influenced their electoral fortunes. The paper uses the manifestos of the two dominant parties in Ghana's Fourth Republic – the National Democratic Congress

(NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) – as case studies. The emphasis on manifestos is important because they have played an important role in elections all over the world (Caplan 2007 and Kiewiet & Mattozzi 2008:313-326). To win an election political parties prepare manifestos and espouse ideologies. Manifestos are documents outlining in more or less detail the policies or programmes a party proposes to pursue if elected to power, while ideologies are more or less coherent sets of ideas that provide the basis for some kind of organized political action. The policies and programmes contain the blueprint for the development strategy the party will pursue if it wins power. Elections are like a political market<sup>2</sup> with several competitors in which voters are in a position to demand the delivery of certain goods mainly social welfare policies and programmes, while politicians are under pressure to provide some kind of policy responses to such requests, if they are to win elections. To operate in the political market, one needs to have political products that include personalities, manifestos, ideology, past performance, and reliability. As a key political product, therefore, manifestos create the platform for political parties and politicians, who are looking for the mandate, particularly in poor democracies such as Ghana, to envision responses to social needs and demands from the electorate (see, for example, Lake and Baum 2001:587-621; de Mesquita, Morrow, Silversson and Smith 2002:559-590; Henneberg 2004). In other words, manifestos are generally responses to popular demands that seek to articulate societal issues and challenges and how to overcome them.

This chapter is divided into seven parts. Part one defines agenda setting, which serves as our framework, because we regard manifestos as important agenda drivers. Part two is devoted to understanding the Ghanaian context. Part three gives a brief review of the literature on elections in Ghana. Part four is devoted to the history of elections and manifestos with special reference to the 1951 manifestos of the Convention People's Party (CPP) and the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC). As the maiden manifestos in modern Ghanaian politics, they bequeathed a legacy for subsequent manifestos. Part five examines the manifestos of the NDC and NPP in the Fourth Republic following our discussion of the institutional context and the ideologies underlying these manifestos; the analysis focuses on a comparison of the two manifestos. Part six analyses the interests of societal actors; the debates by presidential candidates; the campaigns; and finally the influence of manifestos on the electorate. Part seven summarises the lessons learned from this analysis.

### **Agenda-setting Defined**

Agenda-setting is about the recognition of a problem on the part of government (Kingdon 1984). In the words of Cobb, Ross and Ross (1976:126), agenda-setting is the 'process by which demands of various groups in the population are translated into items vying for the serious attention of public officials'. Problem

recognition is essentially a socially constructed process. It involves definitions of normalcy and what constitutes an undesirable deviation from the norm. Hence problem recognition is not a mechanical process, but a sociological one that sets the 'frames' within which governments operate and consider to be of critical importance. The 'problems' that are the subject of agenda setting are constructed in the realm of public and private discourses (Rochefort and Cobb 1993; Spector and Kitsuse 1987). As Edelman (1988:12-13) has argued:

Problems come into discourse and therefore into existence as reinforcements of ideologies, not simply because they are there or because they are important for well-being. They signify who are virtuous and useful and who are dangerous and inadequate, which actions will be rewarded and which penalized. They constitute people as subjects with particular kinds of aspirations, self-concepts, and fears, and they create beliefs about the relative importance of events and objects. They are critical in determining who exercise authority and who accept it. They construct areas of immunity from concern because those areas are not seen as problems. Like leaders and enemies, they define the contours of the social world, not in the same way for everyone, but in the light of the diverse situations from which people respond to the political spectacle.

These frames, of course, are not always widely, or as strongly, held by all the important policy actors, meaning that the agenda-setting process is very often one in which there is a clash of frames (Bleich 2002). The resolution of this conflict is related more to the abilities and resources of competing actors than to the elegance or purity of the ideas they hold (Surel 2000).

The idea that agenda-setting is a process in which policy makers react to objective conditions in a rational manner is misleading. Rather, policy makers are involved in the same discourses as the public and in the manipulation of the signs, sets and scenes of a political play or theatre. According to the script of these ideological discourses, different groups of policy actors are involved and different outcomes prescribed in the agenda-setting process (Muntigl 2002). According to this view, then, the agenda of politics or policy making is created out of the history, traditions, attitudes and beliefs of a people encapsulated and codified in terms of its political discourse. Symbols and statistics, both real and fabricated, are used to back up one's preferred understanding of the causes of the problem. Ancient and contemporary symbols are discovered or created to make one's case. Convenient statistics are put together to bolster one's case. In such statistics, one finds what one is looking for (Howlett and Ramesh 2003). Hence to understand agenda-setting, it is important for us to comprehend how demands for a policy are made by individuals and/or groups and responded to by government, and vice versa. In addition, the conditions must be understood under which these demands emerge and are articulated in prevailing policy discourses. Towards this end, we need to understand the material interests of social and state actors as well

as the institutional and ideological contexts in which they operate (Spector and Kitsuse 1987; Thompson 1990).

Furthermore, it should be noted that the agenda of politics or policy making also includes the contemporary socio-economic and political conditions; the nature and level of education of that society, and the role of organic intellectuals; the socio-psychological, emotional and kinship interests as well as history and class, feelings, attitudes, and emotions (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007; McCombs 2005; Gramsci 1982). Gramsci (1982:9), for instance, discussed the role of intellectuals in society. Even though he stated that all men are intellectuals, in that all have intellectual and rational faculties, he at the same time pointed out that not all men have the social function as intellectuals. He saw modern intellectuals not as talkers, but as practically-minded directors and organizers who produced hegemony by means of ideological apparatuses such as education and the media.

### Understanding the Ghanaian Context

In 1957, Ghana became the first country in colonial Africa to gain independence from Britain. It is considered one of the most successful democracies in Africa and has one of the continent's fastest growing economies, which is supported by the discovery of oil in commercial quantities. It is one of the few countries in Africa that has had significant experiences with democratic political life. It was governed under a democratic regime during the period of internal self-rule 1951-1957, during the early post-independence period 1957-1960 before succumbing to one-party rule, and during two brief renewals of civilian, constitutional rule in October 1969-January 1972 and September 1979-December 1981 (see Table 1). Ghana has experienced prolonged military rule<sup>3</sup> under the National Liberation Council (NLC) in February 1966-October 1969, the National Redemption Council/Supreme Military Council (NRC/SMC) in January 1972-June 1979, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) in June 1979-September 1979 and the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC), December 1981-January 1993 (see Table 1). Despite prolonged periods of military rule, there were important social and political forces embedded in the fabric of Ghanaian society that believed deeply in democratic government (Chazan 1983).

**Table 4.1:** Post-Independence Governments and Constitutions in Ghana, 1957 to Date

Year	Event	Basic Law	Legislative Body	Executive Body
1957	Independence (Convention People's Party Government)	Independence Constitution	Parliament	Queen + Prime Minister + Cabinet

1960 (Jan-June)	Constituent Assembly (CPP Government)	Independence Constitution	Constituent Assembly	Queen + Prime Minister + Cabinet
1960 (1st July 1960)	1st Republic (CPP Government)	1st Republican Constitution	Parliament	President + Cabinet
1966 (24th February)	1st coup d'etat (NLC Government)	NLC (Establishment Proclamation)	National Liberation Council (NLC)	National Liberation Council (NLC)
1969 (August)	2nd Republic (Progress Party Government)	2nd Republican Constitution	Parliament	President + Prime Minister + Cabinet
1972 (13th January)	2nd coup d'etat (NRC Government)	NRC (Establishment Proclamation)	National Redemption Council (NRC)	National Redemption Council (NRC)
1975	Revised composition and renaming of the NRC	SMC (Establishment Proclamation)	Supreme Military Council (SMC)	Supreme Military Council (SMC)
1978 (July)	Palace coup	SMC (Establishment Proclamation)	Supreme Military Council (SMC)	Supreme Military Council (SMC)
1979 (4th June)	Military Uprising (3rd coup d'etat) AFRC Government	AFRC (Establishment Proclamation)	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC)	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC)
1979 (24th September)	3rd Republic (PNP Government)	3rd Republican Constitution	Parliament	President + Cabinet
1981 (31st December)	4th coup d'etat PNDC Government	PNDC (Establishment Proclamation)	Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC)	Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC)
1993 (7th January)	4th Republic (NDC Government)	4th Republican Constitution	1st Parliament of the 4th Republic	President + Cabinet
1997 (7th January)	4th Republic (NDC Government)	4th Republican Constitution	2nd Parliament of the 4th Republic	President + Cabinet
2001 (7th January)	4th Republic (NPP Government)	4th Republican Constitution	3rd Parliament of the 4th Republic	President + Cabinet
2005 (7th January)	4th Republic (NPP Government)	4th Republican Constitution	4th Parliament of the 4th Republic	President + Cabinet

2009 (7th January)	4th Republic (NDC Government)	4th Republican Constitution	5th Parliament of the 4th Republic	President + Cabinet
2012 (24th July)	President John Mills dies in office. Succeeded by Vice President Mahama	4th Republican Constitution	5th Parliament of the 4th Republic	President + Cabinet
2013 (7th January)	4th Republic (NDC Government)	4th Republican Constitution	6th Parliament of the 4th Republic	President + Cabinet

*Source:* Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) 2008. 'Democracy Consolidation Strategy Paper' *An Issue Paper*, June 2008 and updated by the author to cover the period 2012-2013.

Since the establishment of the Fourth Republic in 1992, majority control in parliament has shifted between the NDC and NPP parties. Other parties, such as the People's National Convention (PNC) and Convention People's Party (CPP), have won a small number of seats in each election. While the NPP party is viewed as more conservative and the NDC is socially progressive, they both strongly advocate issues such as better education, modernized agriculture, good governance, basic service delivery and equitable distribution of oil revenue. These and many other issues were prominent in the 2012 election and proved to be crucial in the closely contested race.

### **Elections and Manifestos in Ghana's Politics**

Since independence, there have been several studies on elections in Ghana (including Gyimah-Boadi 1994:75-86 and 1997:78-91; Ayee (ed.) 2001a and 2001b; Ohman 1999:1-43 and 2002; Apter 1963 and Austin 1964). These studies have focused largely on the outcomes and challenges of the elections, voter alignments, ethnicity, legal and institutional frameworks, campaign issues, party financing and abuse of incumbency, elite consensus, candidates' selection, election management, managing conflicts, and the transition to and consolidation of democracy. A few have argued that manifestos are without political significance. For instance, Dunn has stated that 'policy' programmes (or manifestos) and ideologies have played a strikingly insignificant role in shaping voters' choice' (Dunn 1975:191). Chazan, in a similar tone, emphasizes that 'once issues were set, politicization during elections tended to occur around social groups, local interest, and personalities and not around contents' (Chazan 1983:67). This chapter contributes to the debate on the influence of manifestos on the electoral fortunes. It focuses on the two main political parties that have been in government under the Fourth Republic, namely, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP).

Elections and manifestos have been part of government and politics in Ghana just before and after independence and remain so. This is evidenced by the number of both national and local government elections, by-elections, plebiscite and referenda held and the manifestos that have been formulated (see Table 2 ). The interest in and enthusiasm for elections may be attributed to the faith of Ghanaians in elections as a key means of promoting socio-economic development and improvement in their standard of living.

**Table 4.2:** Number of National and Local Elections and Referenda, 1951-2008

Period	National Elections	Local Elections	Referenda/Plebiscites
Pre-independence	3 (1951; 1954; 1956)	–	1 (1956) – Trust Territory of Trans-Volta Togoland (for union or separation)
Post-independence	9 (1965; 1969; 1979 & run-off; 1992; 1996; 2000 and run-off; 2004, 2008 and run-off; 2012)	8 (1958; 1978; 1988/89; 1994; 1998; 2002; 2006; 2010)	4 (1960 – 3 days; electorate voted twice; one for or against the draft constitutional proposals and again for Nkrumah or Danquah; 1964 - 2 amendments to the 1960 constitution; 1978; 1992)
<b>Total</b>	<b>12 &amp; 3 run-offs</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>

*Source:* Compiled by the author

The table shows that since 1951, Ghana has had a total of 12 national or general elections and three presidential run-offs, in 1979, 2000 and 2008; 8 local elections and 5 referenda or plebiscites<sup>4</sup>. The first elections, which were held in 1951, that is, before independence in 1957, were contested by the Convention People’s Party (CPP), the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) and independent candidates. The CPP and UGCC produced what have become the first manifestos<sup>5</sup> in Ghanaian elections; they were entitled, ‘Towards the Goal’ and ‘Plan for the Nation’ respectively (see Boxes 1 and 2). The initial elections, from 1951 to 1957, were very critical as their materiality, morality and ideologies derived from anti-colonialism and Pan-Africanism.

**Box 4.1:** CPP Manifesto 1951: ‘Towards the Goal’

**1. Constitutional:** The Coussey Committee let the country down by prolonging white imperialism. The CPP will fight for self-government NOW.

- 2. Political:** An upper house of the Legislature, known as the Senate, shall be created for the Chiefs. Universal adult suffrage at the age of 21. Direct elections with no property or residential qualifications for candidates.
- 3. Economic:** A five-year Economic Plan... (i) Immediate materialization of the Volta hydro-electric scheme; (ii) Railway lines to be doubled and extended; (iii) Roads to be modernized and extended; (iv) Canals to join rivers; (v) Progressive mechanization of agriculture; (vi) Special attention will be given to the swollen shoot disease; farmers will be given control of the Cocoa Industry Board funds; (vii) Industrialization will be carried out with all energy.
- 4. Social:** Education: (i) a unified system of free compulsory elementary, secondary and technical education up to 16 years of age; (ii) The University College to be brought up to university status; (iii) A planned campaign to abolish illiteracy.
- 5. Social:** Family Assistance: (i) A free national health service; (ii) A high standard housing programme; (iii) A piped-water supply in all parts of the country; (iv) A national insurance scheme.

*Source: Austin, Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960, p. 130.*

**Box 4.2:** UGCC Manifesto 1951: 'Plan for the Nation'

**1. Constitutional:** The present constitution is a watered-down version of the Coussey recommendations; it is 'a step, but not our last step, in the struggle for self-government', which must be achieved 'by all legitimate and constitutional means'.

**2. Political:** The chiefs must, in spite of themselves, be saved for the Gold Coast, by removing the Governor's power to grant or withdraw recognition from Chiefs recognized by their people.

Remove civil servants from the top level of 'field administration' and place the character and structure of the civil service under the control of the Assembly. Civil servants must cease to be the 'Civil Masters' of the country.

**3. Economic:** A Ten-Point Programme – to ensure that the optimum diffusion of private enterprise and ownership of property shall be developed alongside the maximum attainment of personal liberty, within the framework of the WELFARE STATE: (i) an end to Government's extravagant spending and appointments, and to the lowering of the dignity of the Chiefs; (ii) An end to the political officers system and to the 'Go-Slow' policy in education; (iii) A reduction in the importation of light manufactured goods, which should be manufactured locally under a five-year plan; (iv) A national bank; (v) An



active and adequate road building programme; (vi) Scholarships for industrial and technological training to show results, within five years; (vii) The raising of the standard of living, improvements in housing, water supply, primary education, health, lighting, clinics, literacy and culture; (viii) The safeguarding of agriculture and land products, a rationalized cocoa industry, diversified agriculture, development of the Volta and of base metals; (ix) Development of the rural life of the people.

*Source: Austin, Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960, p. 136.*

A number of lessons can be drawn from these two early manifestos, which have influenced subsequent manifestos. First, they were concerned with challenges in the political, social and economic sectors that the political parties pledged to address if voted to power. Since then successive manifestos have emulated this format. For instance, the areas of infrastructure (good roads and railways), industrialization, mechanized agriculture and service provision in education, water and health care delivery have engaged the attention of all manifestos in subsequent elections. Secondly, as we shall see in subsequent manifestos, there is little to choose between the two manifestos. In the words of Austin (1964:138), 'in general, there was very little difference (except in the language used) between the CPP 'Goal' and the UGCC 'Plan.' Thirdly, the two manifestos made promises that could not be fulfilled given the resources and the political climate at the time. For instance, according to Bourett (1959:175), the CPP manifesto 'made sweeping promises – industrialization, jobs for all, free primary education, national health service, the equal opportunity of a socialist state... Stress was laid on materialistic advantages and there was no mistaking the secular spirit embodied in the slogan 'Seek ye first the political kingdom and all things will be added to it.'

Fourthly, even though, they were designed to draw the electorate to the two parties and brighten their chances of winning the 1951 elections, they 'blended emotion with self-interest ... and promised immediate material benefits' (Austin 1964:131). In other words, the manifestos showed the demand, or claim-making interests of both the politicians and voters. Hence, the argument that agendas are socially constructed. The CPP's manifesto, for instance, promised a 'return to a market price for kerosene, cloth, matches, rice, yam, plantain, and tinned fish, as to enable the ordinary man to live within his income while he enjoined the amenities of pipe-borne water, free schooling, cheap houses, smooth roads, and more hospitals' (Austin 1964:131).

Fifth, the manifestos recognized the problems that faced Ghanaian society and set the agenda for debate and discussion and largely shaped voter behaviour whether rationally or irrationally. Sixth, and very important, there is no evidence that the manifesto gave the CPP its electoral victory when it won 34 of the

38 popularly contested seats. The main reason for the CPP's victory was its nationalist fervour and crusade, the sympathy vote for Nkrumah who was in prison and the weak opposition challenge from the UGCC with its 'half-hearted attempt to compete' and being led by 'elder statesmen of more moderate views who were unwilling to enter the rough and tumble of (Ghanaian) politics' (Austin 1964:144). In other words, the manifesto had little influence on the electorate in the elections. It reveals a reversal of roles. Instead of leading or guiding the people, the manifesto was led by the popular interests. Manifestos did not shape popular attitudes on the anti-colonial struggles but their consequences. This is a very important point that will be revisited later as we examine the manifestos of the NDC and NPP in the Fourth Republic.

It must be noted that 'knife and fork' issues and the provision of basic amenities have been manifesto targets as far back as 1951, and they still formed a large chunk of the political agendas in 2012. This shows that little progress has been made in fulfilling such manifesto promises.

### **The Constitutional and Institutional Context of Political Party Manifestos in the Fourth Republic**

The 1992 Constitution provides the legal and institutional framework for the role of political parties in interest articulation and aggregation. Article 55(3) provides that a political party is 'free to participate in shaping the political will of the people, to disseminate information on political ideas, social and economic programmes of a national character'. In this regard Chapter Six of the Constitution (*The Directive Principles of State Policy*) provides a strategic policy direction to 'guide all citizens, Parliament, the President, the Judiciary, the Council of State, the Cabinet, political parties and all other bodies or persons in applying or interpreting the Constitution for the establishment of a just and free society'. The President is required under this constitutional directive to report to Parliament at least once a year all the 'steps taken to ensure the realization of the policy objectives contained in Chapter Six, and in particular, the realization of basic human rights, a healthy economy, the right to work, the right to good health care and the right to education'. In furtherance of these, the chapter further lists political, economic, social, educational, and cultural objectives which must be fulfilled in addition to the pursuit of international relations, duties and obligations expected of citizens vis-à-vis their exercise and enjoyment of rights and freedoms. Thus Chapter Six – *The Directive Principles of State Policy* – provides the basis for a social contract between the government and the governed. In the words of the Committee of Experts, the Directive Principles are not only the 'core principles around which national, political, social and economic life revolves' but also a 'set of fundamental objectives which a people expect all bodies and persons that make or executive public policy to strive to achieve' as well as a 'barometer which

the people could measure the performance of their government. In effect, they provide goals for legislative programmes and a guide for judicial interpretation' (Republic of Ghana 1991:49).

Ghanaian political parties have sought to define the parameters of this social contract through their manifestos. A review of the manifestos of both the NDC and NPP since 1992 shows that even though the manifestos have tried to address some of the political, economic, social, educational and cultural objectives, they do not make direct reference to the *Directive Principles* as their source. In fact, the *Directive Principles* are not mentioned at all in the manifestos and thus linking the two becomes speculative. The result is that when a political party is in government there is little or no reference to the *Directive Principles* while the manifesto is expected to define public policy. As we will see later, political parties have shown poor commitment to fulfilling the objectives of their manifestos.

Furthermore, there is a need to separate intentions from the substantive or practical issues. Frankly, most parts of manifestos are more of intangible promises – or utopia – that are designed to woo the electorate into voting a party into power. In addition, they are written in English with no translation in the local languages. The question therefore remains as to how much they can influence the largely peasant population who constitute the vast majority of Ghanaian voters. Worst of all, the parties do not ensure that ordinary citizens can easily access their manifestos. There is an urgent need to transcend the educated middle class populations and to include the illiterate and semi-illiterate subalterns in the discourse on manifestos.

### **Ideological Context**

In the view of Marx (Marx and Engels 1992) and Antonio Gramsci (1982; 1993), all meaning derives from the relation between practical human activity (or 'praxis') and the 'objective' historical and social processes of which it is a part. According to them, ideas cannot be understood outside their social and historical context, apart from their function and origin. The concepts by which societies or individuals organise their knowledge of the world do not derive primarily from their relation to things (to an objective situation), but rather from the social relations between the users of those concepts. Furthermore, philosophy and science do not 'reflect' reality that is independent of man. Rather, a theory is 'true' when, in any given historical situation, it expresses the real developmental trend in that situation. They conclude that ideology may be regarded as a mask for hiding reality. It is within this context that the ideologies of the political parties in Ghana can be viewed.

Chazan (1983:119) has noted that the 'range of formal political debate in Ghana since the late 1940s has revolved around seemingly opposing poles: the liberal western-oriented one espoused by J.B. Danquah and later by K.A. Busia,

and the socialist-nonaligned pole put forward by Kwame Nkrumah and later elaborated by his self-proclaimed apostles'. This observation seems no longer valid in respect of the NDC and NPP since they were formed in 1992. This is because there is no clear ideological difference between them. The NDC regards itself as a social democratic party<sup>6</sup> and its brand of social democracy 'seeks to marry the efficiency of the market and private initiative with the compassion of state intervention to protect the disadvantaged and the marginalized and to ensure optimum production and distributive justice' (NDC Manifesto 2004:xiv). The NPP, on the other hand, is a liberal democratic capitalist party, and seeks to 'liberate the energies of the people for the growth of a property owning democracy in this land, with the right to life, freedom and justice, as the principles to which the Government and laws of the land should be dedicated in order to specifically enrich life, property and liberty of each and every citizen' (Danquah quoted in NPP Manifesto, 2000:i). Despite these declared differences, the two parties are known to follow largely:

... the same ideological line both in terms of manifestos and policies – neo-liberal economics and liberal democracy with a huge dose of populism. In fact, they hardly articulate any identifiable ideology on their policy platforms, other than a vague 'developmental ideology' aimed at improving the lot of the people. Moreover, the parties rarely mobilize electoral support on ideological platforms. Their manifestos and campaign messages do not reflect any clear ideological stance. Rhetorical shifts in ideological positions have been largely driven by changes in domestic politics and the contingencies of outmanoeuvring political competitors and dislodging the incumbent (Gyimah-Boadi and Debrah 2008:151-152).

### **Comparing NDC and NPP Manifestos**

The two parties have produced six manifestos each between 1992 and 2012 (see Table 3). Each manifesto has a foreword written by the key functionaries of the two parties. For the NDC, the foreword was written by the chairman and presidential candidate of the party while the founder J.J. Rawlings wrote the message showing his importance and influence in the party. On the other hand, the foreword for the NDC manifesto for the 2012 elections was written by John Mahama, the presidential candidate and leader of the party. This is due to the fallout from the defeat of Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings in the presidential primaries, the subsequent formation of the breakaway National Democratic Party to contest the 2012 elections and Rawlings' own criticism of the leadership of the NDC especially under the late President John Mills. Unlike the NDC, the foreword to NPP's manifesto has always been written by its leader and presidential candidate.

Each manifesto focused on the intentions of the parties to promote development, introduce changes and make Ghana a better place for its citizens to enjoy the national 'cake' equitably. Even though the documents include short, medium and long-term plans, the manifestos are largely seen as promises and slogans rather than specific and strategic policy initiatives to be implemented within a four-year term. There is little time spent on how the policies and programmes in the manifestos would be financed, for instance, making each of them a wish list instead of a properly researched set of policy alternatives. This fact notwithstanding, the comprehensive and copious nature of the manifestos is evident in the increased page count over the years, especially from 2000.

Furthermore, the NPP and NDC manifestos of 2000 and 2008 intentionally castigated the policies and programmes of each other while in opposition. For instance, the NPP manifesto of 2000 was intended to bring about 'complete change from the NDC's shameful and depressing record that [had] led Ghana and Ghanaians into poverty and insecurity' (New Patriotic Party 2000:viii). The NPP stated further that Ghana, 'which is blessed so generously with natural and human resources, is still unable to feed itself – all because of the failed policies and confused leadership of the NDC government' (New Patriotic Party 2000:1). On the other hand, the 2008 manifesto of the NDC<sup>7</sup> noted that there was 'more than enough evidence to the fact that under the NPP Government, a whole generation [was] being bequeathed with hopelessness, despair, drugs, immorality and crime' (National Democratic Congress 2008:12) and expressed deep concern at 'the growing inequality and social exclusion in the Ghanaian society since 2001, primarily because of the policies of the NPP government', which the NDC claimed were 'divisive, and...utterly discriminatory' (National Democratic Congress 2008:14).

The manifestos did, however, usefully catalogue the problems and challenges facing the country and how they can be addressed. Some of the key recurring issues covered by the manifestos of both parties between 1992 and 2012, most of which have also featured in the manifestos of other political parties since independence, include the imperative for good governance, economic concerns, employment, the role of the private sector, challenges to agriculture, improving basic service delivery, the decentralisation question, securing peace and stability, fighting the narcotic menace, Ghana's international role and relationships, and the discovery of oil. Other issues include the environment, gender equality, crime, energy and chieftaincy. It is instructive to note that both the CPP and UGCC mentioned chiefs in their manifestos as far back as 1951. For the institution to feature in the manifestos of parties in the Fourth Republic shows its importance in governance at both the national and local levels.

**Table 4.3:** Main Features of NDC and NPP Manifestos, 1992-2012

Year	Theme: NDC	Theme: NPP	Contents NDC	Contents NPP	Pages NDC	Pages NPP
1992	Continuity and Stability	Development in Freedom	Introduction; The Economy; The Social Contract; Mind Body and Spirit, Security; Ghana and the World	Introduction; Positive Change; The Economy: Building Prosperity for All; The NPP's Policies for Selected Areas of the Economy; Developing and Managing Human Resources; Ghana and the World	36	46
1996	Always for People, Always for Development	Development in Freedom	Introduction; The Economy; The Social Contract; Mind Body and Spirit, Security; Ghana and the World	Introduction; Positive Change; The Economy: Building Prosperity for all; The NPP's Policies for Selected Areas of the Economy; Developing and Managing Human Resources; Ghana and the World	35	46
2000	Spreading the Benefits of Development	A g e n d a for Positive Change	Introduction; A Moral and Just Society; The Economy; The Social Contract; Mind, Body and Spirit; Security; Ghana and the World	Introduction; The Time for Positive Change is Now; The Economy: Building Prosperity for all; The NPP's Policies for Selected Areas of the Economy; Developing and Managing Human Resources; Ghana and the World	76	48
2004	A Better Ghana	Agenda for Positive Change: Chapter Two	Introduction; the Economy Bases; The Social Sector; A Fair and Just Society; The National Infrastructure; Law; Order and Society; Governance; Chieftaincy and Culture; Foreign Policy; Conclusion	Introduction; Achievements; The Economy: Building Prosperity for All; The NPP's Policies for Selected Areas of the Economy; Developing and Managing Human Resources; Ghana and the World	103	51

2008	A Better Ghana: Investing in People, Jobs and the Economy	Moving Ghana Forward: Building a Modern Ghana	Introduction; Governance; Economy; Investing in People; Infrastructure for Growth; Conclusion	Introduction; Achievements – Promise Delivered; Strengthening our Democracy; Law and Order; Structural Transformation of the Economy; Modernizing our Society; Regional and Continental Integration	97	64
2012	Advancing the Better Ghana Agenda: Jobs, Stability and Development	Transforming Lives, Transforming Ghana Building a Free, Fair and Prosperous Society: A Programme of Transformation	Theme 1: Putting People First; Theme 2: A Strong and Resilient Economy; Theme 3: Expanding Infrastructure; Theme 4: Transparent and Accountable Governance	Chapter 1: Building the Foundation for a Free and Fair Society; Chapter 2: Economic Transformation, Prosperity and Job Creation; Chapter 3: Public Investment to Provide Basic Amenities and Support Job Creation; Chapter 4: A Disciplined and Safe Society; Chapter 5: Creating Opportunities and Promoting Enterprise; Chapter 6: Ghana in a Wider World; Chapter 7: Moving Ghana Forward Together	76	116

Source: Compiled by the author.

### Interests of Societal Actors

Social forces engaged in the political process showed interest in the manifestos of the political parties. For instance, the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) created a platform for presidential candidates to reach out to the electorate, and clarify and market their manifestos when it organized presidential debates in 2000, 2004, 2008 and 2012 and the evening ‘Encounters’. It also provided funding for the printing of their manifestos in 2008 and 2012, which was duly acknowledged by the parties. There is, however, no evidence to show that the IEA’s support did influence the content of the manifestos.

A more structured approach of societal actors’ interest in the manifestos was manifested in April 2008. The Private Enterprise Foundation (PEF) organized



a forum at which representatives of the various private sector associations interacted with the presidential candidates of the parties. The manifestos were to be enriched by the suggestions, ideas, concerns and statements emanating from the deliberations. After the launching of the manifestos by the parties in June and July, the PEF once again, with support from the Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung, organized a meeting for representatives of the private sector and political parties to deliberate more specifically on the policy initiatives as captured in the published manifestos of political parties and their expected impact on the productive sector of the economy. A similar meeting with the presidential candidates in the 2012 elections was held by the Association of Ghana Industries (AGI) at which the AGI laid out their vision for the private sector. Even though it is difficult to assess the real impact of such interactions between presidential candidates and business interests on their manifestos, the mere fact that they were consulted shows more goodwill and commitment on the part of the political parties to make the private sector participate in the discourses on manifesto formation than there used to be.

The sensitivity of the manifestos to gender equality, the disabled and youth empowerment arose from inputs and lobbying by these social forces. For instance, the publication of the Women's Manifesto for Ghana in April 2004 led to more space being devoted to gender issues in the manifestos in 2008 and 2012. For instance, in its 2008 manifesto the NDC not only accepted the objectives of the Women's Manifesto based on the 'achievement of gender equality and equity in national development' and promised to 'work with the sponsors of the Manifesto to incorporate its key demands in the NDC's 'Affirmative Action Policy for Women' document, first issued in 1999 which is to be revised and implemented upon assuming office in 2009' (National Democratic Congress 2008:75).

### **Influence of Manifestos on the Electorate**

As pointed out above, the idea that manifestos influence the fortunes of political parties is based on a model of voting behaviour of voter rationality, insofar as it suggests that voters select parties on the basis of policies and issues and the benefits that are likely to accrue to them when the parties and their candidates come to power<sup>8</sup>. This line of argument has been questioned by other scholars who have pointed out that voters are not always the rational or well informed creatures that the doctrine of mandate suggests<sup>9</sup>. They can be influenced by a range of 'irrational' factors such as the personalities of the leaders, the images of the parties, habitual allegiances and social background, conditioning and psychology and identity politics and ethnicity especially in Africa (see for example, Bates 1974:457-484; Chabal & Daloz 1999; Horowitz 1985 and 1991; Joyce 1996; Young 1986:421-495; Oelbaum 2004:242-273).

Furthermore, we have noted that opinions differ on the influence of manifestos on the Ghanaian electorate. The first viewpoint, which is supported by the



literature on Ghanaian politics, suggests that manifestos have little influence on the electorate in elections. Ghanaians have voted largely on party lines with varied reasons. Some voted based on the ideological inclinations of the parties they support whereas a large number voted for parties based on ethnocentric nuances associated with the party; ethnic identification either with the leader, some top leaders around the centre of power, personalities, party origin, local factors and last minute campaign tactics particularly directed to floating voters (for some of the reasons see for example, Asante 2006; Frempong 2001; Aye 2005:82-100; Aye 2008:185-214; Arthur 2000:34-58; Lindberg & Morrison 2005:565-586; Gyimah-Boadi & Debrah 2008; and Gyimah-Boadi & Asante 2006).

One major reason for the perceived poor influence of manifestos on the electorate is that voters doubted the credibility of their manifestos as promises made in previous elections were not fulfilled by the parties when it was in power. This led the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church to urge all the presidential candidates in the 2008 elections to 'faithfully keep their promises'<sup>10</sup>, and the then running mate of the NDC and currently the President, John Mahama to caution all politicians to 'avoid empty promises they have made which have led to all politicians to be branded as people who make promises and do not deliver them. It is about time we change that trend to gain the confidence of the people'<sup>11</sup>. This failure of politicians to honour manifesto or electoral promises has been confirmed by the surveys conducted by the Department of Political Science, University of Ghana in 2000 and 2004 which showed the inability of the two parties in power to deliver on their electoral promises and manifesto objectives (Aye 2001a;b and Bofo-Arthur 2006). This Ghanaian experience reflects the political agency problem whereby voters cannot demand accountability from their elected representatives, giving politicians ample political scope to pursue their personal agenda rather than that of their constituents (Jonah 1998).

However the second viewpoint, which is supported by this writer, acknowledges the influence of manifestos on the electorate and emphasizes that they cannot be easily ignored given that in every elections, political parties have developed manifestos and a large chunk of their campaign messages are based on them. Accordingly, like in any market environment, the campaign message that the parties send out must be clear, because it is a political product in a competitive political market designed to attract voters and win their votes. Clarity in the message of 'Positive Change', for instance, was one of the reasons that won the elections for the NPP in 2000 in contrast to the NDC's message of 'Spreading the Benefits of Development' (Aye 2002:148-174 and 2008; Bofo-Arthur 2006; Gyimah-Boadi 2001:103-117). Similarly, the NDC's 'I care for you' manifesto message and making poverty reduction the main focus of its campaign promises, touting investment in people, jobs, the economy and making government more transparent and accountable were part of its trump card in the 2008 elections (Arthur 2009:34-58 and Daddieh 2009:642-647). The electorate saw this

message more appealing and deliverable than the NPP's message which fought the elections on its record of eight years in office and focused on four thematic areas, namely, strengthening the country's democracy, structural transformation of the economy and industrialization, regional and continental integration and the modernization of Ghanaian society (Gyimah-Boadi 2009:138-152; Amoah 2009:12-21; Arthur 2009:34-58; Daddieh 2009:642-647; Whitfield 2009:621-641). Similarly, the NDC won the 2012 elections because the majority of the electorate thought it had a feasible and more attractive manifesto while the NPP's was considered complex and impossible to achieve.

Voting patterns in Ghana show that the influence of manifestos cannot be simply ignored because they contained policies and programmes of the parties that were being marketed to the electorate through campaigns, advertisements and debates by presidential candidates. Ayee, for instance, has pointed out that voting patterns in Ghana since 1992 have also been influenced by the quality of governance and poverty levels and the ideologies and programmes of the parties (Ayee 2008:185-214). Similarly, Arthur has emphasized that the 'characterization of ethnicity as the basis of electoral behaviour in Ghana is simplistic: other factors, such as perceived improvements in their socio-economic lot, issues concerning increased corruption, and other electoral messages that on the surface might appear ethnicity-driven, greatly influence the choices that Ghanaian voters have been making since 1992' (Arthur 2009:55). Alabi has also shown that manifestos as political products are salient in determining political marketing outcomes or fortunes of political parties in Ghana in addition to ethnicity, personality, perceived party image or identity of the political party and communication (Alabi 2007:39-52). Certainly, ethnicity only partly explains the voting behaviour of Ghanaians. In spite of the links that the Volta and Ashanti regions have with the NDC and NPP respectively, there is a number of areas in the country where competition is real and often close. Between the 1996 and the 2008 parliamentary elections, for example, five regions out of ten, namely, Greater Accra, Central, Western, Eastern and Brong-Ahafo, swung at least once from one party to the other (Arthur 2009 and Whitfield 2009). It is instructive to note that issues over poverty, governance, ethnicity, ideologies, socio-economic lots, and corruption were all contained in the manifestos of the parties thus making them issue-based and therefore influencing in one way or the other the electoral fortunes of the political parties. In the 2012 elections, for example, the NDC won eight regions while the NPP won the remaining two regions.

That policies and programmes in the manifestos influenced voting patterns and voter motivations were amply demonstrated in the 2008 and 2012 elections in Ghana. Some of the key issues include a strong and effective leadership, fighting corruption, education, agriculture, security and safety, unemployment, the economy, the drug menace, enforcement of sanctions, general conditions of

living in the country and the record of the performance of the two governments, namely, the NPP and NDC, which were issues contained in the manifestos. For specific regions such as Greater Accra, the main issue was the return of land which was taken over by governments and which was not being used for the purpose for which it was acquired but was sold to some public officials, while in the coastal regions of Central and Western regions, the issue was the inability of the government to deal with foreign fishing trawlers operating in the shores of Ghana, therefore depriving local fisherman of their means of livelihood, and also the irregular supply of the pre-mix fuel used by fishermen (Gyimah-Boadi 2009:138-152; Arthur 2009:34-58; Daddieh 2009:642-647; Whitfield 2009:621-641). Even though these specific issues were not mentioned in the manifestos of the two parties, there was provision for addressing rural development and promoting good governance. In spite of undertaking popular policies such as the national health insurance policy, free health care for pregnant women and the capitation grant, the basic school feeding programme, the incumbent New Patriotic Party (NPP) government lost the elections because the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) campaign machinery used its manifesto to paint the government as being responsible for domestic economic mismanagement and high youth unemployment in large urban areas (Gyimah-Boadi 2009:138-152; Arthur 2009:34-58; Daddieh 2009:642-647; Whitfield 2009:621-641).

The elections were bitterly fought and the results show that they were a close match between the NPP's Nana Akufo-Addo and the NDC's John Atta Mills. Akufo-Addo had 49.13 per cent while Atta Mills had 47.92 per cent, a difference of 1.21 per cent (see Table 4). None of the candidates therefore secured the 50+1 constitutional requirement to win the presidency. Akufo-Addo needed an additional 0.88 per cent to avoid a run-off. In the parliamentary elections, the NPP lost 21 seats to the opposition NDC (see Table 4) and won seats in only three of the ten regions of Ghana. The NDC won the remaining seven regions.

The presidential run-off took place on 28 December 2008. The NPP lost because the majority of Ghanaians wanted a change. They had seen eight years of the NPP in power and even though the government had done well and brought some real improvements in the economy and in the provision of social services such as health, education and general infrastructure, most voters continued to complain that life was hard and that they could not see the 'prosperity' the government talked about in their pockets as there were not enough jobs to go around (Gyimah-Boadi 2009:138-152; Arthur 2009:34-58; Daddieh 2009:642-647; Whitfield 2009:621-641).

In the December 2012 presidential elections, the NPP's candidate, Nana Akufo-Addo lost again to the NDC's candidate, John Mahama, who, as the then Vice-President, had assumed the position of President after the tragic death in office of President John Atta Mills on 24th July, 2012. This time round there was

no run-off as Mahama secured the 50+1 constitutional requirement to win the presidency (see Table 6). The NDC also won the parliamentary elections which were held the same day. Of the 275 seats, the NDC won 148 seats while the NPP won 123 seats. The PNC won one seat, while independent candidates won three seats (see Table 5).

Is there a link between the manifesto of the NDC and its electoral victory in 2008 and 2012? This is a difficult question. However, the fact that the NDC won based on its campaign slogan of 'Change for a Better Ghana', and 'Advancing the Better Ghana Agenda' in 2008 and 2012 respectively shows that the influence of manifestos in elections should not be ignored. The 'Change for a Better Ghana' agenda by the NDC as contained in its manifestos referred to policies and programmes to deal with corruption, the economy, security, employment, education, agriculture, energy, decentralization and infrastructure development. However, the NDC's victory may not be regarded as an endorsement of its manifestos by the electorate but rather the logical manifestation of manifestos as political products in a competitive political market and the arena for articulating policies and programmes on major national issues and challenges and for which the electorate were being asked to compare the NDC with the NPP and to hold them accountable should they win the elections (Gyimah-Boadi 2009:138-152; Amoah 2009:12-21; Arthur 2009:34-58).

**Table 4.4:** The 7 December 2008 Presidential Elections Results

Party	Name of Candidate	Votes Received	% of Votes Received
New Patriotic Party (NPP)	Nana Akufo-Addo	4,159,439	49.13
National Democratic Congress (NDC)	John Atta Mills	4,056,634	47.92
Convention People's Party (CPP)	Papa Kwesi Nduom	113,494	1.34
People's National Convention (PNC)	Edward Mahama	73,494	0.87
Democratic Freedom Party (DFP)	Emmanuel Ansah-Antwi	27,889	0.56
INDEPENDENT	Kwesi Amofo-Yeboah	19,342	0.33
Democratic People's Party (DPP)	T.N. Ward-Brew	8,653	0.10
Reformed Patriotic Democrats (RPD)	Kwabena Adjei	6,889	0.08

*Source:* Electoral Commission of Ghana

**Table 4.5:** Parliamentary Seats of Parties, 1996-2012

Parties	Number of Seats (1996)	Number of Seats (2000)	Number of Seats (2004)	Number of Seats (2008)	Number of Seats (2012)
NDC	133	89	94	115	148
NPP	61	103	128	108	123
CPP	5	1	3	1	-

PNC	1	3	4	2	1
Independent	-	4	1	4	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>230*</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>275</b>

*Source:* Electoral Commission of Ghana

\*The number of parliamentary seats was increased in 2004 from 200 to 230 and then to 275 in 2012.

**Table 4.6:** 2012 Presidential Election Results

Candidates	Votes	Vote Share
John Mahama	5,573,572	50.63
Nana Akufo-Addo	5,263,286	47.81
Paa Kwesi Nduom	64,267	47.81
Henry Herbert Lartey	38,250	0.35
Hassan Ayariga	24,621	0.22
Dr Abu Sakara	15,156	0.14
Jacob Osei Yeboah	15,156	0.14
Kwasi Addai	8,909	0.08

### Realizing Manifesto Objectives/Targets

To enable both the NDC and the NPP to achieve the objectives of their manifestos, they formulated development plans and strategies when they won power. The NDC's strategies were contained in Vision 2020: The First Step: 1996-2000 and the First Medium-Term Development Plan, 1997-2000. The NPP, on the other hand, adopted the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative in 2001 and published the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2003-2005 and the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2006-2009. The extent to which their manifesto objectives were realized can be gleaned from the State of the Nation Address when they were in power. For the NDC, its achievements included the following: (i) an improved macro-economic environment characterized by growth, savings and investment; (ii) an expanded and improved national infrastructure, especially in roads, port rehabilitation, electricity generation and distribution especially in the rural areas, and a vastly improved radio and telecommunications network; (iii) the restoration of incentives for exports through the abolition of import licensing and liberalization of the foreign exchange regime, the establishment of the export retention scheme and the introduction of the export finance scheme; (iv) a solid health infrastructure with a network of teaching, regional and district hospitals

and health centres, and a pilot health insurance project; (v) a more reliable water delivery and sanitation system that had appropriately distinguished between the water needs of urban and rural dwellers together with systems to reflect those needs; (vi) the introduction of the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund) to support the financing of education and education-related expenditure; (vii) an agricultural policy and programme that had resulted in the acclamation of Ghana's Food Production Index of 148% as 'the third largest achievement on record after Jordan (157%) and China (156%)', according to the World Bank's 1999-2000 Development Report; (viii) the introduction of the Minerals and Mining Act in 2006 with improved incentives; (ix) a lowering and harmonization of tariffs and special taxes and rationalization of the public sector through divestiture and the introduction and monitoring of performance benchmarks; (x) the empowerment of local communities through the introduction of a decentralized local government system and the District Assemblies Common Fund (NDC Manifesto 2004).

The NPP, on the other hand, took refuge in the following legacy: (i) bringing back the dignity of the Presidency; (ii) an internationally recognized good governance regime which has enlarged the freedoms of the individual citizen, institutions and the press through the repeal of the Criminal Libel Law; (iii) an enlarged mechanism of representative government through the institution of the People's Assembly concept whereby the President met the people and took questions and queries from the public; (iv) passing of the Procurement Act, Whistleblower Act and other legal instruments to ensure public accountability and tackle corruption; (v) earning US\$547 million from the US government through the Millennium Challenge Account because of good governance; (vi) an increase of the District Assemblies Common Fund from 5 per cent to 7.5 per cent; (vii) in nominal GDP terms, the economy grew from US\$3.9 billion in 2000 to US\$16.3 billion in 2008 while per capita income rose from US\$300 in 2000 to US\$600 in 2008; (viii) the introduction of the National Youth Employment Programme in 2004 which created 108,000 jobs; (ix) the introduction of the National Health Insurance Scheme in 2003 to replace the 'cash-and-carry' system, School Feeding Programme, Capitation Grant and a Metro Bus System; (x) the creation of the Ministries of Women and Children Affairs, and Public Sector Reform Programme (NPP Manifesto 2008).

Similarly, for the 2012 elections, the NDC recounted its achievements. According to the manifesto of the party, the government made significant progress in attaining and ensuring that Ghana would become a middle-income country for the first time in the history of the country. In addition to this, the government maintained a sustainable rate of growth rate and reduced inflation to a single digit. There were also robust public and private policies and programmes that had successfully laid the foundation for sustained prosperity. The manifesto promised to build on these achievements through the following strategies: (i) to deepen and diversify economic performance for the provision of basic human needs;

(ii) to decentralize governance for citizens access to resources and to demand accountability for services; (iii) to develop infrastructure to accelerate and transform Ghana into a full middle-income status; (iv) to modernize agriculture through the promotion of partnership between private agricultural investors and peasant smallholders in a manner that will introduce capital, technology and expand local and international access; and (v) to expand educational assets to provide equitable access for every child to enter and complete basic education and enter and complete secondary school (NDC 2012).

The NPP, on the other hand, reiterated that its eight-year rule from 2001-2008 had brought relief, dignity, hope and promise to many Ghanaians. It promised to extend free education to the Senior High School level, build public universities in regions without one and raise the quality of education at all levels with more and better facilities, teaching and equipment. It castigated the rule of the NDC as 'four wasted years' and one which had made Ghanaians live in desperate and trying times, and promised to replace despair with hope, and promise where the NDC bequeathed 'helplessness, desolation and hardships' (NPP 2012:xiii-ix). It emphasized the retrogression under NDC rule which lacked purpose with an unprecedented weak, bungling inept leadership, backsliding economy, rising cost of living, falling standard of education, collapsing healthcare and unprecedented corruption being the order of the day (NPP 2012).

Notwithstanding these modest achievements by the parties while in government, the realization of manifesto objectives in eight years seems to be an uphill task for them and largely contributed to the two parties being in and out of government in the election cycle. An examination of the 2008 manifestos of the NDC and NPP shows that most of the manifesto objectives of previous elections were not achieved; they were 'recycled' into their 2008 manifestos. They include areas such as poverty (Ghana ranks 11th out of 45 sub-Saharan African countries on the Human Development Index), inequality, inequitable distribution of national resources, poor revenue mobilization, ethnicity, corruption, unemployment, slow pace of industrialization and mechanization of agriculture, inadequate diversification of the economy, reliance on external donors to finance about 40% of the annual budget, grossly inadequate public sector wages and salaries resulting sometimes in worker unrest, and the generally slow progress in achieving economic prosperity and the eight Millennium Development Goals<sup>12</sup> – all of which have sought to undermine the legitimacy of the parties while they were in government and contributed to their defeat: the NDC in 2000 and the NPP in 2008 (Ayee 2009).

As a result of the inability of governments to improve their standards of living since independence in 1957, some Ghanaians, especially those in the rural areas, have become more and more cynical about politics (for a good overview see Daddieh 2009:642-647; Arthur 2009:34-58; Amoah 2009:12-21; Gyimah-



Boadi 2009:138-152). In the popular mind, politics is closely associated with the activities of politicians or political parties. Politicians are often seen as power-seeking hypocrites who conceal personal ambition behind the rhetoric of public service and ideological conviction. They are seen as self-serving, two-faced people rather than serving the public interest. This perception has become common probably as result of the intensified media exposure of the incidence of corruption, dishonesty and other rent-seeking activities as well as abuse of power (Daddieh 2009:642-647; Arthur 2009:34-58; Amoah 2009:12-21; Gyimah-Boadi 2009:138-152). This rejection of the personnel and machinery of conventional political life has led to the use of derogatory phrases such as 'machine politics', 'politicking' and 'office politics'. This image of politics held by some Ghanaians may be traced back to the writings of Niccolo Machiavelli, who, in *The Prince*, developed a strictly realistic account of politics which drew attention to the use by political leaders of cunning, cruelty and manipulation. Such a negative view of politics reflects the essentially liberal perception that as individuals are self-interested, political power has become corrupting, because it encourages those in power to exploit their position for personal advantage and at the expense of others (Machiavelli 1961).

### **Authenticity of Manifestos**

Both parties have levelled accusations against each other over the authenticity of their manifestos. For instance, the NDC in a 56-page document entitled 'The NPP Manifesto – A Set of Stolen Policies' (dated November 2000) accused the NPP of plagiarizing its manifesto on such issues as tax identification numbers, ECOWAS monetary union, government partnership with the private sector, neighbourhood watch schemes, prison farms and additional roles to armed forces in national development. The NDC further described the NPP manifesto 'Agenda for Positive Change' as a document full of 'lies, insults and unrealistic promises' and one which insulted the NDC in a 'language that is uncouth, indecent, provocative and inflammatory'. The NPP, on the other hand, responded that it produced a credible manifesto that posed a great challenge to the dominance of the NDC in Ghanaian politics (Ayea 2002). In February 2009, the NPP minority caucus in Parliament also accused the NDC of dusting off its previous manifesto and publishing it as the 2008 manifesto. The NPP referred to the NDC's 2008 manifesto as the 'The New King James Version'.

The matter of the two contrasting manifestos became a subject of acrimonious debate on the floor of Parliament when the NPP MP for Bimbilla attempted to quote a section from the manifesto on education while contributing to the debate on the State of the Nation address by President Mills. His NDC colleagues asked him to use the new version of their manifesto because, according to them, the old one had been withdrawn (Parliamentary Debates February 2009). No reason



was given for the withdrawal of the original manifesto. It has, however, been speculated that the NDC realized it could not fulfil most of the promises in that manifesto.<sup>13</sup> One is therefore tempted to question the parties whether they based their manifestos on thorough consultations and research. It is believed that quite often manifestos appeared to be the product of a small committee of the party elite rather than a product of extensive consultations with the rank and file of members down to the branch level. Contrary to this suspicion the NDC has pointed out that its 2008 manifesto 'was created by Ghanaians from all walks of life and regions who spoke to Prof. Mills during the door-to-door tours. The policies and pledges it contained are built upon the difficulties and challenges Ghanaians find most important' (NDC Manifesto 2008: 5). Similarly, in the run up to the 2012 elections, the National Youth Organiser for the New Patriotic Party, Anthony Karbo, said that the party delayed its manifesto for the 2012 elections based on lessons from the 2008 elections when he claimed the National Democratic Congress copied portions of the NPP manifesto. He said, for instance, the NDC's Savannah Accelerated Development Authority (SADA) was copied from the NPP's proposed Northern Development Authority (NDA), a programme he said the party intended to implement if it had won power.<sup>14</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter has shown that even though there are several factors or variables that have influenced elections in Ghana, the electoral successes and failures of the two main political parties, namely, the NDC and NPP may be linked to their manifestos because they are political products showcasing their policies and programmes and how they planned to deal with national priorities in the political market. There is evidence to suggest that some progress has been made in fulfilling some of the manifesto objectives. However, there is still more room for improvement judging by the fact that issues concerning poverty reduction, the economy, environment, corruption, safety and security, employment, education, agriculture, water, electricity and equitable distribution of national resources have remained key objectives in manifestos since 1992, and they continue to set the policy agenda.

Four main lessons can be distilled from the paper. First, there is no doubt that manifestos of political parties can make and unmake their political fortunes. No serious and credible party can enter elections without a manifesto. It has become more or less a 'trademark' for political parties. This is evident by the fact that both the major and minority parties in Ghana's history have written manifestos to contest elections. Consequently, it is important that political parties in Ghana and other African countries take their manifestos more seriously than is currently the case. In other words, politicians need to show more commitment in fulfilling their manifesto objectives. They must know what is in the kitty before developing their manifestos. In this connection, it might be useful for political parties to use

research that is available on policy matters, both locally and globally, to prepare their manifestos. They should develop their own research units or think tanks to investigate policy options and keep abreast of relevant research findings and international trends between elections.

Secondly, manifestos will have to be owned by the party members and invariably the voters. Consequently, the parties should ensure that manifesto proposals are discussed at meetings that are representative of the party membership, especially the grassroots activists. In addition to this, more platforms other than the current campaigns and debates of presidential candidates should be created for the parties to market their manifestos and engage with more voters. Parties must listen carefully to what those outside their parties are saying, particularly the floating voters. They should also consider holding focus group discussions with groups of potential voters to gauge their views on possible policy options in their manifestos.

Thirdly, all the manifestos are written in English. The majority of the Ghanaian voting population is unable to speak, read, understand or articulate issues in English. Given that the manifestos are in English it becomes difficult for the majority of the voting population to understand and digest the issues in them. The political parties in their campaign messages have sought to deal with some of the salient issues in the manifestos but they have not achieved the desired impact. This is why it is important for the parties and the agencies of public education in Ghana such as the National Commission on Civic Education (NCCE) to organize more proactive and coordinated public education programmes in the local languages to educate more Ghanaians on the manifestos. Even though this may be expensive, it might be worth trying it.

Fourthly, one should ask why politicians in Ghana and other countries spend resources to design manifestos or revise them for elections if there is no link between them and electoral outcomes? Is the development of manifestos a public relations hoax or a window-dressing venture by the political parties? To some it is, but to the author of this chapter it is certainly not, given that manifestos are not only political products in a highly competitive political market but also avenues for cataloguing the nation's priorities, and that they also constitute a record of promises that the electorate could use to press for change.

## Notes

1. This is a revised and updated version of an article published by the author as "Manifestos and Elections in Ghana's Fourth Republic", *South African Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (December) 2011: pp. 367-384.
2. The theory of political marketing refers not only to the spin and campaigns of political parties but also the role of market intelligence in policy, leadership and organization of political parties. See Lees-Marshment (2001); and Newman (1999).

3. The forces that enabled the military to intervene several times in Ghanaian politics include the colonial legacy; the weak political system and leadership; US imperialism through the CIA; greed for power; inadequate economic resources; and absence of a strong civil society. Morris Janowitz and Samuel Huntington have emphasized the importance of the military elite in spearheading modernisation in the former colonies. See Huntington (1957); Hutchful (1979:35-55); and Hutchful and Bathily (1997).
4. A referendum or plebiscite is a vote in which the electorate can express a view on a particular issue of public policy, unlike an election that is a device for filling an office or post through choices made by the electorate. See Heywood (2000:199-201).
5. The manifesto according to Bourett (1959) drew heavily from the 1946 Colonial Development and Welfare Plan.
6. In 2002, the NDC published a policy document entitled A Social Democratic Agenda for Ghana to define the ideological basis of its existence as a political organization. In 2003, it was accepted as a member of the worldwide Socialist International at a meeting held in Sao Paulo, Brazil.
7. The 2008 NDC manifesto developed on the theme 'Building a Better Ghana' has four themes, namely, investing in people, jobs, the economy and ensuring a transparent and accountable government. This is in contrast to the 2008 NPP Manifesto which had the theme 'Moving Ghana Forward – Building a Modern Ghana'. It is broken into five chapters, namely, 'Achievements – a Promise Delivered'; 'Strengthening our Democracy'; 'Structural Transformation of the Economy'; 'Modernizing our Society'; and 'Regional and Continental Integration'.
8. The idea of voter rationality was first popularized in Downs (1957).
9. A more elaborate dissenting view on voter rationality is found in Caplan (op. cit.), Kiewiet & Mattozzi, (op. cit.:313-326); Eubank (1986:253-266).
10. Rt. Rev. Dr Yaw Frempong-Manso, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ghana addressing the Eighth General Assembly of the Church at the auditorium of the Sunyani Polytechnic on 22 August 2008. See Daily Graphic, 29 August 2008, p. 13.
11. John Mahama, then running mate of the NDC presidential candidate addressing the student wing of the NDC, the Tertiary Education Institutions Network (TEIN) at the Takoradi Polytechnic on 29 August 2009. See Daily Graphic, 1 September 2009, p. 14.
12. The eight MDGs are: eradication of poverty and hunger; reduction in child mortality; universal primary education; promotion of gender equality and empowerment; improvement in maternal health; combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensuring environmental sustainability; and developing global partnership for development. Admittedly, there has been some progress in the achievement of at least one MDG and some effort at addressing the other MDGs in Ghana. For instance, 'the number of undernourished people in Ghana has decreased from 34 percent to eight percent over approximately fifteen years' while the Ghana Strategy Framework for Food Security and Action Plan was designed under the NPP government in 2005. The plan focuses on large scale water development, rural road infrastructure and market development, enhancement of crops, as well as small scale livestock and aquaculture within a comprehensive food security strategy (<http://www.fao.org/countries/55528/en/gha/> accessed 10 November 2013).

13. On p. 78 of the 2008 NDC manifesto, the party pledged to build a 50,000-seat capacity stadium for each regional capital and a 7,000-seat capacity stadium in every district. It was however, pointed out by the NDC caucus in Parliament in February 2008 that the figures quoted were typographical errors.
14. See NPP 2012 manifesto tactically delayed to prevent NDC copying - Anthony Karbo <http://politics.myjoyonline.com/pages/news/201203/82427.php> (accessed 10 November 2013).

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