

vote were not the same, there was little public clamour for voting reform at the national level. Indeed, the general public remained remarkably disengaged from the entire post-election struggle. There were some signs of electoral reform at the state and local level, most especially in Florida where local politicians clearly did not desire a repeat of the attention in the national press. Yet there was remarkably little planned reform even at this level. And there was little evidence of reaction against the many other hints of impropriety in voting rules and their application.

A close election without intense public attachments had thus been followed dramatic elite manoeuvring without evident public distress. It would be followed by policy competition in an environment as closely balanced as any in American history. That is the context within which the next round of public engagement with politics will be fashioned.

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Ghana's 2000 elections: consolidating multi-party democracy

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On 7 December 2000, Ghana, which in 1957 became the first sub-Saharan African country to achieve independence, took another step in the consolidation of its reconstituted democracy. Ghanaians went to the polls to vote in presidential and parliamentary elections; three weeks later, they voted again in a presidential runoff. These national elections, the third set of polls held under the country's Fourth Republic, marked the first time in the nation's history that power was peacefully transferred from one democratically elected administration to a competing party. On 7 January 2001, ten days after the December 28 presidential runoff, John A. Kufuor of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) was inaugurated as President.

1. Background

Despite some isolated cases of violence, the 2000 elections were exponentially freer and fairer than the controversial 1992 elections. In that year, Flt. Lt. Jerry J.

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Rawlings, who had for the previous decade served as chairman of the authoritarian Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC), won the presidency on the ticket of the National Democratic Congress (NDC). The controversial election was disparagingly dubbed the 'stolen verdict' by the opposition parties, whose boycott of the subsequent parliamentary elections denied legitimacy of the NDC administration during its first four years in power (Gyimah-Boadi, 1994; Oquaye, 1995; Rothchild, 1995; Saaka, 1997).

In 1996, Rawlings won re-election with 57.4% of the vote and the NDC retained 133 out of 200 seats in parliament. The NPP took 61 seats and Kufuor won nearly 40% of the vote in the presidential race (Ayee, 1997; Lyons, 1999). With this brief historical backdrop, it is understandable why Ghanaians have taken great pride in the 2000 elections. A relatively peaceful electoral process and subsequent transfer of power following a multiparty election are all too rare in sub-Saharan Africa (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997).

2. Electoral system

The 1992 constitution, alongside assorted legislative instruments, provides for a permanent and independent national Electoral Commission (EC) to conduct presidential and parliamentary elections every four years. The 200 members of parliament are elected in single-member districts according to the first-past-the post system. The EC has the authority to re-demarcate as well as to increase or reduce the number of seats in parliament following elections. In presidential elections, a runoff is held within 21 days of the first round if no candidate wins a majority of the popular vote. Ghana has universal suffrage for all citizens over the age of 18, and well over 90% of eligible voters are registered to vote (Ayee, 1997; Larvie and Badu, 1996).

While the electoral playing field for the 2000 elections was more level than in previous years, the EC acknowledged that the electoral register remained substantially bloated. Prior to the election, the EC was able partially to cleanse the register, by removing the names of over 120,000 fraudulently registered and deceased voters. However, the legitimacy of the register remained in question. And, since the Supreme Court ruled three days before the first round of elections that voters did not require photo ID cards to vote, doubts over the register were not to be quelled (Smith, 2001).

3. Party system

Almost half of Ghana's post-independence history (1966–1969, 1972–1979, 1982–1992) has seen military rule. During these periods, and during the final years of President Kwame Nkrumah's increasingly repressive, one-party regime under the First Republic (1964–1966), the activities of parties were largely banned. In the spring of 1992, not long before elections, the ban on political parties under Rawlings' PNDC regime was finally lifted.

Articles 55 and 56 of the 1992 Constitution stipulate the legal framework guiding

the operation of political parties. While all Ghanaians of sound mind and voting age have the right to form or to belong to political parties, organisations must meet several stringent criteria to register with the EC. There must be at least one founding member of the party in each of Ghana's 110 districts, and the party must have branches in all of the country's 10 regions. Parties are proscribed from having any emblem, symbol, or motto with ethnic, regional or religious connotation, and they must be national in character (Ghana, 1992). In 2000, 10 parties met the EC's standards. Seven—the NDC, the NPP, the Convention Peoples' Party (CPP), the Peoples' National Convention (PNC), the United Ghana Movement (UGM), the National Reform Party (NRP), and the Ghana Consolidated People's Party (GCPP)—contested the presidential and parliamentary elections.

4. Campaign

Both the general election and the presidential runoff were hotly contested. Although President Rawlings was constitutionally prohibited from serving a third term, the NDC's populist leader was omnipresent during the campaign, commanding thousands of jubilant well-wishers at the NDC's 'Super Mammoth' rallies held around the country. Rawlings blamed the country's poor economic performance on external factors—mainly the collapse of the gold and cocoa markets—and claimed that his government was responsible for the 'peace and stability' in the country. On the platform, Rawlings often outshone his handpicked successor, Vice-President John Atta Mills. In sharp contrast to Rawlings' ebullience, Mills focused on the ostensibly apolitical themes of peace and stability, perhaps trying to tap into a latent public fear that the elections would not pass harmoniously unless the NDC was re-elected.

While not formally aligned, all opposition parties sharply challenged the NDC's deliberate attempt to take the political high ground. Aided by the nearly two dozen vibrant private newspapers and FM radio stations concentrated in the south of the country, the opposition highlighted the widespread corruption, bureaucratic incompetence and human rights abuses during President Rawlings' 19-year reign. They accused Rawlings and his party of generating the belligerent atmosphere of the campaign, and tried to debunk the NDC's thinly veiled threat that the nation would be engulfed by anarchy if the incumbent party was ousted.

Despite pre-election threats, both polling days were calm, but over fifty people were killed in ethnic conflict in Bawku, Upper East Region, on 8 and 9 December following a controversy over the counting of parliamentary ballots. The rest of the country, however, remained relatively violence-free. This was due, in part, to the positive role played by the private radio stations, as correspondents swiftly alerted the EC and the police of any irregular activities occurring around the country. Such activities were also hampered by the presence of thousands of independent election observers and party agents, all dispatched across the country to monitor voting. While the state-owned media houses (print and electronic) emphasised the activities of the NDC, their coverage was not as egregiously biased as in previous campaigns and was largely balanced by the pro-opposition private media (Smith et al., 2001).

5. Presidential results

In the first round, Kufuor was unable to reach the 50% required to win the presidential contest outright, winning 48.2% to Mills' 44.5%. Of the five other presidential candidates, Edward Mahama of the Nkrumahist-inspired PNC came in third, polling 2.9% of the vote (Table 1).

True to form, the traditional strongholds for the NDC and the NPP—the Volta and Ashanti regions, respectively—provided the bulk of support for the main presidential rivals, Kufuor and Mills, in both rounds. In Ashanti, Kufuor's home region, he won 74.7% of the first-round vote. Unlike in 1996, though, Kufuor also won first-round majorities in Brong-Ahafo, Eastern, Greater Accra, and Western Regions. He fared poorly in the three most isolated and most staunchly NDC regions of the country—Volta (8.5%), Upper West (15.5%), and Upper East (2 1.5%)—although his share of the vote in all three was appreciably higher than in 1996 (Ayee, 1997).

As expected, Mills performed strongly in Volta Region—the NDC's 'World Bank'. Mills won roughly 86% of the first-round vote, and boosted this to 88.5% in the second round. Yet even these majorities pale in comparison to Rawlings' 1996 performance, when the native son won nearly 95% of the vote. Mill's failure to generate popular support in the region reflected his poor showing nationwide. Nationwide, he polled fewer than 3m valid votes on December 7, 1.2m fewer than Rawlings in 1996.

Not unexpectedly, Mahama performed well in the upper reaches of the country, particularly in Upper East and Upper West Regions. Although he still finished third in the two regions, PNC partisans in the north would become important swing voters in the runoff. The other presidential candidates, especially George Hagan of the CPP and Goosie Tanoh of the NRP, fared much worse than expected.

The EC scheduled the runoff election exactly three weeks after the first round. The runoff pitted Mills and the NDC's revamped slogan of 'Continuity and Change'

Table 1
Presidential election results

Candidate	First round		Runoff	
	Valid votes (no.)	Valid votes (%)	Valid votes (no.)	Valid votes (%)
J. Kufuor (NPP)	3,132,865	48.2	3,631,263	56.9
J. Mills (NDC)	2,895,575	44.5	2,750,124	43.1
E. Mahanama (PNC)	189,659	2.9		
G. Hagan (CPP)	115,641	1.8		
A. Tanoh (NRP)	77,503	1.2		
D. Lartey (GCPP)	67,504	1.0		
C. Wereko-Brobby (UGM)	22,123	0.3		
Total	6,500,870	100.0	6,381,387	100.0

Source: www.ghanaelections.com

against Kufuor and the NPP's ubiquitous mantra of 'Positive Change'. Casting off their ideological baggage, the leftist opposition parties—the CPP, PNC, GCPP, and the NRP—all endorsed Kufuor in the runoff. Even though for most of the country's history the Nkrumahist, socialist-leaning parties had been at loggerheads with the neo-liberal NPP, their leaders prioritised the need to end Rawlings' two-decade grip on power.

On December 28, Kufuor widened his margin of victory over Mills, this time winning 56.9% of the vote. Kufuor bested his rival in six of the ten regions, and nearly split the vote with Mills in the Northern region. The NPP candidate gained votes significantly in all ten regions, indicating that rank-and-file supporters of the other opposition parties followed their parties' leaders in backing Kufuor.

Initial reports by the media that turnout was 'massive' in the first round of elections (including of course the parliamentary poll) and 'low' three weeks later in the runoff were misleading. (Evidently the media were deceived by the queues of voters that formed well before the first-round polls opened at 7 am, queues that had disappeared by noon.) Valid turnout was 60.8% on 7 December and 59.7% on 28 December. These figures constitute a sharp decline compared with 1996, when turnout (in the single round of voting) was 77.0%. Regionally, the decline was steepest in Volta, which saw turnout fall from nearly 82% in 1996 to less than 60% in the first round in 2000.

The lowest turnout in 2000 was in Northern, the country's largest and most sparsely populated region, while the highest first-round turnout was 64.3%, in Ashanti. The highest second-round turnout was in Volta, which, unlike eight of the ten regions, saw turnout increase for the second round. This large increase, of 8.1 percentage points, was driven by turnout skyrocketing by nearly 20% in three staunchly NDC constituencies, Ho East, Ho West, and Keta. It remains unclear whether these newfound votes were the result of previously complacent NDC supporters being jolted into supporting Mills in the runoff election, as the NDC's Director of Research contended, or were cast by 'ghosts' on a fraudulent electoral register (Smith, 2001).

6. Parliamentary results

The parliamentary elections on 7 December demonstrated further that the NPP was not just an Ashanti-based party (Nugent, 1999). Besides winning 31 of the 33 parliamentary seats in Ashanti, the NPP won well over half of the seats in Brong-Ahafo, Eastern and Greater Accra, and also showed strongly in Central and Western. In addition, the party made inroads in the north, winning seats in Northern and Upper East. Thus, the NPP increased its total number of seats to exactly 100, well up from the 61 seats it won in 1996 (Table 2).

The NDC lost 41 of the 133 seats it had taken in the 1996 elections. Most dramatic were the NDC's defeats in Greater Accra and Brong-Ahafo, in each of which regions the party lost eight seats, and in Central and Eastern, in which seven seats were lost. Even in the NDC's home turf in Volta Region, two incumbent MPs were defeated by independent candidates. In all, four independent candidates, each with NDC ties,

Table 2
Parliamentary election results by region

	Votes NPP	NDC	PNC	CPP	Others	Total
National	45.0%	41.2%	3.4%	4.4%	6.0%	100.0%
Region	Seats	NDC	PNC	CPP	Independents	Total
Ashanti	31	2				33
Brong-Ahafo	14	7				21
Central	8	9				17
Eastern	18	8				26
Greater Accra	16	6				22
Northern	3	18	1		1	23
Upper East	2	8	1		1	12
Upper West		7	1			8
Volta		17			2	19
Western	8	10		1		19
Total	100	92	3	1	4	200

Source: www.ghanaelections.com

defeated sitting NDC members, largely due to the party's decision not to hold primaries. The only region in which the NDC maintained dominance was Upper West, where it retained all eight parliamentary seats. The CPP, which as the erstwhile People's Convention Party (PCP) had won five seats in 1996, lost all but one MP. The other parties—the UGM, NRP, and UGCC—failed to win a seat.

7. Conclusion

The 2000 elections raise important questions about the future of Ghana's party system. There are serious concerns in some quarters about the NDC's state of health. A classic neo-patrimonial party, steeped in patronage networks, the party no longer controls the machinery and financial largesse of the state. Nor has it ex-President Rawlings at the helm of state to galvanise its supporters. Internecine conflict is rampant and the party is still reeling from the defection, two years previously, of key players to form the new Reform Party. The NDC was also damaged by its weak internal democracy: its cadres were alienated by the authoritarian imposition of parliamentary candidates by its National Executive Committee. In addition to all this, the NPP has tagged the party with running the economy into the ground, and with amassing enormous domestic and foreign debts.

The other opposition parties have a great deal of rebuilding to do in order to become more electorally competitive. The CPP—founded by Nkrumah in 1949—remains embroiled in soul-searching following its stumbles in both the presidential and parliamentary elections. The PNC, its roots also firmly planted in the Nkrumahist tradition, won support only in the northern and largely Muslim sector of the country. The personality-based UGM and GCPP, as well as the parties allied to the NDC, the DPP and EGLE, may all fold in the coming years.

Finally, while the NPP is still riding high, the honeymoon period is ending. The Kufuor administration has imposed harsh but apparently essential belt-tightening measures to stabilise the country's economy. Taking a cue from the World Bank and IMF, some in the party seek a return to the NPP's traditional approach, which for reasons of political expediency was downplayed during the campaign. As a result, old divisions are beginning to reemerge, between neo-liberals who want to balance the budget and pursue privatisation, and moderates—with their eyes fixed on re-election in 2004—who want to maintain social security and generate employment.

While the future of Ghana's multiparty system seems unclear, therefore, the future of democracy in the country seems much more assured. The relatively peaceful 2000 elections marked a political milestone in Ghana's history, as they heralded the first successful change of administration under the same republic. The elections constitute strong evidence of the consolidation of democratic governance under the Fourth Republic. The EC proved itself to be quite independent of the ruling NDC, although some underlying problems with the electoral process—such as the bloated register, mis-apportioning of parliamentary seats, and voting irregularities in the Volta—need to be addressed before the 2004 elections.

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The reforming elections in Iran, 2000–2001[☆]

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During the later 1990s Iran witnessed the emergence of a political reform movement. This was first manifest during the 1997 presidential election, when President Khatami defeated the Speaker of the Majlis, Ali Akbar Nateq-Nuri, the candidate of the ruling clerics. Throughout his campaign for the presidency, Khatami stressed the importance of the rule of law, tolerance of divergent views, wider political participation, social justice, and the strengthening of civil society (Amugezar, 1998; Hooglund, 1999; Bakhash, 1998; Fairbanks, 1998; Baktiari, 1997). Khatami's government licensed several newspapers and appointed administrators who recognised the value

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[☆] Editor's note. This is the first of occasional Notes on elections in democratizing countries, reflecting growing interest in processes of democratisation and democratic consolidation.