

# THE NATURE OF IDEOLOGY IN GHANA'S 2012 ELECTIONS

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## ABSTRACT

*The nature of ideology in Ghana's 2012 elections has not been studied, but to do so is key to understanding social, economic and political developments in the country. This article tries to fill the gap. Theoretical guidance is taken from Giovanni Arrighi's The Long Twentieth Century (1994). While the analysis is cast in the longue durée, the empirical evidence is mostly extracted from the 2012 elections. Contrary to earlier findings that ideology plays no part in Ghanaian politics, it is argued that it was central, to the campaign at least, but that the position is one of common economic liberalism rather than multiple ideologies. So, while rhetorically the parties asserted their differences, substantially and substantively, aspiration rather than ascription was the common unifying logic of the two major political parties. This assessment has some positive but mostly very disturbing implications for the distribution of wealth.*

## INTRODUCTION

Now that the Supreme Court has brought finality to the 2012 elections and President John Mahama has been affirmed as winner, it is important to turn attention to the political and economic aspects of the elections. The issue of ideology is central to the economic direction of the country and, hence, to the material conditions of the people, so it requires careful reflection.

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On the basis of the nature of previous elections and political programmes the literature coheres around the view that it is pragmatism rather than any ideology that drives party programmes in Ghana and that while the parties profess differences in political traditions, in practice their actions are not anchored in any real ideology (see, eg, Rathbone 1973; Ninsin 2006; Fridy 2007; Ayee 2011).

This state of knowledge has recently been advanced by Bob-Milliar (2012, pp 678-79) and Gyampo (2012). The former argues that the dominant and common view of non-ideology-based-politics should be qualified because party support and membership can be categorised and it is those on the lowest rungs, often the least educated, who are sometimes described as 'foot soldiers', who follow parties without considering their ideologies. The more informed members, Bob-Milliar argues, are drawn to their parties on the basis of distinct political ideologies.

However, these findings are contradicted by survey results presented by Gyampo. According to him, most party supporters who have a tertiary education are either ignorant of their party's ideology or, despite knowing the ideology, are not drawn to the party for that reason. So, the jury is still out about the nature of ideology and party politics in Ghana. It should be noted, however, that most of these studies examine the demand side of politics – perceptions, beliefs and attitudes of supporters and voters, not the supply side – the behaviour of the parties themselves. Yet both perspectives are necessary for a better appreciation of the role of ideology in Ghanaian politics.

This chapter tries to further the debate by examining the supply side, while weaving insights from the demand side into the story. Guidance is taken from Giovanni Arrighi's theory of ideology as spelt out in *The Long Twentieth Century* (Arrighi 1994). The article is cast in the *longue durée* historical research tradition, but the empirical evidence (among other evidence gleaned from speeches, manifestos and press releases) is drawn mostly from the 2012 elections.

It is argued that in 2012 Ghana's political parties espoused three archetypical ideologies, namely, social democracy, property-owning democracy and socialism of the Nkrumahist type and that political campaigns were largely based on these belief systems. However, beyond asserting difference, the substantive position of the dominant parties is one of common economic liberalism rather than multiple ideologies. So, while rhetorically and superficially the parties asserted difference, substantially and substantively, aspiration rather than ascription was the common logic of the two major parties.

This view leads to both positive and disturbing conclusions. On the positive side, since most political actors subscribe, substantively, to the same ideology, political inclusiveness is more feasible. On the other hand, this assessment shows a further rightward shift in Ghana's political economy, with implications for continuing, if not intensified, social differentiation. An alternative to economic

liberalism exists in the smaller parties, but continuing internal discord, rancour, and acrimony, together with external forces, make it unlikely that they will capture power any time soon.

The rest of the article is divided into four sections. Section one presents the ideologies of the two leading parties to pave the way for more substantive analysis in section two, where the various approaches to the management of Ghana's economy are compared and contrasted along ideological lines. Section three analyses the tendency of the key ideas, indices, and approaches to the management of the country's economy to converge around a central neoliberal ideology and the implications of this tendency for society and economy. Section four examines an alternative political ideology and ponders the possibility of it becoming the common and dominant belief system.

#### IDEOLOGY AND POLITICAL PARTIES IN GHANA

Ghana's political parties lay claim to traditions, core beliefs, 'creeds' or philosophies. I will call these belief systems ideology. The parties that went into the 2012 elections advanced three ideologies: social democracy (National Democratic Congress, NDC), property-owning democracy (New Patriotic Party, NPP) and socialism/scientific socialism/Nkrumahism (Convention People's Party, CPP). The rest (eg, the People's National Convention – PNC and the Progressive People's Party – PPP) advocate versions of these key belief systems.

The official ideology of the NDC has evolved over time. The party started out, in 1981, as the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC), a military group justified by its architects on the grounds of opposition to corruption, moral decadence, obscene concentration of wealth and lack of accountability on the part of the government. It was widely believed that the PNDC would turn out to be socialist in ideology – as John Haynes (1992) noted in his contribution to the *Journal of Communist Studies*.

However, the choice of economic policies (as in the acceptance and implementation of the Economic Recovery Programme, Ghana's version of Structural Adjustment Programmes), and an alliance with Washington, created doubts about whether the PNDC was ideologically socialist or simply a populist regime seeking global legitimacy and economic survival. Its leader, Jerry Rawlings, was later to make it clear that he did not believe in party politics at all and, while his promotion of the ideas of decentralisation might be lauded as progressive, the decentred governance programme was mainly a scheme to perpetuate his rulership (Crook 1999).

All that changed, however, when he called for multiparty democratic elections in 1992 in response to overt and covert international pressure (Oquaye

1995). Since that time, but especially since 2002, the NDC has been a proponent of social democracy (Bob-Milliar, 2012). In the 2012 elections the party stated that:

As a social democratic party the NDC is duty-bound to focus its economic development priorities on improving the lives of Ghanaians through investment and development policies that maximise inclusive growth and supports a responsive relationship between state and private sector in a manner that creates wealth without undermining the interests of ordinary Ghanaians and a sustainable environment. Arising out of these we aspire to achieve the following targets during our next term:

- Maintain single digit rate of inflation;
- Ensure exchange rate stability;
- Reduce deficits significantly;
- Maintain an average annual growth rate of at least 8%.

NDC 2012, p 31

Article 5 of the NDC's constitution states that 'The Party is a Social Democratic Party that believes in the equality and the egalitarian treatment of all persons irrespective of their social, cultural, educational, political, religious and economic relations in a multi-party environment' (NDC 1992).

Within these sentiments are echoes of a type of democracy that cherishes collective progress, social justice and broad human development. According to Daddieh & Bob-Milliar (2012, p 8) the party has a 'revolutionary ideology'.

The NPP, on the other hand, has always espoused an ideology of 'property-owning democracy'. Although, the party was formed in 1992 it has consistently held onto this ideology since the days of the United Gold Coast Convention and later the National Liberation Movement and the United Party, and has followed the articulation of that ideology, especially by J B Danquah and K A Busia (see Ayee 2009 for a more detailed account of the formation of the NPP). According to Mike Oquaye (1995, p 270), '[w]ith the motto "development in freedom", NPP, inter alia, stood for human rights, anti-Marxism, anti-authoritarianism, liberal economy and rural development'. In the 2012 elections the NPP quoted a statement from Danquah in its manifesto, presumably as an embodiment of its ideology.

According to the NPP (2012, p 14), '[the party's] policy is to liberate the energies of the people for the growth of a property-owning democracy in this land, with right to life, freedom and justice, ...'. Various subsections of Article 2 of the party's constitution (NPP 2009) contain references to the idea of a property-

owning democracy, but a fuller version of this ideology is stated on the party's official website (NPP 2013). Under the caption, 'our creed', it states that:

*We believe ... in 'Property-owning democracy' ... We believe in Freedom of the Individual, of Choice, of Speech and of Enterprise. We believe that national development starts with the individual, who has the right to choose, fully grow and exploit his or her God-given talents. We believe that government has a duty: To provide access to relevant education and training that will empower the individual's development. To make available affordable, quality healthcare to every citizen. To create and sustain an environment that offers opportunity to all. To guarantee that rule of law and protection of rights that enables the individual to flourish ... We believe that we are responsible for ourselves, but that in our development, we must raise our families, improve our community and contribute to the creation of a wealthy country. Finally, we believe that the people of Ghana, the government and each and every one of us, must accept that there will always be those who are unable to provide for themselves, and for them we must provide a level of support, a safety net.*

NPP 2013, emphasis in original

Here we see the centrality of individual responsibility, with collectivity almost unremarked. So, of the two ideologies, it is the NPP version that is clearly individualistic and mostly based on aspiration – although, in practice, the NPP has important interventionist policies such as its free senior high school ('free SHS') proposal. Cast in the language of the world ideologies, the NDC is social democratic and the NPP holds a neoliberal ideology and tries to create a neoliberal state.

According to eminent political economist David Harvey (2006, p 25):

The fundamental mission of the neo-liberal state is to create a 'good business climate' and therefore to optimize conditions for capital accumulation no matter what the consequences for employment or social well-being. This contrasts with the social democratic state that is committed to full employment and the optimization of the well-being of all of its citizens subject to the condition of maintaining adequate and stable rates of capital accumulation ... The neo-liberal state is particularly assiduous in seeking the privatization of assets as a means to open up fresh fields for capital accumulation.

The parties contesting the 2012 elections in Ghana asserted these differences. Their campaigns were mostly party manifesto based, issue based, substance based and programmatic, retrospectively and prospectively. There were political debates, lectures, and other issue-based events that gave the key political actors the opportunity to set out their programmes and ideologies. So, the 2012 elections would seem to contradict – at least in terms of the conduct of the elections as distinct from voting patterns – the claims by Cornell University don Nicolas van de Walle of the centrality of valence, ethnicity and clientelism to elections in sub-Saharan Africa (see, eg, Van de Walle 2003, 2012). They would also contradict the situation in the 1950s in Ghana where the key difference between the competing parties was the speed with which self-government would be achieved (Rathbone 1973). In short, the campaigns were based on expressed ideologies.

In what follows I shall argue that, contrary to the claims of difference, both political parties seek to extend *capitalist* market forces, reduce the role of the state in economic management, financialise society and promote aspiration, not ascription. In short, both parties have a neoliberal ideology and strive to create a neoliberal state. The version of these ideologies advocated by the parties in Ghana is consistent with the theoretical position of the NPP, not that of the NDC. So, of the two parties it is the NPP whose policies are congruent with its ideology.

Yet, suggestions that some of its proposals, such as the famous ‘free SHS’, are ‘socialist’ because they call for social interventions, amount to a misapprehension of the concept of property-owning democracy, as recently discussed by Richard Dagger (2012) in *The Good Society*. A highly educated workforce is consistent with the NPP’s ideology of ensuring individualism, free enterprise and general extension of free markets. Ultimately, however, it is in the management of the economy that we see the similarities between these two parties.

### MANAGING THE ECONOMY

The NDC and the NPP advanced different programmes and policies in their manifestos. In the case of education, for instance, both had programmes geared towards improving the quality, but they approached the subject differently. In the case of the NPP, education would be free, at least at the senior high school level. The NDC was critical of this viewpoint, claiming that it was not attainable, that education should not be regarded as a promise but a right, that it is basic not secondary education that should be free, that other aspects of education were more important, that the costing of the programme was wrong and that the country was not ready for the programme as the existing infrastructure was incapable of supporting ‘free SHS’. It then offered a gradualist alternative.

So, on the surface, there seem to have been important differences between the two parties. However, in terms of the overall philosophy about the transformation of the economy, both placed total confidence in economic growth and both played up their achievements in terms of mainstream indices of economic management such as inflation, while downplaying the efforts of the other along the same orthodox indices.

Even more telling is the fixation of the two parties on private-sector-led growth. In the NPP's manifesto the private sector is regarded as the 'driving force of the economy' (NPP 2012, p 45) and the 'bedrock of the economy' (p 45) and, for those reasons, an NPP government 'will put its weight behind our private sector' (p 46).

The NPP's aim is to divide wealth evenly among the masses. To achieve that it promised to review taxes and to create a vibrant private sector by offering free education, establishing 'economic growth poles' (p 39) and formalising, creating and extending land ownership (p 39). In short, the NPP believes 'in the efficiency of a market economy' (p 45) and, in saying that it envisages a Ghana in which 'everyone wants to do business' (p 47), it aims to create what Karl Polanyi ([1954] 2001) calls a 'market society'.

The NDC, which is supposedly social democratic, called the private sector the 'key' to transformation – a surprising position, though not new, since it was the NDC, or its predecessor, the PNDC, that ushered in the pro-market Economic Recovery Programme in 1983. The founder of the party himself, who once claimed to be a socialist, was later hailed as a pragmatic neoliberal and a great political acrobat because he shifted his ideology to the right (Haynes 1992). The reduction of state involvement in economic management was accelerated and state powers were used to clear the way for private capital accumulation. While the NPP definitely continued the process of marketisation when it governed the country (2001-2009), this was in keeping with the party's ideology of a property-owning democracy.

From this basis both parties claim that, through the private sector, they can create jobs for all. It can be argued that it is pragmatism that is shaping this ideological choice or that it is the failings of the state-led model of economic development or that this approach is the only way – what Margaret Thatcher termed 'TINA – there is no alternative'. Yet, the so-called failings of the state can be found in private-sector-led development programmes too. The National Youth Employment Programme is a case in point. A private-sector-led programme set up in 2006 and renamed the Ghana Youth Employment and Entrepreneurial Development Agency in 2012, its scope was the empowerment of the youth through activities such as employment. Yet the draft report of the Ministerial Impact Assessment and Review Committee (2013) contains allegations of

corruption attendant on this model, so something other than pragmatism must be driving the wheels of private-sector growth. Ideology is one possibility.

Ghana's economy is largely based on natural resources, so it is important to see how the two parties intend to manage these resources. In its manifesto the NPP (2012) promised to industrialise what it called a Guggisberg or raw-materials-based economy. It planned to use the oil resources for social services and promised transparency in oil management. More importantly, it would process and add value to the raw materials produced in Ghana.

As part of that vision it would modernise agriculture but it emphasised that it would 'diversify into higher value production' (NPP 2012, p 39). It considers small-scale farming a problem and blames the problem of food security on small-scale farmers who use outmoded techniques and inefficient agricultural methods. It would give support to the small-scale farming sector if it was prepared to serve corporate food chains or out-grower schemes.

Its preference is to stimulate the growth of commercial agriculture on a large scale (NPP 2012, pp 69-71), disregarding the objections to and rejections of these models, which have recently been styled in the literature of political economy as 'land grabbing' (Yaro & Tsikata 2013). That said, the NPP had a comprehensive programme on agriculture, spanning five pages of ideas of how to transform the sector (NPP 2012, pp 68-77) and even the most uncharitable critic of the party is likely to be impressed, if not by the ideas, at least by the commitment and seriousness it attached to the sector.

In terms of depth of analysis the NDC manifesto did not measure up to that of the NPP but, in essence, focused on similar policies. For instance, the NDC (2012, p 32) promised to provide 'further tax incentives for investments in strategic businesses' and, like the NPP, it promised to modernise agriculture, to capitalise, mechanise and marketise the sector and to encourage the production of 'high value crops' (p 33). Farmer-based organisations and farming co-operatives were mentioned as achievements, but their radical effect was quickly countered by another self-styled achievement of creating rural industrialisation (p 33), with the likely effect of creating a large pool of wage labour and turning land usufructs into opportunities for tenants and farm workers. As in the NPP's manifesto there was praise for out-grower schemes and self-congratulatory remarks about the creation of contract farming (p 33). Food security is important to the party, but, like the NPP, the NDC emphasise food sufficiency not autonomy; matters of distribution were muted and quantity highlighted.

Although it is a social democratic party, what the NDC regards as 'achievements' are, by definition, what neoliberals should celebrate. The true colours of the NDC become clearer upon reading the party's position on the private sector and capitalist markets. In short, the NDC believes 'the private sector is key',

priding itself on creating the necessary environment for ease of doing business in Ghana (NDC 2012, p 38). Indeed, there is an elaborate programme, *Private Sector Development Strategy II*, aimed at ensuring that the private sector thrives under a 'social democratic' party. The NDC also has a 'Brand Ghana' programme, analogous to the NPP's former Golden Age of Business programme. Like the NPP, the NDC promotes the building of industrial estates and, also like the NPP, it promises to use oil resources responsibly.

The common denominator in the oil programmes of both parties is not only that they focus on similar topics, but rather that the underlying logic of both is more privatisation of natural resources and the creation of property in land. Both put their trust in private use of nature's resources, both talk of the privatisation of resources and both talk about the use of natural resources to promote economic growth.

Substance aside, the form of the manifestos reveals dramatic similarities in terms of references to 'social justice' – a key ideal for social democrats. Interestingly, there is only one reference in each to 'social justice' (on p 11 for the NDC and p 82 for the NPP), although there is a reference to 'social and economic justice' in the NDC manifesto (p 83). So, overall, it would be extremely challenging, if not impossible, for readers who are not informed about the professed ideologies of the two parties to identify which of the two manifestos is social democratic in character, but it is easy to classify both as neoliberal in form, essence and substance.

The manifestos aside, a scrutiny of how the two parties intend to produce economic transformation reveals an obsession with attaining narrow macroeconomic health as against broader human development outcomes. The limitations of such indices have recently been discussed in a paper published in the *African Review of Economics and Finance* (Obeng-Odoom 2013a) so they are not repeated here except to stress that aspiring to attain such ends is the stock-in-trade of the liberal economic ideology. It is best achieved when orthodox economists are put in direct charge of managing the economy (see, eg, Pusey 1991).

This is not too surprising given that there is proof that a training in neo-classical economics typically makes people selfish or that selfish people are attracted to the study of economics (Stilwell 2011). The culture of sharing often ruffles the feathers of the *homo economicus* spirit, hence those who have studied economics usually feel that Christian attitudes of love are sharply contrasted with the promotion of individualism in economic science (Chalupníček 2011). So economists in charge of managing the economy, especially if they are of the orthodox breed and have had no experience with radical trade unionism or labour issues, tend to manage the economy along neoliberal lines.

That was what the two parties promised to do in the 2012 elections. In the lead-up to the elections, both the NPP and the NDC fielded professional

economists as vice-presidential candidates. Both Mahamudu Bawumia, the NPP candidate, and Paa Kwesi Amissah-Arthur, the NDC candidate and current vice-president of the country, are central bankers with impressive technocratic skills.

In a debate in the lead-up to the elections both showed great knowledge of economic management. So it might be said that the growing participation of professional economists in Ghanaian politics has important positive implications for delivering on promises and improving the social and material conditions of the citizenry. This view may, however, be too optimistic. There is international evidence that the greater use of economists, for whom the 'economy' is the market, people are 'rational' and 'profit maximising' and the market tends towards equilibrium (see, eg, Pusey 1991, 2003) leads to less accountability and little or no use of 'people power' in managing the economy.

Therein lies the conundrum of trying to depoliticise and technicalise issues relating to the people's material conditions as a way of co-option. As the vice-president's portfolio in Ghana is typically to head the country's economic management committee, the presence of an economist in this position in the light of the international evidence, is disturbing.

In a statement issued on 4 August 2012 in support of the selection of Amissah-Arthur as the NDC's vice-presidential candidate, Tsatsu-Tsikata, a highly respected member of the party and hence a social democrat, at least in theory, wrote:

Paa Kwesi Amissah-Arthur played an important role in the development of Ghana's Economic Recovery Programme in 1982. He was one of the young economists who were actively involved in undertaking the economic analyses that culminated in the formulation of the Economic Recovery Programme and its implementation.

Tsikata 2012, p 1

To be sure, the Economic Recovery Programme was Ghana's formal initiation into neoliberalism as a capitalist ideology (Aryeetey, Harigan & Nissanke 2000; Yeboah 2000; Hutchful 2002). So, for a 'social democrat' to be so instrumental in its formulation and for such a person to be praised by another 'social democrat' – and, for that matter, the lead legal counsel for the NDC in the 2012 election petition, only serves to confirm, if anecdotally, that the NDC's ideology is substantively neoliberal.

The ideological suasion of the NPP's vice-presidential candidate is equally obvious. As a conventionally trained economist and central banker – formerly Deputy Governor of the Bank of Ghana and head of the Monetary Policy Committee, a unit whose duty it is to ensure macroeconomic health through economic growth, Bawumia is a highly praised economist of the neoliberal order.

According to his official profile, published on the NPP website, he has played a key role in ensuring the growth of the banking sector, the growth of credit, electronic money (e-zwich) and the general financialisation of the economy. The fact that the NPP has appointed such an economist is, of course, in keeping with its ideology of a property-owning democracy, and he is well placed to steer the desired neoliberal changes.

#### IDEOLOGY IN WORD, IDEOLOGY IN DEED

So much for empirical analysis. Conceptual considerations are also important to an understanding of ideology and how it was represented in the 2012 elections. In principle, property-owning democracy and social democracy are different, but can also be conceptualised as similar ideologies.

Claiming that the two ideologies are similar is counter intuitive, especially since property-owning democracy is generally regarded as conservative. However, as we see in the collection of articles that appeared in *The Good Society*, it can be considered a feasible alternative to the stresses of the neoliberal, capitalist ideology.

That view emerges from a Rawlsian analysis of property and inequality. From this angle, property-owning democracy is the broad distribution of the means of production, wealth, and opportunity among the masses (Williamson 2012). This reading of the ideology does not support capitalism classically defined as monopoly capitalism (Baran & Sweezy 1966), as neoliberalism does. Neither is it socialism. Perhaps it is best regarded as a progressive system pitched at the cleavage of the extreme left and the extreme right.

The idea of property distribution makes property-owning democracy radical as it tries to avoid the concentration of capital, and hence, power, in the hands of a minority who will, in turn, control the polity (Williamson 2012). Indeed, James Meade, the British economist, whose ideas influenced Rawls in his *A Theory of Justice*, developed the idea of property-owning democracy as another approach to the search for egalitarianism. While Rawls purged the idea of state welfarism, the key notion of egalitarianism remained a central tenet of property-owning democracy (Thomas 2012).

Social democracy shares some of these features. Much like property-owning democracy, the social democratic ideology does not try to curtail markets or private property, although equality is a key aspiration, which is not the case with neoliberals. Social democracy also places enormous trust in politics, regarding it as an effective and practical medium through which change can be sought. Thus, while it does not systemically try to change the way the means of production is held, it strives to make equality a central ambition.

Social democracy tends to be confused with technocracy and centralism, but these ought not to be a *sine qua non* for social democracy. Indeed, such features can be replaced by bottom-up, people (including minorities)-based politics (Block 2010). Social democracy, then, is 'the belief that the key to radical social change is to use democratic politics and the power of the state to challenge and reduce the inequalities of income wealth and power that result from the unequal ownership of property' (Block 2010, p 6).

If the construction of property-owning democracy as a radical ideology is possible it should not be regarded as 'property-grabbing democracy', as some critics of the NPP argue (see, eg, Dadzie 2011). Indeed, the radical meaning of the concept is *property sharing*. Nevertheless, the version of the ideology advocated by the NPP is neoliberalism, so the argument is different in that sense.

Similar comments apply to the NDC's claim of holding onto a social democratic ideology. Contrary to common belief, the difference between social democracy and neoliberalism is not just the size of the state. Rather, it is the role the state plays in the process of economic development. Big states that clear the way for capital accumulation are obviously more neoliberal than small states that support the position of labour and the environment. 'Actually existing neoliberalism', as it is normally called (Cahill 2010), sees the state intervening to help the private sector develop. That is evidently the case for both the NPP and the NDC, as can be seen, for example, in their eviction of poor people who work in the informal sector of the urban economy (see Obeng-Odoom 2011).

The question, then, is why two parties rhetorically professing distinct ideologies end up with one ideology – economic rationalism or, simply, neoliberalism? Giovanni Arrighi's (1994) theory of ideology, how it spreads and is established, can help to unravel this puzzle. Arrighi, an Italian political economist, argues that ideology spreads and is adapted because of its credibility and force of persuasion but also because of force of coercion or incentivisation.

He believes that capitalism, or its economic ideology, economic liberalism, was well crafted and presented and effectively advertised as a force for the good of all, but that was not the only reason for its success, another was the way it advocates in the imperial North forced it down the throats of countries on the periphery of the world system through a combination of powerful exposition of the credibility of the ideology and the use of force to ensure its acceptance.

Arrighi's theory of ideology not only explains how and why ideas become important and how they drive action, it also shows that ideology has no autonomous identity outside of material forces. In turn, to understand ideology, it is important to consider both political and economic factors and how they have influenced particular views over time (Major 2012).

Arrighi's framework is a more effective way to view the 2012 elections as it is part of a long march towards democracy in a process that has been highly

influenced by the world system and its key political economic actors. The process of evening out or eroding all alternative ideologies cannot be said to have commenced with the 2012 elections. It goes way back into the global ascent of neoliberalism and its local manifestations in the 1983 era of economic reform. There must have been compliant officers to make the acceptance of the economic rationalist policies gain roots. But such people alone could not have made the programme successful.

External pressure, the claim that the state was a problem and was solely responsible for the economic stresses of the time, coupled with the global wave of neoliberalism, made this ideology unstoppable in Ghana (see Hutchful 2002). In turn, even a party like the NDC, which talks tough and radical, behaves conservative or, as South African political economist Patrick Bond aptly puts it, 'talk[s] left [but] walk[s] right' (Bond 2006).

#### IMPLICATIONS

So, if both parties walk right, what are the implications for Ghana's politics and elections, economy, society and environment? In the lead-up to the judgement in the Supreme Court case to determine who won the 2012 elections, several calls were made for an all-inclusive, biparty or even multiparty government. Indeed, Ernest Abotsi of the School of Law of the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration, made a passionate plea for such a system in a lecture at the Institute of Economic Affairs, Accra (Bokpe 2013).

Critics claimed that the ideologies of the two leading parties were so fundamentally different that any such inclusiveness was bound to fail. However, the evidence set out in this article casts doubts on the so-called ideological schism between the two parties. If, in essence, they are similarly orientated, political inclusiveness ought not to be such a major problem. Rather, it could provide a basis for harmonising and utilising the diversity of skills available for running the country along shared ideological lines.

However, from the perspective of the voters the matter is more complex. In a controversial paper recently published by Staffan I Lindberg in *Party Politics* (2012), the argument advanced is that voting in Ghana is mainly done on programmatic lines. Ghanaians vote on the basis of promises made to them or on the basis of how well the national economy does, Lindberg argues. If this view were accepted, the question would be how voters perceive the alleged differences in programmes when, in substance, there are no major differences? Further, it raises questions for Bob-Milliar's stimulating analysis that suggests that more informed people join parties because of their ideologies (Bob-Milliar 2012). If we accept that there are no substantial differences in the ideological positions of the NPP and the NDC what ideological features inform the informed people's choices?

This conundrum provides a strong basis for the argument that other factors, or what Bob-Milliar (2011) regards as non-material drivers, or, to quote Gyampo (2012, p 160), 'personal interest' or 'what [people] can gain from the parties and the political process' (Gyampo 2012, p 161) continue to play a major role in elections in Ghana, even if segments of the population are more reflective about their choices. For Ghanaian voters, material 'achievements' or 'failures' seem to lie in the eye of the beholder (Kelly & Bening 2013, p 478).

This pattern should not, however, be regarded as 'irrational', as Lindberg's work suggests. Rather, being potentially a function of poverty and other social problems (Gyampo 2012), both diachronically and synchronically, this feature of politics, which is not only a 'Ghanaian thing', as it exists even in advanced capitalist countries (see the analysis by Ayelazuno 2011, pp 31-32 of the Alvin Green case in the US), is rational (under the circumstances).

Besides, in the broader scheme of things, the art or act of voting serves not only as a decision-making tool but also as a moral right of citizens, namely to be part of a legitimising group which establishes that the rulers or the law makers have the legitimate mandate of the people. Otherwise, the right to vote would have to be restricted to some group of people purported to be more 'rational' or 'enlightened' than the rest of the population – a point poignantly made by the Australian-based philosopher, John Armstrong (2013), in another context.

More importantly, the most popular choices available to voters are different sides of the same coin – neoliberal ideology disguised as 'social democracy' on the one hand and neoliberal ideology described as 'property-owning democracy' on the other.

More fundamentally, the country is now, more than ever before, knee deep in the neoliberal ditch. There can be progress, but this is likely to be concentrated rather than spread, or will co-exist with inequality, as recent empirical analysis demonstrates (Obeng-Odoom 2013b). The result is that the youth – that large stratum of Ghanaian society – are now transforming from viewing the society as one of ascription to a position of aspiration where they have to blame themselves for being unemployed and, in some cases, unemployable.

Neoliberalism as ideology is unsympathetic to the poor and unemployed. It is an ideology that looks favourably on the patrician and scornfully on the destitute, as the latter, in this ideology, are the cause of their own poverty and want. In turn, the political class and economic technocrats pontificate in newspapers and policy documents that the unemployed ought to start their own businesses, be creative, create property in the commons and find ways of staking out a share in the common wealth.

Both the NPP and the NDC have presented reactionary programmes for the youth and unemployed, often with short-term perceived benefits that turn out, in the long term, to have disastrous consequences. While design defects are often

blamed for such results (Ministerial Impact Assessment and Review Committee 2013), historical research (Gyampo & Obeng-Odoom 2013) points to more systemic reasons linked to neoliberalism as a capitalist ideology. Fundamental change is badly needed.

#### SCIENTIFIC SOCIALISM AND NKRUMAHISIM AS AN ALTERNATIVE

There is an alternative to the NDC-NPP substantively uniform neoliberal ideology. The Convention People's Party advocates a different philosophy and while, in the past, some of its policies have intersected strongly with those of other political traditions (Obeng-Odoom 2009), it clearly holds and espouses a substantively and substantially different ideology – Nkrumahism, which Kwame Nkrumah said was 'scientific socialism' and the only effective socialism in Africa (Mohan 1966, p 220). According to the CPP (2013, np), the party Nkrumah founded, this philosophy connotes three principles:

*Self-determination:* We must abandon our colonial mentality and inferiority complex and re-assert control over our natural resources and national interests for the sustainable and equitable development of our country;

*Social Justice:* The State has a moral and constitutional duty to promote equal opportunity and equitable rewards for all Ghanaians, irrespective of age, gender, ethnic, religious, political or other backgrounds; and

*Pan-Africanism:* We must work with Africans at home and abroad to find common solutions to our common problems of racism, poverty, exploitation and under-development.

While the CPP does not promise to abolish wage labour it explicitly advocates greater state ownership of the means of production. That is, it does not advocate the use of the private sector to *lead* development. Indeed, during the second 2012 Presidential Debate, Abu Sakara Foster, the CPP's presidential candidate, called that approach an 'illusion'. Private ownership will not be abolished under a CPP regime and there will be markets, but they will not be capitalist. Strictly speaking then, there will be market socialism, but the presence of markets is not inconsistent with the tenets of socialism (Schweickart 1992). Polish political economist Karl Polanyi ([1954]2001, p 242) famously noted that

[s]ocialism is, essentially, the tendency inherent in an industrial civilization to transcend the self-regulating market by consciously

subordinating it to a democratic society. It is the solution natural to industrial workers who see no reason why production should not be regulated directly and why markets should be more than a useful but subordinate trait in a free society.

It follows that the significance of market presence is not one of quantity but of proportion. That is, the markets under socialism ought not to rule society but must be subordinated to political economic institutions such as the state. The CPP declares in its manifesto (CPP 2012) that:

We, the CPP, are determined to re-activate our sense of self-determination, self-reliance, and self-mobilization. In doing this, we shall be guided by the three main objectives of: Social Transformation, Sustainable Economy, and Social Justice. These objectives will shape all our policies and programmes.

Consistent with this 'S Cubed' philosophy of socialism, as the party calls it, the CPP advocates, for example, that most of the goods and services needed in the country be produced locally. The party's definition of democracy is both economic and political and when it talks about political democracy it seeks to find congruence between what the people want and what politicians offer. Freedom is expressed in terms of escaping want, poverty, and fear.

The CPP prioritises social indices over economic ones and hints at indigenisation, as against the other parties' obsession with modernity. 'Social justice' as an ideal is more frequently mentioned in its manifesto than in any other manifesto considered in this article. The main role of the (Central) Bank of Ghana under a CPP government will be to help the state create jobs rather than play its current role of being predominantly interested in monetary policy. The party advocates greater state involvement in the oil industry, again, as opposed to the other two parties, which are fixated only on the idea of managing oil rents as transparently as possible, important as that focus is. Small-scale farmers will be given state support through farmer-based organisations and social security protection will be extended to fishers and farmers (CPP 2012).

The CPP's position on the environment is reformist and is likely to be criticised by ecological and Marxist political economists such as James O'Connor (see, O'Connor 1991). The party adopts uncritically the neoliberal definition of sustainable development, as postulated by the Brundtland Committee (CPP 2012, s 2.5). Indeed, it talks about recycling, but fails to discuss the role of corporate capital in generating waste.

Presumably the state would be the biggest polluter under a CPP government, since it will control the commanding heights of the economy, but even if that is

the case, restraints on overproduction could have been covered much better in the manifesto. Be that as it may, overall, looking at the programmes on agriculture and environment in their entirety and the way these are linked with Afrocentric ideas to challenge the world system, the CPP presents not just an alternative but a just alternative.

Yet, the 2012 elections saw a staggering and stuttering CPP, a party with deep wrinkles and one embroiled in rancorous in-fighting, leading to the breakaway of Paa Kwesi Nduom, arguably the party's most visible, most popular, and most creative leader. Not surprisingly, the party he founded, the Progressive People's Party (PPP), performed substantially better in the presidential elections than the CPP, coming third after the two biggest parties, while the CPP candidate came sixth of eight competitors (see Kelly & Bening 2013 for a breakdown of both the presidential and parliamentary election results).

The plight of the CPP should be put in historical context. The 2012 conflict only compounded long-lasting conflicts which have afflicted the party since it was last in power, in the 1960s. Its poor showing in elections is not only due to the internal conflicts in which it is entangled but also to poaching by other parties, with which some notable CPP members recurrently associate themselves.

By portraying itself as social democratic, the NDC has successfully annexed a large number of CPP followers. It is telling that the only CPP member of Parliament, who won a by-election when the sitting NDC MP passed away, votes with the NDC in Parliament.

Of course, the NDC is not the only beneficiary of the CPP's losses. In the 2001-2008 NPP government, leading CPP members, for example, Paa Kwesi Nduom and Agyemang-Badu Akorsah were given top government and civil service positions. Yet the official position of the CPP is that the NDC has benefited more than any other party. According to the CPP Political Committee (2013, np), 'it was the NDC that dismembered the CPP in the run up to the elections of 1992 by financing the formation of many parties in the Nkrumaist [sic] tradition'. However viewed, unless the current situation of the CPP both internally and externally improves substantially, the alternative to NDC-NPP neoliberal ideology will, unfortunately, be long delayed.

## CONCLUSION

Party politicking for Ghana's 2012 elections was conducted along ideological lines – contrary to earlier findings presented in the political science literature that assert that politics in the country are not ideology based. The expressed ideologies range from property-owning democracy and social democracy to socialist-Nkrumahism, but the spectrum is narrower in practice, often spanning neoliberal capitalism and socialist-Nkrumahism.

Even narrower were the 'choices' between winnable ideologies presented to voters in 2012 – neoliberalism portrayed as property-owning democracy and neoliberalism disguised as social democracy, effectively blurring any real distinctions.

While it might be argued that there is a natural tendency for political ideologies to coalesce, Arrighi's theory and the evidence show that this dynamic is imposed. There are important implications arising from these conclusions. On the one hand, the uniformity of ideology can be leveraged in the pursuit of political inclusiveness. On the other, as an ideology that prioritises profits over human needs, neoliberalism in Ghana should be expected to lock the vast majority of the poor into a vicious cycle.

There is likely to be more prosperity, but this will typically be up for grabs only by economic giants. For economic dwarfs it is tough, if not impossible, to capture the fruits of prosperity. So, the 2012 elections and the neoliberal ideology they entrenched make it challenging to attain inclusive prosperity in spite of the numerous claims that it is attainable.

Indeed, the distribution of wealth, and hence the material conditions of the broad mass of the people, are likely to deteriorate.

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