

## Third Parties and Electoral Politics in Ghana's Fourth Republic

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### Abstract

Since the inception of Ghana's fourth attempt at constitutional democracy in 1992, third parties have performed abysmally in the nation's electoral politics. The quest and hope for a third force in Ghanaian electoral politics has always been dashed after every election. This article places the electoral performance of third parties in Ghana's Fourth Republic under microscopic view and interrogates the nature of their pitiable electoral performance, and its implications on Ghana's multiparty electoral democracy. The paper analytically demonstrates the progressive decline of third parties' electoral output despite their active participation in both presidential and parliamentary elections. It argues that, although third parties' electoral fortunes appear utterly gloomy, showing no realistic chance of forming government, they augment Ghana's multiparty democratic politics. In order to make any meaningful incursion and impact in Ghanaian electoral politics, the paper will recommend the need for third parties with shared political ideology to reorganize under a uniform umbrella to become more electorally competitive in the future.

**Keywords:** Ghana, electoral politics, third parties, fourth republic

### 1. Introduction

Though the 1992 Constitution of Ghana provides for a multiparty democracy, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriot Party (NPP) have since 1992 emerged as two dominant parties under the Fourth Republic; creating a de facto two-party system (Ninsin, 2006; Daddieh & Bob-Milliar, 2012). These two main political parties have remained highly competitive in every single general election conducted under the Fourth Republic (Bob-Milliar, 2014). Such intense electoral competitions managed to push the 2000 and 2008 presidential elections respectively to a runoff and in the 2012 elections, it was the "do or die" posturing of the competition that led to the results of the election being challenged in the Supreme Court for a period of eight months. Indeed, the two parties have dominated the political scene both at the presidency and the parliamentary level, leaving insignificant representation for any other party. Consequently, the influence of third parties in Ghana's democratic politics has been quite minimal; reflective of their gross abysmal electoral performance over the last two decades. Paradoxically, Ghana's Fourth Republican democratic politics has been characterized by the phenomenal rise in the number of third parties seeking to capture political power in order to implement their manifestoes. Whilst some of these political parties are secessionists from the two main political parties, others have independent origins. Irrespective of their history and constituent, the sad reality is that these third parties have consistently performed poorly during national elections with no third party polling even up to seven percent of the total votes cast. The main objective of this paper, therefore, is to examine the nature and implications of this phenomenon on Ghana's electoral politics and democratization process.

Though there are plethora of general literature on opposition (political) parties and elections in Ghana (see, for example, Bluwey, 1993; Oquaye, 1995; Larvie & Badu, 1996; Ayee, 1997; Jonah, 1998; Lyons, 1999; Nugent, 1999; Anebo, 2001; Smith, 2002), the position of third parties in Ghanaian politics is not clearly understood as there seems to be no research on the subject matter. Nevertheless, chunk of studies on Ghana's electoral politics have inclined towards democratic consolidation, electoral choices and voting behavior with little reputation for third parties (Anebo, 2001; Smith, 2002). There is, therefore, dearth of scholarly research on third parties' electoral output on the account of the prevalence of Ghana's emergent two-party system. Hence, this study is innovative and serves as a basis for future studies on third parties in Ghana whilst it makes a modest attempt to bridge the knowledge gap. It is the contention of this paper that, notwithstanding the abysmal electoral fortunes of third parties in Ghana, they deserve scholarly attention owing to their latent role in democratic consolidation.

The balance of this article is divided into six sections. This introductory section provides a general background to the problem being investigated. The next section of this paper takes a brief political history of Ghana as it dawns the spotlight on the Fourth Republic. Subsequently, a strenuous attempt is made at conceptualizing the political party system and the third party constructs. This is to situate the study in a proper theoretical context. This is followed by a brief methodology and; a detailed analysis of empirical results. Finally, we draw some general conclusions from the study of third parties in Ghana's electoral politics and offer some policy relevant recommendations.

## **2. A Brief Political History of Ghana**

Political parties became a vital instrument in Ghana's democratic politics as early as the 1950s when the country was in transition from colonial rule to an independent sovereign nation-state. At the time, eight political parties emerged between 1954 and 1957 to participate in the pre-independent elections. The most vibrant political parties were: the Convention Peoples' Party (CPP), the National Liberation Movement (NLM), the Northern Peoples Party (NPP) and the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC). These early political parties had different identities and philosophies of existence. While some of the parties were formed to express sub-national or ethnic and regional identities, others held onto religious or supra-national identities (Ninsin, 2006; Nam-Katoti, Doku, Abor & Quartey, 2011).

Ghana was subsequently declared a republic on 1 July 1960 by the country's first president, Dr. Nkrumah. However, after almost half a decade of a one party state, the CPP Government was ousted through a military coup on 24 February 1966. The country has since the 1966 coup undergone a number of political changes. Between 1966 and 1992, Ghana experienced about five military regimes interspersed with two relatively short periods of civilian rules. Within that period, multiparty elections were held in 1969 and 1979. These elections produced the Progress Party government (1969-1972) under Prime Minister K. A. Busia and President Edward Akuffo Addo; and Dr. Hilla Limann's People National Party (PNP) government (1979-1981) respectively. The 23 months rule of the PNP abruptly ended when Flt Lt. John Rawlings usurped power on 31 December 1981. Rawlings and his Provisional National Defense Council ruled Ghana for the next decade until political pluralism was restored in 1992, following the promulgation of the 1992 Constitution (Smith, 2002; Yakohene, 2009).

The restoration of multiparty democracy in 1992 witnessed the formation of thirteen new political parties, namely, the National Democratic Congress (NDC), New Patriotic Party (NPP), National Independent Party (NIP), Peoples' Heritage Party (PHP), Democratic People's Party (DPP), New Generation Party, Ghana Democratic Republican Party, Every Ghanaian Living Everywhere Party (EGLE), National Convention Party, People's National Convention (PNC), People's Party for Democracy and Development, National Justice Party, and National Salvation Party. Some of these parties have since collapsed whilst others have merged, aligned and changed their names (Ninsin, 2006). Unlike subsequent elections in Ghana, the presidential and parliamentary polls of 1992 took place on different dates. The presidential election was held first. In the contested and highly flawed multiparty elections in 1992, the opposition parties boycotted the parliamentary elections, rendering the first parliament of the Fourth Republic an essentially 'rubber-stamp' legislature. To support its claim of electoral misconduct, the NPP catalogued a number of irregularities allegedly perpetrated by the NDC and individuals associated with it in a book entitled 'The Stolen Verdict' (Jeffries and Thomas, 1993; Nugent, 1996).

Four years into constitutional rule, eight of the political parties had survived to contest the 1996 elections; whereas seven parties participated in the 2000 elections. By 2004 the political arena had stabilized enough to allow only the better organized political parties to sustain their participation in Ghanaian electoral politics. Hence, eight parties contested in the 2004 general elections (Ninsin, 2006). Though a total of sixteen registered political parties existed during the 2008 general election, only seven had ballot access in the presidential race. In the 2012 elections seven out of over twenty registered political parties contested in the presidential race. In fact, apart from the NPP and NDC, the other registered political parties could not field candidates in all the constituencies for the parliamentary elections. The paucity of funds and other material resources have been the biggest challenge for the smaller political parties in their attempt to field candidates in all the constituencies (Nam-Katoti et al., 2011).

## **3. Some Conceptual Issues**

### *3.1 Political Party System*

Throughout the literature, political party denotes an organized group of citizens who act together as a political unit, having a shared opinion on the leading political questions in the state, with an express aim to capture and control political power. A political party is, therefore, distinguished from other political units such as interest group, in the sense that the latter only seeks to influence public policy whereas political party seeks to capture

and control actual public decision making and implementation (Patterson, 2001; Johnston, 2005; Hofmeister & Grabow, 2011).

Political parties operate within specific political systems. Whilst the constitutions of some countries explicitly provide for multiparty systems, others provide for two-party systems, and others still favor one-party system. The multiparty structure describes a system where several political parties are competitive. In a single-party system, one party dominates elections, whereas in a two-party system, two major parties are competitive during elections (Salih & Nordlund, 2007; Hofmeister & Grabow, 2011). Political parties are essential to the functioning of democratic political systems. It is often argued that political parties enliven democracy and ingrain it into a nation's daily life (Johnston, 2005; Melusky, 2000; Moncrief, Peverill & Malcolm, 2001). Political parties perform a wide spectrum of functions, key of which is that they help recruit and support candidates and harness financial resource for developmental purposes (Moncrief et al., 2001). In the considered opinion of Hofmeister and Grabow (2011), political parties are brokers of ideas in the political system. Out of the many issues which call for a solution in the state, political parties select those of public interest, study them, think out solutions and present them in a form of manifestoes.

Whether or not they win control of the government, political parties participate in governance; either directly as the party in power or indirectly as the opposition. In a multiparty system, losing political parties form the opposition and through scathing criticisms the ruling party (government) is kept on its toes (ibid). This, Melusky (2000) argues, has a merit of preventing dictatorial rule. This role is essential for ensuring good governance and public accountability; whilst encouraging more efficient public policy making and implementation.

Scholars like Johnston (2005), Salih and Nordlund (2007), and Nam-Katoti et al. (2011) have identified funding gaps as the most single common challenge of party organization, the world over. Funding political parties are crucially paramount since the wheels of party system run on resources. To relieve political parties of fiscal burdens, in order to be effective in the political system, some scholars (Johnston, 2005; CDD, 2005; Nam-Katoti et al., 2011) advocate for state funding of political parties. Johnston (2005), for instance, argued for political finance policies that best aid democratic politics. He was, however, quick to caution against the risks of political finance abuse in emerging democracies where institutions are weak (Ibid). Melusky (2000) avows that campaign finance laws make it difficult for minor parties to qualify for public funds. Olaore (2005) also observes that, public allocation of funding to political parties is usually closely tied with parties' representation in the legislature. Only represented political parties receive state funds. This proportionality approach of public funding, which tends to favor dominant parties is severely criticized as it accentuates the status quo and suppresses the rise of new parties in democracies (Pottie, 2003; Olaore, 2005; Matlosa, 2004).

Quite a few studies on mass politics have tended toward the defects of the party system. In many Third World countries, particularly Africa, political parties are formed with parochial objectives, thereby flooding the political arena with several minor parties with weak structures. Most of these parties have no clear or credible ideology. While financial constraints undermine their strength and development, their lofty promises are based on no discernible probability of winning elections (Salih & Nordlund, 2007; Githu, 1998). Political parties, even in established democracies, are criticized for their oligarchic and self-seeking tendencies (Bawn, Cohen, Karol, Masket, Noel, & Zaller, 2012). Schumpeter (1942: 279) therefore noted; 'the first and foremost aim of each political party is to prevail over the others in order to get into power or stay in it'.

### 3.2 What Are Third Parties?

The term *third party*, in electoral politics, denotes any party contending for votes that failed to outpoll either of its two strongest opponents, or in the context of impending elections is considered unlikely to do so (Nash, 1959; Gillespie, 1993; Voss-Hubbard, 1999; Epstein, 2012). The term 'minor parties' is sometimes used in a similar manner (Melusky, 2000). However, in some categorizations, a party needs to attain a certain level of electoral success to be considered a third party. Smaller parties that win an insignificant share of votes and no seat in the legislature are often termed minor or fringe parties, as it is the case in the United Kingdom. In the United Kingdom, a third party is a national political party, other than the Conservatives and the Labour, which has at least a seat in the House of Commons (Feasby, 2003). A third party, in American politics, is any political party other than Democrats or Republicans. The term can also refer to independent politicians with no party affiliation. The largest since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, in the United States, are the Libertarian Party and Green Party (Epstein, 2012). The distinction is particularly lucid in two-party systems where two major parties dominate the political sphere.

Third parties usually have a paltry chance of forming a government or winning the position of a head of government. In parliamentary two-party systems, only the major parties entertain a serious chance of forming a

government. Likewise, in presidential systems, third party candidates are rarely elected president (Gillespie, 1993; Bibby & Sandy, 2003). Third party's presidential candidates are often criticized for spoiling the election or splitting up segments of votes. Nevertheless, there are many reasons for third parties to compete (Rosenstone, Roy & Edward, 1996). Rosenstone et al. (1996) and Melusky (2000) argued that national elections provide huge platform for the third parties' position on public issues to be recognized. They tend to draw attention to issues that may be ignored by the major parties. Often, the intent is to force public attention on such an issue. If such issues find acceptance with voters, the dominant parties might be compelled to adopt the issues to their own party platforms. For this reason these parties are sometimes referred to as 'issue finders' for the major parties (ibid).

Among other setbacks third parties face are; the frequent exclusion from major national debates and media coverage, and the difficulty of raising sufficient resources to compete with major political parties (Melusky, 2000; Epstein, 2012). Even in a jurisdiction where state funding of political parties exists, third parties often fall short of requirements owing to the difficulties they face in gaining representation (Olaore, 2005). Epstein (2012) also identifies ballot access laws as a major impediment to third party candidacies. Third parties often fail to meet the criteria for ballot access, such as having a national outlook, registration and filing fees. For the purpose of this paper, *third party* is conceptualized as any minor political party other than the main opposition party in a particular election. Specifically, in the current Ghanaian politics, we refer to all the political parties other than the NPP and the NDC.

#### 4. Methodology

The scope of this study is limited to the Ghana's Fourth Republic. This spans from the period 1992 to 2012 covering six successive national elections. Data for this study was primarily sourced from the Electoral Commission of Ghana. These are in the form of certified electoral results. The paper also reviewed extant literature to set the theoretical basis of the study. Hence, the empirical basis of this paper is both primary and secondary. Data utilized for the analysis are logically presented in a form of tables; and sequentially discussed in relation to the study's objective. Conclusions are drawn based on the data analysis.

#### 5. Empirical Findings

This section presents and discusses the findings of the study.

Table 1. Parties contesting parliamentary elections & seats won (From 1996-2012)

1996	No. of seats (200)	2000	No. of seats (200)	2004	No. of seats (230)	2008	No. of seats (230)	2012	No. of seats (275)
NDC	133	NPP	100	NPP	128	NDC	116	NDC	148
NPP	61	NDC	92	NDC	94	NPP	107	NPP	123
CPP	5	PNC	3	PNC	4	PNC	2	PNC	1
PNC	1	CPP	1	CPP	3	CPP	1	CPP	-
EGLE	-	NRP	-	NRP	-	DFP	-	UFP	-
GCPP	-	UGM	-	DPP	-	DPP	-	NDP	-
DPP	-	GCPP	-	EGLE	-	RPD	-	PPP	-
NCP	-	EGLE	-	GCPP	-	GCPP	-	GCPP	-
		DPP	-			NVP	-	NVP	-
		Independent	4	Independent	1	Independent	4	Independent	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>		<b>200</b>		<b>230</b>		<b>230</b>		<b>275</b>

Source: Compiled by author, 2015

This table gives a panoramic view of how parties have fared in terms of parliamentary elections since 1996. Even though the first parliamentary election under the Fourth Republic was held in 1992, the analysis of parliamentary elections starts from 1996 because as indicated earlier, the first parliamentary election in 1992 was boycotted by the opposition. Though third parties have actively participated in parliamentary elections since

1996, their electoral fortunes have been daunting. As observed from table 1, the CPP and the PNC remain the only parties that have won parliamentary seats under the Fourth Republic. However, in most cases, it was not without the support of one of the two major parties (NPP and NDC). The PNC obtained a single seat in 1996 but managed to annex 3 seats in 2000; and 4 seats in the 2004 parliamentary elections respectively. While the CPP captured 5 seats in 1996; it ceded 4 seats in the 2000 parliamentary elections. In the 2004 and 2008 elections, the CPP won 3 seats and a seat respectively. Notably, only the PNC secured a seat in the legislature for the third parties during the 7 December 2012 polls. However, the CPP grabbed the Kumbungu Constituency seat from the incumbent NDC in a later bye-election. The NPP did not participate in this bye-election in protest of its widespread electoral irregularity claims which was pending before the Supreme Court. Majority of Ghana's Fourth Republic, parliamentary seats have always gone in favor of the two major parties, leaving meager representation to third parties and independent candidates.

Table 2. 1992 presidential results summary

CANDIDATE	PARTY	VOTE	PERCENTAGE
J. J. Rawlings	NDC	2,323,140	58.40%
Albert Adu Boahene	NPP	1,204,764	30.29%
Dr. Hilla Limann	PNC	266,710	6.70%
Kwabena Darko	NIP	113,629	2.86%
Gen. Erskine	PHP	69,827	1.75%
<b>Total</b>		<b>3,978,070</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Electoral Commission, Ghana

In the 1992 elections, despite allegations of electoral fraud, the NDC's candidate was declared the winner of the presidential election with 58 percent of the total votes cast. The main opposition NPP placed second with 30.29 percent of the total votes cast. As observed in Table 2, the Nkrumahist-inspired PNC placed third, polling 6.7 percent of the total votes cast; Kwabena Darko of National Independence Party (NIP) secured only 2.86 percent; whilst Gen. Erskine of Peoples' Heritage Party (PHP) polled 1.7 percent of the total votes cast. Altogether, the electoral fortunes of all the third parties (i.e. the PNC, the NIP, and the PHP) represented 11.31 percent of the total valid votes. Having been devastated by their electoral performances in 1992, the PHP and NIP decided not to contest the 1996 elections. In fact, these two political parties have since the 1992 elections been extinct from Ghana's political scene.

Table 3. 1996 presidential results summary

CANDIDATE	PARTY	VOTE	PERCENTAGE
J. J. Rawlings	NDC	4,101,674	57.4%
J. A. Kufuor	NPP	2,834,878	39.6%
E. N. Mahama	PNC	214,373	3.0%
<b>Total</b>		<b>7,150,925</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Electoral Commission, Ghana

The 1996 presidential election was ardently contested by three main political parties, namely; NDC, NPP and PNC. However, this time around, the presidential candidates for the opposition parties were changed. John Agyekum Kufuor of the NPP replaced Prof. Albert Adu Boahene; whilst Dr. Edward N. Mahama of the PNC replaced Dr. Hilla Limann. As shown in Table 3, it is noteworthy that the change of candidacies did not produce a much desirable outcomes as the third party's (the PNC) votes tally decreased drastically from 6.7 to 3.0 percent of the total votes cast. Though the main opposition party (NPP) increased its electoral fortunes significantly from 30.3 to 39.6 percent, the incumbent NDC was retained. Myriad of factors have been put forward for such high performance of the NDC leading to poor show of the opposition parties that contested the 1996 presidential election. Obviously, abuse of incumbency is not ruled out. The experience of John Rawlings (the NDC candidate)

as a sturdy campaigner was also unparalleled. In fine, the abysmal performance of PNC, the third party, in the 1996 presidential elections represent a negative variance of 4.74 percent against its 1992 electoral results.

Table 4. 2000 presidential results summary (1<sup>st</sup> round)

CANDIDATE	PARTY	VOTES	PERCENTAGE
J. A. Kufuor	NPP	3,131,739	48.17%
J. E. Atta Mills	NDC	2,895,575	44.54%
E. N. Mahama	PNC	189,659	2.90%
G. P. Hagan	CPP	115,641	1.80%
Augustus Goosie Tanoh	NRP	78,629	1.20%
Dan Lartey	GCPP	67,504	1.00%
Charles Were-Brobbeey	UGM	22,123	0.30%
<b>Total</b>		<b>6,500,870</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Electoral Commission, Ghana

The keenly contested 2000 presidential elections witnessed several third parties, mostly splinter, contesting for the very first time since the inception of the Fourth Republic. The new faces of political parties included the CPP, the Great Consolidated Popular Party (GCPP), the National Reform Party (NRP) and the United Ghana Movement (UGM). In this election, the NDC polled 44.54 percent, whereas the NPP obtained 48.17 percent of the total votes cast. The remaining votes were shared among PNC (2.90%), CPP (1.80%), NRP (1.20%), GCPP (1.00%), and UGM (0.30%), as illustrated in Table 4 above. No candidate secured an absolute majority (at least 50 percent + one vote) to be declared winner at first round per constitutional requirement.

Characteristically, the results of the third parties were quite unimpressive. The PNC, in particular, lessened in terms of actual votes by 24,714 as against its results for the preceding 1996 election. The personality-based political parties – the NRP, the UGM and the GCPP – fared much worse than expected. The summation of the electoral fortunes of all the five minor parties (PNC, CPP, NRP, GCPP and UGM) was only 6.7 percent of the total votes cast. However meager it may be, the electoral fortunes of the third parties contributed to the ‘no clear winner situation’. Though this ostensibly presented a fiscal burden to the political system, it boosted Ghana’s electoral democracy. The impact of the third parties, rather, offered an opportunity for the Ghanaian electorate to endorse ‘majoritarian rule’ in a runoff election held on 28 December 2000. Perhaps, the most crucial moment third parties’ support became highly sought-after in the history of Ghana’s Fourth Republic.

Thus, the winner of the 2000 presidential elections was decided in a runoff election between the two dominant parties; the NDC and the NPP. The latter won with 56.9 percent of the total votes cast. This marked the first transfer of power under the Fourth Republic. During the runoff election, most of the third parties openly urged their supporters to vote for the main opposition NPP. The NPP candidate gained votes significantly in all the ten regions, indicating that rank-and-file supporters of the other opposition parties followed their parties’ leaders in supporting candidate John Kufuor (Smith, 2002; CDD and IDEA, 2006).

Table 5. 2004 presidential results summary

CANDIDATE	PARTY	VOTES	PERCENTAGE
J. A. Kufuor	NPP	4,524,074	52.45%
J. E. A Mills	NDC	3,850,368	44.64%
E. N. Mahama	PNC	165,375	1.92%
George Aggudey	CPP	85,968	0.99%
<b>Total</b>		<b>8,625,785</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Electoral Commission, Ghana

During the 2004 elections, the number of political parties on the ballot paper reduced considerably. Thus, only four parties contested in the presidential election. A few months before the elections, the PNC and the GCPP secured a 'feeble' electoral alliance called the Grand Coalition, with Edward N. Mahama as its presidential candidate. (Note 1) Notwithstanding the Grand Coalition, the impact of the third party in the 2004 election was quite insignificant as the PNC polled only 1.92 percent, representing 165,375 votes; the CPP recorded just 0.99 percent of the total votes cast (see Table 5). The NPP won the election landslide at first round with more than 50 percent of the total votes cast. Since this election was the third time for the PNC's Edward Mahama in the presidential race, coupled with the fact that there was an electoral coalition, an improved performance was somewhat anticipated. Nonetheless, the case of third parties was not any different from the preceding elections.

Table 6. 2008 presidential results summary (1<sup>st</sup> round)

CANDIDATE	PARTY	VOTES	PERCENTAGE
N. A. D. Akufo-Addo	NPP	4,159,439	49.13%
J. E. A Mills	NDC	4,056,634	47.92%
Papa Kwesi Nduom	CPP	113,494	1.34%
Edward N. Mahama	PNC	73,494	0.87%
Emmanuel A. Antwi	DFP	27,889	0.33%
Kwesi Amofa-Yeboah	Independent	19,342	0.23%
T. N. Ward Brew	DPP	8,653	0.10%
Kwabena Adjei	RPD	6,889	0.08%
<b>Total</b>		<b>8,465,834</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Electoral Commission, Ghana

In the 2008 election, as indicated in Table 6, the CPP's results appreciated slightly over the 2004 results yet it was only 1.34 percent. This could be attributed to the personality of its presidential candidate, Dr. Papa Kwesi Nduom, who had been a parliamentarian and former minister under the Kufuor-led administration. He had gained some fame for serving as minister for Public Sector Reform; unlike his predecessor George Aggudey who had little political exposure. But it has been argued that Dr Nduom's performance was partly as a result of his resources. As a former minister and a successful business magnate (Note 2), he had enough resources to prosecute his campaign. Given the capital-intensive nature of electioneering campaign and the financial suffocation many third parties go through, the quest for an appreciable role for third parties in the Ghanaian political space may continue to remain a chimera. As Dr Nduom's performance show, albeit still abysmal, there still remain some correlation between adequate resources to fund political activities and electoral fortunes of all political organizations, particularly third parties.

For the first time in the history of Ghanaian politics, an independent politician contested in the 2008 presidential election. However, not unlike the minor political parties, his performance was 'ill-fated at birth' as he polled only 0.23 percent of the total votes cast. The DPP and the Reformed Patriotic Democrats (RPD) obtained insignificant percentages of 0.10 and 0.08 respectively. The Democratic Freedom Party (DFP), a splinter party from the NDC, also secured 0.33 percent representing 19,342 of the total valid votes. Reminiscent of splinter parties in the past, the DFP and RPD have since their awful show in the 2008 general elections hibernated.

Just like the 2000 presidential election, the 7 December 2008 polls failed to produce a clear winner at the first round of ballot. The winner of the presidency was therefore settled in a scheduled runoff election three weeks later. Not unexpectedly, the minor opposition parties (not including the DFP) teamed up against the ruling NPP to support the main opposition NDC's candidate J. E. A. Mills to outpoll the NPP's Nana Akufo-Addo in the 28 December 2008 runoff; even though the latter had gained the majority votes in the first round. (Note 3) J. E. A. Mills was subsequently declared the winner with more than 50 percent of the total votes cast. This was not without the endorsement of the third parties.

Table 7. 2012 presidential results summary

CANDIDATE	PARTY	VOTES	PERCENTAGE
J. D. Mahama	NDC	5,573,572	50.63%
N. A. D Akufo-Addo	NPP	5,263,286	47.81%
Papa Kwesi Nduom	PPP	64,267	0.58%
Henry Lartey	GCPP	38,250	0.35%
Hassan Ayariga	PNC	24,621	0.22%
Abu Sakara	CPP	20,109	0.18%
Jacob Osei Yeboah	Independent	15,156	0.14%
Kwasi Addai	UFP	8,909	0.08%
<b>Total</b>		<b>11,008,170</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Electoral Commission, Ghana

As observed in Table 7, the 2012 election presents the worst ever performance of minor political parties in Ghana, under the Fourth Republic, as the total votes of the all the six third parties (including the independent candidate) amounted to only 1.6 percent of the total votes cast. Nduom's Progressive Peoples' Party (PPP) placed third after NDC and NPP respectively; though with an immaterial 0.58 percent of the total votes cast. The PPP was, however, formed barely a year to the 2012 general elections. Again, owing to access to reasonably funding to the PPP (as it was the case in 2008 when Dr. Nduom contested on CPP's ticket), the then newly formed political party managed to outpoll all the other aged third parties. Nevertheless, since Nduom had been out of frontline politics as parliamentarian and minister of state, his electoral fortunes was gloomy. This shows that money in politics is crucial, nevertheless a combination of it with popularity as Member of Parliament or Minister of State also helps in Ghanaian electoral politics. Even though the PNC had contested all presidential elections in Ghana, it garnered only 0.22 percent (24,621 votes) during the 2012 election. The CPP, another veteran minor political party, obtained just 0.18 percent (20,109 votes) to place sixth position after the PNC. For this reason, we consider GCPP's 2012 electoral performance as relatively impressively as the novice obtained 0.35 percent representing 38,250 votes to secure the fourth position.

## 6. Implications and Conclusion

Ghana has since 1992 endorsed multiparty democracy as evidenced by the superfluity of political parties participating in both the parliamentary and presidential elections. Nevertheless, Ghana's emergent two-party system contributes to the weakening of third parties in the country. Thus, there has been meager representation of any other party beside the NPP and the NDC. These two main parties have dominated the political scene both at the presidency and the parliamentary level, leaving scanty electoral votes for any third party. Hence, the impact of third parties in Ghanaian electoral politics has been quite minimal and unimpressive. For instance, even though the PNC has contested every single national election held under the Fourth Republic, its electoral fortunes have diminished steadily since its enviable show in the 1992 elections. The party has subsequently failed to become a formidable third force in Ghana's electoral politics.

Even though third parties' electoral fortunes appear gloomy under the current republic, showing no serious chance of forming government, they offer alternative choices (other than the usual NDC and NPP) to the voting public; thereby, amplifying multiparty democratic principles which include freedom of choice and political association. Empirically, the function of third parties during the 2000 elections and the resultant runoff is remarkable as they jointly and openly campaigned for the then opposition NPP to outpoll the incumbent NDC to end the Rawlings' two-decade rule. Nevertheless, the continued poor performance of the individual third parties negatively impacts Ghana's democratic politics as the two main political parties seek to monopolize the political space. This, more often than not, leads to voter apathy as it is predicted that electorates who become dissatisfied with the NPP and the NDC politics may entirely abstain from exercising their franchise. In such event, a national election is reduced to a mere endorsement and/or rejection of the two main political parties (the NPP and the NDC). This becomes more pervasive once electorates form the opinion that third parties are 'vote spoilers' since they do not entertain any realistic chance of winning the election.

In conclusion, despite their awful electoral outputs, third parties present latent merits of Ghana's democratic deepening as subtly argued in the foregoing paragraphs. Hence, public recognition and support offered to the



main political parties must be similarly extended to third parties on all platforms. To secure an effective third force in Ghana's electoral politics, it is suggested that like-minded (similar political philosophy) fragmented political parties coalesce, possibly with new branding (name and symbol) to reflect their shared ideology. By so doing, adequate resources, both in term of human and material, may be available to fund their political activities. This could be an antidote to their acute financial inadequacies and the issue of not being able to field parliamentary and presidential candidates, at all times, which would in effect, render them more electorally competitive. The newly registered PPP appears promising to be a potent third party in Ghanaian politics, following its seemingly impressive performance in the 2012 presidential election. To be considered more serious and attract funding and support from Ghanaians, all other third parties must team up with this leading party (PPP) that clearly has the potential of serving as an alternative to the two main parties. Anything less than this would continue to render third parties as "mushrooms" in outlook and unattractive to Ghanaians.

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## Notes

Note 1. The CPP was initially part of the Grand Coalition; however owing to misunderstanding among the constituent parties, the party withdrew from the Coalition in the eleventh-hour.

Note 2. Dr. Nduom is the leader of Group Nduom with over forty different businesses across the financial sector, tourism industry, manufacturing, media & entertainment industry.

Note 3. The DFP refused to support Prof J. E. A. Mills bid because it was a breakaway faction of the NDC, on whose ticket Prof Mills contested.

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