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## **Partisan Politics and the Decline of Ghanaian Public service over the past two decades**

### **Abstract**

A Spector is haunting Africa (Ghana), it manifests widely in what scholars have referred to as patrimonial rule or neopatrimonialism, whereby the resources of a state becomes the private resource or personal property of ruling coalitions and their allies, thereby eschewing impersonal resource allocation. This is facilitated through the heavily contested nature of Ghanaian politics; hence the civil service has become a mere tool of political staffing and change in organizational goals anytime there is a change in regime. The function of the civil service is compromised in many ways, which is well translated into a decline in performance. Additionally, successive incumbent regimes necessarily undermine the performance of public agencies so as to bypass formal channels of resource allocation, while redistributing state perks through informal networks. The findings suggest that patronage, change in

organizational goals and deliberately eschewing certain public agencies to perform has led to a decline in the performance of the civil service.

Keywords: Partisan Politics, Civil Service, Patronage, Neopatrimonialism, Ghana, Public Institutions

## **Introduction**

A Spector is haunting Africa (Ghana), it manifests widely in what scholars have referred to as patrimonial rule or neopatrimonialism, whereby the resources of a state becomes the private resource or personal property of ruling coalitions and their allies, thereby eschewing impersonal resource allocation .<sup>1</sup> The politics of the day encourages such patrimonial forms of leadership due to the heavily contested nature of politics in Ghana, which has seen four electoral turnovers since 1992, with ever growing smaller margins of victory. As such, anytime a new set of elites are sworn into power the state's resources, jobs, contracts, perks etc., have different destinations and varied beneficiaries, which are remotely different from the prior elites.

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<sup>1</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. "Why is democracy performing so poorly?." *Journal of Democracy* 26, no. 1 (2015): 11-20..

Electoral politics has numerous adverse consequences for Ghana, among them is the huge budget deficits that is accrued due the desire of the incumbent to remain in power, and hence public spending is not capped.<sup>2</sup> The civil service, which is supposed to be the implementing arm of government, has thus become the tool of political interference, which is largely encouraged by the unfettered constitutional powers accorded to the executive arm of government. This manifests largely in the presidential power over public appointments, with the net outcome of this being the staffing of various policy making roles with party loyalist. Ninsin captures this well, and asserts:“ These constitutionally mandated appointments alone make the president a very powerful head of an extensive and rich patrimony, and the rank and file of his party become privileged beneficiaries of financially rewarding patronage.”<sup>3</sup>

Gyimah-Boadi summaries such assertions that Ghana is simply struggling to break away from neopatrimonialism, which is similarly seen in the executives reach to appoint an overwhelming number of bureaucrats; all these occurs at the expense of the professional civil service.<sup>4</sup>

But the question remains: what is the impact of such electoral politics on the functioning of the Ghanaian civil service. Has the service seen decline? This paper will seek to answer this conundrum by structuring the paper as such: the first section provides a brief overview of the civil service in Ghana, followed by a survey of the political context in Ghana. This will be

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<sup>2</sup> Anaman, Kwabena Asomanin. "Impact of Democratic Political Transition on the Economy of Ghana." *Issues in Ghana's Electoral Politics* (2017): 135.

<sup>3</sup> Ninsin, Kwame A. "Political Transitions, Electoral Mobilization, and State Institutions1." *Issues in Ghana's Electoral Politics*(2017): 153.

<sup>4</sup> Gyimah-Boadi, Emmanuel. "Another step forward for Ghana." *Journal of Democracy* 20, no. 2 (2009): 138-152.

followed by delving into the concept of neopatrimonialism, bringing out salient themes in the concept, as well as an overview of patronage, political appointments and lastly, the discussion. The paper, however, concludes that the advent of electoral politics has had damaging impacts on the civil service as well as other public institutions.

### **Ghana's Civil Service**

Public administration systems occur on a global level, and this can be attributed to the more evolving roles of government over the years to more complex roles in the economy. In as much public administration systems occur globally, there are significant differences across countries, pertaining to how they are organised. Central to any given public administration system is the civil service, and it is that part of government that is tasked over the initiation, formulation, program management and the implementation of statist programs through departments and agencies. Ghana's civil service is no different from the above. Ghana's civil service was handed over from the former British Crown after independence, but it was a somewhat unitary civil service, however, in contemporary times the civil service is organised into a series of semi-autonomous bodies that comprise the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs).<sup>5</sup>

Scholars of public administration and political scientist note two main phases of the Ghanaian civil service's trajectory: a well performing bureaucracy (immediate period before independence to the 1970s) and a poor performing bureaucracy (1974 to 1980s). The performance of the civil service in both distinct eras have been keenly associated to the performance of the economy, in that when the economy was good the service performed

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<sup>5</sup> Adei, Stephen, and Yaw Boachie-Danquah. "The civil service performance improvement programme (CSPIP) in Ghana: Lessons of experience." *African Journal of Public Administration and Management* 14, no. 1 (2003): 10-23.

better, the opposite is true.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the economy was bad within that period that coincided with the poor performance of the civil service.<sup>7</sup>

Among the attributes that characterised the good days of the civil service, which propelled Ghana on the international stage as the “torchbearer of the African continent” include: a manageable number of employees, security of tenure and neutrality of the service? On other hand (bad days), the service was characterised by overstaffing, indiscriminate recruitment of personnel in the marginal roles that led to a swollen service.<sup>8</sup> The era of the bad days of the service falls into the years that Knight and Sabot attributed to a period of patronage appointments that caused the public sector to enlarge, far outstretching the private sector.<sup>9</sup> So, it is now clear that the era of the bad days of the civil service might not be due entirely to the overall macroeconomic conditions, but that the politics of the day played a crucial role in this as well.

It is thus not surprising that the then ruling coalition, the PNDC assented to the Civil Service Reform Program (CSRP) from 1987 to 1993 in an effort to restore the civil service back its

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<sup>6</sup> Ayee, Joseph RA. "Civil service reform in Ghana: A case study of contemporary reform problems in Africa." *African Journal of Political Science/Revue Africaine de Science Politique* (2001): 1-41.

<sup>7</sup> Konadu-Agyemang, Kwadwo. "The best of times and the worst of times: structural adjustment programs and uneven development in Africa: the case of Ghana." *The Professional Geographer* 52, no. 3 (2000): 469-483.

<sup>8</sup> Ayee, Joseph RA. "Civil service reform in Ghana: A case study of contemporary reform problems in Africa." *African Journal of Political Science/Revue Africaine de Science Politique* (2001): 1-41.

<sup>9</sup> Gelb, Alan, John B. Knight, and Richard H. Sabot. "Public sector employment, rent seeking and economic growth." *The Economic Journal* 101, no. 408 (1991): 1186-1199.

glory days.<sup>10</sup> But the CSRP was bedevilled with challenges, and the government once more assented to a new set of reforms: Ghana Civil Service Performance Improvement Programme (GCSPIP).<sup>11</sup> This is not say these are the only reforms that have taken place in the country, there have been others.<sup>12</sup>

### **Ghana's Political Context; a Brief Narrative**

Ghana's political history is a chequered one, showing both democratic transitions that have been guided by civilians and transitions that have been guided by violent military seizures of power. Before Ghana's independence, multi-party elections was not uncommon, and the years 1951, 1954 and 1956 is evidence of this. However, following independence, Ghana's first president, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah altered the multi-party tradition to a one party system. After the overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah, the period 1966 to 1992 saw Ghana elapse through six different military regimes; in this time span of 21 years, only five years of institutionalised democratic rule was seen. Ghana saw democracy back on its agenda under a new constitution in 1992, with multi-party democracy reignited in 1993. The government has changed four times over this period, however, democracy in Ghana was and has since been crippled with neo-patrimonial forms of politics.<sup>13</sup> It is important to assert that the transition to multi-party democracy was not the entire making of the PNDC regime that was in power as at

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<sup>10</sup> Adei, Stephen, and Yaw Boachie-Danquah. "The civil service performance improvement programme (CSPIP) in Ghana: Lessons of experience." *African Journal of Public Administration and Management* 14, no. 1 (2003): 10-23.

<sup>11</sup> Antwi, K. B., F. Analoui, and D. Nana-Agyekum. "Public sector reform in Sub-Saharan Africa: what can be learnt from the civil service performance improvement programme in Ghana?." *Public Administration and Development: The International Journal of Management Research and Practice* 28, no. 4 (2008): 253-264.

<sup>12</sup> Appiah, Daniel, and Abdul-Gafaru Abdulai. "Competitive clientelism and the politics of core public sector reform in Ghana." (2017).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

then, but rather due to a series of international pressures over the need to democratise. When Ghana finally made the transition to multi-party democracy, immense contestation for political power has characterised the political arena ever since.<sup>14</sup>

A defacto two party system has characterised Ghana's politics from 1992 (Fourth Republic), with two main political parties, the NPP (New Patriotic Party) and the NDC (National Democratic Congress) dominating and alternating power ever since. The NDC won the elections in 1992 and 1996, but lost to the NPP in 2000. The NPP assumed power in 2000 and maintained their gains in 2004. The NDC bounced back, winning the elections in 2008 and 2012 but lost out to the NPP once more in 2016.<sup>15</sup>

The political scene is heavily contested in Ghana, and it evident in the ever- growing smaller margins that have set the two dominant parties apart during elections. So, why is access to political power so keenly contested in Ghana ? Ninsin notes that : "elections have become a method for conferring a veneer of democratic legitimacy on what the political elite regard as the proprietary right to power which is power to control the state, its bureaucratic apparatus as well as the wealth and other assets of the nation."<sup>16</sup> Ninsin further argues that access to political power allocates the president a patrimony upon which patronage wealth is directed towards party loyalists. The ruling coalition also assumes a spending power of 25 to 30

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<sup>14</sup> Abdulai, Abdul-Gafaru. "Political Context Study–Ghana." *Leeds and Accra: Human Rights, Power and Civic Action Research Project* (2009).

<sup>15</sup> Abdulai, Abdul-Gafaru. "Uneven Regional Development in Ghana; Does Politics Matter?." In *UNU-WIDER conference on 'Inclusive Growth in Africa', September*, pp. 21-22. 2013.

<sup>16</sup> Ninsin, Kwame A. "Political Transitions, Electoral Mobilization, and State Institutions1." *Issues in Ghana's Electoral Politics*(2017): 153.

percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country upon which to redistribute or redirect.<sup>17</sup>

Ninsin (2017) made reference to the damming character of ruling elites monopolising state resources for personalised redistribution to party members, hence he was alluding to the advent of neopatrimonialism in Ghana.

### **The Neopatrimonial State**

In order to properly understand the processes and forms in which electoral politics has undermined the Ghanaian civil service during the last two decades, it is imperative that one understands the neopatrimonial regime, which is dominated by patron-client networks as a means to better appreciate the relationships that exist within the country. Neopatrimonialism can be described as a type of rule or governance structure, which is depicted by personal relations between the ruler and his/her subordinates, whereby the ruler distributes the resources of the state as if it were his/her own personal property.<sup>18</sup> In a neopatrimonial regime, the resources are likened to the resources of the ruler and his entourage or governing elites; the power to distribute public jobs, resources, allocate rents, determine beneficiaries of resources etc., are determined by a few known as patrons.<sup>19</sup> This, however, evident in Ghana. So, a public appointment that is typical of a president appointing friends and party loyalist is evidence of neopatrimonialism.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> Kelsall, Tim. "Neo-patrimonialism, rent-seeking and development: Going with the grain?." *New Political Economy* 17, no. 5 (2012): 677-682.

<sup>19</sup> Killick, Tony. "What drives change in Ghana? A political-economy view of economic prospects." *Overseas Development Institute* (2004).



It is perpetuated through informal channels that exist with the formal ones, but the formal channels seldom work. The state thus serves the interest of the rulers rather than being the impersonal structure, which is depicted from the lenses of rational- legal bureaucracies. Similar observations have been advanced by Erdman & Engel (2007) that two main domains typify neopatrimonialism that is: patrimonialism and legal ration bureaucracy. Patrimonialism is based on a personalised and an informal rule and relationships between the ruler and those he/she governs; there is no dichotomy between the private realm and the public realm. Legal rationale bureaucracy, however, typifies the modern state, and is premised on formalised institutions as opposed to the informal of the patrimonial.

What Erdman & Engel stress is that the informal sphere invades the formal sphere, but does not completely dominate the formal; they both exist side by side. When this happens, the formal state apparatus fails to deliver its purpose of efficient allocations, and is rather subject to elite capture.<sup>20</sup>

Altenburg adds that neopatrimonial regimes are depicted in two main forms: preferentialism with strong concentration of power and patron- client networks. Patron- client networks is of much relevance to this work, since it is through this relationship that public sector jobs are handed to party crony's.<sup>21</sup> Such arguments have been erupted to explain the aberrations of copious political corruption that has ever occurred in Nigeria, Kenya, Zambia, Zaire-Congo and Ghana due to the formation of a network of patrons and clients. The thoughts resonating here stems that African polities are somewhat devoid of "upward mobility" channels outside

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<sup>20</sup> Erdmann, Gero, and Ulf Engel. "Neopatrimonialism reconsidered: Critical review and elaboration of an elusive concept." *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 45, no. 1 (2007): 95-119.

<sup>21</sup> Altenburg, Tilman. "Industrial policy in developing countries: overview and lessons from seven country cases." (2011).

the state, and thus politics becomes the “benevolent redeemer that ensures this upward mobility. As such, the politics degenerates into networks of patrons and clients, with the patrons using their positions in power to award and support their respective clients in diverse ways. And when such a system is embedded in a competitive party environment, then the networks of distributing the states resources must expand, since maintaining political power requires that a larger section of the substantial and potential support base must also benefit. All these are facilitated by the absence of the necessary institutions (accountability) that constrain such behaviours.<sup>22</sup>

The relationships that have come to depict the patron and his/her client or cronies in Africa has propelled some scholars to refer to African ruling regimes as “Predatory,” due to the manner in which successive governments often strive to establish their own patrimony, so as to divert state resources and offices along the lines of party, friends and family .<sup>23</sup> And there is indeed, evidence in Ghana that the state purposively misappropriates state resources to their respective political party members, so as to be able to meet the demands of their clients, so, neopatrimony is active in Ghana.<sup>24</sup>

Theobald argues that African polities have a higher tendency to be patrimonial due to “: The compartmentalisation of African societies into ethnic, regional, religious, and other

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<sup>22</sup> Diamond, Larry. "Class formation in the swollen African state." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 25, no. 4 (1987): 567-596.

<sup>23</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *Political order and political decay: From the industrial revolution to the globalization of democracy*. Macmillan, 2014.

<sup>24</sup> Lindberg, Staffan I. "'It's Our Time to' Chop": Do Elections in Africa Feed Neo-Patrimonialism rather than Counter-Act It?." *Democratization* 10, no. 2 (2003): 121-140.

primordial groupings which both express and reinforce personalistic tendencies.”<sup>25</sup> But if he was right, then how could such relationships have persisted and been worse-off in 16th century Europe: France and Spain, which was later transferred to Latin America, which has ever since been firmly embedded among their ruling coalitions. In fact, it was so pervasive in France that it spiralled a revolution.<sup>26</sup> An appropriate explanation that this work will suffice to explain the African and the Ghanaian case will be an institutional challenge, whereby existing or lacking institutions have failed to constrain such behaviours in African polities.<sup>27</sup>

In as much as the literature on neopatrimonial regimes specifies that neopatrimonialism is the reason for the dumfounded nature of development outcomes in developing countries.<sup>28</sup> it is not absolute, however. The works by Cammack, Kelsall & Booth; Altenburg Kelsall; and Kelsall all provide evidence that neopatrimonialism, if harnessed in particular ways can deliver positive development outcomes in Africa. It is not always bad.

Regardless of this, an operationalised and an orderly presentation of neopatrimonialism is seen as a purely political phenomenon, which does not bring about broad based inclusive developmental patterns. This view is depicted in the manner whereby governing elites within a polity garner and accrue political support by using their respective positions in the public

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<sup>25</sup> Theobald, Robin. "Lancing the Swollen African State: Will it Alleviate the Problem of Corruption?." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 32, no. 4 (1994): 701-706.

<sup>26</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *The origins of political order: From prehuman times to the French Revolution*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011.

<sup>27</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. "Why is democracy performing so poorly?." *Journal of Democracy* 26, no. 1 (2015): 11-20.

<sup>28</sup> Erdmann, Gero, and Ulf Engel. "Neopatrimonialism reconsidered: Critical review and elaboration of an elusive concept." *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 45, no. 1 (2007): 95-119.

sphere to distribute the perks of the state to party loyalist/supporters in an effort to gain political support.<sup>29</sup> As such, neopatrimonialism sets out a broader way of thinking about the manner in which the politics of public sector appointments materializes (I shall elaborate this in a section below), as well as all the ways in which an incumbent uses its advantage while in power to allocate resources towards party lines. It is typical in what is widely known as patron-client networks, and the members of parliament in Ghana constantly engage in this.<sup>30</sup>

### **Patronage**

More importantly, in the practical world the distribution of political perks can manifest in the form of patronage, which is seen as an organizational resource that builds a party's organizational networks in the public sphere. Particularly, it is operationalised through the processes that allow incumbents to appoint their own loyalist and people into state institutions and bureaucracies. It is noticed in the degree and extent to which positions are distributed.<sup>31</sup>

The underlying ideas behind patronage is depicted in electoral purposes, organizational purposes and Governmental purposes. Electoral purposes, despite weak, is to seek for votes in the next election period; organizational purpose is basically to consolidate party linkages and unity in organizations; for governmental purposes, patronage is used to allocate party loyalists to significant policy positions, so as to easily implement the incumbents policy

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<sup>29</sup> Abdulai, Abdul-Gafaru. "State elites and the politics of regional inequality in Ghana." *Unpublished PhD thesis, School of Environment and Development, University of Manchester, UK. Google Scholar* (2012).

<sup>30</sup> Lindberg, Staffan I. "It's Our Time to 'Chop': Do Elections in Africa Feed Neo-Patrimonialism rather than Counter-Act It?." *Democratization* 10, no. 2 (2003): 121-140.

<sup>31</sup> Kopecký, Petr, and Peter Mair. "Party patronage in contemporary Europe: principles and practices." (2011).

ideals.<sup>32</sup> Patronage is imperative to maintaining all forms of clientelist relationships that have come to depict African polities, since “clientelism can only function if office- holders are free to allocate political resources and goods to their clients irrespective of rules that demand distribution by impersonal, bureau- cratic criteria” (Diamond, 1987). Consequently, the state becomes a redistributive mechanism outside the expected and largely lauded weberian lines.

Sigman has argued that colonialism had its part to play with regards to the present patronage dominated bureaucracies because the European institutions were alien to Africa, and thus they never really institutionalised, that is, referring to meritocratic recruitment. So, when African leaders after the 1960s engaged in the Africanization of their public services, the European meritocratic experience was largely eschewed in the process, and the consequence of this was the large scale fiscal crises that engulfed nations such as Ghana.<sup>33</sup> Erdmann & Engel allude to Sigmans explanation, but under much subtle terms, by not blaming entirely the Africans for their poorly built bureacracies: they argue that it was rather the colonial empire that was patrimonial in nature, concentrating meritocratic principles at the top of the governance hierarchy. Such principles only cascaded down to the larger bureacracy just after World War 2, but it was so short a period to have made any substantial gains, and then the perils of Africanizing the bureacracy set in.<sup>34</sup> So, from Africa and Ghana’s past, we know that

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<sup>32</sup> Kopecký, Petr, Maria Spirova, and Gerardo Scherlis. "Beyond the Cartel Party? Party Patronage and the Nature of Parties in New Democracies." In *São Paulo, IPSA-ECPR Joint Conference*. 2011.

<sup>33</sup> Sigman, Rachel. "Which jobs for which boys? Party financing, patronage and state capacity in African democracies." (2015).

<sup>34</sup> Erdmann, Gero, and Ulf Engel. "Neopatrimonialism reconsidered: Critical review and elaboration of an elusive concept." *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 45, no. 1 (2007): 95-119.

the colonial regime, as well as the Africanization (by African leaders) of the bureaucracy played a role in consolidating patronage appointments.

Now that it is clear what patronage seeks to achieve, more recent evidence from a survey of 15 countries in Europe, with 750 expert interviews reveals that patronage is now an organizational resource instead of it being a tool to reward party loyalists. An organizational resource means that patronage is used as a tool to control state institutions.<sup>35</sup> Hence, once a state assumes control of institutions through awarding high ranking positions to party loyalists, the entire bureaucracy is typical of the ruling regime. The control of the state institutions is also sought for party financing purposes.<sup>36</sup>

### **Politics of Public Sector Appointments**

The politics of public sector appointments manifests in both developing and developed countries. The underlying tenet here stems that: politicians have particular policy preferences, and hence would similarly staff public agencies with administrative personnel that have are inclined with their own policy preferences. So, anytime one sitting government or governing coalition assumes the mantle of political leadership in a given polity, public officials must necessarily be changed. Such thoughts have been well articulated by Dahlström & Holmgren.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Kopecký, Petr, and Peter Mair. "Party patronage in contemporary Europe: principles and practices." (2011).

<sup>36</sup> Sigman, Rachel. "Which jobs for which boys? Party financing, patronage and state capacity in African democracies." (2015).

<sup>37</sup> DAHLSTRÖM, CARL, and MIKAEL HOLMGREN. "The Politics of Political Appointments." *QoG Working Paper Series* 2015, no. 4 (2015): 4.

The authors note that public appointments are often meddled with by the reigning ruling coalition, and that even the advanced nations such as the United States is no exception to this, since after a new governing coalition assumes power a lot of positions are subject to be changed, which are in tandem with the incumbent president's powers. To the extent that the authors empirically show that in Sweden, when power changes hands it is reflected in the number of organizational heads that lose their jobs.<sup>38</sup> Similar observations have been made by Meyer-Sahling in post-communist Hungary, but argues that it is more intense at the senior levels. The reason for this is likened to the need to establish active control over policy.<sup>39</sup>

Similar instances have been concurred to by Doherty, Lewis & Limbocker, but in the American context, arguing that American presidents often turn to all manner of strategies to marginalize and coerce turnovers from certain key administrative positions that are necessary to perpetuate the incumbent regime's rule. Famous in the American context was during the Nixon administration, which saw a manual ("Malek Manual") being distributed to administrative officials concerning the means to marginalize and force turnovers from certain bureaucrats who might not support the course of the incumbent. This was done to frustrate some bureaucrats out of their positions, so as to employ Nixon loyalists.<sup>40</sup>

Such appointments have also manifested through the purposive reserving of certain specialised roles (information sensitive roles) for only politically appointed members

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid

<sup>39</sup> Meyer-Sahling, Jan-Hinrik. "The rise of the partisan state? Parties, patronage and the ministerial bureaucracy in Hungary." *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 22, no. 3 (2006): 274-297.

<sup>40</sup> Doherty, Kathleen, David E. Lewis, and Scott Limbocker. "Controlling Agency Choke Points: Presidents and Regulatory Personnel Turnover." *Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions Working Paper* (2016): 2-2015.

(executives) of the incumbent, with considerable powers of reshuffling current employees, as well as transferring them without their consent. This is, however, typical in the case of the Senior Executive System in the USA, which allowed and accorded such powers to political appointees.<sup>41</sup> The emphasis being laid here does not suggest that in any of the cases provided, the constant meddling of the politicians in the affairs of the bureaucracy has led to a weak bureaucracy. It is only to assert that there is, indeed evidence that when power changes hands, with new elites assuming the “corridors of power,” the bureaucracy is altered.

Even though the adverse impact of politics meddling in bureaucratic appointments might not be generalised, there is valid evidence that when politicians staff their bureaucracy with personnel outside meritocratic channels, corruption becomes institutionalised. As an example, Jesus Gil, the mayor of Marbella, Spain, from 1991 to 2003, replaced a professional bureaucracy with political appointees, the consequence was widespread corruption that led to the embezzlement to the tune of millions.<sup>42</sup> Apart from this, the work by Rauch & Evans that covered 35 countries showed that meritocratic recruitment correlated with reduced levels of corruption.<sup>43</sup> Corroborating such findings, the study by Dahlstrom, Lapuente & Toerell which used data from 52 countries shows that merit based recruitment correlates with control of

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<sup>41</sup> Ban, C. “Drawing The Line Between Political Control And Politicization: An Analysis Of Public Administration Theory”. In *Paper presented at the annual meeting of NISPACE* (Vol. 1). (2014, May).

<sup>42</sup> Dahlström, Carl, Victor Lapuente, and Jan Teorell. "The merit of meritocratization: Politics, bureaucracy, and the institutional deterrents of corruption." *Political Research Quarterly* 65, no. 3 (2012): 656-668.

<sup>43</sup> Rauch, James E., and Peter B. Evans. "Bureaucratic structure and bureaucratic performance in less developed countries." *Journal of public economics* 75, no. 1 (2000): 49-71.



corruption after controlling for certain political variables.<sup>44</sup> This means that merit based recruitment can curb corruption to some extent, and it is no news that corrupt bureaucracies seldom perform well. So, the roles of politics in a bureaucracy can be damning.

### **Political appointments in Ghana's Public Sector**

It will be quite elusive and naive for one to study political (patronage) appointments in Ghana without first having an earnest look at the powers conferred on the president by the Ghanaian constitution. According to Professor Michael Oquaye in an Institute of Economic Affairs(IEA) newsletter, he describes the powers of the president as: "the president's powers is legion. He has overwhelming power of appointment and patronage."<sup>45</sup> Such emphasis pertains to the powers of the president over public appointments, which are comfortably conferred on him/her by the constitution.

As an example, the president appoints all the heads of the Ministries (chief directors), heads of the Metropolitan, Municipal and District assemblies, board of directors of all state institutions, as well as the heads of certain key anti-corruption agencies such as CHRAJ and EOCO; other high ranking positions include the Chief Justice, Inspector-General of Police (IGP) and the Auditor-General (AG). These facilitate the awarding of such offices to party loyalists, which forms part of the broad based plans of ruling elite to capture state institutions. To the extent that even sensitive public positions such as the Chairman, Deputy chairman and

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<sup>44</sup> Dahlström, Carl, Victor Lapuente, and Jan Teorell. "The merit of meritocratization: Politics, bureaucracy, and the institutional deterrents of corruption." *Political Research Quarterly* 65, no. 3 (2012): 656-668.

<sup>45</sup> Oquaye, Mike. "Addressing the Imbalance of Power between the Arms of Government-a Search for Countervailing Authority." (2013).

other members of the electoral commission (EC) are all appointed by the president (the EC chair and the auditor general, however, have security of tenure). This is just to make reference to the pervasiveness of the heights of political appointments in Ghana.

Abdulai corroborates such arguments by also arguing that despite institutions such as the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) and the National Media Commission and the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) are supposed to consolidate Ghana's democracy and serve as checks on abuses<sup>46</sup> Ironically, while these bodies were established to serve as checks against the potential abuse of powers by various state institutions, executive hegemony over these commissions has significantly undermined their independence of action<sup>47</sup>. From this, at least, Abdulai makes it clear that extensive Executive powers which are vested in the president undermine public institutions.

Notable scholars such as Gyimah-Boadi have similarly levied backlashes against the hegemonic domination of presidential appointments or patronage in Ghana; noting that the apparent lack of transparency and accountability in the management of public assets such as the mines, forests, as well as the tolerance of certain non-performing public bodies is to facilitate the capture and control of such state institutions, so as to reap the perks of corruption.<sup>48</sup> And that is why subsequent regimes have deliberately stalled the enactment of formal institutions that could mitigate corrupt practices. The emphasis here is no different from the empirical study undertaken by Kopecky, Spirova & Scherlis who also find that

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<sup>46</sup> Abdulai, Abdul-Gafaru. "Political Context Study—Ghana." *Leeds and Accra: Human Rights, Power and Civic Action Research Project* (2009).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid

<sup>48</sup> Gyimah-Boadi, Emmanuel. "Another step forward for Ghana." *Journal of Democracy* 20, no. 2 (2009): 138-152.

incumbents seek to control institutions so as to similarly reassign the perks of corruption towards their domain.<sup>49</sup>

Abdulai also notes that patronage appointments reaches the local level (the District Chief Executive, as well as 30% of the staff) and the DCEs are to be the local representatives of their ruling parties; they help garner and organise votes for their incumbent regimes. This resonates well with the thoughts that patronage appointments indeed have an electoral ambition, as such, patronage is a powerful tool for any incumbent.<sup>50</sup>

Ghana is no different from the situations in the above European countries and in the United States of America (U.S.A). Variant studies have documented the nature of politically motivated appointments in Ghana, key among these is a recent study undertaken by Kopecky, Spirova & Scherlis (2011). They find that political appointments in Ghana's public service is blatant (undertaken by president/ministers/top level executives), and evidence from their interviews suggests that 52% attribute the staffing of such public bodies to the desire to establish control over public institutions; 30% also attribute the need to enforce such appointments over the need to reward party loyalist, as well as to instill control over public bodies. Such motifs is due to issues of the new incumbent mistrusting those employed by the previous regime, however, disturbing among the findings is the fact that incumbent regimes

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<sup>49</sup> Kopecký, Petr, Maria Spirova, and Gerardo Scherlis. "Beyond the Cartel Party? Party Patronage and the Nature of Parties in New Democracies." In *São Paulo, IPSA-ECPR Joint Conference*. 2011.

<sup>50</sup> Abdulai, A. G. (2012). State elites and the politics of regional inequality in Ghana. *Unpublished PhD thesis, School of Environment and Development, University of Manchester, UK*.

also seek to control appointments, so as to have control over corrupt practices, which will be used to fund party activities.<sup>51</sup>

The authors also make it clear that in Ghana politicians prefer to hire only those who speak the same political language. Evidence from their data shows that 87.8% of their interviewees espoused that appointments to the public sector is due to politics, however, that same percentage asserts that despite the appointments may be political they are nonetheless professional appointees, and not just the appointment of incompetent personnel.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, in Ghana, the political appointments permeate all public bodies and the bureaucracies, with the exceptions being the state-owned media, including the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, Daily Graphic, Ghanaian Times and Ghana News Agency (from 2004 to 2008). Apart from these, patronage appointments dominate the public sector in varying forms and degrees. What might be of concern to development and anti-corruption experts is that fact that political appointments dominate the Judiciary in Ghana: the high incidence of party political appointments to both the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General's Department (which are the same office in Ghana), as well as to the Judicial Council, the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) and EOCO, which are the non-departmental agencies and commission in the Ghanaian judicial system. The courts in Ghana, despite still prone to political appointments occurs on a relatively much

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<sup>51</sup> Kopecký, Petr, Maria Spirova, and Gerardo Scherlis. "Beyond the Cartel Party? Party Patronage and the Nature of Parties in New Democracies." In *São Paulo, IPSA-ECPR Joint Conference*. 2011..

<sup>52</sup> Ibid

smaller level. The ministries in Ghana is no exception, since incumbent regimes appoint chief directors, deputy directors and the appointment of some middle ranked personnel.<sup>53</sup>

Hence, patronage appointments is evident in Ghana, so one could deduce that in Ghana, capturing political power is quite an illustrative venture to use the states resources and positions as public a private purse, which would be distributed to party loaylists as rewards and to also gain controll over state institutions. Now, it makes ssense, when one critically examines the assertions posited by Knight & Sabot that:

*..... less developed economies (Ghana inclusive), having ill- functioning mixed economies with powerful bureaucracies and little public accountability, are fertile breeding grounds for rent seeking behaviour and patronage.*

Knight and Sabot also show that patronage appointments in developing nations such as Ghana led to bloated bureacracies from 1960 to 1978, with employment in the public sector surpassing the that of the private sector. But the question still lingers: what is the impact of patronage appointments on the performance of the bureaucracy?

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<sup>53</sup> Kopecký, Petr. "Political competition and party patronage: public appointments in Ghana and South Africa." *Political Studies* 59, no. 3 (2011): 713-732.

**Discussion: Critically discuss the role of electoral politics in the decline of the Ghanaian civil service during the last two decades.**

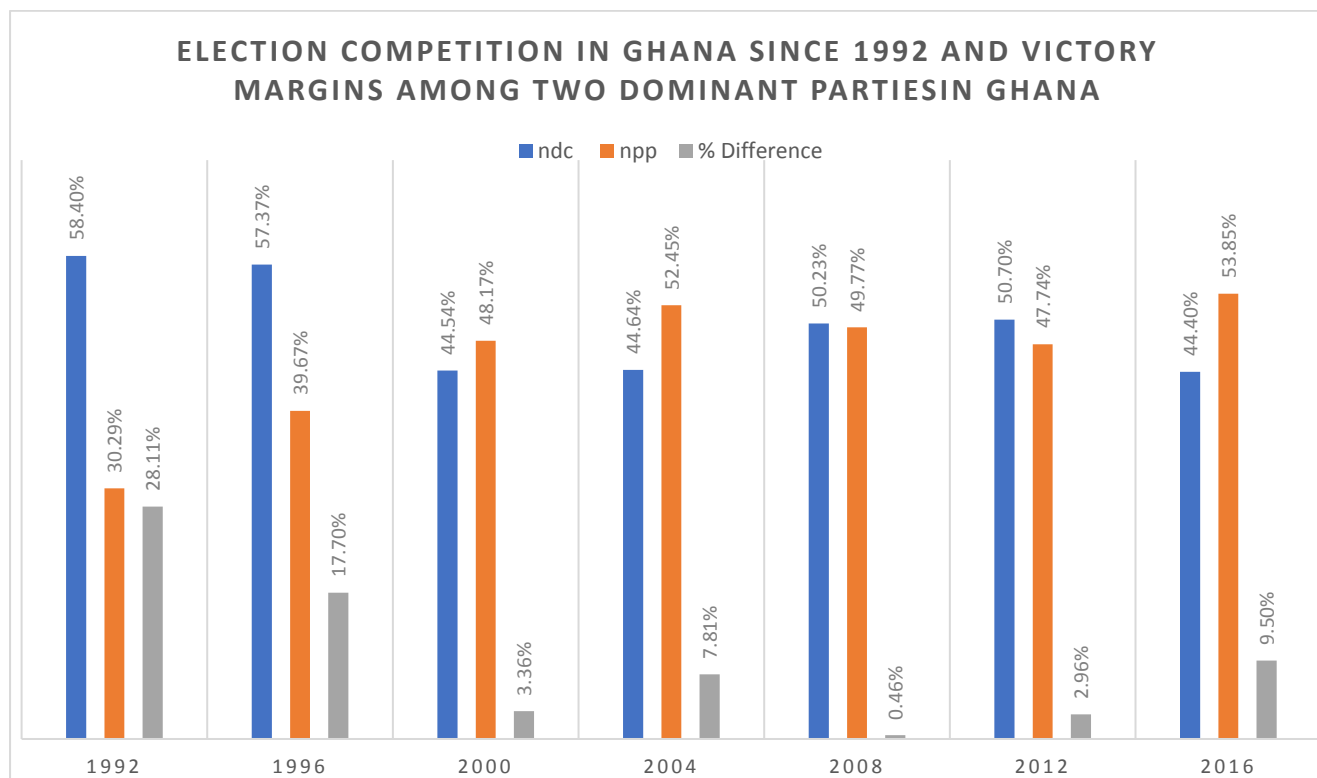
**Table 1.0**

**Electoral Results Between Ghana's Two Dominant parties since 1992 Democratic Elections (Presidential Election)**

<b>Year of Election</b>	<b>NDC</b>	<b>NPP</b>	<b>% Difference</b>
<b>1992</b>	58.40% ( <b>winner</b> )	30.29%	28.11%
<b>1996</b>	57.37% ( <b>winner</b> )	39.67%	17.7%
<b>2000</b>	44.54%	48.17% ( <b>winner</b> )	3.36%
<b>2004</b>	44.64%	52.45% ( <b>winner</b> )	7.81%
<b>2008</b>	50.23% ( <b>winner</b> )	49.77%	0.46%
<b>2012</b>	50.70% ( <b>winner</b> )	47.74%	2.96%
<b>2016</b>	44.40%	53.85% ( <b>winner</b> )	9.5%

Source: Authours own construct with data from Electoral Commission Ghana.

**Figure 2: Election Competition in Ghana since 1992 and Victory Margins Among the Two Dominant Parties (NPP and NDC)**



From the graph and the table above, one instantly notices the degree of competition between the two parties in terms of the presidential elections from 1992 to 2016. It is clear that the mantle of leadership has alternated between both parties twice, with the degree of competition ever heightening as the years progress. For instance, ever since the 1992 and the 1996 elections whereby the NDC won by an overwhelming 58.40% and 57.37% respectively, with the margin of the win being 28.11% and 17.70%, all other electoral (presidential) victories have recorded winning margins of less than 10% among both parties. Of importance are the 2000, 2008 and 2012 elections that saw no party clearly recording a margin of victory by more than 5%. The story this tells is that elections in Ghana has become highly competitive over the years.

This, however, has some theoretical implications. Sigman notes that high levels of competition in democratic elections creates incentives for governing elites to legitimise their rule; they, however, do this by patronage (distributing state jobs).<sup>54</sup> However, Sigman also notes that this occurs more in highly competitive settings.<sup>55</sup> Diamond also makes similar assertions that patronage appointments may actually increase in a highly competitive setting, over the need for increased levels of “upward mobility” in state jobs since the private sectors of developing countries remain poor.<sup>56</sup> Lindberg also notes that such competition heightens the distribution of economic perks to clients.<sup>57</sup>

As evidence to why incessant electoral competition in Ghana allows patronage, Linberg’s study in Ghana, however, reveals that Members of Parliament (MP) are often under pressure to provide links or the actual jobs that can aid a client/clients who supported that MP win elections.<sup>58</sup>

The argument to make then is that, it is expected that patronage should be consolidated in the Ghanaian polity, since Ghana easily meets the criteria for a highly competitive political setting. So, if this happens to the case, then assessments of the impact of this patronage can be thoroughly assessed on the public sector, notably the civil service. Among the works that have confirmed the presence of patronage is one by Owusu which also shows that patronage leads

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<sup>54</sup> Sigman, Rachel. "Which jobs for which boys? Party financing, patronage and state capacity in African democracies." (2015).

<sup>55</sup> Ibid

<sup>56</sup> Diamond, Larry. "Class formation in the swollen African state." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 25, no. 4 (1987): 567-596.

<sup>57</sup> Lindberg, Staffan I. "'It's Our Time to' Chop": Do Elections in Africa Feed Neo-Patrimonialism rather than Counter-Act It?." *Democratization* 10, no. 2 (2003): 121-140.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid



to poor organizational performance in Ghana's civil service. The study covered 19 public institutions in Ghana, while interviewing 223 employees. He stresses on the dangers of patronage within organizations that leads to poor performance as; (i) difficulty of institutions in establishing a sense of discipline among the employees, (i) difficulty in establishing a high performance culture and (i) the difficulty to demand for professionalism from their current crop of workers.<sup>59</sup> His findings suggests that institutions that had quite a lesser proportion of its employee's employment accorded to patronage, performed relatively better and were high performers, while those that recruited a higher percentage of employees due to patronage performed poorly.<sup>60</sup> So, organizations that showed that a larger percentage of its employee base owing their appointment to political connections performed poorly.

The evidence is apt that electoral politics has indeed effectuated poor performance among the civil service organizations. Of course, when one looks at the powers of the president over patronage appointments, which is constitutional (argued above), it only makes sense that a new incumbent comes in with a new set of political elites and top level bureaucrats who could similarly impact public jobs. Strong evidence of patronage appointments in Ghana can be seen in the work of Kopecky, Spirova & Scherlis who found that new regimes may mistrust old employees of the previous regime, and thus alter the personnel in some positions in favour of their own loyalist.<sup>61</sup> Hence, the political appointees in Owusu's work owed their appointment to the incumbent regime as the time of his study.

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<sup>59</sup> Owusu, Maxwell. *Uses and Abuses of Political Power: a case study of continuity and change in the politics of Ghana*. Ghana University Press, 2006.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid

<sup>61</sup> Kopecký, Petr. "Political competition and party patronage: public appointments in Ghana and South Africa." *Political Studies* 59, no. 3 (2011): 713-732.

In her Doctoral Thesis, Sigman shows that new incumbents who ascend the throne of leadership in Ghana alter organizational goals of some public institutions. When this happens the organizations tend to perform poorly due to inconsistent goals they follow, clearly lacking a consistent pattern. In her study of the African nations (Ghana and Benin), despite a larger portion of the sample in Benin saw the change in organizational goals as more of a serious problem than in Ghana, it nonetheless means that the impacts are not felt in Ghana. So, her study is quite informative and provides adequate and robust evidence of the role electoral politics can play with regards to undermining the Ghanaian civil service, contributing to the decline of the service.<sup>62</sup>

Other studies that have taken a more pragmatic approach to elucidate the influence of electoral politics on Ghana's bureaucracy is the one undertaken by Appiah & Abdulai.<sup>63</sup> Sequencing their arguments through the political settlement framework, the authors have argued that over the years in Ghana, political competition has become intense, with the margins of victory by the two dominant parties declining over the years; this has, however, led "members of the two dominant parties (to) see the control of the state as the most lucrative avenue for individual wealth and group influence".<sup>64</sup> As such, successive governments have not shown commitment to curtail these illicit wealth creation ventures. This has manifested in the misguided support ruling coalitions have accorded the National Development and Planning Commission (NDPC) in Ghana by deliberately setting up their own versions of coordination units under the auspices of the president's office, and eschewing the NPDCs

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<sup>62</sup> Sigman, Rachel. "Which jobs for which boys? Party financing, patronage and state capacity in African democracies." (2015).

<sup>63</sup> Appiah, Daniel, and Abdul-Gafaru Abdulai. "Competitive clientelism and the politics of core public sector reform in Ghana." (2017).

<sup>64</sup> Ibid

work in the process. The NPDC has thus been subject to changes in membership of its ranks due to electoral turnovers leading to policy discontinuities over the years. This weakens the NDPC to deliver its constitutional mandate of public sector coordination, as well as development planning.

The performance of anti-corruption agencies has similarly been subject to the mortifying nature of politics. Evidence suggests that notable anti-corruption agencies such as the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) is weakened to function effectively due to under-funding the body, as well the continuous practice that has seen its organizational heads not being accorded the independence to operate. This is due to the deliberate appointing of its heads as acting heads. This has stifled the organizations ability to meet its constitutionally delineated function of fighting corruption.<sup>65</sup>

Also the duplicative role that a political appointee assumes as a minister of Justice and an Attorney General (AG) is damning to Ghanaian accountability because the political appointee, who owes his/her appointment to the head of the Executive arm of government is seldom willing to hold to account the one to whom he/she owes the appointment, as well as other high ranking members of the executive who may be corrupt. Central to this is fact that the the Directorate of Public Prosecutions (DPP), the prosecuting arm of the government, is under the Ministry of Justice, which is headed by a political appointee, as such the offices under the AG are often disincentivised not to agitate to prosecute offenders. This is captured well by Appiah & Abdulai:

*“In a country where many heads of public sector agencies appointed by the president are usually key financiers of the ruling party, the AG (Attorney General) finds it difficult to undermine not just his own political position, but also the financial backbone of his political*

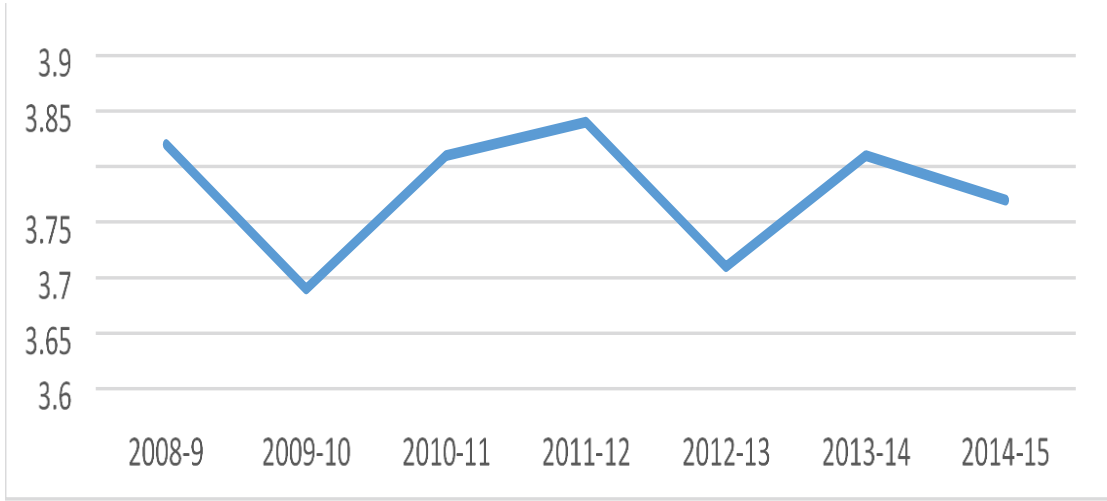
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<sup>65</sup> Ibid

*party. Consequently, the two dominant parties have often resorted to ‘post incumbency’ accountability strategies in fighting corruption, whereby only former officials from rival political parties are prosecuted, while corrupt ruling party officials are often required to resign from their positions, rather than being prosecuted.”<sup>66</sup>*

It is thus clear that electoral politics has played a key role in the decline of very sensitive public sector agencies such as anti-corruption agencies. Their performance is then questionable.

**Figure 3: Effectiveness of public institutions in Ghana, 2008- 2014**



**Source: World Economic Forum – Global Competitiveness Index Historical Dataset, 2005-14 (Adopted from Appiah & Abdulai, 2015).**

The figure above is also evidence of the undulating and inconsistent performance of Ghana’s public institutions over the years, scoring somewhat poorly across the years.

The underlying reasons why this forms of politics has persisted and has continued to persist lies in the reasoning of neopatrimonilism, which has throughly infested the nation state in

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid

Ghana, leading to the deplorable nature of the public service. It has been argued that making the transition from a neopatrimonial state to an impersonal one (modern state/bureaucratic elements) is quite a herculean task. And that: "Where a modern state has been consolidated before the extension of the franchise, it has often succeeded in surviving into modern times; where the democratic opening preceded state reform, the result has often been widespread clientelism."<sup>67</sup> Ghana easily meets this criteria, and the reforms that accompanied its democratic transition supports this thinking well.

Fukuyama also notes that democracies with low per capita income levels and poor education levels are inclined to be clientelistic in nature due to the likelihood that voters will be mobilised on clientelist basis to the polls than on programmatic public policies. When this happens, individuals get into politics not pursue sound governing and public agenda's but rather to enrich themselves.<sup>68</sup>

Fukuyama in another instance famously argued that the challenge of getting to a modern state is likened to the problem of getting to Denmark (Denmark is supposed to be a mythical place where all institutions work and the state is impersonal). But he further asserts that the Danes don't even know they got where they are.<sup>69</sup> The challenge confronting new democracies such as Ghana is herculean, but there is hope. Promoting the good governance agenda seems a plausible solution, but it will be much more viable when combined with effective enforcement, in that Ghana should be able to enforce its formal laws, while equipping

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<sup>67</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. "Why is democracy performing so poorly?." *Journal of Democracy* 26, no. 1 (2015): 11-20.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid

<sup>69</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *The origins of political order: From prehuman times to the French Revolution*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011.

accountability agencies to work well; at the same time the rule of law should be upheld, constraining even top-top elite.

However, this mortifying impact of the spector (neopatrimonial politics) that is haunting Ghana, which is attributed to the politics of the day (neopatrimonialism, patronage, patron-client networks, diverting state funds to support party activities) can be mitigated with the growth of a market economy that will offer more opportunities for individuals to enrich themselves through other alternatives means and not only through politics.

### **Conclusion**

This study has delved copiosuly into the avenues through which electoral politics can dampen public institutions or the civil service agencies to perform well. It attributes the poor performance of the civil service over the years to the politics of day, which is manifested in the desire of rulling coalitions to capture the state, so as to distribute the states resoruces along party lines/friends/informal channels. When this happens, such coalitions will necessarily eschew supporting the states bureaucracies to function well, so as not to hinder their ability to distribute the perks of the state through informal networks. As such, this study shows that patronage appointments, as and when a new incumbent assumes power, changinging of organizational goals due to a change in regime and the sidelining the neccessary agencies that have been mandated to perform their jobs forms part of the many ways in which electoral politics hinders civil service performamance.