

LAUNCHING OF KAS DEMOCRACY REPORT 2007

**HELD AT
ALIZA HOTEL, NORTH RIDGE
ON 19TH NOVEMBER, 2007**

ORGANIZED BY KONRAD-ADENAUER-STIFTUNG (KAS)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) seeks to promote the ideals of good governance. In order to attain this objective, KAS prepares and disseminates publications among others as part of its contribution towards helping to build democracy across the globe. As a result of this, a programme was held at the Alisa Hotel in Accra on 19th November, 2007 to launch the 2007 “Democracy Report” which aims at informing the public on the state of democratic development around the globe.

Participants at the launch were selected from people with diverse backgrounds. They included those in political governance, economic governance, corporate governance and socio-economic governance.

The report on Ghana was authored by Prof. Kwame Ninsin, formerly of the University of Ghana who also reviewed it. Hon. Maxwell Kofi Jumah, a Member of Parliament and member of the Executive Council of the New Patriotic Party (NPP), also reviewed the report from a practitioner’s point of view. The Launch was chaired by the Chairperson of the National Governance Programme, Mrs. Leonora Kyeremanten.

Prof. Ninsin observed that the findings of the study are instructive because they indicate fragility of democracy in emerging democracies in Africa. Again, political parties in the countries studied are not effectively institutionalized as instruments of self-determination because of the parties having a short history and not well rooted in the society and have thus become instruments for some people to pursue their parochial interest of acquiring wealth.

Hon. Jumah praised the report as a good one and indicated that probably for the first time, an attempt has been made to describe the role of political parties in our political system. Notwithstanding, he alleged that the report was colored with some biases of the author.

There were discussions on some of the issues at the launch, one of which was the constitutional requirement that states that the president should appoint more than 50% of his ministers from parliament. According to a discussant, this hampers the system of separation of powers of the executive and the legislature. There were arguments that the President wields too much power. Again, there was a worry on MPs being appointed as Regional Ministers far from Accra (the seat of parliament).

Concerns were also raised on state funding of political parties as well as low patronage of political parties i.e. very few card bearing members in political parties thus making the parties financially incapacitated.

INTRODUCTION

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) is one of the German Political Foundations that seeks to promote, among others, the ideals of good governance i.e. the Rule of Law, Human Rights and Social Market Economy, across the globe. KAS, which has been operating in Ghana in the last forty-one years, believes in harnessing indigenous knowledge to confront challenges of development.

In order to attain its objectives, KAS works with, and grants financial assistance to, local institutions and organizations from government, legislative bodies, parastatals as well as civil society to:

- execute educational programmes, conferences, seminars and workshops
- build capacity
- develop strategy concepts, and
- prepare and disseminate publications

It is as a result as of the latter function, i.e. preparation and dissemination of publications that a programme was held at the Alisa Hotel in Accra to launch the 2007 Democracy Report on Ghana.

The report was reviewed by Prof. Kwame Ninsin from the academia and Hon. Maxwell Kofi Jumah, a parliamentarian who reviewed it from a practitioner's perspective.

Participants at the launch were selected from people with diverse backgrounds which included those in political governance, economic governance, corporate governance and socio-economic governance. This was to ensure that issues that would arise could be discussed dispassionately.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON KAS DEMOCRACY REPORT

The KAS Democracy Report informs on the state of democratic development around the globe. Two volumes of reports have already been written. These are Media and Democracy (2005) and Rule of Law (2006). The third volume i.e. the current one, focuses on the role of

political parties in the process of democratization in our partner countries. Additionally, this third report covers the problems of institutionalizing democratic parties and party systems.

It is a fact that political parties perform functions which help to organize complex societies and to produce legitimacy for political decisions. However, it has been discovered that most of the political parties have deficits in internal party democracy, in their organizational structures, including membership, or in their programmes.

This report therefore provides information about the parties' contribution to democracy and their programmatic and organizational standing.

OPENING CEREMONY

The ceremony started at 10.20 a.m. with an opening prayer by Mr. Kubadzi of Christian Mothers Association. Mr. Isaac Owusu-Mensah of KAS in his opening remarks highlighted the reasons for the meeting as part of his foundation's contribution towards helping to build democracy in Ghana. He said that KAS has embarked on a project called "KAS Democracy Report". This is a means by which certain segments in building of democracy can be put into the public realm so that there can be discussions on building the pillars of democracy.

Mr. Owusu-Mensah stated that this is the third in the series of the Democracy Report that KAS was going to launch. He thereafter took the opportunity to introduce the dignitaries for the occasion.

CHAIRPERSON'S OPENING REMARKS

Mrs. Leonora Kyeremanten, the head of the National Governance Programme, a fellow of Fredric Ebert Foundation and a human rights activist, chaired the launch. She welcomed everyone to the programme and recounted the violent politics in her youthful days and how far politics in Ghana has changed for the better over the last 40 years or so.

She was of the opinion that although there have been good prospects, large windows of opportunity remain untapped. For that matter, the National Governance Programme which she chairs, collaborated with the Institute of Economic Affairs to negotiate the Dutch support which has been offering assistance towards enhancing the capacity of political parties as well as their internal democratization process and promoting consensus building on key issues of politics.

Mrs. Kyeremanten expressed worry that many people in Ghana are not interested in bearing cards of political parties which would make them provide funding for political parties. Rather, according to her, Ghanaians love funerals of which they are ready to spend a lot of money to bury the dead. She wanted to know if people would be ready to be taxed to fund political parties.

She wanted consensus to be built on what constitutes national interest and how we can uphold it, irrespective of political, ethnic or religious affiliation so that by 2015, political parties in Ghana would also attain “middle income or fully developmental” status. She tasked all to work to ensure that Ghana has credible political parties in readiness for another credible and conflict-free election.

REMARKS BY THE RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE OF KAS

Mr. Klaus D. Loetzer, the Resident Representative of KAS stated that this is the third in the series of Democracy Reports. He gave the background of KAS as a promoter of democracy across the globe. He said that the study covered 16 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East. He admitted that the report did not cover all the contributions made by the political parties. This notwithstanding, there are a lot of recommendations in the report which should be seen as food for thought for political parties in Ghana. He thanked both Prof. Ninsin for his invaluable contributions to this report and Hon. Jumah for agreeing to review it.

Mr. Loetzer indicated that although what he was going to say is not part of his prepared speech, as someone who has worked in a couple of African countries, he strongly believes that African democracy should be based on Africa’s own political values and traditions but not as an importation from Europe. He challenged the intelligentsia and practitioners to develop something that represents Africa’s past, present and the future. He added that democracy is a long struggle so he implored everyone to be part of that struggle.

REVIEW BY PROF. KWAME NINSIN

Introduction

Prof. Kwame Ninsin, a one time Head of Department of Political Science, University of Ghana, the Secretary-General of Association of African Political Scientists and an author of many books, in his introduction observed that political parties are among the key institutions of any democratic society. According to him, they are instruments for self determination and thus the people are able to indirectly govern themselves through their representatives whom

they have elected. He remarked that the importance of this publication – *Parties and Democracy* – lies in this important function that political parties perform in a democracy. Prof. Ninsin stated that the publication is a study of 16 countries drawn from five regions of the world and that Ghana is one of the four African countries studied for this report.

Importance of Political Parties

Prof. Ninsin admitted that political parties play an important role in the institutionalization of democracy therefore they should be committed to the principles of democracy and practice them. He elaborated that the principles of democracy should include freedom of association and freedom of speech as well as freedom to choose one's own government. He continued that one could infer from this study that for democracy to flourish, the principles of democracy must be embodied and practiced by political parties.

The Findings

According to Prof. Ninsin, the findings of the study are instructive because they indicate fragility of democracy in emerging democracies in Africa and again, political parties in these countries studied are not effectively institutionalized as instruments of self-determination. These have come as a result of parties having a short history and not well rooted in the society. According to him, these political parties have become instruments for some people to pursue their parochial interest of acquiring wealth. However, he stressed that in countries where democracy has thrived for over five decades, political parties have become reasonably autonomous from the state and truly represent the interest of the people.

On the methodology used for the study, Prof. Ninsin stated that the countries selected for the study represent different geographical regions and are of comparable socio-economic situation and historical experience. A uniform set of indicators and questions were also used for all the countries studied.

REVIEW BY HON MAXWELL KOFI JUMAH

Hon. Maxwell Kofi Jumah, a Deputy Minister for Local Government and Rural Development and a practitioner of a political partyism, reviewed the report from a practitioner's perspective. He started by praising the report as a good one and indicated that probably for the first time, an attempt has been made to describe the role of political parties in our political system.

These notwithstanding, he was quick to observe that the report is probably colored with some biases of the author. For instance, where the author does not mention studies by the Department of Political Science, he (Hon. Jumah) sees a lot of editorials and an attempt to present perceptions as facts. For example, according to him, in talking about legal basis, what the author did not explain the legal basis for our political parties' attempts to broaden the people's representation by insisting that founding members/officials of the parties should be as representational of the nation as possible. He said that it calls for district representation but that was not captured in the presentation. According to him, looking at our history, there is the need to bring the various geographical areas and ethnic groups together as part of the democratic development. He stated that the paper attempted to touch on it but it was not highlighted the way it should have been.

Touching on the electoral system, Hon. Jumah indicated that although the study commends Ghana, there is something that runs through it. According to the report, because of poverty and illiteracy, the electorates are not able to make rational choices. However, according to him, there is a difference between rational choice and a good choice. In his opinion, for the people who are voting, they are making rational choices - according to their priorities. So, he (Hon. Jumah) does not believe that the decisions made by Ghanaians are irrational choices as the report tries to suggest.

On parliament, Hon. Jumah disagreed with the author on the impression created that as a result of our hybrid electoral system, the President always has his way. According to him, although there are certain public issues like the Representation of the People's Amendment Bill (ROPAB), in most cases when issues are presented to parliament and they go to the committee level, one would hardly find partisanship. He cited that some debates even end up with the rejection of presidential nominees to key positions.

What is more? According to him, the report seems to say that MPs spend a lot of money to be elected only to be controlled by the President. He observed that there are some contradictions in this statement. He therefore argued that if the President wants to control whoever emerges, then he should spend the money.

Hon. Jumah again expected the author to have highlighted on the issue of equal representation because there is a big gap both in our constitution and in our practice. He asked whether the thumb has the same weight or the same effect regardless of one's tribal or geographic location. He said that that is something that needs to be debated if one wants to

talk about the core values of democracy but we have conveniently sidestepped that because probably it is too sensitive. But he added that in an intellectual forum like this, this is where such an issue should be discussed.

Hon. Jumah again stated that the author argued that our system only rewards a person who has the simple majority but in his opinion, even in our traditional environment and colonial history the majority carries the day.

On state funding of political parties, he emphasized that although there are some merits to it, he does not believe it should be carried out because it will be bad for our democracy. He explained that as our democracy grows, people will begin to understand the democracy and how it affects them. This will make them not only vote with their thumbs but with their pockets. He opined that this will be an expression of the people's will. He argued that if the state begins to fund political parties, it will start to distort whatever the people want. He asked the question that 'how are we going to determine the amount for a particular political party?' is it going to be based on their performance on the last elections even though situations have changed? Or is it going to be based on their representation in parliament or is it going to be based on equal basis? According to him, this will distort our political process in terms of expressing the freewill of the people. He cited South Africa as an example of his argument and stated that as soon as a party gets its funds, it reinforces the position it is already in and thereby makes it difficult for new parties and new ideas to emerge.

Hon. Jumah again mentioned the role of chiefs which to him is an important point and needed to have been mentioned in the report. He asked of the role that chieftaincy plays in democratic dispensation. Is it democratic to have chiefs at all? If it is, how do we turn them around to fit into the democratic dispensation?

He also touched on the role of the FM stations and stated that there is nowhere in the world that the media has free expression as it is done in Ghana but that was not mentioned in the report.

He however concluded that on the whole he believes the publication is a good report because a lot of very important issues have been brought out especially the issue of the role that money is placed in our political system, and the issue of ethnicity. He also praised the role of women which was mentioned in the report.

DISCUSSION ON ISSUES RAISED

In the ensuing discussion, Mr. Elvis Afriyie-Ankrah the Deputy General-Secretary of NDC, acknowledged that he has not seen the report but argued that Hon. Jumah's assertions were based on theory and not in practice. According to him, the assertions that were debunked by Hon. Jumah are all realities - they are things that are being manifested on the ground. For instance, it is obvious that the executive has a very strong influence on the legislature although there are some instances where consensus are built on certain issues by both sides of the house. He continued that on major national political issues, the position of the executive has always been towed by the members of the ruling party e.g. on ROPAL, CNTCI loan, etc. He said that even the attitude of the executive towards critical voices of their own party members is something worrying e.g. on P. C. Appiah-Ofori, an NPP Member of Parliament. Mr. Afriyie-Ankrah suggested that critics like Hon. P. C. Appiah-Ofori are those who should be made Ministers. Apparently however, he alleged, if one wants to be a minister, one needs to be loyal to the government in power.

Aside from the above mentioned, Mr. Afriyie-Ankrah admitted that although he has not seen the full report, he thinks that there are two major issues that constitute a constitutional dilemma. One is the constitutional requirement that states that the president should appoint more than 50% of his ministers from parliament. According to him, this hampers the system of separation of powers of the executive and the legislature.

Secondly, the constitution stipulates that the role of MPs is to make laws. However, there is no MP who would go and tell his people to vote for him so that he will go to parliament and make laws for them. Anyone who campaigns on this message will lose the election, he predicted. According to him, what the MPs are doing is that they are forced to make promises like construction of roads, building of clinics, schools, etc. This means that we are deceiving ourselves particularly when one's party is not in power, one can hardly carry out any development project aside from one's paltry MPs Common Fund.

Another contributor who said he was a student of governance stated categorically that he does not side with Hon. Jumah's assertion that it is not true that the executive is very powerful and that it controls the thinking of the majority in parliament. According to him, during the last District Assembly election, the Electoral Commission met with the Minister of Local Government and agreed that unit committees and others should be scrapped to cut down election cost by over ₵67 billion. He added that when the executive was not moving, he

thought they could meet with the Local Government Committee but when he met the minority leader and later the majority leader, the majority leader was adamant and told him that “you know some of these issues you don’t know what the President is thinking so you need to take your time”.

On the appointment of the Speaker of Parliament some of the majority members did not have their free-will to vote. He continued that one is not saying this practice of executive wielding too much power started from the current government, but all that he wants to say is that it is real.

He elaborated that on state funding of political parties, it is unfortunate that Hon. Jumah said it would distort the political parties because the NPP gets support from Netherlands’ Institute of Multi-Party Democracy and other states but up to date they have not said it distorted the relationship. According to him, all that they are saying is that there should be a legislation that stipulates what additional support should be given to political parties. He reiterated that this does not mean all the expenditures of the political parties should be borne by the state. He concluded that the state providing additional support to political parties is being practiced even in advanced democracies.

The third contributor, Hon. Benjamin Kumbuor, commended the study that it has been very exciting because it registers a number of continuities and discontinuities on the profile of political parties particularly in Africa. According to him, through his study he has observed that there seems to have been a major movement from the political party architecture as we had it in the early 1990’s. He said that one thing that he thought should have been registered very clearly in a particular context of Ghana was first of all, the findings of the NCD on political parties after the district and regional fora were held, how this found expression in the committee of experts and particularly how it was reformulated by the consultative assembly. In his opinion, these three developments provide a very useful context because if the NCD report says the country was divided, as to whether the vehicle for democracy was through political parties or not, the preference was that that will be the right way to go.

He said that the first point that he wants to register was that we should try to make some professional distinctions. According to him, we should look at the institution of the political parties and what role they are supposed to play in the democracy and the individual actors. He compared them with a vehicle (political parties) and the driver (individual actors) –

whether the difficulty in democracy is by the nature of the vehicle or the people who are driving it?

He went on to mention the study of values and said that he was particularly happy that the study has revealed that very few people join political parties because of certain values (ideology). He said that just because there is this lack of commitment to some values that makes one to join a political party, the other inconsequential tools into political party becomes more manifest i.e. one enters into a political party to make money.

He therefore tasked the NCCE, the Electoral Commission and the civil society to put back on the agenda of political parties the values of a wider national agenda.

On the way forward, Hon. Kumbur proposed economic democracy. He drew the analogy that anyone who acquires wealth illegally feels insecure with that money and therefore will not sit with it. He will transform it into political power to protect the money and when he acquires political power, he will use it again to acquire more economic power. He added that the worst situation is that he will try to acquire social power by making sure that he even pays people that he is oppressing to support his course as the right person against all other social courses. In his opinion, the economic democracy and ideology should also be looked closely as the basis for analyzing the way forward of the political parties.

Another contributor from the National Governance Programme reemphasized Hon. Jumah's claims that discussions in parliament are not on partisan lines. According to him, in the parliamentary committee levels, issues are dispassionately discussed. He therefore suggested that this should be brought to the fore of the public so that people will appreciate parliament's work.

He however confirmed that people take money to vote for a particular person during elections. According to him, the voters do not have confidence in the politicians as people who will help solve their problems after winning elections so they (the voters) take their money as pay back time.

Adding his voice to the above, Hon. Malik Yakubu confessed that partisanship in any modern democracy cannot be ruled out. It is a question of to what extent is partisanship taking hold on good decisions. He said that about 80%-85% of business in the house is arrived at by

consensus. It is certain areas where maybe out of party principles people differ. To him, that is not bad at all.

Mr. Seth Agbloso of the TUC, corrected the Chair on a statement she made that the country has had four successive successful election. According to him, the 1992 elections were not held in accordance with the constitution because the country was not a democratic one when that election was conducted to the extent that the opposition boycotted the parliamentary elections.

He went on to express his worry on decision-making process in our political parties. He doubted whether it can be established that persons who take ultimate decisions at congresses are persons who are in good standing – payment of dues - in the parties.

He was however of praise that one major progress the country has made in political parties development is that it has been mass owned. According to him, beginning from 1992, one has to have at least 110 members – at least one person from every district as at that time - before a party could be formed. This means that no one person was a founder. Regrettably, the NDC has amended their constitution to make Former President Rawlings as its founder. According to him, this distorts the power relationship of collective ownership among the founding members.

Mr. Agbloso was again not happy about the verbal assaults on our airwaves and the print media and stated that it is something that needs to be checked.

Reacting, Mr. Afriyie-Ankrah said that President Rawlings' title as founder is just an honorary title given to him in recognition of his role in the formation of the party. According to him, that role does not give him a veto of any of the organs or structures of the party.

Responding to some of the comments that were made, Hon. Kofi Jumah stated that he does not see why the President would want to appoint P. C. Appiah-Ofori as a minister. This is because the President is elected based on agenda and that he will select a team that will play his ball.

On the President having control over parliament, he said that the president has been given wide powers by the constitution so we should not blame the president but the constitution. He argued that if the president is pursuing a certain agenda and he as a minister in his

government will not buy it, he will resign from the government. However, as a member of parliament, it is his constituents who elected him to parliament so he can oppose the government's policies and the president cannot do anything to him.

Hon. Jumah did not take kindly certain comments that were earlier made by Mr. Afriyie-Ankrah and retorted that the assertion that if one is not pursuing the agenda of the opposition then one is not independent and therefore been controlled. According to him, every party has agenda which their members follow.

He again touched on decision-making process in our various political parties. According to him, his biggest problem is that whether the delegates who are selected to articulate views of constituencies really do articulate the views of their constituents? His argument was that these delegates are not accountable at that level.

He advised that corruption should not only be searched among our government ministers and high profiled politicians but within the party system.

Adding his voice to some of the comments made by some of the participants, Prof. Ninsin could not agree more with Hon. Dr. Kumbuor on the issue of lack of economic democracy. According to him, the social inequality in the party system implies that people who have the means to spend money are those likely to form political parties. Secondly, it also means that those who can take decisions within the party are the ones who are the founding members. In effect, they are the ones who actually own the party. So, though we may have nationwide membership, the reality is that those who come to own the party are not the masses who signed but those who have the financial capacity to manage the affairs of the party.

He also commended Dr. Kumbuor on his comments on the values or ideologies of political parties and their actors.

The chairperson, Mrs. Kyeremanten, added her voice that MPs are law makers and yet up to date there is hardly a single private members bill. She therefore tasked MPs to begin to make laws out of parliament.

On presidential excessive powers, Mrs. Kyeremanten opined that although the constitution has given powers to the president, how he uses it is the issue. She asked that although the constitution states that majority of ministers should come from parliament, why are Regional

Ministers out of parliament. Why are their constituents not holding them to task? She wondered why for instance a Regional Minister in the North is able to function in parliament in Accra.

On funding of political parties, she cited an instance where she and one other person went to the office of the chief-of-staff and the chief of staff went to the President and came back to tell them that their request has been granted by the President. According to her, although it was a welcoming news, state funding of political parties should be institutionalized and not on an ad hoc manner.

On dictatorship of the media, Mrs. Kyeremanten expressed her displeasure that it is becoming a problem and asked whether they are the fourth estate or the fourth dictatorship? According to her, it is beginning to let government see the need for a freedom of information.

Commenting on the allegation that political parties in Ghana are now ethnic based, the country Representative of KAS wondered why people shun matters on ethnicity versus political parties. He asked that if questions on ethnicity are really genuine, why should we put it under the table? He called for discussions on such issues.

Hon. Malik Yakubu reacted that although some parties can be found to be having very strong sways in certain areas, our constitution forbids any party to be formed on religious, regional or ethnic basis. He went on to talk about vote buying by politicians and asked how many of the million voters can politicians buy in elections.

LAUNCHING OF THE REPORT BY HON. ALHASSAN MALIK YAKUBU

Hon. Alhassan Malik Yakubu, who is the 2nd Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Ghana began by praising the report as a very important one. He proceeded to apologize on behalf of his party i.e. NPP. According to him, he realized that his party was not represented at the launch so he called the party office to find out why, but was told that there was only one person present and that all the executive members had traveled to Kumasi for “National Women and Youth Function”.

Hon Yakubu commended KAS for their immense role in the last 41 years in the country. According to him, the ‘Democracy Report’ is only one of so many useful contributions they have made to this country. He expressed the hope that the report would be rich and well

informed because it covers other countries worldwide and that they would have a lot of experience to bear on the part that concerns Ghana.

He expressed his happiness that Ghana has been included in this report and cited a saying that “he who constructs a path which ought to be straight for the path to be good is unable to see if the path is getting crooked”. He continued that it is necessary for a bystander to tell him that your path is getting crooked somewhere for him to correct it.

Hon. Malik Yakubu observed that a programme would be successful only when it undergoes reviews by impartial observers and that is precisely what KAS has done for political parties and for Ghana as whole. He noted that it is important that whatever we do should have a native’s involvement and that the study to have a Ghanaian spearheading it is very significant.

He said that the author of the report on Ghana (Prof. Ninsin) is not only a political scientist but also one of the effective members of the Consultative Assembly that drew the 1992 constitution of Ghana. He praised him for his immense contributions in that course and threw the challenge to him and his colleagues in the academia to make themselves available in parliament to listen to the debates in parliament so that they can enrich their tools for research and be practical because the parliamentary hansard does not capture the spirit in parliament and therefore people are not able to accurately assess parliament.

Hon. Yakubu praised the report as a very good one and that when one is able to read it, one is able to place Ghana accurately. He therefore urged all Ghanaians to read this report in order to be well informed as leaders and citizens of the country. He declared the report duly launched.

CHAIRPERSON’S CLOSING REMARKS

Hon. Malik Yakubu who stood in for Mrs. Kyeremanten, the chairperson, at the latter stage of the programme thanked the organizers of the function and appreciated the contributions of all the participants. He was of the hope that the report would be made available to all the participants when they are ready as was earlier promised by the Resident Representative of KAS. He advised everyone present to read the copy of the report on Ghana which had been distributed to all participants so as to enrich our democracy.

THE END