

Observations on the Outcome of the 2008 Elections and Outlook on the 2nd Round on 28 December 2008

The 2008 Ghana Elections have been described by many international commentators such as the European Union, Africa Union, Commonwealth and ECOWAS Observer Missions as well as local observer mission, like the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO), including the international and local media as transparent, free and fair, and most and importantly as an African country, peaceful. Congratulation goes to the people of Ghana and various stakeholders who contributed in diverse civic educations advocacy programmes on voter education.

Various opinion polls conducted by credible institutions such as Primary Research Associates, Research International, Danquah Institute and Policy Associates Inc. could not predict a second round but rather insisted on first round victory for the New Patriotic Party (NPP) or National Democratic Congress (NDC) to meet constitutional requirement of more than 50% of the valid votes cast for the Presidency.

The 2008 General Elections are the most competitive elections in the electoral history of Ghana. It is also the elections with the highest peace advocacy messages to the electorate and huge investment in time and resources by various stakeholders on the need to promote and maintain peace by all before, during and after the elections. These advocacy programmes were required in 1992, when Ghana graduated from military dictatorship to multi party system democracy or 2000 when the Ft. Lt J.J. Rawlings

(the longest Head of State) had completed his mandatory terms of office.

Some reasons for second round of ballot on 28th December 2008.

Reasons for competitiveness of the elections include:

1. Perceived easier macro-economic outlook as result of the expected oil revenue. Politicians in the NPP and NDC anticipate huge revenue proceeds from the oil rigs hence it is anticipated that enormous resources will be generated to meet various development challenges ranging from health, education to the development of infrastructure confronting the nation.
2. Personal benefit from the distribution of state power and more importantly distribution of the oil revenue. Ghanaians do not expect the oil to be a curse as compared to other African countries such as Nigeria. But it is latently clear among the citizen that given the perceived spate of corruption in the current and past administrations, it is enough bases to demonstrate that good percentage of the oil revenue will be misappropriated by the leaders' hence high stakes in the conduct of the elections.
3. Making of history. NDC and NPP are competing to make history in Ghana. Who ever will win the election will be the first political party in the history of

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Ghana to have won the election three times. For NPP it will be the first political party to have maintained the line of succession within the party after completion of two mandatory presidential terms by its candidate. For NDC, it will be the first political party in Ghana to have governed two terms and recapture power from the opposition.

4. Economic management of the country. The management of the country contributed immensely to push the elections to second round. The NPP was confident of maintaining power and consequently managed the economy with the required econometric tool matched by the needed indicators. These contributed in bringing untold hardship on the citizens. Prices of petroleum products were high, contractors were not paid, and government instructed all departments (MDAs) to reduce expenditure by 50%. The citizens became uncomfortable and subsequently requested for change. These problems of managing the economy were used by NDC as a propaganda electoral message by promising to resolve them in 100 days in office. Some traditional NPP areas e.g. in the Central Region therefore voted for NDC as a hope to improve on their quality of life.
5. Beyond these competing issues above, there were also low voter turnouts in two strongholds of NPP that is Eastern and Ashanti Regions. This affected the electoral fortunes of the party as well as its performance in the final outcome.

Who will win in the second round?

The winner of the second round to be decided by Ghanaian on 28th December will be based on the following:

- The party to earn the support of the smaller parties as well as the smaller parties' ability to whip the support of its rank and file to support their chosen partner. For instance, the CPP may opt for NDC but it has no mechanism to

compel all its members in Ashanti to vote for NDC.

- The strategies to be adopted by the parties to win the flouting voters who did not vote but are determined to vote during the second round of elections. This will certainly be influenced by their assessment of the parties to improve on their quality of life.
- For NPP to win, it must demonstrate maximum humility and preparedness to share state resources with the larger Ghanaian community. Ghanaian see NPP members as affluence people who dissipate state resource with impunity whereas the larger section of the population wallow in the quagmire poverty, poor sanitation, lack of access to portable water, poor health services delivery as well as dilapidated infrastructure. Some voted against the party due to these reasons.
- For NDC to win to the second round it must also accept that, it has pitiable historical democratic credentials but it has changed as well as transformed itself into genuine democratic political party that is prepared to work as a functional political party to form a government where the respect for the media, individual liberty will be fully guaranteed for all. Some Ghanaian vote against NDC due to the perceived role the former President is expected to play in the NDC administration which is measured in context of brutalities of the PNDC regime.

Ghanaians are looking towards the second round of the elections after sacrificing their Christmas festivities for the elections due to the constitutional arrangements. This is the second time the clash between Christmas and elections have coincided. It is important for various constitutional bodies to take up the necessary steps to rectify the problem as well as provide enough time for transition under the current arrangements the period of transition is eight days.

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Whoever wins the 28th December elections, Ghana is the winner at the end of electoral process. For the first time Ghana has a balance Parliament where issues will be properly analyzed and thoroughly discussed for the benefit of the citizenry unlike the previous regimes where Parliaments were regarded as rubber stamp of the cabinet minutes.