

Full Length Research Paper

Neopatrimonial logic and national programmatic policies in Ghana: A case of rice importation and production policies under the administrations of J.A. Kufuor and J.E.A. Mills

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Accepted 4 October, 2013

Ghana's 1992 constitution requires a party's candidate to obtain 50% plus one valid vote to win presidential elections. However, no party has ever secured such valid votes in the respective stronghold alone. This study explores whether or not political parties in Ghana are emerging as programmatic parties, and the implications of the lack of programmatic parties for a party's credibility and the deepening of democracy. To undertake this analysis, multidimensional construction of neopatrimonial logic is adopted and NPP's Rice Importation Tariffs and NDC's Savanna Accelerated Development Programme were extrapolated. Findings demonstrated that implementation of these policies has been occasioned by neopatrimonial logic as none of them is a programmatic party. This led to hypothesize that a non programmatic party leads to no credible national policy and programme, and consequently no democratic deepening. Using secondary data and interviews with 2 policy experts, 3 politicians and some respondents selected from among NGOs specialize in governance issues. This study concluded that Kufuor and Mills' rice policies were populist rather than programmatic. Findings from the views of Ghanaians confirmed that the absence of programmatic parties opposes national policy and programmes, in that social interventionist policy of one regime faced implementation challenges in another. This situation often worsens the already dilapidated social conditions.

Key words: Neopatrimonial logic, democratic deepening, national policy, programmatic parties.

INTRODUCTION

In 2004, President John Agyekum Kufuor and the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) government reduced the tariff on all imported rice. In 2010, the late President John Evans Atta Mills and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) government also emphasized the need for increasing the production and consumption of locally produced rice under the SADA project (Kufuor's 2004 Budget Statement/ Mills and NDC' 2008 Manifesto, p 76 and 77).

On the surface, the attempts by the two governments to

promote rice importation, production and consumption, is a clear indication that rice has become an important component of the Ghanaian diet. It is for this reason that one can read politics into the locally produced, importation and consumption of rice in Ghana. Against this background, this paper discusses rice importation and production policies under the administrations of J.A. Kufuor and J.E.A. Mills, and attempts at drawing linkages between the above-mentioned policies and neopatrimonial logic (populist and paternalistic politics).

This paper employed qualitative approach or method and used in-depth interviews with experts on policy framing and implementations, scholarly Journal articles and newspapers. This paper discusses the connection between populism and rice policy –issue framing in Ghana.

Before proceeding to discuss populist politics with its implications for Kufuor and Mills' rice importation and production policies respectively, it is indeed necessary to consider two important fundamental but empirical questions:

First, what is the nature of political legitimization of presidents in Ghana? And second, how relevant are votes in legitimizing political authority in Ghana?

The main argument of this paper is that legitimization of both the presidency and vote turnouts intend to facilitate better understanding of why the two presidents could use rice as strategic political mechanism for inducing electorate's votes. The objective of this study is therefore to explore and explain the rationale for the political elite's promise on policy while out of office, but why they tend to oppose or differ from actual policy design while in office. This paper investigates whether or not this unhealthy character of political elites is gaining currency in Ghanaian body politic. It also examines whether or not both the constitutional requirement of presidential candidate to obtain 50+1 valid votes to emerge a winner (Article 63:3), and the zero sum of political power struggles have made or propelled neopatrimonialism in the Ghanaian body politic.

This paper supports the assertion that the provisions of the 1992 constitution on issues of elections and electoral processes tend to spur patronage politics and policy diversions (Nkansah, 2010; USAID, 2010) rather than counteract it. How is this explained?

Although Article (63:3) of the 1992 constitution provides the need to ensure ethnic configuration such that no particular ethnic group gets advantage, this same 1992 constitution also requires that a presidential candidate of a party must obtain 50% plus 1 valid votes in order to confirm him or her as the winner of presidential elections in Ghana. Now, the imperative of each party to be regionally representative, inclusive of the fact that no dominant party has ever been able to secure such valid votes in their respective strongholds alone (Lindberg and Morrison, 2008; Gyimah-Boadi, 2004) underpins the increasing number of critical questions that have come to occupy the center stage of democratic discourse in Ghana.

In which ways have the 1992 constitution spurred neopatrimonial logic? Is the issue of neopatrimonialism gaining currency in Ghanaian body politic? Have any of the elections conducted in Ghana been free from neopatrimonial proclivity? Have the ideologies, policies and

Programmes of Kufuor's NPP and/or Mills'NDC governments ever contributed to securing 50% +1 valid vote? To what extent have rice importation and production policies under the administrations of Kufuor and Mills reflected patronage politics? What explains the rice policy swing under the administrations of Kufuor and Mills? What accounts for the inability of the incumbent to fulfill campaign promises on national policies and programmes in Ghana?

These questions would be addressed in the analysis and discussion section.

In order to gain a better understanding of the nature and application of neopatrimonial logic in Ghanaian body politic, this paper explores and explains Lindberg's (2003) multidimensional construction of neopatrimonial logic such as 'Neopatrimonialism', employed by Kheffer and World Bank (2006); 'Big-man syndrome' by Jockers et al. (2004); populism as used by Booth et al. (2006) and Whitefield's (2009) 'Competitive Clientelism' as well as Lindberg and Morrison's (2008) programmatic appeal. The intention is to ascertain how these concepts have shaped or are shaping the understanding of politics in Ghana.

This paper also explores the meaning of credible national programmatic policy and the implications of the absence of national programmatic policy for both party's credibility and democratic deepening in Ghana's Fourth Republic. In conclusion, it brings into limelight the influences of rice importation and production policies on Ghanaians under the administrations of Kufuor and Mills. This paper begins with the conceptual framework or issues, with particular reference to Lindberg's (2003) multi-dimensional constructions of neopatrimonial logic, and shows how each of these concepts manifests itself in the Ghanaian body politic.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Issues of party's inability to ensure credible or broad national programmes and policies are hotly debated in third world new democracies, particularly Ghana (Cromwell and Chintedza, 2005; Whitefield, 2009; Van de Walle, 2005; Booth et al., 2006; Ketschelt and Wilkinson, 2007). What is central to this hotly debated argument is? Which of the multiple dimensions of neopatrimonialism does the policy of parties in Ghana reflect? This has led many scholars to pursue empirical research on democratic accountability mechanisms such as clientelism and neopatrimonialism, populist politics and programmatic appeals (Whitefield, 2009; Lindberg and Morrison, 2008; Ketschelt and Wilkinson, 2007). There is a relative lack of clarity in respect of which of these neopatrimonial logics is most prevalent in Ghanaian body politic. In this paper, an attempt is made to elucidate the various constructions of neopatrimonialism.

Multi-dimensional constructions of neopatrimonialism

This paper addresses the empirical gap by first operationalizing each of these multi-dimensional constructions of neopatrimonialism, and then extrapolates with rice importation and production policies under Kufuor and Mills' administrations to reveal dominant type, and the implications for policy-issue framing and implementation of programmes.

To contribute to the debates and to highlight the extent to which clientelist, populist, neopatrimonial and programmatic means of mobilizing votes in contemporary Ghanaian politics are significant, these terms or concepts are employed here simply as models of how Ghanaian political parties choose their linkage strategies. As the Ghanaian case demonstrates; parties may appeal to different constituencies with different linkage tactics or efforts (Aidoo, 2010; Lindberg and Morrison, 2008).

Neopatrimonialism (Big-man Syndrome)

Neopatrimonialism is the vertical distribution of resources that give rise to patron-client networks based around a powerful individual or party. It consists of the centralization of power on an individual to whom all within the system owe their position (Killick and Charles, 2001). It is basically an exchange relationship between unequal (Osei-Asare, 2010; Clapham, 1985), and is a distinct form of acquiring state legitimacy.

Neopatrimonialism arises where patronage politics have managed to displace the legal-rational apparatus. An essential element is the co-existence, in tension, within the state of a legal-rational element and a patronage element. It is the giving and granting of favours where the public/private dichotomy in policy decisions and resource distribution becomes hard to distinguish. It is significant in terms of policy design and implementation.

Neopatrimonial politics have developed the capacity of being able to divert public resources (from national tax revenues and aid funds) for private lucrative gain, undermining development possibilities already restricted by social and economic constraints. It is an important mechanism for ensuring continued support for the ruling party and access to resources. Development policies are, more often than not, designed accordingly, where food or rice projects for example are devised to suit "neopatrimonial logic rather than objectives of food security or poverty reduction" (Ghana, Country Report IEA, 2008). Kitschelt and Wilkinson's definition of clientelism (patronage politics) which focuses on the direct, "contingent" nature of the transaction between patron and client, that is, patrons give in exchange for votes, is instructive and useful.

Populism/ populist politics

Populist politics is the attempt to gain political support

using paternalistic policies, in the form of income redistribution (Aidoo, 2010; Jockers et al, 2004). It is a highly debated concept today since many Ghanaian politicians fall into the tempting trap of following populist policies simply to garner votes. The political class relies on income redistribution to the poor (the masses) in order to "buy" political support to perpetuate the elite's control of political power. In essence, populism is an informal alternative to institutionalized forms of political representation provided by political parties (Aidoo, 2010).

It is a set of economic policy measures or promises directed towards obtaining support from the poor masses. Killick and Charles (2001) identify the following political goals of populism: mobilizing support within organized labor and lower-middle-class groups, obtaining complementary backing from domestically oriented business, and politically isolating the rural oligarchy, foreign enterprises, and large-scale industrial elites. It is pertinent to emphasize that it is competition between elites that drives them to make appeals to poor groups that were previously marginalized from policy debates. Nonetheless, what is offered is not coherent programmes that could eventually transform the circumstances of those poor groups, but isolated (albeit often high profile) transfer programmes, e.g. various forms of subsidy.

The picture that emerges in the case of Ghana is a system that is driven by the constitution (supply side) towards institutionalized parties-an important precondition for programmatic politics; but there is not yet the demand for programmatic politics from large portions of the electorate (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). Hence, Ghanaian political parties resort to populist appeals to some groups and use patronage approaches in other contexts (including the north!) in order to win the 50% + 1 valid votes, necessary for their candidate to become president.

Booth et al. (2006) refer to the populist politics as the strength of political incentives in a country to pursue policies that benefit narrow groups in society (clientelist policies) at the expense of policies in the broad public interest. Populist policies are usually inconsistent with the broad reforms of public policy required to sustain accelerated growth. As the incentives of politicians to use clientelist appeals to gather votes increase, they may for instance, prefer policies that increase local infrastructure to policies that improve education. Moreover, they prefer policies that increase infrastructure quantity for targeted groups to those that improve quality (such as maintenance) for all groups. Also among policies that improve education, they prefer those that increase the number and compensation of teachers to those that improve teaching quality such as adjusting teacher compensation to the educational progress of their students (Booth et al., 2006; van de Wall, 2007).

In Ghana, for instance, there are policies pursued by political elites that reflect purely populist politics. For example, rural electrification and Quality Grains policies

of former president Rawlings and NDC regimes (electricity power was supplied to areas that did not make economic sense and Ms Cotton's rice Scandal) (GNA, April, 1996); Capitation Grants; and School Feeding Programme, NYEP as well as rice tariffs policies of President Kufuor and finally, President Mills' rice project in the SADA policy (Okyere-Darko, 2010). All these policies, to a large extent, though far from exclusion, reflect deliberate attempts by the politicians to tie specific policies to electorates' votes (Van de Walle, 2007).

Booth et al. (2006) note that populist politics has become necessary because vigorous competition for votes in Ghana has not reduced, and this perhaps, has highlighted the attraction of politicians to making clientelist appeals for political support. However, this populist politics has not yielded the desired results within Ghana's polarized political economy, as implementation of these policies have often been occasioned by populist logic. There is also evidence which confirms that neither NPP nor NDC is a programmatic party (Booth et al., 2006; van de Walle, 2007).

This leads us to hypothesize that neither Kufuor's rice importation policy nor Atta Mills' rice production policy reflect non-neopatrimonial oriented programme and policy, and this situation does not only tend to have dire consequences on the credibility of the parties, but also slows down the democratic deepening process in Ghana. This also explains why it is becoming increasingly difficult (albeit these populists policies) for Ghana to conduct national presidential elections without run-offs. This situation, according to Lindberg and Morrison (2008), is propelling political parties resort on programmatic appeal and hence programmatic appeal becomes critical on the agenda of the discourse on neopatrimonialism..

Programmatic appeal

This study makes reference to Diamond and Frank's (2001) definition which refers to a programmatic party as a modern day organized political party mainly focused around election campaigns. It has three characteristics: It tends to have a much more distinct, consistent, and coherent programmatic or ideological agenda, it clearly incorporates those ideological or programmatic appeals in its electoral campaigns and its legislative and government agenda. Basically, its appeals are less diffused, vague and eclectic. It seeks to win control of government through this sharper definition of a party platform or vision, and lastly, as Diamond and Frank (2001) maintain, the programmatic party has a more clearly defined social base, and possibly some firmer linkages to like-minded civil society organizations.

In programmatic politics, a party proposes a manifesto, which offers the potential for gains for some groups, but they are then free to vote for it or not (Aidoo, 2010).

According to Aidoo (2010), if the party wins, those policies are pursued and members of the groups in question benefit from the policies whether or not they voted for the party. He concludes that such an approach is conducive to investment in public goods, whereas clientelism is more commonly associated with private transfers (administered with discretion).

Generally, since voters cannot choose separate parties to represent them on each separate issue, programmatic parties try to offer them an overall agenda that they are broadly comfortable with. In its simplest form, an ideology can be located somewhere on a simple two-dimensional continuum, e.g. left-right, urban-rural. In order to achieve this, a party has to be able to exercise a certain amount of discipline: multiple spokespeople all have to be broadly "on message" and to submit their personal preferences on particular issues to the collective will of the party, once this has been agreed (Aidoo, 2010). Hence according to Aidoo (2010) programmatic politics cannot be "big man" politics, even if a particular founder played a key role in shaping the party; ultimately the party is bigger than individuals.

The programmatic appeal in the context of this paper refers to an arena involving politicians making seemingly credible commitments to citizens regarding broad, national programmatic policies (Booth et al., 2006; Lindberg and Morrison, 2008). Programmatic policies or appeals are normally economic policies but often it seems to be a political issue in disguise. Politicians sometimes resort to programmatic appeals with the intention to capture votes from the policy beneficiaries (Lindberg and Morrison, 2008).

The issue of whether or not political parties in Ghana are emerging as programmatic parties as a result of the difficulties that the demand and supply of constitutional provision poses, such as the need to obtain the 50% +1 valid votes, the need to promote elites settlement and ethnic configuration as well as the reflection of political party representation regionally, is now, extremely interesting, but hotly debated argument in the Ghanaian politic.

Whitfield (2009) advances the competitive neopatrimonial argument by positing that policies pursued by Ghanaian politicians reflect a competitive clientelism. In contrast, Booth et al. (2006) think they are rather populist. Aidoo (2010) argues that when the political parties are out of power they project programmatic policies because there is no way they can afford to push and sustain neopatrimonialism – after all they have empty pockets when out of power. However, these political parties when in power resort to populist or patronage programmes, because they have the means - after all they control state resources.

Contrary to the assertions above, Lindberg and Morrison (2008) argue that recent evidence shows that political parties in Ghana are emerging as programmatic

parties and this is demonstrated by the fact that Ghanaians in particular neither vote on ethnic line nor clientelistic basis. Rather, they vote on the basis of evaluation of past performance and that makes new democracies a "mature" one.

This paper however, challenges their argument that parties in Ghana do not make credible national promises. Can parties make credible national policies and yet not considered as programmatic parties? What shows that the so-called promises (policies) are not archetype of populism? What about the new politicians in the game, on what basis are they evaluated?

In considering Lindberg and Morrison's (2008) position, apart from being limited to the voting culture of Ghanaians (Africans), their conclusion that the basis of the Ghanaian voter is neither ethnicity, tribe nor clientelism, but rather on the basis of evaluative-rationales or past performance of policy and parties do not reflect the socio-political realities. Lindberg and Morrison have inadequate or insufficient explanation of the political realities of particular policy in question. The fact is such "past policy performance" is likely to be quintessential to populist politics.

Some scholars, however, argue that in environments where politicians are unable to attract large fractions of the electorate with broad policy promises, they rely instead on the promises they can make to short change the electorate (Van de Walle, 2007; Jockers et al., 2004; Bratton and van de Walle, 1997). The electorate may represent special interest groups as they are traditionally-defined (organized groups of workers and firms, cronies of political officials), but are just as likely to be residents of a particular village or members of a certain ethnic enclave (Van de Walle, 2007).

In view of this, van de Walle (2007) notes that "programmatic and ideological cleavages have not shaped political competition in Ghana nearly as much as ethnic and regional factors" (p.298). Evidence shows that, though parties in Ghana are more institutionalized and exhibit greater party discipline (Lindberg and Morrison, 2008), they are not programmatic (Whitefield, 2009; Booth et al., 2006). Many scholars have also emphasized that Ghana is not only a neopatrimonial state (Lindberg, 2003; Gyimah-Boadi, 1999; Jockers et al., 2004) but also neopatrimonialism has been institutionalized, (patrons reward clients on obedience but punishes disobedience) (Booth et al., 2006; van de Walle, 2007).

In considering these concepts, it is abundantly clear that Lindberg's analysis does not fit into the analysis made by this paper on neopatrimonial logic. It is in this direction that this paper postulates that at the surface levels the attempts by the two presidents (both Kufuor and Mills) to promote rice importation, production and consumption is a clear indication that rice is an important diet of Ghanaians. It is for the same reason that one can read politics into the locally produced, importation and

consumption of rice in Ghana. Hence, this paper concluded that the rice importation policy under former president Kufuor and the rice production policy under the late President Mills have been occasioned by populist logic.

One question which is very central to this paper is, what accounts for the rice policy swing in the two regimes of Kufuor and Mills?

Factors explaining political party's policy inconsistency in Ghana

This paper supports the assertion made by Booth et al. (2006) that there is no programmatic party in Ghana. This is because politicians in democratic politics strive to acquire and maintain political office. In order to achieve this, the competitive electoral process forces them to at least partially employ the leverage of office to support a loyal constituency (core constituency) (Booth et al., 2006). Impressed by the experience of democracy in contemporary affluent and fragile democracies, most substantive empirical research and most formal theory of democratic competition assumes that politicians pursue electoral constituencies by offering and delivering policies for voters (van de Walle, 2007; Booth et al., 2006) (assuming that the politicians resort to rational choice model).

Evidence shows that politicians are responsive to electorate by advertising and enacting principles and policies sufficiently in line with a stock of constituents to get them reelected, when voters compare the so-called 'credible' commitments and perceived achievements of rival candidates (van de Walle, 2007). Periodic elections make politicians accountable to their voters and enforce a modicum of responsiveness to their demands. This is the essence of what political scientists have called the —responsible party governance model since the 1960s (Booth et al., 2006; CDD, 2008). This refers to instances where parties attempt to provide 'credible' national policies and programmes.

Credible or broad national programmes and policies are usually socio-economic in nature that serves national interest rather than individual or a selected few (CDD, 2008; Booth et al., 2006). Therefore, they are policies and programmes that are not only sustainable but also could endure from regime to regime (Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007).

It is important to note that all democratic accountability is based on citizens' demand for and politicians' articulation of programs and delivery of policies (Crook, 2005; Booth et al., 2006). It is therefore a foregone conclusion that credible national programmes and policies have no alternative accountability mechanisms with which politicians might employ for the prospect of winning a critical electoral constituency. The reason is that such policies

reflect broad national interest and therefore do make very little political sense and so requires politicians deciding on the effort they make to develop programmatic appeals and policies. Thus, they often resort to alternative ways to promote their re-election (Debrah, 2004).

The politicians try to bundle accountability mechanisms that show their responsiveness to voters and choose between them. More specifically, there are no complementarities or trade-offs between the deployment of programmatic accountability strategies and clientelistic strategies that rely on the provision of material goods and services targeted to particular voters or small groups of voters contingent upon their delivery of the vote to the candidate or clients (Booth et al., 2006; Crook, 2005).

In the context of neopatrimonial logic, this paper attempts at discussing or analyzing the rice importation and production policies under the administrations of J.A. Kufuor and the NPP, and J.E.A. Mills and the NDC.

Before proceeding to discuss the policies mentioned above, it is important to note that Mills' rice project in the SADA policy document like Kufuor's special tariffs on rice importation have been discussed in this paper as classic examples of public policies which are characterized by populism. With populism as the basis of analysis, this paper extrapolates rice importation and production policies under the administrations of Kufuor and the late Mills. This paper argues that the rice production and importation policies are not national programmatic policies because the former is Northern rice farmer-centered while the latter is urban rice consumer bias. First, this paper focuses on Kufuor's rice policy and attempts to link it with neopatrimonial logic.

Rice importation policy of J.A. Kufuor and the New Patriotic Party (NPP)

Evidence shows that Kufuor and the NPP government when initiating the rice policy, quoted Jerry Rawlings' earlier assertion which emphasizes the importance of rice as indispensable diet for Ghanaians (during Miss Cotton's quality grains issue, GNA, 20-04-,1996);

"I don't know law and I don't understand economics, but I know it when I'm HUNGRY"

Like Rawlings, Kufuor on Tuesday September 28, 2004, emphasized the importance of rice security and sustainability of rice-based livelihoods as fundamental to world food security. Kufuor therefore listed rice among the selected commodities to be tackled within the short-term under the Food and Agricultural Sector Development Programme (FASDEP) which in a way is similar to Mills' SADA (GNA 28-09-2004).

With this programme in place, Kufuor and the NPP government concluded that rice distribution in the country

was not only even but also follows a linear progression trend and would undoubtedly contribute to the successful implementation of the World Food Summit's Plan of action, a global action to ensure food security which Ghana was tasked to co-ordinate (GNA, 28-09- 2004).

An interview with Kasim Kasanga, the then Minister of Environment and Science, revealed "an interesting global view on the extent to which rice a staple food is so significant to the international community." For instance, he stated, "Kufuor's opening speech of the Pan-African Celebration of the International Year of Rice in Accra in December 2002, was emphatic on the formal requests made by governments of 44 African countries to the United Nations General Assembly to declare 2004 as the International Year of Rice." Among these 44 countries Ghana was selected to host the weeklong celebration in the African Region under the theme: "Rice is Life For Africans" in which countries such as Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Guinea, Uganda, Senegal and La Cote d'Ivoire among other countries participated (GNA, 28-09- 2004:4).

Again, this explains why Kufuor's rice importation policy did not only receive justifiable praise but also succeeded in linking rice distribution to measures that were intended to ensure food security and poverty alleviation in the entire country (GNA, 28-09-.2004). Kufuor reaffirmed his position on rice importation policy when he remarked that;

"Already, African leaders as part of their commitment to the goals of NEPAD have declared that rice has been considered one of the major agricultural products that together constitute the hub of Africa's development, as captured in the African Agricultural Development Plan" (Daily Graphic, 29-09-2004:3).

Kufuor emphasized the development of local rice industry as one of the five priority areas in Ghana's Poverty Reduction Strategy (GNA, 28-09-.2004). Indeed, rice was one of the key intervention policies of Kufuor and hence provided extension services and credit facilities to farmers for increasing locally produced rice to ensure food security and to promote import substitution. Hence Kufuor authorized African Development Bank to provide financial support to some Ghanaian rice farmers to undertake Inland Valley Rice Project (IVRP) to increase production of good quality rice (GNA, 28-09-.2004).

An interview with Major Courage Quashigah (rtd) (Kufuor's Minister of Food and Agriculture, 29-09-2004) revealed that "the project was intended to cover 4,500 hectares and to increase the income of 9,000 smallholder rice producers; 150 traders and processors of rice and increase paddy rice production by 60,000 metric tons." He added that "rice importation and production policies therefore began to suffer a simultaneous crisis of overwhelming increase and hence it led to conflict of interest."

With regards to Kufuor's policy to boost locally produced rice, an interview with the late Quashigah revealed that "importation of rice into sub-Saharan Ghana had at the same time been growing steadily by six per cent per annum, which was presumed to be the fastest in the world and indicated that the government was committed to, and was striving to increase the local production of rice and to reduce its importation by 30 percent by the end of the year 2004, as a measure to protect the interest of smallholders rice producers."

Ironically, in December 2004 towards general elections, Kufuor and the NPP government drastically reduced the tariff on all imported rice which according to critics, was an attempt to fulfill his positive change II agenda (Daily Guide, 24-11- 2004:7). The implications of the Kufuor government's decision to increase rice consumption through low tariff regime were widespread and devastating. Rice farmers interviewed at rice growing area in the Upper East and Northern regions complained sadly that "It did not only lead to exposing our feeble local rice industry to severe competition with the international market, but also led to reduction of local or domestic rice production, high prices of domestic rice as well as poor processing and packaging of domestic rice due to high cost of production coupled with low patronage."

Some critics argue that it is for this reason that when the late Mills assumed office in 2009, he decided to reverse the trend (Daily Guide, 28-09-2004). We then turn our attention to discuss Mills' rice production policy

Rice production policy of J.E. A. Mills and the National Democratic Congress (NDC)

In 2010, the Late President John Atta Mills and the NDC government also emphasized the need to increase the production and consumption of locally produced rice under the SADA project. He said this in response to the current famine spreading across the horns of Africa which had again focused on the world's attention on the massive challenges the world faces to ensure food security for the people of the planet.

According to Mills, "the world lived through a massive food crisis in 2007/2008, and is in the middle of an even worse crisis." A respondent interviewed stressed, "under such circumstances one wonders why politicians still create space for using rice as a political decoy for their personal gain and political ambitions."

Daily Guide reported that "Food Security Ghana (FSG) has been following issues on rice production and importation in Ghana for quite some time, and there is none as controversial as the issue of rice policies under the NDC's administration." An interview with Mamaa Entsua Mensah, the then Deputy Director General of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in Ghana (22-02- 2011), revealed that "the rice industry in

Ghana has seen unprecedented increase in consumption levels over the past decade with significant proportion of consumers switching from consumption of other staples to rice." What this means, she stressed, "is that rice continues to dominate the staple diet and hence any attempt to use rice for scoring political points becomes apparent."

At the "Africa Rice Project" inception workshop organized by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Mensah, again, has the following fact about rice in Ghana to present: "about 70% of rice consumed in Ghana is imported and these importations had been consistently high since 2001." "Despite the efforts made in local rice production, the cost of production was high and uncompetitive in the domestic market." "There is a significant quality gap between locally produced and imported rice due to cost of inputs, poor post-harvest handling and lack of access to improved processing technologies, and marketing challenges."

Data facts about rice in Ghana indicate that promises by the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA), that Ghana would be self sufficient in rice production by 2015 is just a typical example of using rice for scoring political points or gains." The reality on the ground is that the area under rice cultivation which is expected to increase from 13,292 to 26,5842 hectares with corresponding yields increasing from 1.36 metric ton (MT) per hectare to 2.04 MT/Ha unattainable. Interview with an Agro extension officer (22-09-2011) confirmed that "total production by 2015 would be about 628,602 MT while the demand by 2015 is estimated at 1.68million MT, leaving a self-sufficiency gap of more than 685 not much better than today's gap of 70%."

Some rice importers interviewed also confirmed the fact that "the domestic supply is less able to meet the increased demand for some food commodities, such as rice and poultry." To conclude, on the whole, Mills' rice production policy like Kufuor's importation policy was perceived to have reflected populist politics. According to a political scientist interviewed at the University of Ghana (21-02-2011), the politicians attitude of linking or tying rice policies to votes is often guided by the rational choice model than a mere opportunity cost. These theories are either confirmed or unconfirmed by the findings and analysis discussed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF ISSUES

This paper presents a number of interesting but critical findings. First, the majority (96.0%) of respondents interviewed confirmed that "rice consumption in Ghana has been increasing tremendously and that it has led to increase in rice importations and that for domestic rice to be able to compete with the imported rice, farmers should improve productivity and packaging or branding."

Generally, respondents interviewed concluded that "the quest for self-sufficiency in rice production in Ghana by 2015 is highly unlikely to be reached." Indeed, these findings contradict the Government of Ghana, 2007a report which forecast that there would be sufficient rice production by 2015.

Also, finding revealed that Mills' SADA project which focuses on local rice production was a fiasco not only in terms of low yield as a result of poor implementation of the policy but also, it focused only on the Northern sector neglecting other equally important rice growing sectors such as Afram plains and Asutware to mention but a few (Osei-Asare, 2010).

This paper finds this scenario not only very interesting but also worrisome. Respondents interviewed said, "the fact is that in reality, there is no way rice produced locally could sustain the total rice needs of Ghanaians." They stressed, "moreso, Governments of Ghana have been constrained by importation cost implications to depend solely on imported rice." "Likewise, the reduction of tariffs on locally rice could not help to bridge the gap of the total rice needed by the entire Ghanaian populace."

Other findings revealed by respondents interviewed are that "rice importation and production policies under the administrations of Kufuor's NPP and Mills' NDC are not only characterized by populist politics but also rice as an important staple diet like other staple food has become the element of political exploitation. About 88.5% of the respondents interviewed concluded that "due to absence of programmatic parties, there are no credible national programmatic policies, and that social interventionist policy of one regime faces implementation challenges in another whenever power is transferred." "And hence such situation often worsens the already dilapidated social conditions."

The key issues the paper explored include; whether or not the rice policies under the administrations of Kufuor and Mills were underpinned by neopatrimonial logic; whether or not parties in Ghana are programmatic; whether or not parties in Ghana promise credible programmes and policies but often end up pursuing populist policies.

Interestingly, the responses generally confirmed that "rice policies under the administrations of Kufuor and Mills are underpinned by neopatrimonial logic and that this is explainable in terms of ingrained neopatrimonial nature of party politics." In relation to the question as to what accounts for political parties' inability to fulfill broad credible national programmes and policies; the majority of the respondent (97.0%) indicated that "credible national programmes and policies are broad and often require longer period for formulation as well as implementation." A policy expert interviewed said "unlike populist and clientelist policies which are often tied to electorate's vote, credible national programmes and policies appear to be unwise and inappropriate policies

when the politicians are targeting electorate's votes."

Furthermore, respondents interviewed indicated that "political parties in Ghana do resort to programmatic appeal in their bid to win political support, and that politicians' attitude of promising programmatic but pursuing populist politics is informed by pervasive clientelism and neopatrimonial logic". In view of this, an investigation was conducted on two factors that are likely to serve as evidence of neopatrimonial logic such as i) Political market imperfections and ii) Information and political silence of non-economic issues.

With regard to the former, the respondents said that "Ghana's political market is imperfect, which means that Ghanaian voters cannot infer credible candidate positions on issues of broad public concern." To him, "this often impacts significantly on public policy." He added, "thus, most electorate do not have strong incentives to base their electoral choices on, and therefore turn to rely on two criteria (in support of Lindberg and Morrison's argument) the past performance of the candidate and the voter's personal connection with the candidate based on the seemingly credible promise of jobs or public works which is prevalent in contemporary Ghanaian body politic".

In the case of the latter, that is, information and political silence of non-economic issues, the respondents were not too sure and so less than 5.0% responded that "citizens are often not able to predict the intention of politicians in relation to economic issues such as employment and the provision of other social benefits. To them politicians often short change the electorate when it comes to issues of job creation and non-economic issues such as provision of security and other safety nets.

An interesting finding is that the respondents interviewed said "Ghana is not only a two-party state but also polarized and it is characterized by overpoliticization of everything." To the respondents "this polarization and overpoliticization tend to limit voters' political space and credible choices." Indeed, this finding corroborated Bratton and van de Walle's (1997:231) position that "political parties in Ghana lack broadly credible policy promises and so the electorate relies on narrow promises made by politicians." To the respondents interviewed, "these politicians' promises are usually made to small groups of constituents who believe their promises (as between patrons and clients)." And that a respondent said "even when political parties cannot convey credible policy stances to voters, individual candidates sometimes can. "Often strong incentives or targeted goods are provided to those few voters to whom individual candidates can make credible promises and weak incentives or public goods are given out which benefit all voters, including even those who do not believe the candidates' promises."

Another key finding is that more than 80.5% of the respondents interviewed confirmed that "politicians in

Ghana do not see it to be more electoral beneficial in pursuing policies that are most likely to increase voter welfare (e.g. improved basic services; water, sanitation, health, governance and education)." The respondents said that, "special interests and patron-based appeals remain strongly influential in Ghana, even as the advent of competitive elections endow Ghanaian citizens with better tools to hold governments accountable for the policies they enact."

Using the Afrobarometer survey report (2008) to identify what citizens look for in politicians and evidence of the claims that politicians actually make when they campaign; it was confirmed by the interviewees that "clearly citizens usually look for the political incentives of politicians, be it past performance or how credible the present campaign message appears to be." Findings though corroborated the Afrobarometer survey conducted by Center for Democratic Development (CDD) (2008), the overwhelming majority of the respondents indicated that Ghanaians are inclined to cast their votes on the basis of "whom you know" non-evaluated-rationale such as a relative, tribe or ethnic identity, religious affiliate, old boyism, classmates or school mates etc. more than the issue of past performance or evaluated-rationale."

Another interesting finding this paper revealed that a respondent interviewed indicated that "though electoral competition in Ghana is not only less effective to deterring politicians from catering to narrow interests, but that, "It is rather difficult to establish ways to encourage them to be more attentive to broad-based, growth-promoting reforms because politicians in Ghana have internalized and institutionalized neopatrimonial logic".

In a related issue, which outcome this paper discovered so interesting is that about 88.5% of the respondents indicated that "though populist policies are not equal to credible national programmes and policies, the majority of Ghanaians are able to credibly evaluate past performance of a party with such policies that do not reflect national programmes and policies."

Using the 2008 elections for example, the respondents less confirmed "any kind of credible policies Mills pursued while in opposition that was subjected to critical analysis such that he emerged the winner." And hence this paper argues that Lindberg and Morrison's argument is inconsistent with the social realities. The majority of the respondents (97.0%) concluded that "credible national programme and policy and ideological cleavages have not shaped political competition in Ghana nearly as much as programmatic appeal, ethnic, clientelistic and regional factors."

A very contradictory and controversial finding is that about 89.0% of the respondents "believed the fact that parties in Ghana are as though programmatic but they also find the parties to neopatrimonially institutionalized – exhibit greater party discipline and at the same time resort to populist inducement." In the analysis of the logic of neopatrimonialism, the paper sets out to interrogate

what special interests were so influential in producing clientelism and also, what aspect of clientelism and special interest or influence that could become the two sides of the same coin or produce the desired outcome. The overwhelming majority (98.5%) confirmed that "it has become clear the logic of clientelism and neopatrimonialism are veiled sources of power and influence, and their source of influence often depends on citizen's demand for political incentives on one hand, and politician's ability to programme and deliver policies responsive to their demands."

In the context of desired outcome, 87.5% of the respondents said "it requires strategic thinking and planning, thus framing credible promises or policies and possessing the skills to articulate or disseminate and act politically conducive period, tackling them."

The overwhelming majority of the respondents (96.0%) believe "there is a fair amount of theorizing about choice of effort politicians make to pursue and implement different accountability mechanisms, particularly programmatic and clientelistic politics (albeit less so about the intensity of programmatic effort made by political parties)." Some respondents, not less than 64.5%, maintained "but there is a general paucity of data reporting how parties actually make such choices in democracies around the world, and how much effort occurs to deploy various democratic linkage mechanisms."

Finally, this paper compared politicians' efforts to project programmatic appeals with other appeals and established by the majority of the respondents over 80% that "politicians may employ populist politics to attract voters and establish relations of accountability and suggested the need for future avenues for the refinement of these measures". The argument that it is increasingly becoming difficult to secure a first victory in Ghana because the parties are not able to convince the electorate with their populists policies, has critically been explored and tends to be correct. About 75% of the respondents indicated that "the reason(s) being that Ghana is not just a polarized state (two party-state), block voting assumes phenomenal rise and also, it is abundantly clear that any strong member of one party may prefer to stand independently when defaulted to joining the opposition party (Brobbey, 2009). It is also clear that no matter what a politician gives to a member of opposition, it becomes extremely difficult to induce the vote." In short, "once opposition, always opposition."

Conclusion

The usage of tariffs on rice as the center of argument in this paper is therefore more appropriate in that clearly, there are differences in the policy emphasis placed on rice output. One focuses on importation and tariff reduction, increasing rice consumption and at the same time creating job for rice importers. The other focuses on

rice production and increasing consumption thereby encouraging locally produced rice and at the same time creating jobs for local rice growers. However, the point of departure is that, these policies are exclusionary or discriminatory policies. While Kufuor's policy targeted urban rice importers consumers (urban bias) Mills' policy focused on Northern local rice production (Northern rice producer-centered). Also significant is that rice policies of Kufuor and Mills appear to have the propensity to attract electorate's votes to facilitate the 50% +1 valid vote to win the presidency. In line, it is becoming a daunting task for the country to experience one touch elections due to pervasive neopatrimonialism in Ghana, and hence election outcomes tend to reflect block voting pattern making it impossible for a party to emerge one touch winner. Also evidential is that the incumbents are unable to ensure sustainable credible national programmes and policies beyond regimes. Neopatrimonialism is not only very popular but also well entrenched in Ghanaian body politic, and that, it is a very complex and contradictory phenomenon, that is, it simultaneously spurs and negates democratic rule. Besides, neopatrimonial rulers often circumvent vertical and horizontal accountability and hence tend to promote corruption.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the findings discussed, this paper makes some recommendations for policy action and also for further research as praxis. First, political education should be intensified to create awareness of neopatrimonial practices and at the same time expose the negative elements of neopatrimonial practices. Second, although neopatrimonialism has been institutionalized, it has not been illegalized. This paper recommends the need to set up an institution such as Anti-Corruption squad to deal with issues of neopatrimonial practice such that the perpetrators of neopatrimonialism would be brought to book. Third, politicians should not only be made to render accounts of every bit of their campaign messages, manifestos and promises, but also the parliament should enact laws that would enable the general public to prosecute any politician who short changes the public with vain promises.

Finally, given the complexity and contradictory nature of neopatrimonialism, further research is important to address the issue of distinguishing culturally, what is to be considered socially acceptable practice and politically what is not, bearing in mind the dichotomy between private and public decisions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am indebted to the following: God Almighty for preserving my life. Managements of Institute of African

Studies, University of Ghana and Ghana Institute of Journalism respectively, for their institutional support; UPEACE-IDRC, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Africa Journal of Political Science and International Relations (AJPSIR) for accepting to publish this work. Other individuals including; Prof. Essuman-Johnson, Dr K.O. Aidoo, members of my supervisory committee for their invaluable and the Management of Ghana Institute of Journalism, especially, Mr. David Newton, Rector for the institutional supports. Dr. S. A. Ntewusu, Dr. G. Bob-Milliar and for their encouragement and painstakingly editing my work, Vida Adu-Bempah Brobbey, my backbone, without whom I could not have completed this work and my four lovely children; Sylvia, Collins Jnr., Aaron and Samuel. God bless you all.

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