

WEBINAR BRIEF

ISSUE 2020/004

**DE-MONETIZING ELECTORAL POLITICS,
STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNANCE:
WHICH WAY FORWARD FOR GHANA?**

Background



- ❖ Since the 2004 general elections, Ghana has experienced a rise in monetization of electoral politics. In a 2017 survey, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) found that it cost approximately US\$87, 000 or about GHC 500,000 to get elected to Parliament (Asante and Kunnath,2018). Today, many aspirants would put that figure at not less than GHC 1 million or \$200,000.
- ❖ Monetization threatens the credibility of election outcomes as a true reflection of the will of the people. It turns political leadership into a commercial product that is up for auction to the highest bidder (IDEG, 2018, WFD, 2018). In Ghana, political parties and politicians are increasingly raising the alarm on the need to address this problem if the country's multiparty democracy is to deliver the expected dividends of development (IDEG, 2020).
- ❖ The purpose of the webinar was to create a platform for political parties and citizens to reflect on the concept of monetization and the challenges that it poses to Ghana's multiparty democracy and national development; and to deliberate on proposals put together by IDEG towards demonetizing electoral politics in Ghana. The webinar was designed as an interactive panel discussion. Panelists were selected from the New Patriotic Party (NPP), the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the Progressive People's Party (PPP).





Against this background, the Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG) held a webinar on the theme, “Demonetizing Electoral Politics, Strengthening Accountable Governance: Which Way Forward for Ghana?” on Tuesday, 22nd September 2020. The program was sponsored by the Danish Embassy in Ghana and the Danish Institute for Parties Democracy (DIPD).

The panelists were the following: Honorable Member of Parliament for Nadowli West Constituency, NDC and Second Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Mr. Alban Bagbin; The Honorable M.P. for Suame Constituency, NPP, Majority Leader of Parliament of Ghana and the Minister for Parliamentary Affairs. Mr. Osei Kyei Mensah-Bonsu; The Flagbearer for the PPP, Ms. Brigitte Dzogbenuku.

The discussion was moderated by the Executive Director of IDEG, Dr. Emmanuel Akwetey. Representatives from political parties, civil society, development partners and the general public, took part in the webinar.

IDEG Webinar



Key Issues Emerging: Monetization



- ❖ Panelists acknowledged that monetization had increased significantly since 1996. The panelists from the two major political parties further acknowledged that both their political parties were in breach of political party funding regulations.
- ❖ They stressed a need for both internal political party and Constitutional reforms to address monetization. Their submissions highlighted the effect of monetization on women's representation in that it had contributed to the under representation of women.
- ❖ A disturbing ripple effect of monetization was the emergence of violence in Ghana's electoral politics.
- ❖ All the panelists acknowledged that monetization had increased significantly since 1996.

Key Proposals for De-Monetizing Ghana's Electoral Politics

Panelists' submissions responded to the IDEG's earlier proposals as well as other proposals emerging in the public space on de-monetizing electoral politics which are detailed as follows:



De-monetization Proposal

Democratizing Party Ownership



The IDEG has proposed the democratization of party ownership as an option for de-monetizing electoral politics. By this option, the influence of small numbers of party financiers would be countervailed by payment of party dues and subscriptions by the membership base of the parties.

This would empower the base which has become subservient to power brokers (IDEG, 2018).

Panelists embraced the idea of membership dues and subscription to resource political parties:

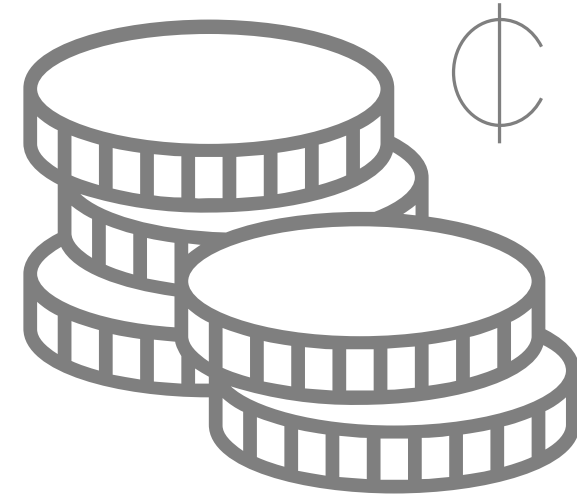
- ❖ The Flagbearer of the Progressive People's Party stated that her party members are required to pay monthly dues.
- ❖ However, the Majority Leader stated that only few registered members of his party pay dues. For instance, in the Suame constituency which he represents as the MP, and which is also a stronghold of the NPP, the party cannot boast of more than 4000 paid-up members.

De-monetization Proposal

Public Funding for Political Parties

Direct public funding of political parties is needed to complement party subscription and membership dues to resource the parties as done in other democracies has surfaced within the public debate.

- ❖ This option which has also been advocated for by the IDEG resurfaced in the panelists' submissions. They unanimously agreed on the need for the state to support the activities of political parties.
- ❖ Accordingly, the country needs to agree on the list of items that the state must sponsor such as the development of party manifestos and annual congresses of political parties to discuss development issues.
- ❖ The Majority Leader proposed that the proportion of state funding for political parties at the presidential level should be based on a minimum percentage of votes that the parties garner during the general elections. At the parliamentary level, the number of parliamentary seats that the parties obtained should determine the proportion of state funding that must be allocated to them.
- ❖ The Majority Leader and the 2nd Deputy Speaker of Parliament representing the two major parties (NPP and NDC) respectively, further acknowledged that their parties were in breach of party funding regulations.



De-monetization Proposal

Enforcement of Existing Laws

The IDEG has proposed the strict enforcement of legislations meant to regulate the activities of the political parties.

- ❖ As such, the Flagbearer of the PPP and the Majority Leader agreed that the Electoral Commission (EC) must probe the financing of the parties and enforce existing political party financing regulations.
- ❖ Specifically, Articles 55 (14) and (15) together with section 23 and 24 of the Political Parties Act 574 (2000). The Flagbearer of the PPP further stated that Article 286 of the Constitution on asset declaration for public office holders must be strictly enforced.



De-monetization Proposal

Creation of a Multiparty Democracy Commission

Given the EC's constraint in effectively supervising political parties, the IDEG has advocated for the establishment of a multiparty democracy commission purposely to regulate the activities of political parties.

- ❖ In view of this, the 2nd Deputy Speaker of Parliament advocated for the establishment of a democracy commission that will be responsible for regulating the political parties.
- ❖ He proposed that the state can dedicate a single building to accommodate all the democratic institutions in the country such as NCCE, CHRAJ, EC and the suggested democracy commission.

Multiparty Democracy Commission



De-monetization Proposal

Strengthening the Developmental Orientation of Parties

The IDEG has advocated for constitutional amendments and consequential reforms aimed at strengthening the developmental orientation of the parties.

- ❖ In this regard, the Majority Leader proposed that party manifestos must be based on the directive principle of state policy (Chapter 6, 1992 Constitution).
- ❖ On her part, the Flagbearer of the PPP stated that political party manifestos must not only focus on infrastructure and social development, but national and party values must also be enshrined in parties' manifestos.
- ❖ She further called for the election of MMDCEs at the local level so that citizens can demand accountability from their elected leaders and the parties.



De-monetization Proposal

Internal Party Reforms

Political parties' representatives and other stakeholders have proposed a reform of political party structures and amendment of their constitutions. This resurfaced in the panelists' submissions.

- ❖ The panelists stressed on the need for both internal political party and Constitutional reforms to address monetization. Their submissions highlighted the effect of monetization on women's representation in that it had contributed to the under-representation of women.
- ❖ The 2nd Deputy Speaker of Parliament stated that political parties have misunderstood the intentions of the framers of the Constitution on Article 55 (5) and (7) by applying competitive elections to fill every position within the parties.
- ❖ The Majority Leader called for the reform of internal political party structures to reduce the effect of monetization in Ghana's electoral discourse. Proposals include the substitution of the first-past-the-post system with other modes of selection such as nominations, appointments of polling station and constituency executives of the parties to ensure proportional representation of women and other marginalized groups.
- ❖ He also called for the extension of electoral college to all card bearing members of the parties to vote during parliamentary primaries. Moreover, it will be great to allow high performing MPs to go unopposed after an assessment by the appropriate party structures on the performance of such MPs.



REFORMS

De-monetization Proposal

Strengthening the Regulatory Framework

The IDEG has made proposals aimed at strengthening the financial and operational regulatory framework within which political parties operate.



- ❖ In line with this proposal, the Majority Leader called for the amendment of Article 78 and 79 of the Constitution for a ceiling on the numbers of ministers and deputy ministers of state as well as curb the practice where majority of ministers are appointed from parliament.
- ❖ This will help provide the needed competence required by the executive and the legislature. Thus, the nation must build consensus on the appropriate number of ministers that is needed for efficient running of the state.
- ❖ He further suggested that there is the need for a deliberate effort at building a third force to break the duopoly of NPP and NDC.
- ❖ To ensure transparent and accountable financial management system of the parties, the Flagbearer of the PPP stated that the political parties should not receive monetary donations and dues in cash but rather through digital transactions i.e. mobile money or the bank. This will help the party to trace all donations and account for them.

Other De-monetization Proposals

Other proposals for de-monetization that emerged from the program include the need for:

- ❖ The state should resource NCCE to educate the electorate on the purpose of elections and the benefits of democracy.
- ❖ There should be collaboration and partnership between NCCE, CSOs and relevant stakeholders to educate the public on multiparty democracy and the importance of de-monetization.
- ❖ Political parties must begin to examine their values and what they stand for in nation building and inculcate these democratic values into their parties' members and citizens.

