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## The national peace council and democratic Consolidation: An assessment

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### Abstract

Ghana's democracy continues to remain an example for several African countries to emulate. After having gone through three turnovers/peaceful transfers of political power from an incumbent to the opposition since the return to democracy in 1992, several minimalists concluded that Ghana's democracy has consolidated because it passed Huntington's two-test hypothesis. Moving beyond elections and minimalist views on democratic consolidation, this paper uses the National Peace Council (NPC), as a case study on the democratic consolidation strives of Ghana. The goal of this paper is to unpack the various contribution of the NPC to Ghana's democratic consolidation. We show how, since the creation of the NPC, Ghana has been able to consolidate its democracy by remaining peaceful before, during and after elections. We also point out some major limitations to the progress of the NPC and proffer some solutions for policy recommendations.

**Keywords:** Ghana, National Peace Council, Democratic Consolidation, Elections, Politics

### Introduction

The "Third wave" of global democratization which swept across countries around the world affected Ghana as well. This wave pushed Ghana under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah to attained political independence from the British colonial masters on March 6, 1957. Since then, a blend of both civilian and military rule with intermittent coup d'états have occurred. Emphatically, Ghana has experienced five military interventions and takeovers since independence with the last being the December 31, 1981 under the auspices of the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC). The country returned to democratic rule on January 7, 1993 following the "founding election" of November and December 1992. This election marked the beginning of the Fourth Republic. Since the return to democratic rule, there has been three rotations of power from the incumbent political party to the opposition. In 2000, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) ceded political power to the New Patriotic Party (NPP), in 2008, the NPP lost power to the NDC and in 2016, the NDC with its presidential candidate being the incumbent president losing to the NPP (Gyampoh *et al.*, 2017). Based on these, Ghana's democracy has been described as consolidated (Gyimah-Boadi 2001; 2009; Ayee 2017, Graham *et al.* 2017) [36, 37, 10, 28]. Several actors and factors contributed to this feat. Although there have been several studies on democratic consolidation in Ghana (Gyimah-Boadi 2001; Ayee 1998; Gyimah-Boadi 2009; Graham *et al.* 2017; Arthur 2010; Asante and Asare 2016; Abdulai and Crawford 2010; Gyampo and Asare 2015) [36, 9, 37, 3, 33], none has examined the role of the national peace council in Ghana's democratic consolidation process. It is important to state that Gyampo and Asare's (2015) [33] paper examined the role of the church in Ghana's democratic consolidation process, they used the case of Ghana Christian Council, however, this paper seeks to build on Gyampo and Asare's (2015) [33] research. It therefore, against this backdrop, this paper examines the roles and challenges of the National Peace Council (NPC) to consolidating democracy in Ghana's Fourth Republic. The rest of the paper is organized into five sections, namely: theorizing democratic consolidation, Ghanaian scholarship on democratic consolidation, the evolution of the National Peace Council in Ghana, methodology, the roles of the NPC to democratic consolidation, the challenges faced by the NPC, conclusion and recommendations.

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### Conceptualizing democratic consolidation

Before attempting to understand the concept of democratic consolidation, it is imperative to explain the meaning of the two words forming it. Etymologically, democracy as a word and a form of political life both began in ancient Greece (Asante and Asare, 2016) <sup>[6]</sup>. The word comes from a combination of the Greek noun *demos*, meaning common people, and the verb *keratin*, to rule (Sargent 2008, 62) <sup>[51]</sup>. For the Greek, democracy means rule or government by the common people. That is those who were uneducated, unsophisticated and poor. Abraham Lincoln at the Gettysburg Address extolled the virtues of democracy and called it “government of the people, by the people and for the people” (Asante and Asare, 2016:2) <sup>[6]</sup>.

The concept of democracy, whilst being an essential concept in comparative politics, is equally elusive and open to difficulties in conceptualization and measurement (Khorram-Manesh, 2013:5) <sup>[42]</sup>, as such scholars have defined it variously. Huntington (1991:6) <sup>[38]</sup> postulates that contemporary definitions of democracy can be categorized into three separate families: those based on “the sources of authority for government”, “the purposes served by government”, or “the procedures for constituting the government”. Huntington (1991:7) <sup>[38]</sup> defines democracy as a political system where the most powerful decision makers are selected through fair, honest and periodic elections in which all the adult population are eligible to vote. To Huntington (1991) <sup>[38]</sup>, at the heart of democracy are contestation and participation. In the words of Przeworski, *et al.*, (2000) <sup>[48]</sup> contestation through elections is an essential feature of democracy. Collier (2009:15) <sup>[21]</sup> succinctly corroborated it by espousing that elections are regarded as not only the most visible feature of democracy but also its defining characteristics.

Consolidation is derived from the Latin word, “consolidate” literally meaning to “make firm” (Asante and Asare, 2016) <sup>[6]</sup>. Pridham exposition that democratic consolidation was a “nebulous concept” has not lost its unpleasant validity since then. Still “no clear consensus has emerged” as to the meaning of democratic consolidation. Diamond (1997) <sup>[24]</sup> argued, “Consolidation is the process of achieving broad and deep legitimation, such that all significant political actors, at both the elite and mass levels, believe that the democratic regime is the most right and appropriate for the society, better than any other realistic alternative they can imagine”. Linz and Stepan (1996:5) <sup>[44]</sup> are of the view that there are still many tasks that need to be accomplished, conditions that must be established and attitudes and habits that must be cultivated before democracy could be considered consolidated. In identifying the characteristics of a consolidated democracy, Linz and Stepan (1996:5) <sup>[44]</sup> chose a narrower definition that nonetheless combined behavioral, attitudinal and constitutional dimensions. In expanding the definition, they opined that democracy is consolidated when the following are in place. First, the behavioral dimension, which occurs when no significant national, social, economic, political, or institutional actors spend significant resources attempting to achieve their objectives by creating a nondemocratic regime or by seceding from the state. Second, the attitudinal dimension. This suggests that a democratic regime is consolidated when a strong majority of public opinion, even in the midst of major economic problems and deep dissatisfaction with incumbents, holds the belief that democratic procedures and

institutions are the most appropriate way to govern collective life, and when support for ant system alternatives is quite small or more-or-less isolated from pro-democratic forces. The third dimension is the constitutional, which occurs when governmental and nongovernmental forces alike become subjected to and habituated to the resolution of conflict within the bounds of the specific laws, procedures, and institutions sanctioned by the new democratic process.

Aside the above three dimensions, Linz and Stepan (1996:6-7) <sup>[44]</sup> identified five other interconnected and mutually reinforcing conditions as prerequisites of democratic consolidation. One, the conditions must exist for the development of a free and lively civil society. Two, there must be a relatively autonomous political society. Three, throughout the territory of the state, all major political actors, especially the government and the state apparatus, must be subjected to rule of law that protects individual freedoms and associational life. Four, existence of a state bureaucracy that is usable by the new democratic government, and five, there must be institutionalized economic society. To Linz and Stepan (1996:5) <sup>[44]</sup>, democracy is consolidated, when it is “the only game in town”.

Democracy is conceptualized to be consolidated when it is “likely to endure” and expected to “last well into the future” (Schedler, 2001, O’Donnell, 1996:48, Valenzuela, 1992 cited in Khorram-Manesh; 2013:8 <sup>[53, 47, 54, 42]</sup>). This “thin” conceptualization, however, creates operationalization difficulties as it resides on expectations of the future (Schedler, 2001:67) <sup>[53]</sup>. Schedler offered three different assumptions to this operationalization difficulty.

The first assumption focused on behavioral foundations of stability. This states that key political actors sustain political institutions. Schedler (2001:68) <sup>[53]</sup> intimated that; “democracy is neither a divine gift nor a side effect of societal factors; it is the work of political actors”. This is somewhat similar assessment to what Linz and Stepan (1996:5) <sup>[53]</sup> advocated – that a democracy is consolidated when democratic processes and institutions become “the only game in town” and this only happens when actors decide to “play the game”.

The second assumption outlined an attitudinal foundation of democratic governance where it is argued that democracy is always under risk unless all major political actors develop “normative motive, strategic rationality and cognitive perceptions” in order to sustain a regime of liberal democracy (Schedler, 2001:85) <sup>[53]</sup>. The third assumption is the socio-economic foundation of a democratic regime. Feeling “safe” in the consolidation only occurs when the socio-economic environment and its institutional settings look promising for the continuity of democracy (Schedler, 2001:85) <sup>[53]</sup>. On the relationship between the three operational assumptions, Schedler (2001:85) <sup>[53]</sup> argued that behavioral evidence overshadows both attitudinal and structural factors. The democracy of a state is consolidated when the key political actors behave democratically. This is manifested by key political figures stepping down from power and respecting electoral results.

Elements of democratic consolidation have also been identified in the literature (Diamond, 1997) <sup>[24]</sup>. Some of these are highlighted below.

1. The minimalist conception of democratic consolidation and maturity emphasizes the conduct of elections as the

- key and major element.
2. Democracy is consolidated when individual and group liberties are respected, well protected, and there exist autonomous spheres of civil society and private life, insulated from state control.
  3. Democratic consolidation also requires the effective functioning of civil society in supporting democracy within a body politic. According to him, the democracy support functions of civil society are two-fold. First, they play a crucial role in ensuring a transition from an authoritarian rule to at least an electoral democratic rule. Secondly, they strive to deepen democracy once it is established through capacity building of key democracy actors like political parties. They create platform for consensus building among political elites; play a watchdog role and offer constructive criticisms to keep governments on their toes. This provides basis for the limitation of state power. Civil society supplement the role of political parties by offering political education on tolerance, compromise, moderation, respect for dissenting views; arouse political consciousness of the citizenry and stimulate political participation.
  4. Groups are independent from the state in their functions and they command respect in their activities as intermediaries between the state and the governed. Valenzuela (1992) <sup>[54]</sup> identified five broad conditions that promote or drawback the consolidation of democracies. These are: (i) The modalities through which the transitions to democratic governments took place, (ii) The influence of historical memories of alternative regimes, (iii) The moderation of political conflict, (iv) The management of social conflict, and (v) The subordination of the military to the democratic government. In Valenzuela's opinion, getting rid of "tutelary powers", "reserved domains," and "major discriminations" in the electoral law appeared as necessary ingredients of democratic consolidation.

Schedler (2001:73) <sup>[53]</sup> amplified the "one-turnover test" as the most cited indicator of measuring democratic consolidation. The test states that democratic consolidation occurs when the willingness to accept democracy comes from political actors accepting it not only as a way of gaining more power, but as also where "parties lose elections" (see for instance Przeworski, *et al.*, 1991:10) <sup>[49]</sup>. The acceptance of the test is not universal, several scholars have brought forth claims of its limitations, and that it does not represent sufficient evidence of political commitment from electoral competitors. For instance, it is argued that the test misclassifies dominant party systems as well as presidential systems with "limited non-re-election rules", Huntington, 1991, Schedler, 2001) <sup>[38, 53]</sup>. Yet, Schedler (2001:73) posited, "The way political actors handle instances of changes in government constitutes an excellent indicator of their democratic commitment".

Minimalist and maximalist levels of democratic consolidation have been identified. There is considerable consensus over what are, as O'Donnell and Schmitter put it, the "procedural minimum" of democracies, namely, "secret balloting, universal adult suffrage, regular elections, partisan competition, associational recognition and access, and executive accountability". Tutelary power, reserved domains of policy, voter discrimination and the centrality of

the electoral means to constitute governments are the factors that hinder the minimalist approach to democratic consolidation.

Similarly, Dahl (1971:3) <sup>[22]</sup> enumerated eight "institutional requirements" for the existence of a democracy, which are: "1. Freedom to form and join organizations; 2. Freedom of expression; 3. Right to vote; 4. Eligibility for public office; 5. Right of political leaders to compete for support (and votes); 6. Alternative sources of information; 7. Free and fair elections; and 8. Institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference".

Democracy according to the maximalists, is consolidated when there are certain conditions in place beyond elections and turnover of power (Beetham, 1994; Diamond, 1997, 1999) <sup>[12, 24, 25]</sup>. These features include rule of law, vibrant civil society, respect and protection of individuals and group liberties, free and fair elections, the right to political expression, organisations, and opposition.

In the literature, Schedler (2001:67) <sup>[53]</sup> identified five notions of democratic consolidation. These are avoiding democratic breakdown, avoiding democratic erosion, institutionalizing democracy, completing democracy, and deepening democracy. Empirically, Khorram-Manesh (2013:32-34) <sup>[42]</sup> espoused that the higher the level of corruption in a state, the lesser it is for democracy to be consolidated.

Based on the above conceptual reviews, this paper adopts the maximalist approach to democratic consolidation and conceptualizes democratic consolidation as the process of deploying the elements of democracy beyond elections and rotation of power to stabilize or make Ghana's democracy firm. The maximalist view is appropriate for this article on two grounds. One, it helps in neutralizing the fallacy of electoralism (Karl 1990 cited in Asante and Asare 2016:) <sup>[41, 6]</sup>, which equates democratic consolidation to the holding of successful elections. Two the NPC is not the constitutionally mandated institution for election management in Ghana but a significant actor who employs diverse strategies to deepen Ghana's democracy.

### Ghanaian scholarship on democratic consolidation

Ghanaian studies on democratic consolidation are legion and diverse covering elections, political parties, civil society organizations (CSOs), state institutions, the media and legal frameworks. Ayee (2001), Jonah (2005), Anebo (2006), Frimpong (2006), Gyimah-Boadi (1996) and Bofo-Arthur (2006) <sup>[37, 39, 4, 26, 35, 26]</sup> gave a detailed account of the significance of elections in consolidating Ghana's democratic dividend as well as the prospects and drawbacks of elections in nurturing democratic maturity in Ghana. The importance of political parties in the democratic drive has also been given the needed attention in the literature (Debrah, 2005; Ninsin, 2006; Bofo-Arthur, 2003; Jonah, 2010) <sup>[23, 50, 14, 40]</sup>.

CSOs have contributed enormously to democratic consolidation in Ghana. Gyimah-Boadi (2009) <sup>[37]</sup> posits that Ghana's civil society—including religious, secular, and professional organisations, as well as think tanks and civic-advocacy bodies—acting individually and collectively, was vigorous and savvy enough to monitor the entire electoral process from beginning to end, thereby enhancing its transparency. Civil society's interventions, along with media vigilance, helped to keep campaigns issue-based and

peaceful. This signified a renewed political alertness and expanded the democratic space. Their activism, alertness and watchdog roles in the democratic space has concurrently increased civic participation in policy-making (Graham *et al.* 2017) <sup>[28]</sup>.

In contributing to the discourse on the role of CSOs to democratic consolidation, Gyekye-Jandoh (2016) <sup>[34]</sup> examined the impetus of the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) and argued that they propelled the Ghanaian democratic process forward in the post-transition period through domestic observation practices that frustrated electoral fraud and enhanced the credibility and transparency of electoral outcomes. Gyekye-Jandoh (2016) <sup>[34]</sup> opined that CODEO's salience in election observation practices culminated into the acceptance of election outcomes thereby consolidating democracy. In Gyekye-Jandoh's (2016) <sup>[34]</sup> estimation democracy can be consolidated and democratic reversals pre-empted when civil society organisations take the initiative to enhance domestic ownership of the electoral process through active observation and monitoring of elections. Nonetheless, local election observation and monitoring are necessary but not sufficient conditions for consolidating a democratic order. Election management reforms, elite consensus and state/governmental supports are vital for the credibility of the electoral process and enhancing the legitimacy of its outcomes.

Botchway (2018) <sup>[18]</sup> specifically interrogated the role of the Centre for Democratic Development- Ghana (CDD), Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG) and Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) to democratic consolidation in Ghana and found that CSOs have promoted the integrity of Ghana's election by observing every stage of Ghana's electoral process. In particular, the IEA, CDD and IDEG have inculcated democratic values of civic participation, political engagement and tolerance in the population thereby promoting democratic citizenship.

CSOs are plagued with challenges in their contribution to democratic consolidation. One of such hiccups is funding (Botchway 2018; Graham *et al.*, 2017) <sup>[18, 28]</sup>. The funding challenge has made them unable to attract and retain the requisite experts, douses their independence thereby making them pliable tools in the hands of their foreign partners, and difficulty in implementing major programmes. In addition, CSOs are perceived as pursuing their parochial interests, the continuous deliberate tagging of CSOs by political parties to be in bed with their opponents (Botchway, 2018, Graham *et al.* 2017, Arthur, 2010) <sup>[18, 28, 5]</sup>.

Ninsin (2007) and Arthur (2010) <sup>[45, 5]</sup> identified the gradual accumulation of confidence and relative autonomy by democracy state institutions such as the National Media Commission, Electoral Commission and the Commission of Human Rights and Administrative Justice. To them, these has propelled the institutions in the performance of their functions in a reasonably free and impartial manner thereby contributing to democratic consolidation. They also highlighted the significant role of the CSOs. Gyampo (2015) <sup>[33]</sup> examined the contribution of the Christian Council of Ghana to democratic consolidation and maturation. In his view, the activities of the Christian Council of Ghana did not only promote democratic consolidation at the minimalist level but at the maximalist level as well. He enumerated activities such as voter education, constructive criticisms, election monitoring and observation as some roles of the

Christian Council of Ghana in consolidating Ghana's democracy. Through their public utterances, public education and press statements, they have kept governments on their toes, protected the rights of the ordinary citizenry as well as offered political education to Ghanaians on their rights, responsibilities and the need for them to refrain from acts that could undermine the nation's democratic progress and peace. He further emphasized the collaboration of the Council with other civil society groups, media and religious bodies as a *modus operandi* in the promotion of peace, culture of tolerance as well as politics of accommodation in Ghana. They have been able to contribute to the calming of political tension before, during and after election. Gyampo (2015) <sup>[33]</sup> further intimated that the Council has promoted accountability and issue based politics through the Presidential Forum. In Gyampo's view, this shifted electioneering campaign from politics of insults and mudslinging to the discussion of bread and butter issues of concern to Ghanaians.

On the role of the legal and institutional frameworks in democratic consolidation, a handful of studies exists. Quashigah (2016) <sup>[50]</sup> saw the provisions in the 1992 Republican Constitution as a "double-edged sword" in democratic consolidation. In one breath he espoused that the provisions significantly aided democratic consolidation in Ghana whilst in another, he argued that these same provisions created an inherent constraint on the electoral process with respect to the timing of elections and the time for a smooth handover to the incoming administration when the election outcomes results in power alternation. Bofo-Arthur (2008) <sup>[16]</sup> extolled the virtues of the Ghanaian courts in democratic consolidation. He posited that since 1992, the courts have been used in resolving potentially destabilizing election-related disputes. Similarly, Abdulai and Crawford (2010) <sup>[30]</sup> argued that major Ghanaian political actors have accepted the rule of law as the best option in settling electoral disputes through appropriate procedures and institutions, and there have also been increase trust in the capacity of the legal institutions to that effect. The 2013 Election Petitions affirmed these assertions. In the words of Asante and Asare (2016) <sup>[6]</sup>, Ghana made a great leap towards democratic consolidation through the 2013 Election Petition. "Constitutionally, the election results as declared by the Electoral Commission (EC) was the bone of contention between the EC and NDC on one side and the NPP on the other. Instead of choosing to battle it out on the street as happened in other places across the world, the conflicting parties subjected themselves to the full rigour of the laws of the country to resolve their differences. Asante and Asare (2016) <sup>[6]</sup> remarked that the deepening of democracy is not just a four-year ceremony as it is the case of queuing and voting for one political party or the other, but rather conscious efforts should be made to improve all facets of the democratic apparatus".

Graham *et al.* (2017) <sup>[28]</sup> argued that Ghana passed Samuel Huntington's two-turnover test to democratic consolidation when political power alternated between the NDC and the NPP in 2001, 2009 and 2017 following successful peaceful turnover of power. They attributed the consolidation of democracy in Ghana to the existence of multiparty system, political parties' value of interparty alliance, increasing role of CSOs and the media. Aside the arguments in favour of Ghana being a consolidated democracy, there are pockets of studies that equally argued that Ghana is democratically

unconsolidated. Factors such as the prevalence of winner-takes-all (WTA) politics (Bitafir-Ijon, 2018) [13]. Other factors include the failure of the media to provide fair and equal access for all political parties and their candidates, particularly in the lead up to elections (Graham *et al.*, 2017) [28]. Inequality, poor standards of living, massive unemployment and underemployment, abuse of power by the executive, judicial corruption, existence of political vigilante groups, nepotism, no clear separation of powers etc. are banes to Ghana's democratic maturation (Botchway, 2018) [19].

From the above, it can be gleaned that there is no explicit direct study on the roles and challenges of the National Peace Council to democratic consolidation in Ghana. This study therefore makes a modest contribution to the burgeoning literature on democratic consolidation in Ghana by examining the roles of the National Peace Council to democratic consolidation and the challenges faced thereof.

### **The evolution of the National Peace Council**

The NPC had its root from the northern part of the country where plethora of post-independence challenges resulted into pockets of instability and armed conflict including inter-ethnic disputes over power and control, intra-ethnic disputes over chieftaincy succession, land-disputes and election-related tensions (Awinador-Kanyirige, 2014) [8]. To avert the escalations of violent conflicts in the northern region of Ghana, Rt. Rev. Phillip Naameh (then Bishop of Damango, the capital town of North East Region), focus his initial apostolate on creating necessary structures and processes to address issues of recurring conflicts. In collaboration with the Catholic Relief Services in 1995, Rt. Rev. Naameh initiated the Northern Ghana Peace Project, which later evolved into the Centre for Conflict Transformation and Peace Studies (CECOTAPS) (Awinador-Kanyirige, 2014) [8].

The existing traditional government system which could also in a way help prevent recurring violent conflicts in northern Ghana prior to CECOTAPS had been compromised by the nature of the recurring conflicts which they believed to be influenced by some political entrepreneurs. In addition, the National Security Council (NSC); a state apparatus, partly responsible to maintain law and order, respect for human rights and promotion of peace and tranquillity was not only financially challenged but also lacked the requisite mediation capacity, particularly the skills in dealing with chieftaincy related conflicts and land disputes (Awinador-Kanyirige, 2014) [8].

Notwithstanding the challenges that faced the NSC, the CECOTAPS took initiatives to ensure peace and security in northern region thereby finding sustainable solutions to land and chieftaincy. This action yielded result during the 1994 armed conflict between Nanumbas and Kokombas. The Catholic Relief Services, Non-governmental organisations, CSOs including Action Aid Ghana, World Vision Ghana, Christian Council of Ghana, Oxfam International and other aid agencies collaborated with CECOTAPS to complement the efforts of the NSC in ensuring sustainable peace between the Kokombas and the Nanumbas. The early warning signal and timely intervention by CECOTAPS, NSC and other non-state actors prevented the conflict from becoming protracted.

However, the complexity of joint action by the stakeholders working to ensure peace and community development in

northern Ghana came with challenges including duplication of efforts since there were no well-defined responsibilities and activities among CECOTAPS, NSC and other actors. Sometimes, there were competing efforts between CSO and government-sponsored initiatives (Awinador-Kanyirige, 2014) [8]. This culminated into the emergence of the first regional peace council in northern region to establish a clear definition of responsibilities and roles among the stakeholders. The problem of duplication of efforts and the absence of CECOTAPS in other regions served as a fertile ground for the establishment of a well-defined infrastructure for peace hence the NPC was birthed in 2005 (Awinador-Kanyirige 2014) [8].

To give the NPC legal backing, the National Peace Council Bill was passed into the National Peace Council Act, 2011 (Act 818) by the Parliament of Ghana in March, 2011 with Presidential Assent on 16<sup>th</sup> May, 2011. The Council operates a three-tier structure; thus national, regional and metropolitan, municipal and district. The objective of the NPC is to facilitate and develop mechanisms for conflict prevention, management, resolution and to build sustainable peace in the country (National Peace Council Act, 2011).

To achieve the objective, Act 818 enumerates the following eight functions for the Council at the various levels:

- a) To harmonise and co-ordinate conflict prevention, management, resolution and build sustainable peace through networking and co-ordination,
- b) To strengthen capacities for conflict prevention, management, resolution and sustainable peace in the country including but not limited to chiefs, women, youth groups and community organisations,
- c) To increase awareness on the use of non-violent strategies to prevent, manage and resolve conflict and build sustainable peace in the country,
- d) To facilitate the amicable resolution of conflict through mediation and other processes including indigenous mechanisms for conflict resolution and peace building,
- e) To promote understanding of the values of diversity, trust, tolerance, confidence building, negotiation, mediation, dialogue and reconciliation,
- f) To co-ordinate and supervise the work of the Regional and District Peace Councils,
- g) To facilitate the implementation of agreements and resolutions reached between parties in conflict,
- h) To make recommendations to the Government and other stakeholders on actions to promote trust and confidence between and among groups and to perform any other functions which are ancillary to its objectives.

The NPC as an independent state institution has a board, consisting of thirteen eminent members appointed by the President in consultation with the Council of State in accordance with Article 70 of the 1992 Constitution (Republic of Ghana, 11:5; 1992:60). Six are representatives from religious bodies. In addition, the NPC have regional and district peace councils, with thirteen members, whose activities involve among others, public education, sensitizing and raising awareness of conflict indicators within the region. Executive secretaries operate in each region and district. They are the secretaries of the peace councils with experience in conflict resolution and peace building.

**Methodology**

The study employed the qualitative approach coupled with case study. Data was collected through both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected via face-to-face elite interview in two phases. Phase one comprised of data from the officials of the NPC. To have a holistic view on the NPC’s contributions and challenges in democratic consolidation, the reputational method was used in phase two to garner experts’ perspectives on the NPC’s role in democratic consolidation. Eleven (11) respondents were interviewed. The information sought was on the strategies used by the NPC to consolidate democracy, how these strategies contributed to democratic consolidation and the challenges inherent. Secondary data was gathered from multiple sources including chapters in books, articles in journals, official reports and bulletins and newspaper publications. The generated data was organized and interpreted under major themes and analysed by means of content analysis. Data collection was between October, 2020 and February, 2021.

**The role of the National Peace Council to democratic consolidation in Ghana**

The NPC is recognized as one of the pivotal actors in Ghana’s democratization process. Its role in democratic consolidation is categorized under the following thematic areas: civic education and engagement, dialogue and preventive diplomacy, signing of peace pacts, legal instruments and capacity development for political parties. First, the Council is involved in civic education and engagements. For instance, the Chairperson of the NPC was part of the national enforcement body put together by the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), a public policy think tank based in Ghana, to supervise the enforcement of the 2012 political party code of conduct adopted by all the political parties to guide and regulate their activities (Fieldwork, October, 2020). In a related manner, the Council also collaborated with other state agencies and non-state actors in conflict prevention, peace and democracy related issues. In the words of a respondent,

*“The NPC is working with WIDAF, for now, they are doing peace show, road shows, to preach peace across the country. It is also working with Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CDD), the CDD trained a five member peace mediation committee in all the sixteen regions, and they are working”. In a similar vein, an official of the NPC indicated, “we also work with the EC and National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) for public education, awareness creation, and outreach programmes on election etc. Community sensitization in the churches, media to educate people about the importance of peace and security. The youth have been our target. So we are working with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for example to engage youth stakeholders, community durbar and advancing peace and security through tradition by involving eminent persons in the society as witnessed in 2012. We*

*collaborate with the Ghana Police Service to take up issues that border on criminality because our mandate does not involve prosecution” (Fieldwork, October, 2020).*

The Council augmented this with media (print, radio, television) campaigns for peace across the country, peace education in communities, schools and universities and public peace fora and symposia. Through these programmes, Ghanaians increasingly embraced a culture of peace, tolerance, dialogue, reconciliation and the rule of law.

Second, the Council employed dialogue and preventive diplomacy in its work. For instance, NPC leveraged on its public credibility and dialogued with the NDC, NPP and EC prior to the declaration of the 7 December 2008, 2012, and 2016 elections results by the EC. In the case of the December 2012 general elections, the then General Secretary (Mr. Kwadwo Owusu Afriyie) of the NPP through a Press Statement on December 8, 2012, declared that the presidential candidate of the NPP Nana Addo Akufo-Addo had won the presidency with 51 percent of the votes and urged party supporters to jubilate. In a rebuttal, the NDC also threatened to declare the presidential results that John Dramani Mahama was the winner. These counter claims increased the already high political temperature until the timely intervention by the NPC. The NPC through its then Chairman Most Rev. Prof Emmanuel Kwaku Asante, issued a press statement on 9 December 2012 at midnight describing the NPP General Secretary’s declaration as “premature” and inconsistent with the constitution of Ghana. The Chairman of the EC is the only constitutionally mandated person to declare the outcome of presidential results. He further called on all Ghanaians especially the NDC to exercise restraint and admonished the media not to provide its platforms for such ‘premature’ press conferences. The statement by the NPC doused the heightened political tensions and averted potential backlash that would have followed a similar declaration by the NDC (Awinador-Kanyirige, 2014)<sup>[8]</sup>.

Before the EC announced the election results on 10 December 2012, the NPP lodged several unsubstantiated complaints of electoral malpractices and accused the EC of being in bed with the NDC to falsify election results. Foreseeing the likely eruption of violence after the declaration of the results, the Council convened an in-camera meeting between the NPP, NDC and the EC. At this meeting, it emerged that the NPP lacked substantial evidence to prove the claims. Therefore, the EC counselled it to seek legal redress in court after the declaration of the winner of the election to which the party concurred. The Council continued to dialogue to build consensus by holding discussions with the parties individually to accept the outcome of the polls. The announced result and the subsequent publication of the Declaration of the President-Elect Instrument 2012, C.I. 80, indicated that John Dramani Mahama of the NDC had won as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Election 2012: Presidential Results in Percentages

Political Party	NDC	NPP	PPP	GCPP	PNC	CPP	IND. CAND.	UFP
Percentage of Votes	50.7	47.7	0.6	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1

Source: Electoral Commission, 2012

In response to the declaration, the NPP led by Nana Addo Danquah Akuffo Addo, Mahamadou Bawumia and Jake Obetsebi Lamptey (presidential candidate, vice presidential candidate and national chair respectively) filed a petition at the Supreme Court in accordance to Article 64(1) of the 1992 Constitution, C.I. 72, 74 and 75. The petition had the NDC presidential candidate and the Electoral Commission as the first and second respondents respectively. The case was heard, and verdict delivered on August 29, 2013, with the Supreme Court upholding the result as declared by the EC. The eight-month legal battle between the election petition parties gave the NPC another opportunity to show its prowess in contributing to democratic consolidation. This it demonstrated by adopting dialogue and mediation to admonish the parties to accept the ruling of the apex court. In a similar vein, the NPC on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2020 also issued a statement encouraging dissatisfied parties to use the appropriate channels to address their concerns on the outcome of the 2020 general elections <sup>[1]</sup>. On the election petition, the Council on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021, again issued a press statement urging the concerned parties (NDC, NPP, EC) to abide by the verdict of the Supreme Court <sup>[2]</sup>.

Third, democratic consolidation is inhibited in the absence of peace. In this regard, the NPC since 2012 instituted the high level meeting (HLM) christened “peace pact” where all the presidential candidates contesting elections commit to peace. The first HLM was a tripartite collaboration between the NPC, IDEG and the Asantehene, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II organized in Kumasi dubbed the “Kumasi Declaration” on Tuesday November 27, 2012. According to Kotia (2013) <sup>[43]</sup>, the Kumasi Declaration was unique in two ways: first, it was signed and witnessed by the Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, former Presidents Jerry John Rawlings and President John Agyekum Kufuor. Two, it was historic as it was the first time in the history of Ghana that political parties committed themselves to such a peace accord.

On December 1, 2016, the second HLM was held in Accra championed by the NPC, IDEG and National House of Chiefs (NHC). The third peace pact forum was organized on December 4, 2020 also in Accra under the auspices of the NPC, NHC and IDEG. Tables 3, 4 and 5 shows the political parties, names of representatives and designations who signed the peace pacts.

**Table 2:** List of Political Parties and name of signatories to the Peace Pact, 2012

SN	Name of Political Party	Name signatories to the Peace Pact	Designation
1	National Democratic Congress	John Dramani Mahama	Presidential Candidate
2	New Patriotic Party	Nana Addo Danquah Akuffo Addo	Presidential Candidate
3	Convention Peoples’ Party	Sherita Sarpong Kumankuma	Vice Presidential Candidate
4	Progressive Peoples’ Party	Papa Kwesi Nduom	Presidential Candidate
5	National Peoples’ Party	Hassan Ayariga	Presidential Candidate
6	United Front Party	Akwasi Addai	Presidential Candidate
7	Great Consolidated Popular Party	Henry Lartey	Presidential Candidate
8	Independent Party	Joseph Osei Yeboah	Presidential Candidate

**Source:** Compiled by the Author, September 2020

**Table 3:** List of Political Parties and name of signatories to the 2016 Peace Pact

SN	Name of Political Party	Name signatories to the Peace Pact	Designation
1	National Democratic Congress	John Dramani Mahama	Presidential Candidate
2	New Patriotic Party	Nana Addo Danquah Akuffo Addo	Presidential Candidate
3	Convention Peoples’ Party	Ivor Kobina Greenstreet	Presidential Candidate
4	Progressive Peoples’ Party	Papa Kwesi Nduom	Presidential Candidate
5	Peoples’ National Congress	Dr. Edward Nasigre Mahama	Presidential Candidate
6	National Democratic Party	Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings	Presidential Candidate
7	Independent Party	Joseph Osei Yeboah	Presidential Candidate

**Source:** Compiled by the Author, September 2020

**Table 4:** List of Political Parties and name of signatories to the 2020 Peace Pact

SN	Name of Political Party	Name signatories to the Peace Pact	Designation
1	National Democratic Congress	John Dramani Mahama	Presidential Candidate
2	New Patriotic Party	Nana Addo Danquah Akuffo Addo	Presidential Candidate

**Source:** Compiled by the Author, December 2020

From Tables 2, 3 and 4, it can be inferred that eight, seven and two political parties signed the peace pacts in 2012, 2016 and 2020 respectively. The reduction to seven in 2016 was due to the disqualification of some presidential aspirants due to errors in filling the presidential nomination forms. Limiting the signatories to only the NDC and NPP presidential aspirants also affirms the duopoly in Ghanaian politics where the NDC and NPP are the only political parties capable of winning presidential elections. These two political parties continue to garner between 95% and 98% of total valid votes cast. The second and third HLM peace pacts had the Chief Justice of Ghana and the Presidents of

the NHC appending their signatures as witnesses. The peace pact continues to attract eminent personalities across the globe to signify global interest in Ghana’s democracy. The 2016 and 2020 forums attracted dignitaries such as His Eminence Cardinal Peter K. Appiah Turkson, President, Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Rome and Former Chair of the NPC, Madame Josephine Ojiambo-Deputy Commonwealth Secretary-General, Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, UN Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel, Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and high-profile delegation from the European Union, United Nations and diplomats.

The Council through early warning signals organized a constituency level peace pact programme in the Asawase Constituency in the Ashanti Region between the NDC and NPP in August, 2020 ahead of the 2020 General Elections. The two parties signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to commit to peace ahead of the 2020 General Elections (Table 5). As part of the MoU, the Chairman of the NPC urged the political parties to desist from using internal party security to protect political leaders and allow the state security to perform their constitutionally mandated roles. To illustrate commitment to deepening democracy in the constituency before, during and after the elections, the Chairman of the Council remarked,

*“We have agreed that at some point in October, 2020, we shall bring together the two parliamentary candidates, Mr. Mohammed Muntaka Mubarak and Mr. Alidu Seidu so that they would make a public demonstration that they are for peace for their followers to emulate”* (Myjoyonline.com, August 25, 2020).

This did not happen because the NPC got involved in leadership transitional issues during the period. Other stakeholders including the Regional Chief Imam, Sheikh Abdul-Mumin Harun and representatives from the Council of Zongo Chiefs, also attended the meeting.

**Table 5:** Political Parties, Name of Signatories and Designation at the Asawase Constituency MOU

SN	Name of Political Party	Name of representative	Designation
1	New Patriotic Party	Mohammed Imoro	Constituency Chairman
2	National Democratic Congress	Mr. Mugis Mahdi	Constituency Secretary
3	National Democratic Congress	Faisal Dauda	Constituency Treasurer

Source: Compiled by the Author, September, 2020

Fourth, the NPC also contributed enormously to the passage of the Vigilantism and Related Offences Act, 2019 (Act 999) to prohibit political vigilantism. This the Council did through the invitation of the political actors to jaw-jaw on the negative implications of political vigilantism to Ghana’s democracy. Following the disturbances during the Ayawaso Wuogon West by-elections on 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2019, the President during the 2019 State of the Nation’s Address directed both the NDC and NPP to find a lasting solution to the vigilante menace. Through the council’s instrumentality, two dividends emerged.

- (i) The road map against vigilantism. This is in phases, namely: total eradication of political vigilantism, economic livelihood and empowerment to equip the youth with the private sector as the catalyst.
- (ii) Formation of national monitoring committee for the NDC and NPP to abide by the Act, the road map and code of conduct.

Other roles of the NPC to democratic consolidation in Ghana include capacity development programmes for political parties, civil society organisations (CSOs) and local governance agencies on how to manage diversity, conflict

among others.

**The challenges facing the NPC in democratic consolidation**

The NPC is plagued with plethora of challenges which impairs it from discharging its mandate. Some of these are discussed below.

First and foremost is inadequate funding. The NPC Act, 2011 in Sections 20 and 21 provided for the establishment of a Peace Fund and the sources of the fund. However, this has not yet materialized hence the Council is underfunded. This has culminated into other hiccups including lack of institutionalized capacities in human, logistics and technical. According to Kotia (2013) <sup>[43]</sup>, the inadequacy in human resource has resulted in limited support staff and professional skills training in early warning, conflict analysis, resolution and management. This has made the Council to be reactionary instead of being proactive. In addition, the council lacks adequate offices or workplace environment for its key staff. The inadequate finance has hindered the Council from engaging the full complement of its staff and office locations. Available data in Table 6 below shows the budgetary allocation to the Council.

**Table 6:** Government of Ghana budgetary allocation and releases to the National Peace Council in Ghana Cedis

Year	Budgeted	Releases	Goods and services	
			Budgeted	Releases
2016	2,300,000	1,700,000	35,000	27,000
2017	1,600,000	600,000	700,000	40,000
2018	2,450,000	2,050,000	600,000	600,000
2019	3,050,000	2,626,150	800,000	600,000

Source: National Peace Council, October 2020

From Table 6, it can be gleaned that the Council never received its full budgeted amount from the Government of Ghana. It received 74%, 38%, 84%, and 86% of the budgeted amount from 2016 to 2019 respectively. It could also be distilled that the 2017 budgeted and released amount was lesser than that of 2016. However, the budgetary allocation and releases for 2018 and 2019 saw consistent increase. The Council also received donor support from the United Nations Development Programme to draw its five years strategic plan. This strategic plan could not be fully

implemented as indicated in the accounts of Kotia (2013) <sup>[43]</sup>.

On how inadequate financing impeded the work of the Council, one respondent intimated that,

*“We have produced the road map and the code of conduct. Then you ask yourself after the political parties have signed the road map and the code of conduct, what has happened? We have not been able to do what the road map expected us to do because there is no funding.*



*Because in the road map, they said we should establish national implementation committees which we have established which I am a member, establish implementing committees in the regions and districts we haven't because we don't have the resources. Even with the national implementation committee, we have just been able to meet twice since its establishment. The first one was just to sign our terms of reference (TOR), that we have established the committee and this is what we are expected to do. The second one was to review our action plan. We reviewed, we made inputs, and they said they were going to rework it and bring it back to us. That meeting was in June 2020 and today is 21<sup>st</sup> October, 2021, no outcome” (Fieldwork, October, 2020).*

By implication, the roadmap and the code of conduct was not implemented leading to the 2020 general elections due to fiscal resource constraint.

Second challenge facing the Council is its perceived biasness. There is the general perception that the Council has a soft spot for the NPP hence does not chastise it publicly as it does to the NDC. This perception is gradually eroding the confidence and trust that people have in the Council. For instance, after the Council issued a press statement on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2020 condemning the NPP and NDC for violence during the 2020 voter registration exercise, the NDC through its Communication Director expressed dissatisfaction with the statement indicating that members of the NDC were the victims of such violence, hence the NPC should advise the NPP directly and call them to order. The NDC Director of Communication further stated, “The statement failed to name and shame, because the NPC through their monitoring can tell those who perpetuated this violence. So when you make general statement that both NDC and NPP should abide by the terms of the roadmap, you are only trying to be unnecessarily fair” (Myjoyonline.com, 14<sup>th</sup> July 2020)

The third is structural challenge. This problem is inherent in the National Peace Council Act, 2011. The Act is not gender sensitive, did not take into consideration the inclusion of minority groups in the composition of the Governing Board but rather prescribed institutions from which board members should be selected. From a respondent,

*“and I say that in Ghana and in most African countries, if you give committees or compositions of boards to institutions, you are likely to have male dominated committees or boards because, most of the institutions are headed by males. Females are always at the secretariat and at the middle-class levels”. Section 4(1) of the National Peace Council Act, 2011 indicates the composition of the governing board. “The National Peace Council consists of 13 board members made up of one representation from each of the following institutions: Catholic Bishops Conference, Christian Council, Ghana Pentecostal Council, National Council for Christian and Charismatic Churches, Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission, Al-sunnah Muslim, Tijaaniya Muslim Group, and practitioners of Africa traditional religion. A man always heads these groups. A woman in the person of the Mampong Hema (Queen Mother of Mampong) is a member of the board because of the legal provision in the Act which stipulates that “Two persons nominated by the president one of whom is a woman” (National Peace*

*Council Act, 2011:5). Persons with Disability, youth, aged and women do not have representation on the NPC board meanwhile they are the most affected when peace is compromised. “There is nobody in the NPC governing board who is below 50 years, there is no person with disability on the board, only one person came because of section 4(1 b) so that is the structural deficiency” (Fieldwork, October, 2020).*

A fourth challenge is visibility of the Council across the sixteen administrative regions of the country. Following the conduct of referendum on December 27, 2018, six additional administrative regions were created in 2019. These were the OTI, North East, Western North, Savannah, Bono East and Bono West Regions. However, the NPC has regional offices in only 11 regions. The Savannah Region is the only new region with NPC presence. Out of the 275 Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies, the Council has offices in only three. In the words of the NPC, *this affects the milestone covered.* Another respondent averred,

*“The visibility is not there, it is poor, people don't even know what NPC does. People don't really understand what NPC is. All that they hear about NPC is that in elections they give their opinions. So NPC is not out there” (Fieldwork, November, 2021).*

The visibility challenge extended in impairing the citizens' understanding of the workings of the Council. An official of the NPC lamented,

*“The Ghanaian need to understand the work of the Council. You speak to the academics even those lettered, educated; they say this is for the pastors and churches. The work of the NPC is not for pastors, imams, it is not meant for religious bodies. It is a Council established to prevent conflict. It is a peace architecture established by an Act of Parliament. We seems not to have people understanding the architecture. This affects how things are done” (Fieldwork, October, 2020).*

The fifth challenge is the perceived partisan politics eating deep into the Council. The Council has become a playing field for the NDC and the NPP. Depending on which party is in power and the support for the Council. For instance, it is argued that the NPC received more resources from the state when NPP is in power. However, it is also instructive to note that it was the NDC government that gave legal backing to the Council in 2011.

Another challenge is the perceived lack of independence of the Council. This is borne from the fact that the board members are appointed by the President in consultation with the Council of State based on Article 70. As a result, the Council is always seen as doing the bidding of the appointing authority.

## Conclusion

Measuring the role of the NPC in democratic consolidation in Ghana is a herculean. On the face value and judging from the above-identified facts, it can be said that the NPC has indeed played a pivotal role in consolidating Ghana's democracy. This is because of the deployment of dialogue, preventive diplomacy, civic engagement and above all the

lead role in disbanding political vigilant groups. This to a large extent culminated into the reduction of election related violence especially during the 2020 elections. However, it is instructive to note that 2020 elections only witnessed higher and intensive atrocities compared to previous years. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made; first, the National Peace Council Act, 2011 (Act 818) should be amended to make room for the representation of minority groups. This may enable the Council attract funding from the other UN systems such as the United Nations Children Development Funds and others that champion and protect minority rights and will make the Board diverse and representative of the various segments of society. Second, to ensure the independence of the Council, the proposed Peace Fund in the Act should be established and made operational, this will wane the Council of politicians and the associated bias tags. Third, the Council should be more proactive in response to issues instead of the current reactionary approach. This will help remove the lack of neutrality inscription and make it win public confidence and trust.

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