
Political parties' manifesto as an anchor for prioritising environmental and climate change issues in Ghana: rhetorics and actions

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Abstract: Ghana's decision to uphold participatory democracy over the last two decades has led to the emergence of written public declarations of political parties' policies and intentions on a myriad of issues affecting the electorate and the country. To what extent do these declarations serve as an anchor for prioritising the environment and climate change issues which occupies an important position in global development discourse? This paper attempts to answer the question through the interpretive research paradigm. The analysis focused on manifestos of the two major political parties in Ghana. We argued that climate change has implication for national development and therefore political parties cannot outdoor its manifestos that seeks the mandate of the people without prioritising them – rationalist perspective. Our review identified that environmental and climate change issues were highlighted in the various manifestoes albeit but unsure of the extent to which these have actually been implemented following an electoral victory.

Keywords: political parties manifestos; environmental management; climate change; National Democratic Congress; NDC; New Patriotic Party; NPP.

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1 Introduction

The landmark decision by Ghana to uphold participatory democracy over the last two decades has not only resulted in the proliferation of political parties but witnessed the emergence of written public declaration of political parties' policies and intentions on a myriad of issues affecting the electorate and the country at large (Debrah and Van Gyampo, 2013). Anebo (2006) and Ayee (2011) revealed that some critical issues featured in manifestos are the increasing environmental challenges and emerging problems in sensitive areas of pollution, deforestation, illegal small-scale mining, loss of plants and animal species, urban congestion and climate change. Environmental

management and climate change issues are vital to the general development of a country (Little, 2017; Spoon et al., 2013). However, the extent to which political parties have represented and prioritised environmental issues in their manifestos are potential de-facto national policy directives, in events of electoral victory, are barely interrogated across policy academy. Ayee (2011, p.3) notes that “as a key political product, manifestos create the platform on which political parties and politicians who are looking for electoral mandates, particularly in poor democracies such as Ghana, set out their proposed responses to social needs and demands from the electorate”.

In the context of public administration of environmental and climate change concerns in Ghana, this research examined whether growing global concerns over environmental and development nexus have been given critical consideration by political parties in their campaign manifestoes. This is very important because, by the architecture of the governance system of Ghana, political manifesto becomes a major social contract between the elected government and the electorates. Article 36 (5) of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana states that “the president shall present to parliament a coordinated programme of economic and social development policies, including agricultural and industrial programmes” and party manifestos have often been the de facto base document underpinning these policies. Furthermore, the economy of Ghana is still heavily reliant on extractives which employ large segments of the Ghanaian population and thereby poses challenges to government’s will power to act in decisive ways in handling issues of the environment. The analysis reviewed 12 (2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016 and 2020) out of the 16 manifestos of the two major political parties since 1992, when Ghana’s current democratic system was born. Specifically, this article aims, among others, to qualitatively assess whether environmental management and climate change concerns have been prioritised in their manifestos. Despite lack of consensus on conclusions, it is a widely held opinion that manifestos provide the potential government the opportunity to outdoor its relevant policies which eventually become a benchmark document for holding public officers accountable to the electorate (Benyi, 2013; Debrah and Van Gyampo, 2013; Merz, 2017). Thus, political party manifesto is considered as a list of potential government development intentions (Båtstrand, 2015).

As a qualitative research, we used documentary and contextual analysis approaches in reviewing the manifestos of National Democratic Congress (NDC) and New Patriotic Party (NPP) which are the only political parties that have had the opportunity to steer the affairs of the country since 1992. This analysis is extremely important given that:

- 1 Ghana is a signatory to many global environmental and climate change protocols
- 2 the ravaging havocs of environmental perturbations and anthropogenic induced negative impacts on natural resources in Ghana are ubiquitous
- 3 lastly, political parties manifestos are near-statutory territorial development operational manual.

This paper is structured as follows; introduction, literature review, methodology, results and discussions as well as conclusion.

2 Literature review

2.1 Political party manifesto

Manifestos can be linked to Robert Peel's *Tamworth Manifesto* of 1834, where he contended that confidence in government demanded electoral contenders to declare 'frank and explicit declarations of principle' (Weir and Beetham, 1999). Currently, manifestos are comprehensive public policy papers written by political parties before elections. A manifesto typically entails a broad policy issues, such as economic policy, fiscal, environmental, education and international affairs. These documents are formulated by diverse actors and groups within a political party and offer the most official statement of a party's policy proposals (Ishiyama et al., 2018; Quinn, 2014). The party which is declared as the winner of an election however is considered to have democratic mandate to implement the policies in the manifestos since these political parties have held the imprimatur of democratic legality. The government does not only have the right to actualise its policies; it also has an obligation to do so, as it was elected on the basis of its manifesto. By the time of the following election, voters can check whether the governing party was true to its promises and either reward or punish it as they judge fit. In this cycle, manifestos are transformed into mandates by the voters in one election, and retrospective accountability is ensured at the following election (Breeze, 2011; Nartey and Yankson, 2014).

According to Debrah and Van Gyampo (2013) manifestos are undoubtedly a significant campaign tool in contemporary politics used by political parties to advance policy-based politicking during electioneering era. Certain that manifestos incline to summarise the vital issues that challenge a country and establish the conduits to confronting these issues, they have become the major tool for rallying groups' support for political parties and their candidates during election competitions. Several researchers (Bob-Milliar and Paller, 2018; Dolezal et al., 2018; Konteh, 2007) have consented that political parties that deliver their campaigns using manifestos are capable of canvassing wider support among sections of the voting population. In the view of Breeze (2011) and Jakobi (2011) manifestos are open public statements of political party's ideas, future policies and a solid epitome of the party's structure itself, its association to other bodies and its engagement with constituent.

With several competitors, the electoral environment becomes a political market where voters have the right not only to request for the delivery of social welfare policies but also demand the protection of the built environment from destruction. The political class adopt manifestos to provide a policy response if they are elected (Båtstrand, 2014; Dolezal et al., 2016). To survive in the political space, political actors need to have political products that include personalities, manifestos, ideology, past performance, and reliability. As such, manifestos are created as political products for political parties and politicians working to govern specifically in emerging democracies like Ghana to predict answers to social needs and requests from the electorate (Debrah and Van Gyampo, 2013). The established trait of manifestos is that of exploring the future and promising actions. Political manifestos are among the most endowed source of information about parties' development policies. However, parties additionally investigate the past and use their manifesto to highlight their records and achievements (Balcere, 2014; Braun and Schmitt, 2018).

2.2 Current environmental and climate change concerns in Ghana

As per the Government of Ghana (2017), the cost of environmental degradation is estimated to be \$6.3 billion yearly and almost 11% of Ghana's 2017 gross domestic product (GDP). Non-renewable resources, for example, gold and oil cannot support development as resources drain while sustainable resources like cocoa, timber, other trees and food crops, rely greatly on the natural environment. There are obvious indicators and logical proof that the depletion of the natural resources might put development, livelihoods, and human health at risk. Air contamination is regarded as a serious environmental threat to public health, costing generally \$2 billion every year and causes the sudden death of almost 16,000 individuals every year (Akpalu and Normanyo, 2017; Holl, 2017; Chillrud et al., 2021; Srivastava and Pawlowska, 2020). According to Gyamfi et al. (2019) water pollution is the source of huge harm equivalent to 3% of the GDP. This is because of the health impacts of insufficient water supply, poor sanitary conditions, and discharge of solid industrial and harmful waste into water systems. Plastic pollution is ascending to emergency levels. Every day, more than 3,000 metric tons of plastic waste is produced with quite a bit of it dropped as litter or put into improvised landfills. This waste choke open drainage systems and contaminates the sea (Afum and Owusu, 2016; Monney et al., 2013).

Adanu et al. (2020) revealed that electronic-waste, related with the Agbogbloshie dumpsite, is Accra's principal source of air contamination. This air pollution is generated as a result of the burning of electronic parts which discharges cancer-causing compounds into the air while depositing harmful metals into streams and the sea. It is estimated that each year exposure to lead and mercury causes cancer in children costing \$440 million (Cao et al., 2020; Daum et al., 2017). Improper land management results in land degradation which cost Ghana over US\$500 million every year. Deforestation is further costing Ghana US\$400 million per year: 5 million hectares of forest was also lost between the years 2001 and 2015. Over the last decade, artisanal gold mining fuel degradation and pollution of streams and rivers in the search for gold. Miners' exposure to poisonous mercury equally costs \$240 million in health (Emmanuel et al., 2018; Moomen and Dewan, 2017).

Interestingly, Ghana loses around 2.7 million m² of its shore each year, with 80% of the coastline seriously eroding. Coastal erosion and flooding are especially extreme in Greater Accra where ocean levels are rising, increasing erosion intensity and raises the chance of flooding by 20%. This puts in danger communities and UNESCO World Heritage sites like Cape Coast and Elmina (Alves et al., 2020; Jonah et al., 2016). Overfishing cost \$233 million and could prompt the breakdown of small pelagic fisheries and the loss of half a million jobs. Changes in climate intensively influence climate delicate sectors on which Ghana's development is based such as agriculture, forestry service, and energy. It additionally triggers natural disasters: in the past 40 years, floods impacted 4 million individuals and a 2015 destructive flood in Accra caused \$55 million in damages (Akpalu and Eggert, 2021; Lazar et al., 2017). These practical evidences should prompt political parties (New Patriotic Party and NDC) in Ghana to prioritise action-led environmental management and climate change issues in their manifestos.

2.3 *Political parties manifesto: environmental and climate change issues*

In the view of Farstad (2017) political parties are at the centre of environmental and climate change politics. The competition within political market deeply shapes government policies, and the central government remains dominant in framing policy decisions on environment and climate change. The central role parties play in environmental and climate change politics was established by Jensen and Spoon (2011) who points to the essence of parties and partisan manifestos in environmental and climate change outcomes. They explained that the advantage of incorporating environmental and climate change issues often appeal to the electorates.

Farstad (2017) added that the reaction of political parties to environmental and climate change concerns reflect their ideological perspectives. Scholars are of the view that political parties with conservative ideologies often are reluctant to include climate change and environmental measures in their manifestos (Carter, 2013; Dinas and Gemenis, 2010), hence the only climate and environmental measures conservative parties feature in their manifestos are measures that would favour market-based solutions that align with free market environmentalism. Little (2017) in a related study on intra-party politics in Ireland on climate change and environmental policy states that climate and environmental issues are topical in the manifestos of Ireland political parties. In a similar study in Nepal, Paudel (2010) revealed that environmental governance, natural resource management, and climate change are priority areas in the manifestos of Nepal's political parties. This is prominent because Nepalese political believes that citizens vote for the parties in power based on publicly declared agenda which are anticipated to be translated into government policies.

Table 1 Titles of electoral manifestos

<i>Titles of electoral manifestos</i>		
<i>Election years</i>	<i>National Democratic Congress (NDC)</i>	<i>New Patriotic Party (NPP)</i>
1992	Continuity and stability	Development in freedom
1996	Always for people, always for development	Development in freedom
2000	Spreading the benefits of development	Agenda for positive change
2004	A better Ghana	Agenda for positive change: chapter two
2008	A Better Ghana. Investing in people, jobs and the economy	Moving Ghana forward: building a modern Ghana
2012	Advancing the better Ghana agenda	Transforming lives, transforming Ghana building a free, fair and prosperous society: a programme of transformation
2016	Changing lives, transforming Ghana	Change, an agenda for jobs. creating prosperity and equal opportunity for all
2020	Jobs, prosperity and more: the people's manifesto	Leadership of service: protecting our progress, transforming Ghana for all

Source: Compiled by the authors (2020)

Other research has found a relationship between political party manifestos and environmental spending in the France. This research feature has revealed based on analysis of party manifestos to demonstrate that political parties have been able to implement most of their environmental and climate change promises heralded in their manifestos. The study highlighted that the programmes implemented from the manifestos covered issues on renewable energy, net zero transition, air pollution and the reduction in agriculture pollutant (Brouard et al, 2018).

Schaub (2019) mentioned that German political parties have used their manifestos as the entry points for major policy agenda settings on various environmental and climate change issues. Therefore, German political parties have driven many positive changes in environmental and climate change through their manifestos. Literature further show that manifestos have been one of the avenues used by political parties in the global north to publicise their climate change and environmental policies and subsequent implementation of these policies after winning the mandate of the people. In a different perspective, Braun and Schmitt (2018) revealed that political parties in the global south have failed to prioritise climate change and environmental management issues in their manifestos less to talk of implementing these intentions. Table 1 presents the tiles of the manifestos of NDC and NPP in Ghana.

3 Methodology

The use of documentary analysis sits well with the qualitative research tradition and provides sufficient basis for inferences and conclusions (Creswell, 2014). Hence, within interpretivist research paradigm, this paper adopted a textual search and documentary review to examine the extent to which political party's manifestos capture environmental and climate change issues during electioneering periods in Ghana. A qualitative approach was adopted to examine how the two major political parties in Ghana have attached importance to environmental and climate change issues in their charter of promises made to electorate. Creswell (2014) posits that textual search and documentary review is appropriate for qualitative research practice since it offers sufficient basis for interpretations and conclusion (Loughran and McDonald, 2015).

The study provides a succinct review of the manifestos of the NPP and the NDC presented to electorates in order to win their vote during the 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016 and 2020 election years. In all, 12 electoral manifesto documents were reviewed in this paper, two each from the NPP and NDC in every election year for the six separate elections conducted in 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016 and 2020. The reason for choosing electoral manifestos as the focus of this article is because manifestos form the collective will of the political parties and represent a stable document meant to endure for several years (Båtstrand, 2015). "If one wants to study party policy, and not the policies advocated by internal factions or individuals inside the party, one has to study the manifesto, platform or election program", presented by Budge (2001). In analysing electoral manifestoes, the authors employed a qualitative content analysis which was geared towards searching for, and identifying, what kinds of measures on climate change and environmental management have been featured in the manifestos of the NPP and the NDC.

4 Results and discussion

4.1 *Prioritisation of environmental issues in the manifestos*

In reviewing the manifestos of the two main political parties of Ghana to identify whether environmental management and climate change issues have been acknowledged to exist and prioritised, the NPP 2000 manifesto emphasised that the very existence, the quality of life and our standard of living depend, both on the short- and long-term, on a delicate balance between ourselves and the natural environment. The manifesto recognised the reality and gravity of environmental problems in Ghana. The manifesto highlighted that at least 40% of the world's economy and 80% of the needs of the poor are derived from biological resources. Similarly, the 2000 manifesto of the NDC acknowledged that the activities such as illegal small-scale mining, illegal logging and evasion of forest reserves are deteriorating natural environment.

Just like the previous NPP manifesto, the 2004 manifesto acknowledged the existence of environmental problems and also underlined the deplorable nature of Ghana's environmental resources. It was stated in the manifesto that "There are also cases of land degradation through natural causes and the long term effects of human activities, such as serious soil erosion along our sea shores. There is indeed an alarming rate of environmental degradation." Underlying these worsening trends is the country's rapid rate of population growth which increasingly puts heavy demand and pressure on natural resources.

"The management of the impact of human activities on the environment therefore requires greater effort. The NPP will introduce measures to create a healthy balance between environment and development. Special attention will be paid to the exploitation of our agricultural, forest, energy and mineral resources, inland water and offshore resources and their effects on the environment." [NPP, (2004), p.27]

In reviewing the 2004 NPP manifesto the document admonishes the impact of human activities on the environment recognising the alarming rate of urbanisation and high population growth. The recognition of the 2004 NPP manifesto on how human activities impact the natural environment triggers some policy directives to address this challenge. The NDC manifesto of 2004 also highlighted environmental management as a key policy ingredient, they intended to pursue rigorously when they are elected to steer the affairs of the country. The manifesto underscores the worsening environmental management practices especially in the areas of land degradation, illegal logging, and illegal small scale mining. Relatedly, the 2008 manifestos of the two main Political Parties seek to redirect development towards environmentally sustainable practice. The research revealed that the parties demonstrated their preparedness by recognising the essence to reconcile economic development with conservation and seeks to promote the sustainable use and maintenance of Ghana's natural resources which is a crucial step in addressing environmental issues.

The 2012 manifestos also had issues of environmental management featured extensively, the researchers were able to pinpoint evidence of political parties exhibiting their understanding and acknowledging the extent of damage to the environment citing examples as air and water pollution, improper disposal of plastic waste and mining in forest reserves among others. The manifestos further underscored the immense benefits of prudent environmental management practices to promote sustainable development.

The manifestos recognised consumerisation and modernism (e.g., indiscriminate disposal of electronic waste) as negatively polluting Ghana environmental health. The 2012 manifesto of the NPP therefore stated that “unbridled exploitation of Ghana’s resources poses an environmental challenge and a threat to health. The scourge of non-biodegradable plastics, pollution of our beaches and coastal waters, recklessly poor practices of miners, destruction of our water bodies, and poor management of our forest reserves are a source of considerable concern”.

In furtherance, the NDC 2012 manifesto also stated that “Ghana is on the verge of losing her forest cover, which is currently estimated at about 1.6 million hectares, down from the estimated 8.2 million hectares at the beginning of the 20th century”. This is evident that the NDC has recognised and prioritised the environmental issue in their campaign document. Further, the strong commitment to prioritise environmental management issues also featured prominently in the 2016 campaign manifestos of the two major political parties. In analysing the 2020 manifesto of the NDC, the researchers found that the party has laid strong emphasise on reducing the rate of deforestation and forest degradation. In the 2020 manifesto of the NPP, the researchers identified that less attention was given to climate change and environmental issues. The researchers attributed the less prioritisation of the environmental and climate change issues in the NPP manifesto to the NPP led government’s failure to effectively fight illegal small mining in Ghana after heralding the issues in the 2016 manifesto of the NPP.

4.2 Prioritisation of climate change concerns in the manifestos

In the review of the 2000 Manifesto of the NPP, the researchers identified that the manifesto of the party failed to acknowledge and prioritise climate change as a threat to the development of Ghana as well as the livelihood and employment of the citizens. This was surprising considering that Ghana is a signatory to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) at the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit in June 1992, after which the Convention was adopted on 9 May 1992 (Environmental Protection Agency, 2011). Besides the signing of the convention, the country has been experiencing the adverse impacts of climate change in 1990s leading to the 2000 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections. There was disruption in the agriculture system, coastal erosion destroyed people’s homes and the largest hydro-electric power generating plant at the time was operating below capacity because the water level was low due poor precipitation (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2003). The failure of the party to recognise this problem will mean failure to show policy commitment to address this problem. The researchers identified that the NDC failed to document climate change issues in their 2000 election manifesto considering that the NDC government led the country to adopt climate change convention at Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit in June 1992.

The issue of climate change was totally missing in the 2004 manifesto of the NPP. This raises questions as to the seriousness the party attached to the visible (rising sea level, erratic rainfall pattern, rising temperature, flooding) impact of climate change on the agriculture and other climate sensitive sectors like fisheries, forestry. The review identified that the 2004 manifesto of the NDC did not capture anything on climate change. This is worrying in an era where climate change threats are thwarting the effort of global development initiatives (Savo et al., 2016; Salman et al., 2019).

However, 2008 manifesto of the NPP acknowledged that climate change is dwindling agricultural production and threatening food security, deteriorating water security,

declining fish resources in lakes due to increasing water temperature and the increasing rate of vector-borne diseases. The 2008 manifesto of the NDC did not prioritise climate change issues which the researchers believe would have been topical and convincing because the incumbent NPP government was struggling to manage erratic power supply resulting from the low water levels as a result of low rainfall which is a vivid evidence of climate change effect. We identified that the NDC and NPP manifesto document of 2012 and 2016 did not capture the issue of climate change. This is quiet worrying especially in a period where the country is experiencing the worst form of flooding, rising sea level, declining rainfall, increasing variability, rising temperature and low agriculture yield in Ghana (Owusu et al., 2015; Owusu and Waylen, 2013). This is troubling where the country has spent a lot in providing relief items to floods victims (Flood List, 2016). On the issue of climate change, NDC 2020 manifesto recognised and prioritised climate change as an existential threat and undermines Ghana's efforts to develop. The authors considered this important because climate action is crucial to Ghana achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs) in 2030. Contrary to the NDC's 2020 manifesto, the NPP's manifesto did not capture climate change issues in their manifesto at a time the international community is bent on reducing greenhouse gases and pursue climate change adaptation (Srivastava and Pawlowska, 2020).

4.3 Evidence of commitment to pursue environmental management practices

A review of the manifestos of the two major political parties in Ghana shows evidence of willingness and perhaps policy commitment towards the pursuance of environmental issues if they are elected to govern. For instance, the manifesto of the NPP in 2000 underscored the need to protect and develop the ecological resources of Ghana. It thus states:

“Our natural environment of biological resources (plants, animals and micro-organisms), mineral resources, soil, water and ocean resources, the atmosphere, and the man- made environment of settlements, public buildings, civil works, etc. are all under threat from human activities and natural causes.” (NPP, (2000), p.25]

Though the NPP remains the oldest tradition of political party in Ghana it had not had the mandate of the people but noted that the aspiration of Ghanaians was in tandem with its environmental resources and hence made a demonstrable commitment in their manifesto which perhaps could be a way of courting electorate to their message. The NDC manifesto of the year 2000 was not quite different from the NPP on environmental pledges. The NDC equally promised its commitment to prevent abuse of Ghana's ecological resources whiles utilising it to the benefit of all Ghanaian. The 2000 manifesto of the NDC thus state:

“The NDC government will continue to pay special attention to the exploitation of our agricultural, forest, energy and mineral resources, inland water and offshore resources and their effects on the environment. We shall take specific actions on the efficient use of energy both in the home and in industry, on waste management and all kinds of pollution.” [NDC, (2000), p.28]

The NPP 2004 manifesto highlighted the effort and energy the party intends to put in to minimise the rapid exploitation of the environment. What is missing is that the party failed to outline concrete and tangible steps as how they intend to resolve this menace.

This therefore raises questions as to whether indeed after securing the mandate of the electorate, they would truly commit to protecting the environment while ensuring sustainable utilisation of the natural resources. There was weakness in the NDC manifesto of 2004 as the policy document failed to authenticate strategic processes the party would employ in safeguarding the volatile natural environment from illegal logging and small scale mining. This raises red flags as to the earnestness the party would attach to address this challenge if critical policy document such as the manifesto fail to provide guidelines to pursue environmental management.

In order to catch the attention of the constituents within the political market, our review observed that the NPP manifesto of 2008 seek to create healthy balance between development and sustainable environmental exploitation.

The NPP 2008 manifesto state thus:

“The next NPP administration will intensify the fight for environmental preservation on the continent of Africa. In line with the objective of the Kyoto Agreement we commit ourselves to achieving the set target of cutting carbon emissions by at least fifty (50) percent by 2050. We shall benefit from available global funds accordingly. Ghana will continue to pursue climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies.” (NPP, (2008), p.26]

In Ghana, rapid exploitation amidst poor natural resource governance after independence has negatively affected the natural resource balance sheets with its accompanying negative impacts on its dependents. Accordingly, in 2008, through its manifesto the NDC pledged to adopt a plan for sustainable development paradigm which would try to woo the private sector into plantation development and afforestation, facilitate log importation and exports as well as ensure that the livelihoods of natural resource dependent communities are protected, protect community tenure and rights of farmers to trees outside reserves, promote the use of lesser used trees (rubber, coconut and bamboo) for construction, assist industrial-scale tree farming in depleted Forest Reserves or degraded land, develop inland and coastal wetlands and rehabilitate mangrove resources, etc. [NDC, (2008), p.5]. Flowing from the above, it is more than obvious that, conscious efforts were made by political parties in their 2008 campaign messages to prioritise the management of Ghana's ecosystem and ecological processes. Their 2008 campaign messages are one that show political party's commitment towards ensuring sound management of natural resources and the environment, and to adequately institute measures to protect against the harmful impacts and destructive practices which by extension preserves biological diversity. In screening the manifesto, we observed in the manifesto document that the party intend to bring on board the private sector in its proposed plan to undertake plantation development while protecting the livelihood of forest fringed communities. The supposed involvement of the private sector is considered novel; however, the manifesto did not touch on how climate change threats would be minimised when they are given the mandate to rule.

The 2012 NPP manifesto was not different in any way from the previous years because the manifesto stated that “the next NPP government will embark on an ambitious reforestation programme. This will serve a multi-purpose of protecting the environment, creating immediate jobs for our youth and creating future wealth. We will employ the same concept to use waste to generate electricity in Ghana” [NPP, (2012), p.35]. The party will therefore show commitment of conserving the environment to preserve the country's biodiversity and also intensify efforts to restoring degraded land, combat erosion, protect our rivers and ensure that the environmental impact of mining and oil

extraction in Ghana is carefully mitigated. The NDC in their 2012 manifesto documented that the party will pursue policies and programmes that will target the reversal of the trend and address gaps in the effective and efficient management of our forestry resources.

The research uncovered in the 2016 manifestos of the NPP and NDC the willingness of the political parties to put in place policies that would ensure sustainable use of natural resources with keen interest in promoting sustainable water management, enhanced the ecotourism industry and support biodiversity conservation. The NDC Government has put in place policies and programmes for the effective management of our forest reserves [NDC, (2016), p.48]. The NPP on the other hand showed that it will support the enhancement of the ecotourism industry in the country to boost further its potential and contribution to economic development. NPP will promote replanting of trees along the banks of all major water bodies and their tributaries to reduce silting and other negative human activities adjacent to river banks (NPP, 2016).

The 2020 manifesto of the NDC showed a strong commitment to tackle environmental challenges by the NDC due to what many scholars will consider as a gross failure of the incumbent government of the NPP to fulfil their promises of combating illegal small scale mining popularly called ‘galamsey’ after the party won the 2016 general election (Myjoyonline.com, 2021). Through the manifesto, the Party intends to increase participation of the private sector, civil society, local communities and individuals in reforestation. It also highlighted the Party’s readiness to increase forest reserve patrols and enforcement activities in critical forests areas. These they intend to do through improved staffing, staff training, enhanced transportation and communications.

The manifesto states as thus:

“Develop forest plantation on de-forested lands, enrichment planting of degraded natural forests, and planting to protect water bodies and enhance water quality, establish a new Plantation Division within the Forestry Commission to be solely in charge of developing forest plantation and establish a National Mining and Forestry Initiative to help tackle illegal logging and illegal mining (galamsey).”

The 2020 manifesto of the NPP did not provide any steps to show the party’s commitment to pursue environmental management practices.

4.4 Evidence of commitment to address climate change issues

It was discouraging to identify that both 2000 and 2004 manifestos of the parties did not show policy commitment to address issues of climate change during the run-up to the 2000, and 2004 elections respectively. But, we noted that the manifesto of the NPP in 2008 recognised the Kyoto Agreement on reducing by half global carbon emission by 2050 while seeking to rely on international climate change fund to undertake climate change adaptation and mitigation initiatives. However, the policy document is unable to offer concrete strategies and how the party intends to carry out their climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives. The authors identified innovativeness in the 2008 NPP manifestos with the introduction of the climate change adaptation and mitigation issues. This was different from the 2000 and 2004 manifestos of both parties. Unambiguously, the NPP in 2008 was poised to work to improve environmental and sanitation through education and enforcement of bye-laws of Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies. They thus stated as follows in the 2008 manifesto:

Greater attention would be given to environmental sanitation and hygiene in the basic school curriculum. The Government will promote recycling of refuse through the use of incentive packages. [NPP, (2008), p.26]

Though the NDC was in opposition and seeking the mandate of the people in 2008, it failed to make strong points within its manifesto on climate change given the extent to which the Akosombo Dam was drying up and affecting electricity supply. The review identified that 2012 manifestos of the NPP and NDC also did not provide evidence of how they intend to tackle climate change. Similarly, both manifestos in 2016 failed to provide evidence of the intent of the political parties to pursue rigorous climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies.

The authors find these intriguing because the NDC was the incumbent government that led the formulation and implementation of the National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (NCCAS) and National Climate Change Policy (NCCP) in 2010 and 2012 respectively. It was natural that the party would have captured climate change issues in their 2016 manifesto especially when it was just a year after the party superintended over Ghana adoption of the SDGs where goal SDG 13 is emphasising on action to combat climate change.

In 2020, the NDC manifesto revealed that the party is determined to mobilise the youth in this direction through establishing the 'youth in climate change and Afforestation (YiCCAP) in partnership with the private sector for afforestation and job creation'. The NPP 2020 manifesto also state that "NPP will Work with international partners to access part of the global fund for climate change management and Operationalize the national e-waste program". It was expected that the most recent manifestos would have made a bold commitment to prioritising both adaptation and mitigation action in line with the SDGs and the Paris Agreement. Given Ghana's active role in the global climate change multilateral process and the evidence of impact on the core sector of the country one would expect the political parties to be conscious of this reality and reflect it in their manifestos.

5 Conclusions

The two main political parties in Ghana would continue to alternate power hence the need to critically interrogate their understanding and willingness to mainstream into their manifestos carefully curved policies on how they intend to institute environmentally sustainable management and climate change practices. This research note has highlighted the extent of prioritisation of environmental management and climate change issues by political parties in their manifestos. This brief analysis shows that political parties have highlighted some commitments to address climate change issues in their manifesto. The commitment of political parties, though varied, to enhance environmental protection and embark on climate change mitigation and adaptation action provides an entry point to creating a favourable policy ecosystem for action. It also allows electorates the opportunity to assess which political party is willing to address one of the most pressing challenges of the 21st century. Most especially, Ghana is a developing country with limited resources to address current and future climate impacts. The country will need international technical and financial support. Creating a policy ecosystem provides the platform to access sufficient international support. As a result, the current evidence

mentions some of the environmental and climate change issues in the two major political parties in Ghana manifesto provides strong basis to promote climate action.

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