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Interviewee:  Rampsford Gyampo
Interviewer:  Lucas Issacharoff  
             Daniel Scher
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ISSACHAROFF: Thanks for agreeing to meet with us. So I want to talk sort of about two areas. One is the most recent election, the 2008 elections, and some of the issues with that and how it was resolved successfully. And then sort of more broadly about Ghana’s transition to democracy over the past two decades. But first, if we could start, if you could tell us about yourself and about some of the research that you’re currently doing and that you’ve done in the past relating to elections in Ghana.

GYAMPO: So you want to know the past studies I have conducted about the past elections in Ghana. So basically, I conducted I think two key studies on Ghana’s 2008 elections. One was about what I’d call the political parties’ code of conduct and how it impacted the elections. Then the second one was presidential debates. It is quite a novel innovative phenomenon in Ghana here. I also looked at how presidential debates affected the electoral fortunes of political parties that contested the elections and also some of the benefits that the phenomenon, even though novel, affects Ghana’s democracy. So basically these are the two main studies that I conducted.

The political parties in Ghana here come together—what I mean by political parties when I say political parties in Ghana here, what I’m referring to is the four main political parties that have representation in our Parliament: the National Democratic Congress (NDC) that is ruling Ghana now, the New Patriotic Party (NPP), the Convention People’s Party (CPP) and then the People’s National Convention (PNC). These four parties have a platform that has been offered them by an organization, a public policy institute called the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA).

The Institute of Economic Affairs has a governance unit. OK, the Institute of Economic Affairs happened to have some [indecipherable]. So it has a governance unit that has provided this platform; the program is called the Ghana Political Parties Program. Then under the Ghana Political Parties Program, you have the Caucus of Party Chairmen. The Caucus of Party Chairmen is made up of the national chairmen of the four main political parties that have representation in Parliament.

Then you have also the Platform of General Secretaries. That is also made up of the general secretaries and policy analysts of the four main political parties that have representation in Parliament. Now, monthly, these two bodies meet separately to brainstorm and to discuss issues of national concerns in a non-partisan manner. They look at Ghana as a whole and irrespective of the political calculations, irrespective of their differences. They look at the picture of how the democratic landscape is and look at the problems, the challenges, and come out with those challenges and prescribe ways and means that they come together in a concerted manner for dealing with those challenges.

Now it was under this program that the political parties agreed they needed to have a code of conduct that must guide our actions before, during and after elections. Now prior to this, in 2000, the electoral governing body, the Electoral Commission of Ghana, had some form of an arrangement in 2000 that was supposed to regulate the activities of political parties.

Now if you read my work, I believe I outlined some of the challenges of that 2000 arrangement that was initiated by the Electoral Commission. It had some challenges. One was how it was going to be enforced. So in 2004 the Institute of Economic Affairs, under the aegis of the Ghana Political Parties Program that it hosted brought all the political parties together and sort of reviewed their already
existing code. That would be the 2001 [code]. So they tried to identify some of
the challenges of the code and to see how they could build on it.

So one main challenge was for them to have enforcement mechanism so that
you don’t have it as just a code but we should find some ways and means of
enforcing the provisions of the code. So it built on the 2000 initiative of the
Electoral Commission. Now, unfortunately, even though the 2004 code
prescribed the establishment of enforcement body, the enforcement bodies were
not set up. So in 2008 these same bodies met together again and said, “Look,
why don’t we activate, or implement, the provision or the decision we took in
2004 by setting up a national enforcement body and replicating the enforcement
body at original and constituency levels.”

So that was what they did. As to whether the code worked to perfection or not, it
depends on how you look at it. But I feel if political parties themselves came
together and said, look, we can’t allow politics to degenerate into violence, so
let’s have some rules that would sort of guide us before, during and after
elections. I think this in itself represents a major victory for us because people
feel that look, whatever we do there are rules and at the end of the day we must re-agree. They did not just prepare the document, but they prepared and then
signed it. I’ll get out a copy of the 2008 code here. They prepared it and then
appended their signatures to it. So with the help of other bodies like the National
Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), we went around the town educating the
electorate that this is the document that your own people have signed and
pledged to go by, to make sure that the election is incident free. So it is up to you
to demand accountability. Make sure, refer them, remind them, that this is the
document that they themselves signed.

So being responsible people, they found it difficult to go contrary to what has
been approved or what they themselves had appended their signature to. Even
though there were spots of violence—I mean, you can’t control everybody.
Sometimes you may exercise, you may impress on them to respect the code, but
there will be some who may just do their own thing. But generally I believe the
platform that was given to the political parties to sit together and to discuss
issues in an apolitical manner, in a very nonpartisan manner calms down tension.
Prior to the formation of this platform, it was an offense for two people of different
political persuasions to be seen talking. I mean, you’re talking to your source and
why are you talking to him, he’s supposed to be our opponent. But now we have
this platform that brings the national chairmen together. It also brings the general
secretaries together. These are the movers, these are the people who are the
helm of affairs when it comes to political party, for party administration and how
they should do their things. These are the people who are really at the helm of
affairs.

So we brought them, their organization, the platform brings them together.
Seeing each other and discussing issues in that apolitical and nonpartisan
manner calms down persons. So this I believe contributed to the success that we
had in our 2008 election because you can’t look at your brother’s face and harm
him. Because you won’t go do that and then come and sit down at the same
platform with him to discuss issues of national importance. You don’t want to do
that.

You try to sensitize your people. It calmed down things. So this, plus the help of
the code, because even though they signed, the Institute and the NCCE did not
leave it up to them. They also went about sensitizing people about the conditions
of the code and the need for them. The people themselves to hold their actions of
their top men in check against the code that they themselves had signed. Then overall I outlined that it had so many challenges. It has contributed in no small way in harnessing the credibility and the peaceful nature of our 2008 elections.

Now, the second study that I also undertook was the presidential debates. Now the presidential debates here provided a platform for the presidential experience of the four main political parties with representation in Parliament to also meet and to try to sell their programs and policies and details of their manifesto. The policies they intend to implement should they be elected into power. Hitherto, politics had been based on personality attacks, insults, and were practically doing on issues-based politics. Now this debate provided a platform that forced the presidential aspirants to engage the electorate in dialogue over issues. So it fell to the people to shift their purpose from politics of personality attack to politics that was based on discussion of issues. What do you intend implementing? What are you then doing for the people? Should you win the mandate of the people?

So you strive to articulate those issues and then the people also were given the chance to also ask questions for clarification and all this. So we realized that any time we allow politics to degenerate into—anytime we allow campaign to degenerate into personality attacks and all that, it results in violence. But any time you have issues-based politics, forcing politicians to be addressing the issues, forcing the electorate to ask some questions based on issues, you have some serene and you have some peace with which you can conduct peaceful elections.

So these two studies I conducted and for me I believe they assisted in the kind of election that we had that was hailed world over.

ISSACHAROFF: Could I follow up on the study you did on the political parties' code of conduct? What general types of behavior and of activities did the code try to restrict and try to prevent the parties from engaging in?

GYAMPO: Well, I think it will be useful—this is the only copy I have, but then I would direct you to the Institute where you can get a copy of the code of conduct which—I mean, first of all, there is the 2004 code of conduct. There is a 2008 code of conduct, built on each other. But if you go to the Institute of Economic Affairs you’ll get copies. But pre-election, it looks at issues that pertain to pre-election. So for pre-election for instance one of the provisions has to do with campaigning.

So, for instance, “political parties, candidates, agents, and party workers shall not obstruct, disrupt, break up or cause to be broken up meetings or rallies organized by other political parties and candidates, nor should they interrupt or prevent speeches and the distribution of handbills, leaflets and the pasting of posters by other parties and candidates.” This was to make sure that in the course of campaigning you don’t have violence. Somebody will go and display his party paraphernalia, will go and be holding rally and then others will go and disrupt it. This code was supposed to check an incident like this.

Then also you have a provision for instance that enjoined political parties and their practitioners or supporters to desist from carrying offensive weapons and the display of same and to extend cooperation to the law enforcement agencies and should anybody be arrested for carrying offensive weapons and doing all sorts of acts that could mar the campaign process of other parties.

If you think, look at the code, you will see that the provisions that were supposed to guard and guide the conduct of political campaigns. Then there were
provisions that were supposed to also regulate the elections, the conduct of party officials and their supporters. There were provisions to regulate them. For instance, you have a provision like political parties shall actively discourage members from engaging in multiple voting and other form of election malpractice such as voting in the name of deceased and absent voters as well as minors and other unqualified persons.

A provision like “no members, officials or agents of political parties shall engage in confrontation or open argument with election officials at the polling stations.” Now to this end, any complaint, challenges relating to processes and procedures at polling station shall either be routed through the party agent, to the presiding officer, or the security officer for resolution. Thereafter an aggrieved party or person is at liberty to seek redress in the law courts. So this was a provision that was supposed to make sure that you had election that was devoid of rancor. You don’t have people taking the law into their own hands simply because they feel something has gone wrong. There were processes that this code prescribed that one could resort to should anything go wrong.

Basically these were some of the things. If you can take a look, a critical look at the code itself, you see what it provided for. As I said, as to whether political parties live by it or not it depends on how you look at it. Some actually live by it, others decided to just do their own thing. But generally, I believe there was a wide acceptability, a respectability of the provisions of the code that culminated to a large extent in the kind of election that we held.

ISSACHAROFF: I believe you wrote that the actual, you said that the enforcement mechanism was lacking, that it was somewhat toothless. But you believe that despite this the parties generally behaved according to the code of behavior?

GYAMPO: Yes, that was a challenge. Don’t forget that I mentioned earlier on that in 2004 we said—the code said that the enforcement mechanism—but it wasn’t—that decision was not implemented. This, in 2008 the Institute or the political parties themselves decided to implement that particular recommendation of the true full code. Let’s set up an enforcement mechanism. But it was novel, it was new, so it was bound to go through some teaching challenges and problems. Then you needed a lot of money to keep those mechanisms in operation, to keep them active. Being something new you needed—you have to contend with some of these challenges they had to go through.

So initially one can describe it as a toothless bulldog, but then we’re hoping that with time, as now has been established, we were hoping it would become properly institutionalized with adequate funding and all those things. I believe therefore we will be able to have it doing what it was set up to do.

ISSACHAROFF: OK, if I could just move back to sort of the election generally. What challenges for the election were you and were others in Ghana anticipating in the year or two prior to the election. What did people think and what did you think that the main challenges were going to be?

GYAMPO: We thought it was going to be a keenly competitive election and so the possibility of it degenerating into violence could not be underestimated. The NDC had been in power for eight years. They tasted the niceties of power and the glories of power and the goods of power. Then they had also wallowed in opposition for eight years and they had seen the hell it was to be in opposition.

ISSACHAROFF: Right.
GYAMPO: The NPP had also been in opposition. In fact they had been in opposition for a long time. But [Indecipherable] position they had been in opposition for eight years. They had also been in power for eight years. Now, they don’t want to go into opposition again. They didn’t want to go into opposition again because of what they had experienced. So they were going to hold onto power.

NDC, they didn’t want to remain in opposition again because it was a hell being in opposition.

So it was going to be keenly competitive and for the first time this was an election that we didn’t have a sitting president or a sitting vice president going to contest. In all the elections that we had held under the—since 1992, we’ve either had a vice president or a president, the incumbent, contesting. But in this election it was a kind of an open or a level playing field. So it could go either way. So everybody was active, everybody was alive and competing or contesting for this particular election and the other thing was that Kenya, a hitherto peaceful country, had also degenerated into chaos. Nobody thought of that. So it was something that was quite scary. Look at what has happened to Kenya and look at how competitive this election is going to be and all those things.

A lot of people thought it was going to be chaotic and all those things. But, as I said, you can give credit to the Platform of General Secretaries. You can give credit to the Caucus of Party Chairmen and the Ghana’s Political Parties Program. Then you can give a lot of credit to our electoral commissioner. The election administration body of Ghana that has been able to, over the years, win some respectability and admiration of many Ghanaians as an independent party.

People believe that the Electoral Commission is quite independent and so it wasn’t going to do things in favor of any political party. It was going to apply the rules of the game in electoral administration. Then you can also give credit to the culture of tolerance among Ghanaians. I believe Ghanaians have a culture of tolerance. They try to tolerate and they put on a good antiviolence culture. Yes, there is this, this, this, and look at violence from [Indecipherable] give it to God. So if there is any dispute that can degenerate into serious violence, the combatants are told to just give it to God. It’s not your time, your time will come, wait your time and all the rest.

These all added together to sort of counsel or work out against the perception and the fear that people had prior to the conduct of the election.

ISSACHAROFF: So would you say that there was a worry before the election that the losing party would reject the results and would refuse to accept having lost the election?

GYAMPO: Yes, people had the leading candidates and contestants of the election were quized prior to election, what would you do if you are declared the loser? They said, “Look, if you follow the rules of the game, if there is nothing fishy, why not? We are democrats and we will accept it.” So even though some people had expressed that fear, the leaders of the parties themselves, most of them had said, “Look, we are democrats and if the people of Ghana speak, why not? We will give in to what they say.” Let’s not also downplay the role that was played by people like the sitting president and other statesmen like—there is a man called B.J. da Rocha and even other institute and civil society bodies. These were bodies that also came out strongly [Indecipherable] and said, “Look, you should respect the results of the people. We should respect the verdict of the people.”
I know that the NPP wanted to take the whole process, to take the EC (Electoral Commission) to court or something, but the sitting president just came out and said, “It is important for you to respect the wishes of the people.” I mean statesmen and leading politicians within their own party got up and said look, it is important for you to respect the verdict of the people. Civil society organizations like the Institute of Economic Affairs, the Center for Democratic Development all came out to impress on the political parties and their leadership to respect the verdict of the people as reflected in the electoral results.

ISSACHAROFF: One of the things that must have been necessary for this was a very high degree of confidence that the results were accurate, that the results reflected the will of the people. One of the challenges before the election was that, I think, 2.5% of the ballots were rejected by the Electoral Commission?

GYAMPO: Yes. I think I forgot to tell you about that. I’ve forgotten where it was published, but there was a study that I also did on rejected ballots and democratic consolidation and where I argued that if democracy is really to be consolidated in Ghana, then the issue of rejected ballots must be of grave concern to everybody in Ghana, because the election would have been decided on first round had there not been the high state of rejected ballots. In my analysis, it showed that since 1992 it has been increasing. It has been going up, up, up. I think it is not—because it doesn’t allow the views of the people to be expressed.

There are so many causes of it, either the people themselves are not educated properly as to the right way to vote, the thumbprint or sometimes you have people deliberately going into the strongholds of their opponents and doing something fishy and misinforming the people and so that they could thumbprint in a particular way that it destroys a ballot.

There is thumbprint, one. Some people receive the education that if you go and you don’t like all the rest, thumbprint in front of all of them to show that you don’t like them. The moment you do that—.

You understand. Then there is—you know you do that with ink. Some people I interviewed were saying look, there wasn’t, the place where you were supposed to have dipped your finger or thumb in the ink, the distance between that place and then where you were supposed to actually thumbprint was so close that yes, you dip your thumb in there and then you get there and the ink is still dropping. So as you are trying to thumbprint, it soils the other part. Then, when it comes to counting, the pollster says no, if it is a soiled ballot that must be rejected. There are so many reasons available that account for this high incidence of rejected ballots. It is important that if you really want to consolidate our democracy, we take a critical look at high incidence of electoral ballots. So if democracy thrives on the people expressing their will, then again that is high incidence of rejected ballots would not allow the will of the people to be adequately expressed.

ISSACHAROFF: Thank you. Moving back—you said before the election there was, people might not have been talking about it much but there was consciousness of what had happened in Kenya and the potential for violence associated with elections. In Kenya there were very, very strong ethnic divisions and the parties were very closely associated with certain groups and that really led to the violence because those groups were unwilling to accept defeat. My impression is that Ghana, that the political parties in Ghana are not very closely associated with one ethnic group or another in the same way. So what are the main divisions that elections reflect here and why were those less contentious?
GYAMPO: Ethnicity has not really been a serious problem in Ghana, even though the 2008 elections for instance show that look, we can’t believe in the fools’ paradise if all of a sudden we behave like—look we are not like Nigeria, we are not like Kenya and all those, it is important. Because if you analyze the results, you’ll see that some particular people voted in a particular way and it has been like that since ’92. The people in Volta region voted for a particular party massively and then since 1992 the people in Ashanti region voted for a particular party massively in the 2008 election and they have done that since 1992. It is just like this in the 2008 elections we saw this incident in a very grand manner. I believe that it is important that we take a look at it and sensitize the people on the dangers of ethnicity. We have so many examples that we can draw from.

ISSACHAROFF: Right.

GYAMPO: So even though I’ll argue that yes, it is not as bad as it is in other countries, it is gradually rearing its ugly head in our political dispensation and it is important that we express concern about it and try to sensitize the people on the challenges it poses to our democracy. Yes, there are ethnic divisions in our country and sometimes you can see in the way or manner people talk. Sometimes politicians want to hype on it or thrive on it to get some votes for themselves. But the point is, our democracy has come so far and we do not—we can’t afford to allow it to relapse because of ethnic villages and ethnic divisions. I believe it is important that we take a look at it.

ISSACHAROFF: So do you think—what would you—you’ve mentioned the political parties code of conduct and the Electoral Commission. Are there any other groups or actions that you think were particularly important in ensuring that the 2008 election was peaceful and was accepted by everyone?

GYAMPO: I mentioned we have a very advanced civil society, too.

ISSACHAROFF: Right yes.

GYAMPO: Very advanced civil society. Most of them devoted much attention to sensitizing the people. About the importance of the 2008 elections and the need for the elections to be violence-free. Most of them deployed their people out there as election observers and monitors to see what was actually going on at the various polling centers. Most of them held workshops, seminars, symposia for political parties. So, as I said, the IEA has an institutionalized platform that does this, but apart from the IEA there are other civil society bodies, the Center for Democracy and Democratic Development in Ghana, the Institute for Democratic Governance, I mean they all do work with political parties to make sure that—look, you bring all of them together so that contributed to the kind of election we had. As I said, we have the cultures, Ghanaians have the culture of tolerating each other. We don’t have anywhere to go because we have a feeling that look, all the countries, all our neighboring countries have some crisis, one form of crisis or the other. So we do not have anywhere to go. So we can’t allow our democracy to relapse into any form of undesirable government.

So yes, people talk, people act, but at the same time they are cautious. We need to be careful otherwise we become like the other countries.

SCHER: I don’t mean to push on this point of the parties’ code of conduct, but we’ve looked at these types of things in other countries and it is very similar processes, the parties sign, everybody agrees to do this but then they don’t stick to it. They
Gyampo: Let me give you an example.

Issacharoff: Yes, please.

Gyampo: There was a by-election that was held, I think in September last year, in a constituency called Chereponi in the northern region. Now, before the by-election, what I understand is the Institute of Economic Affairs held a meeting under the aegis of the Ghana Political Parties Program. That brought all the political parties representation in Parliament together, their leadership, [Indecipherable] was the national chairman. When they held the meeting, one thing that was high on the agenda was for them to look at the code again and to replace their commitment to it, prior to the conducting of the election.

So they met together. They said yes. They issued a statement that we, the political parties, we remember the code that we signed in 2008 and we are pledging our commitment to it again. We pledge to ensure that there is going to be an incidents-free election. Incidents-free by-election. So that is what they did. And they don’t just do this and keep it on the shelf. The do this and then we circulate it, we circulate it to the media houses to popularize it, to let Ghanaians know what the political parties themselves have said. So even if there is nobody there to monitor you, you are being checked, anonymously, by the signature you appended to your document.

People said, you are the ones who wanted to sign this document, so your conscience itself would not let you go free if you should do anything contrary to what you said you were going to, to what you said you were going to respect. So they understand it, there were spots of violence, but we believe there not been an initiative like this, it would have been worse. So yes, democracy, the force of republican dispensation is evolving. There are challenges, yes. But we believe that with time some of these rough edges will be ironed out. We’ll get there. We’ll get to a situation where they will sign—we don’t expect to have 100% incident-free by-elections because in our part of the world democracy is still taking root. But I believe we will get there.

Some of us we keep advising these civil society organizations not to relent in their effort, not to be discouraged by the fact that you bring them together and sometimes some of them violate the agreement that they themselves have signed. We try to advise them to keep what they are doing and we believe that—I’m sure now, sooner or later we will get there.

Issacharoff: Do you think that the voters themselves hold parties accountable—that the voters will punish parties who are seen to reject these standards and the code of conduct?

Gyampo: Yes and no. Yes, because you saw that in areas where education was massively done Ghanaians are categorized in two frames when it comes to voting. There are die-hard supporters and then there are—sorry, there are two categories. You have die-hard supporters and then floating voters. Die-hard supporters who vote for a party irrespective of whatever they do, irrespective of—I mean, he belongs to the party and he is for the party, irrespective of anything. Then there are floating voters. Incidentally, these floating voters are the people who I refer to as
the kingmakers, who go either way. So some of them look at some of these things. The way and manner, to the extent you are able to comply with some of these basic codes and provisions.

So if we are able to sensitize in some of these areas where some of these floating voters were sensitized about provisions of the code—yes, you can argue that they demanded accountability and they made sure that you were going by the code that you yourself prepared and signed. But in areas where education wasn’t that intense—and I’m sorry it has to do with money matters—how do you go educating people. You need a lot of money to go into the hinterlands, the rural areas where massive violence and all manner of things go on. You need to be able to go out there.

So yes, where education was massively undertaken about the provisions of the code except as a tool for measuring the performance of political parties. But where education couldn’t reach, where people—I know there were places where people did not even know about the code. Their leaders were aware, but they themselves were not aware. During the heat of the moment you were interested in garnering for support and votes, so there wasn’t much time for you to go and educate people about it. You were thinking about telling them what would get you elected and all those things.

But, as I said, with time I believe—and with the resources—I believe we will get there. We will get to the situation for our people would be adequately informed about some of these documents and demand accountability.

ISSACHAROFF: I have a couple more questions.

GYAMPO: Let’s go, maybe I can spend the next ten minutes.

ISSACHAROFF: One thing, you mentioned that the Electoral Commission was very important and people have a lot of faith in the Electoral Commission and people trust it a great deal. That requires it to be seen as very independent and not under the control of one party or another. I think to some extent the Institute of Economic Affairs must be the same way in order to bring these parties together. What do you think—this is a problem that many countries have had where they are unable to keep these important institutions that are supposed to be neutral. Whether it is the Supreme Court or the Electoral Commission, they end up being dominated by the government and by the party in power at the time. What do you think has allowed Ghana to prevent that from happening and to really keep these independent?

GYAMPO: The Electoral Commission itself has also developed a body called the Inter-Party Advisory Committee, IPAC. Now this body brings together all political parties to discuss issues that affect the conduct of elections. So even though the Electoral Commission is an independent body, it is not sitting out there, pretending as if because it is independent it doesn’t want to relate with anybody. I mean, it tries to relate cordially with the political parties themselves through the IPAC meetings that are called. These are times where political parties are free to ventilate whatever grievance they have against the Electoral Commission for redress. There are times that are used to ask questions for clarification and to make petitions and all those things.

So by being, you bring a kind of a harmonious relationship between the political parties and then the election governing body. So it acts up to their independence. Notice, at one point in time, even those in power criticized the Electoral
Commission for being in bed with the opposition. At the time, the opposition also criticized the Electoral Commission for being in bed with the ruling government. I argue that if you have a situation where the opposition is criticizing you and those in the ruling party are also criticizing you, then it makes you independent. That is what is happening in Ghana. The commission has been able to, over the years, assert itself so much, so well.

It has supervised the government that brought it into— I mean, they appointed it. Even though they are independent, it is the political leaders who appoint you through some process. But yes, they were appointed during the NDC era and supervised the demise and existence of the NDC, the NPP, and they supervised their demise and now it is the NDC again. So you can’t really say that they are in bed with any of the political parties. They are doing their job. So all that is important is that democrats and political leaders who respect democracy should always be mindful of their financial obligations towards them. Let’s make sure that the funds with which they can run their duties are always released—timely, such that they are not cash strapped or their hands are not tied.

I think that’s a good place to stop. Do you have any other specific questions?

I only have one question which you mentioned at the beginning and you haven’t spoken too much about and that’s this issue of the presidential debates and effecting the transformation from a personality attacks to discussion of an issue. I’m sure there are many countries around the world that would like to know how to do that, where elections do become mud-slinging matches as opposed to a serious debate over issues.

As I said, and it all, the credit goes to civil society. Once again you talk about the Institute of Economic Affairs that sat down and said, look, we have the Ghana Political Parties Program. We bring you guys together to brainstorm on national issues. So why should we allow you to go and then do mud-slinging? Why should you attack do politics that sort of attacks personalities instead of talking about issues? Why do you try to divert people’s concentration from the real issues that affect them? People do not have regular source of water, people do not have regular source of power. People don’t have food; people don’t have good roofs, why are we not talking about them?

So the credit goes to civil society for being innovative and saying, now look, we can’t allow this to go on. We’ve practiced our constitution for close to 20 years and we can’t always be at the rudimentary stage of democracy. We should go on. We should move forward to talk about issues.

So, as I said, it was not difficult at all because we have that relationship, the institute has that relationship with the political parties. This is the national chairman of the party. They go tell the presidential candidate that we want him to meet the other presidential candidate. If you go tell your presidential candidate—so it was not difficult. There was a committee that was put in place which was made up of eminent statesmen, people who were not political, who met these presidential aspirants, showed the rules of the game to them. They realized that at the end of the day it wasn’t a big deal, it was just trying to encourage dialogue
between the aspirants and the populace—that was all. So, the credit goes to civil society for being innovative and saying that, look, we can’t remain at a rudimentary stage of democracy; we should move things a bit further.

ISSACHAROFF: To wrap it up I guess, if you have any last thoughts on the ultimate purpose of these interviews is to sort of provide a guide to countries that are trying to manage the same sort of success that Ghana has achieved in many ways. So if you have any last reflections on what sort of advice to other countries. What steps do you think other countries could take to allow them to smooth out and enhance the political process the same way that Ghana has.

GYAMPO: It is important to think about building and strengthening institutions. Democracy is the best form of government that I know of as a political scientist, that’s what I’ll tell you. It is the best form of government. You can’t start from day one and all of a sudden become like America. There are processes that you have to go through gradually. It is a gradual process. One thing that African countries must do is to try to build and to strengthen institutions, build democratic institutions and try to strengthen them so that they become independent. So the moment they are independent, they try hard to carry out their mandate and to fulfill the purpose for which they were established. They become impersonal. They try to go by the rules of the game; they apply the rules without fear or favor. I believe that with this, Africa will be the best place in the whole world to live in.

SCHER: I think that’s an excellent place to wrap things up. Thank you very much.

GYAMPO: My pleasure.