

Public Sector Reform and Human Security: Postcolonial State Transformation in Ghana (2000-2022)

William Osahon Imasuen

Directorate of Linkages and Collaboration, Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna, Nigeria
Email: w.imasuen@gmail.com

How to cite this paper: Imasuen, W. O. (2026). Public Sector Reform and Human Security: Postcolonial State Transformation in Ghana (2000-2022). *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 14, 201-228. <https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2026.145013>

Received: April 7, 2026

Accepted: May 18, 2026

Published: May 21, 2026

Copyright © 2026 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial International License (CC BY-NC 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>



Open Access

Abstract

Since the early 2000s, Ghana has implemented extensive reforms in the public sector aimed at strengthening state capacity, improving service delivery, and consolidating democratic governance. Drawing on the human security framework, this article critically examines whether these reforms have translated into meaningful improvements in citizens' everyday security between 2000 and 2022. The study adopts a qualitative political-economy approach, combining postcolonial state theory with political settlements theory, public choice theory, and historical institutionalism to analyse reform trajectories and outcomes. The findings reveal a persistent reform paradox. While public sector reforms have made significant progress in formal governance institutions, particularly in electoral administration, macroeconomic management, public financial management, and certain service delivery systems, their impact on human security remains inconsistent and limited. Challenges such as economic vulnerability, youth unemployment, health system fragility, environmental degradation, and deficits in political and legal security persist despite numerous reform initiatives. These outcomes are explained by enduring neo-patrimonial political incentives, institutional weaknesses, donor dependence, fragmented implementation, and historically embedded governance structures. The article argues that Ghana exemplifies a hybrid postcolonial state where bureaucratic modernisation coexists with informal power relations, resulting in institutional resilience without substantial transformation. It concludes that public sector reform has been necessary but insufficient for advancing comprehensive human security and offers valuable lessons for governance reform across post-colonial African states.

Keywords

Public Sector Reform, Human Security, Postcolonial State, Political

1. Introduction

Public sector reform has remained a central pillar of state restructuring efforts across postcolonial African states, driven by the dual imperatives of increasing state capacity and responding to citizen demands for effective governance, accountability, and socio-economic development. In many African contexts, reform initiatives arose as responses to the perceived failures of post-independence statist models, worsened by fiscal crises, governance deficits, and pressures linked to globalisation (Mkandawire, 2009; World Bank, 1997). Since the late twentieth century, public sector reform has increasingly been seen not only as a technical task aimed at boosting bureaucratic efficiency but also as a vital tool for achieving broader human security outcomes by enabling states to shield citizens from economic vulnerability, social exclusion, and political insecurity (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 1994; Grindle, 2010).

Ghana, often portrayed as a “model democracy” in sub-Saharan Africa, provides a particularly compelling case for examining the connection between public sector reform and human security. Following a relatively successful transition to constitutional rule in 1992 and the peaceful transfer of political power after 2000, Ghana has been widely praised for its stable electoral process, institutionalised competitive democracy, and engagement with governance reform agendas (Gyimah-Boadi, 2009; Lindberg, 2010). These accomplishments have enhanced Ghana’s positive international reputation and sustained donor confidence. However, beneath this surface of political stability lie persistent structural challenges related to inequality, uneven development, service delivery deficits, and vulnerabilities that affect large segments of the population—issues that directly impact the human security of citizens.

Since the turn of the millennium, Ghana has undertaken several waves of public sector reform driven by neoliberal policy frameworks, donor-led conditionalities, and changing domestic political priorities. Early reforms in the 1990s and 2000s were heavily influenced by structural adjustment programmes and the New Public Management (NPM) paradigm, emphasising downsizing the civil service, privatisation, performance-based management, and fiscal discipline (Larbi, 2006; Hutchful, 2002). Later reform initiatives, including the Public Sector Reform Programme (PSRP), the Single Spine Salary Structure, decentralisation reforms, and public financial management reforms, aimed to modernise the bureaucracy, improve coordination among ministries, departments and agencies, and increase efficiency in service delivery (Ayee, 2013; Republic of Ghana, 2018). More recently, digital governance and e-government initiatives have been promoted as transformative tools for enhancing transparency, reducing corruption, and expanding access to public services.

Despite these extensive reform efforts, evaluations of their results remain mixed. While Ghana has made measurable progress on certain governance indicators,

such as budgetary transparency, macroeconomic management frameworks, and electoral administration, ongoing gaps in accountability, inconsistent policy implementation, and deep-rooted socio-economic inequalities raise important questions about the real impact of public sector reform on human security (World Bank, 2017; Oduro et al., 2014). Poverty reduction has been uneven across regions, especially between the northern and southern areas of the country, and vulnerabilities related to unemployment, informalisation of work, healthcare access, and urban insecurity continue to affect large parts of the population (Aryeetey & Baah-Boateng, 2016; UNDP, 2022).

This paper is grounded in the human security framework, which broadens the concept of security beyond just territorial and government stability to include economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security (UNDP, 1994). Seen from this perspective, the success of public sector reform cannot be judged solely on administrative efficiency or fiscal discipline, but must also be assessed by its capacity to tackle the daily insecurities citizens face. In post-colonial contexts like Ghana, this link is further complicated by deeply rooted institutional arrangements, patron-client networks, and political incentives that influence how reforms are planned, executed, and experienced locally (Chabal & Daloz, 1999; Pitcher, Moran, & Johnston, 2009).

The paper argues that Ghana's public sector reforms from 2000 to 2022 have led to limited and uneven improvements in human security outcomes, mainly because of the persistent influence of postcolonial institutional legacies, neo-patrimonial political dynamics, and structural capacity limitations. While reforms have enhanced certain aspects of state functionality, especially electoral governance, public financial management systems, and macroeconomic credibility, they have not fundamentally changed the underlying political economy of the Ghanaian state. Reform efforts have often been hampered by politicisation of the bureaucracy, fragmented implementation, and the tendency for reforms to be driven more by external motivations than by locally rooted social bargains (Ayee, 2013; Booth et al., 2005).

By focusing on the period from 2000 to 2022, this study documents successive administrations under different political parties and examines how changing political coalitions, donor relationships, and reform narratives have influenced outcomes over time. The paper contributes to wider debates on postcolonial state transformation by showing that public sector reform, when separated from deeper structural and political reforms, is unlikely to achieve comprehensive human security improvements. In doing so, it challenges technocratic and depoliticised explanations of reform and highlights the importance of situating public sector change within the broader context of power relations, historical legacies, and citizen-state interactions in postcolonial Africa.

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Public Sector Reform

Public sector reform involves intentional and systematic efforts to reorganise state

institutions, administrative practices, and governance processes to enhance efficiency, accountability, effectiveness, and responsiveness to citizens' needs (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017). In postcolonial countries like Ghana, public sector reform has been closely linked to broader state-building and development goals, often influenced by external policy orthodoxies as well as internal political dynamics.

Since the 1980s and especially after 2000, Ghana's reform path has been greatly shaped by the principles of New Public Management (NPM). NPM highlights market-based mechanisms, assessing performance, decentralising authority, granting managerial independence, and adopting private-sector management methods within the public sector (Hood, 1991; Larbi, 2006). These reform concepts became more prominent through donor conditions and public sector modernisation efforts aimed at lowering fiscal burdens, improving service delivery, and boosting administrative efficiency.

However, extensive scholarship questions the effectiveness of NPM reforms in African contexts. Critics argue that NPM often assumes institutional capacities, legal cultures, and political incentives that do not align with postcolonial governance realities (Ohemeng & Ayee, 2016; Andrews, 2013). In Ghana, reform implementation has frequently been undermined by weak enforcement mechanisms, elite resistance, politicisation of the bureaucracy, and fragmented coordination across public institutions. As a result, formal adoption of reform frameworks has not always translated into substantial changes in public sector performance or citizen outcomes.

In response to these limitations, recent public sector reform thinking has shifted towards post-NPM or whole-of-government approaches that emphasise policy coordination, inter-agency collaboration, digital governance, and citizen-centred service delivery (Christensen & Læg Reid, 2011). Ghana's growing focus on e-government platforms, digital public services, and results-based management reflects this transition, although the extent to which such reforms transform deeper governance structures remains contested.

2.2. Human Security

The idea of human security, introduced in the *United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report (1994)*, redefines security by shifting the focus from safeguarding state borders to protecting individuals and communities. Human security covers several areas, including economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security (UNDP, 1994). This framework is especially relevant for evaluating governance reforms in developing countries, where threats to well-being are more often connected to poverty, inequality, institutional failure, and social exclusion than military conflict.

Scholarly debates on human security have focused on whether it should be defined narrowly as "freedom from fear" or broadly as "freedom from want" (Paris, 2001). The narrow approach emphasises protection from violence and political

repression, while the broad approach incorporates socio-economic vulnerabilities and structural conditions affecting human well-being. This study adopts the broad conception of human security, as it enables a multidimensional assessment of how public sector reform influences citizens' lived experiences, access to basic services, and protection from economic and social risks.

Within this framework, effective public sector institutions are essential for human security outcomes. Administrative capacity, regulatory effectiveness, and accountable governance structures directly impact the state's ability to provide healthcare, education, employment opportunities, social protection, and political inclusion. As a result, failures in public sector reform have significant consequences for human security, especially in postcolonial contexts marked by institutional fragility.

2.3. Postcolonial State and Neo-Patrimonialism

Postcolonial state theory offers a critical perspective for understanding the historical and structural factors influencing governance reform in Ghana. Colonial administrative systems were mainly created for resource extraction and political dominance rather than inclusive development, leading to highly centralised authority, fragile accountability mechanisms, and limited bureaucratic independence (Mbembe, 2001; Young, 1994). These institutional legacies continue to influence post-independence state structures and reform paths.

A key concept in this literature is neo-patrimonialism, which describes governance systems where formal bureaucratic institutions coexist with informal networks of patronage, clientelism, and personal rule (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997). In neo-patrimonial states, political authority is often maintained through the distribution of material resources and public offices to supporters, blurring the line between public and private interests.

In Ghana, neo-patrimonial dynamics are evident through politicised appointments, partisan control over state resources, and the use of public sector employment as a means of political reward (Aye, 2013). These practices often undermine merit-based recruitment, weaken institutional autonomy, and distort the implementation of reforms. Consequently, public sector reforms tend to be selectively applied, symbolically adopted, or reversed depending on changes in political power, thereby limiting their transformative effect on state capacity and human security.

2.4. Comprehensive and Equitable Improvements in Human Security

In this paper, comprehensive and equitable improvements in human security are understood as sustained, multidimensional gains in citizens' protection against economic, social, political, and physical vulnerabilities, distributed across regions, social groups, and livelihoods rather than concentrated among politically connected or urban populations. Such improvements are assessed against six mini-

mum dimensions, each with an explicit equity component:

1) Economic Security: stable incomes, secure employment, and effective social protection; reduction in regional, youth, and informal-sector vulnerabilities (not just GDP growth).

2) Political Security: protection from arbitrary state power, corruption, and exclusion; consistent enforcement of rights and accountability institutions beyond electoral stability.

3) Health Security: reliable access to affordable and quality healthcare across urban-rural divides; system resilience during shocks (e.g., pandemics), not merely coverage expansion.

4) Environmental and Community Security: effective regulation of extractive activities and environmental protection; safeguarding community livelihoods from environmental degradation.

5) Food Security: food availability and affordability; access to market and farm inputs; adequate farmer income; access to government support and subsidies; nutritional adequacy.

6) Personal Security: protection from crime, police abuse, vigilantism, and communal insecurity; trustworthy and citizen-focused security and justice institutions.

Equity is central: improvements must benefit marginalised regions, low-income groups, women, youth, and informal workers, not merely produce aggregate or sector-specific gains. The paper finds that although Ghana's reforms strengthened formal institutions and financial management, they failed to advance all five dimensions in an inclusive and sustained manner, resulting in uneven human security outcomes.

2.5. Analytical Framework

Building on the above theoretical perspectives, this study conceptualises the relationship between public sector reform and human security in Ghana as follows:

Public Sector Reform → State Capacity → Human Security Outcomes

Public sector reform is expected to enhance state capacity by improving administrative competence, coordination, accountability, and policy implementation. Enhanced state capacity, in turn, should translate into improved human security outcomes across economic, social, and political dimensions. However, this relationship is neither linear nor automatic.

The effectiveness of reforms is influenced by various contextual factors, including political will, institutional capacity, socio-economic structures, and external donor influence. Neo-patrimonial political incentives, postcolonial institutional legacies, and reliance on donor-driven reform agendas significantly shape how reforms are designed, implemented, and experienced. This analytical framework thus highlights the importance of situating public sector reform within Ghana's broader political economy in order to assess its implications for human security between 2000 and 2022.

To enhance the explanatory power of the conceptual framework, this study draws on a theoretical framework that includes political settlements theory, public choice theory, and historical institutionalism. These theories help in explaining why public sector reforms in Ghana, despite often being well-designed, have resulted in limited and inconsistent human security outcomes.

2.6. Political Settlements Theory

Political settlements theory focuses on the distribution of power among elite groups and how this distribution shapes institutions, policy choices, and reform outcomes (Khan, 2010). From this perspective, public sector reforms succeed not simply because of their technical merit, but because they align with the interests and incentives of dominant political coalitions. In Ghana, the post-1992 political settlement has been characterised by competitive electoral politics combined with strong executive power and reliance on patronage networks to maintain political support (Oduro et al., 2014).

Within this settlement, public sector reforms are often selectively implemented to preserve elite cohesion and electoral advantage rather than to fundamentally change state-society relations. As a result, reforms that threaten access to rents, control over appointments, or discretionary resource allocation face resistance or are only partially implemented. This helps explain why enhancements in formal governance structures have not consistently led to better human security, particularly for marginalised groups. Political settlements theory thus supports the paper's argument that neo-patrimonial dynamics restrict the transformative potential of reform.

2.7. Public Choice Theory

Public choice theory offers insight into how self-interest, incentives, and rent-seeking behaviour shape decision-making in the public sector (Buchanan & Tullock, 1962). When applied to Ghana's reform experience, this perspective emphasises how political leaders and bureaucratic actors might resist or distort reforms that limit their discretionary powers or material benefits.

Public choice theory helps explain persistent problems such as corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency, and the weak enforcement of accountability mechanisms despite repeated reform efforts. When reforms restrict opportunities for patronage or rent extraction, political and administrative actors may prefer symbolic compliance over genuine change. These dynamics weaken state capacity and undermine public trust, thereby limiting the effectiveness of public sector reform on political, economic, and personal security.

2.8. Historical Institutionalism

Historical institutionalism emphasises the role of historical trajectories, institutional legacies, and path dependence in shaping contemporary governance outcomes (Thelen, 1999; Pierson, 2004). Ghana's public administration remains

heavily influenced by colonial institutional structures designed for control and extraction rather than inclusive service delivery. Post-independence reforms, including those inspired by New Public Management and post-NPM paradigms, have been layered onto these inherited structures rather than replacing them.

This process of institutional layering explains why reforms often coexist with persistent informal practices like patronage and clientelism. Therefore, historical institutionalism highlights that the limitations of public sector reform in Ghana are not only political or technical but also deeply rooted in history. These legacies limit the state's capacity to effectively tackle long-standing human security challenges such as inequality, employment insecurity, and unequal access to public services.

Taken together, these theoretical perspectives emphasise that public sector reform in Ghana must be viewed as a politically influenced and historically rooted process rather than a neutral technocratic intervention. Political settlements set the limits of possible reform, public choice dynamics influence incentives to comply or resist, and historical institutional legacies restrict transformation. Incorporating these theories enhances the analysis of why reforms between 2000 and 2022 have improved certain facets of governance while leading to limited and uneven human security outcomes.

3. Methods

3.1. Research Design and Approach

This paper adopts a qualitative, interpretive research design to examine the relationship between public sector reform and human security in Ghana between 2000 and 2022. The analysis is grounded in an integrated framework of political economy and human security, drawing on postcolonial state theory, political settlements theory, public choice theory, and historical institutionalism. The aim is not to establish causality in a positivist sense, but to provide an analytical explanation of patterns, constraints, and outcomes across sectors over time.

The study relies on structured documentary analysis rather than primary fieldwork. This approach is appropriate given the study's scope, historical coverage, and focus on institutional reform trajectories, policy implementation, and sectoral outcomes across multiple administrations.

3.2. Types of Documents Reviewed

The evidence base comprises secondary documentary sources drawn from four main categories:

- 1) Academic Literature

Peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and edited volumes that focus on public sector reform, governance, neo-patrimonialism, political settlements, and human security in Ghana.

- 2) Government and Policy Documents

Official Ghanaian policy and programme documents and reports.

3) International Organisation Reports

Analytical and evaluative reports from institutions such as the World Bank, UNDP, and other multilateral agencies, particularly those assessing governance reform, service delivery, human development, and institutional capacity.

4) Think Tank and Civil Society Analyses

Reports from Ghana-focused and international policy institutes and civil society organisations addressing corruption, political accountability, security sector performance, environmental governance, and public trust.

These document types were selected to ensure coverage of formal policy intent, implementation practices, and outcome-focused assessments across governance and human security domains.

3.3. Criteria for Evidence Selection (2000-2022)

Document selection followed explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure relevance, consistency, and analytical coherence.

Inclusion criteria: materials published between 2000 and 2022 and those published outside but relating to this period; analyses covering reforms and outcomes within this period; documents directly addressing public sector reform, state capacity, governance performance, or at least one human security dimension (economic, political, health, environmental, community, or personal security); Ghana-specific studies or comparative works where Ghana constitutes a central empirical case; and sources that provide empirical findings, institutional analysis, or evaluative commentary rather than purely descriptive narratives.

Exclusion criteria: sources focused exclusively on pre-2000 reform periods without relevance to post-2000 trajectories; commentary lacking empirical grounding or analytical rigour; and sectoral studies with no linkage to public sector institutions or reform processes.

Triangulation was used where possible by comparing government claims, donor assessments, and independent academic or civil society evaluations to limit reliance on single-source interpretations.

3.4. Analytical Procedure

The analysis proceeded in four structured stages:

1) Periodisation of Reform Trajectories

The 2000-2022 period was divided into reform phases aligned with changes in political leadership, donor engagement, and policy orientation. This enabled comparison across administrations and reform waves, including early post-2000 reforms, New Public Management-influenced initiatives, the National Public Sector Reform Strategy, and pandemic-era digital governance reforms.

2) Mapping Reform Areas to State Capacity Dimensions

Identified reforms were analytically grouped into core capacity domains: administrative capacity, financial management, decentralisation, service delivery, accountability mechanisms, and security sector governance. This step linked re-

form intent to functional state performance rather than treating reforms as isolated initiatives.

3) Sectoral Human Security Assessment

Drawing on the broad human security framework, reforms were assessed against outcomes across economic, political, health, environmental and community, and food security. Personal security outcome was assessed against security sector reform. Sectoral findings were derived by examining how institutional changes influenced citizens' exposure to vulnerability, access to services, and protection from socio-economic and political risks.

4) Theoretical Interpretation

Empirical patterns were interpreted using political settlements theory, public choice incentives, and historical institutionalism to explain why reforms produced inconsistent results. This approach linked reform limitations to elite motivations, institutional legacies, and informal political practices, rather than focusing solely on technical design.

3.5. Derivation of Findings

Sectoral findings were derived from cross-document thematic synthesis, highlighting common reform ambitions, implementation gaps, and results across various sources. Evidence was deemed strong when consistent conclusions were found in academic studies, donor evaluations, and domestic policy reviews.

Rather than ranking sectors quantitatively, the study emphasises comparative depth, highlighting where reforms strengthened formal institutions yet failed to translate into consistent gains in human security. This approach allows the findings to capture complexity, contradiction, and variation across policy domains.

4. Historical Context of Ghana's Postcolonial State

Ghana's postcolonial administrative and governance structures are largely shaped by colonial legacies inherited from British indirect rule. The colonial state was mainly designed to facilitate resource extraction, preserve order, and govern through traditional authorities rather than to encourage inclusive development or democratic accountability (Mamdani, 2018; Young, 1994). This system resulted in a highly centralised bureaucratic structure with limited avenues for popular participation and weak mechanisms for holding state authority accountable. At independence in 1957, the Ghanaian state inherited these institutional features, which greatly influenced postcolonial governance paths and reform initiatives.

The early post-independence period under Kwame Nkrumah saw ambitious efforts at state-led development, rapid bureaucratic growth, and political centralisation aimed at overcoming colonial underdevelopment. However, these efforts were accompanied by increasing authoritarianism, politicisation of the civil service, and pressures on fiscal sustainability, culminating in Ghana's first military coup in 1966 (Austin, 1970; Bofo-Arthur, 2007). Over the following two and a half decades, Ghana experienced cycles of civilian and military rule, characterised

by repeated regime changes, policy reversals, and institutional instability. This period of political volatility severely weakened bureaucratic capacity, undermined long-term planning, and entrenched patterns of patrimonial governance that continue to influence reform outcomes (Aye, 2013).

The adoption of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) in the early 1980s under the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) marked a significant turning point in Ghana's postcolonial political economy. SAPs, implemented in collaboration with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, focused on macroeconomic stabilisation, fiscal discipline, privatisation of state-owned enterprises, trade liberalisation, and reducing the size of the public sector (Hutchful, 2002; World Bank, 1994). While these reforms succeeded in restoring macroeconomic stability and re-engaging Ghana with international financial markets, they also weakened state capacity, decreased public sector employment, and cut social spending, with serious consequences for inequality and human security. The cut-back of social services during this period increased vulnerabilities in health, education, and employment, especially among rural and low-income populations (Aryeetey & Kanbur, 2017).

The shift to constitutional governance in 1992 and the creation of the Fourth Republic marked a major institutional shift in the Ghanaian state. The 1992 Constitution introduced democratic checks and balances, decentralised local government structures, and formal commitments to accountability and human rights. This period laid the groundwork for future public sector reform efforts by stabilising political institutions and restoring electoral legitimacy (Gyimah-Boadi, 2009). However, scholars point out that democratisation did not fundamentally dismantle neo-patrimonial power relations within the state, as political competition increasingly depended on access to state resources and patronage networks (Oduro et al., 2014).

From 2000 onwards, Ghana's democratic consolidation coincided with renewed efforts to modernise the public sector, improve service delivery, and enhance state effectiveness. Successive governments pursued civil service reforms, decentralisation initiatives, public financial management reforms, and performance-based systems, often supported by development partners. These reforms were framed as necessary for achieving poverty reduction, inclusive growth, and improved governance outcomes. Yet recent Ghana-specific analyses highlight persistent implementation gaps, limited bureaucratic autonomy, and the politicisation of administrative institutions as key constraints on reform effectiveness (World Bank, 2021; Crook & Manor, 1998).

Contemporary assessments of Ghana's postcolonial state highlight the tension between official democratic institutions and ongoing structural weaknesses. Despite relatively stable democratic governance, the government continues to struggle with increasing public debt, youth unemployment, regional disparities, and declining public confidence in state institutions—challenges that became especially severe between 2020 and 2023 due to economic shocks and fiscal crises

(UNDP Ghana, 2022; Institute for Security Studies [ISS], 2025). These dynamics demonstrate how colonial legacies, reforms during adjustment periods, and post-1992 political agreements collectively influence the capacity of the Ghanaian state and shape the outcomes of public sector reforms. Recognising this historical background is therefore crucial for analysing the limitations of state transformation and its implications for human security between 2000 and 2022.

5. Evolution of Public Sector Reforms in Ghana (2000-2022)

5.1. Early Reform Phase (2000-2009)

The early 2000s marked a crucial phase in Ghana's public sector reform journey, coinciding with the country's first peaceful transfer of political power in 2000. Reform efforts during this period were strengthened under the Public Sector Reform Programme (PSRP), which aimed to modernise the civil service, enhance efficiency, and bolster accountability mechanisms across ministries, departments, and agencies (Ayee, 2013). These initiatives built on earlier adjustment-era reforms but were now integrated within a democratically legitimised governance framework.

Key interventions included civil service performance improvement programmes, payroll reforms aimed at eliminating ghost workers, public financial management (PFM) reforms, and renewed anti-corruption efforts. The introduction of the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) and improvements in budgetary procedures were intended to align public spending with policy priorities and enhance fiscal discipline (Oduro et al., 2014; World Bank, 2017). Despite these ambitions, implementation outcomes were uneven. Limited technical capacity, weak coordination among reform agencies, and persistent political interference constrained the depth and sustainability of reforms (Ayee, 2013). As a result, many reforms remained procedural rather than transformative, with limited impact on frontline service delivery.

5.2. NPM-Driven Reforms and Decentralisation

Throughout the 2000s and 2010s, Ghana's reform agenda continued to reflect the influence of New Public Management (NPM) principles, particularly through decentralisation and performance-oriented governance reforms. Decentralisation was promoted as a means of enhancing participation, accountability, and service delivery by empowering Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs) (Crawford, 2009). In principle, bringing governance closer to citizens was expected to improve responsiveness and reduce regional inequalities.

In practice, however, decentralisation in Ghana has predominantly been characterised as administrative deconcentration rather than true political or fiscal devolution. The central government maintains significant authority over budget allocations, staffing, and policy directives, which limits the autonomy of local governments (Ahwoi, 2010; Crook, 1994). The appointment of Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Chief Executives by the president further reinforces central con-

trol and politicisation at the local level. These limitations have undermined the capacity of local governments to deliver services effectively and have weakened the accountability link between citizens and local authorities, with direct implications for human security outcomes at the community level.

5.3. National Public Sector Reform Strategy (2018-2023)

The adoption of the National Public Sector Reform Strategy (NPSRS) 2018-2023 marked a renewed effort to address long-standing coordination failures and implementation gaps within Ghana's public sector. The NPSRS signalled a shift towards results-based management, performance accountability, and institutional coherence across government (Republic of Ghana, 2018). Key pillars of the strategy included service delivery improvement, human resource management reforms, harmonisation of reforms across ministries, and strengthened monitoring and evaluation systems.

While the NPSRS reflected lessons drawn from earlier reform failures, empirical studies suggest that outcomes have remained inconsistent. Weak enforcement mechanisms, resistance from entrenched bureaucratic and political interests, and the persistence of patronage-based appointments have constrained reform effectiveness (Agbevade & Koduah, 2020; World Bank, 2021). Moreover, reform ownership has often been concentrated at the central level, limiting institutional buy-in across the wider public sector. These challenges highlight the difficulty of sustaining reform momentum in a political environment where electoral incentives frequently prioritise short-term gains over long-term institutional development.

5.4. Digital Governance and the COVID-19 Response

The COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2022) served as a catalyst for accelerating digital governance reforms in Ghana's public sector. In response to restrictions in mobility and disruptions in service delivery, government institutions increased their use of e-governance platforms, digital identification systems (notably the Ghana Card), online service portals, and the integration of mobile financial services for public transactions (Bawole & Langnel, 2023; World Bank, 2022). These efforts enhanced administrative efficiency, cut transaction costs, and improved transparency in areas such as revenue mobilisation and social service delivery.

Nevertheless, the rapid digitalisation of public services has also revealed and, in some cases, worsened existing inequalities. Unequal access to digital infrastructure, differences in digital literacy, and the marginalisation of rural and vulnerable populations have restricted the inclusivity of these reforms (Adams, 2024). While digital governance has enhanced institutional responsiveness in certain sectors, its contribution to wider human security outcomes depends on tackling fundamental socio-economic and infrastructural challenges.

Overall, the evolution of public sector reforms in Ghana between 2000 and 2022 reveals a pattern of ambitious reform initiatives constrained by persistent political, institutional, and structural challenges. Successive waves of reform have im-

proved certain aspects of state capacity, especially in financial management and administrative modernisation, but have failed to deliver comprehensive and equitable improvements in human security.

6. Public Sector Reform and Human Security Outcomes

This section examines how public sector reforms in Ghana from 2000 to 2022 have affected human security outcomes across key areas such as economic, political, health, environmental, and community security. Drawing on the broad human security framework, it highlights both the progress achieved through reform and the persistent vulnerabilities that continue to affect citizens' daily lives.

6.1. Economic Security

Ghana experienced relatively strong economic growth in the 2000s and early 2010s, driven by improved macroeconomic management, public financial management reforms, and governance stabilisation following democratic consolidation. Growth was further supported by debt relief under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, reforms in revenue administration, and the discovery of oil in commercial quantities in 2007 (Aryeetey & Baah-Boateng, 2016; World Bank, 2021). These developments enabled the state to expand public spending and social programmes, leading to significant reductions in poverty at the national level.

However, the distributional impact of growth has been uneven. Youth unemployment and underemployment remain persistent problems, particularly among educated urban youth, while a large portion of the labour force remains in the informal sector, characterised by low wages, job insecurity, and limited access to social protection (Baah-Boateng, 2020; ISS, 2025). Income inequality has also widened along regional and spatial lines, with northern regions and informal urban settlements facing higher levels of economic vulnerability. These trends suggest that public sector reforms have improved macroeconomic stability but have been less effective in delivering inclusive and sustainable economic security.

Economic shocks between 2020 and 2023, including the COVID-19 pandemic, rising public debt, and macroeconomic instability, have further exposed structural weaknesses in Ghana's economic governance. Fiscal pressures constrained the state's capacity to protect vulnerable populations, highlighting the limits of reform efforts that emphasised fiscal discipline without sufficiently strengthening social protection systems (UNDP Ghana, 2022).

As an example, the introduction and consolidation of the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) and related Public Financial Management (PFM) reforms between 2000 and 2008 improved overall fiscal discipline and budget credibility. These reforms contributed to macroeconomic stability and helped reduce poverty at the national level. Nonetheless, they did not deliver lasting employment security or income protection for informal sector workers and youth, who continued to face job insecurity and limited social safety nets. Data indicate

that although headline poverty decreased, unemployment, underemployment, and informal employment persisted, reflecting only partial gains in economic security and a lack of equitable distribution (Aryeetey & Baah-Boateng, 2016; World Bank, 2017).

6.2. Political Security

Ghana is widely regarded as one of Africa's most stable democracies, with a strong track record of peaceful elections, peaceful transfer of power, and relatively independent electoral and judicial institutions. Public sector reforms have bolstered political stability by strengthening electoral administration, formalising constitutional governance, and enabling a vibrant civil society to hold state actors to account (Gyimah-Boadi, 2015; Lindberg, 2010). These developments have reduced the likelihood of violent political conflict and enhanced regime legitimacy.

Nonetheless, political security in Ghana remains weakened by widespread corruption, politicisation of state institutions, and entrenched patronage networks. Despite the creation of anti-corruption bodies and accountability mechanisms, enforcement has been inconsistent, and public trust in state institutions has fallen in recent years (Center for Democratic Development-Ghana [CDD-Ghana], 2022a). The perception that political access and public sector appointments are driven by partisan loyalty rather than merit undermines institutional trust and constrains the effectiveness of governance reforms.

Thus, while public sector reforms have strengthened formal democratic institutions, they have not fully addressed underlying political incentives that create insecurity through exclusion, unequal access to state resources, and a weakened rule of law.

For instance, electoral governance reforms between 2000 and 2016 strengthened the Electoral Commission, voter registration systems, and electoral dispute resolution mechanisms. These reforms improved government stability, ensured freedom from electoral violence, and culminated in multiple peaceful transfers of power (2001, 2009, 2017). However, political security remained uneven, as corruption and the politicisation of state institutions persisted, limiting citizens' everyday sense of fairness and protection from elite abuse. Studies show declining trust in institutions despite electoral success, revealing a gap between formal political reform and substantive political security (Gyimah-Boadi, 2009; CDD-Ghana, 2022a).

6.3. Health Security

Public sector reforms have significantly strengthened Ghana's health system, notably through the launch of the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), governance reforms in the health sector, and investments in service-delivery infrastructure. The NHIS has expanded access to health services and reduced out-of-pocket expenditure, leading to better health outcomes for many households (de-Graft Aikins, 2016; Agyekum et al., 2023).

However, the COVID-19 pandemic revealed significant structural weaknesses

in the health system, such as poor infrastructure, shortages of healthcare workers, disparities in urban and rural healthcare access, and inefficiencies in public sector coordination. Although Ghana's pandemic response was initially commended for its institutional coordination and public communication, resource limitations and systemic inequalities hindered the long-term sustainability of the gains (Dzando et al., 2022; UNDP, 2022). These issues highlight that reforms centred on policy design and expanding coverage have not been accompanied by adequate investment in institutional capacity and resilience.

For example, the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), launched in 2003 and operational from 2004, greatly improved access to healthcare and lowered out-of-pocket costs, thereby boosting health security for millions of Ghanaians. By the mid-2010s, service use, particularly for maternal and child health, had increased significantly. Yet the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2022) exposed vulnerabilities in system resilience, health infrastructure, and regional equity, with rural and under-resourced areas experiencing greater pressure. This shows that merely expanding coverage does not guarantee comprehensive or fair health security (de-Graft Aikins, 2016; Dzando et al., 2022).

6.4. Environmental and Community Security

Environmental and community security highlight the limitations of public sector reform in Ghana. Illegal small-scale mining ("galamsey") has become a major threat to environmental sustainability, community livelihoods, and public health, despite repeated government interventions and regulatory reforms. The persistence of galamsey reflects weak enforcement capacity, fragmented institutional mandates, and political interference in environmental governance (Kumah, 2022; Ayee et al., 2011).

Environmental degradation caused by illegal mining has contaminated water sources, ruined arable land, and increased insecurity in communities, particularly in areas affected by mining. These outcomes reveal the failure of public sector reforms to effectively tackle complex socio-economic issues where dominant political and economic interests clash with regulatory institutions. Consequently, environmental insecurity highlights the broader point that public sector reform in Ghana has achieved limited transformative results when separated from deeper political-economic constraints.

To illustrate, anti-galamsey enforcement campaigns, notably Operation Vanguard, initiated in 2017, aimed to combat illegal small-scale mining and restore environmental safety by safeguarding water sources and local livelihoods. Although illegal mining temporarily declined, enforcement efforts soon waned due to political interference and fragmented institutional responsibilities. Consequently, river pollution and land degradation increased again, jeopardising community security and livelihoods in mining regions. This case shows that regulatory reforms without continuous political support often fail to ensure environmental protection and community well-being (Kumah, 2022; Ayee et al., 2011).

6.5. Food Security

The adoption of the Food and Agriculture Sector Development Policy II (FASDEP II) in 2007 and its implementation framework, the Medium-Term Agriculture Sector Investment Plan (METASIP I) (2011-2015), marked a major public-sector reform aimed at improving national food availability, agricultural productivity, and farmer income through better coordination of agricultural spending, fertiliser support, and extension services. These reforms contributed to aggregate gains in staple crop production, particularly maize, cassava, and rice, thereby improving overall food availability at the national level. However, food insecurity remained uneven across regions and social groups, with northern Ghana and poorer rural households continuing to experience high levels of vulnerability due to weak market access, climate exposure, and limited income diversification. Evidence from sector reviews and human development assessments shows that while production-focused reforms improved supply, they did not ensure stable access, affordability, or nutritional adequacy for vulnerable populations, indicating that food security gains were neither comprehensive nor equitable (Republic of Ghana, 2010; UNDP Ghana, 2022; World Bank, 2018).

Building on earlier agricultural reforms, the Medium-Term Agriculture Sector Investment Plan II (METASIP II) (2014-2017) sought to strengthen food security by prioritising productivity growth, input access, and value-chain development, with explicit attention to food availability and farmer incomes. Public investment under METASIP II contributed to increased production of staple crops, particularly maize and rice, and improved coordination of agricultural spending. However, assessments show that food insecurity persisted among poorer households, especially in northern regions, due to continued exposure to climate shocks, limited market integration, and weak income diversification (Republic of Ghana, 2015; World Bank, 2018).

These challenges directly shaped the design of Planting for Food and Jobs (PFJ), launched in 2017 as a flagship, state-led agricultural reform that combined input subsidies (improved seeds and fertiliser), extension services, and marketing support. PFJ led to substantial increases in aggregate food production and temporarily improved domestic food availability, particularly between 2017 and 2019. Nonetheless, evidence indicates that gains were uneven and fiscally vulnerable: poorer farmers faced barriers to consistent participation, food price volatility persisted, and the benefits were partially reversed by COVID-19 disruptions and macroeconomic stress (2020-2022). Human development assessments show that improved production did not reliably translate into stable, affordable, and nutritionally adequate food access for vulnerable populations, highlighting partial food security gains without comprehensive or equitable improvement (UNDP Ghana, 2022; World Bank, 2021).

7. Security Sector Reform and Human Security

Security sector reform (SSR) is an essential aspect of human security, especially in

postcolonial states where the security forces have historically served more to protect regimes than to ensure citizen safety. In Ghana, SSR has concentrated on improving professionalism, accountability, and civilian oversight in key institutions, including the police, military, judiciary, and correctional services. These reforms have been implemented within the broader framework of democratic consolidation and governance reform since the start of the Fourth Republic.

Ghana's relative success in avoiding large-scale violent conflict and military intervention since 1992 is often cited as evidence of a stabilised security sector. Public sector reforms have contributed to this outcome through the constitutional subordination of the military to civilian authority, electoral neutrality of security agencies, and participation in international peacekeeping operations, which have reinforced professional norms within the armed forces (Frempong, 2019; Hutchful, 1997). These developments have strengthened government stability and reduced the likelihood of overt political violence, thereby contributing to baseline political and personal security.

However, from a human security perspective, significant challenges still exist. Policing reforms have been inconsistent, with repeated reports of police brutality, excessive force, arbitrary arrests, and corruption across various levels of the Ghana Police Service. These practices disproportionately impact economically marginalised and politically vulnerable groups, damaging personal security and diminishing public trust in law enforcement institutions (CDD-Ghana, 2022b; Tankebe, 2010). Despite reform efforts to enhance community policing and accountability mechanisms, institutional culture and incentive structures have remained resistant to change.

Judicial reform has yielded mixed results. Although Ghana's judiciary enjoys relatively high formal independence compared to many African nations, weak enforcement of court rulings, delays in proceedings, and high costs of accessing justice continue to hinder legal security for ordinary citizens (Atuguba, 2018; World Justice Project, 2023). The justice system's limited capacity to effectively punish corruption and human rights violations within the security sector further restricts the transformative potential of SSR. Consequently, legal protections on paper do not always translate into actual security for citizens.

Political influence over security institutions remains a fundamental constraint. Appointments, operational deployments, and resource allocations within the security sector are often driven by partisan considerations, especially during election periods. This politicisation undermines institutional independence and reinforces public perceptions that security agencies serve elite or partisan interests rather than the wider population (Ashiabi, 2021). Such dynamics diminish the credibility of SSR initiatives and restrict their ability to enhance community and political security.

Recent analyses further show that emerging security threats, such as vigilantism, violent crime, cybercrime, and spillover risks from instability in the wider West African sub-region, have tested Ghana's security institutions (ISS, 2018,

2025). While public sector reforms have enhanced coordination at the strategic level, operational weaknesses and accountability deficits still exist. These challenges reveal that SSR in Ghana has focused more on government stability and institutional continuity than on the daily insecurities faced by citizens.

In particular, police reforms and community policing initiatives between 2001 and 2010 aimed to boost professionalism and citizen trust in the Ghana Police Service. Although institutional stability and civilian oversight improved during this period, ongoing issues such as police brutality, corruption, and arbitrary arrests—especially impacting marginalised groups—continued to undermine personal security. Studies indicate that these reforms enhanced government stability more than they improved individual protection, suggesting limited progress in human security despite institutional reform (Hutchful, 1997; Tankebe, 2010).

Overall, Ghana's experience shows that security sector reform, when focused only on institutional professionalism and stability, provides only limited human security benefits. Persistent issues like police violence, judicial inefficiency, public mistrust, and political interference restrict how much SSR improves personal, legal, and community security. As Atuguba argues, without deeper reforms that address accountability, access to justice, and the political economy of security governance, SSR is unlikely to significantly improve human security outcomes in Ghana (Atuguba, 2007).

8. Challenges and Structural Constraints

Despite successive waves of public sector reform, Ghana's experience between 2000 and 2022 highlights persistent structural constraints that hinder reform effectiveness and diminish potential human security benefits. These constraints are deeply rooted in the country's postcolonial political economy and influence how reforms are designed, executed, and maintained over time.

8.1. Neo-Patrimonial Politics

Neo-patrimonial politics remain a key obstacle to public sector reform in Ghana. Although formal bureaucratic rules and procedures exist, political authority is still exercised through informal networks of patronage, clientelism, and partisan loyalty. Political appointments across ministries, departments, agencies, and state-owned enterprises often prioritise party affiliation and electoral considerations over merit and technical competence (Ayee, 2013; Oduro et al., 2014).

This practice undermines the professional autonomy of the civil service, weakens performance management systems, and distorts recruitment and promotion processes. Reform initiatives aimed at strengthening meritocracy and accountability, therefore, coexist with informal practices that reward political loyalty, creating gaps in implementation and institutional incoherence. From a human security perspective, neo-patrimonial governance redirects public resources towards elite interests, reducing the state's capacity to address socio-economic vulnerabilities faced by ordinary citizens (Appiah & Abdulai, 2017).

8.2. Institutional Weaknesses

Institutional capacity limitations continue to hinder the effectiveness of public sector reform. Although Ghana has a relatively extensive bureaucratic structure, many public institutions experience shortages of skilled staff, outdated administrative systems, and poor internal coordination. Reform agencies themselves often lack the authority and resources needed to enforce compliance across the public sector (World Bank, 2021).

Bureaucratic inefficiencies, such as delays in procurement, weak monitoring and evaluation systems, and fragmented service delivery, undermine reform outcomes at both central and local levels. These institutional weaknesses diminish the state's capacity to turn policy reforms into better public services, with direct impacts on economic, health, and community security. The result is a cycle of reform adoption without institutional change, reinforcing public mistrust in state institutions (UNDP Ghana, 2022).

8.3. Donor Dependence

Donor dependence forms another major structural constraint. Since the era of Structural Adjustment Programmes, public sector reform in Ghana has been heavily influenced by external actors, including the World Bank, IMF, and bilateral development partners. While donor support has provided technical assistance and financial resources, it has also encouraged reform agendas that emphasise global best practices over institutional realities specific to the local context (Mkandawire, 2009; Booth et al., 2005).

Externally driven reforms often lack strong domestic ownership and experience weak political commitment once donor incentives fade. This situation leads to reform discontinuity, policy reversals, and partial implementation. In Ghana, reliance on donors has sustained reform rhetoric but has not consistently built lasting institutional capacity or achieved inclusive human security outcomes, especially for marginalised groups (Booth et al., 2005).

8.4. Reform Fragmentation

Reform fragmentation further obstructs public sector transformation. Multiple reform initiatives—covering civil service reform, public financial management, decentralisation, digitalisation, and performance management—have often been executed simultaneously without sufficient coordination. Overlapping mandates across reform agencies and ministries generate institutional rivalry, duplicate efforts, and policy incoherence (Ayee, 2013; Republic of Ghana, 2018).

This fragmented reform landscape hampers implementation, limits learning across reform cycles, and reduces overall impact. For frontline service providers and citizens, the outcome is inconsistent service delivery and variable reform results across sectors and regions. Fragmentation, therefore, constrains the state's capacity to deliver coordinated responses to complex human security issues such as unemployment, health crises, and environmental degradation.

8.5. Digital Divide

While digital governance initiatives are promoted as transformative solutions to administrative inefficiency and corruption, the digital divide has become a significant obstacle. Unequal access to digital infrastructure, limited digital literacy, and differences between urban and rural regions hinder the inclusiveness of digital reforms (Bawole & Langnel, 2023; Adams, 2024).

Marginalised communities, including rural populations, informal sector workers, and low-income households, are more likely to be excluded from digital public services. As a result, digital reforms risk reinforcing existing inequalities rather than improving human security universally. Without additional investments in infrastructure, education, and social inclusion, digitalisation remains a partial solution that benefits already privileged groups.

Taken together, these structural constraints emphasise the central argument of this study: public sector reform in Ghana has been limited less by technical design flaws than by long-standing political-economy factors rooted in neo-patrimonial governance, institutional fragility, donor dependence, and social inequality. These constraints help explain why reform outcomes have been uneven and why improvements in state capacity have not consistently resulted in comprehensive human security gains between 2000 and 2022.

9. Discussion: The Limits of Postcolonial Transformation

This study aimed to assess whether public sector reforms in Ghana from 2000 to 2022 have promoted meaningful postcolonial state transformation and enhanced human security outcomes. The findings uncover a persistent reform paradox: significant institutional reforms and governance innovations have coexisted with enduring structural constraints that restrict their transformative effect. Instead of a straightforward transition towards a developmentally effective and citizen-responsive state, Ghana demonstrates a hybrid governance model characterised by formal bureaucratic modernisation alongside deeply rooted informal political practices and uneven state capacity.

Across successive reform waves, from New Public Management-inspired restructuring, decentralisation initiatives, and results-based management to digital governance and security sector reform, Ghana has shown notable progress in formal institutional design. Electoral governance, macroeconomic policy frameworks, public financial management systems, and selected service delivery mechanisms have improved compared to the period before the 1990s. These advances help explain Ghana's reputation as a stable democracy and a credible reformer within sub-Saharan Africa. However, when viewed through the lens of human security, these reforms have produced only partial and uneven outcomes.

The empirical analysis reveals that improvements in macroeconomic stability and administrative efficiency have not led to inclusive economic security, especially for youth, informal workers, and residents of marginalised regions. Similarly, while political security has benefited from democratic consolidation and

peaceful electoral competition, ongoing corruption, politicisation of state institutions, and declining public trust undermine citizens' everyday security. Health sector reforms—most notably the National Health Insurance Scheme—expanded access, but COVID-19 exposed vulnerabilities rooted in infrastructure deficits and uneven capacity across regions. Environmental and community security remain notably weak, as shown by the failure to contain illegal mining despite repeated regulatory and institutional reforms.

These patterns are best understood by integrating the paper's theoretical perspectives. Political settlements theory explains how Ghana's post-1992 competitive electoral settlement encourages reforms that strengthen regime legitimacy and donor confidence, while discouraging deeper changes that would threaten elite access to political and economic rents. Reforms that threaten control over appointments, decentralised resources, or discretionary enforcement—such as genuine devolution, merit-based recruitment, or strict anti-corruption measures—have encountered resistance or partial implementation.

Public choice theory further explains why reform compliance is often symbolic rather than substantial. Political and bureaucratic actors respond logically to incentive structures that reward patronage, discretion, and short-term electoral gains over long-term institutional performance. This dynamic undermines accountability mechanisms within the public service, security sector, and local government, restricting the contribution of reform to human security outcomes such as legal protection, personal safety, and equitable service delivery.

At a deeper level, historical institutionalism highlights the lasting impact of colonial administrative legacies and post-independence adaptations. Ghana's reforms have mainly taken place through institutional layering rather than abrupt change, integrating new managerial and digital tools within existing structures characterised by centralisation and weak downward accountability. The outcome is institutional resilience without real institutional transformation—systems that can maintain order and macro-stability, but are less effective at tackling structural inequality and citizen vulnerability.

In comparison, Ghana's experience closely mirrors reform trajectories in countries like Kenya and Nigeria, where broad public sector reforms coexist with neopatrimonial politics, fragmented implementation, and inconsistent human security outcomes (Booth et al., 2005; Pitcher et al., 2009; UNDP, 2022). This suggests that Ghana is not unique but reflects wider structural challenges within postcolonial African states, where reforms are shaped more by entrenched power relations than by objective administrative principles.

Overall, the findings challenge technocratic narratives that equate institutional reform with state transformation. Ghana's experience shows that public sector reform can stabilise governance and modernise administrative practices without fundamentally reconfiguring the political economy of the state. As a result, improvements in state capacity have been necessary but insufficient for achieving comprehensive human security. Addressing this gap requires not only better-de-

signed reforms but also political strategies that realign elite incentives, strengthen local accountability, and confront the historical roots of institutional weakness. Without such shifts, postcolonial transformation is likely to remain partial, contested, and uneven.

10. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

This paper examined the relationship between public sector reform and human security in Ghana between 2000 and 2022, placing reform outcomes within the broader context of postcolonial state transformation. The analysis reveals that Ghana has implemented extensive and often ambitious public sector reforms, resulting in tangible improvements in formal governance structures, macroeconomic management, electoral administration, and certain areas of public service delivery. These reforms have contributed to political stability, improved administrative procedures, and strengthened Ghana's reputation as a relatively successful democratic reformer in sub-Saharan Africa.

However, when viewed through a human security framework, the impact of these reforms has been uneven and limited. Improvements in state functionality have not consistently resulted in comprehensive gains in economic, health, environmental, or community security. Structural inequalities, informal political practices, weak enforcement capacity, and uneven institutional development continue to leave large segments of the population exposed to economic vulnerability, service delivery failures, and environmental and personal insecurity.

The paper's findings emphasise that Ghana's reform trajectory reflects a hybrid postcolonial state rather than a fully transformed developmental one. Using political settlements theory, reforms have been influenced by elite incentives linked to competitive electoral politics and patronage-based coalition maintenance. Public choice theory accounts for the continued existence of rent-seeking behaviour, symbolic compliance, and resistance to reforms that threaten discretionary power. Historical institutionalism highlights how colonial administrative legacies and post-independence adaptations persist in shaping contemporary governance through institutional layering rather than sudden change.

Together, these dynamics create the "reform paradox" observed in Ghana: reforms that modernise institutions without fundamentally altering the underlying political economy of the state. As a result, public sector reform has proven necessary but insufficient for achieving meaningful postcolonial transformation and sustained human security improvements. The Ghanaian case, therefore, offers broader lessons for African governance reform, demonstrating that technocratic reform models alone cannot surmount deeply entrenched political and historical barriers.

The study's reliance on documentary sources limits direct insight into citizens' perceptions and frontline implementation experiences. The varying depth of evidence across sectors also constrains causal inference, but as noted in the Methods section, establishing causality in the positivist sense is not the aim of the study.

However, this limitation is mitigated by using evaluative and survey-based secondary sources and by triangulating across multiple document types. The qualitative approach emphasises analytical insights rather than broad generalisations, making the findings highly relevant to understanding reform dynamics in Ghana and similar postcolonial governance settings.

To enhance the contribution of public sector reform to human security in Ghana, reform efforts must move beyond procedural adjustment toward deeper institutional and political change. The following recommendations build directly on the empirical findings and theoretical insights of this study.

1) Institutional Deepening: Strengthening Bureaucratic Autonomy and Capacity

Reform efforts should focus on institutional deepening by improving bureaucratic capacity, professionalism, and independence from partisan political influence. This involves merit-based recruitment and promotion systems, competitive pay structures, and ongoing investment in training and administrative infrastructure. Enhancing the authority and coordination ability of reform-mandated institutions is crucial to ensure consistent implementation across ministries, departments, and local governments. Without strong institutions capable of executing policy, reform achievements will remain fragile and uneven.

2) Anti-Corruption Reforms: Enhancing Enforcement Mechanisms

Anti-corruption reforms must move beyond a mainly legal-institutional focus to emphasise credible enforcement. It is essential to strengthen the independence, resources, and prosecutorial powers of anti-corruption agencies and oversight bodies. Reforms should also target public procurement, asset declaration enforcement, and judicial efficiency to minimise opportunities for rent extraction. Increased transparency and certainty in sanctions would boost institutional trust and reinforce political and economic stability.

3) Inclusive Governance: Promoting Citizen Participation and Accountability

Public sector reform must become more citizen-centred by fostering meaningful participation beyond just electoral competition. Strengthening local accountability measures, participatory budgeting, community oversight of service delivery, and civil society involvement would help align reforms with everyday human security issues. Improving downward accountability is especially vital in decentralised governance, where formal authority has not been matched by effective citizen influence.

4) Digital Equity: Expanding Access to Digital Infrastructure and Skills

Digital governance initiatives should be paired with specific investments in digital equality. Expanding broadband infrastructure in rural and underserved areas, enhancing digital literacy, and creating inclusive service platforms are crucial to ensure digital reforms do not reinforce existing inequalities. Without intentional inclusion strategies, digitalisation risks benefitting already advantaged groups while excluding those most vulnerable to human insecurity.

5) Political Reform: Reducing Patronage and Politicisation of Public Institutions

Finally, the success of public sector reform ultimately depends on tackling the political roots of governance. Reducing patronage in public appointments, safeguarding key institutions from partisan control, and reforming executive dominance over decentralised governance structures are essential to changing reform incentives. Gradual political reforms that limit discretionary power and reward performance would strengthen the credibility and durability of public sector reforms.

Taken together, these recommendations highlight the key lesson of this study: improving human security in Ghana requires not only better public sector reforms, but also a reorganisation of the political and institutional conditions under which reform takes place. Public sector reform must therefore be part of a wider effort of postcolonial state transformation that addresses power, incentives, and historical legacies. Without such alignment, reform will continue to produce stability without inclusion and capacity without security.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the professors, lecturers, supervisors, coordinators, and fellow scholars of the Security and Strategic Studies doctoral programme of the Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna, Nigeria.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

- Adams, A. S. (2024). *Uncovering the Hidden Socio-Technical Issues Threatening Digitalization Agenda*. GhanaWeb. <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/business/Uncovering-the-hidden-socio-technical-issues-threatening-digitalization-agenda-1965468>
- Agbevade, A., & Koduah, D. T. (2020). The Search for a Result-Oriented Public Sector Reform in Ghana: A Myth or Reality? *Journal of Public Administration and Governance*, 10, 136-157. <https://doi.org/10.5296/jpag.v10i3.17628>
- Agyekum, E. O., Ngetich, E., Smith, O., Sonne, S. E. W., Chen, D., & Rodas, P. A. C. (2023). *Public Health Expenditure for Universal Health Coverage in Ghana*. World Bank.
- Ahwoi, K. (2010). *Local Government and Decentralization in Ghana*. Unimax Macmillan.
- Andrews, M. (2013). *The Limits of Institutional Reform in Development: Changing Rules for Realistic Solutions*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781139060974>
- Appiah, D., & Abdulai, A. (2017). Competitive Clientelism and the Politics of Core Public Sector Reform in Ghana. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2954598>
- Aryeetey, E., & Baah Boateng, W. (2016). *Understanding Ghana's Growth Success Story and Job Creation Challenges*. Brookings.
- Aryeetey, E., & Kanbur, R. (2017). *The Economy of Ghana Sixty Years after Independence*. Oxford University Press.
- Ashiabi, E. E. (2021). Political Vigilantism in Ghana's Democratic Consolidation: Critical Mass, Political Behavior, and Actor Choices. *African Studies Quarterly*, 20, 62-80.
- Atuguba, R. A. (2007). Democratization and the Governance of the Security Sector in

- Ghana: The Case of the Ghana Police Service. *University of Ghana Law Journal*, 23, 129-157.
- Atuguba, R. A. (2018). *Ghana's Justice System Needs a Major Overhaul: Here's What Should Be Done*. The Conversation Africa.
<https://theconversation.com/ghanas-justice-system-needs-a-major-overhaul-heres-what-should-be-done-88724>
- Austin, D. (1970). *Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960*. Oxford University Press.
- Ayee, J. R. (2013). The Political Economy of the Creation of Districts in Ghana. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 48, 623-645. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909612464334>
- Ayee, J., Soreide, T., Shukla, G. P., & Le, T. M. (2011). *Political Economy of the Mining Sector in Ghana*. World Bank. <https://doi.org/10.1596/1813-9450-5730>
- Baah-Boateng, W. (2020). *Africa Youth Employment Insights: Ghana Brief*. INCLUDE Knowledge Platform.
<https://includeplatform.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Youth-Employment-Insights-Ghana-1.pdf>
- Bawole, J. N., & Langnel, Z. (2023). Administrative Reforms in the Ghanaian Public Services for Government Business Continuity during the COVID-19 Crisis. *Public Organization Review*, 23, 181-196. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11115-022-00687-w>
- Boafo-Arthur, K. (2007). *Ghana, One Decade of the Liberal State*. Zed Books.
- Booth, D., Crook, R., Gyimah Boadi, E., Killick, T., Luckham, R., & Boateng, N. (2005). *Policy Briefings on the Drivers of Change in Ghana*. Overseas Development Institute.
<https://odi.org/en/about/our-work/policy-briefings-on-the-drivers-of-change-in-ghana/>
- Bratton, M., & van de Walle, N. (1997). *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781139174657>
- Buchanan, J. M., & Tullock, G. (1962). *The Calculus of Consent: Logical Foundations of Constitutional Democracy*. University of Michigan Press.
- Center for Democratic Development-Ghana (CDD-Ghana) (2022a). *Approval Rating of Government's Anti-Corruption Efforts Dips after Significant Improvement in 2017, New Afrobarometer Study Shows*. News Release.
<https://www.afrobarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/R9-News-release-Corruption-Afrobarometer-28july22.pdf>
- Center for Democratic Development-Ghana (CDD-Ghana) (2022b). *Bribery, Unprofessionalism, Illegal Activity: Ghanaians' Negative Perceptions of their Police*. Dispatch No. 563, Afrobarometer.
<https://www.afrobarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/AD563-Ghana-police-face-challenge-of-rebuilding-public-confidence-Afrobarometer-19oct22.pdf>
- Chabal, P., & Daloz, J. P. (1999). *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument*. James Currey.
- Christensen, T., & Læg Reid, P. (2011). *The Ashgate Research Companion to New Public Management*. Ashgate Publishing.
- Crawford, G. (2009). 'Making Democracy a Reality'? The Politics of Decentralisation and the Limits to Local Democracy in Ghana. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 27, 57-83. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02589000802576699>
- Crook, R. C. (1994). Four Years of the Ghana District Assemblies in Operation: Decentralization, Democratization and Administrative Performance. *Public Administration and Development*, 14, 339-364. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pad.4230140402>

- Crook, R. C., & Manor, J. (1998). *Democracy and Decentralisation in South Asia and West Africa: Participation, Accountability and Performance*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9780511607899>
- de-Graft Aikins, A. (2016). Health Policy and Systems Research in Ghana: A Preliminary Review of the Evidence. In E. Bortei-Doku Aryeetey, B. Sackey, & S. Afranie (Eds.), *Contemporary Social Policy Issues in Ghana*. Sub Saharan Publishers.
- Dzando, G., Salifu, S., Donyi, A. B., Akpeke, H., Kumah, A., Dordunu, R. et al. (2022). Healthcare in Ghana Amidst the Coronavirus Pandemic: A Narrative Literature Review. *Journal of Public Health Research, 11*, 34-38. <https://doi.org/10.4081/jphr.2021.2448>
- Frempong, A. K. D. (2019). Change and Continuity in Ghana's Electoral Politics (1951-2016). In J. R. A. Ayee et al., (Eds.), *Politics, Governance, and Development in Ghana* (pp. 259-280). Lexington Books. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781978722811.ch-013>
- Grindle, M. S. (2010). *Good Governance: The Inflation of an Idea*. CID Working Paper No. 202. John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.
- Gyimah-Boadi, E. (2009). Another Step Forward for Ghana. *Journal of Democracy, 20*, 138-152. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.0.0065>
- Gyimah-Boadi, E. (2015). Africa's Waning Democratic Commitment. *Journal of Democracy, 26*, 101-113. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2015.0000>
- Hood, C. (1991). A Public Management for All Seasons? *Public Administration, 69*, 3-19. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9299.1991.tb00779.x>
- Hutchful, E. (1997). Military Policy and Reform in Ghana. *The Journal of Modern African Studies, 35*, 251-278. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022278x97002450>
- Hutchful, E. (2002). *Ghana's Adjustment Experience: The Paradox of Reform*. United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.
- Institute for Security Studies (ISS) (2018). *Political Vigilantism Threatens Stability in Ghana*. ISS Today.
- Institute for Security Studies (ISS) (2025). *Ghana's Road to Rebuilding Public Trust Starts with Security Reforms*. ISS Today.
- Khan, M. H. (2010). *Political Settlements and the Governance of Growth Enhancing Institutions*. SOAS Working Paper, University of London.
- Kumah, R. (2022). Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining Formalization Challenges in Ghana: Explaining Grassroots Perspectives. *Resources Policy, 79*, Article ID: 102978. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resourpol.2022.102978>
- Larbi, G. A. (2006). Applying the New Public Management in Developing Countries. In Y. Bangura, & G. A. Larbi (Eds.), *Public Sector Reform in Developing Countries: Capacity Challenges to Improve Services* (pp. 33-57). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lindberg, S. I. (2010). What Accountability Pressures Do MPs in Africa Face and How Do They Respond? Evidence from Ghana. *The Journal of Modern African Studies, 48*, 117-142. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022278x09990243>
- Mamdani, M. (2018). *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton University Press.
- Mbembe, A. (2001). *On the Postcolony*. University of California Press.
- Mkandawire, T. (2009). *Institutional Monocropping and Monotasking in Africa*. UN-RISD Programme Papers on Democracy, Governance and Well-Being.
- Oduro, F., Awal, M., & Ashon, M. A. (2014). *A Dynamic Mapping of the Political Settlement in Ghana*. ESID Working Paper No. 28, Effective States and Inclusive Development Research Centre, University of Manchester.

- Ohemeng, F. L. K., & Ayee, J. R. A. (2016). The 'New Approach' to Public Sector Reforms in Ghana: A Case of Politics as Usual or a Genuine Attempt at Reform? *Development Policy Review*, 34, 277-300. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dpr.12150>
- Paris, R. (2001). Human Security: Paradigm Shift or Hot Air? *International Security*, 26, 87-102. <https://doi.org/10.1162/016228801753191141>
- Pierson, P. (2004). *Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis*. Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400841080>
- Pitcher, A., Moran, M. H., & Johnston, M. (2009). Rethinking Patrimonialism and Neopatrimonialism in Africa. *African Studies Review*, 52, 125-156. <https://doi.org/10.1353/arw.0.0163>
- Pollitt, C., & Bouckaert, G. (2017). *Public Management Reform: A Comparative Analysis-Into the Age of Austerity* (4th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Republic of Ghana (2010). *Medium Term Agriculture Sector Investment Plan (META-SIP), 2011-2015*. Ministry of Food and Agriculture.
- Republic of Ghana (2015). *Medium Term Agriculture Sector Investment Plan (META-SIP) II, 2014-2017*. Ministry of Food and Agriculture.
- Republic of Ghana (2018). *National Public Sector Reform Strategy (2018-2023)*. Public Services Commission. <https://psc.gov.gh/public-sector-reform-for-results-project-psrrp/>
- Tankebe, J. (2010). Public Confidence in the Police: Testing the Effects of Public Experiences of Police Corruption in Ghana. *British Journal of Criminology*, 50, 296-319. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azq001>
- Thelen, K. (1999). Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2, 369-404. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.2.1.369>
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (1994). *Human Development Report 1994*. Oxford University Press.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2022). *Human Development Report 2021-2022: Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives-Shaping our Future in a Transforming World*. UNDP.
- United Nations Development Programme Ghana (UNDP Ghana) (2022). *Country Programme Document 2023-2027*. UNDP Ghana.
- World Bank (1994). *Adjustment in Africa: Reforms, Results, and the Road Ahead*. World Bank.
- World Bank (1997). *World Development Report 1997: The State in a Changing World*. World Bank.
- World Bank (2017). *Fiscal Consolidation to Accelerate Growth and Support Inclusive Development: Ghana Public Expenditure Review*. World Bank.
- World Bank (2018). *3rd Ghana Economic Update: Agriculture as an Engine of Growth and Jobs Creation*. World Bank.
- World Bank (2021). *Ghana Country Economic Memorandum: Ghana Rising—Accelerating Economic Transformation and Creating Jobs*. World Bank.
- World Bank (2022). *Ghana Digital Acceleration Project (P176126)*. World Bank.
- World Justice Project (2023). *Rule of Law Index 2023: Ghana*. World Justice Project. <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/country/2023/Ghana>
- Young, C. (1994). *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective*. Yale University Press.