



Violence Without Victory In Sub-Sahara Africa: A Muse Of Ghana's Election 2020

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Abstract

The aftermath of Ghana's election 2020 witnessed series of protests mainly from supporters of the biggest opposition party (the NDC) instigated by party officialdom in various capacities across the country. The National Democratic Congress – the main opposition political party - described the outcome of the election of which they were declared losers by the Electoral Commission of Ghana as 'flawed' and 'fictionalised' in favour of the incumbent New Patriotic Party. This paper is underpinned by the theories of electoral violence and thus, it seeks to interrogate the alleged election fraud propagated by the Presidential candidate of the National Democratic Congress. It also interrogates why the party *ab initio* chose the pub-crawled, vitriol, viaduct and obstreperous street protests in spite of its notification of a legal challenge of the results at Ghana's apex court? The paper argues that, the spontaneous street protests, the concomitant public nuisance and violent behaviour of party apparatchik's angst Ghanaians and threatened the basic fundamentals of national security.

Keywords: Conflict, Election fraud, Reactive protests, Spontaneous protests, Voting booth, Law.

1. Introduction

Election is a key feature of democracy (Braimah & Forson, 2023). It is a means by which citizens through the voting booth, select their preferred candidate(s) to steer the affairs of a polis for a period of time. Election legitimises governments and it is supposed to be peaceful democratic gymnastics to either maintain or change a government. It is a platform for the voiceless masses in society to participate in governance, ensure equal participation and free competition. This democratic exercise superficially, appears simple, peaceful and without any shred of intimidation or attempt to subvert the will of the people. However, elections around the world – particularly in much of Africa - have become the ethoxyethane for destruction of societies. According to Burchard (2015: 50; cited in Kovacs & Bjarnesen, 2018), "more than half of Africa's states, 55 per cent, have experienced electoral violence in the post-Cold War period ..." Some countries in Africa that already paid the bitter price of election-induced crisis or violence include Cameroun, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Mali, Niger, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Togo, Kenya, Madagascar, South Sudan, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Rwanda, Central African Republic, Senegal, Uganda and Zimbabwe (Straus & Taylor, 2012).

Ghana's political stability is well documented in a continent perceived as the 'theatre of war' by international media headlines. Ghana is described in many cycles as the oasis of peace and the beacon of democracy in Africa. This is because, the country is largely peaceful in the midst of a turbulent continent since the 1990s. While disagreements and neanderthal thinking about election outcomes have turned bloody in neighbouring African states, Ghana, have successfully conducted eight democratic elections including election 2020. Since 1993, democratic elections have either maintained an incumbent government or replaced same through peaceful transfer

of executive power from one political administration to another. In times of election disputes, leadership of political parties will customarily, resort to the law court to challenge election results (e.g., 2012, 2004 and 2020). The major election petition since 1992 was in 2012. The petition was initiated by NPP after several protests of alleged election fraud from party supporters. The petition challenged the validity of presidential results as declared by then Chairman of the Electoral Commission. It took eight months for the apex Court to determine the import of the petition. At the end of the hearing, the outcome of the hearing was that the 2012 presidential candidate of NDC (John Dramani Mahama) was validly elected and the petition was subsequently dismissed. It is therefore incomprehensible to explain the intransigence and the posture of NDC to head to the law court to seek redress (if evidence exist to support its claim of electoral fraud) instead of embarking on protests calculated to disturb public peace. The thrust of this paper is to interrogate the veracity or otherwise of the NDC's claim of victory and the efficacy of the behemoth street protests in achieving electoral victory.

By focusing on Ghana, the study seeks to answer two important questions regarding Ghana's election: (1) how was Ghana's election 2020 rigged? and, (2) to what extent do violent street protests guarantee electoral victory? Specifically, the research aims to understand the motive behind the pre and post electoral violence that characterises elections in Ghana. In this way, the research contributes towards bridging the gap on the dynamics and operations of political parties using vigilante groups and massing at polarised centres to galvanise support which ends in violence. There are divergent views on what the post electoral demonstration in Ghana sought to achieve. The present paper argues that, the spontaneous street protests, the concomitant public nuisance and violent behaviour of party apparatchik's angst Ghanaians and threatened the basic fundamentals of national security. Yet, Owusu Kyei and Berckmoes (2021) have also argued that, the post electoral violence witnessed was to deepen the ideals of Ghana's democracy and to set precedent for posterity and not necessarily to plunge the country into a state of anarchy.

The rest of the paper is organised as follows: section one is the background of the study which spells out the motivation for the study. Section two focuses on the theories of electoral violence. The section explores pre and post electoral violence theories and the motive behind. The method and design of the research is captured in section three. Section four is the analysis and discussion of the results. Section five concludes with practical implications.

2. Theories of Electoral Violence

In this section, the study explores theories of electoral violence from three main perspectives: (1) before election is conducted, (2) during the election itself and (3) aftermath of the election. It is worth noting that this electoral violence is perpetuated to challenge the prevailing power structures.

In every election, different actors with diverse motives resort to violent strategies or illicit means at different stages of the electoral process (Matanock and Staniland, 2018). Political parties and candidates prior to the election day work with mafias, militias, gangs, and vigilante groups as a means to intimidate or cause violence to gain an electoral advantage (Owusu Kyei and Berckmoes, 2021; De Luca and De Feo, 2017; Acemoglu et al, 2013).

On the day of election, insurgent groups that are alien to the democratic process may increase their attacks to denigrate and cast a snare on the legitimacy and integrity of the entire electoral process (Condra et al. 2017). The aftermath of the electoral process is characterised by a situation where losing parties challenge election results and coordinate protests or rebellion which can be quashed by the government (Hafner-Burton et al. 2016; Bhasin and Gandhi, 2013; Fearon, 2011).

Sterck (2021), proposed a theoretical model of pre-electoral violence that extends the pioneering model of Skaperdas and Grofman (1995) and Collier and Vicente (2012) by focusing on the link between violence and the distribution of voters and violent supporters measured by fractionalisation and polarisation benchmarks (Esteban et al. 2012). The model stipulates that electoral violence is most likely when certain conditions are jointly satisfied: (1) tight political

competition with large number of violent supporters involved, with the expectation that violent parties will win if violent move is successful, and (2) parties engage in violence only if the likelihood of success is sufficiently high. The study walks through the framework espoused by these researchers to understand the two questions posed in the build-up of the study.

3. Material and Method

This is qualitative research that employs grounded theory as an approach to inquiry. According to Creswell (2013), grounded theory focus is to go beyond the act of describing phenomenon in its quest of providing a unified theoretical explanation (see Corbin & Straus, 2007). One of the dominants defining features of grounded theory is its ability to allow researchers to focus on a process or an action that has distinct steps or phases over time and in the end develop a theory of this process or action (Creswell, 2013: p85). The primary form of data collection is interview. Data for this study was largely derived from protesters in six (6) administrative regions of Ghana where the NDC organised street protests against the election results as declared by the Electoral Commission. These regions comprised three (3) from Northern Ghana – Upper East, Upper West and Savannah regions. The other three regions were selected from Southern Ghana. It included Ashanti, Volta and Central regions. The target population were protesters of NDC in the streets across Ghana. In selecting participants for this study, the researcher used *purposeful sampling* technique. This approach gives the researcher the opportunity to select respondents likely to give in-depth or valuable information capable of addressing the substance of the research (Patton, 1990; Tracy, 2013). Twenty-five (25) participants were selected from each region. Thus, a total of 150 respondents were selected for the study. This comprised 55 females and 95 males respectively. The skewed representation of the sexes was contingent on the availability, knowledge and willingness to participate in the study. Most females shy away from participating in the study for fear of name-calling and victimization; while others cited personal security concerns as basis for nonparticipation.

Interviews were unstructured and took place at the side-lines of the National Democratic Congress's demonstrations. The rationale was to catch the near-live situation of the nation-wide protests against the election 2020 results outcome. Interview sessions took a minimum of 10 minutes to a maximum of 20 minutes after the end of each protest. Responses were tape-recorded and transcribed in the exact words expressed by participants with informed consent of participants – this implies, giving space and time for participants to comprehend the nature of research undertaken, and to voluntarily or in their own freewill, participate or quit in the research. In offering explanation to the construct of informed consent, Homan (1991) was of the view that it is an action is seen to be autonomous, and may be the outcome of a carefully planned phenomenon with a certain intent without recourse to controlling influences that may emerge either through force or manipulation from psychiatric disorders or others. In this perspective, participants were given unfettered freedom without control. The purpose was to enable participants express their thought based on predetermined research questions. This gave the research team (i.e., Researcher and Research Assistants) the flexibility to adjust to the particularities and idiosyncrasies of each participant's understanding of the phenomenon under study (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; Park & Sung, 2013). This dimension of information was complemented by secondary data gleaned from monographs, journal articles, newspaper publications and field notes. Content analysis was adopted to make meaning out of participants' perceptions through interpretation of data by means of the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

4. Compilation of a New Voter's Register Contention: The Politics and the Facts

4.1. New Patriotic Party (NPP) and its Demand for New Voter's Register Prior to Election 2016

The call for the replacement of Ghana's voters' register gained momentum prior to the 2016 presidential and parliamentary elections. It was acknowledged by various stakeholders including the Electoral Commission of Ghana, political parties, academics, the media and civil society organisations (CSOs) to the effect that, the voter's register was over bloated and contained names of minors or voters under aged, the dead and citizens from neighbouring states - Togo, Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Benin, Niger and Mali among others. The NDC is normally suspected by their political opponents (i.e., the New Patriotic Party) of being the masterminds of facilitating the registration of 'foreigners' on Ghana's electoral register. This accusation is predicated in the

electoral gains the NDC usually garner along the national borders of Ghana. The NDC also, suspects the NPP of being the masterminds of facilitating registration of minors on the electoral register. The suspicion jigsaw of the two major political parties is a tacit admission that, the electoral register was not credible enough.

The credibility conundrum of the electoral register necessitated the call for its replacement by the New Patriotic Party (then in opposition) prior to election 2016. The National Democratic Congress (then in government) and the Electoral Commission (EC) vehemently resisted the demands of the NPP for a new voter's register. This led to series of violent protests orchestrated by "Let My Vote Count", a pressure group affiliated to the NPP. The violent protests targeted at the Electoral Commission and the then NDC government for a new voter's register never materialised. Instead, many of the protesters went home with severe injuries resulting a few recorded deaths due to some violent skirmishes between the police and protesters affiliated to the New Patriotic Party. The NPP, having failed to get the EC and the NDC government to compile a new register prior to election 2016, they nevertheless, contested and won election 2016 with the perceived 'flawed' voter's register. The NPP defeated the NDC (then in government) with over one million vote difference. However, the electoral victory of the NPP in 2016 did not accentuate its stance to have a new voter's register for future credibility purposes. Hence, the new government in spite of fierce resistance from the NDC and other petit political parties, made resources available to the Electoral Commission to compile a new voter's register for Election 2020.

4.2. National Democratic Congress (NDC) and its Resistance to New Voter's Register for Election 2020.

The National Democratic Congress is undoubtedly the largest opposition political party in Ghana. Prior to December 7, 2020 election, the party teamed up with other petit political parties to resist (via street demonstrations) the Electoral Commission from compiling a new voter's register for the 2020 election. The parties cited time and space as basis for its resistance. The EC's unshaken resolved to compile a new register for December 7, 2020 election sent NDC leadership and supporters onto the street to register its displeasure. According to the protestors, the Electoral Commission's (EC) decision to compile a new register was a mere decoy calculated to disenfranchise many Ghanaians and particularly, those living along the national borders of the Republic of Ghana. The deployment of military personnel to enforce the border closures necessitated by COVID-19 spikes according to the government, further heightened the suspicion of NDC that, government was scheming with the Electoral Commission to disenfranchise its support-base. The NDC normally draw massive electoral support from border towns since the birth of Ghana's Fourth Republic in 1992. Hence, it is understandable that any decision or policy that emanates from any quarter that seeks to vary the status quo (i.e., compilation of a new register in the midst of border closures, deployment of military officers to check influx of people crossing into the country), explains the NDC's sustained protests prior to the start of the compilation of the new voter's register. Expectantly, the leadership and supporters of the NDC had threatened to unleash mayhem as well as reject the outcome of the December 7, 2020, election result if it is premised on a 'flawed' new register. In practice, the leadership meant that, the party will reject the result if it does not go in their way. This posture by the leadership of the NDC anaesthetised its supporters in hold for a possible postelection violent protest. It was therefore not surprising, when party leadership instigated party supporters to protest having lost the 2020 presidential election. The protest went violent as they devoured car tires on streets, and vowed unending protests until the election result is reversed and the NDC presidential candidate declared the winner.

4.3: The Politics and the Reality

The contention of whether to have a new voter's register or not, has been 'hotly' and 'bitterly' contested since 2000. The NPP has been the proponents of compilation of a new voter's register, while the NDC are the opponents. Hence, the accusation and counter accusation of a 'register bloat' between the two main political parties (i.e., the NPP and NDC), resurrects whenever it is an election year. This conundrum has been widely politicised and polarized along party lines (Braithwaite, 2020). The polarization is not limited to the political realm. It permeates all facets of life in Ghana. Depending on the political or ideological spectacle of academics, media outlets,

some influential religious personalities, pressure groups, supporters of political parties, and civil society organizations; there is an inverse increase in extreme debates in favour, or disposition of compilation of a new voter's register. These debates are normally premised on NPP and NDC standpoints. Regrettably, there is growing distrust of citizens for political parties and political leadership in government. The search for accurate information (i.e., truth and honesty in governance) from political leadership by the citizenry, has become a doggy bag – pretence in governance and extreme political propaganda among others. The polarization of a 'new voter's register' further deprives citizens' of any apolitical and intellectual reasoning on the subject matter without being tagged as either for, or against one political party.

However, major stakeholders including the Electoral Commission, political parties, civil society organisations (Examples include, Centre for Democratic Development (CDD), Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG), Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) chiefs, and religious groups, have all in fact, unanimously agreed that, the voters' register used for 2012 and 2016 elections was over bloated and contained illegible voters. For, the register predominantly contained within it, dead compatriots of several years, minors or persons under voting age and 'foreigners' from neighbouring states. The complex nature of 'over bloated register' saga in Ghana can be explored thematically into a three-fold schema.

First, accusing fingers are usually pointed at the NPP by the National Democratic Congress and its adjuncts whenever the question of minors on the voter's register is mentioned. While some political activists may be ingrained in registering 'minors' and 'foreigners' on a voter's register, there is also the complicity of parents and community members who vouch for minors so-called with fictitious and other doubtful documentation as evidence to have them registered. But technical speaking, Ghana has a population segment dotted around the administrative regions whose body structure and facial outlook is enough to categorise them as 'minors'. But in reality, genetics and other environmental factors may be the major causative agents of stunted growth in many a people in Ghana. Many of these persons are found in many instances, above the voting age of 18. Second, the mere mention of 'foreigners' on the voter's register, the NDC is normally accused by the NPP and its adjuncts of being the masterminds of roping in citizens from neighbouring states to register and vote for the party during elections. However, the problem is embedded in colonial construct of balkanisation of Africa into individual states or units without due regard to compartment of ethnic identity or groups, cultures, the 'power' of self-actualization and determination. Hence, some ethnic groups are found in a number of neighbouring African states; thus, making it irreconcilable to pigeonhole ethnic groups into one particular state. It is therefore irrefutable to have a flawless voter's register in Ghana – at least there will always be some incidences of perceived 'foreigners' on the register. This irredentism is prevalent in the African continent, and a source of instability and mutual mistrust among the diverse population within states. Even though the arbitrary division of territories by the colonialists did not produce a fully-fledged interstate war in the post-independence period, internal instability has produced civil wars that have caused between half a million and million deaths (Sartre, 2014). Finally, in the midst of these complexities, the Electoral Commission of Ghana becomes the 'political football' being tossed among political parties. The Commission is blamed by political parties for inclusion of minors and 'foreigners' on the voters' register.

It is worth noting that, perceptions of a flawed electoral register and processes have the potential to wreck national security. Admittedly, there can never be a flawless voting register. However, there must be consensus building among political parties and other stakeholders to chart a new path on the question of having a 'credible' voter's register acceptable to key players. Again, the questions of having illegible voters on a register, infiltration of noncitizens, and the irredenta in Africa will continue to threaten stability of states until citizens resolve never to condone with 'foreigners' so-called from Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Niger, Mali, Togo and minors among others, to be on a national voter's register for monetary or material reward from some politicians and their agents to satisfy their parochial interest. Prosecution and severe punishment of individuals found to have facilitated the registration of minors and other nationals will reduce the unpatriotic and subversion's behaviours to the barest minimum.

5. Backwash of Election 2020: From Street Protests to Trilateral Legal Tussles

The post-election violence or the chaotic street protests perpetuated by some supporters of the NDC around the country has its historical antecedent from the political jigsaw and contention of 'compilation' and 'no compilation' of new voter's register for the December 2020 election. The rocky stand taken by the Electoral Commission of Ghana to compile a new register in spite of the unbridled protests from some political parties before the 2020 election, presaged the speculation that, the EC planned to rig the election in favour of the incumbent party in government. The financial support from government to the EC to undertake the compilation of a new register in the midst of COVID-19 spike, further raised eye brows among some political parties and civil society organisations. As expected in Ghanaian politics, the Electoral Commission was accused of being in 'bed' with government to rig 2020 election for the incumbent. The main opposition political party (the NDC) sought to place an injunction on the EC from the Supreme Court of Ghana – the purpose was to halt the compilation of a new voter's register for 2020 election. The lawsuit was subsequently dismissed paving way for the EC to embark on the compilation of a new register for the 2020 election. The NDC under that circumstance, had no choice but to urge its supporters to actively participate fully in the registration exercise. For, the voter's register is the main vehicle to capturing the levers of government. The party nevertheless, signalled its unpreparedness (by inference through press briefings) to accept the results if the outcome of the election did not go in its favour.

Thus, the declaration of the 2020 Presidential election outcome in favour of Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo- Addo and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) after polls by the Chairperson of the Electoral Commission, infuriated the National Democratic Congress (NDC). The party described the outcome as "fictionalised" and "travesty of justice" in decelerating the NDC as losers. In this perspective, the NDC utterly rejected the verdict of the EC. The party's position was re-echoed by the 2020 NDC presidential candidate who hinted among others in the Ghanaian Times (2020; p.11) that:

".....as has been announced by our party, the National Democratic Congress; we are unable to accept the outcome of the election as declared by Electoral Commission Chairperson ... those results are flawed and discredited".

It is understandable why a political party will customarily, reject election results that is not in its favour. This scenario dominates Ghana's democracy since the return to constitutional rule in 1993. The nature of politics in Ghana makes it extremely difficult for either of the two key political parties (i.e., the NPP and the NDC) that alternated executive power since 1992, to readily accept defeat after polls. For instance, 'the winner takes all' politics make the stakes of elections too high because of the instrumental view of politics. This threatens the stability, cohesion and consolidation of democracy in the country. The cost of electoral defeat means, debt crisis at the stairs of the losing party to pay back loans it may have contracted from individuals and financial institutions with its devastating consequences. A loss at the polls further means another few years out in the cold, another few years of struggle for survival, recognition and access to state resources (Christensen & Utas, 2016).

The series of postelection violent protests against the declaration of the 2020 presidential result, marred by various forms of violence exclusively by overzealous party supporters dents the accolade of Ghana as the oasis of peace in turbulent West Africa. City and far-flung supporters of the NDC demanded one main issue from the EC as a *sin quo non* to halt the behemoth protests - the reversal of the election outcome by the EC, and to declare the 2020 presidential candidate (i.e., John Dramani Mahama) as the 'winner' of the polls. It is unclear how the supporters of the NDC conceived the idealisation of election fraud without any grounded and compelling evidence to back their claim. Violent protests is often derided because of its potential to escalate and attract other interests group to join the fray. This, in many instances in Africa (e.g., Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, The Gambia, Gabon, Togo etc) winkled out governments or wreck national cohesion and stability. In the unique case of Ghana, the National Peace Council (NPC), National House Chiefs (NHC), religious organizations, civil society organizations, ordinary citizens, and student associations appealed to the leadership of the NDC

to call their supporters to order by halting all violent protests and resort to the law court with their evidence.

5.1. Election 2020 and Trilateral Legalities

The decision of the 2020 Presidential candidate of the National Democratic Congress to challenge the outcome of 2020 results at the Supreme Court was a sigh of relief to many a people in Ghana. For any price in the eye of the Ghanaian public, legal suit is preferred to violent demonstrations with its political, economic as well as national security implications. The purported electoral fraud and the claim of victory by the NDC, were two key areas Ghanaians expected to pass the litmus test at the law court. Prior to the legal suit, the NDC had announced that, it undertook a thorough bibliotics of electoral materials and figures that showed its presidential candidate won the 2020 elections root and branch (i.e., it won both presidential and parliamentary elections). The burden of proof was therefore on the Petitioner to counter the figures churned out by the Chairperson of the Electoral Commission that declared Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo as validly elected for the December 7, 2020 presidential election.

The right to petition the Supreme Court to challenge the validity of an elected president (person) is rooted in the 1992 Constitution of Ghana (i.e., in article 64, clause 1) and C.I. 74 and 99 respectively of the rules of the apex court of Ghana (i.e., Rule 68A).

Article 64, clause 1 provide that:

"The validity of the election of the President may be challenged only by a citizen of Ghana who may present a petition for the purpose to the Supreme Court within twenty-one days after the declaration of the result of election in respect of which the petition is presented".

The apex court rule (i.e., Rule 68A) of writ No. 11/05/2021:4 had stated that:

"...despite rule 45(4), the parties in a petition shall be (a) the petitioner as specified in article 64 (1) of the Constitution, and (b) the person declared elected as President and the Electoral Commission who together shall be the respondents".

It is in the light of the above provisions that the Petitioner (herein refer to as John Dramani Mahama), headed to the apex Court of Ghana to seek reliefs and orders against the Electoral Commission of Ghana (herein refers to as 1st Respondent) and the Presidential Candidate of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) as the 2nd Respondent. The reliefs were in the nature of three (3) declarations and three (3) orders (Supreme Court Document, 2021). The reliefs sought were:

- a. A declaration that Mrs. Jean Adukwei Mensa, Chairperson of 1st Respondent and the Returning Officer for the Presidential Elections held on 7th December 2020, was in breach of Article 63(3) of the 1992 Constitution in the declaration she made on 9th December 2020 in respect of the Presidential Election that was held on 7th December 2020.
- b. A declaration that, based on the data contained in the declaration made ... "Chairperson of 1st Respondent and the Returning Officer for the Presidential Election held on 7th December 2020, no candidate satisfied the requirement of article 63(3) of the 1992 Constitution to be declared President- elect".
- c. A declaration that the purported declaration made on 9th December 2020 of the results of the Presidential Election ..." Chairperson of 1st Respondent and the Returning Officer for the Presidential held on 7th December 2020 is unconstitutional null and void and of no effect whatsoever".
- d. An order annulling the Declaration of President-Elect Instrument, 2020 (C.I.135) dated 9th December 2020, issued under the hand of ... "Chairperson of 1st Respondent and Returning Officer for the Presidential Election held on 7th December 2020 and gazetted on 10th December, 2020".

- e. An injunction to restrain the Presidential candidate of the NPP who also doubles as the incumbent from holding himself as the President-elect;
- f. An order directing the electoral commission to reorganise another election based on the petition from the NDC presidential candidate.

An order and a declaration sought (i.e., 'b' and 'f') by the Petitioner stunned party supporters and many a people in Ghana. The loudness of the NDC to the effect that, its audited electoral materials (popularly known as 'pink sheets') revealed that, the NDC 2020 presidential candidate won the election was conspicuously missing in the petition. The Petitioner could not also present credible data to expose vote padding by 1st Respondent (the Electoral Commission) in favour of the incumbent. The flurry of protesters manifested when they demanded the National Executive of the NDC to present their evidence so-called before the apex court. A daunting task it was to prove any wrong doing of the 1st and 2nd Respondents by the legal team of the Petitioner. In the end, the Supreme Court had no grounded reason(s) to order the electoral commission to reorganise another election between the parties involved as earlier articulated the various reliefs presented.

A critical analysis of the Petitioner's reliefs showed that, the Petitioner and NDC were fully aware they never won the 2020 presidential and parliamentary elections. In their own writ, one of the reliefs state inter alia, "... no candidate satisfied the requirement of article 63(3) of the 1992 Constitution to be declared President- elect;" It is clear that the leadership of the NDC radicalised its supporters to violently protest through the law of propaganda reminiscent of Nazi Goebbels that says, "repeat a lie often enough and it becomes the truth". The leadership of the NDC were heard loud, clear and long enough on various media platforms where they drummed with excessive vigour, their averment of election fraud. This did not only incite more protests from their supporters, but its propaganda machinery confused many a people including some core supporters of the NPP – that NDC's collation results will overturn Electoral Commission's declared results. It also sent many people wondering: Why the NDC encouraged its supporters to resort to massive violent protests if indeed it has evidence that it won the election? It is unclear and mind-boggling, how postelection violent protest in the streets could alter the outcome of a major electoral process and event by the entity responsible for it organisation? The eudemonism of the postelection protest was to say the least, an exercise in futility – i.e., violence without victory.

6. Results and Discussion

Ghana's enviable record as the oasis of peace in turbulent West Africa stand to relapse until players and other stakeholders in election management work to click off postelection violent behaviour orchestrated by leaders of losing political parties. In Ghana, two main political parties (i.e., New Patriotic Party and National Democratic Congress) pose's security threat to the nation. Every election year is clouded with fear, panic, harassment, intimidation, violence, impunity, retribution of cycles of revenge between rival supporters of political parties at the local level, and wanton destruction of property of political opponents (Huglund, 2009). These issues have the potential to plunge a state into chaos, crisis and civil war. Thematically, responses from participants based on the survey, are teased out and presented in line with the research questions of the study.

How was Ghana's election 2020 rigged?

This research question drew excitement from respondents. The responses were categorized into a three-fold schema. First, responses from participants were anchored on the administrative mistakes and subsequent amendment of declared figures by the Chairperson of the Electoral Commission as an alibi for rigging. Second, some participants re-echoed party leadership's position that, the EC rigged the election; and finally, the Chairperson is the 'family' member of the President. Hence, her appointment as the EC Chairperson to rig 2020 election for the NPP. According to participants:

"The 2020 election was rigged for the NPP. They didn't win. The NDC has been cheated. There was vote padding and that is why the EC continue to change figures of the presidential results without any prior consultation with the NDC. One election, two or three declarations or figures?"

We will continue to protest until John Mahama is declared president-elect. No justice, no peace. The Chairperson of the Electoral Commission must do the needful to keep the peace.

It is obvious the EC manipulated the figures to favour the incumbent government. The leadership of our party (NDC) and supporters will resist the Chairperson of the EC. We have audited and collated the pink sheets. The conclusion is that, the NDC won the 2020 presidential and parliamentary elections. Do you think national executives of the NDC will lie to its members that we won? We won't go to court. The manipulated results must be corrected by the EC to reflect the will of the people. We will continue the protests. The NPP must concede defeat and hand over political power to the NDC. That is the only way we (NDC) will understand.

We knew Mrs. Charlotte Osei (the former Chairperson of EC) was dismissed from office to pave way for a family member of the president, Mrs. Jean Mensa to be appointed. The calculation to rig 2020 election machinery started in 2017 upon NPP assumption of political power. The posture and actions of the EC Chair and her deputies has been anti-NDC. They sung same song with the NPP ... new voter's register at the peak of coronavirus, purchase of new verification machines against expert advice from civil society organisations, all points to election rigging machinery put in motion by the NPP and the EC. But we assure you, this daylight robbery wouldn't stand. We will resist it with the last drop of our blood. This is not Kwame Nkrumah Ghana. The NPP wants to turn the country into a war zone. We will join them if they don't handover peacefully to the NDC".

Analysis of the various responses showed that, the administrative mistake in figures declared by the Electoral Commission influenced party executive and supporters alike to attribute criminality to the EC and by extension, the government. Critical examination of the corrected figures made by the EC revealed that, it did not affect the outcome of the presidential results or change substantially to warrant a re-run. In furtherance, NDC supporters embarked on series of protests across the country mainly due to utterances of national executives of their party (NDC) that they won the 2020 elections. Without concrete evidence, supporters besieged the offices of the Electoral Commission armed with the information from political leadership. This is a fallacy of appeal to authority. Finally, participants could not establish how 'family' relation of the President with the Chairperson of the EC influenced the election outcome. The present electoral structure in Ghana makes it practically impossible for a Chairperson of EC to unilaterally rig an election. The effective participation or monitoring of domestic observers and the usual activism of Ghanaian media on elections over the years, is a guarantee against possible rigging of elections. The results for both presidential and parliamentary are declared at the various polling stations throughout the country. The media becomes the watchdog of figures having armed themselves with information from various constituencies - most media outlets deploy reporters throughout the country on voting day to collate figures.

To what extent do violent street protests guarantee electoral victory?

In response to the above question posed to the participants, they contend that the violence protest was intended to drum home two main issues. First, to mount excessive pressure on the Chairperson of the Electoral Commission to annul the results declared in favour of the NPP, and instead, declare the NDC presidential candidate for 2020 election as the president-elect. Second, to court the attention of international community to call the EC to order. Some responses from participants among others, included the following:

"The protest is the strongest signal to the EC that, NDC wouldn't allow itself to be stripped with the power the people of Ghana bestowed on them. We will go out there to demonstrate violently if the presidential results is not changed in favour of John Mahama. The burning of tyres during our protests is a child's play. We will escalate the burning of tyres to kidnapping of state officials if the results is not changed in favour of our candidate. Violence is key if the NPP and the EC are adamant in reversing what has been stolen. The courts wouldn't give NDC fair hearing.

Violence is the way out for the NDC. There is no avenue for dialogue. The National Peace Council cannot be trusted. The Peace Council must tell the EC to do the right thing - declare John Mahama as the president-elect to reflect the confidence reposed in him by the people of Ghana.

The EC manipulated the figures to suit their political mentor. John Mahama will not concede defeat to anyone because he won the election. We will face state security if they dare use force to disperse us on the streets. Peace thrives in society where there is justice. Since the EC did not want justice, violence is the only way out. We will invade the offices of the EC throughout the country to demand justice.

Violence can lead to victory. If we (NDC) continue to escalate the violence, either the EC will declare Mahama as the president-elect or cancel the December 7, 2020 elections. If this happen, is it not victory for the NDC? We will not leave the streets. Ghanaians are hypocrites. Why are they silent on the stolen election? Why are Ghanaians telling the NDC to go to court? The NPP did same. Have you forgotten?"

The 2020 postelection protests did not augur well for Ghana. In democracies across the globe, violence has no place in governance. Election dispute are required to be resolved via institutions of state – the judiciary and its adjuncts in particular. Protest or violence by supporters of a particular party to declare its presidential candidate as a winner in electoral competition is unheard-of. Violence is normally deplored by states, groups and individuals to settle primordial scores or differences through belligerents or combatants in a war-like situation with a perceived foe. Election is a legitimizing process of choosing state officials. It is supposed to promote participation in the decision-making process in a polity. In many instances, election violence is used as a means to suppress voter turnout. The aim is to intimidate voters for political advantage or to ensure electoral victory. However, most of these election-induced violence goes without the desired electoral victory.

7. Conclusion

Postelection protest is a cesspool of Ghanaian politics – it is a routine politics of protests by losing political parties after presidential and parliamentary elections. The voter's register is always in contention for political parties since 1992. In Ghana, the two major political parties have had the cause to reject the outcome of election results whenever the declared results by the Electoral Commission is unfavourable. The rejection of election outcome is usually accompanied by violent behaviour of losing party supporters, wicked voice snarls, harassment of political opponents, and coercive intimidation from both party militia and state security apparatuses. The 2020 postelection protests were however, aggravated to the level that posed extreme security threat to the nation – obstructed law-abiding citizens from going about their normal duties, devouring tyres on major streets around the country, fanned the sensibility of party supporters to join the protests and threatened security personnel among others. The inflammatory speeches by political leadership in the aftermath of the 2020 election also led to an irascible response or violent protests by supporters of the NDC across the frontiers of Ghana. These findings dovetail the perspectives shed by different researchers on the theories of electoral violence in the literature (see Owusu Kyei and Berckmoes, 2021; Condra et al. 2018; De Luca and De Feo, 2017; Acemoglu et al, 2013).

Threats associated with election violence has immense consequences on human, social detritus and the high risks of destabilizing legitimate governments and *ifso facto*, wither democracy. But when politicians prioritize executive power over peace and state cohesion, millions of citizens suffer. Election violence does not bequeath election victory. Political parties must play according to the rules of the game – no harassment, intimidation, physical attacks on political opponents, hate speech, profiling, and learn how to accept defeat among others. Nevertheless, it is absolutely necessary for the security apparatuses in Ghana to take decisive and implementable actions to manage Ghana's postelection violent behaviours of party supporters. Besides security agencies, stakeholders in the electoral process – Electoral Commission, international observers, political leadership, civil society organisations, the media, students, indigenous rulers and citizens – must act professionally to keep the peace in Ghana.

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