

Ghana

2020 Presidential & Parliamentary
Elections Security

Report

Building Trust
while ensuring
Transparency and
Accountability
among **Stakeholders**



VOTE



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Abbreviations

AU	Africa Union
AWW	Ayawaso West Wuogon Constituency
BVD	Biometric Verification Device
CCG	Christian Council of Ghana
CDD	Center for Democratic Development -Ghana
CI	Constitutional Instrument
CODEO	Coalition of Domestic Election Observers
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
COVID-19	Corona Virus 2019
DSP	Deputy Superintendent of Police
EC	Electoral Commission of Ghana
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EMB	Election Management Body
ESTF	Election Security Taskforce
EMAM	Electoral violence Monitoring, Analysis and Mitigation
EPSAO	ECOWAS Peace and Security Architecture and Operations
GBC	Ghana Broadcasting Cooperation
GIZ	Gesellschaft fur Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GmbH	Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung
GNA	Ghana News Agency
GPCC	Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council
GPS	Ghana Police Service
IDEG	Institute for Democratic Governance
IPAC	Inter-Party Advisory Committee
IPRAN	Inter-Party Resistance Against the New Voters Register
MCE	Metropolitan Chief Executive
MMDCE	Metropolitan Municipal District Chief Executive
MP	Member of Parliament
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NPC	National Peace Council
NPP	New Patriotic Party
PVT	Parallel Vote Tabulation
WANEP	West Africa Network for Peacebuilding

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Executive Summary

The conduct of regular and periodic elections remains one of the critical features of democratic states. For many Ghanaians, elections provide them with the finest opportunity to compel their elected officials to account for their stewardship during their time in office, as well as subject their powers to proper scrutiny. The political elites see democratic elections as an opportunity for renewing their mandate to exercise legitimate political power. In this sense, elections constitute a vital bridge linking the Ghanaian voter to the political class. Democracy all over the world is generally rooted in a complex web of norms which are personified and fulfilled by a collection of institutions including the multi-party system, an independent judiciary, vibrant free press, multiplicity of civil society and a robust electoral system. A secure and resilient electoral process has been a vital national interest and one of the highest priorities for Ghana since the promulgation of the 1992 Constitution.

From what many has described as a false start in 1992, Ghana has made great strides in competitive electoral politics with eight consecutives comparatively peaceful and generally accepted elections which have led to three alternations of power. Considering that elections under the Fourth Republic began with a paltry low voter turnout of 29% in 1992, it has grown to a peak of between 70% to 80% in the later years; an indication of mass participation and an acceptance of elections as the best way to elect public officials. A number of factors have accounted for this success story in Ghana. Key among them being the respect of the rule of law, dynamic constitutional provisions, effective election management body, responsive media, vibrant civil society and consensus building among political actors. Ghana's seemingly strong institutions, open and free political space and commitment to force democracy to gain a foothold have laid the groundwork for inclusive, transparent and accountable elections. These commitments have contributed immensely towards entrenching democracy under the Fourth Republic after many years of military rule.

Despite this progress, the future of Ghana's democracy remains uncertain. Election violence in Ghana has become a four-year cycle. Election insecurity remains a veritable threat and is inimical to the survival of Ghana's democratic system. The political landscape continues to be awash with threats associated with bellicose and inflammatory rhetoric, abusive language, abuses of incumbency, "Monetisation" of the political and electoral processes, registration irregularities, politicisation of ethnic issues and vigilante and secessionist activities. Ghana's elections are often characterised by pervasive polarisation, intolerance, mistrust, suspicion, and high level of

partisanship between the two main political parties, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP). The risk of suspicion and mistrust have become potential source of electoral violence, conflict and insecurity.

COVID-19, the security situation, the challenges with compiling new voters register, and the fierce political competition, made for an extremely thrilling election environment. The 2020 election processes were historic. It pitched the incumbent Nana Akufo-Addo against his predecessor, John Mahama. For the third consecutive time, the two were contesting for a second and final term in office. And for the first time in the Ghanaian elections, one of the two leading political parties had a woman as the vice-presidential candidate. While her nomination generated a lot of hope for progress on gender equality it also opened the floodgate for vile rhetoric modelled on anti-feminism and misogyny. Likewise, the role of the youth in politics and elections has always been fundamental in the evolution of Ghana's political landscape. Their active engagement in politics has in the past engineered regime changes and other significant political events. The growing youth population coupled with lack of opportunities, state of hopelessness and discontent also intensified the sensitivity of young people in the leadup to the elections. The heightened political competition was marred by violence and irregularities from the onset following the decision by the new leadership of the Electoral Commission (EC) to compile a new voter register. Whereas the ruling NPP and some of the smaller parties fully supported the EC's position to compile and deploy a new register, the main opposition party, the NDC together with some minority parties under the umbrella of the Inter-Party Resistance Against the New Voters Register (IPRAN) as well as eighteen (18) CSOs were opposed to the idea of a new register. Their reservations were premised on the fact that the decision to compile a new register was ill-timed, costly, a waste of taxpayers' money which set the rigging machinery of the ruling party into motion. The divergent posture taken by these two leading political parties increased the political tension. The lack of consensus between the political parties, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and the Election Management Body (EMB) on the compilation of the new register, amidst a pandemic, defined elements of the parties' mistrust, lack of confidence, and suspicion in the EMB.

Regardless of this standoff, the EC was able to complete the 38-day registration exercise and two days of mop-up, in spite of violence across the country fueled by land border closures, acts of impunity by security agencies in the Ketu South Constituency (Volta region), identity and nationality challenges in the Oti and Volta regions, registration of minors, bussing of party supporters and faithful's across constituencies and alleged participation of foreigners in the registration process in the Ajumako, Sabon Zongo, Takoradi, Accra, Kumasi and Navrongo. There were also violent incidences in between the campaign period and election day. Data generated from the WANEP's Electoral violence Monitoring, Analysis and Mitigation (EMAM) early warning system recorded: 19 incidents of violent attacks (including low-medium to high risk) by party supporters and alleged

vigilantes associated with political parties during the voter registration process in some hotspots registration centres, especially in Greater Accra, Central, Eastern and Ahafo regions. For instance, at Awutu Senya East Constituency in the Central Region, unidentifiable gunmen attacked officials at the centre and disrupted the registration process by firing gunshots. Other incidents include physical and verbal attacks on EC officials and destruction of registration centre materials. A total of 125 election-related violence including physical attacks, inter-party clashes, destruction of parties' properties and campaign materials by political party supporters were recorded between April and November 2020. A total of 12 incidents of violent communication (intemperate language, hate speech and inflammatory rhetoric) through traditional and social media platforms were reported between April and November 2020. This incited attacks against political opponents and heightened tensions in the election.

Although the violence on the Election Day was isolated, the post-election period saw sustained and elevated forms of violence at polling stations and coalition centers following the tight presidential and parliamentary race with the two major parties almost sharing the spoils. For example, there were reported gunshots at the Modark Hotel and the Constituency Collation Centre in Odododiodio Constituency in the Greater Accra region. This shooting incidents left three people dead. Also, in the Awutu Senya West Constituency in the Central region, a young man tried to snatch a ballot box at the Obrachire Polling Station but he was accosted and beaten up by voters. Similarly, At the Fomena Constituency in the Ashanti Region, some unidentified youth invaded and set the EC's District Office ablaze in the early hours of Tuesday, December 8, 2020. Police reported more than 61 electoral and post-electoral security incidents nationwide resulting in five deaths. Tensions escalated further, following the declaration of the results with both candidates claiming victory. There were violent demonstrations nationwide for NDC supporters who disagreed with the outcome of the elections and the declared results. The rampaging supporters of the NDC continued to block major roads, burnt lorry tyres, destroyed public and private property in displeasure to the declared results. The police in an attempt to disperse these protestations were forced to use teargas, rubber bullets and water cannon to disperse the crowds.

The filing of the election petition at the Supreme Court appeared to have halted the nationwide demonstrations and disturbances. However, after almost three months of deliberations, the Supreme Court in a unanimous decision dismissed the application for lacking merit. The aftermath of the ruling has been one of uneasy calm, especially after the opposition leader, former president John Mahama refused to concede defeat and have gone ahead to reject the ruling from the apex court stating that the outcome was "a stab in the heart of transparency and accountability to the sovereign people of Ghana". The challenges demonstrated by the violence that characterised the 2020 elections and its aftermath, exposes the frailties and inadequacies of the multi-party democracy practiced in Ghana. This has called into question the long-term sustainability of Ghana's

democratic process. Electoral violence, as it continues to manifest, incontestably represent a compelling force for eroding all the gains made since 1992. A comprehensive set of detailed recommendations is included at the end of this report for consideration by the relevant authorities and stakeholders in order to further improve certain areas in the election process.

Key recommendations include:

- The EC must build trust within itself and improve on its relationship with all the major stakeholders including the political parties and CSOs. This can be achieved by ensuring that it improves on its channels and strategies of communication;
- There is the need to strengthen IPAC by backing it with the right legislation and the needed power to hold political parties accountable. Additionally, the legal framework must clearly stipulate and define the composition and functions of the committee;
- The NPC must be proactive in discharging its duties and build strong partnerships with other stakeholders with requisite knowledge and skills in conflict management and mediation;
- The NCCE should collaborate with key stakeholders to reduce political tension and public anxiety before, during and after elections;
- CSOs must build partnership amongst themselves and with other stakeholders working within the election space to ensure effective watchdog role;
- Media should desist from using intemperate words in broadcasting and trivializing or exaggerating issues to the public. The prevalence of these for example, has the tendency of inflaming tensions, mistrust and consequentially, igniting electoral violence;
- Law Enforcement Agencies must build the capacity of their personnel to engineer professional conduct and management of election-security related situations; and
- Regional and International bodies are to ensure that there is greater transparency, regulation and control within electoral management bodies so that they reflect more than just the interest of the State or country.



i. Introduction

Elections provide the space for deepening, consolidating, strengthening and institutionalising democracy and governance systems. The last two decades have witnessed considerable changes in democracy on the African continent. Many countries have responded to this groundswell desire of their people to engage the idea of participatory politics by signing up to periodic elections. Elections have facilitated the emergence of democratic governments in a number of countries in Africa including Ghana, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Burkina Faso, among others. Between 1990 to date, the percentage of African countries holding democratic elections has increased tremendously (Freedom House, 2021). In 2020 alone, Africa hosted a dozen of presidential and general elections in West Africa, Central Africa, the Horn and the Great Lakes regions. While there have been periodic elections in many African countries, the progress of electoral democracy has been uneven. The quality of elections has been a source of tensions and violence for many of these states and its citizens. In some cases, in Togo, Uganda, Chad, Cameroon, Rwanda, Burundi and Egypt, elections have been reportedly manipulated by some autocratic regimes with some even proceeding to change the countries constitutional term limits. Over the years, elections have become the most viable tool for democratic participation, contest of ideas, control of resources, and the power to influence the actions, beliefs and the behavior of others.

Although elections by themselves are not an end in itself, it repetitively remains a means to an end because it provides the foothold for democracies to thrive and flourish (Gyekye-Jandoh, 2014; Bratton 1999). At best, elections provide the platform on which both the government and the governed meet and where greater accountability and domestic legitimacy are highly linked and enhanced. In spite of its benefits, democratic elections have panoply of threats and have also been associated with some profound risks. Between controversy of the credibility of voters register, political party nominations, electoral campaigns, voting and counting, information sharing, impartiality of the security agencies and the fairness of the empire of the entire elections, a wide range of concerns face institutions tasked with the responsibility to maintaining confidence in the democratic process and ensuring peaceful elections. The high-stake contexts associated with these electoral processes have inherently become a potential source of conflict, instability, anxiety and uncertainty. If not properly handled, such contestation can degenerate and exacerbate political, ethnic, regional, and religious tensions and eventually spill over into violence; thus, invariably destroying the sanctity and security of the process.

ii. Situational Context

After several years of unconstitutional changes of government, and incessant militarisation of the Ghanaian political space, 1992 marked the return to relatively stable democratic environment. After decades of experimentation with varying political forms, Ghana reverted to multiparty politics through which the country collectively signaled to the entire world of its commitment to abide by the international principles of rule of law, respect for institutions of state, protection of individual rights and provision of conditions of freedom, equality, transparency and plurality of views. Under this Fourth Republican Constitution, arguably, Ghana has witnessed an unmatched degree of stability within its political landscape. This is evidently visible in terms of the processes through which formal rules and decision-making procedures governing political exchange are now established, implemented, and altered. There has clearly been substantial improvement in the performance of key institutions within the state, including the Electoral Commission, the security agencies, the judiciary, media and civil society organizations (Gyimah-Boadi 2009, Whitfield, 2009). The ultimate benefits of these principles are shown in the successive democratic transitions between the two main political parties, namely the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC). Even when there have been disagreements with the outcome of the election results, the parties have resulted to the laid down procedure of using the judiciary to resolve the outcome. The 2012 and the 2020 presidential election petitions are singular milestones in Ghana's electoral system and reforms.

Under this Constitution, Ghana has held eight presidential and parliamentary elections in 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016 and 2020. Twenty-nine years after, irrespective of the gains, Ghana's democratic system of alliances, institutions and norms continues to come under a barrage of attacks like never before. Edu-Afful and Allotey-Pappoe (2016) contend that in spite of the democratic gains, elections in Ghana are fraught with largely localized and confined violence. At the intra-party level, the political landscape is characterized by threats of intimidation, physical assaults and vandalism of electoral materials. At the inter-party level, there is mounting pressure of pugnacious vigilante activities, destructive behavior of party foot soldiers, divisive ethnic politics, abuse of incumbency and politics of exclusion. At stake at the 2020 elections was not just the survival of the political system itself, but the growth and consolidation of Ghana's fledgling democracy. Presidential and parliamentary elections are always fraught with myriad of challenges, but the 2020 electioneering process was in its own league. Significantly, a number of factors combined to further heighten the prospect of extensive violence. There were challenges with the pandemic, political vigilante groups and secession agitation from the Western Togoland secessionist group. All these notwithstanding, there were misunderstanding, confusion and violence that characterised the process of compiling a new voter's register following the promulgation of a new Constitutional Instrument (CI 126). Election officials were anticipating multiple new challenges as Ghanaians prepared to head to the polls.

COVID-19 also affected the election in multiple ways. There were postponement of the voter registration process, cancellation of many political party campaign activities, the halting of civil society election-related activities and election observation missions. The country had to grapple with holding an election within a pandemic following the recording of its first case on 12th March 2020, nine months to the 2020 polls. The incumbent government responded rapidly to the outbreak of the virus by introducing some measures to curb the spread of the virus. The President first introduced the Imposition Restriction Bill, 2020 and later Imposition Restriction Act (Act 1012) to help fight the virus. There were partial lockdowns in most of the affected areas, including the Greater Accra Region, the Ashanti Region and parts of the Central Regions. These places, incidentally, happened to be part of those areas with some of the most crowded voter population. Significantly, there were lot of political opposition to the lockdowns. While some saw this lockdown as an order to create space for the Electoral Commission (EC) to compile a new voter's register for the 2020 general election, others were of the view that it was basically being pursued to curtail people's freedoms. Yet again many more others, particularly from the minority NDC, decried in loud tones that the real intention of this lockdown was for government to gain some political advantage in the upcoming elections and to set the election rigging machinery in motion (Daily guide, 2020). The General Secretary of the opposition NDC was quoted to have said that:

"This whole announcement of emergency ban, emergency here, stopping this gathering, stopping that gathering, in my view, on the surface, it will appear to the world that the president is acting to deal with the COVID-19 and so on. But the real intention is not to deal with COVID-19 at all. The real intention is to find space to put the pieces of the rigging equipment's together. So that by the time anybody could say jack, the election has been compromised"

Similarly, the NDC Minority in Parliament insisted on the Floor of the House that the Imposition of Restrictions Bill which was hurried for approval under the certificate of urgency was:

"The most egregious attack on our fundamental human rights and freedom since the inception of the 4th Republic. It is this type you would expect from dictators like Iddi Amin and President Bokasa of Central Africa Republic who ended up crowning himself Emperor."

The public safety measures around the need for strict social distancing, community lockdowns, limited public gathering, closure of borders, local and international travel restrictions and the spread of information and misinformation by both mainstream and social media impacted negatively on the electioneering process. The political, social and psychological impact of this health crisis affected a number of activities such as the compilation of new voters register, campaign rallies and the election of parliamentary and presidential candidates by the political parties in the lead-up to the polls.

For Ghana, ethnic-related violence and secessionism have never been a key issue in any of the eight elections under the Fourth Republic. So, for the activities of these secessionist groups to intensify few

months to the elections demonstrated by the multiple violent attacks raised a lot of eyebrows. Police reports had suggested that one of the affiliates of the Western Togoland secessionist group, the Homeland Study Group Foundation, had been engaging in recruiting, training and indoctrinating the young people as part of their strategy to form a militia arm in support of their movement (myjoyonline.com, 2020). The September 25, 2020 attack on the two police stations in the Volta region and the seizure of weapons and police vehicle in the process demonstrated the veritable threat that the activities of these groups posed to the security of the Ghanaian state and by extension the sanctity of the election process. Abdul-Gafaru Abdulai and Naaborle Sackeyfio (2020:10) asserts that the demand for succession is predicated on the grounds of “political history and socio-economic marginalization of successive post-colonial governments”.

One major departure from the 2020 elections was the demand by many Ghanaians for a more inclusive democracy. According to a report released by the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) in the lead up to the elections, 66 per cent of voters were willing to cast their ballot for a female president and 76 per cent for a female member of parliament (NCCE, 2020). Women politicians in Ghana face significant barriers to participation and leadership in the governance system due to social norms. According to the Ghana Women's Manifesto (2004:32), “Traditional prejudices, beliefs and perceptions, gender discrimination and low levels of literacy have contributed to the low level of women's participation in the policy-making process”. A lack of direct representation of women in the political landscape reduced women's influence on community decisions and more broadly derail local economic development.

However, the naming of a female running mate by the main opposition presidential candidate raised hopes for increased gender inclusiveness. This invariable shifted the election dynamics and opened up the possibility of challenging the existing patriarchal structures in politics. Similarly, the youth have played pivotal roles in all elections in Ghana and the 2020 elections was no exception. The youth have been noted for being the driving force behind the mobilization of all others during an election year. With '57 percent of the country's population under the age of 25 years (GSS, 2020), Ghana's youth make up a significant voting bloc that has the potential to decide the outcome of any elections. It is for this reason that most of the political parties always prioritize issues like employment and education when they try to appeal to the young population.

Political vigilantism was one of the most frightening issue in the buildup to the 2020 elections especially following the political violence that characterized the January 31, 2019 parliamentary by-elections in the Ayawaso West Wuogon Constituency (AWW). The gun violence and the bloodbath that marred the AWW elections forced the NDC to pull out of the by-elections citing security of its candidate and supporters. WANEP situational update on the AWW by-elections suggested that eighteen (18) people were injured through gunshots. Government response to the AWW violence was three-pronged. It first enacted the Vigilantism and Related Offences Act (Act 999, 2019) with the sole aim of disbanding all vigilante activities

including those pursued by political parties, land guards and thugs. Secondly, the government established the Justice Emile Short Commission of Inquiry to investigate the violence that characterized the by-election. Finally, government together with other stakeholders, like the National Peace Council, initiated the process of establishing a Roadmap and Code of Conduct for political parties with the view to encourage the political parties to desist from political violence using vigilante groups. These responses notwithstanding, the threat of the political parties using these groups in the 2020 elections was very much real. Perhaps that explains why WANEP argued in 2020 that 'the most potent threat to the country's peace and political stability ahead of the 2020 General Elections' was the activities of vigilante groups.

iii. Methodological Approach

The report chose a survey research design approach because it best served to answer the questions and the purposes of compiling the report. The survey research is one in which a group of people or elements is studied by collecting and analysing data from a few people considered to be representative of the entire group. This report adopted a mixed method approach that facilitated the exploration of the phenomenon of election security in Ghana using a variety of data sources. This ensured that the issue is not explored through one lens, but rather a variety of lenses which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood. In compiling this election security report, the review report relied heavily on both qualitative and quantitative data. This enabled the report to immeasurably benefit from experiences of respondents and to generate rich data insight into CSOs perspective on the way and manner election security was organised for the 2020 general elections. At the beginning of the assignment, the consultant supplemented the information received from CSO and other key stakeholders such as the political parties, the Electoral Commission, the judiciary, security agencies and the media with relevant desk research from reliable sources including online and face-to-face interviews where necessary (in consultation with the regional coordinators of WANEP).

Data Collection Tools and Techniques

Primary and secondary data was used for the compilation of the report and was taken from the following sources:

- Desk review;
 - Semi-structured Interviews (SSI) with relevant designated focal points;
 - Questionnaires; and
 - Online Consultation meetings.
-

iv. Pre-Election Security

The pre-election phase in almost all elections under the Fourth Republic has been characterised by party primaries, intra-party competition, electoral legislation, voter registration, voting preparation and political campaigns. It is the period where the legal and policy frameworks and the security arrangement guiding the management and execution of an election are promulgated and crystallised. Historically, in the case of Ghana, violence that depicts most elections emanates from this early phase where the motivation of violence is premised on narrowed playing field, limiting of political space, preventing candidates from running, weakening the opposition through financing and maintaining the desire to retain or hold firm to power. Considering the polarisation, tensions and the mistrust that exist between the key stakeholders including the Electoral Commission, political parties and the security agencies, recent experience justifies why such periods are often marred with violence. As has been argued by Aboagye (2020), the pre-election phase in Ghana presents the stage where structural and proximate factors of violence in any election are laid. Political violence that occurs during this early phase are most often less recognised, yet it becomes a potent force that has the propensity to damage the integrity of an election.

In most cases, pre-electoral activities in Ghana are marked by high tensions, often resulting in violence rather than polling day and the post-election activities, and the 2020 election was no exception. Intra-political party activities, particularly those associated with the primaries of the two main political parties, the NPP and the NDC, was fraught with a lot of tensions, conflicts and violence. These tensions and violence were occasioned by the high-stake political battle between the various candidates. The publication by the political science department of the University of Ghana in 2019 that about 50% of all sitting MPs were likely to lose their seats due to poor performance heightened some tensions within the various political parties. The resultant effect of this report was a decision by political parties to insulate some sitting MPs, streamline the numbers that could contest, disqualify others under some technicalities, including not nurturing the party in the constituency, insubordination, alleged fraudulent acts, inconsistencies in personal information, forged documents, among others. This generated a lot of discontent, anguish and dissatisfaction among the file and rank of the various political parties. In some constituencies, not only were electoral materials vandalised, but also some of the aspirants were beaten. In most of these cases, the perpetrators were mainly the youth that belong to different factions of the same political party. Their targets or victims were rival factions and the approaches used included clashes, shootings, vandalism and ambushes. In the Asawase Constituency of the Ashanti Region for instance, supporters of a disqualified NDC aspirant (Masawudu Mubarak) registered their displeasure by rampaging the party's regional office, setting tyres ablaze and vandalising property (Kwawukume, 2019).

These party supporters believed that their candidate was deliberately disqualified to pave the way for incumbent Muntaka Mubarak to contest unopposed. Similarly, in the camp of the ruling NPP, 67 out of 168 candidates stood unopposed and this led to fallouts within the party. Intra-party violence became a problem, especially in constituencies regarded as “safe” for the ruling party. The primaries to select candidates rather than the elections determine who will eventually win power. This invariably raised the stakes of the primaries.

Many election watchers predicted that the ruling party was likely to lose a lot of votes following the deliberate disqualification of some aspirants in order to pave way for some others who were considered to be in privilege positions. Even though the NPP Primaries was generally peaceful, there were multiple reported incidences of violence, vote-buying and display of opulence and ostentation. For instance, there were attacks on two journalists, Macdabara Romanus of Tizaa FM in Nalerigu in the North-East region and Abraham Ananpansah, a journalist with PAD FM in Damongo in the Savannah Region, for recording a scuffle that ensued between two political executives of the ruling NPP. Also, in Wulensi in the Northern Region some irate youth went on rampage setting bonfires at the party's Constituency office after their preferred aspirant lost the election. Even though reports were filed in all cases at the police station, the investigation and onward prosecution appears to have stalled due to some political interventions. Impunity has also been identified as the main driver of electoral violence in Ghana as few of those responsible for electoral-related violence are never brought to justice. In the case of Ananpansah in the Savannah Region, for instance, the Regional Police Commander personally settled the case out of court on the day the accused was to appear before court. The cumulative effect being the weakening of party cohesion and the deepening of a violent environment ahead of the elections, a situation that could depress voter turnout and increase opportunity for fraud.

Even though leaders of both NDC and NPP admitted to the violent acts that clouded their primaries ahead of the elections, they were all on the defensive when queried. Nevertheless, an emerging development shows that when there are heightened violent trends during the primaries, these acts of violence are often carried into the general elections. In 2016, constituencies such as Ejura (Ashanti Region), Nanton (Northern Region) and Ningo Prampram (Greater Accra Region), that experienced violent primaries saw these incidences of violence being transferred into the general elections. Likewise, in 2020, highly contested party primaries in constituencies such as Fomena and Bekwai (Ashanti region) and Ashiaman (Greater Accra region) became the hub of bloody clashes in the general elections.

Voter Registration and Inherent Insecurities

In December 2019, the Electoral Commission presented a case to Ghanaians on the need to compile a new voter register and the procurement of a new Biometric Voter Management System (BVMS). The issue of compiling a voter register was previously argued in 2012 when the NPP then in opposition insisted that

the EC adopts the biometric voter system. Although this same register was used for the 2012 and 2016 elections, the sudden distrust in the register raised suspicions among the stakeholders. This decision received mixed reactions from the political players as usual; a response that is symptomatic of most decisions by the umpire, the EC. A new level of resistance was introduced following the groundswell opposition by Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) against the decision to compile a new register, raising a number of issues relating to cost, timing, necessity and data accuracy.

As was argued by an interviewee:

"We didn't need a new voter register for the 2020 elections; that was a useless exercise and the outcome of the registration exercise, Election Day and post-elections period has sort of confirmed this position. Till date, we have not been able to use our voter ID for any purpose other than the voting which took place. Therefore, the resources of about a billion dollars spent was a wastage and could have been channeled into other meaningful purposes".

The EC argued that the previous register was bloated with foreigners and ghost names. On the issue of the BVMS, the EC argued that the system was obsolete and refurbishing them would cost the nation more money than getting a new one. The new BVMS, as argued by the EC, promised to be more efficient as it contained certain security features such as the facial recognition that hitherto was lacking with the previous system. Even though stakeholders, especially political parties, are constantly concerned about the state of the voter register and other equipment before elections, this time, the proposition of the EC was continually debunked and met with intense opposition. A coalition of six opposition parties identifying themselves as the Inter-Party Resistance against the New Voter Register (IPRAN) registered its displeasure and embarked on the 'Y3npene' (meaning 'we won't agree') demonstration in Accra, Kumasi and Tamale. IPRAN described the suggestion of the EC to compile a new voter register as a waste of resources as it was going to cost the state close to a billion Ghana cedis. The leader of the All-People's Congress (APC), Hassan Ayariga and a member of the IPRAN, while objecting to the intention of the EC, stated that:

"The reasons given are bizarre, as if that is not enough, the process to procure and compile this needless register has been shrouded in secrecy and characterized by deception, lack of transparency and disingenuity"¹.

IPRAN also argued that the EC used the same 'bloated' register to carry out the District Level Elections and they could not fathom why it was impossible for same to be used for the general elections. IPRAN assertions were based on the fact that even though the various political parties which form the Inter-Party Advisory Committee (IPAC) had several meetings with the EC to discuss and agree on other relevant aspects of the impending elections, the issue of compiling a new voter registration was never discussed.

¹Starrfm (2020). Opposition parties to protest over New Voters' register; <https://starrfm.com.gh/2020/01/opposition-parties-to-protest-over-new-voters-register/>

It appeared that the EC was not transparent with IPAC on its dealings hence the disapproval of the IPRAN. Similarly, CSOs such as IMANI also condemned the EC and argued that the basis for the new register was flawed and that the timing for the exercise was wrong. Apart from the effect of COVID-19, it was going to delay the election calendar and reduce an exercise that should take two years to barely seven months. They further argued that the EC should have waited for the national census and national identification exercise to be concluded before embarking on compiling a new register so that data could easily be synchronized. The apprehension that the compilation of a new register may drain the coffers of the nation galvanized CSOs vehement opposition to the decision.

Whereas recognized bodies such as the Christian Council of Ghana had called for consensus building between the EC and all relevant stakeholders before a final decision on the voters' register was taken, the EC decided to proceed with the exercise in spite of the objections. Amid the many controversies, the EC went ahead through parliament to amend Constitutional Instrument 91 (C.I. 91) to limit the valid documents required for the new register. The EC contends that this was to ensure that only Ghanaians were registered thus making the new register credible. Previously a Ghanaian of international suffrage age could prove his or her citizenship to acquire a voter ID with a passport, a driver's license, a national identification card and an existing voter identification card. By amending C.I. 91 one's citizenship could only be proven through a passport or a National Identity Card (Ghana Card) which many Ghanaians at the time did not possess.

The NDC and other CSOs objected to the omission of the existing voter card and the birth certificate as requisite identity documentation accepted for the new register. The disagreement, particularly the invalidation of the birth certificate as a credible proof of citizenship, ended up in the Court. The Supreme Court dismissed both suits arguing that the birth certificate and existing voters ID cards are not proof of citizenship. This caused public uproar as people questioned the criteria for citizenship and the credibility of the passport and the Ghana card since the birth certificate and voter card was used in acquiring both national documents. Some opposition parties, CSOs and many in the general public regarded the EC's decision as an attempt to disenfranchise and exclude a cross section of Ghanaians as was highlighted in an interview:

"...Even though the voter ID is purposely for election, we are in a country where majority for lack of proper identification system rely heavily on the use of the voter ID as the most preferred form of identification for verifying identity, transacting financial and other business. We can't pretend as if we do not know that people use these voters ID for multiple purposes other than elections. So, having such a registration should encompass multiple documentation as the voters' ID has become essential in the determination and experience of citizenship".

With all these disagreements, the grounds were prepared for tensions and potential violence in the registration process. The five-week registration process (30th June to 6th August 2020) was marred by violence mainly orchestrated by the youth. This violence was fueled by border closures, delays in the release of funds especially to the NCCE for civic education, political parties sponsoring minors to go and register, non-Ghanaians from neighboring countries being paid to cross the border to register and the use of the military to restrict movements of would-be registrants in some parts of the country described as strongholds of the opposition NDC. This time, the principal threat to the voter registration was not only the political parties, but also some security and logistical decisions and arrangement taken by the State.

Military and the Electoral Process

Prior to the exercise, security forces were deployed to border towns in the Volta, Oti, Savannah, Upper East and Upper West Regions which are the strongholds of the largest opposition NDC. The deployment of security forces to some borders, especially during the registration was a debatable issue. While the official positioning was that these military deployments was in support of the Ghana Immigration Service (GIS)'s efforts to stop illegal entry of foreigners through unapproved routes and to protect the populace against COVID-19, the opposition parties and some CSOs had argued that deployments had certain ethnic and hidden undertones. This view was given some credence, especially when soldiers were seen monitoring registration centres and, in some cases, physically preventing people from registering. Evidentially, from 2000-2008 and now (2016-2020), it appears that every time the NPP or the Danquah-Busia-Dombo tradition is in power there are heavy deployment of security around the border communities, particularly the Northern and Volta regions respectively. Elections attract great interest and excitement and people would ordinary not want the borders closed mainly because it has the tendency to disenfranchise border communities. It is for this reason that the Restriction Act ahead of the voter registration exercise needed more nuanced engagement with all stakeholders.

The call on the government to withdraw the military by the NDC Volta Region caucus in Parliament and the Volta Regional House of Chiefs proved futile. The Presidential candidate of the NDC, John Dramani Mahama, in a statement said:

"This represents another unprecedented low in the shameless abuse of state power to attack the very citizens whose safety and security the Akufo-Addo government should be protecting".

CSOs also added their voice to the plea of the NDC and residents of the Volta region. The Democratic Credentials Network Ghana (DCN Ghana) and its partners Community Focus Foundation Ghana (CFF Ghana), Coalition of CSOs against Political Vigilantism and Grassroots Mobilisers condemned the deployment of military in the Volta Region by stating that:

"We consider the huge deployment of armed military forces to the Volta Region as Communist inferior tactics being employed by the Ghanaian government to put fear among Voltarians not to vote and choose the leader of their choice in total contravention of the Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in December 1948, which famously set the standard that: 'The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage' (modernghana.com, 2020)".

Consequently, pockets of violence disrupted EC's activities during the registration process and in the worst case resulted in the loss of lives. This violence was fueled by reported cases of duplicate registration, minor, and foreigner registrations as well as the 'bussing' of supporters to certain constituencies. The situation was very knotty in competitive constituencies where chances of winning a parliamentary seat depends on few numbers and so the registration became very contested riddled lots of violence. The shooting incidence in Awutu Senya East (Kasoa) Constituency involving Mavis Hawa Koomson (Minister of State); pepper spray attack in Asutifi South Constituency (Acherensua) involving Collins Dauda (MP); violence in Asawase Constituency involving Chairman Wontumi of the NPP; and the stabbing of a 28-year-old graduate of the Akim Oda Training College at Banda Constituency are examples of some of the violence that characterized the process. The violence that engulfed the registration process forced major stakeholders like the National Peace Council, CSOs and the clergy to call the police to order by demanding some form of investigation and the punishment of perpetrators.

Dilemmas from the Compiled Voters List

In fulfilment of regulations 22 (1) and 23 (1) of the C.I. 19, the EC organised an exhibition exercise to provide registered voters the opportunity to crosscheck that their details captured in the provisional register are accurate. During the ten-day exhibition exercise, there were reports of missing names in an unprecedented proportion in the entire country. In constituencies such as Ashaiman, Korley Klottey, Saula-Tuna, Kalba and Luara, The NDC Presidential Candidate reported that some 7000 names were missing from the newly compiled register. However, the EC stated that a total of 541 electorates who registered for the new voter roll had their names missing. Some of the affected individuals pursued their cases in court and the EC was ordered by the court to add those who legitimately qualify to be on the roll to be list. The situation was further compounded when a viral video captured some EC officials from giving out voter ID cards to people in some NPP stronghold in the Ashanti Region after the registration exercise had ended. This generated and deepened the mistrust and suspicion between the CSOs and some political parties, particularly the NDC, of the ability of the EMB to execute the elections.

The NDC accused the EC for deliberately removing the names of voters in some particular areas in order to disenfranchise some portion of Ghanaians to the advantage of the ruling NPP. The NPP, however,

described the NDC's allegation as baseless and admonished their party members to partake fully in the exhibition exercise. The EC, in a response, debunked these claims stating that their processes were not intended to deprive anyone or group of persons from exercising their civic rights; however, they admitted that they incurred some errors in the registration exercise which were detected during the exhibition period and had been duly corrected. In the case of the viral video, the EC said the cards were for people who had duplicated ID numbers that had been corrected. The supposed errors and inconsistencies in the EC's response on duplicate ID numbers further heightened the tensions and apprehensions between and among all the stakeholders.

As elections got closer, the EC, in an attempt to display the voter register to the public, published the document on google drive with links of the website to the Electoral Commission. The EC was challenged by some CSOs for breach of privacy after it publicly displayed and made the personal information of all voters accessible and open to all. Franklin Cudjoe, president of IMANI Africa, described this action of the EC as 'irresponsible and absurd'. He opined that:

"...The fact that the law gives you right to publish names does not mean that you should use the least of all the technology that could be accessed by just everybody in every part of the world and just dump the data there"².

Elections Hotspots

Security preparations towards the 2020 general elections included the identification of hotspots for likely electoral violence. The Ghana Police identified over 5,000 "hot spots" where violence was likely to erupt during the election period. Although almost all the regions have flashpoints, Ashanti Region had the highest number of hotspots followed by the Central Region, the Northern Region and lastly Greater Accra Region. The high number of flashpoints raised a lot of concern with some even describing the situation akin to going to war.

Table 1: Top Four Regional Hotspots for Elections 2020

REGION	Out of 6178 flashpoints	Out of 4098 flashpoints
Ashanti Region	975	635
Central Region	908	537
Northern Region	393	287
Greater Accra Region	500	264

Source: <https://www.adomonline.com/election-2020-all-you-need-to-know-about-hotspots-police-deployment/>

² Voters' Registration: EC "shamefully" using 40% of old BVRs – Franklin Cudjoe
<https://ghanapoliticsonline.com/voters-registration-ec-shamefully-using-40-of-old-bvrs-franklin-cudjoe/>

Similarly, following the launch of EMAM, WANEP developed its monitoring tools and empowered field monitors and analysts to use them. WANEP together with IDEG, CDD, LECIAD and a few others developed indicators to map and monitor potential hotspots of election violence in Ghana in addition to operationalizing the early warning system for the election. The stakeholders also developed a contextualized online system for monitoring and reporting alerts. This election framework helped WANEP to yield more qualitative data that were used in generating the weekly highlights, monthly situational reports, quick updates and election-related policy briefs. In order to map and monitor potential hotspots, WANEP was guided by the main objective under the EMAM project. To gather and disseminate early warning signals that was relevant to governmental, inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations in preventing possible violence in the 2020 elections.

Considering the ballooning of the number of hotspots, the Coalition of Civil Society in Governance and Security for Peaceful Elections 2020 advised the Police to intensify security before, during and after the elections. The National Commission of Small Arms and Light Weapons also emphasised the need for these hotspots to be closely monitored to prevent violence from escalating. Through the National Election Security Taskforce (NESTF) it appears the security agencies managed to map out strategies to contain possible security breaches and infractions in most of the identified hotspots. Through the EMAM project, WANEP during the Pre-election phase was able to engage the security actors, media, electoral commission and the political parties on priority risk and hotspots and to remind the various stakeholders of the code of conduct for the election. This contributed significantly to a number of preventive diplomacy and dispute management activities particularly at the state level.

Such state-centric engagements and collaborations included:

- meetings with political actors that have influence in case of emergencies during elections;
- assessing the state of preparedness of the EC, security agencies, political parties; and
- other stakeholders towards the conduct of peaceful elections.

Empirical evidence available suggests that on a balance, the violence that characterised the period before, during and after the general election was not so widely spread as originally envisaged with the identification of these hotspots. It is evident that while the operations of the security agencies tackled this existential threat, education provided by CSOs, traditional authorities, members of the clergy and the media contributed significantly to reduce and to prevent widespread violence.

Political Vigilantism and Violence

The over politicisation of Ghana's security apparatus in the past two decades has led to mistrust in their services and the emergence of violent groups referred to as political vigilante groups. Under the Fourth

Republic, the posture and attitude of some political party bigwigs suggest that political vigilantism and the desire for political power are conjoined. Indeed, political vigilantism has always played significant role in electoral violence in Ghana particularly during by-elections. According to Edu-Afful and Allotey-Pappoe (2016), these groups have emerged in response to the competition of power. They serve as violent gangs, thugs, hooligans, goon-squads, militias, protection rackets, and criminals for hire, ostensibly to protect the electoral fortunes of their pay masters. The political parties justify the creation of these groups that are mainly dominated by the youth as emanating from the seemingly bias posturing of the security agencies towards the ruling party. Aning and Albrecht (2020) assert that the police are unable to control these groups primarily because the police is under undue political pressure and these vigilantes are better equipped in weapons and transportation than the average police officer.

In recent times, the rise of political vigilantism in its current form has raised a lot of uneasiness following the violence that characterized the Ayawaso West Wuogon (AWW) by-elections that was held on January 31, 2019. The impunity with which individuals suspected to be vigilantes disguised as National Security operative's perpetrated violence on voters in AWW generated nationwide uproar. The resultant effect was an establishment of the Justice Emile Short Commission of Inquiry on February 8, 2019, to begin unravelling what essentially was a growing phenomenon of political violence in Ghana. President Akufo Addo in his State of the Nations Address in February 2019 called for the drafting and passage of the Vigilantism bill which was later passed into law in September 2019. The law defines vigilantism as:

An act or threat of violence or intimidation undertaken by a person or group of persons to further the interest of that person or any other person affiliated or associated with or connected or related to: (a) a political party, (b) a political office holder, (c) an official or a member of a political party, (d) a landowner or purchaser of a landed property, (e) a real estate developer, (f) a public office holder or any person who holds an office of a public nature, or (g) mining activities or (h) a person who engages in any act of vigilantism. (Act 999, s.11, and s.1 (1) (a)-(h)).

Aside the enactment of the Vigilantism and Related Offences Act in 2019, -which provided for prohibition of vigilantism in all its forms- there was also the creation of a roadmap and the code of conduct for political parties which sought to control supporters from engaging in all kinds of political violence and vigilantism of any form. The opposition NDC actually described the bill as a hasty one because they were convinced the bill did not address the root cause of the problem which was rather the socio-economic crisis facing the youth of the country. However, the December elections showed that all three initiatives, that is the enactment of the Vigilantism and related offences Act; the set-up of the Emile Short Commission of Inquiry; and the crafting of the roadmap and code of conduct for political parties were partially effective in addressing the incidence of political vigilantism. It remains to be seen whether these initiatives can withstand the test of time particularly during by-elections as these are the occasions where the activities of such groups are most prominent.

Few days to the 2020 election, the NDC raised a concern that the EC was in bed with the ruling government and intended to rig the elections by printing excess ballot papers. According to the NDC National Campaign Coordinator, Prof. Joshua Alabi, the EC has a practice of printing an extra 5% of ballot papers for every polling station in all elections to take care of unexpected situations such as spoilt ballot papers which is known to all stakeholders. Surprisingly this time, the NDC alleged that the EC was printing 5% of the total number of registered voters in a constituency in excess of the 5% extra ballot papers required for every polling station. Per the NDC estimation, the EC is printing a total of 150,000 ballot papers beyond the extra 5% required. Subsequently, some NDC supporters amassed at the Buck Press in Ofankor-Accra for allegedly conniving with the EC to print excess ballot papers. The inability of the EC to explain and carry all the stakeholders along in any decision might have accounted for the considerable suspicion at their every move. Although the EC refuted both allegations of the NDC, it could not convincingly address the issues raised apart from describing the NDCs position as misleading. It would appear that the response of the EC was immersed in further destroying the worsening trust because of its non-adherence to established standards, norms and traditions.

Elections in the Midst of COVID-19

Ghana, just like the rest of the world, has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, ideally, the safety protocols in line with the World Health Organisation (WHO) were to be observed to prevent the spread. The correlation between the timing of the registration exercise and the trail of infections is noticeable. By March, 23, 2020, an Executive Instrument came into being which empowered the government to impose restrictions on public gatherings and travel to Ghana. The government had already imposed a partial lockdown on Accra, Tema and Kumasi for a period lasting two weeks on the March, 23, 2020. The wearing of facemasks in public spaces also became mandatory. At the same time, the authorities strongly encouraged handwashing and social distancing. The regular presidential update on COVID-19 and the media briefings by the Minister of Information and the Director General of Health had confirmed a steady rise in the number of infections. The virus appears to have spread beyond Accra and Kumasi to almost all the regions.

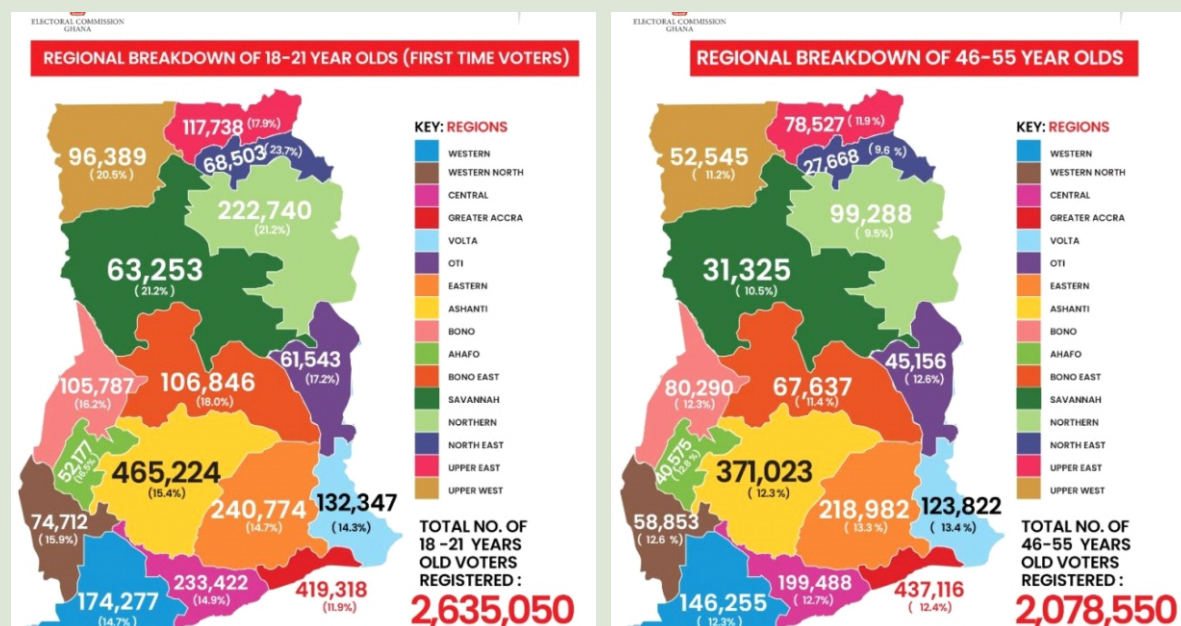
For many, the general concern with the preparation of the elections was aggravating the community spread of COVID-19. Activities such as voter registration was a likely multiplier to the case count especially as the process involved the massing-up of people in long queues. Coupled with the lack of strict adherence to the protocols, many envisaged that there was going to be a potential spike in Ghana's COVID-19 cases. The media and the Coalition for Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) reported violations in the early phases of the registration process. There was lack of respect for protocols such as social distancing and wearing of mask, especially in areas where large numbers congregated to register at the same time. The EC in response introduced both manual and digital queue management strategies

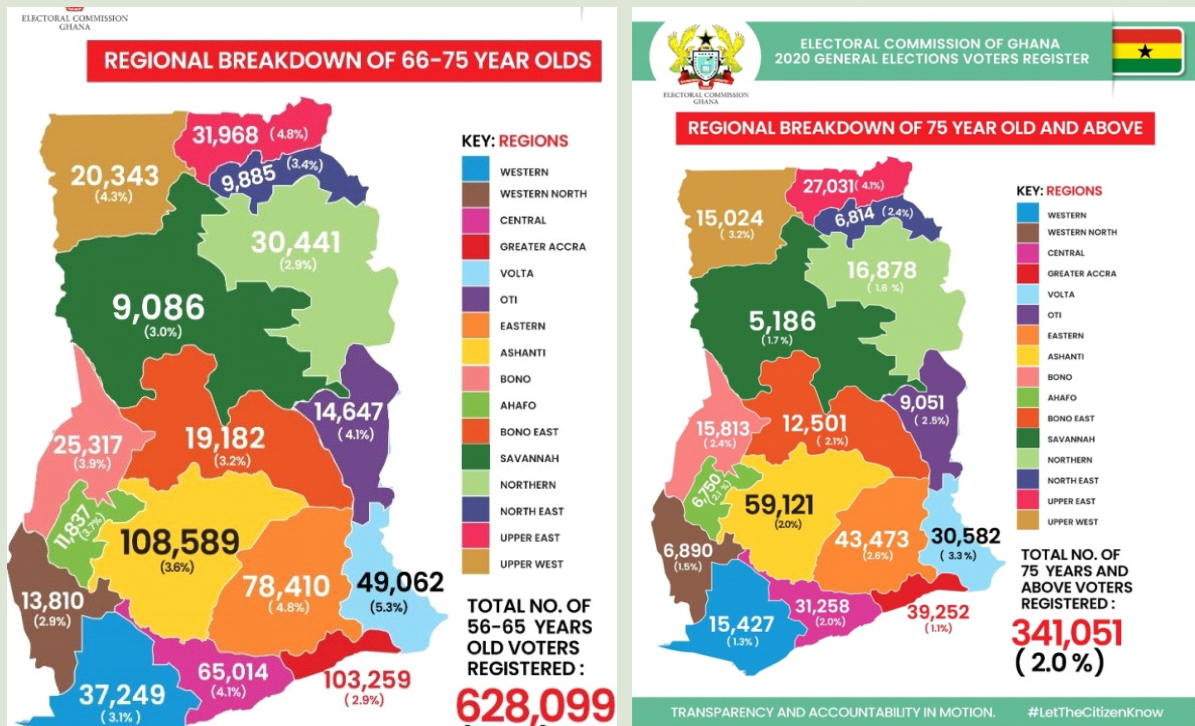
such as the use of chits and shot codes to address overcrowding and lengthy congestion at the registration centers. Although the EC officials were expected to sanitise, clean the biometric devices and ensure strict adherence to the protocol that was not fully obeyed.

On campaigns, once the restrictions on large campaign rallies were in place the political parties altered their approach and focused on less crowded activities. However, these less crowded activities were equally a multiplier of the infection as the political parties flagrantly flouted the protocols on hand washing, social distancing and mask wearing.

Politicians contributed hugely to the culture of non-compliance. A case in point was when the Deputy Trade and industry minister Carlos Kingsley Ahenkorah was forced to resign when he violated coronavirus self-isolation measures after testing positive for the virus. Considering that the risk of severe illness with COVID-19 increases with age, many felt that older adults, particularly those in the 50s, 60s and 70s who were at higher risk of severe illness would not even turn up to register. The available data showed that that was not the case. The regional breakdown below shows the age categorization of registered voters.

Figure 1: Regional Breakdown by age





Source: <https://www.ec.gov.gh/elections-gallery/>, 2020.

The COVID-19 risk notwithstanding, the total number of registered voters actually increased substantially from 15,712,499 in 2016 to 17,027,641 in 2020. This invariably dispelled initial fears that the pandemic would have a negative effect on registration turnout. At the exhibition centres, for instance, there were COVID-19 ambassadors to ensure the strict compliance on safety protocols. On the day of election, electorates were orderly queued a meter apart in polling stations and sanitizers were readily available for use. To prevent overcrowding at existing polling stations, 10,000 additional polling stations were created. In all of the EC's procedures, the wearing of nose masks was compulsory.

Ghana is lauded for being the beacon of democracy in a rather volatile sub-region. So far, all the elections held since 1992 can be agreed to be free and fair, however, the increase in mistrust for state institutions such as the EC and the Security forces poses a threat to the stability of the nation. This was heavily evident in the pre-electoral activities of the 2020 general elections. Political players must not take the stability of the nation for granted and ensure to act in the confines of the constitution.

v. Polling Day Electoral Infractions, Malpractices and Violence

Some studies on electoral violence identify the polling day as one of the safest periods during the election cycle, possibly due to the alertness of the security agencies, the presence of both local and international observers and the attention of particularly the international media. Bekoe (2010) asserts that Election Day claims fewer victims to electoral violence than either three months before or after elections. The special voting that preceded the main Election Day was not without challenge. There were complaints of missing names in the voters register, issues with verification, wrong typing of ID numbers, details and names appearing at polling stations and in constituencies that the prospective voters were not aware of. Additionally, there was violence and commotion in some polling centers following the incidence of voters taking a screenshot of their thumb printed ballot. This brought complete chaos to the process in some parts of the country. The EC has stated that those involved in the special voting that failed to show up to vote inadvertently lost the opportunity of voting on December 7th 2020. Considering the challenges associated with the entire special voting exercise, the possibility of some losing the right to vote generated heated tensions. These challenges brought to the fore concerns about the readiness and preparedness of the EC to conduct a free, fair and credible elections. The EC, in response, met stakeholders, including political parties, to assure them that the challenges will be addressed before the main Election Day. Despite these reassurances, there was little hope among the general voting populace that the EC's promise of a hassle-free election process on December 7 will ever materialize.

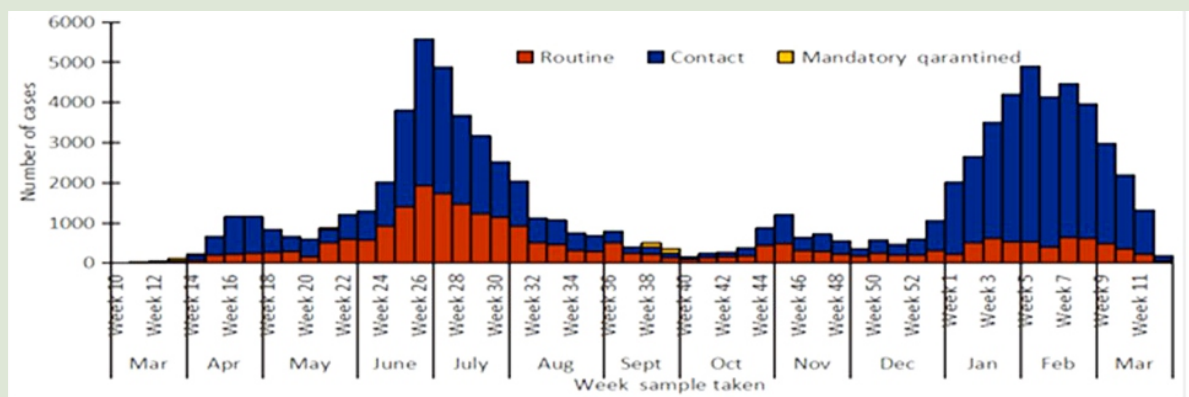
On Election Day itself, majority of polling stations opened on time and they were equipped with requisite polling materials and staff to execute their functions. CODEO reports, for instance, that polling agents for the political parties, particularly the NPP and the NDC, were represented in almost 99.6% of all polling stations. In terms of security, most polling stations had either police or representation of other sister security agencies like the Ghana Armed Forces, Ghana Immigration Service, Ghana National Fire Service, Customs Service, Prisons Service and national security, among others. Of the deployed security numbers, about 23% were armed while nearly 70% were unarmed (Adams, 2020; CODEO, 2020). Some observers reported spotting stationed or roaming security personnel in some 85.2% of the polling stations. However, less than 15% of polling stations across the country were without security personnel.

Many more others with high vested interest in the 2020 electoral security arrangements, including the Economic Community of West African States Commission (ECOWAS), Africa Union (AU), the European Union Election Observation Mission and WANEP deployed election observers, particularly to some of the 6178 identifiable national flashpoints. WANEP's 350 and CODEO's over 4000 election observers were seen in most of the polling stations across the country (Adams, 2020a; GNA, 2020). Additionally, as has

been done in a few other countries on the EMAM project, the election monitoring process for the day was coordinated from an Election Situation Room (ESR) put together by WANEP at Mövenpick Ambassador Hotel in Accra. Additionally, there were three other satellite ESRs in Ho (African Hill Hotel) for the southern cluster, Tamale (Mariam Hotel) for Northern Cluster and Kumasi (Miklin Hotel) for Middle Cluster to support response actions within the regions. In the Central ESR, 27 young people were engaged to collate the data using Arc 123 Survey GIS tool and all other media channels available for data collection. The data gathered were analysed by seven (7) analysts and the results were subsequently submitted to the Eminent Persons for decision-making. The Central ESR Decision Room hosted 17 Eminent Persons drawn from the NPC, WANEP, NCCE, STAR-Ghana Foundation, EC, and Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG). They used their good offices to resolve identified threats and mitigated their impacts through preventive diplomacy.

Fears about turnout for the December 7, 2020 elections was very high, especially in the COVID-19 context, where elderly voters with certain underlying medical conditions (such as those with serious heart conditions, diabetes, weakened immune systems, obesity, sickle cell disease) among others were at higher risk. Apart from the elderly, women were significantly affected by COVID-19 mainly due to the fact that care generally falls to women in the household, the pressures of closure of schools among other restrictions prevented some women from participating actively in political activities. However, the fear of infection could not limit the level of citizens' participation in the elections as there were strict adherence to protocols at most polling stations, with priority voting given especially to the aged, pregnant women and nursing mothers (CODEO, 2020a). Figures from the Ghana Health Services showed lower cases of

Figure 2: Distribution of COVID-19 Cases in Ghana by week sample taken, Mar 2020-Mar 2021



Source://ghanahealthservice.org/covid19/latest.php#, accessed 20 March, 2021

Contrary to earlier suggestions of the impact of COVID-19 on voter turnout, it appears that voter turnout has neither been higher than in previous elections, whether we compare it with the 2016 or the 2012 elections respectively. Therefore, initial evidence does not appear to support a consistently lower level of turnout during the COVID-19 pandemic than in previous elections.

Table 2: Voter Turnout in Ghanaian Elections, 1992-2020

Year	1992	1996	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016	2020
Turnout	50.2	77.9%	61.7%	85.1%	69.5%	80.2%	69.3%	78.9

Source: <https://ec.gov.gh/election-statistics/>

The voter turnout of 78.9 was considerably higher than that of the previous elections of 2016. Besides, the 2020 percentage is above the international standards and considerably higher than the rate of 61.7 per cent recorded in the November 2020 Presidential elections in the United States. The rise in turnout was fueled in part by the bitter fight between incumbent President Nana Akufo Addo (NPP) and challenger former president John Mahama (NDC). This was the third time they were challenging each other, Mahama having won in 2012 and Akufo-Addo in 2016.

Polling day electoral infractions and malpractices centered on mutilation of ballot papers, stuffing of ballot boxes with foreign materials, threats, intimidation, physical assault and vandalism of electoral materials. Coincidentally, a combination of these threats raised the level and nature of violence never witnessed on Election Day in Ghanaian elections. The Ghana police reported that there were over 60 incidents, 21 of which were true cases of electoral violence; and six of which involved gunshots resulting in the death of five. For instance, the gunshots incident at the Modark Hotel and the Constituency Collation Centre, both at the Odododiodio Constituency led to the death of three people. Similarly, two person's sustained injuries after some unidentified men opened fire on electorates at a polling station in the Awutu Senya East constituency in the Central Region. Again, one person was shot dead in Awutu Senya West constituency after he tried to snatch a ballot box at the Obrakyere BA primary school polling station. From the EMAM situation room, WANEP reported that in Kyekyewere and Dadwen Kyekyewere in Adanse North of the Fomena Constituency of the Ashanti Region, five strong muscular men also known as "macho men" armed with knives disrupted voting proceedings for about 30 minutes.

Table 3: A Tabulation of 2020 Electoral Incidents

S.N.	Type of Incidents	Number of Cases	% of Incidents
1	Intimidation or harassment	45	18.0
2	Violation of COVID-19 health and safety protocols	41	16.4
3	Violence	26	10.4
4	Unauthorized persons at the polling station	24	9.6
5	Biometric verification device not functioning properly	21	8.4
6	Voting or counting suspended	17	6.8
7	Polling station did not open or opened very late	10	4.0
8	Polling station ran out of materials	8	3.2
9	Violations of voting or counting procedures	7	2.8
10	Destruction or stealing of election materials	4	1.6
11	Eligible voters not permitted to vote	4	1.6
12	Vote buying/bribery	5	2.0
13	Ineligible persons allowed to vote	2	0.8
14	Ballot box stuffing	1	0.4
15	Over-voting	6	2.4
16	Polling station closed before 5:00 pm	1	0.4
17	Other incidents	28	11.2
Total		250	100.0

Source: CODEO 2020a (p.5)

Besides these, extensive media coverage equally unearthed many voting issues including the malfunctioned Biometric Verification Devices (BVDs), absence of indelible inks, delayed materials, unavailable desk for officials and absence of complaints and objection forms.

vi. Post-Election Security

Election-related violence can occur at different periods in the election cycle. It could happen before, during, or after election. Besides, what distinguishes post-election violence from other forms of electoral violence is the fact that it occurs just after polling, usually during or after collation and announcement of election results. Sequentially, the post-election phase involves a number of activities including the closing of polling stations, preliminary tabulation of ballots, through adjudication of disputes, certification of results, and inauguration of triumphant candidates. Essentially, considering the electoral cycle approach, the assumption is made that while there is the possibility of election-related violence occurring at

different stages within the election cycle, there are indicators that separate the nature of violence at different periods irrespective of the manifestation (UNDP, 2009). That notwithstanding, the violence that happens at the post-election phase are triggered by issues emanating from the pre-election and activities on the polling day.

Arguably, violence committed in elections is often seen as the pre-election activity because of the obvious means by which perpetrators attempt to change an outcome of an election. The goals of post-election violence are often distinctive and different from those before the elections. The ulterior motive of the perpetrators of such violence is directed at protesting against the results rather than to changing them. Post-election phase, however, appears not to have the 'litmus' utility as many see it as lacking the rational purpose for violence of any nature. Post-election violence manifests in several way, including attacks on opposing candidates, party officials and supporters as well as violent street protests (UNDP 2009). This violence is exhibited by actions including shooting, killings, arson, and wanton destruction of public and private property (usually perpetrated by officials and/or supporters of different political parties) (Adoke 2011).

Historically, in the Ghanaian case, most of election-related violence has been situated in the pre-election and polling day itself. Also, some enquiry points to the fact that significant incidences of post-election violence occur during consolidation elections than transition elections. Characteristically, consolidation elections are general elections organized by a civilian regime and are intended to strengthen the regime's grip to power whereas transition elections are the general elections organized by a departing political authority. Transition elections are relatively peaceful and devoid of large-scale violence than consolidation elections mainly because the role that the departing political authority usually plays lead to some legitimacy and credibility to outcome. Contrasting that with transition elections, consolidated election is often prone to violence because the political forces that control the state resources and election machinery have diverse interest in the outcome of the elections.

The 2020 elections which came soon after the 2016 elections presented inherent dynamics that characterized the elections. For the first time in the history of Ghana, there was a sitting president contesting an immediate past president and the contest was almost at par. Although this election was the third time that both candidates were going against each other, it had far-reaching implications as it presented an opportunity for candidates of the two leading political party to test their popularity. Considering the high stakes in the 2020 elections, both the NPP and the NDC desperately wanted to win the election by all means lawfully or unlawfully. The 2020 election was made even more prone to violence by the fact that the election was executed during a pandemic and with a new leadership of an EC that was conducting an election for the first time.

At the close of polling, there were isolated cases of security irregularities in some constituencies including massing up at collation centers despite security presences. Some collation centres were however challenged with a multiplicity of issues linked to denial of recount, discrepancies in total valid votes, verification of voters on the polling station results sheet, party agent's refusal to sign collation sheets and the like. Some constituencies, such as Dormaa West (Bono Region), Jomoro (Western Region), Zabzugu (Northern Region), Upper Denkyira (Central Region) and Fomena (Ashanti Region) witnessed some of these anomalies. Particularly in the case of Techiman South (Bono East Region) Constituency, two persons were confirmed dead following a shooting incident that was occasioned by some misunderstanding that ensued over the results declared in favour of NPP's Martin Adjei Mensah Korsah against Beyere of NDC. Both candidates had earlier declared themselves winners. Similarly, two journalists were also victims of shooting incidents and attacks at the Ablekuma Central (Greater Accra Region) collation centre by political party agents. The dispute and disagreement from a number of these collations' centres sparked off violent demonstrations nationwide to almost all the 16 regions especially after official results announced indicated both the NPP and NDC had won 137 seats compared to the 168 seats that the NPP had in the 2016 elections. Official reports said the 2020 electoral violence led to the death of 5 persons including the 61 persons that were also injured. Intervention by the police and the military in all of these situations appears to have escalated the situation as they were met with violent resistance from the supporters of both parties.

There were a number of interventions and actions taken by the eminent persons in the various ESRs to "water down" the tensions that had characterized the violence that heralded the collation and tabulation of results. At the regional level, EMAM election situation room reported that eminent persons engaged Parliamentary Candidates, Police Commanders, the Military High Command, the National Intelligence Bureau (NIB) and Political Parties in Kasoa (Awutu Senya East Constituency), Odododiodio Constituency, Bongo and Binduri Communities in Upper East Region on many security matters that could have resulted in full blown violence. Some of these issues centered on late arrival of electoral materials, alleged printing of ballot papers, tampering of Presidential ballot papers and audio recording circulating on social media indicating that heavy military equipment was being sent to the Volta Region (WANEP, 2020).

At the national level, the intervention of the National Elections Response Group (NERG) under the implementation of EMAM visited the leadership of the two main political parties and at least managed to douse the tensions generated by the collation of elections results. The NERG managed to raise the level of confidence in the political parties of their ability as a group to mediate in the brewing tensions. Additionally, the group became a bridge between the national actors, political parties and the international observer missions. Where the group felt they did not have the convening power to manage the tensions, they involved key international actors such as UNOWAS, AU, the Commonwealth and ECOWAS at some levels and this appears to have worked in addressing these tensions. Through this arrangement, these international observer missions were engaged to speak to political actors and to manage emotions when the group felt these international actors had the leverage to do so.

Declared Presidential and Parliamentary Results: Victory and Defeat Brouhaha

The decision by the EC to declare the results of the elections in 24 hours based on their level of preparedness appears to have sparked a number of issues that heralded the final declaration of the results. This move drew countless criticisms from the political players as many saw the move as a way of adding to their fears of possible grand scheme to rig the elections for the incumbent.

The chairperson of the EC had stated that:

“Ordinarily, the intention of declaring elections is to minimize tension. After all, if you have the results why sit on it? Why wait on the result when you have the results? We all know that our media houses have in the past been able to present the results within some ten hours of the polls. If you put in place systems to ensure they release results on time, why the panic?”

However, the inability of the EC to go by its own pre-planned decision to declare the presidential results within 24 hours further deepened and the fueled of speculation towards the EC's intent to rig the elections. The continuous delay by the EC to declare the results created renewed nervousness and raised suspicions amongst NDC supporters who assumed that, the act was to create room for possible rigging of the results in favor of NPP. The resultant effect was the massing-up at the EC headquarters in Accra to caution the EC to revert their supposed rigging. The Commission was under no obligation to come out with those fixed timelines, yet they did, and the delays only added to the already heightened tension and suspicion that had principally characterized the work of the Commission. As has come to be associated with the post-election phase, political parties held press conferences and counter press conferences to declare themselves as either winning or leading when the provisional results started trickling in. The uncertainty created by some of the pronouncements from these multiplicity of press conferences spiraled into anxiety, forcing people to stay indoors for fear of possible violence.

The EC declared the NPP's Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo to have won the election with 6,594, 875 votes (51.48%) and announced that the NDC's John Dramani Mahama polled 6,130,698 votes (47.86%). The aftermath of electoral declarations generated diverse responses amongst Ghanaians nationwide. NDC sympathisers in the wake of NDC's loss took to several demonstrations nationwide to press for an audit of the election results sheets. Most of the violence that characterised the announcement of the results were engineered by the youth. The demonstrations took a gendered approach when hundreds of women embarked on a protest march in the streets of Accra to call for the reversal of the Electoral Commission's declaration of President Akufo-Addo as the winner of the presidential election. In the midst of the confusion and disagreements, the former MP for Tamale Central, Inusah Fusieni, advocated for Mahama to declare himself winner of the 2020 presidential elections and form a parallel government. This statement, for instance, drew lots of condemnation from CSOs and culminated in a later invitation and a charge of the said MP for inciting violence. Similarly, the Minority in Parliament led by its leader, Haruna Iddrisu, marched to petition the EC at its headquarters about the polls, but a scuffle ensued between them

and the police when the MPs defied the orders and went beyond a barricade mounted by the police around the Ridge Roundabout, a few meters from the EC's headquarters. The physical manhandling of the legislators and the EC's inability to meet with the legislators further deepened the mistrust and suspicion among these stakeholders. Later, the Chairperson of the EC, Jean Mensa, apologised to the Minority in Parliament for her inability to be present to receive their petition.

These street protests for nearly two weeks forced the police to seek a restraining order to prevent prospective demonstrations in Accra. Specifically, in Accra, the police clashed with supporters of the NDC at the forecourt of the headquarters of the EC after they were refused entry. The police had to use water cannons and rubber bullets to disperse the unwavering crowd that continued to picket at the EC demanding for the resignation of the EC chairperson Jean Mensa. Coincidentally, simultaneous violent protest codenamed "No Mahama, No Peace" took place in other parts of the country with the burning of lorry tyres, pelting of stones, blocking of major roads, destroying of private and state property, and in some instances, attempt to attack the police to demand justice and change of the outcome of the general elections. The demonstrators blamed the police and the military for the escalated violence and accused these state institutions of bias. The strategy of these demonstrators was to intensify their actions by moving the demonstrations into civil disobedience, but they could not sustain the proposed actions because of the alertness of the security agencies and the education from CSOs on how to manage the dissatisfaction of election results. The intervention of the NPC within the umbrella of the NERG succeeded in managing the tensions and violence that characterised the declaration of the results. Following these engagements, the NDC in particular agreed to use the legal means to address their grievance instead of resorting to violence.

Election Petition and Matters Arising

Following that, the NDC eventually submitted a petition to the Supreme Court after weeks of street protests over alleged voter fraud and irregularities. The petition underscored the need to build and sustain trust within the democratic institutions in Ghana. The petition detailed serious violations of the 1992 Constitution by the chairperson of the EC.

The issues that were determined by the court included the following:

- Whether or not the petition discloses any reasonable cause of action;
 - Whether or not based on the data contained in the declaration of the Electoral Commission of President Akufo-Addo as president-elect, no candidate obtained more than 50% of the valid votes cast as required by Article 63 (3) of the 1992 constitution;
 - Whether or not the 2nd respondent still met the Article 63(3) of the 1992 Constitution threshold by the exclusion or inclusion of the Techiman South constituency presidential election results;
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- Whether or not the declaration by the first respondent dated 9th of December 2020 of the results of the presidential election conducted on the 7th of December 2020 was in violation of Article 63(3) of the 1992 Constitution;
- Whether or not the alleged vote padding and other errors complained of by the petitioner affected the outcome of the presidential election results of 2020.

The reliefs sought by Candidate John Mahama included:

- A declaration that Mrs. Jean Adukwei Mensa, Chairperson of first respondent and the Returning Officer for the Presidential Elections held on December 7, 2020 was in breach of Article 63(3) of the 1992 Constitution in the declaration she made on December 9, 2020, in respect of the Presidential Election that was held on December 7, 2020;
- A declaration that based on the data contained in the declaration made by Mrs. Jean Adukwei Mensa, Chairperson of first respondent and the Returning Officer for the Presidential Elections held on December 7, 2020, no candidate satisfied the requirement of Article 63(3) of the 1992 Constitution to be declared President-elect;
- A declaration that the purported declaration made on December 9, 2020 of the results of the Presidential Election by Mrs. Jean Adukwei Mensa, Chairperson of first Respondent and the Returning Officer for the Presidential Elections held on December 7, 2020, is unconstitutional, null and void and of no effect whatsoever;
- An order annulling the Declaration of President-Elect Instrument, 2020 (C.1. 135) dated December 9, 2020, issued under the hand of Mrs. Jean Adukwei Mensa, Chairperson of first respondent and the Returning Officer for the Presidential Elections held December 7, 2020, and gazetted on December 10, 2020;
- An order of injunction restraining the second respondent from holding himself out as President-elect; and
- An order of mandatory injunction directing the first respondent to proceed to conduct a second election with Petitioner and second respondent as the candidates as required under Articles 63(4) and (5) of the 1992 Constitution.

This was not the first time that a Ghanaian presidential election result had ended up in the Supreme Court. In 2012, NPP's Akufo-Addo's petitioned the court to throw out then-president Mahama's win. After nearly

45 days of court proceedings the seven-member panel in a unanimous decision dismissed the 2020 election petition filed by John Mahama stating that it lacks merit.

According to the Chief Justice:

"The petitioner did not demonstrate in any way how the errors [committed by the EC] affected the declaration of the election...We have therefore no reason to order a re-run [of the polls]".

However, the court proceeding was fraught with a number of issues that raised questions and suspicion about transparency, accountability and fairness in the entire judicial process. The refusal of the request of the interrogatories, the rejection of the request to inspect the documents in possession of the EC and the refusal of the EC chairperson to testify raised serious concerns about the desire to establish the truth. Besides, these actions were premised on the laws governing the elections. Moreover, the petitioners also failed to adduce any evidence of their own tallied results that suggest contrary to the results announced by the EC. In seeking to overturn a presidential result before the Supreme Court of the Land, it is imperative for the petitioners to provide enough evidence to support their claims. The posturing of the courts and the doubts raised by their every action added to the Afrobarometer's 2019 finding that highlights Ghanaians' lack of trust and the perceived corruption within the judiciary. Unlike the 2012 election petition ruling where there was a lot of uncertainty, anxiety and nervousness of how people were going to receive the verdict, the 2020 election petition was much calmer. Before the ruling, many had prepared their minds towards the outcome, especially considering how the case had travelled with many of the requests of the petitioner being dismissed. The security atmosphere was less intense even though the security agencies had put measures in place to address any violent fallout.

The Supreme Court ruling brought finality to the outcome of the 2020 presidential polls. Candidate Mahama in response to the ruling accepted the judgement but disagreed with the outcome. He stated thus:

"As much as I'm aware that we're legally bound by the decisions of the Supreme Court, I disagree with the process of the trial and the ruling of the court,"

The ruling of the courts has not marred anything in Ghana principally, because the petition was given a fair hearing at the court. Beyond the political gains it achieved, the petition could not adduce enough tangible evidence to support the claims of voter fraud. Although the verdict did not go his way, he agreed he was bound by it. Besides, he was a beneficiary of the same system in the 2013 electoral petition where the latter also did not agree but was bound by the courts ruling. Expectations were that he would not react beyond what he made clear as his position. At minimum he could have asked for a review but he did not.

Cross-Level Interaction Among Various Stakeholders

There are multiplicity of stakeholders in Ghana's elections. It is therefore common knowledge that, these stakeholders have always had vested interest in the country's electoral processes and its related matters. At various levels of Ghana's electoral politics, the Electoral Commission, Political Parties, the National Peace Council, Civil Society Organizations, the Law Enforcement Agencies and the Judiciary, interact among themselves. Arguably, of all these stakeholders, the political parties appear to have the greatest stake in the elections. As a result, they resort to different approaches to secure their interest. For this reason, there is always some degree of tension between the Electoral Commission and the political parties, specifically the opposition parties. Nonetheless, in past elections we have seen how these stakeholders have collaborated amongst themselves for effective election management.

The cross level-interaction effect between the Electoral Commission and the political parties differs at different levels. Generally, comparing previous elections to the 2020 elections, the EC was less consultative and this caused a bad relationship between the EC and the political parties particularly the largest opposition party. Perhaps, this most likely provoked the mistrust, suspicion and tension between the two actors. More specifically, the manner in which the Commissioner was appointed raised a lot of suspicion coupled with allegations that, she together with her assistant Commissioners were sympathisers of the ruling party. A number of media reports showed that, while the NPP often agreed to almost every decision taken at IPAC meetings, the NDC on the other hand often disagreed or boycotted meetings. Added to this, was the mismanaged channel of communication between the EC and the opposition political parties.

On these grounds many other stakeholders expressed that, the EC's inability to build consensus with the political parties probably contributed to some of the disputed administrative and procedural guidelines instituted by the EC. Some CSOs bemoaned the continuation of this practice in which compromise often not respected hinders the progress of IPAC meeting and renders its purpose nearly useless.

As was argued by an interlocutor:

"The EC does not have the professional language to communicate with most of its stakeholders especially the political parties...This has impacted negatively on its relationship with other stakeholders"³.

Over the years, CSO have played supportive roles to Ghana's electoral system and this is ever increasing considering that the country's democracy is growing. Sustaining electoral systems with consented CSO action has been challenging. Ghana's democratic growth may be subjective but regardless, it is growing in such a way that the scope of expansion has created room for more CSO engagements. This is

³ Interview with a CSO representative, Accra. 20-03-21

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particularly so because, the State itself and other duty bearers are unable to meet all the demands that come with the broadened scope of Ghana's democracy hence offering more room to CSOs. While we may see an expansion of CSOs role in the context of elections, there are serious gaps in terms of capacity to be able to adequately play the expected role that is expected from them. Besides, there are a lot of "ad-hocness" in terms of the way and manner CSOs engage in elections. We have seen how the CSO partnerships under the Civic Forum Initiative (CFI) try to work together, but sustainability has always been a challenge mainly as a result of limited capacity and funding.

Another relationship of interest was between the NPC and CSOs. Drawing from past experiences, there appears to be deteriorating relationship between the NPC and CSOs particularly in the management of 2020 electoral disputes. The relationship was strained because the CSOs established that the current crop of the membership of the NPC lack proactiveness, finesse and the necessary technical expertise in dialogue, mediation and negotiation; particularly, when it is related to managing the individual egos of the political actors in the game. The NPC seemed weak and unable to handle the heat generated out of the disagreements over the election results.

As was highlighted by one CSO actor:

"...We realized that in 2020 the NPC was not the NPC that was in place in 2012 and 2016. There were a number of dynamics that played out key among them is that the NPC board was relatively new and this was their first major assignment. Ideally, that should not be a challenge but the composition of the group was problematic. It was mostly dominated by religious bodies, most of who lacked the requisite technical know-how to operate the NPC. This invariably affected the sought of partnership between the CSOs and the NPC. In fact, some CSOs didn't want us to allow the NPC to lead the process of electoral dispute management because they lacked the skillset. After the elections, we didn't hear the NPC talk rather it was some of the board's members that we were hearing."⁴

Also, the disparities in communication between the EC and the media demonstrated that, the media did not benefit from the high-quality levels of engagement and information-sharing that was generally associated with previous elections. Considering these differences, there was divided rapportage on election issues. It appeared also that the EC was biased in its relationship with the media fraternity. It seems they had some preferred media houses of which they gave unfettered access while giving limited chance to others. This further reemphasised and deepened the inherent suspicion around the EC's ability to be transparent.

One major influencer of the 2020 election was the issue of security. At the heart of the many security questions raised in this particular election was the deployment and use of excessive force by security

⁴ Interview with a CSO representative, Accra. 20-03-21

operatives especially in supposed opposition strongholds. It is the duty of the police to oversee election-related security as per the National Election Security Taskforce (NESTF) framework. The military is a constituent of the state and its loyalty is to the state and not interim occupants of the governmental tier. Many have argued that election is wholly a civic and civil affair and has nothing to do with the military. However, the role of the military in elections is captured within the context of the NESTF to include maintaining law and order, protecting lives and property, secure critical security installation and supporting the police and other sister security agencies once the security situation degenerate to a level that these other institutions cannot handle. It is within the arrangement that the military is always engaged to support the police and other sister security in providing security.

The weighty role of the military in the 2020 election has raised a lot of concerns and agitations. Specifically, there were instances in places in the Bono, Greater Accra and Northern regions where the military curiously denied access to polling and collation centres. These military deployments only come to make a bad case worse. As was raised by one respondent:

“We have crossed three decades of handling electoral violence with mainly police providing security. The deployment of the military on the Election Day appeared as though we were still in the military regime. The heavy use of the military in the 2020 elections was needless and unwarranted. Their involvement in the election only aggravated the chaos and shooting incidents that happened...If people perceive them as independent and professional, then it is difficult for people to push them away but already the perception out there is that, they are not independent and have been compromised. That is fuels a very dangerous electoral environment”.

CSOs, political parties, international and local election observers have all condemned the conduct of some of the military deployments in this particular election. The unprofessional conduct that climaxed in open show of partisanship to those that wield political power was an aberration and seem to have compromise the transparency and trust in the electoral process. To many this was a worrying turn of events, especially considering the use of military to perform police functions in election management. This deviation has weakened the public confidence in the military. The military is seen as the last resort when it comes to security provision so for them to be involved in the nitty-gritties of everyday policing compromises their operational effectiveness. Already the trust in the police is low.

vii. Conclusions and Recommendations

It is a well-established fact that democracy has been recognized as the best form of governance all over the world. Elections are a key component of this democratic governance particularly when it comes to the transfer of power from one leader to the other. It is through the exercise of franchise that citizens get the

chance to choose their elected representatives. Ghana is one of the few countries in Africa that has been described as being stable following the political power alternation. Between 1992 and 2020, power has alternated thrice between Ghana's two leading political parties, the NDC and the NPP. Even when there have been electoral disputes, the political actors have resulted to the judicial process for resolution.

Unfortunately, the history of elections under the Fourth Republic in Ghana shows a worrying trend of lack of adherence to the core principles of democracy. A number of activities that exist to strengthen the growing democracy appears to be under some serious strain. Some of the procedures involved in all stages of the electoral process such as the voter registration, polling, collation and announcement of results continue to be issues of serious contention among key stakeholders. Issues of identity, citizenship and the legal framework underpinning elections in Ghana have been misinterpreted, misrepresented and abused for political convenience. Although Ghana has not experienced electoral violence in the same magnitude as has happened elsewhere in Africa, there is a growing concern that the inability of stakeholders to address the pervasive trend of election-related violence may push the country down the path.

The 2020 general election was unique in all aspects. This was an election that took place during a pandemic with a lot of restrictions of border closures, movement of persons, travel restrictions and prevention for public gatherings. The security situation during the time could best be described as fragile. There was increasing rate of violent extremism and terrorist activities with some of Ghana's neighbors particularly in the north, and an implosion of an internal secessionist group of the Western Togoland in the Volta Region. These challenges coalesced with the insecurities, tensions and isolated incidence of violence generated by the perennial activities of political party contest to elect candidates to contest on their ticket and the compilation of new voters register. Despite supervising elections in which incumbent parties have lost on three occasions, significant deficiencies exposed the EC to suspicion of political manipulation. The appointment of the new leadership of the EC further deepened the mistrust and uncertainty about their ability to organize a credible election. For the first time CSOs seemed not to have played the significant roles that we have come to associate with elections in Ghana, obviously due to some administrative, funding and logistical challenges. Also, the EC was clearly less engaging with major stakeholders. Specifically, it failed to adopt and implement inclusive broad-based consultations with CSOs, political parties, media, political candidates and voters.

Building Trust While Ensuring Transparency

The rationale for this security report was to document a comprehensive assessment of the 2020 presidential and parliamentary elections. The empirical and anecdotal evidence suggest that the 2020 elections were riddled with issues of insecurity, violence and uncertainty. These issues were widespread and cut across the pre-election, polling and post-election phases. In addition, for the first time in Ghana's

democracy, a lot of violence and nationwide demonstrations characterised the collation and declaration of results stage with the loss of five lives and injuries to many others. The post-election security events however defied existing electoral outcomes where tensions were often recorded as high in voter registration and on the polling day than the post-election stage.

The role of the Ghana Police Service/National Elections Security Task Force (GPS/NESTF), the Attorney General's Department and the Judiciary in the determination and the investigation into the 61 reported election-related violence and the judgment thereof is critical to trust, impartiality, non-partisanship, integrity and stability of Ghana's democracy. To build public confidence, cure the impunity that have been associated with previous election-related violence and to prevent would-be perpetrators in future elections, there is the need for these key law enforcement and justice agencies to speed-up investigations and provide regular information to the public on the status of those 61 election-related violence reported by the police and the matter involving the excessive use of force by security officers during the elections.

The involvement and use of the Ghana Armed Forces in the 2020 electoral processes generated a lot of controversy and tensions. Their involvement in some of the violence that characterised the elections raised diverse reservations with some members of the general public and CSOs. From the many interactions, it is clear that the deployment of the military in the 2020 elections was seen as illegitimate and overbearing. A comparative analysis of the 2020 elections to previous elections showed that the violent incidence of this election unduly sunk Ghana's electoral credibility and democratic maturity. There are useful lessons to be learnt from the 2020 elections. Ghana's election 2020 has come and gone, and despite the political discontent that trailed the aftermath of the elections, and the Supreme Court ruling, majority of Ghanaians still perceive multi-party electoral system as the most ideal form of electing their leaders. This shows the level of political awareness and determination to sustaining democratic values. There is the need for a concerted effort from all stakeholders in Ghana's electoral system to address the growing incidence of violence in our elections. In doing so, the EC (the empire) needs to be more transparent and engaging with all stakeholders.

Ensuring a violent free election is not easy, but to address the significant events and challenges that clouded the 2020 elections, as raised by this report, we highly propose the following interventions for future elections:

The Electoral Commission of Ghana

- The EC must build trust within itself and improve on its relationship with all the major stakeholders including the political parties and CSOs. Institutionalize a non-negotiable organizational cohesion, establish reciprocal expectations of professional/leadership behavior between the EC and its personnel. It is also imperative for the EC to present itself as a body with a single voice in addressing election issues. It must also have an open-door policy of engaging with all stakeholders in the electoral process particularly opposition parties.

- There is the need for a legislative Instrument that spells out the security of tenure of the Chair and Commissioners of the EC. This is necessary for safeguarding the independence of the EC regardless of the continuous change of political party in power.
- The EC must work to ensure that it improves on its channels and strategies of communication. This requires making information readily and easily accessible across new and traditional media including, timely responses to critical issues, being an active listener, partnering and building strong alliances with most accredited media partners including community radios.
- The EC must create a system that allows for continuous registration of people who attain universal suffrage age. In consultation with relevant bodies especially political parties, the EC should facilitate the process for an agreed universal platform that easily allows for the continuous registration of people who turn 18 and others who hitherto are not registered voters to do so. This includes being decisive on the document to be used as a proof of citizenship. This should be strengthened further with a synergy between the EC and data management institutions as well as a synchronization of national data collection, in particular, to prove citizenship. The periodic mass verification exercise should however not be compromised.
- The EC must facilitate broad-based stakeholder dialogues, especially with CSOs, and make them an integral part of IPAC meetings to harness mutual trust between members. It should collaborate with IPAC to issue a joint statement that address most of the important issues and the joint decisions taken at meetings. This shall be done immediately at the end of all joint meetings.
- The EC should ensure due diligence in the recruitment of temporary election officers. It must ensure that, there are practical and robust training on election management for all would-be election officers.

Inter-Party Advisory Committee (IPAC)

- There is the need to strengthen IPAC by backing it with the right legislation and the needed power to hold political parties accountable. Additionally, the legal framework must clearly stipulate and define the composition and functions of the committee.
- IPAC meetings should develop a more regular platform of dialogue and engagements between the Electoral Commission and the political parties. Full transparency measures need also to be introduced including formal rules for meetings and published minutes.

National Peace Council

- The NPC board and Secretariat must be relooked at to ensure the Council has the adequate technical capacity and financial resource to resolve election disputes.
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- The NPC must be proactive in discharging its duties and build strong partnerships with other stakeholders with requisite knowledge and skills in conflict management and mediation.
- The NPC should take all the necessary mechanisms to make the Peace Accord signed by political parties binding with consequential effects. This is for the benefit of not reducing the accord into a mere symbolic gesture but to safeguard the integrity of subsequent peace accords and the interest of future elections.
- The NPC must revamp its interest in national issues to sustain its credibility as an oversight body. It is required to be proactive in responding to and in resolving matters that threaten the consolidation of our democracy and peaceful stability as a country.
- The NPC must be seen as an independent body without allegiance to any political party. Although, board members have the right to freely communicate their views about political happenings, the NPC should ensure that, they demonstrate appropriate professional ethics in communicating and executing their mandates.

National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE)

- The NCCE must be adequately resourced to enable them to continue their mandate of Community Engagements on need for peace during elections and election petitions.
- The NCCE must be proactive in organizing consistent and periodic civic and voter education annually instead of waiting till election year, on the district level elections and referendum.
- The NCCE should collaborate with key stakeholders to reduce political tension and public anxiety before, during and after elections.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

- CSOs must build partnership amongst themselves and with other stakeholders working within the election space. It is important for CSOs to leverage on their comparative advantages to enhance the continuity of their various election tasks. This means, they should have an established platform for accredited CSOs to create that enabling environment for capacity building, shared knowledge and expertise in spite of the existing competition for donor funding.
 - CSOs must periodically ensure to conduct an assessment of the electoral climate and provide sustainable solutions to emerging issues.
 - CSOs must proffer alternative source of funding to support the sustainability of project activities. They should for instance, leverage on their technical expertise and other avenues to generate internal revenues to sustain their operations and to reduce their over dependency on donor funding.
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- CSOs must serve as credible-alternative stakeholders and initiate multi-stakeholder dialogue with other institutions. CSOs should lead the process to ensure their activities are not aligned to promoting any political party's agenda as they risk losing public trust.
- There should be an established recognized body that brings all civil society organizations under one umbrella to serve as a check on civil society work, harness their operations and foster professionalism. Due to their practical experience, CSOs should be proactive in building strategic collaborations with stakeholders especially in working together to identify and address the critical issues that are likely to engineer electoral violence.

The Media

- All media platforms and/or their affiliate bodies should ensure to publish only verifiable and impartial information about electoral events and results including those received from the public/listeners/viewers.
- Media should desist from using intemperate words in broadcasting and trivializing or exaggerating issues to the public. The prevalence of these for example, has the tendency of inflaming tensions, mistrust and consequentially, igniting electoral violence.
- All media houses must have a working code of conduct that details or governs their operations during elections. This must include the adequate training of election reporters, adequate accreditation and how to safeguard their security.

Political Parties

- Political Parties must invest in building the knowledge and skills of their supporters specifically, their polling agents especially in arithmetic and legal issues, election monitoring and processes, and electoral frameworks. They should invest in the development of their members especially polling agents and accredited observers to enable them have the needed oversight responsibility in managing elections and electoral results.
 - Political parties must endeavor to share only accurate information through credible communication platforms about electoral activities and outcomes with their supporters. They should initiate policies with punitive measures for supporters or party members who engage in electoral malpractices.
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- Political parties must have good-working relationship with election and security management bodies.
- Political parties must work to build and maintain consensus with the Electoral Commission and other election and security management bodies.
- Political parties must respect the independency of state institutions, especially the EC and security agencies. In particular, the two dominant parties should desist from mistrusting state institutions whenever they are in opposition.
- Political parties must endeavor and should be encouraged to use only evidential reports and laid-down approved legal mechanisms to resolve electoral disputes and concerns.

Judiciary

- The judiciary must be independent of any political influence and undue pressure.
- The Judiciary must build trust within itself to enhance mutual trust, specifically with citizens and political parties.
- The Judiciary should acknowledge people's right to right of speech and allow for constructive criticisms or divergent views regarding its own conduct and decisions.
- It should strengthen its credibility and integrity through appropriate measures.

Law Enforcement Agencies

- Law Enforcement Agencies must build the capacity of their personnel to engineer professional conduct and management of election-security related situations.
- Law Enforcement Agencies must reduce the deployment of the military; the military should be used as a last resort to addressing electoral violence. When need be to engage the military, they must be trained on how to relate with civilians without using brutal force as though electoral violence should be treated as warfare.
- Law Enforcement Agencies must be proactive to investigate and offer transparent feedback on all electoral violence-related cases. The public should be updated on the status of these reported cases and what measures are undertaken to ensure timely justice to win public confidence.

- With established evidence, the body must take all the necessary steps to take investigative measures against misconduct of political parties, political party sympathisers, voters and media houses that misinform the public.
- Law Enforcement Agencies must offer independent services devoid of any political party influence. Professionalism should be established as a hallmark in the discharge of their duties and personnel should be encouraged to be firm in discharging their duties without kotowing to the whims and caprices of political figures and other influential persons.
- Law Enforcement Agencies must establish good working-partnerships with other practitioners and institutions within the peace and security space for shared knowledge and best practices.
- Law Enforcement agencies should adopt and implement electoral justice mechanism specially those violating human rights. These mechanisms should integrate resolutions for law enforcement agents who unnecessarily and unprofessionally violate the rights of civilians in the cause of the work.

ECOWAS / AU / International Partners

- Regional and International bodies are to ensure that there is greater transparency, regulation and control within electoral management bodies so that they reflect more than just the interest of the State or country.
 - International monitoring observers are encouraged to fully understand and identify the various issues that emerged during the electoral processes so as not to undermine the occurrence of electoral mishaps and regrettably contribution to setting a negative tone in electoral reports.
 - They should ensure that Ghana's commitment to international protocols and frameworks relating to elections are indeed respected during election periods.
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Appendix 1:

Regional Representation of 2020 Gazetted Presidential and Parliamentary Polls for NPP and NDC

Region	No of Valid voters	Number of valid voters on party basis		Others	Number of Seats on parliamentary basis	
		NPP	NDC		NPP	NDC
Western	1,187,333	439,724	398,549		9	8
Central	1,567,756	613,804	538,829		10	13
Greater Accra	3,528, 996	1,253,179	1,326,489		14	20
Volta	924,116	100,481	606,508		1	17
Eastern	1,641,050	752,061	470,999		25	8
Ashanti	3,019,178	1,795,824	653,149	Independent (Fomena)	42	4
Western North	468,683	175,240	196,556		3	6
Ahafo	316,970	145,584	116,485		4	2
Bono	653,378	292,604	203,329		6	6
Bono East	5,94,610	153,341	213,694	Sene West (outstanding)	3	7
Oti	358,552	103,865	181,021		0	8
Northern	1,050,016	409, 963	476, 550		9	9
Savannah	298,404	80,605	144,244		3	4
Upper West	469,753	121,230	238,972		3	8
North East	289,529	122,742	112,306		4	2
Upper East	659,317	170,340	335,502		1	14
Total	17,027,641			1	137	137

Source: EC (2020a & 2020c)

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