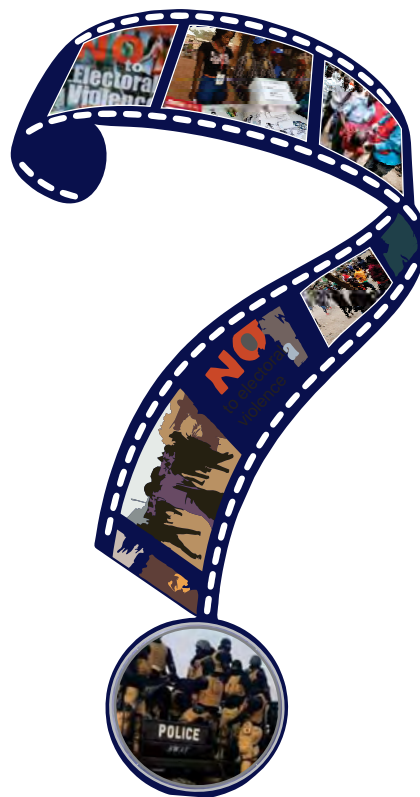


**RESEARCH PAPER**

**27**

# **ELECTORAL VIOLENCE AND POLITICAL VIGILANTISM IN GHANA**

EVIDENCE FROM SELECTED HOTSPOTS



Mawusi Yaw Dumenu  
Mildred Edinam Adzraku

Research Report



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**ELECTORAL VIOLENCE AND POLITICAL VIGILANTISM IN GHANA:  
EVIDENCE FROM SELECTED HOTSPOTS**

**Prepared by:  
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(CDD-GHANA)**

**Commissioned by:  
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(UNDP) GHANA**

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# **Electoral Violence and Political Vigilantism in Ghana: Evidence from Selected Hotspots**

## **Final Report**

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## ACRONYMS

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| AG        | Attorney-General                                       |
| AU        | African Union  |
| AWW       | Ayawaso West Wuogon                                    |
| BVDs      | Biometric Verification Devices                         |
| CBOs      | Community Based Organizations                          |
| CDD-Ghana | Ghana Center for Democratic Development                |
| CHRAJ     | Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice |
| CODEO     | Coalition of Domestic Election Observers               |
| CPP       | Convention People's Party                              |
| CSOs      | Civil Society Organizations                            |
| DCEs      | District Chief Executives                              |
| EC        | Electoral Commission of Ghana                          |
| EU        | European Union   |
| FBOs      | Faith Based Organizations                              |
| FGDs      | Focus Group Discussions                                |
| FOMWAG    | Federation of Muslim Women Association                 |
| GACC      | Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition                        |
| GJA       | Ghana Journalists Association                          |
| GSS       | Ghana Statistical Service                              |
| IGP       | Inspector General of Police                            |
| KAIPTC    | Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center  |
| LECIAD    | Legon Center for International Affairs and Diplomacy   |
| LED       | Local Economic Development                             |
| LI        | Legislative Instrument                                 |
| MDAs      | Ministries, Departments and Agencies                   |
| MP(s)     | Member(s) of Parliament                                |
| NADMO     | National Disaster Management Organization              |
| NCCE      | National Commission for Civic Education                |
| NDC       | National Democratic Congress                           |
| NDPC      | National Development Planning Commission               |
| NHIS      | National Health Insurance Scheme                       |



|       |                                       |
|-------|---------------------------------------|
| NLM   | National Liberation Movement          |
| NPC   | National Peace Council                |
| NPP   | New Patriotic Party                   |
| NYEP  | National Youth Employment Programme   |
| PWDs  | Persons with Disabilities             |
| SDGs  | Sustainable Development Goals         |
| SOEs  | State Owned Enterprises               |
| SONA  | State of the Nation Address           |
| UNDP  | United Nations Development Programme  |
| WANEP | West Africa Network for Peacebuilding |
| YEA   | Youth Employment Agency               |

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ghana has enjoyed uninterrupted governance since the country returned to constitutional rule in 1992. Ghana has had seven successive presidential and parliamentary elections resulting in three peaceful turnovers from one political party to another (2001, 2009 and 2017), and other intervening elections such as by-elections, re-runs, district level and internal political party contests. However, none of these elections have been conducted without some forms of violence, and the violent incidents keep intensifying with increasing competitive elections. Coupled with this is the surge and use of political vigilante groups in electoral and political activities, a phenomenon that threatens Ghana's democracy, peace and stability.

This research was commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and undertaken by the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), to explore the underlying context of electoral violence and political vigilantism in some selected hotspots in the country. The research also collated citizens' perspectives on government initiatives that are aimed at addressing the phenomenon of political vigilantism and its implication for peaceful elections. The study adopted a qualitative research design to help the researchers' gain in-depth contextual understanding about electoral violence and political vigilantism. Eight groups made up of respondents 18 years and above were purposively targeted as the study population in five sampled hotspots across three zones (Northern, Middle and Southern) in the country. These hotspots are Yendi, Bolgatanga, Sankore, Asawase and Aflao. The communities were selected based on either one or more of the criteria below:

- Communities in which there has been an incident of electoral violence
- Recorded incidence of political vigilante activity
- Highly competitive elections

The research team conducted Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) in the sampled communities to elicit information from the groups. In all 36 FGDs were conducted in the five hotspots sampled for this study.

### **Summary of main findings**

- Across all hotspots, electoral violence manifests in several forms including verbal and physical assaults noted to result in destruction of properties, especially properties of political opponents, removal of electoral materials among others.

- The main actors of electoral violence are: primary actors (political party youth, vigilante groups, supporters and polling agents of political parties); secondary actors (candidates or aspirants, political party leaders); and external actors (EC staff, security agents (police), media, traditional and religious leaders).
- Largely, respondents identified structural causes of electoral violence as winner-takes-all politics in Ghana, unemployment and poverty, polarized chieftaincy disputes; and proximate causes as electoral malpractices, family background, especially lack of parental care, political influence on the media, lack of confidence in security agencies, poor enforcement of laws, verbal abuse, electoral malpractices, and integrity issues with the EC.
- Generally, respondents identified ignorance, peer influence, unfulfilled promises by politicians and political parties, enlistment of party foot soldiers into security agencies, chieftaincy disputes as potential drivers of electoral violence.
- In terms of the motivations to form vigilante groups, respondents generally identified mistrust for state institutions (EC and Police), need for internal party security, desire to win political power and conception of vigilantism as a business model as the underlying motives.
- Uncovering why people join vigilantism groups, respondents identified employment, rewards for services, recognition within parties, revenge and protection, and protection from the law as the main reasons.
- The use of drugs among political vigilantes was raised as a big concern in almost all the communities. Respondents mentioned the use of tramadol and some ordinary medicines bought from pharmacy shops and combined with some other items to form strong drugs for consumption. Having consumed these drugs, the political vigilantes perpetuate crimes without consideration for their victims.
- A few respondents are aware and have knowledge about the recently passed Vigilantism and Related Offences Law Act, 2019 (Act 999) to tackle vigilantism and related offences. Moreover, skeptics do not think the Act is necessary, and that more efforts should be channeled at enforcing existing laws.

In addition, they noted that lack of political will coupled with hypocritical behavior of politicians, corrupt practices of police officers and interference from traditional authorities would militate against effective enforcement of the Act.

- Respondents are optimistic a positive outcome of the dialogue between the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) being facilitated by the NPC would promote free and fair elections, enhance the electoral process, enhance confidence in the outcome of elections and increase Ghana's democratic credentials. However, it was based on the hope that public awareness should be created on the dialogue itself and the outcomes.

### **Policy recommendations**

Participants at the FGDs made the following recommendations for policy consideration.

#### **Electoral Commission of Ghana**

- Promote inter party dialogues in constituencies, extending the dialogues to even the lowest level of the communities, such as the polling station and the ward levels. This will be helpful in mitigating risks and threats to peaceful elections. Most often misinformation leading to suspicion creates anxiety between opposing political parties. This dialogue will offer the opportunity for all issues to be fact-checked and rumors dispelled.
- Build the capacity of polling agents of political parties on the electoral laws and procedures. Most of these agents are ignorant of the laws and this defines their actions at the polling stations. The EC in collaboration with the political parties may schedule capacity-building sessions at the constituency level to train polling agents of candidates and parties in the run up to elections.
- The EC should deepen its commitment and ensure free and fair elections and independence in the delivering of its mandate in order to engender public trust for the Commission.
- The EC should undertake due diligence in the recruitment of their temporary staff.

## **Government of Ghana**

- Resource the NPC and the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) including resourcing their regional and district offices, to be proactive in taking center stage in convening such dialogues that will be preventive-driven.
- Political will is needed to enforce laws without fear or favour. It is always expected from ruling governments to take the lead in enforcing decisions on all offenders who violate the laws, and allow the justice system to deal decisively against offenders, especially when members from their own parties are involved. This will boost the confidence of justice delivery institutions, and their actions will also serve as a deterrent to potential offenders.
- Creation of sustainable jobs for the youth would go a long way to keep them from engaging in political violence. Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies should consider initiatives to empower the youth within their communities through feasible Local Economic Development (LED) approaches.
- The Minister of Justice and Attorney General as required by Section 10 of the Vigilantism and Related Offences Act, 2019 (Act 999), must as a matter of urgency introduce a legislative instrument that will provide the necessary regulations to give effect to Act 999.

## **Civil Society Organizations**

- Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), including faith-based organizations, the media, NPC and the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) should take active interest and embark on continuous civic education and peacebuilding campaigns on elections.
- Build the capacity of the youth to serve as peace ambassadors in hotspot communities. This will nurture a generation who will be interested in peaceful outcomes of elections in their communities instead of being used as tools to perpetuate violence.
- Mass public sensitization on the Vigilantism and Related Offences Act, 2019 (Act 999) is required from the media, civil society, political parties, NPC, and the NCCE to boost awareness about the Act.
- Religious leaders should continue to preach peace at social events and in the churches and mosques.

## **Leadership of Political Parties**

- While the NPC is engaging the leadership of the NPP and NDC to find lasting solutions to political vigilantism, the awareness and knowledge about the process appears to be low at the constituency/community level. Community level executives are estranged from the process, and this may have negative consequences for buy-in of the outcomes of the dialogue. There is therefore the need for the main parties involved – NPC, NPP and NDC leadership to engage with constituency actors especially in hotspots. The NPC, NPP and NDC should explore avenues to replicate the dialogue at the grassroots, and popularize the Political Parties Code of Conduct and Roadmap to eradicating political vigilantism that were generated from the dialogue.
- Similarly, conscious efforts should be made by the leadership of NPP and NDC to disseminate the outcomes or agreement of the dialogue through engagements with executives in the party sub-structures. Such an approach will sensitize executives at the sub-structures and contribute to their buy-in and support implementation of the Roadmap to eradicating political vigilantism and Code of Conduct for political parties.



Political vigilantism is not new in Ghana's political history. The violence and antagonism that characterized the activities of the then political vigilante groups littered the road to the country's independence and immediate post-independence period with the formation of the Action Troopers of the National Liberation Movement (NLM) and the Action Groupers of the Convention People's Party (CPP) (Allman, 1993). The formation of these political vigilante groups stemmed from what seemed to be tensions over political party formation and the national political philosophy - federalism versus unitary government (Attobrah, 1976). However, the activities of these earlier vigilante groups fizzled out following the overthrow of Ghana's first president, Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah and his CPP-led government in a 1966 coup d'etat. Other forms of political vigilantism resurged during the long period of military rule, but these were quelled by the military regimes (Asirifi-Danquah, 2008). The Fourth Republic has witnessed the gradual resurfacing of political vigilantism taking a pivotal role in Ghana's electoral politics. Ghana is nonetheless touted as a model of democracy and good governance. Characterizing this enviable feat since resumption of multi-party democracy in 1992, is a record of seven successive and generally peaceful elections that have culminated into three successful transfers of power from one party to another in 2001, 2009, and 2017 respectively. However, beneath these positive credentials are undercurrents of recurring low intensity electoral violence that has virtually marred every election cycle (Bob-Millar, 2014), although this has not blown out into a civil war as exemplified elsewhere on the continent (African Union (AU) and Government of Ghana, 2018). Indeed, none of the seven presidential and parliamentary elections, by-elections and re-runs was without violence, with the level of violence intensifying as electoral and political competition intensified with each election.

Mention can be made of re-run and by-elections that were characterized with violence such as those conducted in Akwatia in the Eastern Region (August, 2009), Chereponi in the Northern Region (September, 2009), Atiwa in the Eastern Region (August, 2010), and Talensi in the Upper East Region (July, 2015) (Edu-Afful and Allotey-Pappoe, 2016, p. 69).

The most recent case of electoral violence was the Ayawaso West Wuogon (AWW) Constituency by-election held on January 31, 2019, in which there was a shooting incident and about a dozen persons were injured in clashes between supporters of the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) and purported national security operatives (Myjoyonline, January 31, 2019). Political vigilante groups with affiliation to the two leading political parties, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) have been at the forefront of unleashing torrents of violence during elections with the aim of undermining opponents, in either inter-party or intra-party contests and events, and safeguarding the electoral fortunes of their parties (Lartey and Danso, 2016, p. 55). By-elections and re-runs have proven to be tense atmosphere that is plagued with more violence largely because virtually the entire machinery of political parties, functionaries and droves of party footsoldiers<sup>8</sup> descend to a single constituency to campaign and monitor elections.

Described as a brand of party activism that violates the norms of liberal democracy (Bob-Milliar, 2014), dynamics around the operation of political vigilantes have evolved. With reference to the Fourth Republican era, Edu-Afful and Allotey-Pappoe (2016) note that “Historically, in Ghana, political vigilante groups have emerged in response to the theft of ballot boxes, violence, and the inability of security agencies, mainly the police service, to provide adequate security, especially during electioneering periods.” Over time, a new dimension has been observed with vigilante group activities, in which there is an apparent penchant for patronage spoils following electoral victory of their party, often negotiated as an entitlement through exhibition of violence and acts of hooliganism. Post-election and transition periods marking transfer of political power from one political party to another – (2001: NDC handed over power to NPP; 2009: NPP handed over power to NDC; 2017: NDC handed over power to NPP) – witnessed NPP party footsoldiers in 2001 clashing with their counterparts in the NDC to seize control of lorry parks, and public places of convenience which were maintained by the latter. Similar acts of aggression and takeovers occurred when the table turned in 2009,

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<sup>8</sup> Edu-Afful & Allotey-Pappoe (2016) highlight the origins of the term 'party footsoldier(s)' from the work of Bob-Milliar (2012, 2013), as a term coined to represent a group of party loyalists who in 1996 supported the presidential ambition of NPP business economist and investment consultant, Andrews Kwame Pianim, during the party's primaries.

with the NPP relinquishing power to the NDC. Groups associated with the latter took control of public places of convenience, lorry parks, National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) offices, the then National Youth Employment Programme (NYEP) offices and Metro Mass Transit Limited. In some instances, these vigilante groups successfully ousted District Chief Executives (DCEs), managers and staff of state institutions such as the NHIS and NYEP (Armah-Attoh, 2017). The transition of NPP into office in 2017 was no different from previous times and marred the almost smooth process. NPP affiliated groups, mainly led by the Invincible Forces, Delta Force and Kandahar Boys plunged the nation into a series of unlawful invasions, seizures and forceful control of public assets and facilities – for example, public places of convenience, lorry parks, toll booths, Kintampo water falls, Tema Port and Harbour, Passports Office, School Feeding Program sites, Tamale Teaching Hospital, among many other public places.

The increasing number of vigilante groups coupled with their militarization poses significant threats and risks to Ghana's growing democracy and national security in diverse ways. First, the ability of vigilantes to disregard and physically assault appointees of the President; and later set free colleagues on trial at a court in Kumasi for the initial offence of forcefully removing from office the Ashanti Regional Security Coordinator, Mr. George Adjei, suggests that they have entrenched themselves as a semi-autonomous institution that threatens the legitimacy of the state (WANEP, 2019). Second, their activities of disrupting electoral processes with violence poses the likelihood of discrediting the democratic process and throwing it into an atmosphere of widespread insecurity (WANEP, 2019); and can undermine the sovereign will of the people (Gyampo, Graham & Asare, 2017). Third, continuous existence of these groups without addressing the attendant problems has the tendency to metamorphose into militant groups (Asamoah, 2019) and has far-reaching consequences for a volatile and unstable sub-region. These highlighted risks have the tendency to inhibit the state's ability to fulfil its primary responsibility of protecting the population and meeting its commitment in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 16 which focuses on 'Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions'<sup>9</sup>.

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9 UN SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

These are part of the reasons for this research that sought to unearth the causes to be able to develop appropriate policy recommendations to support efforts to end political vigilantism in Ghana.

### **Rationale for the research**

Violence has become a regular feature of Ghana's elections and manifests in open confrontations, clashes, threats intimidation, ballot box snatching and stuffing among others. These incidents create an atmosphere of tension and fear, and ultimately undermine election credibility. Election violence in Ghana is mostly perpetrated by vigilante groups or party footsoldiers affiliated to political parties. Dr. Kwasi Aning, a security expert when he appeared before the Justice Emile Short led Commission of Inquiry on the AWW Constituency by-election violence intimated that there are about 24 identifiable vigilante groups in the country (Myjoyonline, March 4, 2019)<sup>10</sup>, and many more without names. This number is likely to increase given the intense competition between the NPP and NDC, especially during elections. Political vigilantism and its attendant electoral violence pose a threat to the nation's democratization process, peace and stability (CODEO, 2017a) in a region that is increasingly becoming volatile.

Activities of vigilante groups now go beyond elections and dovetail into post-elections, transitions and periods of governance. This means vigilantism is gradually being entrenched in Ghana, and the unabated scourge of their blatant disregard for the rule of law and penchant for impunity is a source of concern for Ghanaians. Recognizing the incessant seizures of state assets, attacks on state institutions, public officials and citizens, and the mayhem they cause during elections, especially during by-elections, has sparked massive public criticism and condemnation. The latest vigilante incident on the Ayawaso West Wuogon by-election on January 31, 2019 received mass public condemnation and demand for action to stem vigilantism in Ghana, which was met with swift action from the president.

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10 Dr. Kwasi Aning, Director of Faculty of Academic Affairs and Research at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center (KAIPTC) in Accra Ghana appeared before the Justice Emile Short Commission in March 2019 during its inquiry sitting to share his expertise on the subject of political vigilantism. See: Myjoyonline.com (March 4, 2019) Security analyst names 24 violent groups in Ghana <https://www.myjoyonline.com/news/security-analyst-names-24-violent-groups-in-ghana/>

This subsequently led to three major interventions from the government. First, the Justice Emile Short Commission of Inquiry into the AWW Constituency by-election violence was inaugurated. Second, the president tasked the Minister for Justice and Attorney General to initiate a process to have a bill on vigilantism, and third, the president tasked the NPP and NDC to meet and disband their known party vigilante groups. The public furore against the AWW incidence, and the quick executive response to the incidence point to the fact that vigilantism in Ghana's politics has reached its apex, and can potentially derail Ghana's much touted democratic credentials.

These executive initiatives also point to the recognition of the extent of the political vigilante challenge and therefore the need to take steps to preserve Ghana's peace and stability, and improve on its good governance now and beyond Presidential and Parliamentary elections in 2020.

Indeed, these concerns have engaged the attention of quite a number of scholars whose previous studies have shed light on the extent of violence in electoral processes and vigilantism in Ghana's electoral and political processes. For instance, Lamptey and Salihu (2012) discussed the linkages between patronage politics and electoral violence in Ghana while Amankwaa (2013) explored the dynamics and causes of election-related violence and its relations with patronage in three different regions in Ghana. Bekoe (2012) on her part used examples from selected countries in Africa to discuss voting in fear and electoral violence in Africa. Bob-Milliar (2014) looked at political party youth activists' role in supporting elites to capture political power and their involvement in low-intensity electoral violence. Danso and Lartey (2012) unearthed the motivations underlying the resort to electoral violence and its implications on Ghana's democratic consolidation. Abdallah and Osei-Afful (2012) examined not only the involvement of the youth in election activities of political parties, but also the active roles they played as perpetrators of political violence. Frazer and Gyimah-Boadi (2011) addressed the mechanisms for preventing electoral violence in Africa. In relation to political vigilantism, Armah-Attoh (2017) in a policy brief examined party footsoldiers in Ghana's politics using Afrobarometer Round 7 (2017) survey data and pre-election survey data. Similarly, Gyampo, Graham and Asare (2017) looked at political vigilantism and the destabilizing acts of vigilante groups in undermining the consolidation of Ghana's democracy. Edu-Afful and Allotey-Pappoe (2016) examined the activities of sub-state actors in the provision of security within the political landscape with particular focus on political vigilantism and electoral violence in Ghana. Attuquayefio and Darkwa (2016) addresses the phenomenon of political party vigilantism.

Lartey and Danso (2016) assessed both state and sub-state actors in the provision of security in election related activities. Notwithstanding these literature sources, there remains less empirical information and assessments on policy initiatives for addressing political vigilantism and electoral violence.

It is based on this that this research sought to build on the existing body of research on the phenomenon of electoral violence and political vigilantism, gain more understanding about the motivations and dynamisms of vigilante actions, as it happens in different hotspots. This was expected to ascertain unique contextual dimensions in hotspot communities with the aim of informing policy design of workable interventions to address specific problems. In addition, in the absence of any known assessment, there is the need to test the perception and assessment of government actions and initiatives aimed at solving the menace of political vigilantism from the point of view of community members in hotspots.

### **Research objectives**

Specifically, the study sought to:

- Gain in-depth contextual understanding of electoral violence and political vigilantism within selected hotspots building on existing research on electoral violence and political vigilantism in Ghana.
- Examine the dynamics, manifestation and issues that have implications for peaceful and credible elections in selected hotspots.
- Collate views and perspectives of members of hotspots on ongoing government initiatives for addressing political vigilantism; and
- Make recommendations to inform catalytic peace and governance initiatives targeted at addressing the underlying causes of electoral violence at the community level.

### **Scope of work**

This study formed part of broad project interventions that sought to engage various stakeholders in an attempt to collate views from various stakeholders on political vigilantism and its interaction with electoral violence, and ultimately champion advocacy that aims at garnering support and public discourse towards eradicating the phenomenon from Ghana's electoral and political spaces. The research focused on drawing on the perspectives of some identifiable groups in five selected hotspots that cut across the Northern, Middle and Southern zones of the country through the use of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) as the primary data collection method.

The study explored contextual discussions with research participants or respondents about electoral violence and political vigilantism taking into account the timeframe between 2012 and 2019. The study further provided case studies of each of the five hotspots to inform the design of specific interventions by policymakers and practitioners.

### **Structure of the report**

The report is structured into five major chapters, with chapter one introducing the topic with a brief background on electoral violence in Ghana's Fourth Republic and its linkage with political party vigilantism and the rationale for undertaking this research. Chapter two describes the methodology which was used in designing, sampling, collecting and analyzing the data. In chapter three, the results and findings are thoroughly discussed, and concluded with considerations for policy makers in chapter four. The last chapter focuses on reflections on context specific cases for each of the hotspots sampled for this study.

#### **Introduction**

This section discusses the methodology adopted for conducting the research. The discussions cover the profile of study areas, research design, study population, sampling procedure, data collection methods, and analysis of the data.

#### **Profile of study areas**

##### **Bolgatanga**

Bolgatanga is the District Capital of one of the fifteen (15) administrative districts of the Upper East Region. It is also the regional capital of the region. Bolgatanga Municipality was established in 2004 by legislative instrument (LI) 1797 (2004). It is located between 10°30' and 10°50' North and longitudes 0°30' and 1°00' West. Bolgatanga shares its border with Bongo District to the north, Talensi and Nabdam to the south and east and to the west by Kassena Nankana Municipality. It is characterized with soils ranging from sandy loams to salty clays. The vegetation is that of savannah woodland characterized by short scattered drought resistant trees and grass that is burnt by bushfire or scorched by the sun during the dry season. The climate is characterized with one rainy season from May/June to September/October, from November to mid-February with cold, dry and dusty harmattan. Agriculture, hunting and forestry are the main economic activities (Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), 2014a).

##### **Yendi**

Yendi is the capital of Yendi Municipality and the Dagbon Kingdom. It is located in the eastern corridor of the Northern Region and lies between Latitude 9°30' North and 0°30' West and 0°15' East. Yendi Municipality shares boundaries with six districts. Saboba district to the east, Chereponi and Zabzugu districts to the South, Nanumba North Districts to the North, Gushegu and Mion Districts to the west. Yendi is about 90km from the Northern Regional capital, Tamale. It is characterised with sedimentary rocks of predominantly voltarian sandstone, shales and mudstones. The vegetation is a tree savannah. Most of the people of Yendi are involved in subsistence agriculture (GSS, 2014b).



### **Sankore**

Sankore is one of the settlements in the Asunafo South district of the Ahafo Region. It is located on the Nobekaw-Sefwi road. Sankore is close to the Abonyere forest Reserve in the Goaso Forest District. The main occupation of the people is farming, mostly cocoa and plantain. A small proportion of the population are into buying and selling of foodstuffs (Mckeown et.al, 2015). Sankore is one of the six (6) area councils of the Asunafo South District. The Asunafo South District is one of the six (6) districts of the Ahafo Region. It shares boundaries from Asunafo North Municipal to the north and the Juaboso District to the south-west.

### **Asawase**

Asawase is located in the Asokore Mampong Municipal of the Ashanti Region. It is one of the three zonal councils of the Asokore Mampong Municipality. Asawasi has a population of about 80,258 and is the largest settlement in the Asokore Mampong Municipality. The Municipality covers a total land area of 23.91 km<sup>2</sup> and is located in the North Eastern part of Kumasi Metropolis. It shares boundaries with Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly to the East, South and West, Kwabre East to the North -West. The Municipality falls within the west-sub equatorial. it falls within the most semi-deciduous ecological zone (GSS, 2014c). Asawase is one of the strongholds of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) in the Ashanti Region. The Asawase Constituency was created in 2004 and has since been occupied by the NDC.

### **Aflao**

Aflao is located in the Ketu South Municipality of the Volta Region. It is less than 10km from Lome, the capital city of Togo, sharing the border with Togo. It is a densely populated community and serves as the main commercial town on the eastern gateway to Ghana. Aflao being a border town experiences large human and vehicular traffic to and from neighbouring countries such as Togo, Benin, Nigeria among others on a daily basis. The factory Diamond Cement is located in Aflao (Arku, 2013). The factory employs more than six hundred (600) people who are mostly indigenes of the Ketu South Municipality (Ketu South Municipal Assembly, 2019).

### **Research design**

The research adopted a qualitative design with the aim of gaining deeper insight into the causes, manifestations and dynamics of electoral violence and political vigilantism within the context of each of the selected communities. The study puts emphasis on the question of 'how' and 'why' of the phenomenon under study to get a better understanding of the phenomenon beyond the questions of 'what' which usually does not uncover in-depth reasons for explaining issues.

### **Study population and sample size**

In each of the communities, a wide variety of groups in the adult population were considered for the study. Respondents who participated in the study were 18 years and above as they constitute the adult population. Persons 18 years and above were included because they are autonomous and are able to provide informed consent to participate in the study. This is not the case for the population below 18 years who are considered special and protected. Respondents were constituted into groups based on the eight categories listed below:

- Identified persons involved in election violence (including members of identifiable political vigilante groups, militant youth groups)
- Political party executives/representatives
- Community Based Organizations (CBOs)
- Youth groups (including tertiary wing of political parties, political party youth groups, community youth associations eg. Yendi Youth Parliament etc)
- Profession based groups (Taxi/bus/Okada drivers' union, Teachers association, dressmakers and tailors association etc)
- Women groups (Market women association, Christian Mothers Association, Federation of Muslim Women Association (FOMWAG) etc.)
- Assembly members
- Religious or Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) and traditional authorities

Overall, 442 respondents participated in the study and this constituted the sample size. This sample size enabled the amplification of many voices, and it demonstrated the extent of community-wide consultation and participation. Additionally, the sample size enabled rich and diverse perspectives to be shared by respondents as they participated in the study.

### **Sampling procedures**

Based on the design, a non-probability sampling procedure was applied in selecting communities that are designated as flashpoints or hotspots for violence. The country was clustered in three zones, that is, the Northern, Middle and Southern.

Five hotspots were purposively sampled in five constituencies representing each of the three zones based on *at least either one or more* of the under listed criteria:

- Communities in which there has been an incident of electoral violence
- Recorded incidence of political vigilante activity
- Highly competitive elections

Bolagatanga, Yendi, Sankore, Asawase and Aflao were sampled in the Bolgatanga Central, Yendi, Asunafo South, Asawase and Ketu South constituencies respectively with the justifications provided in Table 1.

**Table 1: Sampled hotspot communities**

| <b>Community</b> | <b>Constituency</b> | <b>Zone</b> | <b>Justification</b>   | <b>No. of FGDs</b> |
|------------------|---------------------|-------------|--|--------------------|
| Bolgatanga       | Bolgatanga Central  | Northern    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recorded incidence of electoral violence</li> <li>2. Recorded incidence of vigilante activities</li> </ol>   | 8                  |
| Yendi            | Yendi               | Northern    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recorded incidence of electoral violence</li> <li>2. Recorded incidence of vigilante activities</li> </ol>   | 8                  |
| Sankore          | Asunafo South       | Middle      | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recorded incidence of electoral violence</li> <li>2. Recorded incidence of vigilante activities</li> <li>3. Close electoral competitiveness/close margin constituency</li> </ol> | 6                  |

|                                  |            |          |   |           |
|----------------------------------|------------|----------|---|-----------|
| Asawase                          | Asawase    | Middle   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recorded incidence of electoral violence</li> <li>2. Recorded incidence of vigilante activities,</li> <li>3. Close electoral competitiveness/close margin constituency</li> </ol> | 8         |
| Aflao (Ketu South) <sup>11</sup> | Ketu South | Southern | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recorded incidence of electoral violence</li> <li>2. Recorded incidence of vigilante activities</li> </ol>  | 6         |
|                                  |            |          | <b>Total</b>  | <b>36</b> |

### Data collection methods and analysis

Primarily, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) was employed as the method of data collection in soliciting useful information from targeted groups. This method is useful because it provides a platform for differing worldviews (Guba & Lincoln, 1994); and allows group interactions and provides insight into why certain opinions are held (Blaikie, 2010). Fieldwork was conducted from August to September 2019.

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11 Aflao in the Ketu South Constituency was selected because it is a major border community that shares boundaries with the Republic of Togo in the Eastern Corridor of Ghana. As with previous elections, particularly the 2016 elections, there were suspicions, allegations and confrontations to prevent suspected Togolese nationals crossing the border into Ghana to participate in electoral activities in favour of the NDC. Prior to the December 7, 2016 elections, the Volta Regional branch of the NPP launched 'Operation Eagle Eye' as a strategy for preventing suspected Togolese on the Ghanaian voter register from voting during the polls. Gyampo, Graham and Yobo (2017) notes the use of vigilante groups along the porous borders of Ghana-Togo in the Volta Region to prevent allegedly non-Ghanaian illegal voters from entering the country to vote. This makes a curious case for the study to understand the dynamics of electoral violence and political vigilantism within that context. See: Ghanaweb.com (May 11, 2016) We chased out Togolese voters - Ketu South NPP. <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/We-chased-out-Togolese-voters-Ketu-South-NPP-437717> (Accessed: November 7, 2019); See Peacefmonline.com (November 1, 2016) NPP Launches 'Operation Eagle Eye' To Prevent Togolese Voters. <https://www.peacefmonline.com/pages/politics/politics/201611/296937.php?storyid=100&> (Accessed: November 7, 2019)

The groups consisted of between 4 and 15 persons in each group. Most of the FGDs lasted for about 90 minutes. Participants of the FGDs were selected and grouped based on homogenous characteristics. Separate discussions were held for persons involved in election violence (including members of identifiable political vigilante groups), political party representatives, Community Based Organizations (CBOs), Youth groups (including tertiary wing of political parties, political party youth groups, community youth groups) and professional based groups (eg. Taxi /bus/okada drivers union, teachers associations, dressmakers and tailors associations). An FGD guide with open-ended questions to allow for further probing of responses was developed and used to facilitate discussions with the targeted groups.

Cumulatively, 36 FGDs were held in the five communities sampled for this study (refer to Table 1 for the breakdown). The FGD guide was translated into four local languages: Ewe, Twi, Dagbani, Gurune. Translators were used in FGDs that required local language translations and that contributed in preserving the accuracy of the primary data that was collected.

Researchers took copious notes during the FGDs in addition to the audio recording of nearly all sessions after seeking informed consent, and assuring respondents of keeping all information confidential and their identity anonymous. In some instances, respondents declined to have the FGD recorded even after informed consent had been sought, respondent anonymity and confidentiality of responses assured. Moderators respected the wishes of respondents and did not record those particular sessions. All audio recordings (including local languages) were transcribed for the purposes of complementing the researchers' notes for data analysis and report writing. The transcribed data was analyzed using ethnographic analysis, which allowed researchers to examine the quotes and context of respondents in the FGDs, and derived meanings from the responses (Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick & Mukherjee, 2018). Themes and illustrative quotations derived from the quotes of respondents were used to back the meanings and interpretations captured in the discussions. The discussions were further triangulated with relevant data from secondary sources to test the validity and reliability of the primary data collected from the five selected hotspots. Respondent or participant validation suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) was conducted as a dissemination event, which allowed some selected respondents and stakeholders to validate the preliminary report of this study.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Discussion of Results and Findings

#### Introduction

This chapter focuses on discussing the results and findings following the analysis of the data. It has been structured into two sections, with the first section focusing on understanding electoral violence whereas the second section delved into exploring the context and drivers of political vigilantism in the selected hotspots.

#### SECTION A: Understanding Electoral Violence: Actors, Drivers and Dynamics

##### Understanding violence

According to Bufacchi (2005), violence can be defined from two perspectives. Violence in terms of an act of force, or violence in terms of violation. He indicated that most scholars or academics attempt at defining violence combine both the idea of an act of physical force with a violation. Honderich (2002, p. 91; 2003, p. 15) as cited in Bufacchi (2005) defines violence as a “use of physical force that injures, damages, violates or destroys people or things. Stegar (2003, p. 12) argued that violence “comprises a range of meanings, including “to force”, to injure, to dishonour” and “to violate”. Based on findings from the study, nearly all respondents described violence as a misunderstanding/disagreement between two or more people that leads to the destruction of properties, death, chaos and confusion. There was a consensus among respondents that the bedrock of violence is misunderstanding/disagreement between two or more people, hence the need for patience and tolerance. The views expressed by the respondents brought to bear the fact that violence leads to strained relationships thus culminating into physical and psychological outcomes of violence. Subjecting the definition of violence by respondents to Honderich's (2002) definition of violence, the physical and the psychological outcomes may come because of injury and dishonour.

A respondent of the Community Based Organization Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) in Yendi defined Violence as:

*“Violence is an act of committing/inflicting physical or emotional injury on an individual or a group of people as a result of a misunderstanding or differences that exist among people.”*

A respondent of the Political Party Executives FGD in Bolgatanga also defined violence as:

*“Violence refers to disturbances that can lead to loss of property and life, and sometimes it creates fear so that people cannot be themselves.”*

Apart from assessing respondents' understanding of violence, the study also sought to establish the types or forms of violence and those that are prominent in the study area.

From the data gathered, the study areas in Northern Ghana (Yendi and Bolgatanga) were characterized with chieftaincy and political violence while communities visited in Middle and Southern Ghana (Sankore, Asawase and Aflao) had mainly political violence. It is imperative to note that political violence in the former tends to be embedded in chieftaincy disputes.

A participant in the FGD conducted for Assembly members' in Yendi noted:

*“In Yendi here, chieftaincy is the most prominent violence, followed by political violence and then ethnic violence.”*

A participant of the political party executive FGD in Bolgatanga noted:

*“The main ones that happen in Bolgatanga are chieftaincy and political violence, but chieftaincy is the prime kind of violence”.*

A participant of the Religious Leaders FGD in Asawase noted:

*“Political violence- thus violence between political parties is the commonest violence here.”*

A respondent of the Professional Based Group FGD in Aflao noted:

*“Mostly the major violence is political violence. However, after the elections then things become normal.”*

### **Manifestation of violence and its connection to electoral violence**

According to Birch and Muchlinski (2017), electoral violence entails coercive force, directed toward electoral actors and/or objects, that occurs in the context of electoral competition – it can occur before, during, or after elections, and it can target a variety of actors, including candidates, activists, poll workers, election observers, journalists, and voters.

Straus and Taylor, (2012) also referred to electoral violence as physical violence and coercive intimidation directly tied to an impeding electoral contest or to an announced electoral result. Straus and Taylor, (2012) asserted that electoral violence in Africa mostly manifests in the form of harassment and intimidation.

This study sought to establish how the prominent forms or types of violence in the study areas are related to electoral violence. From the evidence gathered, it is of importance to note that politics is a trigger of violence embedded in chieftaincy disputes in Yendi and Bolgatanga. Politicization of the Dagbon Chieftaincy dispute and the Bolgatanga chieftaincy dispute have given rise to political violence in these areas. Respondents noted that influential politicians from the NPP and the NDC have aligned themselves with either of the two feuding gates and are purported to be fanning the disputes.

Ostensibly, political figures meddling in the chieftaincy disputes are giving the assurances that their respective governments will ensure that the skin is given to the faction aligned to their political party. This concern was flagged by respondents in Bolgatanga<sup>12</sup> as a potential risk for violence during the 2020 Presidential and Parliamentary Election since fertile grounds have been created for chieftaincy related issues to be ironed out violently on political and electoral grounds by supporters of the feuding factions. Kendie, Osei-Kurfour and Boakye (2014) revealed in their study of selected communities (Bawku, Gbane, Yendi, Hohoe and Agbogbloshie) in the country that while the underlying remote causes are obscured, politics acted as a trigger; especially to more deep-seated ethnic, chieftaincy and land related disputes when violent conflicts are associated with elections.

Tsikata and Seini (2004) and Tonah (2012), underscored the politicization of unresolved chieftaincy and communal disputes across the country. The authors accentuated that rival groups/royal gates in chieftaincy or communal disputes often align or identify with either the New Patriotic Party (NPP) or National Democratic Congress (NDC) to gain influence at the local level to enhance their chances of winning the chieftaincy dispute especially when their party of affiliation gets the nod to govern the country. The consequences are that local conflicts play out in the political arena as part of party related squabbles that spark violence. The NPP and the NDC have been accused by several groups and individuals of politicizing the Dagbon Chieftaincy dispute.

Key among these individuals is the Asantehene, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, the King of the Ashanti kingdom who doubled as the Chair of the Committee of Eminent Chiefs assigned with the responsibility of bringing peace to Dagbon.

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12 The Bolgatanga chieftaincy disputes started after the death of the Paramount Chief of Bolgatanga, Naba Martin Abilba III, in 2013. In May 2015, two persons were enskinned at two separate ceremonies as Bolga Nabas. The late chief's eldest son, Raymond Abilba was installed to succeed his father and Joseph Apakre another royal laying claim to the skin was also enskinned as the Paramount Chief of the Bolgatanga Traditional Area by the Overlord of the Mamprugu Traditional Area, Naa Bohugu Mahami Sheriga, in Nalerigu. The litigation between the two factions over the Bolga skin is currently before the Court of Appeal in Tamale. See: Gbcghanaonline.com (October 26, 2019) Bolga chieftaincy factions ordered back to house of chiefs for resolution <https://www.gbcghanaonline.com/news/bolga-chieftaincy-factions-ordered-back-to-house-of-chiefs-for-resolution/2019/> (Accessed: March 13, 2020); Citinewsroom.com (October 1, 2019) Resort to due process- Ambrose Dery to Bolga feuding factions. <https://citinewsroom.com/2019/10/resort-to-due-process-ambrose-dery-to-bolga-feuding-factions/>

In the FGDs with CBOs and Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) in Bolgatanga they indicated their perception of the Raymond Abilba faction to be aligned with political interest of persons in the NDC and Joseph Apakre faction aligned with the NPP.



He blamed the NDC and the NPP for the failure of the committee in bringing peace to Dagbon in its initial attempt due to the suspected meddling of the two main political parties in the chieftaincy conflict. He indicated that while the NDC claimed to be Andanis, the NPP supported the Abudu's (Peacefmonline, December 5, 2011).

Similarly, the Omanhene of the Sankore Traditional area, Nana Ogyedom Appiah Kubi also accused the NDC and NPP for being responsible for the political violence in Sankore. According to him, the political violence began in 1992 and since then it has been recurring due to the activities of the two main political parties (Modern Ghana, September 25, 2018).

A respondent of the NDC youth group FGD in Sankore noted:

*“Political violence is the most prominent one. The violence started in 1992, there was no parliamentary candidate from Sankore then...2008 and 2012 we were supposed to end the attacks but now we cannot even go to town now.”*

Drawing from the dominant forms of violence in their communities, respondents indicated that electoral violence is expressed through the following actions in the study areas:

#### *Intimidation of Opponents and Voters*

Intimidation of political opponents and voters was identified in almost all the FGDs as one of the key actions through which electoral violence is expressed in the study areas. Well-built men 'machomen' are deployed to polling stations to intimidate voters, create panic and a sense of insecurity for voters, opponents and even polling staff. In some instances, these well built men fire indiscriminate gunshots in the air and screech motorcycles around polling stations, mostly in opposition strongholds to disrupt polling processes.

A desirable outcome of these tactics - intimidation or threat of violence - serve the purpose of instilling widespread fear and panic among voters (those present and those yet to go to the polling stations), reduce voter turnout and ultimately reduce the margin of votes of their opponent, even if their party's presidential or parliamentary candidate does not necessarily win the results at that polling station.

Respondent of political party pouth & activists, Yendi:

*“Politicians know their strongholds and 'weakholds' in the constituency. They use intimidation and restrict voters from coming out to vote in areas that are not their strongholds. And there are reprisals between politicians every electoral season.”*

Another respondent of the NPP Executive and youth group FGD in Asawase acknowledged same:

*“I wouldn't mention any political party's name. In 2012, I was an Assemblyman here at Asawase. Asawase Keneako school park had two polling stations. From morning to about 11am when there was a long queue, that was when some macho men came in with motorbikes on top speed to give warning shots and then the people dispersed, running for their lives. People informed their relatives and they ended up not going out to cast their ballots for fear of the possibility of being shot dead”.*

These views expressed by respondents concur with the views expressed by the African Union Election Observation Mission to Ghana during the 2016 Presidential and parliamentary elections. The Observer Group noted that the 2016 presidential and parliamentary elections were characterized with incidents of violence, intimidation and use of offensive language across the political divide (African Union (AU), 2016).

#### *Use of abusive or indecent language*

Respondents indicated the use of abusive language has become a common phenomenon in Ghana's body politics and these verbal abuse on radio and campaign platforms of political parties is one of the triggers of election violence.

A female respondent in the Yendi Youth Parliament FGD noted:

*“When they come to the platform instead of them to tell people what they will do when they are voted into power, they would rather insult or attack their opponent which leads to violence.”*

These views expressed by respondents were alluded to by the Commonwealth Observer Group that was in Ghana to observe the 2016 general elections. The observer group in its interim statement after the 2016 presidential and general elections raised concerns about the use of inflammatory language particularly on radio (The Commonwealth, 2016). Also, the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) in its final report of the 2016 Presidential and Parliamentary election noted the pre-election period was characterized by the use of abusive language on campaign platforms by politicians (CODEO, 2016).

### *Violation of electoral laws*

Respondents indicated that the violation of electoral laws by political parties and their supporters give rise to electoral violence. The most prevalent violations that give rise to violence during electoral activities often stem from registration of minors, registration of foreign nationals, registration of persons not resident in the constituency and misconduct of political actors. While multiple registration, registration of minors and non-residents and misconduct of political parties cut across almost all communities, registration of alleged foreign nationals usually from Togo was more pronounced in Aflao. Thus, for instance the Limited Voter Registration period usually heightens this manifestation of violence<sup>13</sup>. Instead of resorting to completing a challenge form, party agents rather resort to violent confrontations to prevent perceived ineligible registrants from registering. Physical attacks are meted to victims to discourage the use of the challenge system. For instance in Sankore, respondents noted that vigilantes from the opposing party at times physically assault persons who challenge the eligibility of registrants. In another instance, a headmaster was brutalized by political party assailants for providing information about a suspected minor from his school to the District Registration Review Committees (DRRC).

Respondents bemoaned the weak enforcement of electoral laws by the EC. Respondents accused the EC of not enforcing its own laws; and that the challenge process was not effective in preventing ineligible persons - minors, non-residents and non-nationals from being registered. Respondents noted that this was due to perceived biases on the part of EC's staff, deliberately ignoring use of challenge forms, delays in the adjudication process, and perception that persons who are usually challenged still end up in the voter register and subsequently vote during elections. Armed with the notion that alleged minors, non-residents and foreign nationals would end up voting on election day once they are allowed to go through the registration process successfully, hence the need to prevent them from the onset, and that sets the tone for contention between party agents of opposing sides and in some cases resulting in violent clashes.

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13 For instance, during a limited voter registration exercise at a registration center in Asawase on June 28, 2019, supporters of the NDC and the NPP engaged in a free-for-all brawl triggered by an alleged assault of Zeinab Jibril by Muntaka Mohammed MP for Asawase constituency. In her account, she alleged that she pulled down the veil from the face of a lady who was brought to be registered by the MP, who in turn slapped her twice for that. Angered by this, supporters of both parties clashed, leading to injury of three persons and vehicles vandalized. See: Ghanaweb (June 29, 2019) Bloody NPP, NDC clash leaves 3 injured. <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Bloody-NPP-NDC-clash-leaves-3-injured-759157> (March 27, 2020)

The EC constitutes the DRRC, which reviews reported cases after the registration period. However, these processes experience low patronage from political parties, guarantors, and perceived minors, foreigners and non-residents who are challenged and are required to appear before the DRRC. CODEO observation report of some sittings of selected committees in 2012 confirms this low level of interest and patronage in the work of the DRRCs (Modern Ghana, July 3, 2012)<sup>14</sup>. Similarly, the Biometric Voter Exhibition Exercise which allows for the voter register to be cleaned by means of ridding it of minors, deceased persons, foreigners and multiple registrations before it is finalized, records slow response and low patronage by the general public and political parties (CODEO, 2018, p. 101-102). Respondents from FGDs in Sakore explained how electoral laws are violated.

*“The rules on the challenge form do not work. Our opponents [NPP] will not allow you to pick the challenge form to register your complaint. When such a person is challenged then it results in an exchange of words, and then NPP and NDC agents will attack each other.”* - Respondent, FGD with NDC Party Youth Group, Sankore

*“The electoral laws are not enforced here. When your party is not in power nothing works for you and when you oppose they beat you up and wound you with a machete. The EC does not ensure that the challenge form works.”* - Respondent, FGD with NPP Executive, Sankore

This view was corroborated by CODEO in its communique that assessed Ghana's 2016 Presidential and General elections. CODEO (2017) in the communique bemoaned the weak enforcement of electoral rules by the EC.

#### *Physical attacks, destruction of livelihoods and property*

Respondents stated that through violent and vigilante actions in their communities, people have lost their lives, others have been maimed, livelihoods and properties have been destroyed as a result of electoral and politically motivated violence.

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14 The report highlighted CODEO's observation of the sitting of District Registration Review Committees (DRRC) in some selected districts in 2012 following the Biometric Voter Registration Exercise. See: Modernghana.com (July 3, 2012) EC official ignores District Registration Review Committee. <https://www.modernghana.com/news/404299/ec-official-ignores-district-registration-review.html>

They indicated that violent incidents are often characterized with gunshots, cutlass attacks, pelting of stones and other physical attacks which eventually results in injuries, loss of life in some cases as exemplified by this report in which one person was shot dead while others sustained gun wounds when some supporters of the NPP and NDC clashed at Sankore (Modern Ghana, August 2, 2017), and destruction of businesses and loss of properties through vandalism. In the FGD with women groups in Sankore, respondents noted that business and trading activities are affected as a result of violent clashes between hooligan factions of NDC and NPP sympathizers, with people running out of town and others staying away from the market area in fear of their lives.

A participant of the NPP party executive FGD in Sankore noted:

*“Again I want to say that people are hurt and some are bitter. All of us sitting here have had cutlass inflicted wounds; some on their head, arm or other parts of the body. All of us are bitter, and until there is a compensation for victims, there is nothing you can do to make Sankore safe and progress. It is one very important thing to look at. Some may forgive and let go but it's not all people who can do that”.*

A respondent in a FGD with NDC Party Youth in Sankore noted:

*“Some of us are targets and we have not been able to sleep in our rooms for the past 2 years. We know those who have sworn heaven and earth to terminate our lives no matter where they meet us.”*

A respondent of the Faith Based women FGD in Bolgatanga noted:

*“When those political parties clash, they attack our businesses by looting, burning down kiosks, houses and motorbikes”.*

As found in a previous study by Edu-Afful & Allotey-Pappoe (2016), the use of illicit drugs among political vigilantes was raised as a big concern in almost all the communities this study was conducted. Respondents mentioned the use of drugs such as tramadol and some ordinary medicines bought from pharmacy shops and combined with some other items to form strong drugs for consumption.

Having consumed these drugs and under its catalytic influence, the political vigilantes perpetuate crimes without any consideration for their victims.

Illicit drugs essentially enhance the viciousness, ruthlessness and impulsiveness with which vigilante groups operate.

A respondent of the Bolgatanga Professional Bodies noted:

*“Some of the vigilantes take drugs like tramadol or a solution of teda cough mixture, tomtom and coke drinks. These make them feel high and engage in the social vices we are talking about.”*

A respondent of the Asawase Political Party Youth noted:

*“Most of the vigilante activities emanate from the Aboabo spare parts area and the Subin areas where the big gutter is located. The boys are on drugs and are sometimes paid to cause confusion and wicked acts. After committing crimes in town, they go back to their ghettos at Aboabo and the big gutters at Subin.”*

### **Main Actors of Electoral Violence**

Evidence from the field suggests that most stakeholder groups in Ghana's elections value chain through their actions and inactions either overtly or covertly contribute to electoral violence. According to the participants at the FGD, actors in electoral violence ranged along structures within the political parties to executives and aspirants on one hand and state agencies such as staff of the EC and police who are all situated within the value chain of electoral processes in Ghana. The study also found that women had unique roles in fueling violence in the selected hotspots (*Refer to Appendix 1 for a detailed discussion on this*). The report classifies these actors into primary, secondary and external (Herbet, 2017; Peacebuilding Center, 2013).

#### **A. Primary actors**

##### *Political Party Youth*

Respondents noted that the youth are mostly involved in electoral violence in the study areas. They indicated that the youth often affiliate themselves with the two main political parties (NPP and NDC). Respondents noted the youth especially the unemployed are used by political parties and politicians to perpetrate violence with the promise of securing jobs for them. The youth engage in electoral malpractices such as removal and defacing of posters, facilitating the registration of minors, snatching ballot boxes among others to disadvantage their opponents.

Respondents noted that apart from the youth being used by political leaders to perpetrate violence during elections, the youth also engage in post-election violence such as seizure of public facilities like places of convenience, markets, and chasing out of public officials they perceive as belonging to the opposition party from public offices on their own accord.

A respondent who was in the FGD for Tertiary Students Wings of political parties held at Asawase noted:

*“Most of the time the party youth will not even wait for orders from their leaders and they just go around taking over markets, public toilet facilities, etc. There should be education right at the grassroots to ensure that things are done according to what the constitution says.”*

A respondent of the Women FGD in Yendi noted:

*“These political parties also use the youth to cause violence by giving them money and motorbikes to attack people.”*

These views expressed by respondents were accentuated in CODEO's final report on Ghana's 2016 Presidential and Parliamentary election. CODEO in its observation report noted there were incidences of post-election violence, disturbances and attacks on public properties such as places of convenience and the invasion of public offices by NPP youth groups. Furthermore, there were reports in the media of several forceful takeover of public institutions by NPP affiliated youth supporters after the swearing in of President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo in 2017 (Myjoyonline, January 9, 2017)<sup>15</sup>.

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15 Party youth supporters affiliated with the NPP in Tamale besieged and locked up the offices of the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), Youth Employment Agency (YEA) and the National Disaster Management Organization (NADMO) and threatened the public officers to vacate their offices because those positions had been earmarked for NPP youth since their party is in power. Their actions are believed to be revenge for similar actions taken by NDC affiliated youth who in 2008 seized control of the NHIS, YEA and NADMO offices when the NPP lost power. See: Myjoyonline (January 9, 2017) Rampaging Tamale NPP youth invade, lock up NHIS, YEA, NADMO offices. <https://www.myjoyonline.com/politics/2017/january-9th/rampaging-tamale-npp-youth-invade-lock-up-nhis-yea-nadmo-offices> (Accessed: November 23, 2019).

This phenomenon has become part of Ghana's body politics. Similar incidents were recorded in 2013 after the NDC's John Dramani Mahama was sworn into office as President (Frempong, April 8, 2013)<sup>16</sup>.

Furthermore, in a political environment that accords extensive powers to the president, and underpinned by strong neo-patrimonial tendencies, winning elections is key to maintaining patronage networks, control resources and dispense jobs, public services, or lucrative government contracts (Gyimah-Boadi, 2007; Lindberg, 2003).

With a youthful population structure, coupled with a lack of opportunities for participating in formal political, economic and social decision-making, young people become vulnerable to political manipulation and are exploited for violence (Asante, 2006; Danso and Aborampah Mensah, 2015; Gyampo, 2011; Bob-Milliar, 2014).

#### *Political Vigilante Groups*

Political vigilante groups have been visible in all elections (district level elections, intra-party contest, and by-elections) usually with well-built and muscular men as members. Evidence on the ground indicates that increasingly the NDC and NPP rely on vigilante groups for security and electoral victory (Kwarkye, 2018). Political parties, particularly, opposition parties, tend not to trust the police, especially during elections.

Instead of depending solely on state security for protection, the NDC and NPP prefer to entrust the safety and security of their parties and party leadership (presidential candidates, running mates and campaign contingents, political events, including rallies and delegates conferences) in the hands of vigilante groups, sometimes sidelining the official state security personnel assigned to them. Vigilantes are often deployed as goon squads to undermine political opponents and electoral activities to give unfair advantage to their sponsors who are more often political elites.

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16 Some youth of the NDC in Wassu Amenfi East District led by the Constituency Youth Organizer locked up the office of the District Chief Executive (DCE) claiming that the performance of the DCE was not in the interest of the party, thus resulting in disaffection. See: Frimpong, D. E (April 8, 2013) Angry NDC youth lock up DCE's office. <https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/politics/angry-ndc-youth-lock-up-dce-s-office.html>



These views expressed by Kwarkye (2018) are in line with the findings of the study. Respondents underscored the use of vigilante groups, who are mostly muscular and stoutly built, popularly referred to as “macho men’ in Ghana for political party internal security primarily by the NDC and the NPP. From the discussions, the two main political parties do not trust the security agencies to provide them with security, especially when they are in opposition. Hence, they resort to their own internal security arrangements.

A respondent in the FGD for Religious Leaders in Asawase noted:

*“The political parties say they have internal security and the internal security are these macho men. They form these groups because of lack of trust in the police.”*

A respondent in the FGD for Assembly members in Yendi made these observations:

*“In order for us to have a peaceful election, we should be able to dissolve these groups (vigilantes or violence groups) but I don't think we can measure up to these groups because they are well trained and have objectives including providing security. During election periods, they want to make sure they achieve the objectives they have been trained to accomplish. As a matter of urgency, we need to dissolve such groups or educate them so we can have a peaceful election.”*

#### *Supporters and Polling Agents of Political Parties*

Ghana currently has twenty-three (23) registered political parties and these political parties have supporters across the country. However, the two main political parties in the country (NPP and NDC) have more supporters than the other parties that barely have representatives in parliament and command smaller proportions of votes cast. Respondents identified political party supporters, especially those who serve as polling agents as one of the main actors of violence. The study found that some party polling agents spark up violence due to their lack of knowledge of the electoral laws and regulations. On the role of women in political violence, the study revealed that female supporters of political parties are used by their husbands' to verbally assault their political opponents.

A respondent in a FGD for Assembly members in Yendi explained a scenario of how supporters of candidates indulge in violence:

*“I must say there have been instances where two candidates are going for a position and one candidate is being favoured by the government and given the position, supporters of the second candidate may decide to attack the other candidate and his supporters which may lead to violence.”*

A respondent of the FGD held with Women in Yendi noted:

*“The party agents are not patient to handle polling stations. They become biased and fight over ballot boxes. During elections, some people use stones and buckets to form queues and this causes violence.”*

Respondents of the Profession Based Groups FGD in Aflao commented:

*“The party agents don't know their work. Even when you are enquiring on something, they are clueless on how to explain it to you. They rather resort to exchange of vulgar words [1]...I believe there are guidelines concerning elections to identify a person who is not eligible to vote at a particular center. There are rules to follow in that case. Unfortunately, when such issues arise party representatives mostly do not follow the official instructions, instead they just engage in arguments over peoples' nationality. That's just what they do instead of following the appropriate electoral process. And this leads to people fighting and engaging violence”[2].*

A respondent in the FGD for women in Yendi described the role of women in inciting violence:

*“Both men and women cause violence, especially women in the market. Some make unnecessary comments and rain insults for no reason. These women are just party sympathizers who are encouraged or incited by their husbands to insult and make noise in retaliation to attacks from their opponents.”*

## **B. Secondary Actors**

### *Aspiring Candidates of Political Parties*

Aspiring candidates of political parties were identified by respondents as one of the main actors of electoral violence in the study areas. From the discussions, it was evident that aspiring candidates of political parties use abusive language on their opponents on campaign platforms. These abusive language or offensive words turn to infuriate the supporters of the opponent leading to violence/clashes among the supporters of the two political parties, the NPP and NDC.

A respondent of the women group FGD in Yendi noted:

*“Those aspirants who want to be nominated speak anyhow and that tends to cause violence. This happens in both inter and intra party politics.”*

### *Political Party Leaders*

Respondents noted political party leaders use the youth in perpetrating violence. There was a general agreement among respondents that the leaders of the two main political parties in Ghana (NDC and NPP) influence their supporters and provide them with the resources and incentives to blatantly defy electoral laws and regulations.

A respondent of the Assembly members FGD in Yendi noted:

*“Our political leaders sometimes influence these groups (political vigilantes or violence groups). These acts can especially be attributed to the two main political parties in the country [referring to the NPP and NDC]”.*

A respondent of the Professional Bodies FGD in Asawase

*“Another thing is registration of minors. Political leaders will take them to register. I saw something like that four years ago and I did not allow them to register the minor.”*

### **C. External Actors**

#### *Electoral Commission of Ghana*

The EC by law is the election management body mandated to conduct free and fair elections and manage and regulate the activities of political parties in Ghana. By law, the EC is to be independent and neutral in the discharge of its functions and duties. From the discussions, it is believed by respondents that the EC is not neutral and independent in the discharge of its functions, hence, breeding mistrust among political parties and their supporters which often results in violence. Sometimes the behavior and conduct of some staff of the EC gives reason for suspicion of their actions, and invites unnecessary criticism of the EC's activities. Some of the participants asked whether the EC is indeed neutral. Some respondents indicated that often the processes leading to the elections, counting, collation and declaration of the election results by the EC are not free and fair and these are used as a basis for aggrieved individuals and party representatives to instigate violence.

A respondent in the FGD with executives of Tertiary Students Wings in Asawase acknowledged:

*“We all know that elections are run by the EC and when the processes are not fair on both sides there may be issues; and if the registration is not fairly distributed in the end the party which is disadvantaged will rise up and use mayhem or violence as a means to address their grievances. The EC should not reject candidates from one side and register candidates from the other side. They should do things fairly.”*

### *Security Agencies*

Respondents identified the police as one of the main actors of electoral violence. Respondents indicated that the political parties do not trust the police, because it is perceived that the police are always manipulated by ruling governments and therefore do the bidding of ruling governments. Due to this perceived manipulation, the police are seen as unprofessional and ineffective in the discharge of their duties. They noted that the police are unable to fight election related crime and provide effective security during elections. Respondents specifically accused the police for misconduct and unprofessionalism especially in the way they handle informants and are not able to keep their identities anonymous and secret from the public. Respondents thought such behaviour has also affected the police public image and the public trust in the police. The inability of the police to enforce the law has contributed to the increasing impunity with which vigilante groups and party footsoldiers act.

A respondent of the NDC Youth Group FGD in Sankore noted:

*“The politics here is such that even the police and soldiers are powerless. They can't control these guys because their weapons are even mightier than those of the state security. They are able to threaten people or even uniformed officers including the commanders and the ACPs, wielding these sharp edges and guns in their faces.”*

Religious Leaders' FGD in Asawase noted:

*“If you report a case and the police come to arrest the accused, the same police will let the accused person know that you are the one that reported him and they come out to attack you. There is no trust in the police.”*

### *Media*

Ideally, the media serve as a source of information for the public and plays a watchdog role, thus monitoring government and its officials, monitoring the implementation of government policies and programs among others. However, the media was identified by respondents as one of the actors responsible for instigating electoral violence. Respondents noted that politicians own the majority of media houses in Ghana. That is either the owners are affiliated to elites in the political parties or some senior and influential staff of the media houses align and sympathize with some political parties (candidates, party elites or the party as a whole). These political alignments or affiliation of media houses to political parties blind them to truthfulness and fairness, but focus on lies, deceit and biases in their broadcasting. The perceived falsehoods that they propagate incite, cause tension in the country, and sometimes result in violent actions by party supporters.

A respondent, an executive of political parties' tertiary students wing FGD in Asawase noted:  
*“Some media stations are affiliated to certain political parties and their day-to-day activities are in favour of these political parties, and they mostly misinform the unsuspecting public which leads to a lot of things [suspicion, mistrust, tension]<sup>17</sup> when it comes to election day. You cannot tell who is saying the truth. One station says things to favour their party and blacklist the other and that generates violence.”*

#### *Traditional and Religious Leaders*

Respondents outlined other actors such as traditional and religious leaders as actors of election violence. Ordinarily, the respect and reverence accorded to these leaders endow them with moderating influence on feuding factions. However, respondents indicated that some influential traditional, religious and opinion leaders are perceived to be aligned with political parties, hence are not able to objectively advise their followers to behave peacefully, or they are ignored when they call them to desist from violence.

A respondent of the Party Tertiary Executives in Asawase noted:

*“Influential people such as the chiefs, religious leaders etc. are supposed to play a neutral role within the process of election. They have so much influence on the electorates but when it so happens that here in Asawase some opinion leaders identify themselves with a particular candidate in the election period. This vexes the other side who see it as a threat or disadvantage and then it can result in chaos.”*

#### **Drivers and Causes of Electoral Violence and Current Dynamics**

The study also sought to examine the drivers and the underlying causes of electoral violence in the study areas. Taking a cue from Herbert (2017) and UNDP (2003) in analyzing causes of conflict, two categories - structural and proximate - are utilized for this classification. According to Herbert (2017, p. 15 & 16) “Structural causes of conflict (also called root causes or underlying causes) are long-term or systemic causes of violent conflict that have become built into the norms, structures and policies of a society. Proximate causes of conflict (also called immediate causes) are more recent causes that change more quickly, that can accentuate structural causes and that lead to an escalation of violent conflict. Respondents identified the following as the underlying causes of electoral violence.”

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17 Emphasis by the authors

## A. Structural causes

### *Winner-takes-all politics*

Ghana's electoral system is based on a first-past-the-post and winner-takes-all system of political interactions. This fundamental weakness emanates from the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana (Republic of Ghana, 1992). Consequently, the contestation for power is fierce and distinctly competitive. Even though the results of presidential and parliamentary elections tend to be close, losing candidates essentially get nothing. The net effect is that losing parties and candidates are excluded from access to state resources and decision-making processes. For instance, the president is vested with power to appoint close to 4000 persons to Ministries, Department and Agencies (MDAs), State Owned Enterprises (SOEs), and board members of all state institutions. In addition, the longer a party stays in opposition, chances are that the party will collapse. Thus, politics is reduced to a zero-sum game, parties and contestants see elections as a win-or-die affair (Kwarkye, 2018; Danso and Edu-Afful. 2012), increasing the potential for distrust, tensions, and violence.

Responses from the FGDs concurred with the views expressed by these authors.

A respondent of the professional bodies FGD in Asawase noted:

*“Everyone wants to win so they will do anything to ensure their opponents lose and as a result it turns out to be violent.”*

### *Unemployment and Poverty*

According to the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations, there are 422,000 unemployed Ghanaians in the country (Ghanaweb, August 15, 2019). The country's unemployment rate stood at 6.7 percent as at 2018<sup>18</sup>. Unemployment especially youth unemployment has been identified as one of the main challenges of Ghana's development. The subject of unemployment was one of the issues that featured greatly in the run up to 2016 Presidential and Parliamentary elections.

The NPP outlined its strategies (including the formalisation of the economy, financial inclusion, diversification of export base and development of the property market, favourable policy framework and economic stability) in addressing the issue of unemployment in the country (Pulse GH, March 31, 2019).

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18 Tradingeconomics.com (n.d) Ghana Unemployment Rate. <https://tradingeconomics.com/ghana/unemployment-rate> (Accessed: November 27, 2019)

On the other hand, there was a growing decline among Ghanaians in the ability of the incumbent government (NDC) in addressing the issue of unemployment (Asiamah, Asante & Gyimah-Boadi, 2019).

Respondents recounted how politicians influence youth and women especially the unemployed to engage in all forms of violence. From the discussions, respondents believe that unemployment is one key driver of youth vulnerability to being taken advantage of by political elites to engage in electoral violence. They indicated if the youth were gainfully employed they would not have the time to engage in acts of violence.

*A respondent from the women FGD in Yendi noted:*

*“It is the political parties which create fights that sometimes lead to death. When they are out campaigning, the youth or some of the women are influenced especially those who are not working. We all have to be vigilant because when they come out for you to do those things, the youth have to stop and avoid all forms of violence and should know they are being used. What I want to add is unemployment and illiteracy because when you are busy working you would not have time to follow politicians and political vigilantism. We have to educate them that when they come to influence them, they should not listen to them and their directives.”*

*A respondent from the women FGD in Yendi noted:*

*“Because they [politicians] know they [unemployed youth] have nothing to do, they entice them with little money. Sometimes they only give them food and some ten Ghana cedis and instruct them to go and disturb their opponents.”*

### *Polarized chieftaincy disputes*

Ghana is a multi-ethnic and a multi-cultural society. The resumption of competitive multi-party elections has resulted in a resurgence of cleavages along ethnic, religious and party lines. Some of these have been going on for years, and sometimes looks like a forgotten and dead issue, but they resurface in the heat of politics and elections, where factions align to either side of the political divide (Asante and Gyimah-Boadi, 2004; Frempong, 2001; Anebo, 2006; Heinz, Kohnert and Nugent, 2010).

Both the NPP and NDC play the ethnic card to score points in their traditional regional strongholds by complaining that incumbent governments marginalize and neglect their base. Both parties have further extended the politicization of issues to chieftaincy disputes in the country. It is the belief of respondents that most chieftaincy disputes have not been resolved in the country largely because of political interference.

## **B. Proximate Causes**

### *Electoral Malpractices*

Losing candidates and parties in elections often claim electoral irregularities and complain that they have been robbed of winning the elections. Examples of irregularities that trigger violence include misconduct by some political actors, registration of minors and non-Ghanaians as well as busing people to register in constituencies where they are not resident as required by law (CODEO, 2016; European Union (EU), 2009 & 2017). Also, some of the common acts that trigger violence are: defacing of publicity materials of political opponents including billboards and posters, shootings at crowds especially during political gatherings of opponents or the EC's official activities, growing intolerance evident in the use of hate speech, inflammatory and derogatory comments against political opponents, particularly during political talk shows and phone-in radio programs and social media are injurious to peace.

These views expressed by the authors above concurred with the views expressed by the respondents in the study areas. Respondents identified malpractices such as verbal abuse, vote buying, registration of minors by political parties, campaigning on election day and at the polling station among others as drivers of electoral violence.

A respondent of the Assembly members FGD in Yendi noted:

*“Where a political party suspects the EC for not being neutral during elections. When the election is not free and fair in the sense that one political party feels cheated this may trigger electoral violence.”*

A respondent of Executives of the Student wing of political parties FGD in Asawase observed:

*“Another cause of electoral violence has to do with voter registration and how some people who are not 18 years still get registered. People try to register minors and that causes a lot of violence.”*

A respondent of Executives of the Student wing of political parties FGD in Asawase acknowledged:

*“People on election day itself try to entice people to vote for a particular party so they share items. When the other side sees that they come in to chase those people away and that is bound to bring about violence. So on election day people just flout the laws; campaigning at the election grounds etc. has a great effect on our electoral process.”*

A respondent of the Professional Based group FGD in Aflao noted:

*“That is something that baffles our minds. It happens a lot even in the recent limited voters' registration exercise, party representatives failed to follow due process.”*



### *Media reportage and pronouncements*

Respondents identified the media as one of the drivers of the electoral violence. Respondents underscored the sensationalistic way media houses report and how the media allows its platforms to be used by politicians and political parties to incite people to engage in violence.

A respondent of the Assembly members FGD in Yendi commented:

*“Media is also a potential risk for the upcoming elections in the sense that some of the headlines being captured in their stories against two dominant political parties and individuals supporting different political parties may say things on social media against each other that may cause violence during elections.”*

A respondent of the Religious leaders FGD in Asawase acknowledged:

*“The media doesn't help at all. They allow people to use their platforms for unworthy things. These stations belong to the politicians. so they sit on the radios and exchange words but when they come out you don't see violence”.*

### *Others*

Respondents identified other factors such as lack of confidence in security agencies, perception that the EC lacks integrity, proliferation of vigilantism/violent groups, and poor enforcement of laws as drivers of political violence.

## **SECTION B: Understanding Political Vigilantism: Manifestation, Motivation and Dynamics**

### **Perception and manifestation of political vigilantism**

Several scholars have attempted to define vigilantism. Two popular definitions of vigilantism are considered in this study for the purpose of deriving a concept that fits in Ghana's political context. Abrahams (2003) defined vigilantism as “an organized attempt by a group of 'ordinary citizens' to enforce norms and maintain law and order on behalf of their communities, often by resorting to violence, in the perceived absence of effective official state action through the police and courts”. Johnston (1996) in an earlier paper titled “what is vigilantism” argued six (6) elements are necessary for vigilantism.

The first element he identified is that the action or activity involves planning and premeditation by those engaging in it. Secondly, its participants/perpetrators are private citizens whose engagement is voluntary. Thirdly, it is a form of “autonomous citizenship” and as such constitute a social movement. Fourthly, the activity or action uses or threatens the use of force.

Furthermore, the activity or action arises when an established order is under threat from the transgression, the potential transgression, or the imputed transgression of institutionalized norms. Finally, the action or activity aims to control crime or other social infractions by offering assurances of security both to participants and to others.

Johnston defined vigilantism as a social movement, giving rise to premeditated acts of force or threatened force by autonomous citizens. It arises as a reaction to the transgression of institutionalized norms by individuals or groups or to their potential or imputed transgression. Such acts are focused upon crime control and/ or social control and aim to offer assurances (or 'guarantees') of security both to participants and to other members of a given established order (Johnston, 1996, p. 232).

Common characteristics in the two definitions of Abrahams (2003) and Johnston (1996) include mobilization of private or ordinary citizens, the use of force to enforce norms in a bid to control crime. Given these, some examples of vigilante groups whose focus is to enforce and maintain law and order on behalf of their communities are neighbourhood watchdogs, watchmen or guards and committees for safety and security. These groups in some cases may be working with state agencies in places where state security is absent or inadequate. However, political vigilantism in Ghana takes on features that are not related to crime control.

In view of this, the study adopts Armah-Attoh's (2017) conceptualization that fits Ghana's political context. Armah-Attoh (2017) conceptualized vigilante groups or footsoldiers as “youth activists or organized informal non-state militia groups of political parties whose activities are usually characterized by violence and oftentimes, attempts to supplant the powers of formal police and justice systems.”

In an attempt to conceptualize political vigilantism, respondents were asked how they understood the term, and varied responses were used to describe it. Generally, respondents viewed vigilantism in a negative light although a section of the respondents see political vigilantism as the party supporters who are deployed for house-to-house campaigns. Across the broad spectrum of responses, two thematic conceptions emerged based on what respondents perceived vigilantes to do.

### **Vigilantism as a means to protect and defend party interest**

Some respondents described vigilantism as the act of political parties and politicians recruiting and forming groups for the purposes of protecting and defending the interests of their parties. This view introduces the element of conscious mobilization of people for actions that serve the interest of political party leaders and their parties with the ultimate goal to win elections.

These actions, though in the interest of the party, may contravene the laws of the country and are mostly criminal in nature. The argument espoused by respondents is evident in Rosenbaum and Sederberg (1974, p.542) definition of vigilantism. They defined vigilantism as “taking the law into one's own hands”. And the violent display of brute force to protect the interest of a group they belong to (Rosenbaum and Sederberg, 1974, p.542). Common practices of vigilante groups cited by respondents include protection of ballot boxes, exerting physical attacks on political opponents, harassing and intimidating voters especially in opposition strongholds to dissuade them from voting and suppress votes. Essentially, acts of vigilantism are used by political parties to undermine electoral processes and gain electoral advantages over their opponents.

A respondent in a Faith Based Organizations FGD at Yendi shared a perspective on this:

*“Vigilantism is the selection of macho boys by a political party to support its cause for good or for bad. E.g. Guarding the ballot box so that opponents do not get the chance to cheat and yet they themselves cheat for their party when the chance crops up.”*

*“Illegal security formed by political leaders to protect ballot boxes. They take instructions from their leaders and get support in the forms of guns, motorbikes and cars.”* – Respondent, Bolgatanga womens' group.

### **Vigilantism as an informal security for protective services**

Some respondents largely view vigilantes as well-built and muscular men who provide security and protection for politicians during political party events such as rallies, campaigns, congresses, primaries etc. It is occasioned by the state's inability to provide adequate numbers for political leadership, particularly during such political functions, or where the number of security personnel provided at a political event is inadequate. The political parties resort to their internal private security either to add up to the numbers, or to protect the top leadership and important installations where they do not trust the state security for adequate protection.

However, political parties, mostly the party in opposition have found it convenient to use that as a pretext for setting up vigilante groups for purposes of personal protection in addition to the primary reason of not trusting the police to ensure neutrality; and the police have often times been tagged as biased in favour of the ruling government. Political parties, thus, rely on their own informal security arrangements (machomen and party foot soldiers) outside of the legally recognized security services to provide bodyguards for themselves as well as for party events.

Some politicians are known to organize vigilante groups to serve as bodyguards as their contribution to the party (*Refer to Appendix 2 for the Typology and Formation of Vigilante Groups*).

Ahead of Ghana's elections in 2016, the leadership of the police administration, led by Inspector General of Police (IGP), John Kudalor recognizing the danger that comes with the use of informal security by political parties, made arrangements after consultation with the political parties and provided four bodyguards for all presidential aspirants and two police personnel for their running mates. This arrangement was made by the police administration following the arrest and subsequent deportation of three ex-South African police officers who were brought in as consultants by the New Patriotic Party (NPP), then in opposition to train fifteen persons as security detail for their presidential and vice presidential candidates (Ghanaweb, September 23, 2016; Pulse GH, July 1, 2016; Todayonline, March 22, 2016).

Media reports on the issue noted the activities undertaken by the three former South African police officers:

*“They were said to be training some young men in various security drills, including unarmed combat, weapon handling, VIP protection techniques and rapid response manoeuvres.”* (Salia, March 22, 2016).

This incident marked an escalation in the phenomenon of political vigilantism and raised the stakes for potential risks to national security. It should be noted that by the introduction of these foreigners to provide security training for civilians [party vigilantes and foot soldiers], marked an externalization of the nature of political vigilantism in Ghana. Narratives from some respondents throw light on their perspective on vigilantism as informal security for protective services.

*“Political Vigilantism is a practice more for opposition parties because ruling ones have the police on their side. An opposition party may just be given two policemen to handle a whole lot of crowds during campaign activities. Therefore, vigilantism is used to solve security challenges of opposition parties. Ruling parties do not have such problems.”* – Respondent, FGD for Political Party Executives, Asawase.

*“Political vigilantism is the exploitation of the weak state institutions, the police for that matter. Now the protection of politicians by the police has been taken over by youth.”* – Respondent, FGD for Religious and Traditional Groups, Bolgatanga

In effect, the responses above suggest that vigilantes fill a security vacuum created by the state security apparatus, either because of a question of trust, or because of inadequate numbers.

### **Presence of vigilante groups in communities**

One of the sampling criteria used for the selection of communities for this study was the history of vigilante groups in the selected communities. Respondents were asked whether there were any known vigilante groups operating in their respective communities or have ever experienced acts of political vigilantism in their communities. This was to uncover more information about the existence of lesser known groups. In virtually all communities sampled for this study, respondents indicated that such groups exist - some with names, others informal and with no names; and are contracted by persons who require their services including politicians to foment trouble during electoral and political seasons.

Data obtained from respondents on the number of well-known groups with names in the sampled hotspots points to 16 groups. When disaggregated by affiliations to the political parties, 10 (58.8%) are affiliated to the NPP and 7 (41.2%) are affiliated to the NDC (Refer to Table 2). With respect to groups without names, some variations were noted where there were loosely formed and informal groups of youth party foot soldiers who indulged in thuggery and acts in line with vigilantism are somewhat referenced based on the name or nickname of influential members of the group. For instance, Anointing is very influential among an informal group of friends in NPP's youth wing in Sankore. Residents refer to this group as 'Anointing and his boys'.

Van Dame Boys in Asawase also have this trait. Similarly, there are corresponding groups that are affiliated to the NDC in Sankore, which are referenced by the names of influential members (*Respondents did not mention specific names*).

Some respondents pointed out that some groups indulge in thuggery and make their services available to the highest bidder, and thus are not limited to being used for chaos during elections and political events alone. They mostly spend time in the gym building their muscles and are ready to sell their services. Their services are hired in times of disputes and conflicts to fight for the interest among the factions in disputes.

This type of vigilante groups could be seen as “professional vigilantes” who are mainly for business. As such, their services have no geographical boundaries and are also not subject specific – they could be hired to any part of the country and around all forms of disputes/issues.

With regards to the geographical sphere of influence some groups can be mobilized to operate in other communities especially with events such as by-elections, congresses, rallies etc. For instance, corroborating a media report, Salifu 11 according to FGD respondents is based in Goaso, and they were purported to have attacked and brutalized perceived NPP members, and were sighted in the convoy of John Dramani Mahama, former President during his visit to Sankore in July 2019 (Tntnewspaper, July 23, 2019).

However, respondents in a Bolgatanga FGD with political party executives were quick to draw the line between youth groups that are affiliated to political parties and are not violent from vigilante groups that are associated with lawlessness and violence. That strong comment throws in a cautionary note for researchers not to lump all youth groups that have affiliation with political parties with vigilante groups.

**Table 2: List of political vigilante groups operating around sampled hotspot communities**

| <b>Name of Group</b>    | <b>Location</b>                  | <b>Affiliation</b> |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| Burma Camp              | Yendi                            | NPP                |
| Bolga Bull Dogs         | Bolgatanga                       | NPP                |
| Dazota (Don't fear)     | Bolgatanga                       | NPP                |
| Invincible Forces       | Bolgatanga, Asawase              | NPP                |
| The Hawks               | Bolgatanga, Asawase              | NDC                |
| Aluta Boys              | Bolgatanga                       | NDC                |
| No weapon <sup>19</sup> | Sankore                          | NDC                |
| Salifu 11               | Goaso                            | NDC                |
| Cyborg Killers          | Asawase                          | NDC                |
| Kandahar Boys           | Asawase                          | NPP                |
| Delta Forces            | Asawase                          | NPP                |
| Bamba Boys              | Asawase                          | NPP                |
| Taskforce               | Asawase, Aflao                   | NDC                |
| Alidu Mafias            | Asawase (Oforikrom Municipality) | NPP                |
| Maxwell Boys            | Asawase                          | NPP                |
| Gym 44 <sup>20</sup>    | Aflao                            | NDC & NPP          |

Source: Fieldwork conducted by the authors (August – September, 2019)

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19 FGD at Sankore: Members of 'No Weapon' were noted by respondents to have fled the town since NPP took over the reigns of power in 2017. It is purported members of this group terrorized their counterparts in the NPP while their party NDC was in government. It is believed members of this group are waiting for an opportune moment when their party is elected into office before they can return from exile.

20 Respondents pointed that Gym 44 have been used by NDC in the past and currently by the NPP. The group therefore has affiliation to the two parties, and it is not clear where their loyalty lies.

## **Motivations for the formation of vigilante groups**

The study was interested in understanding the motivating factors for the establishment of vigilante groups, and proceeded to solicit the views of respondents. A number of thematic factors were cited by respondents as underpinning the formation of vigilante groups, among them are mistrust for state institutions, quest to win political power, patronage spoils and vigilantism as a business model.

### *(1) Mistrust for the Electoral Commission*

Political parties' mistrust for state institutions is very high and often directed at the EC, the body mandated to oversee the conduct of any elections in the country and the security services particularly, Ghana Police Service. As noted by respondents, the EC is perceived by the political parties to be mostly biased in favour of the ruling government. Generally, the ruling government is seen by the opposition to wield undue influence over the commissioners of the EC partly due to the perception that commissioners' appointed by the ruling government are likely to do the bidding of the party in government that appointed them. In some instances, the posturing, actions and inactions of the members of the Commission tends to fuel this strong perception held by political parties. Therefore, the political parties, mostly when in opposition persistently say that they have diminishing confidence in the EC to be a neutral arbiter in organizing credible elections. As noted by respondents, this has become a justification for parties to resort to the use of party foot soldiers as vigilantes to 'police' the electoral process.

### *(2) Mistrust for security agencies*

Similarly, the security agencies, particularly the police are accused of not being fair to opposition parties and this can be traced to the undue influence that successive governments exert over the service, through politicization of recruitments, promotions and appointments. The police are perceived not to be independent in its actions. Most respondents cited common examples to buttress this point. For example, when the police refer electoral related crimes to the Attorney General's (AG's) department for advice before it can proceed with any prosecutions, cases involving persons affiliated to the ruling government either delay unduly, or outcomes mostly favour the suspects. On the other hand, according to respondents, they see that the police are either quick to prosecute suspects from opposition camps, or advice on such cases sent to the AG's office always comes back early, and with harsh outcomes.



*“The Police should be seen to be impartial in their conduct and should not turn a blind eye to complaints from aggrieved persons in the opposition parties otherwise they would resort to their own security”* – Respondent, FGD with Faith/Religious based organizations, Yendi.

Instructively, the security services, particularly the Police has not succeeded in clamping down on acts of violence that are allegedly committed by political vigilante groups and foot soldiers, thereby imputing no deterrent effects and creating a culture of impunity for vigilantism to thrive. Emboldened vigilante groups and party footsoldiers know that when they infringe on the law the police will not prosecute or let alone secure any meaningful conviction against them even in the face of massive public criticism and condemnation. Underlying this ineptitude of the police is the constitutional arrangement that has politicized the appointment of the top hierarchy of security agencies, including the Police. By this, the President appoints all heads of security agencies (See Article 200 - 215 of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana). This presents a clear challenge on the security of tenure for office holders (Inspector General of Police) that do not want to offend the executive by working against it; and further raises concerns about political influences undermining the work of the police in dealing with vigilantism (CODEO, 2017b). Indeed, two outspoken senior officials in the Police Service publicly validated these assertions on how political influence 'tie the hands of the police' and render them ineffective in dealing with vigilantism (Ghanaweb, November 2, 2018; News Ghana, January 17, 2019)<sup>[21][22]</sup>.

Another constraining factor can be found in Section 42 of the Representation of the People Law, 1992 (PNDC Law 284) which expressly bars the Police from prosecuting electoral Offences without the written consent of the Attorney General.

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21 ACP Dr. Benjamin Agordzo, [then] Director of the Transformation Programmes Office of the Police Service was speaking at a symposium organised by the Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG) in Accra on Wednesday, October 31, 2018 to discuss ways in which stakeholders could foster efforts to eradicate the menace. See: <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Political-vigilantism-Police-can-t-act-laws-on-appointments-need-reforms-ACP-Agordzor-697395>

22 COP Nathan Kofi Boaye, [then] the Director-General/Research and Planning, Ghana Police Service spoke on the topic "Political Vigilantism and Ghana's Democracy" at the 70th Annual New Year School and Conference, on the theme: "Building Strong Institutions for Democratic Consolidation in Ghana," organised by the School of Continuing and Distance Education of the College of Education, University of Ghana in January 2019. See: [newsghana.com.gh/kofi-boakye-addresses-ghanas-increasing-love-for-political-vigilantism/](http://newsghana.com.gh/kofi-boakye-addresses-ghanas-increasing-love-for-political-vigilantism/)

This provision states that: “No person shall be prosecuted for an offence under this Law without the consent in writing of the Attorney-General, except that this section shall not prevent a person being-(a) charged with such an offence; or (b) arrested with or without warrant in respect of the offence; or (c) remanded on bail or in custody in respect of the offence, without the consent of the Attorney-General”. This implies that for all actions taken by the police - arrest, detention etc the docket should be sent to the Attorney-General for their advice, hence, without political will from the Attorney-General who is a political appointee no prosecutions will be secured. A consequence of this state of affairs is the Police's seeming inability to gather enough evidence that would lead to effectively prosecuting culprits. Indeed an overview of police action taken on vigilante related cases between December 12, 2016 and November 28, 2017 as reported by the Police Communications and Public Affairs Directorate indicated that out of 22 cases only 3 had gone through the legal processes, 3 were under investigation, 3 cases discontinued because the complainants withdrew, while 13 situations were brought under control (The Daily Dispatch, November 28, 2017, p. 2, p. 11; *Refer to Appendix 3 for details of the Police report*).

In addition to the deep-seated mistrust for the police service, respondents pointed out that vigilante groups are formed and used by politicians as internal security political parties. This fits into respondents' conception of '*Vigilantism as informal security for protective services*'. The cost associated with engaging vigilante groups for security purposes at party offices, during campaigns, rallies, primaries and so forth is relatively lower than engaging state security and further sidesteps the bureaucracy that comes with it. Intrinsicly, vigilantes have additional value for politicians and political parties that simply cannot be derived from engaging state security agents, and this may include undertaking acts of violence that contravenes the law, running personal errands, organizing event grounds, gathering intelligence on their opponents etc. As noted by a respondent in the FGD with the tertiary wings of political parties in Asawase, the parties and politicians require people to do their 'dirty jobs' for them and no agency best fits the job description than political vigilante groups. It is inconceivable to get law enforcement officers to perform such 'dirty jobs' that involves breaking the law.

*“The one who forms this group [vigilante group] cannot take certain actions that will be noticed by the public because he is widely known. So he will get people who will act in his favor; by doing the dirty jobs for him while he keeps a clean sheet.”* – Respondent, FGD with executives of Tertiary Students' wings of political parties, Asawase.

In 2016 when the Ghana Police Service provided bodyguards for presidential candidates and their running mates, the then Director of Operations, Dr. Benjamin Agordzo at a meeting with political parties cautioned that policemen assigned for their protective detail were not errand boys (Kessbenfm, 2016) and that lends credence to the argument. He warned that:

*“It will not be nice for us to see any presidential candidate use the policeman as if he is a servant in the house or go to the mall and then the policeman will be carrying the basket and the politician will be dropping stuffs in it...Those are issues that we would want to state unequivocally that we will withdraw our people as soon as we have this information and we have evidence to that effect...Personal activities and other things should not be part of his [Police officer's] business. And they must be provided with decent meals so far as they stay with you. When you travel out of the region, it is your responsibility to provide them with accommodation and meals and they will be subject to police rules and regulations even as they are with you and we are observing them very well. Remember that they are always on camera and therefore when they are captured in compromising situations and other thing we will withdraw them, we will have evidence to that effect.”*

### *(3) Quest to win political power*

Respondents pointed out the desire for political parties to win power at all cost is a driving force for the establishment of political vigilante groups. Given Ghana's very competitive and almost duopolistic system that rotates power between the NPP and the NDC in the Fourth Republic, and the mutual mistrust that exists between them, party foot soldiers are engaged as vigilante groups to outdo each other. All manner of strategies are adopted by political parties to give them an electoral advantage, and this include schemes to cheat, ballot box snatching, ballot box stuffing, instilling fear into voters in opposition strongholds to limit votes for opponents, physical attacks on political opponents etc.

*“It is the youth in a political party who are organized to use their physical strength and ideas to help protect and defend the party, in order to make sure the party wins political power.”* – Respondent, NPP Youth Groups, Sankore.

### *(4) Access to patronage spoils*

Strongly connected with winning elections and ultimately ascending to political heights is the easy access and management of patronage spoils that accompanies state capture by the winning political party. Respondents opined that the allure of patronage spoils becomes the basis for the formation of political vigilante groups to be used by politicians to attain electoral victory.

The 'winner-takes-all system' by virtue of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana vests the president with the power to appoint virtually all persons to positions in public institutions including District Chief Executives, and this practice has conventionally been exclusive of minority parties. This reinforces political parties to fight tooth and nail, and by fair or foul means to capture parliamentary seats, and votes for their presidential candidates. Patronage spoils often come in the form of doling out financial largesse, contracts, travelling and job opportunities to cronies and party members. Politicians' take advantage of the vulnerability of young people such as poverty and unemployment by making promises to secure jobs and improve the lives of these persons on the basis that they supported their bid to capture political power, which opens up the floodgates to patronage goods. Most respondents were of the view that the promises of providing employment for members particularly in the state security agencies is highly correlated with the formation and use of vigilante groups by politicians.

*“Persons who form these groups and use them for party activities and interest expect some rewards in turn, which may be in the form of contracts, jobs etc when their party comes into power.”* – Respondent, FGD with Political Party Executives, Yendi.

#### *(5) Business model*

Realizing the opportunities (financial, promises of jobs etc) that come with the electoral and political season, young people mostly coalesce themselves into groups that are willing to do the bidding of political elites who meet their demands. Respondents in a number of Focus Group Discussions across the sampled communities revealed this as a *form of business model*. Group members are usually unemployed and see an opportunity to profit from politicians who would approach them for their services. While it is not one-directional, the groups may also approach a politician to offer their services at an agreed fee. Respondents further noted that vigilante groups that operate this way are often linked to bodybuilding gyms where members build their bodies in anticipation to be engaged by politicians especially during election years. It should be noted that their services are not limited to election and politics, but transcends into other areas such as chieftaincy, land disputes, available for hiring as enforcers and thugs, and other criminal activities.

*“When a political party is in power, it regulates everything in the country and mostly creates these groups to protect the interest of the party which becomes a reason for forming these groups to achieve the party's goals.”* - Respondent, FGD with Assembly Members, Yendi.

### **Why do people join vigilante groups?**

Apart from trying to understand respondents' views on what motivates the formation of vigilante groups, the study further explored reasons why people join these groups irrespective of the wide public condemnation of vigilantism. The reasons provided by respondents for which people joined vigilante groups were along the same tangent as the factors they cited as being the motives for which vigilante groups are formed, and include: job opportunities; rewards for services; recognition within the party; protection from the law and for purposes of revenge and protection.

*Job opportunities:* Promises made by politicians to provide job opportunities for party foot soldiers who fight for their cause serve as an incentive, which lures people into joining vigilante groups. Absorption of group members who are at the forefront mainly into the state security services, facilitated by political elites tends to seemingly exemplify what politicians are capable of doing for those that are loyal to them, and this keeps other members committed to the political figure, in the hope that it would get to their turn soon. Potential persons on the fringes are encouraged by what they see and join vigilante groups because of the promises and prospects that are offered to them.

*“The core reason people join is the lack of jobs. Those who have their jobs do not have the time to engage in vigilantism. – Respondent, NPP Executives and Youth Groups, Asawase.*

*“Unemployment forces people to join so that when their party wins they can be given jobs.”*  
- Respondent, NDC Youth Group, Sankore.

*“They form these groups because they don't have jobs. Politicians who visit the bases of these groups make promises to them in return for their support with the hope that if he wins the election he will provide them with jobs. After the elections when the promises are not fulfilled then they start committing violent acts” – Respondent, FGD with Women Groups, Bolgatanga.*

Indeed, a number of violent outbursts involving these groups when they are disappointed validate the concerns of insecurity associated with the continued existence of political vigilantism. In August 2017, the Invisible Forces, a pro-NPP vigilante group publicly threatened that if they were not provided with jobs promised them, they would cause mayhem just as it happened months earlier with the Delta Forces besieging the office of the Ashanti Region Security Coordinator and forcefully removing him from office; and members of the group later besieging a Kumasi circuit court to set free their colleagues who were on trial for the earlier Offence. These threats were made at a town hall meeting organized by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development in Tema. Comment by the spokesperson of the group indicates that their frustrations with failed promises of politicians triggered this action:

*“You promised that there are certain jobs on the way coming. We exchanged numbers with those who are supposed to employ us. I have called them for almost two months now but nobody is ready to answer my calls... Please, if they will not give us work to do, what happened at Kumasi, the same thing will happen here... We are even ashamed. Some of us, we are walking in the sun and they are laughing at us. Is that how the party is supposed to treat us?” - Ghanaweb (August 1, 2017).*

Beyond issuing threats of violence on failed promises, political vigilantes utilize acts of violence such as physical attacks to negotiate for 'job entitlements' promised by political elites. For instance, in October 2018, a section of aggrieved members of the Delta Forces invaded a meeting at Tafo-Pankrono in the Ashanti Region, and the group nearly assaulted the Minister of Monitoring and Evaluation who doubles as the MP for the constituency. Reports indicated party executives and police officers prevented the attack on the Minister who they claimed failed to follow through with ensuring their recruitment into the security services. Comments from the aggrieved members of the Delta Forces highlight the issue of vigilante groups tying their livelihoods and fortunes to political parties winning elections.

*“During the elections the MP promised us jobs but two years after the party came to office, the MP no longer picks our calls. Two years into the NPP's reign, there is no single youth here that the NPP executives or the MP have been able to help to get jobs... That is why we also did what we did.” [1] “We helped the party to come to power. We will plead that with the remaining two years of the NPP government, they should help us the youth of Tafo-Pankrono to get jobs. That is all we are asking for and if that is done, we will follow the party forever. We have suffered enough. As I speak with you, my wife accused me of following Akufo-Addo yet I have nothing to show so she took my kids and fled. So if the party is in power and we have been promised jobs, we are only asking for that promise to be fulfilled.” [2] - Citinewsroom (October 8, 2018).*

As noted in the preceding paragraphs, the absorption or recruitment of purely political vigilantes and party footsoldiers into the statutory security services, especially the National Security Coordinator's outfit, the Ghana Police Service and the Ghana Armed Forces strengthens the dangers that are already facing the nation in its quest to consolidate its democracy. Understandably, it has the debilitating effect of perpetuating the establishment of 'regime security' that serves ruling elites or the regime in power rather than the public as against 'democratic security' that has the interest and protection of citizens at its heart<sup>23</sup>. Such polarization of the security services clinically undermines the degree of trust and confidence that society should repose in them as neutral arbiters.

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23 Romi Sigworth (2019) in the paper titled “Harnessing public engagement for police accountability in Africa” used the concepts of 'Regime Police' and 'Democratic Police'. This report adapted these concepts for discussion on 'Regime Security' and 'Democratic Security' to fit within the context of this report.

*“...you'll see them with cards well identified. They are party members. I am telling you some of those boys have been absorbed into National Security. Those boys here in Aflao that they used in 2016 have been absorbed into National Security. Information gathered is that they will bring more those from outside to come and cause mayhem. we know their track record.” - Respondent, FGD with Political Party Executive, Aflao*

*Rewards for services:* Respondents noted that perceived rewards from politicians such as money and other favours become compelling reasons for people to join these groups. Persons willing to join these groups tie their livelihoods and fortunes to political figures in the hope that they will be provided with patronage goods such as jobs, money, contracts etc.

*“For potential benefits such as money, jobs, positions, contracts that would be derived from politicians if the party wins the elections” – Respondent, Party Youth Activists, Yendi.*

*“First, the promises of politicians to help some individuals lures them into it. What they [politicians] tell me, I also tell my friends. He pledges some form of reward so I tell my friends about the 'good news'. If we are able to help him win then we also get our positions. Just as you have assembled us here; the same way the person will tell me and I will mobilize other people and bring them to him [politician] and he tells us his message.” – Respondent, Professional Based Groups, Aflao*

Conversely, when their party wins the elections, and the promises of politicians are not forthcoming, they target and attack government institutions for jobs that do not require high academic qualifications because most of the political vigilantes and party foot soldiers in that category do not have high educational attainment. These practices of forceful takeovers of government institutions and installations have become an avenue for wealth creation through corrupt practices such as the printing of dubious receipts books, improper accounting procedures, non-accountability<sup>24</sup>, and other malpractices. Political party elites through their approvals<sup>25</sup> and government officials through their inactions and counter narratives tacitly endorse these infractions that reinforces other vigilante groups to seize governments assets and installations in other parts of the country with impunity simply because they will not face justice.

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24 Following the death of 19 people at the Kintampo Falls, Nana Essah Boakuro, the chief of Kintampo in an interview pointed out that the Invisible Forces took over management of the facility and had not been accountable to anyone. He added that patronage of the facility has reduced since the Invisible Forces took over due to their incompetence in managing the facility. See: <http://kessbenfm.com/npps-invisible-forces-charge-kintampo-waterfalls-angry-chief/> (Accessed: April 2, 2020)

25 Nana Obiri Boahene, the Deputy General Secretary of the NPP suggested the takeover of the Kintampo Falls by the Invisible Forces is nothing more than sweet revenge for what happened to him in 2009 when his company which managed the Kintampo Waterfall in 2008 until NDC vigilantes forcibly took over the facility in 2009 when their party won elections. See: Myjoyonline (March 21, 2017) <https://www.myjoyonline.com/news/obiri-boahene-applauds-invisible-forces-tit-for-tat-takeover-of-kintampo-waterfall/#!> (Accessed: April 2, 2020)

For instance, the Invisible Forces took over management and sacked workers of the Kintampo waterfalls when the NPP won the elections in December 2016, reversal of events since the NDC affiliated group managed the facility between 2009 and 2016. The comments of Abdul Razk, a member of Invisible Forces in the Bono Region [then Brong Ahafo Region] in a media interview supports this argument:

*“They collect 5.00 cedis per Ghanaian and 10.00 cedis per foreigner. Students are charged 2.00 cedis or 1.00 cedis for children. Abdul Razak said the proceeds per day is handed over to the Constituency Chairman of the party who then puts it into an account created for that purpose.”* (Myjoyonline, March 20, 2017).

Taking into account this statement of Abdul Razak, it prompts these questions: what has the management and daily revenue of a public tourist facility got to do with the bank account of a constituency party chairman? What are the roles of the Municipal Assembly and the Ghana Tourism Authority in managing this tourist facility?

*Recognition within the party:* Activists desiring recognition within the party ranks as hardworking and ardent supporters find affiliation with vigilantism as one sure route to achieving such a goal. Sacrifices that are made by party foot soldiers to protect or promote the interest of the party are used as a trump card to negotiate for rewards – financial, jobs, travelling opportunities, positions etc. Joining and affiliating with vigilante groups has the tendency of propelling the political aspirations of individuals who are seen to command respect and is to an extent due to the dignified socio-cultural celebration of violence and bravery as heroism. In other words, display of violence is a signal for leadership and it is captured aptly in the respondents of Youth Activists in Yendi.

*“Sometimes in the minds of voters [delegates] if you are not violent or if you are 'sober' they would not like you to stand for a position because when it becomes necessary you would not act. They would tag you as somebody who is timid and cannot 'bite'[1]...It would enable you to obtain a position because the electorates [delegates] will say this man is a strong guy, he is not afraid of fights[2].”*



The appointment of Kwadwo Bamba, the Ashanti Regional Commander of the NPP affiliated Delta Forces as the Deputy Director of Operations of the NPP's youth wing (Modern Ghana, October 30, 2018) in October 2018; and the rise of Chief Sorfo Azorka, the leader of pro-NDC vigilante group Azorka Boys from the position of NDC Northern Regional Chairman in a November 2018 national executives election to become the National First Vice Chair of the NDC (Frimpong, November 18, 2018) exemplifies political vigilantism as a pathway to political leadership. Responses from some respondents in Sankore fall in line with this narrative.

*“Who knows the name of Sankore Manhene? But you know Nana Addo, you know Bawumia, the ministers etc. Do you know the name of the local chief? Nobody knows you when you don't affiliate yourself with politics [1]... “People help the party so they can make a name for themselves, by becoming popular.” [2] – Respondent, FGD with NPP Affiliated Youth Groups, Sankore.*

*Revenge and Protection:* Some people get encouraged to join vigilante groups because they or a close relative of theirs previously suffered an attack from persons or groups associated with their opponents. Becoming a member of a vigilante group will offer the chance for the 'victim' now turn vigilante to avenge the past attacks. On similar grounds, others join vigilante groups in order to benefit from the protection the group offers its members. Members in the group can mobilize to defend their counterparts in addition to launching reprisal attacks on individuals and opponents. The notion of revenge is a feature that seems common in Sankore due to the cycle of violence that is closely related to which political party is in power at a given time.

*“People will join because they want to be able to defend themselves against other people who have hurt them in the past.” – Respondent, FGD with NDC Youth, Sankore.*

*Protection from the law:* Respondents opined that vigilantism is an avenue through which perpetrators aligned to political parties escape justice when they commit crime. With the seeming helplessness of the security services when party foot soldiers and political vigilante groups blatantly break the laws with impunity, and influences from political elites in the work of the police, vigilante groups have been emboldened to commit even more brazen crimes without fear of consequential action.

The kind of protection and shielding that perpetrators in vigilante groups receive from politicians urges them to flout laws with impunity knowing very well that they would be granted bail, and prosecution of their cases halted eventually. As noted by respondents, persons with criminal intentions are encouraged to join these groups with the notion that they are immune from prosecution once they have the backing of their political godfathers. Credence is given by respondents from the study on the discourse.

*“People join these groups because of the assurance that if one commits a crime his party will bail him from the situation.”* – Respondent, FGD with Religious and Traditional Authority, Aflao.

*“Following the incident in which Delta Force members stormed the courthouse and freed their members on trial and with the subsequent pronouncement by the court which set them free, a number of bad nuts with criminal background have joined these groups [vigilante groups] knowing very well political parties can easily get them off if they commit any crime.”* – Respondent, FGD with Political Party Executives, Asawase.

*“There are many laws but some are above the laws. When culprits are arrested and released in no time, they are emboldened to commit worse crimes.”* – Respondent, FGD with NPP affiliated youth & vigilante groups, Sankore.

### **Awareness of laws to tackle political vigilantism and electoral violence**

The study sought to find out whether respondents knew any existing laws to deal with vigilantism and electoral violence. In starting the conversation, respondents were asked if they were aware of any existing laws in addressing electoral violence and political vigilantism. Respondents were generally of the view that they were not aware of any such existing laws that specifically dealt with issues of electoral violence. However, most of the respondents said even though they are not aware of any specific laws that focus primarily on vigilantism and electoral violence, they were aware of laws that deal with crime and disorder generally.

Taking the discussions a step further, respondents were asked if they knew Parliament had passed a law to tackle vigilantism and other related Offences<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> This law now known as the Vigilantism and Related Offences Act, 2019 (Act 999) was first laid as bill in parliament by the Attorney General and Minister of Justice in April 2019 under a certificate of urgency following directives from the President on the back of the fallout from the Ayawaso West Wuogon constituency by-election violence. See: Modern Ghana (April, 11, 2019) AG Presents Vigilantism Bill To Parliament. <https://www.modernghana.com/news/926076/ag-presents-vigilantism-bill-to-parliament.html> (Accessed on: March 30, 2020)

At the time of collecting data (August – September 2019), the bill had been passed into law by parliament in July 2019 and was later assented by the President in September 2019. For all the FGDs, most respondents indicated they did not know about the passage of Vigilantism and Related Offences Act, 2019 (Act 999) and therefore had no knowledge about the Act. The few respondents who knew about Act 999 did not know the provisions contained in the law. A follow up question sought respondents' assessment on the general awareness of citizens in each community, including stakeholders (politicians, political party executives, chiefs, youth groups, etc) on the new Act. Respondents opined that in their assessment majority of citizens in their communities were ignorant about the Vigilantism and Related Offences Act, 2019 (Act 999). This finding was not surprising because awareness about the new law was low even among the various groups that are a microcosm of the communities they represent.

### **Perspectives on the efficacy of Vigilantism and Related Offences Law, 2019 (Act 999) to deal with vigilantism and electoral violence**

After asking respondents about their awareness and knowledge about the Act, it was critical to hear their views on how effective they thought the new Act would be in cracking down on the surging threat of political vigilantism. Respondents were asked this question: “In your opinion, is the new law enough to adequately address the problems of vigilantism and electoral violence? (Why?)”<sup>27</sup>. By implication, every response given, whether positive or negative had to be explained by respondents. Although most respondents hitherto to the FGD were not aware of the new Act (Act 999), they expressed a lot of pessimism with its passage as opposed to few respondents who expressed glimmers of optimism.

#### **Pessimistic views**

Respondents generally believe the Vigilantism and Related Offences Law (2019) will not work for the following reasons.

- There are laws that are already in existence that can effectively deal with any type of crime, including acts of violence and lawlessness, but they are often not enforced. Perceived weaknesses in enforcing laws coupled with the selective biases by law enforcement agencies in applying the law, gives respondents the impetus to question any guarantees about the ability of Act 999 to be effective in rooting out vigilantism from Ghana's political and electoral space

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<sup>27</sup> Before posing this particular, moderators of the FGDs explained to participants or respondents the processes leading to the passage of the Vigilantism and Related Offences Act, 2019 (Act 999), the overall objectives of the Act, which essentially outlaws political vigilantism, political vigilante groups and landguards; and the stiff punishment the Act prescribes for offenders found culpable.

- Existing criminal laws are enough to tackle acts of vigilantism and therefore there is no need for this act
- The absence of political will to enforce laws regardless of which political party the culprit is affiliated will water down the intention and implementation of Act 999. Respondents are of the view that politicians will undermine the enforcement of Act 999 by interfering with criminal justice processes
- Respondents hold the notion that politicians will pay lip service to enforcement of laws and clandestinely use vigilante groups after openly declaring their support for its passage. Below are some of the views from respondents on the issue:

*“The laws won't work because the MPs rely on the services of the vigilante groups”.*

– Respondent, FGD with Political Party Executives, Bolgatanga.

*“Our politicians are hypocrites. They will go to a roundtable (an official gathering) and talk but they will go behind the scenes and do differently”* – Respondent, FGD CSOs/CBOs, Yendi

- Corrupt practices from police officers will render the enforcement of the Act ineffective, and that has implications for perversion of justice and discontinuity in prosecuting genuine cases
- Traditional leaders often command a lot of respect and reverence from their subjects and in the communities that fall within their jurisdiction. Some respondents fear that these attributes in some instances have implications that negatively affect the ability of law enforcement agents in their operations. For instance in the Dagomba culture when a person who is accused of crime runs to the chief's palace to seek refuge, the suspected culprit immediately comes under the safety and protection of the chief, thereby eluding arrest from the police. The police out of courtesy cannot forcibly enter the palace and arrest the suspect. Chiefs and elders use their influence to negotiate for the release of suspects. With regards to this, a respondent in Yendi was convinced this cultural norm will militate against the effective enforcement of Act 999 by remarking that:

*“Traditional leaders disrupt the implementation of the law. When a culprit runs to a chief's palace, he/she cannot be arrested.”* – Respondent, FGD for Party Youth Activists, Yendi.

### **Optimistic views**

Views expressed by respondents in favour of effective enforcement of the law were premised on certain conditions, which they thought of as pre-requisites for successful implementation of Act 999. Most respondents with positive outlook for the Act were in Sankore and Asawase.

In the first place, some respondents advocated for mass public sensitization and education to increase the level of citizens' awareness of the Act and sanctions associated with breaching it. Others also believe the Act has the potential to work since it was initiated and enacted in the administration of the ruling NPP government. Therefore, if Act 999 is enforced without fear or favour or recourse to biases against groups and members affiliated to the NPP that are found culpable of an Offence, it will have a deterrent effect on groups affiliated with the NDC, and limit future infractions. It is paramount as Ghana approaches elections in 2020 where the stakes are high and it provides a test case for enforcement of the Act. Following from this, an optimistic view pointed out that because the law was passed after majority of political parties had made inputs in revising the initial bill, and with the usual culprits – the NPP and the NDC – taking active part in the legislative process; it gives a positive indication that any person who flouts the law will be punished. In addition, commitment and political will from politicians, devoid of interferences that undermine the work of law enforcement agencies and the criminal justice system was highlighted as a sufficient condition to ensure efficacy of Act 999 in addressing the political vigilantism menace.

*“The new law will be tested in 2020 but I believe it is enough to work”* Respondent, FGD with Party Executives, Yendi.

*“[I think it will be effective]... if the law is properly implemented. I do not think the law alone will be enough because Ghana has many laws that are not properly implemented. However, [it can work] if the leaders are able to set good examples without influencing the application of the law”* – Respondent, FGD with Religious and Traditional Authority, Aflao.

*“Yes because this law was enacted by the two major political parties hence anyone who goes contrary to the law will be punished.”* – Respondent, FGD with Political Party activists, Aflao.

### **Awareness and expectations about outcomes from the NPC led dialogue between NPP and NDC**

In response to the violent incident that rocked the Ayawaso West Wuogon (AWW) constituency by-elections on January 31, 2019, the President, Nana Addo Dankwa Akuffo-Addo initiated a number of actions to forestall future occurrence.

First was the setting up of a 3-member Commission of Inquiry headed by former Commissioner of the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), Justice Emile Short to investigate the incident and proffer some recommendations to address the issue. Subsequently, the President, Nana Addo-Dankwa Akuffo Addo in his State of the Nation Address (SONA) on February 21, 2019 directed the leadership of the NPP and NDC (the two parties mainly associated with vigilantism in the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic) to meet within one week to dialogue on the way forward in disbanding their respective vigilante groups. He further stated in the SONA that if the two parties failed to find solutions to disbanding the vigilante groups he would introduce legislation to quell vigilantism, and that later culminated into the process leading to the passage and assent of Vigilantism and Related Offences Act, 2019 (Act 999) by Parliament and the President respectively. The President in his address to the nation on the 62<sup>nd</sup> Independence Day celebration on March 6, 2019 in Tamale, reiterated his call for the parties to meet and dialogue in finding lasting solutions to the problems of political vigilantism. Eventually the leadership of the NPP and the NDC agreed to the dialogue, and further agreed that dialogue be facilitated by the NPC. Since then, several meetings were held, and press statements issued after some of the meetings indicate that the dialogue is progressing peacefully.

In view of this, the study sought to find out the level of public awareness and expectation from the ongoing NPC led dialogue between the NPP and the NDC. Respondents were asked the question: “Are you aware that the National Peace Council (NPC) is leading a dialogue between the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) to disband vigilante groups and find lasting solutions to end vigilantism? What are your views on this ongoing dialogue?” On a whole, most respondents were aware of the ongoing dialogue and pointed out they had heard it on the news. However, only a few of them were able to provide significant details – beyond the headlines in the news. In furtherance of this discussion, respondents were asked a hypothetical question about a positive outcome of the dialogue and how that will affect actors, politics and elections at the community level. In the ensuing discussions, two categories of responses were obtained from respondents, with more people expressing optimism about the outcomes of the process while others were pessimistic.

For those who were optimistic, positive outcomes of the ongoing dialogue will be a test of the system especially with respect to the 2019 District Level Elections [held on December 17, 2019] and the voter registration exercise in 2020, as noted by a respondent in Sankore. Optimistic respondents posited that a positive outcome between the NPP and NDC will translate into peaceful elections at the community level since national leadership of the two leading parties have agreed to disbanding political vigilante groups, hence local level executives and actors will fall in line with the decision. This view came with a caveat that conclusions and agreement reached at the national level should not be left hanging; however, conscious efforts should be made by party leaders and NPC to disseminate the information to increase awareness about the implications of the decision particularly within the party structures at the grassroots.

*“It will not change the outcome of the election. However, decisions must go down to the grassroots and if it is well absorbed, there will be less violence and the promotion of free and fair elections.”* – Respondent, FGD with Religious and Traditional Leaders, Aflao.

On the other hand, respondents who were skeptical wondered how a positive outcome of the dialogue would translate into violent free elections and political environment. Their opinions indicated any agreement reached would not work because politicians will only pay lip service on committing to the agreement, and in principle, it would be contravened at the least opportunity for electoral and political advantage. In the same vein, respondents pointed out that the agreement will not work for non-compliance and asked that penalties be included to strengthen its ability to deter would-be offenders. Yet still, lingering mutual mistrust between the two parties has the potential to derail any progress made with the outcome of disbanding vigilante groups as this is seen as a 'paperwork' that holds no sway over realities and dynamics on the ground. In discussions with the various political party executives and activists, it became known that the national leadership of the two leading parties have not been updating the decentralized structures about the dialogue. This gap in information dissemination to the grassroots has the tendency to alienate local level actors from the outcomes of the dialogue and may not augur well for buy-in at the community level. Some respondents wondered whether alternative opportunities would be created for the disbanded group members. These sentiments are reflected in views shared by respondents:

*“Party leaders can sit in Accra and decide to disband vigilante groups, but we the executives at the constituency level cannot trust what has been agreed upon. Mistrust between political parties will still keep vigilantism active in the constituencies. I simply cannot believe the decision that will be taken [1]...It will not work because the group's [vigilante] name is gone, but the job that they do for the party, they will still do it even if they are disbanded on paper.” [2] – Respondent, NPP Party Executives and affiliated Youth Groups, Asawase.*

*“You have recruited and trained these people and now you turned around to disband them. What work would they do now? Some leaders based on this suggested that they must be given an alternative job or else it would be problematic. They will just engage in robbery to survive.” - Respondent, FGD with NDC Youth Group, Sankore.*

### **Public reaction to the Vigilantism and Related Offences Law, 2019 (Act 999) and the NPC-led dialogue between the NPP and NDC**

This section of the report briefly appraises the public's responses and reactions of key stakeholders and institutions to the promulgation of the Vigilantism and Related Offences Law, 2019 (Act 999) and their views on the dialogue that the NPC facilitated between the NPP and the NDC. On the face of it, the political parties, particularly the NPP and the NDC have shown some level of commitment to the efforts aimed at addressing the problem of political vigilantism. This argument is premised on three reasons. First, Members of Parliament (MPs) from both the NPP and the NDC were active both at the committee level and on the floor of Parliament in debating and making contributions that consequently shaped the initial draft bill until its passage into law. Second, most political parties, including the NDC and the NPP, presented position papers and made inputs at a stakeholder consultation convened by the Constitutional, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Committee of Parliament in May 2019 (Ghanaweb, May 23, 2019; Ghanaweb, May 27, 2019). Third, in spite of the initial differences and the disagreements over how the NPC led dialogue for disbanding political vigilantism should be conducted, the NPP and the NDC actively participated in all the processes as part of the dialogue, which culminated in the production of two documents - a Code of Conduct for political parties; and a Roadmap for disbanding vigilante groups affiliated to the parties.

The NPC led dialogue between the NDC and the NPP to disband political vigilante groups is yet to be completed because the NDC is yet to endorse the two documents produced from the dialogue. The Code of Conduct for political parties and is accompanied by a Roadmap, when endorsed by the political parties, the documents will commit them to the process to disband the vigilante groups.



For political vigilante groups, it appears that the public outcry and the processes to end vigilantism may have had a moderating effect on their activities since few acts of political vigilantism had been recorded between April 2019 and after the passage of Act 999. It should be noted that in April 2019, the leader of the Delta Force, Nana Kwadwo Bamba, announced the disbandment of the group he is leading (Enews Ghana, April 11, 2019). Similarly, the Ashanti Regional Chairman of the NPP, Bernard Antwi Boasiako, who in previous times supported and defended the acts of NPP affiliated groups - Delta Forces and Invisible Forces - publicly called for the arrest and prosecution of any members of these defunct groups found to have contravened the law because his party had parted ways with the groups (Ghanaweb, June 21, 2019). The question remains whether truly, the groups have been disbanded as claimed by the leaders. And whether the other political vigilante groups have been disbanded. Regardless of this, Section 2 of the Vigilantism and Related Offences Act 2019, (Act 999) explicitly outlaws political vigilantism and vigilante groups and sums it up as follows: “A vigilante group in existence before the coming into force of this Act, including the groups set out in the Schedule, is disbanded.” Commencement of electoral activities, for instance voter registration exercises and campaigns by political parties ahead of the election will give a good indication of whether these groups and their activities have been disbanded; and whether law enforcement agencies and the Criminal Justice System would work effectively to penalize all acts that constitute vigilantism according to the Act 999. Accordingly, provisions in Section 10 of the law gives discretion to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General to enact a Legislative Instrument (LI) to give effect to the law within twelve months after the law comes into force.

However, it has been nine months since the law came into force, but the Minister of Justice and Attorney General is yet to enact the necessary legislative Instrument for effectively operationalizing the Vigilantism and Related Offences Act, 2019 (Act 999). It is critical that the AG speed up the processes in producing all the needed documents, including the LI, to operationalize the Act, especially with 2020 being an election year.

#### **Introduction**

This chapter summarizes and concludes on the entire results and findings from the previous chapter, and goes a step further to prescribe some recommendations for policy consideration and to inform interventions even as stakeholders' are making efforts to address electoral violence and political vigilantism.

#### **Summary of main findings**

- Across all hotspots, electoral violence manifests in several forms including verbal and physical assaults noted to result in destruction of properties, especially properties of political opponents, removal of electoral materials among others
- The main actors of electoral violence are primary (political party youth, vigilante groups, supporters and polling agents of political parties); secondary actors (candidates or aspirants, political party leaders); and external (EC staff, and security agents (Police), media, traditional and religious leaders)
- Largely, respondents identified structural causes of electoral violence as (winner-takes- all politics in Ghana, unemployment and poverty, polarized chieftaincy disputes); and proximate causes as (electoral malpractices, lack of parental care, political influence on the media, lack of confidence in security agencies, poor enforcement of laws, verbal abuse, electoral malpractices, integrity issues with the EC)
- Generally, respondents identified ignorance, peer influence, unfulfilled promises by politicians and political parties, enlistment of party foot soldiers into security agencies, chieftaincy disputes as potential drivers of electoral violence
- In terms of the motivations to form vigilante groups, respondents generally identified mistrust for state institutions (EC and Police), need for internal party security, desire to win political power and conception of vigilantism as a business model as the underlying motives
- Uncovering why people join vigilantism groups, respondents identified employment, rewards for services, recognition within parties, revenge and protection, and protection from the law as the main reasons
- The use of drugs among political vigilantes was raised as a big concern in almost all the communities interviewed. Respondents mentioned the use of tramadol and some ordinary medicines bought from pharmacy shops and combined with some other items to form strong drugs for consumption. Having consumed these drugs, the political vigilantes perpetuate crimes without consideration for their victims

- Few respondents are aware and have knowledge about the recently passed Vigilantism and Related Offences Law Act, 999 (Act 999) to tackle vigilantism and related Offences, but skeptics do not think the Act is necessary, and that more efforts should be channeled into enforcing existing laws. In addition, they noted that lack of political will coupled with hypocritical behavior of politicians, corrupt practices of police officers and interference from traditional authorities would militate against effective enforcement of the Act
- Respondents are optimistic a positive outcome of the dialogue between the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) being mediated by the NPC would promote free and fair elections, enhance the electoral process, enhance confidence in the outcome of elections and increase Ghana's democratic credentials. However, it was on a caveat that public awareness should be created on the dialogue itself and the outcomes

### **Policy recommendations**

Based on the discussions and findings as well as some recommendations from respondents on what could be done at the community level by stakeholders to complement ongoing efforts at promoting peaceful elections and addressing the threat of political vigilantism, the under listed suggestions were documented from the FGDs, and are presented for policy consideration.

### **Electoral Commission of Ghana**

- Promote inter-party dialogues in constituencies, extending the dialogues to even the lowest level of the communities, such as the polling station and the ward levels. This will be helpful in mitigating risks and threats to peaceful elections. Most often misinformation leading to suspicion creates anxiety between opposing political parties. This dialogue will offer the opportunity for all issues to be fact-checked and rumors dispelled
- Build the capacity of polling agents of political parties on the electoral laws and procedures. Most of these agents are ignorant of the laws and this defines their actions at the polling stations. The EC in collaboration with the political parties may schedule capacity-building sessions at the district level to train polling agents of candidates and parties in the run up to elections
- The EC should deepen its commitment and ensure free and fair elections and independence in the delivering of its mandate in order to engender trust in the commission
- The EC should undertake due diligence in the recruitment of their temporary staff

## **Government of Ghana**

- Resource the NPC and the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), including resourcing their regional and district offices, to be proactive in taking center stage in convening such dialogues that will be preventive-driven
- Political will is needed to enforce laws without fear or favour. It is always expected from ruling governments to take the lead in implementing harsh decisions on all offenders who violate the laws, and allow the justice system to deal decisively against offenders, especially when members from their own parties are involved. This will boost the confidence of justice delivery institutions, and their actions will also serve as a deterrent to potential offenders
- Creation of sustainable jobs for the youth would go a long way to keep them from engaging in political violence. Metropolitan, Municipal District Assemblies should look at the prospects of empowering the youth within their communities through feasible Local Economic Development (LED) approaches
- The Minister of Justice and Attorney General as required by Section 10 of the Vigilantism and Related Offences Act, 2019 (Act 999), must as a matter of urgency introduce a legislative instrument that will provide the necessary regulations to give effect to Act 999

## **Civil Society Organizations**

- Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), including faith-based organizations, the media, NPC and the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) should take active interest and embark on continuous civic education and peacebuilding campaigns on elections
- Build the capacity of the youth to serve as peace ambassadors in hotspot communities. This will nurture a generation who will be interested in peaceful outcomes of elections in their communities instead of being used as tools to perpetuate violence
- Mass public sensitization on the Vigilantism and Related Offences Act, 2019 (Act 999) is required from the media, civil society, political parties, NPC, and the NCCE to boost awareness about the Act, especially as we are in an election year
- Religious leaders should continue to preach peace at social events and in the churches and mosques

## **Leadership of Political Parties**

- While the NPC is engaging the leadership of the NPP and NDC to find lasting solutions to political vigilantism, the awareness and knowledge about the process appears to be low at the constituency/community level. Community level executives are estranged from the process, and this may have negative consequences for buy-in of the outcomes of the dialogue. There is therefore the need for the main parties involved – NPC, NPP and NDC leadership to engage with constituency actors especially in hotspots, and at best explore the possibility of replicating the dialogue at the grassroots and popularize the Political Parties Code of Conduct and Roadmap to eradicating political vigilantism that were generated from the dialogue
- Similarly, conscious efforts should be made by the leadership of the NPP and the NDC to disseminate the outcomes or agreement of the dialogue through engagements with executives in the party sub-structures. Such an approach will sensitize executives at the sub-structures and contribute to their buy-in and support implementation of the Roadmap to eradicating political vigilantism and Code of Conduct for political parties

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Case Study On Sampled Hotspots

#### **Introduction**

This last chapter gives a special focus on each of the hotspots sampled for the research. The essence is to provide case specific context and reflections from responses in each of the communities, simply because chapter four focused on all five communities although nuances exist in each hotspot. This case-by-case reflection concludes with specific recommendations that fit within the context of each hotspot.

#### **Yendi**

Located in the eastern corridor of the Northern Region, Yendi is the capital city of the Dagbon Kingdom and the seat of the Ya-Na, the overlord of Dagbon traditional area. From the data gathered from the various discussions held, Yendi has dominantly experienced chieftaincy and political violence. The chieftaincy disputes have assumed political dimensions, and thus have taken the form of political violence. The two royal gates of the Dagbon (the Abudus and Andanis) are affiliated to the NPP and NDC respectively. The political season in Yendi has often been characterized with violence, which is manifested during voter registration, electioneering campaigns and during elections. The violence is caused by actions such as registration of minors, verbal and physical abuse, and intimidation of opponents in party strongholds. These actions culminate into destruction of property and life. Political party agents, active members of political parties, youth groups, aspiring candidates of political parties, EC staff, party supporters and sympathizers were identified as the main actors in electoral violence in the area. It is interesting to note that respondents accused the EC of not undertaking due diligence in recruiting its temporary staff for election-related activities. Hence, the EC recruits known supporters of political parties who are not trusted by the people. As a result of their inherent biases, they are unable to mediate when misunderstanding occurs between opposing political party supporters and agents.

Unemployment, the desire of aspiring candidates to win elections at all cost, lack of parental care, the influence of aspirants/candidates, verbal abuse, politicization of the Dagbon chieftaincy dispute and electoral malpractices (such as multiple registration, registration of minors, cheating during counting of polls and intimidation of political opponents) were identified by respondents as the underlying causes of electoral violence in Yendi. Women were identified by respondents as the main culprits of verbal abuse.

There was a consensus among respondents that there may be cases of electoral violence during the 2020 political and election period due to unresolved issues during the 2019 limited voter registration exercise undertaken by the EC ahead of the 2019 District Level Elections. Few others were optimistic the resolution of the long-standing Dagbon chieftaincy dispute and the enskinment of the new Ya-Na (the Over Lord of the Dagbon Kingdom) will minimize the level of violence during the 2020 elections.

Respondents identified the following actions as potential triggers of violence in upcoming elections in 2020:

- The enlistment of party foot soldiers into security services may trigger violence in the elections (not limited to only Yendi) as these recruits tend to be loyal to their political parties who employed them and are likely to display biases towards opposing parties.
- Failure of political parties to deliver on their campaign promises and manifestos
- Ignorance of the electoral laws and regulations and peer influence among the youth

Respondents recommended the following as measures towards ending electoral violence in Yendi and its environs:

- Effective and continuous education and sensitization on election and electoral violence by the NCCE, NPC, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) through the use of the media, drama, games among others.
- Ensure economic empowerment of the youth through creation of sustainable jobs for the youth to ensure improved livelihoods
- Provision of adequate logistics and resources to the NCCE to enable the Commission deliver on its mandate
- Disbandment of vigilante groups by political parties especially the NDC and the NPP
- Security agencies should be given the latitude to operate and perform their functions diligently without political interference
- Strict enforcement of laws by the Police without fear or favour.
- Provision of formal education to the youth
- CSOs and other relevant institutions should provide the media with adequate information to ensure informed reportage

## **Bolgatanga**

Bolgatanga is the regional capital of the Upper East Region of Ghana. Bolgatanga has been in the news quite often in recent times due to a protracted chieftaincy dispute in the area. From the evidence gathered from the study, chieftaincy disputes, land disputes, electoral violence, and religious violence (inter and intra) were identified by respondents as the forms of violence in Bolgatanga. However, chieftaincy and political violence were identified as the most prominent forms of violence in the area. Respondents indicated that political violence has found an expression in the protracted chieftaincy dispute. Thus, political parties (especially NPP and NDC) have aligned themselves with the various factions of the chieftaincy dispute. Political violence in Bolgatanga are associated with electoral activities and these are manifested through actions such as removal and defacing of posters of opponents, use of abusive language on campaign grounds and radio, throwing of stones, blowing of false alarms and threats, clashes during campaigning and provocation of political opponents.

The youth, aspiring candidates and their supporters, and political party financiers were identified as the main actors in electoral violence in Bolgatanga. Respondents identified winner-takes-all, unemployment, the use of the media by politicians in propagating lies, lack of confidence in security agencies, poor enforcement of laws, intimidation of opposition parties by ruling party, misconduct of political parties and their supporters, non-compliance with electoral laws and regulations, poverty and vote buying as the underlying causes of electoral violence.

Respondents called on the government and other stakeholders to take the necessary steps in resolving the current chieftaincy dispute in Bolgatanga, as it may escalate to violence in the 2020 electoral season considering that the royal gates are affiliated to the two main political parties in the country.

Respondents identified chieftaincy disputes, ignorance, unemployment, misguided party representatives on airwaves, violation of electoral laws and regulations as the potential risk for violence during the 2020 electoral and political season. Respondents went further to identify the following as measures towards ending electoral violence in Bolgatanga and the surrounding communities.

- Education and sensitization of citizens especially the youth on the effects of electoral violence by the NCCE, NPC, CSOs and Traditional Authority
- The NPC and NCCE should provide political parties a platform to dialogue as part of peacebuilding measures
- Traditional leaders should be neutral and not align to any political party that will enable them use their platform to impress on the youth to be peaceful
- Deployment of more security personnel to hotspots on the day of election, and during any of the EC's public activities, and political party rallies and campaigns
- The EC and other stakeholder institutions such as the Police should ensure neutrality in delivering their respective mandates



- The EC should provide mechanisms such as the hotline to report potential violence for action
- CSOs should consider and start community peace actions, such as the use of women and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) as Peace Ambassadors
- Enforcement of electoral laws and regulations
- Government and the District Assembly should create sustainable jobs for the youth for improved livelihoods

### **Aflao**

Aflao, located in the Ketu South Municipality of the Volta Region, is a border town on the Ghana-Togo border. In discussions with the various groups, it was revealed that the endemic form of electoral violence is intimidation and physical violence that stems from the difficulty in defining and identifying citizens of Ghana. Determination of citizenship is a big issue, and the electoral laws have not been explicit in clearly stating who a citizen is. This gap has created a cause of disagreement between the two leading political parties – NPP and NDC. It often results in physical violence between the perceived foreigners and NPP polling agents on the one hand, and the NPP and NDC polling agents on the other hand. This often results in disenfranchising some persons who may be genuinely eligible to vote.

There is the notion that the NDC buses citizens of Togo to participate in voter registration exercises and on polling day to vote. Respondents explained that some Ghanaians live and work in Togo but when it is time for elections they come to Ghana to vote. Others cited instances where some families have some of their relatives residing in Togo and possibly have the Togolese accent because of their long stay in that country. Party agents for the NPP usually use the accent as a measure to counter claims of suspected foreigners.

Respondents revealed that party agents did not use the voter challenge forms provided by the EC during the 2019 limited voter registration exercise, but rather resorted to use of physical attacks (confrontation). One reason for this may be due to ignorance on the part of party supporters and party agents about the challenge processes. It was intimated that people did not use the challenge forms because the EC officials were perceived to be working in the interest of the ruling NPP government, and so completing the form will amount to nothing.

Respondents identified some potential triggers of violence in upcoming elections in 2020 by pointing out these factors.

- Suspicion that political vigilante groups and macho-men would be imported into the constituency to prevent suspected foreigners from crossing over to participate in the electoral process (limited/voter registration exercise, voter exhibition exercise and voting)
- Persons living in Togo who are qualified to vote may be stranded at the border and this can likely spark agitations that could culminate into violence
- Misinterpretation of rules on verification: People were disenfranchised because the Biometric Verification Devices (BVDs) allegedly could not verify them, while manual verification was not applied by temporary staff of the EC as a second means of verification. There is a strong perception that the BVDs are deliberately manipulated to disenfranchise voters
- Prevention of persons suspected to be non-Ghanaians, non-resident and minors at voter registration centers has the potential to spark violence
- Suspicion that some names were deliberately deleted from the voters register has implications for peaceful elections when these people realise they cannot vote in the 2020 elections
- Suspicion that the ruling NPP government would want to use state power to prevent persons suspected to be affiliated to NDC from voting on polling day

In attempts to find solutions to the problems, a call was made for stakeholders such as religious and traditional leaders to be educated on electoral laws for them to extend this knowledge to their congregation and people.

### **Sankore**

Located in the Ahafo region of Ghana, Sankore is one of the notable towns in the Asunafo South District. Electoral and political violence are very dominant whilst other forms of violence pale in comparison. The levels of mistrust and acrimony between the NPP and the NDC in the community has reached unprecedented levels that transcends into violence beyond the political and electoral cycle.

The community is marked by *stark* divisiveness along NDC-NPP party lines and fuelled by strong acrimony as a result of injustice perpetuated by party-affiliated militant youth groups in times past which have not been punished and these perpetrators are walking scot free. Violent crime and reprisal attacks are very rampant even when there are no political or electoral related activities, and tend to be a way of settling personal feuds. Fear of and actual reprisal attacks from the NPP affiliated vigilantes for what they suffered during NDC's reign (2008-2016), has forced many NDC affiliated youth and vigilante members to migrate (flee) from Sankore, until an opportune time when their party is in power before they can return (such has been the routine in the area – known members, especially opposition party youth groups always flee the area, and return only when their parties win power again).

Voter registration produces a lot of violence because of the use of suspected minors, non-residents and foreigners to register. Each party seems to resist the other's attempts and that spirals into violent attacks and counter attacks. Women groups noted that incidents of violence affects their trading activities especially during market days. The EC's challenge forms are seldom used by party agents to challenge suspected minors or 'foreigners', instead, party agents and activists resort to verbal altercations and physical attacks. This is due both to the belief that nothing good comes out from the use of the challenge process on one hand, and ignorance of the process on the other hand on the part of party agents.

Ordinarily in other communities visited, the research team was able to meet all political parties, primarily the NDC and NPP in one meeting. However, at Sankore, the situation was different. FGDs were held separately with all the parties at different locations. NDC party executives and youth activists indicated that their safety was not guaranteed because they were scared of possible attacks from their counterparts in the NPP if they came to the main venue to participate in the FGDs. The research team therefore met the NPP and NDC separately in different locations. It was only in Sankore that scores of armed police officers were present at the venue for the FGDs to provide security for the research team and to avert any possible violence from ensuing.

Upon reflection of the current situation in the community, respondents indicated some possible triggers and threats to election in 2020. A couple of indicators were cited:

- Intense competition between the followers of the current NDC MP, Eric Opoku and NPP's former MP, George Boakye will see the continuous and increased use of more vigilante groups and militant youth to undermine each other. It is apparent that the NDC will want to use their incumbency to retain the seat. There are suspicions that the NPP which now dominates politically, because it constitutes the ruling party, are likely to use the state security apparatus in its control to unseat the NDC
- Perceived unresponsiveness of the police to members of the opposition, and the perceived alignment of the police with the ruling party
- On-going physical reprisal attacks, threats, intimidation and desire for revenge playing out between groups and individuals aligned with the NPP and NDC will magnify violence during the 2020 elections
- First-time voters were afraid to register during the limited voter registration exercise held in 2019, and there are fears they would not come out to vote

As noted by a respondent,

*“My daughter is more than 18 years and was afraid to go and register, let alone, how she can go out to vote during the elections”* – Respondent, FGD with women groups, Sankore.

- Availability of idle youth because of high rate of unemployment. These unemployed youth are prone to engaging in violent crime, aside their availability for manipulation by politicians

Interestingly, most of the groups engaged, especially party executives and youth groups were aware of Parliament's passage of the Vigilantism and Related Offences Act, 2019 (Act 999). They intimated that for the Act to work effectively in Sankore, there is a need for public sensitization and awareness on Act 999. In addition, respondents provided some suggestions that have the potential of dealing with the persistent violence in Sankore.

- Set up of a military barracks in the town: Respondents requested for a military presence in Sankore because they perceive the police to be compromised and 'weak' in dealing with party affiliated vigilante groups who are found culpable of committing crime. In their views, the military on the contrary are feared by vigilante groups and party foot soldiers as opposed to the police, which were seen to be weak and compromised. On the contrary, respondents view the military to be more neutral, disciplined and professional. They explained that the military has a rotational system, which in their view does not allow them to stay longer at a place, thereby limiting their ability to mingle with the local people; hence, it insulates them to an extent from being compromised
- Central government and the local government should create jobs and opportunities for livelihood improvements that are needed to absorb the teeming youth and get them meaningfully engaged
- Compensate persons who suffered attacks, as well as those whose livelihoods were destroyed in previous bouts of violence. In respondents' view, it was very crucial for the government to compensate this category of people else the implementation of Act 999 and the Roadmap to eradicating political vigilantism and Political Parties Code of Conduct will be negated by a continuous cycle of revenge and reprisal attacks
- Political actors should allow the law to work regardless of offenders/criminals party affiliation
- Neutral bodies and CSOs should identify and target leaders of vigilante groups and speak to them about peace and the need for them to disband their groups in one-on-one sessions. While engaging these persons, the idea of meeting all group leaders at a neutral venue outside of Sankore to find lasting solutions to the issue with these actors in the same meeting should be floated. In this vein, continuous engagements with these groups over a considerably long period of time is required to gauge the level of progress instead of one-off and sporadic events

## **Asawase**

Asawase is located in Kumasi the capital city of the Ashanti Region, a region dominated by the NPP. Asawase is one of three constituencies represented by NDC Members of Parliament in the region. Violence during elections is a regular feature of all elections and is mostly associated with the Presidential and Parliamentary elections. Suspicions about rigging of the elections in some polling stations, whether real or imagined, becomes a basis for party activists and affiliated vigilante groups to launch physical attacks on political opponents. This deep-seated mutual mistrust is exacerbated by rumors, fabricated stories about eruption of violence, or alleged rigging at some polling stations, which compels all sides to dispatch vigilante groups to these polling stations for investigation. The presence of the first team of vigilante groups at the polling station in question stalls the electoral processes and intimidates voters. In the event that the second group of vigilantes from the opposing party arrive at the polling station, a section of voters become terrified and run away because they perceive that the second group have come to cause commotions. Rumor travels around the electoral area and often inhibits voters from stepping out to vote for fear of their lives.

It is interesting to note that in some instances the actions of women within the community tends to incite violence, and this is not only limited to political and election periods. They do this by intentionally insulting persons who do not belong to their parties and provoke them to retaliate. The ensuing altercations draw people to the scene and lead to squads of party activists taking sides. In situations in which the incident is not diffused amicably, it has the tendency of degenerating into brawls between factions along political lines, usually between the NPP and the NDC.

Respondents noted that the issue of political parties pushing minors to register during Voter Registration exercise are very rife. Coupled with that people suspected not to be resident in Asawase are imported and bussed by politicians to the registration centers to be registered, a phenomenon that is repeated during voting day with its attendant problems of being the fulcrum on which opposing political parties clash with each other. On what could constitute threats or triggers of violence during the 2020 elections, a number of factors mentioned by respondents are highlighted below:

- Voter registration process would be problematic since minors and non-resident persons are bused into the constituency to be registered, amidst the fierce contestations and resistance that leads to violence
- There are fears that the parliamentary contest promises to be very fierce and that implies politicians would employ any means necessary, whether fair or foul to win the elections

- Mistrust for temporary staff of the EC – Some of the EC staff were noted by respondents to be surrogates of political parties and would take the least opportunity to do the bidding of the parties they are affiliated to, an occurrence that have implications for peaceful and credible elections
- Police interference and biases in favour of a particular party, usually the party in government
- Suppression of opposition party activities such as floats, keep fit exercises, rallies etc in strongholds
- Spread of fake news and unfounded rumors has the possibility of sparking violence between vigilante groups affiliated with political parties
- Increasing drug use by the youth in the community was flagged as a source of concern as politicians take advantage of drug addicts to foment trouble during the electoral cycle
- Increasing gun circulation and the growing gun culture has the potential to mar the elections if gun owners deploy their weapons especially during electoral and political activities

With regards to vigilante groups operating in the area, apart from those with names – NDC Taskforce, Maxwell Boys, Delta Forces, Invisible Forces, Cyborg Killers, Bamba Boys, Alidu Mafias – there were a lot more groups that cannot be identified with names, and they are available for hiring by politicians, factions in land and chieftaincy disputes and enforcers for private individuals. Respondents noted that drug use among members of these groups is high and their association with crime is undisputed. Awareness of the Vigilantism and Related Offences Law, 2019 (Act 999) was slightly higher among respondents and even more so with political party executives, youth activists and tertiary student wings of political parties. On the other side, respondents think most of the citizens in Asawase are not aware of the passage of Act 999 by parliament. Overall, respondents were skeptical about Act 999 and stressed the need for political will to enforce the Act to create a deterrent effect. Yet still, awareness of the NPC led dialogue between the NPP and NDC was somewhat appreciable, however, only a few respondents knew more details about the dialogue.

Similarly, respondents were pessimistic about any positive outcome of the dialogue in which the two leading parties would agree on disbanding their respective vigilante groups. Some respondents offered the following reasons:

*“The person [politician] who will come down to disseminate that information is the problem. National executives have failed us with promises so they cannot come down here.”* – Respondent, FGD with NPP Executives and Youth groups

*“It won't work because the groups are no longer there [the groups may be disbanded in name] but the individuals who used to constitute the groups are there. They will still work for the party as they used to do when they were in a group. They will guard the ballot boxes and defend their parties' interest. Once we still have such people in our midst, the law [Act 999] won't work.”* – Respondent, FGD with NPP Executives and Youth groups

Based on the discourse in the preceding paragraphs, some remedial actions were suggested by respondents as measures to mitigate electoral violence in Asawase.

- There is the need for stakeholders such as NPC, NCCE and Ghana Police Service to promote dialogue and cordiality between the parliamentary candidates of the NDC and NPP ahead of the elections in 2020. Such an action will go a long way to influence footsoldiers and supporters to perceive their candidates as competitors and not enemies; and somewhat contribute to easing unnecessary tensions that are likely to characterize the elections
- National Peace Council (NPC), NCCE and CSOs should target churches and mosques to sensitize congregations on the Vigilantism and Related Offences Law, 2019 (Act 999)
- Influential persons in the community should be identified by the Ashanti Regional Peace Council and used to reach out to known persons and leaders of vigilante groups for one-on-one sessions using moral suasion approaches
- Community consciousness about the drug use menace and its devastating effects should stir up conversations and social action against drug abuse. CSOs operating in and around Asawase could take up this task of community awareness
- The Ghana National Commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons should consider initiating regional wide collection and destruction of illicit arms to reduce its circulation in the system



## **Instigators and Informants: Role of Women in Fueling Violence and Political Vigilantism**

It is a truism that women are among the worst affected in times of unrest. The narrative has been that women are often attacked and suffer all manner of abuse and violations in conflict situations. Women are also seen getting involved in conflicts nursing wounded men and generally helping with aid efforts. Women are recognized as critical actors in peacebuilding, and are engaged as useful resources in providing early warning information on conflict, support with peace education and volunteer as counsellors for the youth on non-violence alternatives and other peacebuilding initiatives.

Fieldwork undertaken by the research team highlights obscured roles of women in hotspots that do not often come to the fore of discussions, possibly because it does not fit the usual narrative of women as victims and peace ambassadors. It should be noted that the research did not set out to understand the role of women in electoral violence in Ghana. However, the subject came up in most of the FGDs. The research team documented some of the roles the women played in fueling violence.

### **Instigators/Enablers**

In virtually all of the FGDs, the use of insults and abusive language by some actors were noted to be pervasive especially during the political and electoral season. One of the roles women were found to play was instigating violence. They usually do this by engaging in the use of abusive language or verbal assaults on political opponents. For instance, some women with strong affiliation to their political parties particularly in Yendi and Asawase were noted to purposely and deliberately use abusive language on persons belonging to opposing parties without cause until their victims become angry and attempt to strike or actually physically assault them in retaliation. Essentially, this strategy is used to entrap political opponents in some instances. The women in question or onlookers call their relatives and fellow party supporters to come to their defense. The defense team attacks the person who assaulted the woman or women and this eventually degenerates from an altercation into a brawl, often along political lines, that is between NPP and NDC when a counter team emerges in defense of the attacker. A respondent at one of the FGDs remarked:

*“We have some ladies who insult political opponents until it degenerates into a fight between the two main political parties here. We normally call such ladies the 'Kyeiwaas'. They are bold, aggressive and loud mouthed.”* – Respondent, FGD with Political Party Executives, Asawase

The women also, for fear of being ridiculed by their peers for having so called 'weak' men, push their men to join in the fights. Others also made it a point to call out their men to join in the violence for fear of being ridiculed. Men who do not want to be labelled as 'weak' or 'cowardly' participate in these fights. It was revealed in the discussions that some women gather stones for the men to throw at their opponents. This finding is similar to Edu-Afful and Allotey-Pappoe (2016, p. 77) who found that Zabilla Ladies, an all-female group based in Tamale supply stones and other weapons to male vigilante groups during operations. The views by a respondent in an FGD gives further insight to the discussion.

*“When the fight starts, women run to call their men to come and join in. If your man does not join in, the other ladies will laugh at you that you are married to a coward”* – Respondent, Women Group, Yendi

Another form of instigation was identified that showed that some women whose family members or relations were political vigilantes seemed to wield power and were almost untouchable in their communities. They take advantage of the involvement of their relatives in political vigilantism and their reputation for ruthlessness to threaten their colleagues and adversaries in any argument or misunderstanding. Under constant threats, this forced other women to push their male relations into joining vigilante groups so they could benefit from the perceived prestige and protection that comes with it.

*“Some of the mothers whose wards are involved in political vigilantism can sometimes dare other people by telling them, 'Do you know whose mother I am? If you are not careful I will let my son discipline you.'”* – Respondent, Assembly and Unit Committee Members, Asawase

### **Informants**

It also came to light that the women served as informants for the various political party-affiliated vigilante groups. This aided the vigilante groups to evade arrest from the state security agencies who seek to arrest these vigilantes when they commit an Offence. As part of the ploy of staying ahead of law enforcement agencies, some of the vigilantes bait security personnel by intentionally offering their sisters or girlfriends to the security personnel whilst they pose as brothers of these girls, in order for the girls to tip them off about impending security operations meant to cause the arrest of members of their groups. A consequence of these recurring incidents of leaked operational information militates against efforts to quell political vigilantism and the criminality around their actions.

These revelations came to light in FGDs with vigilantes and militant party youth in Sankore.

*“When the security people want to carry out an operation, they tell the ladies ‘tell your brothers that we are going to do an operation against them.’ The girls give us this information and we run away even before the operation is started”* – Respondent, Political Party Youth, Sankore

In other instances, the women attend political party rallies and meetings to spy. They take note of townsfolk who have attended the meetings and report them to the vigilante groups as being members of the other political party. Those who attend the meeting are targeted and attacked by political vigilantes. In the FGD with professional bodies in Sankore, some respondents confirmed that they were careful with their choice of words and the kind of information they revealed because they could not fully trust fellow respondents to keep the information about the discussion confidential.

*“Some of the ladies in Sankore act as informants for their respective political parties. They go to their opponents' campaigns and look at the attendees just to go back to report to their fellow party members. Based on this information, opponents are sometimes attacked.”* – Respondent, Professional Bodies, Sankore

It is the researchers' position that efforts aimed at combating electoral violence and vigilantism should include women, as they play important roles in sustaining vigilantism and violence.

### **Typology and Formation of Political Vigilante Groups**

In the series of 36 rounds of FGDs held in 5 purposively selected violence hotspots, researchers got a deeper meaning into the creation of vigilante groups, and this also influences the typology of those groups. Three main types of vigilante groups based on how they are formed emerged from the study and includes:

- Social Group
- Party Boys
- Business Model

#### **Social Group**

This type of vigilante group starts as a social group. They may be a group of boys who train in the same gym or stay in the same neighbourhood who form a self-help group (popular in suburban and rural areas). Thus they do not start off as a vigilante group, but become a vigilante group when they are contacted by an influential person in political parties, and carry out activities in defense of that influential person or his political party's interest. After this job is done, they revert to their social grouping. This influential politician could even be related to a member by blood or marriage, or even reside in the neighbourhood with them. Their activities may also be localized and would hardly be exported outside the locality they live in.

#### **Party Boys**

This type of vigilante group is intentionally created by political party figureheads from the young persons within their ranks. Thus membership is restricted purely to members of the same political party. In some areas they are often referred to as “party foot soldiers”. They are easily accessible by the political parties and are used to promote or protect party interest in the particular electoral areas in which they are formed. They may or may not be given names, but are easily identified as belonging to one political party or the other.

#### **Business Model**

This type of vigilante group exists mainly in the urban areas. They are not started by political party agents or community members. They are started as a 'business venture' by a leader and their services are offered to the highest bidder. Their activities are not confined to a single area as they can be hired to do jobs in other parts of the country. Bodybuilding is often an integral part of the culture of those in this category. Members of this model of vigilantes also serve as bodyguards to influential persons, act as land guards during the political off-season, or in extreme cases indulge in criminal vices. It was alleged by some respondents that some of these persons are recruited in the security services as rewards for their services to political elites. In one particular FGD, it was alleged that membership into these groups cost as much as GHS 1,200 (US\$240).

## APPENDIX 3

## Police update report on political vigilantism (December 12, 2016 - November 28, 2017)

| S/No. | DATE       | REGION                   | INCIDENT   | ACTION TAKEN  | UPDATE FROM REGIONS   |
|-------|------------|--------------------------|--|---|---|
| 1     | 12/12/2016 | Tema                     | Alleged youth of NPP took over Tema motorway toll booth  | Police responded and the group fled on seeing the police leaving the money behind | Law and order restored  |
| 2     | 13/12/2016 | Ashanti                  | Two persons believed to be NPP supporters seized toilet facilities within Kumasi Metropolis        | No report made to police  | Situation calm  |
| 3     | 9/01/2017  | Greater Accra (CID HQRS) | Policeman ASP Nanka Bruce at Flagstaff House assaulted by Invisible Forces member                  |   | Complaint submitted a withdrawal letter                                     |
| 4     | 10/01/2017 | Western                  | NPP youth in Bodi District besieged and locked up offices of National Health Insurance in the area | Chiefs/elders intervened and resolved the issue                                   | A letter to that effect was sent to the police                              |
| 5     | 10/01/2017 | Greater Accra            | Amasaman Constituency chairman of NPP attacked Police officer on duty at Pobiman toll booth        | Arrested and docket prepared  | Police officer submitted withdrawal letter citing family and other pressure |

|    |            |             |   |   |   |
|----|------------|-------------|---|---|---|
| 6  | 14/01/2017 | Eastern     | NPP supporters take over public toilet in Koforidua                     | The New Juabeng Municipal Assembly stepped in and took over the management of the toilet    | Calm restored   |
| 7  | 22/02/2017 | Northern    | NPP's Kandahar Boys torment Tamale Teaching Hospital CEO                | Police intervened and took custody of the keys to the place                                 | Place now functioning smoothly with no other incident   |
| 8  | 25/03/2017 | Ashanti     | NPP's Delta Force Attack Ashanti Regional Security Coordinator          | Arrested for escaping from lawful custody and having attacked judge                         | They have been fined for assault on circuit court judge. AG advice police to conduct further investigations on the assault of the circuit court judge |
| 9  | 30/03/2017 | Brong Ahafo | Invisible Forces attack school feeding caterers in Atebubu              |   | Case under investigation  |
| 10 | 3/04/2017  | Eastern     | NPP's Invisible Forces allegedly locked up Eastern Regional NHIS office | Police responded swiftly. Perpetrators left the scene when they saw the police approaching. | Calm has been restored  |

|    |            |               |  |  |  |
|----|------------|---------------|--|--|--|
| 11 | 6/04/2017  | Ashanti       | NPP's Delta Force storms court to set suspects free  | 13 suspects sent to court, convicted and fined                 | Place calm   |
| 12 | 15/06/2017 | Northern      | NPP youth in Savelugu clash with police over MCE's position  | REGSEC intervened  | Calm restored  |
| 13 | 25/07/2017 | Northern      | Supporters of NPP stopped construction work on Yendi-Bimbilla section of the Eastern Corridor roads demanding employment | Construction company employed the NPP supporters               | Calm has been restored   |
| 14 | 27/07/2017 | Ashanti       | NPP youth storm Ashanti Regional Metro Mass Transit bus terminal over new director                                       | Security provided and no attack occurred                       | Situation back to normal   |
| 15 | 1/08/2017  | Greater Accra | NPP Invisible Forces threaten chaos over jobs  | Threat issued on air   | No attack occurred   |
| 16 | 1/08/2017  | Tema          | NPP Invisible Forces threaten chaos over joblessness   | Threat issued on air   | Police Regional Commander contacted. MCE handled the case. Calm restored |
| 17 | 16/10/2017 | Northern      | NPP youth in Tamale locked up Northern Regional secretariat of School Feeding Programme                                  | Police reopened the secretariat and no incident occurred again | Calm restored  |

|    |            |            |  |   |  |
|----|------------|------------|--|---|--|
| 18 | 16/10/2017 | Northern   | NPP youth locked up school feeding office in Tamale  | No report made to the police                                  | Place is calm  |
| 19 | 25/10/2017 | Northern   | NPP youth storm police station in Karaga sets suspect free   | Police station and district assembly                          | Case before court. Chairman and 3                      |
| 19 | 25/10/2017 | Northern   | NPP youth storm police station in Karaga sets suspect free   | Police station and district assembly offices secured          | Case before court. Chairman and 3 others before court. |
| 20 | 26/10/2017 | Upper West | Sissala West DCE locked up by angry NPP youth (Gwollu)   | 7 suspects remanded by Wa Magistrate Court                    | Case pending before court                              |
| 21 | 4/11/2017  | Tema       | Invisible Forces attack Ada East Assembly members  | No arrest made. Medical form issued to some assembly members. | Report made to Ada police. Case under investigations   |
| 22 | 8/11/2017  | Tema       | NPP supporters plan to storm and take over one of the main transport terminal at the Kuffuor station in Ashaiman | Swift intervention of the police averted any clash.           | Situation closely monitored                            |

Source: The Daily Dispatch (November 28, 2017)



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