

An Analysis of Political Vigilantism in Ghana Using the Spittercrow Model

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Abstract

The paper is a qualitative analysis of the dynamics of political vigilantism in the fourth republic of Ghana. The goal is to contribute to the understanding of the dynamics of political vigilantism and the behaviors and interactions of actors in the political processes of Ghana. The paper deployed the SPITCEROW model as the framework of analysis of political vigilantism in Ghana. Political vigilante violence increases during general elections in Ghana. In 2024, Ghana will hold general elections. Some Ghanaians are concerned that the country may witness a recurrence of increase vigilante violence and activities in the 2024 general elections. We take the view that understanding the dynamics and complexities in political vigilantism is essential in combating it. The paper draws data from secondary sources including research reports, articles, and online news reports. The analysis demonstrates that the dynamics of political vigilantism in Ghana are complex, multidimensional, and fluid. The analysis further indicates that unaddressed structural deficiencies in the Ghanaian society create fertile grounds for the birth, growth and thriving of vigilante groups and activities. Vigilante tactics range from physical to emotional, psychological, and verbal. There are multiple actors with varied behaviors, positions, interests, identities, and needs in political vigilantism. Therefore, we argued that multilevel interventions are necessary for confronting the multilayered conditions that are responsible for the emergence and thriving of political vigilante groups. We concluded that any effort that is aimed at dealing with political vigilantism in Ghana without addressing the structural sources may not produce sustainable outcomes.

Keywords: Political, Vigilantism, Analysis, Ghana, SPITCEROW

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Introduction

Ghana will hold another general election in the Fourth Republic in 2024. Since the start of the fourth republic, the country has successfully held eight general elections as well as by-elections although not without the occurrences of various forms of violence. The 2024 general elections will be the 9th general election to be conducted since Ghana returned to constitutional rule in 1992. Just like the previous general elections, the 2024 general elections will see the Electoral Commission of Ghana supervising the conduct of parliamentary and presidential elections for Ghanaians to choose leaders to represent them in parliament (to make laws on their behalf) and at the presidency (to lead policy decision-making and administer the affairs of Ghana on their behalf). The incumbent New Patriotic Party (NPP) will probably seek to retain power and break the eight-year term and power alternation between them and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) that has characterized the politics in the fourth republic. On the other hand, the opposition parties particularly, the NDC may also seek to win back the power they lost to the NPP in 2016.

As 2024 draws closer the questions that are on the minds of many Ghanaians are that: will the NPP break the eight-year tradition? Or will the NDC win back power to maintain the eight-year rule that has characterized the fourth republic? Although the 2024 general elections are two years away, tensions seem to be already brewing. There are concerns that the 2024 general elections may witness the phenomena of political vigilante violence and activities. This is because Ghanaians have in previous turnover elections witnessed vigilante violence (Ashiabi, 2021). Also, political vigilante groups persist (Asamoah, 2019) and appear to still be operating in many communities in the country despite the coming into force of the Vigilantism and Related Offences Law (Act 999) (Dumenu & Adzraku, 2020). Additionally, the activism and usage of political vigilante groups in electoral and political activities in Ghana has surged (Dumenu & Adzraku, 2020) since the start of the fourth republic. Some Ghanaians think Act 999 would not succeed in dealing with political vigilantism (GhanaWeb, 2021, February 17). Asamoah blames the NDC and NPP for the perpetuation of political vigilantism in the county.

Political vigilantism in Ghana is not a new phenomenon. Gyampo et al. (2017) indicate that political vigilantism in Ghana began during the British colonial era with the formation of Nkrumah's 'Veranda Boys' which put pressure on the colonial administration for independence. However, after independence political

vigilantism persisted. In the early post-independence era, the National Liberation Movement's Action Troopers and the Convention People's Party's Action Groupers were formed to push the agenda of their respective parties (Allman, 1993 as cited in Dumenu & Adzraku, 2020). This was followed by the formation of many other vigilante groups such as "the 'Mobisquad', Committee for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR), Workers Defense Committees (WDCs), Peoples Defense Committees (PDCs)" during the PNDC era to defend the regime (Gyampo et al., 2017, p. 118). The coming into force of the fourth republic saw a surge in vigilante groups claiming affiliation to the NDC and NPP. Almost every general election and by-election has witnessed some form of political vigilante activities. Political vigilantism therefore remains a major problem and poses a security risk in Ghana's democratic or political process. While some Ghanaians support vigilante groups (Tenkebe, 2009) others perceive them as informal security for politicians and party events as well as defenders and protectors of the interests of political parties (Dumenu & Adzraku, 2020).

Eradicating political vigilante violence and the activities in the political, electoral and governance processes of Ghana is one of the major challenges facing the country today. Over the years, civil societies, the media, religious groups and leaders, international organizations and other stakeholders have launched series of campaigns aimed at engaging political parties in electoral and other political activities devoid of vigilante groups during elections and political activities as well as to ensure peace before, during and after elections. The security agencies have always deployed significant number of personnel to protect and safeguard election centers as well as ensure peaceful and violent-free elections. Yet, vigilante violence and activities have still been recorded before, during and after previous general elections. The persistence of political vigilante groups in Ghana and the recurrence of vigilante violence during electoral and political activities since the fourth republic is a source of concern. We take the view that understanding the dynamics of political vigilantism is necessary in addressing it. Although research on political vigilantism in Ghana is growing, only few empirical studies (such as Dumenu & Adzraku, 2020; Kyei & Berckmoes 2020) have attempted to provide insights into the dynamics of political vigilantism. However, these few studies that have attempted to analyze political vigilantism also failed to use scientific frameworks or models in their analysis so as to shape our understanding of the dynamics of the menace and feed security actions and electioneering policing. Therefore, this paper was undertaken to analyze political vigilantism in Ghana's fourth republic using the SPITCEROW model. Our hope is to contribute to the understanding of the dynamics of political vigilantism in Ghana, the behavior and interaction of actors in the political process and draw insights that could inform a reflection and conduct of general elections and policing.

The SPITCEROW Model

The SPITCEROW is a model that was developed by Christopher Michelle in 1990 to analyze conflicts and violence. Since the development of the model, various studies have used it to analyze conflicts in Ghana and provided significant data that feed into the understanding of conflict dynamics. For instance, Issifu and Asante (2015), Adjei (2019) Kuupiel (2020) and Nangwele (2022) used the SPITCEROW to analyze the Dagbon chieftaincy conflict, Bawku chieftaincy conflict, Nkonya-Alavanyo conflict and the Nadowli chieftaincy conundrum respectively. Thus, the model is very useful in helping to inform understanding of the dynamics of political vigilantism in Ghana. SPITCEROW is an acronym. The 'S' in the acronym means sources of the conflict. The 'P', 'I', 'T', 'C' and 'E' in the acronym stand for parties involved, issues involved, tactics deployed, changes and enlargement of the conflict respectively. The 'R' in the acronym stands for roles played by the various parties. The 'O' in the acronym stands for outcomes of the conflict and the 'W' stands for winners in the conflict. In this paper, *Sources* deal with the causes (both the remote and immediate causes) of political vigilantism in Ghana. *Parties* refer to those whose identities, interests and needs are at stake in political vigilantism. It also includes those who are acting or involved in political vigilantism. *Issues* deal with what or the things that the parties are contesting or struggling over. *Tactics* involve the various ways and strategies that the parties use or are using to achieve their aims. *Changes* concern with the developments that have occurred since political vigilantism resurfaced in the politics of the fourth republic. *Enlargement* is about the growth of political vigilantism and the additions that have occurred. *Roles* refer to the various functions played by other parties. *Outcomes* refer to the consequences of political vigilantism. *Winners* refer to whether there are victors in political vigilante violence in Ghana.

Research Method

The paper is a qualitative analysis of the dynamics of political vigilantism in the fourth republic of Ghana. The paper deployed the SPITCEROW model as the framework of analysis. The paper relied on research reports, articles, and online news reports on political vigilante activities in Ghana as data to make the analysis. Thus, the source of data for the analysis in this paper was mainly secondary.

Sources of Political Vigilantism in Ghana

The sources of political vigilantism in Ghana are remote (structural) and immediate in nature. The remote

sources include the winner-takes-all politics, poverty, and unemployment (National Peace Council, 2019; Dumenu & Adzraku 2020). Ibrahim (2020) has noted polarization in the use of state power as one of the causal factors of political vigilantism in Ghana. Dumenu and Adzraku realized that polarized chieftaincy disputes are some of the sources of political vigilantism. Such conditions create fertile grounds for political vigilantism to thrive. According to Tenkebe (2019), political vigilantism has flourished in Ghana due to unfavorable law enforcement or criminal justice and structural conditions. Tenkebe stressed that when there is “low certainty of apprehension and punishment, perceived illegitimacy of criminal justice, and socio-economic injustice” (p. 6) in the country, political vigilantism would flourish. Thus, any effort that seeks to end political vigilantism without consciously addressing these underlying conditions may fail to yield sustainable outcomes. In terms of the immediate sources, Dumenu and Adzraku (2020) indicate among others things electoral malpractices, pronouncements and reportage of the media, surge in vigilante groups, lack of confidence in the electoral commission and security agencies as well as the ineffectiveness in law enforcement in the country. Other factors such as protection of votes, corruption (Incoom & Tham-Agyekum, 2019) recognition, rewards, vigilantism as business, revenge, and protection of oneself and from the law are also motivations for the formation of and membership to vigilante groups (Dumenu & Adzraku, 2020). Ibrahim (2020) indicates that the promise of rewards to vigilante groups tend to make them willing to use violence or cruel force to make their political parties win power. Therefore, the conditions that give rise to and nurture political vigilante groups in Ghana are political, economic, and social (Asamoah, 2019). It can also be noted that the factors that give birth to and sustain political vigilantism in Ghana are different. Kuupiel (2020) argues that different factors may cause and spark a conflict.

Parties involved in Political Vigilantism in Ghana

Who are the actors in political vigilantism in Ghana? There are different parties acting differently in political vigilantism in Ghana. There are primary, secondary, and tertiary actors in political vigilante activities in Ghana. The primary parties include political vigilante groups, youth of political parties, polling agents and supporters of political parties (Dumenu & Adzraku, 2020). These primary parties are often the main combatants and perpetrators of violence during electoral and political activities. Some studies have argued that the vulnerability of the youth to acquiesce to vigilante violence is due to limited formal political participation opportunities and unemployment among the Ghanaian youth population (Gyampo, 2011). Some of the vigilante groups that have been operating in Ghana include the Hawks, Aluta Boys, No Weapon¹⁹, Salifu 11, Cyborg Killers, Taskforce, Dragon, Rasta Boys, Al Jazeera, Al-Qaeda, Zabilla Ladies, Gbewa Youth, 66 Bench, Pentagon, NATO Forces, Tohazie, Lions, Eastern Mambas, Se Se Group, Bukurisung (affiliated to the NDC) and Burma Camp, Bolga Bull Dogs, Dazota, Invincible Forces, Kandahar Boys, Delta Forces, Bamba Boys, Maxwell Boys, Alidu Boys, Anointing Boys, Bawumia Fan Club, Samira Fan Club (affiliated to the NPP) (Dumenu & Adzraku, 2020; Ibrahim, 2020; Kyei & Berckmoes 2020). Vigilante groups have thus surged in the fourth republic. Meanwhile, contrary to popular perception of vigilante groups as made up of the youth, Kyei and Berckmoes noted in their study that some political vigilante groups were composed of both the young and old with organized structures (such as hierarchy, executives/leaders, rules and regulations, mode of becoming a member and losing membership, payment of dues, etc.). Secondary parties include candidates aspiring to be on the ticket of political parties and leaders of political parties (Dumenu & Adzraku, 2020). The secondary parties arguably, are often the direct inciters, sponsors and/or beneficiaries of vigilante violence during electoral activities. Other parties who are at stake in political vigilantism in Ghana are at the tertiary level. In their study, Dumenu and Adzraku found out that the Electoral Commission of Ghana, media, security agencies, traditional leaders and religious leaders are some of the tertiary actors in political vigilantism in Ghana. Ashiabi (2021) indicates that the behavior and interaction of all these actors in the political process are responsible for the rise and thriving of political vigilantism.

Issues involved in Political Vigilantism

What are the issues involved in political vigilante violence in electoral and political activities in Ghana? We realized from the analysis of the documents that although there are varied issues involved in political vigilantism in Ghana, the main issue is a struggle for political power. At the heart of all political vigilante violence in the fourth republic is the struggle to win political power, whether internal, primaries, presidential, parliamentary, run-off, or by-elections. The benefits that come with political power spur politicians and political parties to want to win it at all costs thereby leading to the engagement in acts of vigilantism. The idea is that the one who wins political power can control and superintend over state resources and affairs. As Ibrahim (2020) argues, the rewards that come with fighting or fomenting violence on behalf of a politician or political party to win power incentivize the youth and vigilante groups to engage in acts of vigilantism. There is also an issue of security in political vigilantism. Politicians and political parties tend to resort to the use of vigilante groups to protect and defend their interests because they lack trust and confidence in the state security services to effectively deliver

their services impartially. For instance, Dumenu and Adzraku observed that vigilante groups are used by politicians and political parties as informal security to protect or defend themselves, their interests and events.

Tactics Deployed by Political Vigilante Groups

Political vigilante groups deploy various and different tactics (strategies) to achieve their goals and to make their opponents yield or lose during electoral and political activities. Tenkebe (2019) indicates violence as a tactic that is frequently deployed by vigilante groups to pursue their interests. Ibrahim (2020) highlights that vigilantes are not just willing to employ violence to make the party of their patron win political power but will also not resist using same violence towards politicians when they feel neglected. Thus, in a comment cited from Citi News Room, Professor Kwesi Aning, a security analyst, is concerned that vigilante groups in Ghana have the potential of transforming themselves into militia groups and turning against both the state and those who formed them (Afanyi-Dadzie, 2018). Tenkebe however notes that vigilante violence goes beyond physical to include psychological, verbal, and emotional violence. Some of the tactics that political vigilante groups use during political and electoral events include intimidation of opponents, registering of minors, use of abusive and threatening language, issuing of threats, poster removals and defacement, physical attacks, seizure of state assets and installations, screeching of motorbikes at polling stations of opponents' strongholds, and firing of guns (Dumenu & Adzraku, 2020). Other tactics include invasion, forceful removals, and takeovers, snatching, stuffing, and swapping of ballot boxes, hijacking of electoral materials, intimidating 'machoism' display at electoral centers, and instilling fear. The use of arms by some vigilante groups raises some crucial questions about security and arms monitoring systems in Ghana. How do arms get into the hands of vigilante groups? How are these arms moved or transported to vigilante groups? What routes are these arms moved through? How is the movement of these arms not being detected by the security services? These are critical questions that the security agencies in Ghana should reflect on. Meanwhile, it is important to indicate that the usage of the tactics highlighted here may depend on the political and electoral activity and the atmosphere and conditions surrounding such activities or events. Also, the numerous numbers of vigilante tactics could make it difficult for security agencies to preempt the kind of violence that vigilante groups would engage in during political and electoral activities.

What Changes have occurred since Political Vigilantism resurfaced in the Fourth Republic?

There are several changes in political vigilantism since it resurfaced in the political landscape of Ghana in 1992. For instance, the number of political vigilante groups and their activities has increased (Asekere, 2020). Unlike the in the early part of the fourth republic, political vigilante activities and violence have become more pronounced and intense. Vigilante groups have become more organized with structures and procedures put in place for joining the group and losing membership (Kyei & Berckmoes, 2020). Further, Kyei and Berckmoes realized that contrary to long held perception of vigilante groups as mainly comprising the youth, political vigilante groups' composition includes the older population. Political vigilante groups have also become bolder and daring than before. For instance, vigilantes attacked a court in Kumasi in 2017 and freed their colleagues in custody and the national security coordinator of the Ashanti Region. Turnover elections witness increases in vigilante violence (Ashiabi, 2021). Some vigilante groups are now being formed for rental. Some of these vigilante groups are hired by politicians and political parties to provide informal security, defend, and protect their interests (Dumenu & Adzraku, 2020). As such, Dumenu and Adzraku indicate that the business model attached to vigilantism is one of the factors responsible for the formation and thriving of vigilante groups. In 2019, a Vigilantism and Related Offences Law (Act 999) was passed to ban and criminalize all forms of vigilantism in the country. However, there are concerns that it may not end the menace (Asekere, 2020; Dumenu & Adzraku, 2020; GhanaWeb, 2021, February 17).

Enlargement of Political Vigilantism

Political vigilantism has enlarged since its resurgence in the fourth republic. Previously, political vigilantism was experienced during presidential, parliamentary, run-off, and by-elections. However, it has enlarged to include other political activities and elections such as internal party elections and primaries. Aspiring candidates or their supporters or vigilante groups linked to them now use amongst others, intimidation, abusive language, threats, and physical attacks during political party internal and primary elections to further their agenda. The number of vigilante groups has also surged (Asekere, 2020) and spread across the country. It is worrying that people are now forming and operating vigilante groups as a business (Dumenu & Adzraku, 2020). The business or entrepreneurial aspect of vigilantism makes it more complicated. The usage of vigilante groups has become more pronounced. Vigilante violence keeps increasing in general elections (especially turnovers) since the fourth republic began (Ashiabi, 2021).

Roles Played by Parties

Different parties are playing different roles in political vigilantism in Ghana. Vigilante groups are among the main actors in political vigilantism. They use violence as a tool to ensure that their political party wins power. They also communicate political parties' manifestoes and messages (Asekere, 2020), facilitate the registration of people (especially minors) on the voter's register (Dumenu & Adzraku, 2020), and help to amplify diverse and ignored voices in our political space (Kyei & Berckmoes, 2020). As such, political vigilante groups are active participants in the political process and undertake various mobilizations events for political action or activities (Kyei & Berckmoes, 2020; Kyei, 2020). Apart from the main actors (vigilante groups, political party youth and polling agents) that directly engage in or experience violence during electoral and political events, there are other parties who have played diverse roles in relation to political vigilantism in Ghana. Politicians, candidates aspiring for various positions in political parties, and the political parties use abusive language on their opponents and sometimes incite their party youth and agents or sponsor vigilante groups to foment violence during political and electoral activities.

The Electoral Commission of Ghana plays a role in vigilante violence occurrence during electoral processes and activities. The Electoral Commission is responsible for ensuring the conduct of free, fair, and transparent elections in the country. However, when the commission and its staff conduct themselves in a manner that compromise their impartiality, political parties, candidates, and their agents tend to take the laws into their own hands and resort to violence to protect their interests. For instance, Dumenu and Adzraku note perceived mistrust in the Electoral Commission as one of the sources of political vigilantism. The National Peace Council has led series of dialogues between the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) to disband and stop vigilantism. The media has covered and reported some of the violent situations that rocked political and electoral activities in the country thereby drawing the attention of the world to such horrifying situations. However, pronouncements and reportage by the media at times also cause vigilante violence during political and electoral events. Furthermore, election observer groups (both domestic and international) have over the years played a role in observing, documenting, and reporting violent scenes that plagued electoral activities and processes in the country. The security agencies have played roles in dealing with political vigilantism. The security agencies (police, fire, military, and prison services) have always been deployed to ensure peaceful electoral processes and to quell any attempt by vigilante groups from interfering with the process. The police over the years have, for instance, launched investigations into acts of vigilante violence and taken individuals engaged in the act through legal processes. That notwithstanding, the security agencies (police) are yet to succeed in prosecuting some political vigilante groups and party agents who have perpetrated violence in the past and this makes such elements more determined to continue to foment violence (Dumenu & Adzraku, 2020). All these feed into the public perception that the security agencies are ineffective and biased in their electoral policing and enforcement of laws.

Commissions of Inquiry have also played roles in investigating cases of political vigilante violence. One of such commissions was the Emile Short Commission which inquired into the Ayawaso West Wuogon by-election violence in 2019. One other party(s) that played a role in dealing with political vigilantism are the courts of Ghana. The court has tried members of vigilante group for their engagement in violence and other unlawful acts. However, in 2017 a vigilante group (Delta Force) invaded and freed their members in court's custody (Emmanuel, 2021; Osei, 2017). Religious and traditional leaders have also made calls on political parties, especially, the NPP and NDC to conduct themselves peacefully during elections and disband their vigilante groups. For instance, the Catholic Bishops Conference of Ghana over the years has implored the NDC and NPP to stop the use and activities of vigilante groups. Meanwhile, one common threat that can be noted from the roles played by other parties is that they focused more on dealing with the immediate sources of political vigilantism and little on the structural issues that gave birth to it.

Outcomes of Political Vigilantism

The outcomes of political vigilantism in Ghana are security, political, social, economic, and policy in nature. Every conflict or violent situation is expected to go through this phase.

Security Outcomes

Political vigilante groups are serious threats to peace and security in Ghana (Aning & Albrecht, 2020). The activities of political vigilante groups tend to create fear, panic, and apprehension among people especially, during political and electoral events. Over the years, the actions of vigilante groups have led to the loss of lives and caused various degrees of casualties—some leading to deaths and others causing permanent loss of body parts of both innocent victims and victims directly involved in the vigilante actions. In a study of electorates in the Cape Coast Metropolis of Ghana, Incoom and Tham-Agyekum (2019) revealed injury and death as the grave consequences of political vigilante violence. Vigilante groups have taken over national installations, beaten and mishandled security personnel, invaded a court and freed their members on trial as well as openly threatened

public officials and citizens (Emmanuel, 2021; Osei, 2017; Knott, 2017). Hence, political vigilantism threatens human security as well as the stability and security of Ghana. Vigilante groups have now constituted themselves and “acting as independent security actors” (Aning & Albrecht, 2020) thereby undermining the powers and role of state security agencies. There is the potential of vigilante groups in Ghana transforming into militia groups. There has been, in the sub-region, the case of the transformation of the Colonel Dévi in Benin into a militia group (Grätz (2008) and others in the sub-region. This suggests that Ghana is not immune to similar situations. Further, there is infiltration of vigilante groups into state security agencies (Nyabor, 2019; Cromwell, 2021; Afanyi-Dadzie, 2018; GhanaWeb, 2021, May 23; Ola-Morris, 2020). The infiltration or the potential invasion of vigilante groups into state security agencies is a major source of fear and worry for Ghanaians. The potential threat as shared by Professor Kwesi Aning in Citi News Room is that these groups may eventually usurp the powers of state security and turn against the people who formed them and against the state (Afanyi-Dadzie, 2018). We agree that if nothing is done now “vigilante groups will take over the security agencies in Ghana due to the politicization of the agencies” (Nyabor, 2019). Vigilantism therefore threatens the peace and security of Ghana (Dumenu & Adzraku, 2020).

Political Outcomes

Ghana’s democracy faces a threat from political vigilantism (Dumenu & Adzraku, 2020; Gyampo et al., 2017). Citizen support for democracy is attenuating in Ghana due to political vigilantism (Ashiabi, 2021). Political vigilante groups have over years seized and forcefully taken over public properties and installations, engaged in violence as well as used force and physical assault to remove public officials (especially those of the previous regime) occupying public properties (Gyampo et al., 2017). As indicated earlier, the Delta Force invaded a court in Kumasi in 2017 where their members were being tried and set them free (Emmanuel, 2021; Osei, 2017; Knott, 2017). Vigilante groups have also engaged in the destruction of electoral processes and properties, snatching and stuffing of ballot boxes, stopping people from voting, removing people from public office, stopping political events, registering minors to vote, and abusing people’s rights. According to Tenkebe (2019), such outcomes are the direct effects of political vigilantism in the country. It is important to indicate that such activities of political vigilante groups have polarized politics and made the full growth of democracy (Gyampo et al., 2017) and its consolidation (Ashiabi, 2021) challenging in Ghana. Ashiabi observes that “vigilante activities lead to the formation of negative perceptions among Ghanaians about important institutions like the legislature, executive and judiciary” (p. 62). According to Gyampo et al., vigilante groups can bring a party to power and on the other hand send a party to opposition. Thus, it can be argued that vigilante groups’ actions can constitute affordances or constraints to their political party agenda. Vigilante groups’ activities are “double-edged sword” (International Crisis Group, 2017). They have the potential to subvert the will of the people as well as undermine or subordinate the constitution and laws of the country (Gyampo et al., 2017). Their activities also have the potential of causing apathy towards political processes and democracy in Ghana (Ashiabi, 2021; Tenkebe, 2019). Political vigilantism is therefore a threat to the rule of law and constitutional democracy. Tenkebe describes such potential outcomes on democracy and rule of law as indirect effects. One other political outcome of political vigilante violence was the setting up of the Emile Short Commission following the violence that characterized the Ayawaso West Wuogon by-election on January 31, 2019, by the President, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo. However, since the commission finished its report, government seems to be finding it difficult to implement the recommendations.

Economic Outcomes

Political vigilantism has potential economic consequences for Ghana. Vigilantism creates serious security and peace risks as well as paints a bad picture of the country to the rest of the world. This could discourage investment flows into the country (Tenkebe, 2019) and deny it the needed development. When investors are not sure of the safety of their investments and their own lives, they may not want to put their funds in such environments. Insecurity is a threat to investment. Dumenu and Adzraku realized that vigilante violence affects trade and business activities as people’s shops are sometimes burnt and looted. The taking over of public institutions and forceful removal of people from state offices halts production and destructs productive hours thereby retarding GDP growth. The destruction of properties and discouragement of foreign investment because of the activities of political vigilante groups slow down development. Also, people are now forming vigilante groups and operating them as a business (Dumenu & Adzraku, 2020) where they offer informal security services to politicians, political parties, and political and other events in return for rewards. Such a relationship between vigilante groups and politicians and political parties is ‘transactional’ (Ibrahim, 2020). This, according to COP Kofi Boakye, is due to “...the entrepreneurship related to vigilantism...” (Afanyi-Dadzie, 2018). Thus, vigilantism-inspired entrepreneurship lends itself as one of the hinderances to ending political vigilantism in Ghana.

Social Outcomes

Political vigilantism threatens social cohesion in the country. Vigilante violence creates bitterness and strained relationship among citizens and political actors. Such bitterness could explain Dumenu and Adzraku (2020) revelation that some people join vigilante groups to seek revenge. Vigilante groups and violence further deepen mistrust between political parties and the security thereby making dialogues somewhat unproductive. Political vigilantism has made cooperation and tolerance between political parties difficult. A weakened social cohesion creates more room for people to take the laws into their own hands and facilitates the recruitment of dissatisfied and disaffected Ghanaians into vigilante groups.

Psychological outcomes

The psychological tactics political vigilantes employ (Tenkebe, 2019) and their violence have the potential of causing psychological problems. Over the years, vigilante violence has caused fear, panic, anxiety, permanent injuries to people, loss of body parts (such as leg, arm, etc.) and loss of lives (Dumenu & Adzraku, 2020). All these create traumatizing images in the minds of Ghanaians and victims. Surviving victims of vigilante violence could be battling with the trauma of losing a part of the body or becoming incapacitated. In their study, Dumenu and Adzraku revealed how some people are finding it difficult to overcome the injuries and bitterness caused by vigilante violence. Victims and people who experienced political vigilante violence could suffer anxiety disorders, depression, panic disorders, sleep disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Some members of vigilante groups have also reported difficulty in sleeping after engaging in violence (Dumenu & Adzraku, 2020).

Policy Outcomes

Political vigilantism has also affected policy actions. One policy outcome of political vigilantism is the passage of the Vigilantism and Related Offences Law (Act 999) in 2019 which disbanded and criminalized political vigilantism and vigilante groups. Although ignorance of the law is not an excuse, Dumenu and Adzraku discovered that there exists an awareness deficit on Act 999 among some members of vigilante groups. Hence, some security analysts such as Adam Bonaa, have doubts that Ghana's vigilantism law will work to curb vigilantism in the country (GhanaWeb, 2021, February 17).

Winners

Are there winners in political vigilante violence in Ghana since the start of the fourth republic? In most violent situations, there are no winners. Rather, the society in which the violence occurred or is occurring is always the loser and sufferer. There cannot be a winner in political vigilantism in Ghana. The people of Ghana have been the losers and sufferers of political vigilantism over the years. Political vigilantism has resulted in serious socio-economic, political and security risks. People lived in fear, panic, uncertainty, and apprehension during such violent occasions. People have sustained injuries with some losing their lives. Ghana's democracy, rule of law, peace, security, and stability have been threatened and continue to face potential threats from acts of vigilantism. Large sums of resources (both material and financial) have been spent to deal with vigilante violence. The unnecessary creation of fear and panic and destruction and takeover of public properties and institutions by vigilante groups retard development and scare away potential investors. Also, the people who come to power through the assistance of vigilante groups may deny the country of the development it needs and rather use the available resources to pay off the debts owed and fulfill the promises made to such groups. All the main actors in political vigilante violence record losses – injuries and at times, loss of lives. Everyone loses at the end. Therefore, there are no winners in political vigilante violence in Ghana. We only have variation of losers.

Conclusion

Political vigilantism remains a major problem in Ghana's democratic and political processes. There are complex, multidimensional, and changing dynamics of political vigilantism in Ghana. Structural deficiencies (such as winner-takes-all politics, unemployment, poverty, exclusion, injustice, etc.) create fertile grounds for the birth, growth and thriving of vigilante groups and activities. However, vigilante violence becomes manifest when, amongst other factors, the electoral processes are characterized by malpractices, the media make inciting pronouncements and reportage, and the postures of the security services and the Electoral Commission are characterized by bias. The tactics vigilante groups employ range from physical to emotional, verbal, and psychological. Efforts that have been aimed at dealing with political vigilantism over the years have focused more on the immediate causes of the menace and little on the root causes. Any effort that is aimed at dealing with political vigilantism in Ghana without addressing the structural sources may not produce sustainable results. An understanding of the dynamics and complexities in political vigilantism is essential and significant in confronting it. Different actors are acting differently with varied identities, behaviors, positions, interests, and needs are at stake in political vigilantism. Political vigilante violence has had and may continue to have serious political, economic, social, security and policy implications on Ghana. Therefore, we are of the view that a

carefully constructed stakeholder approach and multilevel interventions are essential in dealing with the phenomenon of political vigilantism in Ghana.

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