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A study of manifestations of political polarization as structural violence

A case study of Ghana's 2020 Election

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Abstract

This research will use the case of Ghana's presidential and parliamentary elections in 2020 to illustrate how polarization manifests in the power struggle and is fueled by structural violence in the constitutional and institutional arrangements towards elections. Ghana is often considered a model of African democracy with a track record of peaceful elections, regular changes of power since its return to democratic rule in 1992. However, the political environment has become increasingly polarized, creating tension, violence, and distrust of the electoral process. The research aims to understand how political polarization constitutes a form of structural violence within Ghana's internationally acclaimed peaceful democratic development, using the 2020 election as a case study. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following question: How does political polarization manifest as structural violence in Ghana's democratic political culture? Using the case study method, the thesis analyses news articles from the vertical portal GhanaWeb.

Key words: Political Polarization, Structural Violence, Election

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Abbreviations

BVR	Biometric voter register
CPP	Conventional Peoples Party
EC	Electoral Commission
EMB	Elections Management Body
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NPP	National Patriotic Party
PVR	Provisional voter register
PNDC	Provisional National Defence Council
SAP	Structural Adjustment Program
UGCC	United Gold Coast Convention

Chapter 1 Introduction

Many people accept Liberal democracy as the ideal form of government, as Fukuyama so thoroughly acclaimed in his work “the end of history and the last man” (Fukuyama, 2002). In the West, democracy has become the benchmark for countries around the world. The third wave of democratization in the 1980s and 1990s initially substantiated the assumption of democratic triumph. In the last two decades, however, scholars have characterized the state of democracy as marred by setbacks and stagnation. Notably, they have articulated that a global crisis for democracy is prevalent in both new and old democracies. Recent reports illustrate the internal and external challenges facing democracies today, and one increasing component of this is political polarization (Carothers & O’Donohue, 2019b; McCoy, Rahman, & Somer, 2018).

Polarization has become be known globally in recent years, garnering attention amongst academics, journalists, and ordinary citizens alike for its possible detrimental implications. This rising concern was exemplified during the United States presidential elections of 2020. However, polarization is not a US phenomenon in most democracies today, ranging from Norway to Kenya to Bangladesh and Poland. Correlatingly, the implications that it imposes are not exclusively adverse. Polarization unfolds within the framework of democracy and narrowly speaking in the electoral context. Democracy is like a system of conflict management equipped with the task of both generating and accommodating conflicting interests peacefully (Brunk, 2000). Larry Diamond (1990, p. 49) has captured this inbuilt challenge of democracy, noting that:

Democracy is, by its nature, a system of institutionalized competition for power.... But any society that sanctions political conflict runs the risk of it becoming too intense, producing a society so conflict-ridden that civil peace and political stability are jeopardized. Hence the paradox: Democracy requires conflict-but not too much; competition there must be, but only within carefully defined and universally accepted boundaries. Cleavage must be tempered by consensus.

Ghana is lauded internationally for its democratic development. However, ill-feeling, deep mistrust, and intense acrimony between the ruling party and the opposition characterized the periods leading up to elections. This has become a recurrent pattern, where the two dominant political parties dominate the political space each election cycle. The polarization between the two parties incites tension during elections which leads to incidents of violence. The source of the polarization lies in the competitiveness of the two-party system induced by the ‘winner takes all’, characterized by structural difficulties about issues such as neo-

patrimonialism/clientelism. Therefore, this study aims to explore the manifestation of polarization during Ghana's 2020 presidential and parliamentary election, and how that constitutes a form of structural violence embedded in the political culture.

1.1 Problem Statement

In this thesis, political polarization refers to the tense and antagonistic political struggle between the two dominant parties, NPP and NDC. The two political blocs have dominated the political landscape in all eight consecutive elections since 1992. In recent years, increasing political polarization has threatened Ghana's democratic development. Albeit Ghana's status as a beacon of democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa, election cycles are characterized by intense tension, the use of incendiary language, and instances of physical violence. Political polarization has become a constant, which increases towards election day every four years. The politics in Ghana is characterized by the FPTP and winner-takes-all system, which bestows a great deal of power to the executive while excluding the opposition from governance. This lack of power balance has made the competition for control fiercely intense, as political mobilization relies heavily on patronage distribution. However, little research has been done to identify issues over which they are polarized and how the polarization unfolds. Therefore, this research sets out to explore the political polarization in Ghana, using the 2020 election as a case study to give more insight into the sources of polarization. To understand why this is a recurrent pattern, I explore it through the lens of structural violence.

1.2 Research Objective

The thesis has two objectives. The first is to elucidate the nature and structural context (institutional, legal, and socio-cultural) of political polarization in Ghana's Fourth Republic and explore its manifestations during the electoral cycle. The second is a theoretical ambition to reflect (from an interdisciplinary peace and conflict perspective) on how polarization around election issues and processes constitute structural violence embedded in the political culture.

1.3 Research Questions

The following questions are investigated to meet the objectives of this research:

- What are the manifestations of political polarization in Ghana's 2020 electoral process?
- How does political polarization constitute a form of structural violence in Ghana's democratic development?

1.4 Motivation and Relevance for peace and conflict studies

I chose this research topic primarily due to my interest and background. Being a Norwegian with Ghanaian and Colombian heritage exposed me to different democratic societies from an early age. It became a curiosity that has lingered throughout my education, where I got introduced to varying perspectives of democracy. In choosing a research focus, I came over a situation that led me to the current topic of polarization.

In December 2019, Ghana planned to hold a national referendum that proposed amendments to the constitution concerning two bills. The change would have allowed for political party activity on district-level elections and the direct election of Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives (MMDCEs), which the president currently appoints. This system of local government has its origin in reforms introduced by the PNDC in the 1992 constitution. The plan reflected the significant change to the local government system in Ghana with the possibility of increased participation and self-determination at the grass-root level, both positive attributes of democracy. However, the proposal was met with stark opposition, particularly from the dominant opposition party, NDC. Thus, prompting me to question whether the advent of increased local democratic governance was a source of conflict or peace, acknowledging that elections are a source of violence and division in many African countries. However, the proposed referendum was cancelled, along with it the initial idea. But this discussion led me to pose the question, why? Why would a proposal which would ensure the increased possibility for the local exercise of influence over decision making with the election of the leadership equates to more representation in their respective communities?

I became curious about the overall system of ‘winner takes all’, the rampant political contestation, and the role of political polarization in Ghanaian democracy. My interest lies in the broad notion of democracy and the ‘Africanizing democracies’ from the book by the same name. This, among other works, raised my attention years ago to the workings of democracy in Africa and Ghana, in particular. A system embedded in Western societal structures adapted over time in coherence with changes in society. To issues of common knowledge/concern raised around the problematic nature of transferring a westernized model/system to African cultures. It was evident in the longevity of the democratic experience of some Sub-Saharan nations during the third wave of democratization. Thus, considering these aspects, and through a review of correlating literature and news articles surrounding Ghana’s upcoming election, the issue surrounding the presence of increased polarization during Ghanaian elections became evident.

Thus, my interest in democracy remained but pivoted towards a phenomenon that may negatively affect the electoral process and, consequently, democracy.

1.5 Limitations and challenges

Before the imposition of Covid-19 travel restrictions in early 2020, the plan was to travel to Ghana for fieldwork. I planned to collect empirical data through instruments of observation, interviews, and document analysis. The Covid-19 restrictions and the research time frame for the phenomenon for the case study required that I adapt my ambitions to the realities of the situation, as these methods were no longer an alternative. The research missed out on the social dimension of ‘real interviews,’ such as meeting people, reading body language, posing follow-up/clarificatory questions. Due to the nature of the study, the research focus, and research area, doing online interviews proved to be complicated. Thus, I gathered data through the digital information platform (e.g., GhanaWeb).

Rather than being a weakness, the adaptations made with the possibilities offered by the digital revolution and news media platforms facilitated overcoming the challenge posed by the circumstances. The statements from the news articles, in the form of press releases, official statements, editorials, were viewed as a simulation of interviews situations where the actors addressed the topic of focus, resulting in an abundance of data. This approach has similarities between fieldwork and library procedures (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 163). However, this also led to the use of one source of data. In connection to research criteria, this brings about challenges related to validity, reliability, and trustworthiness - which the triangulation of methods could contribute to solving. The lack of multiple data sources is sometimes a weakness, particularly the lack of interviews that have a prominent place in qualitative research. But there are other principles that one can account for, which aids in the quality of the research process. For this study, the researcher found that the news articles were a good data source, primarily due to the nature of the research and the research question.

Finally, the large quantity of available data was both a strength and a challenge. First, as mentioned above, it allowed for much flexibility and selectiveness. On the other hand, it was a time-consuming process. At the beginning of the data collection process, there were challenges of sieving and structuring the information. Finding what is relevant and pursuing that can be hard if there is little guidance. The media site was a large platform offering large amounts of possible data. Concerning this, another challenge was the ambiguity of the procedural steps of document analysis (Karppinen & Moe, 2012). This research experienced that, as there were no clear procedural steps and the process ended up borrowing from different sources, which proved beneficial in the end.

1.6 Chapter overview

This section gives a brief overview of the chapters of the thesis.

Chapter 2 Contextual background presents Ghana's political development and the context of the 2020 election.

Chapter 3 presents the conceptual framework, discussing different conceptions of polarization, its drivers, implications, and conceptualizing structural violence for this study. This chapter sets the foundation for how this research understood these concepts.

Chapter 4 Methodological framework presents the rationale for the methodological choices of the data collection and analysis. It also reflects on challenges and adjustments made during this process.

Chapter 5 Data analysis presents and discusses the data concerning the research objective and existing literature.

Chapter 6 Discussion and Conclusion consists of a general summary and concluding remarks of the study.

Chapter 2 Background to polarization in Ghana's political development

As background to this study of the political polarization during the 2020 elections and how this constitutes structural violence in Ghana's democratic development, this chapter provides an overview of the relevant processes that characterized the country's political growth since independence. As the issues about political polarization are complex and intertwined, my focus will be to present an overview of aspects of the development relevant to my research. The chapter is divided into six main sections. The first describes the historical roots of and ideological cleavages within political party development. The second, the rollback of democratic processes. Third, the introduction of liberal democracy under the Fourth Republic and the emergence of a 'duopoly' (de facto two-party system). The fourth and fifth section discusses factors nurturing polarization under the Fourth Republic, such as the power of the executive and the winner-takes-all political system. And the role of structural elements like neo-patrimony, monetization, ideological orientation, ethnic identity, and religion. The last section briefly describes the context of the 2020 election.

2.1 The early fault lines of political polarization

In 1957, after more than 80 years under British colonial rule, the Gold Coast Colony (1874-1957) became the first sub-Saharan African country to attain political independence as Ghana, with multiparty democratic governance as the preferred system. Since then, alternating civilian rule and military dictatorships have characterized the country's political development. From 1992, the relatively stable Fourth Republic with civilian democratic control has persisted, with eight relatively peaceful elections leading to transitions of power between oppositions and incumbents. Due to the relative stability and albeit highly polarized nature, political observers of the Fourth Republic have labelled Ghana as a beacon of democracy in Africa (Ninsin, 2016b, p. 16).

However, major fault lines of polarization in Ghana's democratic development were apparent during the struggle for independence in the 1940s when two major nationalist political parties emerged and demanded the end of British colonial rule (Morrison, 2004, pp. 421-422). Though the two parties had a common purpose, they differed in their approaches to the struggle for independence, ideological orientation, support base, and geographical visions of the struggle. In 1947, the United Gold Coast Convention (hereafter, UGCC) emerged as the first major party to push for political independence. The principal movers of the party included J. B. Danquah, Kwame Nkrumah, and Kofi Busia. Its support base included intellectuals, lawyers,

traditional leaders (Chiefs), trained teachers, and well as entrepreneurs and merchants (Morrison, 2004, p. 423).

For this reason, some observers of Ghana's political development refer to this group as 'elitist' (Morrison, 2004, p. 423), even though the party also had considerable support among cocoa farmers, workers, and rural groups. The UGCC's approach to the independence struggle was more moderate and 'gradualist' in its demand for constitutional reforms and concessions that would lead eventually to the transfer of power and governance from colonial rulers to Africans. The UGCC's time frame for independence was expressed vaguely as "in the shortest possible time".

In 1949, Kwame Nkrumah, the General Secretary of the UGCC, broke away and formed the Conventional Peoples Party (hereafter, CPP). His breakaway was due to his dissatisfaction with both the moderate approach and the local focus of the mainstream UGCC leadership (Daddieh & Bob-Milliar, 2014, p. 113). Nkrumah charisma radical style is reflected in the "independence now" mantra, which set a concrete, but still vague, time frame for independence and the CPP's 'positive action' program in 1950. Therefore, the CPP gained mass appeal among a broader section of the Gold Coast population, particularly the ordinary people. The CPP's support base included teachers, farmers, government workers, manual labourers, market women, and others (Daddieh & Bob-Milliar, 2014, p. 113). The party's foot soldiers were referred to as 'Veranda Boys/Girls'.

Also, the UGCC and CPP differed in ideological orientations and the geographical focus of their respective struggles, giving the impression of an elite-mass divide in Ghanaian political thought and action during the anti-colonial struggle for independence. The mainstream UGCC leadership was generally liberally (politically and economically) oriented and perceived as proponents of the interests of the educated, traditional (Chiefs) and business classes and internationally pro-Western. In contrast, Kwame Nkrumah's CPP was ideologically socialist and unambiguously anti-imperialist (Haynes, 1993, p. 451; Morrison, 2004, p. 423). When it comes to the scope of the independence struggles, too, whereas Kwame Nkrumah and CPP pursued a pan-Africanist and internationalist vision, the UGCC leadership was more focused on the local struggle Gold Coast. The CPP dominated Gold Coast politics, winning all three elections held between 1951 and 1956 to lead Ghana's and sub-Saharan Africa's first independent government. In 1957, Kwame Nkrumah became Ghana's first Prime Minister and the President from 1960-1966 (Daddieh & Bob-Milliar, 2014, p. 113).

Meanwhile, the UGCC was dissolved in 1952 and replaced by the successor party called the Ghana Congress Party (GCP) under the leadership of an intellectual of the University

College of the Gold Coast, Kofi Abrefa Busia. Because the GCP continued to pursue the policies and ideological visions of the UGCC and had a similar support base, the political cleavages that emerged during the independence struggle persisted. The division has, with slight modifications, endured and continued to shape the current political development (Daddieh & Bob-Milliar, 2014, p. 114; Morrison, 2004, p. 423).

Significantly, the final stages of the negotiations towards independence between 1952 and 1957 saw the rise of other political parties representing sectional, regional, and ethnic interests and thereby further complicated the already existing political cleavages along the lines of ideology and vision (Bob-Milliar, 2019, p. 451). The main issues concerned the type of state that should succeed the British colonial one, the balance of power among the regions, and resources distribution among the different areas. Kwame Nkrumah and the CPP's vision was to establish an independent unitary state, with executive power concentrated in the hands of the party leader that had most seats in the Parliament (Haynes, 1993, p. 451). The unitary state would be most suitable to the interest of the CPP that had become the de facto dominant political force as it won overwhelming majority seats in all parliamentary elections since 1951. A coalition of political parties opposed centralization. Namely, were the Ashanti-based National Liberation Movement (NLM), Northern-territories based Northern People Party (NPP), the Ewe-based Anlo Youth Organization (AYA), Togoland Congress (TC), and the Muslim Association Party (MAP). Though representing different and unique interests, these parties wanted the independent state and distribution of resources determined on regional devolution (federalism).

By independence in 1957, the CPP, under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah (who was elected its "Life Chairman" in 1953), dominated the Ghanaian political system and state power (Daddieh & Bob-Milliar, 2014, p. 113). Nkrumah viewed sectional and ethnic-based opposition to state policy and the CPP's program as a threat to the welfare of the new Ghana and its people. Therefore, in 1957, the "Avoidance of Discrimination Act" banned all parties with sectional interests, while the Preventive Detention Act (PDA) in 1958 sanctioned the arrest and detention of several opposition leaders, prominent among whom was J. B. Danquah, who died in custody (Bluwey, 1993, p. 212). The opposition parties responded by coming together under the name United Party (UP) that operated from 1957 until 1964. Apart from opposing the centralization policy of the CPP, the UP promoted the ideals and visions of the founders of the UGCC-GCP ("Danquah-Busia-Dombo") political tradition. This continuity kept alive the polarized political divide between the pre-independence ideologically opposed traditions.

2.2 Roll back of democratic development

Generally, July 1960 to April 1991 represents a period of a rollback of Ghana's constitutional development towards multiparty democracy due to the violent intervention of dictatorial regimes. The first restriction on democratic development happened under the First Republic Constitution from July 1960 to February 1966. Ghana attained Republic status, and Kwame Nkrumah became the first President. From then on, the CPP's control of the political space was consolidated by a series of events: namely, the overwhelming victory of the CPP during the 1960 elections; the declaration of Ghana as a one-party-state through a National Assembly resolution and a national referendum in 1962; and the banning of opposition parties. In short, the Nkrumah-led CPP government dominated the pre-independence struggle and eventually ruled Ghana from 1957 to 1966, creating a one-party system marked by governmental authoritarianism (Haynes, 1993, p. 451). During this period, the UGCC-GCP-UP tradition went underground and adopted other modes of organization and networking to survive. The overthrow of the First Republican government of the CPP and Kwame Nkrumah in 1966 marked the beginning of a period of instability with phases of undemocratic rule, lasting from 1966 to 1992.

The second event that disrupted multiparty democratic development was a series of military coups and popular revolutions between 1966 and 1991. All successive military dictatorships abolished existing republican constitutions and banned political party activities. However, the long period of military rule was interspersed with two short-lived second and third republics and an enduring fourth republic under new constitutions. Significantly, the 'new' political parties that emerged in these periods to contest elections reflected similar polarized tendencies as pre-independence parties. Thus, the government of the Second Republic from 1969 to 1972 was by the centrist-right Progress Party (PP), and that of Third Republic government was by the Nkrumaist (centre-left/socialist) Peoples National Convention (PNP) from 1979 to 81 (Asante, 2013, p. 56; Haynes, 1993, p. 451).

In 1981, a military overthrew the government of the third Republican and thereby aborted the democratization process. The coup was labelled as the "Rawlings revolution" as it was led and fueled by the populist ideas of Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings. Following a familiar pattern during coups, the new regime, the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC), banned the 1979 Constitution, outlawed political parties, and organized political activities by opposition groups. Some scholars have characterized the PNDC as a nationalist, socialist and anti-imperialist organization (Haynes, 1993, p. 451). An overwhelming number of its leadership self-identified as Nkrumahist (adherents of the socialist and internationalist

principles of Kwame Nkrumah). However, Rawlings himself was more populist and pragmatic, as reflected in his inclusion of some critical elements of the liberal Dankwa-Busia-Dombo political tradition, notably J. A. Kuffuor, who became the second elected president under the Fourth Republic.

2.3 Fourth Republic: Triumph of Liberal Democracy in Ghana

This section outlines the local and international dynamics that led to the return to multiparty democracy and the adoption of liberal democracy as an enduring practice under the Fourth Republic. During its eleven years-rule, from 1981 to 1992, the PNDC faced local and international vulnerabilities (Daddieh-Milliar, p. 119). The first factor that made the PNDC government vulnerable was a weak economic base that hindered the realization of programs and visions of the revolution. Consequently, in 1983, the government was compelled by pragmatic realities to introduce neoliberal economic management strategies under the harshly criticized Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) as a precondition for financial bailout Bretton Woods Institutions — the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). A developmental counterpart of the SAP was the adoption of neoliberalist policies known as the Washington consensus, which was the preferred strategy prescribed by the international financial institutions (IFI) for developing countries. The IFI prescriptions included economic liberalization, privatization of the services, and macro-economic stability (Boafo-Arthur, 2007, p. 4).

The second vulnerability that the PNDC faced was the growing pressure from 1983 to return to multiparty democratic governance. The Ghana Democratic Movement (GDM), a coalition of local opposition and pressure groups, dominated democracy. However, the changing international climate by the early 1990s, signalled by the collapse of the Soviet Union, had implications for democratic developments in Ghana. Francis Fukuyama has controversially described the post-Cold War ascendancy of the USA as the sole Superpower and ‘Western’ liberalism as the apparent dominant value, as the End of History (2002). However, it seems that the rise of other economic and technological poles, like China and the BRICS, in global competition with the USA and the West shows that Fukuyama was too quick in his claim. The triumph of Western economic and political liberalism at the end of the Cold War generated what Samuel P. Huntington (1991) in his influential book described as the “Third Wave” of democratization in the international system (Boafo-Arthur, 2007, p. 2; Haynes, 1993, p. 452). Like many other African dictatorial governments, the PNDC and Ghanaians were faced with the best way to accelerate and institutionalize the liberalization of its political systems under

principles of 'good governance, as it did the economy a decade earlier (Schraeder, 1995, pp. 1160-1168).

Consequently, a national referendum on 28th April 1992 approved a new "Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1992" (hereafter, *1992 Constitution*). It came into force in January 1993, paving the way for the transition processes of the Fourth Republic. In May 1992, the ban on civilian political and organized political party activities was lifted, and multiparty presidential and parliamentary elections were held in November and December 1992 (Boafo-Arthur, 2007, pp. 2, 7; Daddieh & Bob-Milliar, 2014, p. 119). The PNDC closely managed the process and transformed itself into a political party known as the National Democratic Congress (NDC) to contest the elections. It won with John J. Rawlings becoming the first President of the Fourth Republic. Though the main opposition New Patriotic Party (NPP), boycotted the first presidential and parliamentary elections in 1992, claiming an unfair playing field, the elections marked the beginning of enduring liberal democratic governance in Ghana.

The NDC and NPP have dominated the political space in Ghana under the Fourth Republic, forming alternating governments in the past 28 years. In terms of political traditions and ideologies, the NDC presented itself as a 'new' tradition, based on its revolutionary predecessor's principles of 'probity and accountability. However, with its core base comprising acclaimed Nkrumahist, the NDC currently claims to be a 'social-democratic or centre-left party (Morrison, 2004, p. 426). The NPP is ideologically centre-rightist, continuing the Dankwa-Busia-Dombo political tradition from the old CPP-UGCC divide. The third group comprised five splinters of Nkrumahist political parties, of which the Convention Peoples Party (CPP) and Peoples National Convention (PNC) are the most significant.

Meanwhile, some liberal democratic characteristics outlined in the 1992 Constitution captures both the normative ideals and the institutional and structural elements of liberal democracy (Ninsin, 1993, p. 6). It establishes among others the principle of the people as sovereign (Article 1, 35); the structure of government and the balance of power between organs of the state (Articles 57-161); the fundamental human rights, basic freedoms, and duties of Ghanaian citizens (Articles 6-9 and 12-33, 41-42); and regulatory and institutional modality for free, fair, and transparent elections (Articles 42-56). Yet, democratic governance does not necessarily occur because a Constitution establishes its principles. Ninsin has suggested that when there is "institutionalization through sustained political practice, of legitimate organizations, procedures, norms and rules that would ensure limited government, the rule of law, and respect for human rights as well as efficient and effective government through a transparent system of accountability" (1993, pp. 5-6). Also, where governance institutions do

not function properly according to international standards, politicians seek to monopolize power by any means necessary. This political capture is particularly true in contentious politics when highly polarized election-related issues threaten the nation's peace (Ninsin, 2016a, p. 115). As in other African states, the politics of Ghana is characterized by institutional fragility and structural difficulties (Ninsin, 2016b, p. 4).

Following this, the next section will present the institutional and structural features of Ghanaian politics. The constitutional prescriptions and institutional arrangements relating to political power is contested, won, and exercised are particularly relevant. The first aspect addressed relates to the constitutional provisions on the type of government suitable in Ghana. This choice is essential because it reflects the balance of power between the critical organs of the state and the distribution of power between winners and losers of elections. The second aspect is the constitutional provision regarding the institutional arrangements governing the electoral cycle and the election process. A third aspect is the informal context of political power, concerning how socio-cultural issues like ethnicity and religion are played out during elections and exploited in patrimonial relationships. I present an integrated discussion of these overlapping and mutually reinforcing factors in the following section.

2.4 Structural foundations of elections

This section explains the general institutional and structural (formal and informal) arrangements underpinning Ghana's democratic development. The first is the executive presidential system, and the second is the winner-takes-all electoral system. Notably, the presidential and the winner-takes-all systems may be less problematic in relatively well-functioning liberal political and economic systems like the USA that have effective separation of powers and checks and balances. However, similar techniques can be exploited by incumbents (presidents and ruling parties) in evolving democracies like Ghana to monopolize state power and control of state resources ("the national cake") to the exclusion of opponents. What are the implications of these systems in Ghana's Fourth Republic?

2.4.1 "Executocracy": Presidential system and Executive power

The 1992 Constitution (Articles 57 and 58) prescribes a presidential system of government, with the elected President exercising executive power as Head of State, Head of Government, and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces (Daddieh & Bob-Milliar, 2014, p. 118). It also enshrines the principle of separation of powers between the executive, legislature (Article 93), and the judiciary (Article 125), as well as a system of checks and balances (Kumado, 1993, p.

56). In practice, however, the Executive President and by extension the “ruling party” (which until the ‘hung Parliament in the 2020 elections always had an overwhelming majority of members in the Parliament) eventually accumulate a great deal of power, which is enhanced further by formal and informal, structural, and cultural contexts. A major advantage of the Executive Presidency is that the President’s power to appoint and dismiss ministers and other public officials of the state at the national to the local levels.

One of the apparent structural weaknesses in Ghana’s political culture is the requirement that “the majority of Ministers of State shall be appointed from among members of Parliament” (Article 78). This privilege to appoint ministers from the Parliament tilts the balance of power, favouring the government’s executive arm. Indeed, (Ninsin, 2016b, p. 5) suggests that the prospect of getting a ministerial appointment is an event that MPs of the incumbent party “anticipate with pleasure”. However, in the context of intense partisanship and frail enforcement systems, this constitutional requirement potentially constrains the law-making organ. It weakens parliamentary oversight because elected legislators appointed as ministers would tend to dedicate more time and loyalties to their ministerial rather than legislative work (Daddieh & Bob-Milliar, 2014, p. 117; Kumado, 1993, p. 56). Apart from ministers of state, each successive President has the prerogative to appoint heads and members of all public institutions and boards, albeit in consultation with the Council of State or relevant constitutionally mandated councils. These include, when vacant, constitutionally protected long-term positions like the Electoral Commissioner and deputies (Article 43), the Chief Justice and Justices of the Supreme Court courts (Article 144), the Commissioner and members of the Human Rights and Administrative Justice (Article 217). quasi-political professional appointments like the Inspector-General of Police (Article 202), the Chief of Defense Staff of the Armed Forces and Service Chiefs, and other Armed Forces officers (Article 212). Others are purely ‘political positions’ that generally do not outlast the appointing President’s tenure, including Ambassadorial positions other than Career diplomats (Article 74), directors and chairmen public Authorities/Boards. The President’s power to appoint extends to District and Municipal Secretaries that head the decentralized local and regional government system (Article 240). Thus, in practice, the Executive President in Ghana accumulates more power and influence by appointing authority, controlling the state’s coercive and administrative structure, and regulatory oversight of the country’s resources.

It is for this reason that Sir Sam Jonah (GhanaWeb, 2021a), former CEO of the multinational *AngloGold Ashanti* company, recently criticized Ghana’s political system as being an “Executocracy” rather than a ‘democracy’, when he noted,

In our [Ghanaian] system, ... the executive has more strength than the [Parliament and the Judiciary] combined. In fact, the two seem to derive their strengths from that of the executive, thus weakening checks and balances. Any party that comes to power has absolute power to do whatever they want. The 1992 Constitution ... created a monstrous executive which looms large over the other arms of the governance structure, Actually, what we have is an “Executocracy”, not a democracy.

Similarly, Emeritus Archbishop Peter Akwasi Sarpong of the Kumasi Diocese of the Catholic Church lamented that the “form of democracy practised by the political class in the country is a caricature of what real democracy should be” (GhanaWeb, 2021b). These criticisms of the incumbents (President and ruling political party) potential to exploit the power conferred by the Constitution reflects the contrast between the ideals and the actual practice of liberal democratic governance in Ghana.

2.4.2 Winner-takes-all politics: partisanship and balance of state power

Overall, the Executive presidency system in Ghana and its potential for disproportionate distribution of power in state and society is reinforced through the winner-take-all voting system and the First-Past-the-Post (FPTP) system for parliamentary elections and the Two-Round System (TRS) election systems for presidential elections. The potential of election outcomes to reward winners with total control on the one hand and to dispossess the supporters of the losing parties makes the periodic elections in Ghana very keen, polarized, and sometimes destabilizing for the country’s peace. Thus, although the electoral system is democratic, winner-takes-all politics creates a situation where state resources, facilities and opportunities are monopolized by partisan interests while excluding the opposition from political governance (Gyampo, 2015, p. 17). In practice, then as Ninsin (2016a, p. 120) notes, “the rising level of elite competition for parliamentary seats is due to the prevailing view of elections as a means to control the state for accumulation of private wealth, and a marketplace where the electorate exchange their vote for material benefits”.

2.5 Structural factors in Ghana’s political space

This section will look at the role of some of the structural factors that underpin the Ghanaian political context. This section interrogates how contesting political parties may mobilize support among the mainly rural and less educated electorate. The sub-chapters focus is on appeals to apparent ideological, ethnic, and religious divisions and on established neo patrimonial relations and ‘monetization’ (money to buy loyalty or vote).

2.5.1 Neo-patrimonial and monetized politics

Patronage is an aspect of neopatrimonialism, an informal, personalized rule system organized through clientelist networks, personal loyalty, and force. Sustaining neo-patrimonial institutions take regular flows of resources from leaders to followers. The Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana, 2013a) reports that the patron-client political relations that characterize the Ghanaian political system are not new. This relationship has characterized Ghana's political development since independence. Whereas it has become a prominent feature of political mobilization during the Fourth Republic, it has intensified during the last decade. In effect, patronage has become a constituting factor in the relationship between the electorate and the elected. The patron-client relationship is created through gift-giving mainly in terms of developmental projects or material resources in their respective community or ethnic territory. The patrons attempt to establish personal loyalty (Ninsin, 2016a, p. 120).

Lindberg (2003, p. 121) argues that neo-patrimonialism is the primary institutional heritage in African political systems. Alicia Decker and Andrea Arrington (2015) support this view by saying that there cannot be a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to liberal democratic development. African liberal democracies must be assessed on their terms as a contextual modification to the ideals generally prescribed in liberal democratic theory and its practice in the West. Thus, African traditions of the liberal democratic system ought to be discussed by considering some mechanisms of authority in Ghanaian and other African traditional political sources and structures of power derived from ethnicity and hierarchical distribution of patronage in some African societies. From the perspective of African liberal-democratic development, this modification of the conventional relationship between the voter and those they vote for reflects both contradictions and alternatives. In this scenario, informal structures complement formal institutional frameworks in the distribution of power. In the Ghanaian and the African context, the state becomes a redistributive mechanism in contrast to the norms of Weberian prescriptions. Based on this observation, scholars argue that Ghana's multiparty system increasingly embodies a 'competitive clientelist' settlement, reflecting the hierarchical distribution of power within the political system (A. G. Abdulai & Hickey, 2016).

However, the question to ask here is whether patronage politics is unique to Ghana? If not, what is the distinction between patronage in African democracies and that of the West? Patronage is prevalent in all forms of political systems, including the USA, where patronage satisfies the needs of one's political base. Lindberg (2003, p. 123) suggests that patronage politics in African nations is distinct from that in the West due to the fragile institutional framework in which patronage occurs. In contrast to the West, the scarcity of resources has

encouraged a personalization of institutional behaviour that reinforces the patron-client relationship, whereby political loyalty and votes during elections are rewarded with financial and other resources (Lindberg, 2003, p. 124). Thus, unlike in the West, where vertical and horizontal accountability is robust, political accountability in the African system becomes diminished because personalized political agendas tend to form the basis of mutual loyalty between voters and politicians (Lindberg, 2003, p. 124). While this is not the only relevant factor in explaining the role of the fragile state of Ghana's liberal democratic development, it is perhaps significant for understanding the relationship between weak institutions and risk to Ghana's stability through fueling corruption and ethnic rivalry, among others (Throup, 2011, p. 8).

Neopatrimonialism is linked monetization of politics to in the Fourth Republic, whereby electorates become instruments for political use. Unable to perform their political roles efficiently to win the confidence and trust of the electorates through the implementation of adequate developmental and social projects, political parties engage in a game of 'money politics' in which they strive to 'buy' support of their constituents (Ninsin, 2016b, p. 5). The 'buying' of support is evident in the excessive election spending by political parties and candidates each year (Ninsin, 2016a, p. 120). Indeed, the extent of monetization of Ghana's politics has changed the dynamics of governance since 1992. The Speaker of the 8th Parliament (2020-2024), Alban S. Bagbin, observes that Ghana is practising a "duopoly and not a multiparty democracy" due to the extent of apparent vote-buying. Speaking to a delegation of Ethiopian Parliamentarians that had come to study and learn from Ghana's 'best practice', the Speaker explained (GhanaWeb, 2021c):

When we started, the parties that were coming to Parliament were about five; now, there are only two; the other parties, I don't ever foresee them coming to Parliament. ... There is something that is wrong which we have to work on, and that thing is the monetization of politics. Money, money, if you're not able to raise that money, you can have the good ideas, you can have everything, but you can't get the power because you have to get to the people, you have to work on the minds and the hearts of the people to vote for you. If you don't have the money, how can you do it? ... So it's just these two strong parties (NPP and NDC) that are able to mobilize the money, and so they have now monopolized power.

In effect, a symbiotic relationship between patronage and monetization has developed, with the one reinforcing the other and the other way round.

2.5.2 Ideology and Ethnicity in Ghanaian elections

While the role of neo-patrimonialism and monetization are factors for the mobilization of voters and supporters, the same cannot be said of the other structural elements such as ideology and ethnicity. Ideally, in fully functioning liberal democracies, people are perceived to vote based on issues, policy, and ideology or class preference. While this characteristic may be true for both African and Western democracies, the literature on electoral politics in Africa emphasizes the relative importance of ethnic identity, religion, and personality as relevant in determining voter behaviour. These structural factors may also be relevant to voter choices in Western countries (Ninsin, 2016b, p. 7). Still, their impact on election outcomes can be different due to the institutional context of their operation.

Regarding the Ghanaian and Sub-Saharan African contexts, the importance of these features in elections is still being debated. Some scholars argue that these factors have become instruments for political use rather than reflecting actual voter preference (Ninsin, 2016b). What is essential for this research is the potential of these factors to operate together with neo-patrimonial politics to influence voting and election outcomes within the winner-takes-all electoral framework. The following sections assess the extent to which ideological positions and ethnic identity are polarized to mobilize electorates during elections in the Fourth Republic.

There are two main perspectives on this question in the literature regarding whether ideological mobilization plays a determining role in the polarized politics under the Fourth Republic. One view holds that the “duopoly” in governance by the two dominant political parties, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC), derives from and is sustained by the persistence of the ideological divide that characterized the politics of the independence struggles and after. The same can be said for the smaller parties: the People’s National Convention (PNC), the Convention People’s Party (CPP), the National Reform Party (NRP), the Great Consolidated Popular Party (GCPP), and the United Ghana Movement (UGM). LeBas (2018, p. 67) and others argue that both the NPP and the NDC are programmatic parties claiming liberal and social democratic ideologies, respectively. Therefore, arguing that they are polarized along ideological lines. Indeed, while the NPP represents the legacies of the neo-liberal (Danquah-Busia-Dombo) tradition, the NDC represents neo-socialism under the banner of the revolutionary pragmatism of Rawlings and Nkrumah.

Another view holds that the significance of the ideological divide in electoral politics in Ghana has diminished and has minimal relevance when it comes to the choices of most of the Ghanaian electorate. Moreover, it appears to be even non-existent when considering the liberal

framework of policies implemented by alternating governments of the NPP and NDC, both of which are committed to implementing prescribed liberal political, economic, and developmental programs (Gyimah-Boadi & Debrah, 2008). Thus, though it seems that the Fourth Republic will be characterized by ideological polarization, it is generally articulated by core party ideologues to mobilize core party “foot soldiers” (grassroots support base). Ayee (2016) addresses this aspect in the publication of political manifestos, stating that Ghanaian political parties cannot shape voters behaviour based on the policy agendas they put forth (2016, p. 94). Instead, he points out factors like candidates’ personality traits, clientelism and ethnicity as main aspects influencing the public. Haynes (1993) supported this argument, noting the significance of personality over ideology in electorate choices in Ghana and across many African nations (Haynes, 1993, p. 45). Furthermore, Gyimah-Boadi and Debrah (2008) emphasize the point by noting that the two parties follow:

... the same ideological line both in terms of manifestos and policies – neo-liberal economics and liberal democracy with a huge dose of populism. In fact, they hardly articulate any identifiable ideology on their policy platforms, other than a vague ‘developmental ideology’ aimed at improving the lot of the people. Moreover, the parties rarely mobilize electoral support on ideological platforms. Their manifestos and campaign messages do not reflect any clear ideological stance. Rhetorical shifts in ideological positions have been largely driven by changes in domestic politics and the contingencies of out-maneuvering political competitors and dislodging the incumbent (Gyimah-Boadi & Debrah, 2008, pp. 151-152).

I will elaborate on this issue further in the section on political actors.

2.5.3 Ethnicity

Ethnic identity is vital in Ghanaian and other African contexts, as politicians and local leaders can mobilize it. The relevant question for this section to answer is whether and, eventually, the extent to which the contesting parties use ethnic identity for political mobilization in the polarized electoral politics in Ghana. As Figure 1 shows below, Ghana is an ethnically diverse country. The large ethnic population is the Ewe, the Akan, the Mole Dagbani, the Ga-Adangbe, the Guan, the Gurma the Grusi and the Mande-Busanga (Asante & Gyimah-Boadi, 2004, p. 8). Nevertheless, a significant feature of the country’s demography is that no part is ethnically homogenous. One can find people of different ethnic backgrounds living together in all the geographical areas. Despite this diversity, it is significant that there is the peaceful coexistence of other peoples such that Ghana has escaped large scale ethnic conflict in contrast to neighbouring states.

As with the role of ideology (discussed above), there are varied perspectives in the literature on whether ethnic mobilization plays a role in Ghana's polarized elections. Drawing on the literature on elections in Africa generally, one school of thought assumes a correlation between ethnicity and political choices (S. Lindberg & Morrison, 2008, p. 33). Regarding the Ghana case, the proponents of this "correlations" perspective point to apparent "ethnic strongholds" (see Figure 1, map 2) of the dominant parties to show that NPP draws most support and votes from the Akan speaking areas, particularly in the Ashanti Region (Figure 2). On the other hand, the NDC has its firm base in the Volta Region and the Ewe speaking areas (Fridy, 2006).

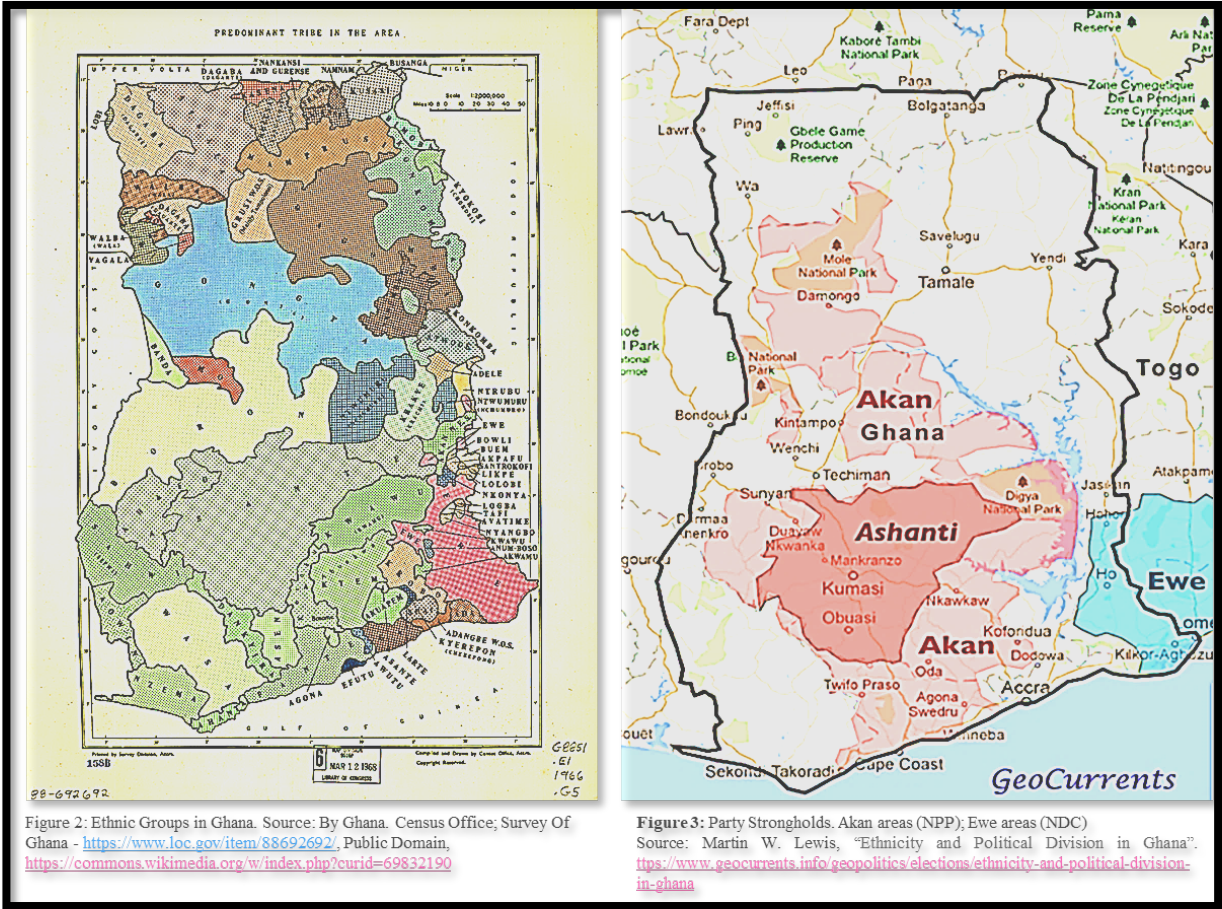


Figure 1: Depiction of two maps. Figure 2 Ethnic groups in Ghana. Figure 3 Party Strongholds Akan area (NPP), Ewe area (NDC).

The election data visualization in Figure 2 shows in 1992 that regardless of ideology, policy, or candidate, the Volta and, from 2020, the Oti regions (see Figure 1) vote overwhelmingly for the NDC party and candidates. Similarly, three out of four voters from the Ashanti region vote for the NPP regardless of the candidate presented. Also, in rural areas, ethnicity can be strongly tied to party loyalties, as loyalties are often delivered as a group (Throup, 2011, p. 7). This

apparent drawing on ethnic sentiments by the NDC was particularly noticeable in the Volta Region in 1992 and 1996 (Figure 2) due to the presidential candidacy of the ‘the favourite son’ of the Volta Region, John Jerry Rawlings (Morrison, 2004, p. 430).

It is observable, however, from the sequence of election results maps (Figure 2) that except in Ashanti and from 2008 the Akan-dominated multi-ethnic Eastern Region, the NDC also has a strong following and has won overwhelmingly in other ethnic areas during elections in 1992, 1996, 2008, and 2012. This overwhelming support is apparently from personal and loyalties to the revolutionary PNDC, which were transferred to the NDC party.

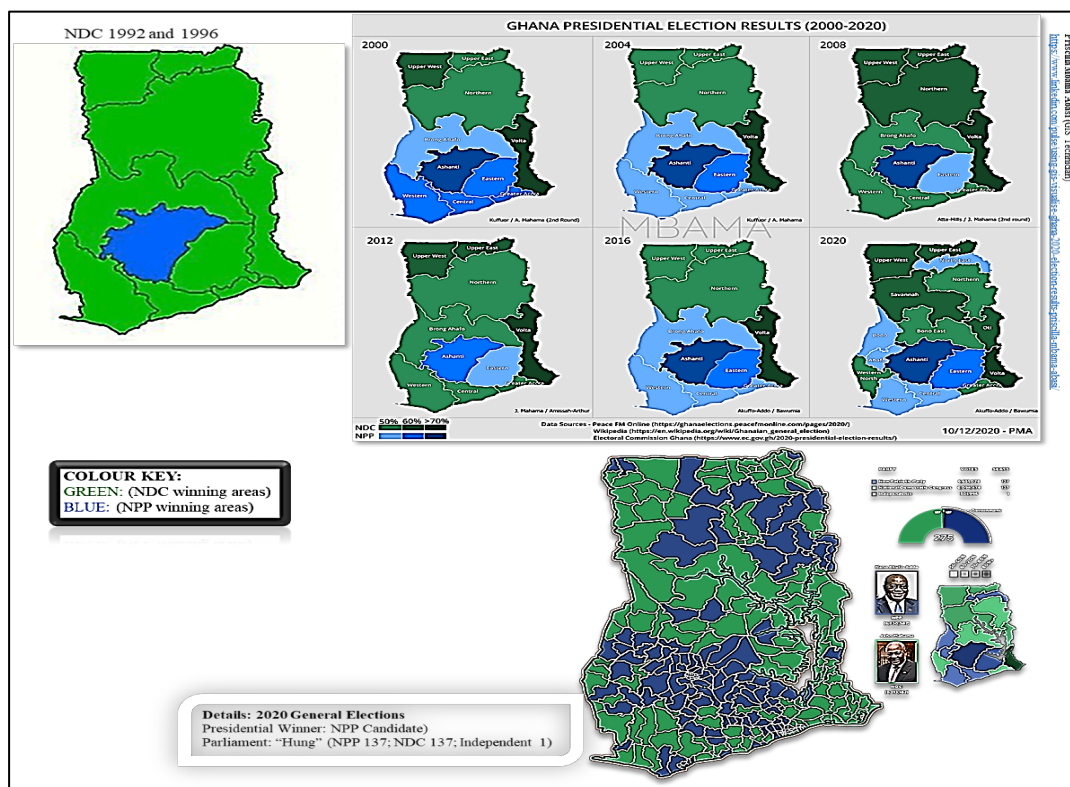


Figure 2: Visualisation of voting patterns: Presidential Results, 1992 to 2020

Another observation from the sequence of maps is that when the NPP won elections (2000, 2004, 2016, and with a deviation in the pattern 2020), its votes came mainly from the Akan speaking areas in the mid-country southern regions. Notably, the different shades of deep to light BLUE or GREEN colours on the election results maps indicate that the voting patterns are more complex than the overview shows. It shows that none of the political parties dominates the other ethnic areas and regions (apart from their traditional bases). Thus, based on the peaceful coexistence among the ethnic groups in Ghana, it is arguable that though ethnic

mobilization during elections is a mechanism used by the contesting elites, the ability to polarize the whole nation on ethnicity is limited.

The second view holds that increasing voter awareness, especially from 2000 onwards, makes ethnic mobilization a less significant driving force for voter behavior (Iddi, 2016, p. 73). Increasing voter awareness has led to the rise of so-called “unpredictable” individual and regional electorates focusing on issues of interests rather than ethnic identity and therefore have no fixed loyalties to one party or other. One of these “unpredictable” voters groups are the so-called ‘floating voters’, who constitute a large part of the electorate from different backgrounds (ethnic, region, class). Another of the “unpredictables” relates to the phenomenon of “swing regions”, referring to administrative regions (like Greater Accra, Central and Western regions) whose votes can ‘swing’ the results of the election. While these floaters and swingers are making elections very unpredictable (Fridy, 2006, p. 23), another voting phenomenon is known as ‘skirt and blouse’ has complicated the elections environment. ‘Skirt and Blouse’ voting occurs when contrary to the expected pattern of voters voting for both the presidential and parliamentary candidates of a party, they rather vote for the presidential candidate of one party and the parliamentary candidate of another party. Though ‘Skirt and Blouse’ voting has featured in previous elections, its effects were clearer on the outcome of the 2020 elections in favor of the NPP Presidential candidate. And, for the first time in Ghanaian (and indeed African), democratic development, leading to a “Hung Parliament” (see lower right map in Figure 2, “Details: 2020 Elections”).

One can argue that ethnicity matters, but it does not necessarily constitute a deciding factor in elections, despite the attachment of NPP and NDC to ethnic strongholds (Fridy, 2006, p. 22; S. Lindberg & Morrison, 2008). Thus, even though it serves as an accessible basis for political mobilization, ethnic identity is mediated by other factors (Iddi, 2016, p. 73; Morrison, 2004, p. 430).

Another important factor that seems to have diminished both ethnic and religious polarization in politics relates to the effort by the political parties to diversify their voters base through balanced sectional and religious presidential tickets. Sectionally, the North-South balanced election ticket corresponds to the imaginary division of the country into a northern section (comprising Northern, Upper-East and Upper-West, North-East, and Savannah regions); and the southern area consisting of Greater Accra, Eastern, Central, Volta, Oti, Ashanti, Western, Western North, and Brong Ahafo, Ahafo and Bono regions (Iddi, 2016, p. 66). These divisions derived from historical (sustained from the colonial period) and relative social-economic inequalities (richer South and poorer North division) between the two parts.

The northern section has been prone to perennial inter-ethnic violent clashes (Throup, 2011, p. 7), potentially affecting localized political activity. However, inter-ethnic violence has not been generally transferred to the country's larger political party competitive space. Asante and Gyimah-Boadi (2004) suggest that the north-south divide also represents the historical and elite-masses divide, which has been present in Ghana for decades.

Like ethnicity, religion hardly has a polarization factor in Ghana electoral politics, even though politicians often exploit it to maximize their votes. As in many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, Christianity and Islam are the two major religions in Ghana, with the majority of the population being Christians and Muslims constituting the second-largest religious group (Throup, 2011, p. 7). This balance between Christianity and Islam reflects within the North-South sectional division. Most Muslims are located in the North and most Christians in the South (Asante & Gyimah-Boadi, 2004). Hence, the presentation of a balanced North-South ticket by both NPP and NDC on the one hand, and a regular Christian-Muslim election ticket by the NPP, on the other hand, help presidential candidates to diversify their electorate support on regional and religious lines (Iddi, 2016, p. 66) and sustains the peaceful coexistence between the two religious groups.

It is clear from the discussions above that ideological and ethnic cleavages may have been used by dominant political actors as instruments for polarized political mobilization in the early phase of the Fourth Republic. However, their significance reduced from 2000 onwards (S. Lindberg & Morrison, 2008, p. 34). Still, the perception is that politicians, particularly the incumbents, can still exploit ethnic identity to mobilize voters by distributing scarce national resources based on ethnicity.

2.6 The context of the 2020 election

This section briefly describes the context of the December 7, 2020, general and presidential election. The 2020 election was Ghana's eighth consecutive election since independence. The advent of the Covid-19 pandemic constituted a challenge for the execution of the election as it changed the dynamics of political campaigns and electoral practice (A.-G. Abdulai & Sackeyfio, 2021, p. 4). However, the Electoral management body instituted public health safety protocols for the conduct of the election, which incentivized the political actors and civil society to adjust their activities (NDI & INI, 2020).

There were 12 qualified presidential candidates for the election (A.-G. Abdulai & Sackeyfio, 2021, p. 1). However, as the previous sections in this chapter explained, the two main political parties, NPP and NDC, dominate the political space. The presidential candidate

for the NPP was incumbent President Nana Dankwa Akuffo-Addo (2016-), which was running for reelection. His primary challenger in the 2020 election was former president John Mahama Dramani (2012-2016), the presidential candidate for the NDC. Both have won and accepted defeat before, but this was the first election in which Ghanaians chose between a sitting and a former president (NDI & INI, 2020, p. 4). Furthermore, Ghana is acknowledged for having solid democratic institutions surrounding its election: comprising the Electoral Commission (EC), the Judiciary, active civil society and media landscape, and security apparatus, which all contribute to the electoral process (Siegle & Cook, 2020, pp. 10-11). This thesis will extend on the issues and the most relevant actors in the 2020 election in Chapter 5 (Data presentation and analysis).

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter described and discussed the relevant political processes within Ghana's democratic development since independence. The first section described the historical roots of party formation, presenting the pre-independence division between UGCC and CPP. The second section discussed the democratic rollback regarding the military coups that characterized Ghana's post-independence period from 1960-1991. A description of the transition to liberal democracy followed. The fourth part addressed the structural foundations of elections, while the fifth part discussed the role of structural factors, such as ethnicity and ideology, in Ghana's political space. The last section briefly described the context of the 2020 election.

Chapter 3 Conceptual Framework

This chapter presents the conceptual framework through an integrated discussion of the relevant concepts in the light of the existing literature and research on political polarization and structural violence. I engaged with the concepts through an iterative interaction with the data, combining a deductive and inductive approach. Accordingly, the thesis does not seek to confirm or reject any specific theory. Instead, as the research question states, the thesis aims to shed light on/explore political Polarization in Ghana's 2020 election and how it may constitute a form of structural violence. Thus, it seeks to use these various concepts and their intersection as (a framework) tools to (understand) explore the research objective.

The first part of this chapter presents and discusses a nascent typology of the evolving concept of political polarization. It begins with a brief introduction to the term polarization in general, followed by a discussion on two distinct conceptualizations of political polarization, which includes a presentation of its various manifestations in terms of drivers. The last section on polarization discusses its possible implications. The second part considers political polarization at the intersection between political science and the multidisciplinary field of peace and conflict studies, seeing it as resulting from inherent structural violence in political culture.

3.1 Polarization as polarity

A formal meaning of polarization is the "state of having two opposites or contradictory tendencies, opinions, and aspects" drawn from the concept of polarity (McCarty, 2019b, p. 8). These tendencies, opinions, or aspects may, depending on the context, be based on various issues ranging from religion to simply partisan attachment, constituting elements that either the elites, the public, or both are polarized over (McCarty, 2019b, p. 8). In simple terms, polarization can be defined spatially as movement along a single left-right continuum as long as the left-right spectrum is not associated with any particular content (LeBas, 2018, p. 62). The literature on polarization is wide-ranging, and the social science disciplines conceptualize and operationalize it differently ((Bauer, 2019). It is often used to describe social phenomena such as health, income, ethnicity, and politics (Bauer, 2019), often portraying distance between two groups or opposites (LeBas, 2018, p. 62).

Consequently, the challenge of defining and measuring the term within different disciplines is under constant debate. What is clear is that research is geared towards studying the polarization of specific social phenomena, such as income polarization, ethnic polarization, and intergroup polarization, amongst others. Large portions of this research use a quantitative approach. They differ, partly based on the statistical measures created to test them, as the focus

is often on aggregating individual positions on one or more scales (Bauer, 2019, pp. 11-13). Thus, the sub-categories delineate the research focus and determine the research approach. Within these frames, the concept means different things based on the specific phenomenon. Correlatingly, as the following section will demonstrate, a similar debate exists within the field of political science, centred around the various definitions and related measurements adopted of political polarization (Lelkes, 2016).

3.2 Political Polarization: An Ideological Definition

The previous section touched upon the various social phenomenon that polarization extends to and some of the dominant methods of inquiry. This section will first briefly present a distinction between elite and mass polarization before discussing the social phenomenon of political polarization, the focus of this thesis. Hereafter, polarization will refer to political polarization.

Polarization can exist at different levels. Scholars distinguish between elite and mass polarization, where research often focuses on whether or to what degree the elites or masses are polarized (McCarty, 2019a, p. 13). Generally, elite polarization refers to polarization between formal political actors, such as political parties and politicians, as well as the institutions they inhabit (Carothers & O'Donohue, 2019b, pp. 5-6). McCarthy describes them as officeholders, party officials, policy intellectuals, and activists along these lines, slightly broadening the category (McCarty, 2019a, pp. 12-13). Mass polarization, also referred to as societal polarization, relates to citizens and ordinary voters. However, the literature shows that the conception of elite and mass polarization varies in different contexts; what each group constitutes should therefore be defined (Carothers & O'Donohue, 2019b, p. 6; McCarty, 2019a, p. 13).

Ideology, the philosophies ascribed to a group or individuals, is one of the most common ways to define and measure polarization. A large part of the polarisation literature focuses on ideological orientation as a prominent cleavage separating political foes. The left-right ideological spectrum has served as a base to determine the ideological distance between parties, leaders, and voters (McCoy et al., 2018, p. 17), commonly measured through issue positions or attitudes. Political science is overwhelmingly the field that has addressed the phenomenon of political polarization. Much of the literature on polarization focuses on single case studies, where the United States has been the dominant focus (Carothers & O'Donohue, 2019b, p. 1; McCoy et al., 2018, p. 17). Which has shaped the way the phenomenon is approached in research and contributed to the ideological positioning, meaning whether individuals position themselves on the left or the right side in politics. Summarizing the debate on polarization in

the United States, Nolan McCarthy identifies public policy, ideological orientations, and partisan attachment as areas where the elites and masses have become increasingly divided in their preferences (McCarty, 2019a, p. 8).

Moreover, studies on the elite level concentrate on legislative voting, perceptions of the ideological distance between political party positions in the legislature, or party manifestos (McCoy et al., 2018, p. 20). For example, research on the United States Congress uses different data such as roll-call votes, legislative text, and bill co-sponsorship (McCarty, 2019a, p. 23) to measure polarization. Research on the polarization of the masses has focused on the degree to which voters sort themselves into increasingly homogeneous political parties or move further apart on policy issues or self-placement on an ideological scale (McCoy et al., 2018, p. 20). Within the public opinion literature, there is debate regarding the polarization of the masses, based on the varied definitions of polarization they adopt. However, as mentioned above, more precisely, the main areas are ideological consistency, ideological divergence, perceived polarization, or affective polarization (Lelkes, 2016). However, despite the definitional differences, the measurement is usually based on distinctive distributions of ideological positionings and represents a common way to establish polarization through quantitative methods identifying polarization statistically (McCarty, 2019a, p. 11).

The U.S. focus has shaped the concentration on ideology within research on political polarization. Polarization and partisanship have been primarily considered a U.S. phenomenon (Hameleers, 2018, p. 491). The overall ideological focus guides the research approach (quantitative) and the specific methods of data collection. The US-based research brings about limitations in the transferability to studies of polarization in other countries as it caters to its particular political system. Notably, for this study, the ideological focus does not capture or explain what polarization is centred around in Ghana, as the research will show. Therefore, a definition that focuses on one specific cleavage, such as polarization as solely ideological distance, is not suitable to study the phenomenon as this research intends. The following segment will present the conceptualization of polarization which this study draws on.

3.3 Political Polarization: A relational and political definition

This section presents a relational and political definition of polarization from the comparative project on polarization by Jennifer McCoy and Murat Somer (2018). McCoy and Somer (2018, 2019) define pernicious polarization as “a process whereby the normal multiplicity of differences in a society increasingly align along a single dimension. Cross-cutting differences become reinforcing, and people increasingly perceive and describe politics and society in terms

of ‘us’ versus ‘them’” (McCoy et al., 2018, p. 18; Somer & McCoy, 2018; 2019, p. 13). In this conceptualization, the focus is not on the ideological or social distance. Instead, the focus is on how the polarization simplifies political and social relations (Carothers & O’Donohue, 2019b, p. 7). This research draws on this understanding of polarization. However, the focus of this study is not on severe or “pernicious” polarization, a distinction that I will address further below.

Moreover, McCoy et al. (2018, p. 20) note that the conventional attribution to ideological cleavages does not necessarily capture the issues prevalent in contemporary political polarization. For example, as the case for many countries in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa show, party identification does not necessarily reflect ideological differences in countries where programmatic parties are not the characteristic of the political process. As Dan Slater and Aries Arugay (Slater & Arugay, 2018, p. 93) note:

Across most of the developing or postcolonial world, electoral competition is not structured along the classic left-right ideological continuum at all. Competitive elections and democratic participation are widely portrayed as exercises in patronage distribution, not programmatic differentiation. Political parties compete for power in ways that channel competing demands for access to the state and its resources. They only rarely channel sharply distinctive ideological visions (Slater & Arugay, 2018, pp. 92-93).

A noticeable element in the definition is not the radicalization of opinion itself that characterizes polarization. Instead, beliefs are realigned under one cleavage (Somer & McCoy, 2019, p. 13). Correlatingly, scholars have recognized other divisions that constitute lines on which polarizing identities are formed and the division is based. These include ethnic, tribal, or religious identity (Carothers & O’Donohue, 2019a, p. 259), or partisanship, as LeBas (2018, p. 67) argues, is a significant social identity by itself. Other divisions include globalist-cosmopolitan versus nationalist-local, urban versus rural, and traditional versus modern cultural values (McCoy et al., 2018, pp. 18-19). overall, these markers act together with or without ideological divide as enduring cleavages of contemporary society.

The conceptualization of polarization presented above focuses on its inherent relational nature and its instrumental political use (McCoy et al., 2018, p. 18). First, the relational feature encompasses actor and group interaction and reaction, it focuses on the usage and interpretation of the difference that exists by groups and actors to create an incompatible ‘us’ vs ‘them’ view of the other, and the subsequent reaction and response by the opponents (Somer & McCoy, 2019, p. 13a). Second, yet less elaborated, the political aspect relates to how political

entrepreneurs often initiate polarization by different intentional policies and discourses (Somer & McCoy, 2019, p. 13a).

As mentioned above, this understanding of polarization centres on its severity. Thus, the definition has some features which distinguish it from moderate forms of polarization. Primarily, the focus of the cross-regional comparative projects by Jennifer McCoy and Murat Somer (McCoy & Somer, 2019; Somer & McCoy, 2019) has been on the occurrence of pernicious polarization. Pernicious simply means having a harmful effect, gradually or subtly (Merriam-Webster). The studies sought to identify patterns of destructive polarization, determining when and how polities become perniciously polarized and the ways it can harm democracy (McCoy et al., 2018; Somer & McCoy, 2019). Accordingly, they theorize that severe polarization fuses elite and mass polarization, indicating that polarization has permeated from the elite level into society. There is a high possibility of polarization extending to social relations in these cases, as political identity often becomes one's social identity; thus, the polarization has an affective dimension (Carothers & O'Donohue, 2019b, p. 7; Somer & McCoy, 2019, p. 9). According to McCoy and Somer (2019), this occurs when political entrepreneurs activate underlying cleavages, realign them under one dominant division while using polarizing rhetoric or tactic to mobilize their base to achieve political goals. This divisive tactic often creates two dominant mutually distrustful blocs in the political system.

Likewise, Thomas Carothers and Andrew O'Donohue's (2019b) comparative project *Democracies divided* addresses the issue of 'severe polarization', drawing on the definition by McCoy and Somer, although with some adjustments and differences in their case criteria. Their extensive research includes countries that do not qualify as 'severe', where polarization has not penetrated society, and where efforts are made to avoid polarization that may compromise democracy (Carothers & O'Donohue, 2019b, p. 11). Among the nine case studies included, four are not perniciously polarized, namely Bangladesh (Hossain, 2019), Colombia (Feldmann, 2019), Indonesia (Warburton, 2019), and Brazil (Mignozzetti & Spektor, 2019). Similarly, Adrienne LeBas (2018) used this definition in her comparative analysis of four African countries, where she deemed Ghana and Burkina Faso not severely polarized while using the definition to explore the trajectory of polarization in these countries. Thus, these case studies provide a basis for the applicability of this conceptualization for this research project, although the Ghanaian case does not qualify as severe. As Carothers and O'Donohue (2019a, p. 283) note, studying countries experiencing lesser but worrying signs of polarization is helpful and necessary.

While acknowledging the different approaches to polarization, determining the severity of polarization in Ghana is not the aim. This study builds this understanding of polarization as a relational and political concept to understand how political competition is structured. Thus, exploring how the different actors interact during the electioneering period and what conflicting issues the political actors drive forth in the political discourse for political gain. Most importantly, exploring this in close connection with the country's political development, as the polarization has roots in Ghana's early political formation, which the background chapter (demonstrated) will demonstrate. Furthermore, elections present an opportunity to observe the political climate as polarization often heightens during moments of the intense electoral contest (Warburton, 2019, p. 202). Thus, this study uses the 2020 election in Ghana as a case study to explore the manifestation of polarization. Acknowledging certain aspects of this conceptualization that emphasize opposition strategies in response to a polarizing incumbent (Sommer & McCoy, 2019, p. 16), due to the characteristics of the Ghanaian case, this study mainly looks at the interaction between the incumbent and the opposition party.

Moreover, the findings from these case studies help to understand how polarization emerges and unfolds. Most have been case study based and included both quantitative and qualitative methods. This research builds on the concepts from these empirical findings and literature, which the sections below will demonstrate, to identify drivers and consequences of polarization. These patterns, and variations identified in several case studies, constitute a framework for the manifestation of polarization.

3.3.1 Drivers of Polarization at the level of agency and institution

The definition presented above defines polarization as a process and not a state, a position recognized by several scholars (DiMaggio, Evans, & Bryson, 1996). Polarization takes on various forms in each context and across historical periods since drivers have a significant role in shaping the trajectory of polarization. It might appear gradually or emerge quickly, the latter being particularly relevant for pernicious polarization (Carothers & O'Donohue, 2019a, p. 265). The comparative studies by McCoy and Sommer (2019) and Carothers and O'Donohue (2019b) have contributed to the development of typical patterns of polarization, which identifies drivers at the level of agency and institution. These typologies can be helpful in understanding and identifying the dynamics of polarization. Therefore, to explore the manifestation of polarization in Ghana's 2020 election, this section first presents drivers at the elite level. The following sub-chapter is on institutional drivers consisting of political arrangements and electoral rules.

3.3.2 Drivers at the level of agency

Political actors often have a role in driving polarization through their actions and the contents of their particular agendas. Their interaction, consisting of actions and reactions, contributes to shaping the process of polarization through their tactics and strategies. As mentioned previously in this chapter, political actors, or elite, varies in the specific context. However, this study will refer to leaders and political parties, as they are often the main polarizing drivers (Carothers & O'Donohue, 2019a, p. 262). They are often characterized as political entrepreneurs or polarizing figures, although not all fall under this category. Moreover, Somer and McCoy (2019, p. 13) note that polarization can manifest at the micro-level, as CSO's, NGOs, peer groups, and neighbourhood groups are both a part of and a parcel of the polarization process, as they often ally with the political groups.

Political actors use various strategies or tactics that drive polarization, either intentionally or unconsciously. McCoy and Somer's comparative study particularly highlights the reciprocity or the strategic choices of the opposition as a determinant in the polarizing outcome (Somer & McCoy, 2019, p. 14). However, as mentioned previously, this is not always the case because polarizing programs are not always single-actor driven. Instead, actors on both sides may contribute to polarization at different times (Carothers & O'Donohue, 2019a, p. 265). This dualism is true in the case of Ghana, as the balance of power between the two major parties, NPP and the NDC, has to a large extent created a cycle of alternating transfer of power. Significantly, in their quest to win power, the major political parties use aggressive tactics. These tactics include threats to life, violence, demonization, and the violation of established democratic norms (Carothers & O'Donohue, 2019a, p. 263).

However, polarizing actors do not create polarization from a blank slate. Usually, they draw on existing cleavages or even minuscule issues to drive their interest. These vary within cases and across time, as some may already happen in society while others may be new constructions. LeBas (2006, p. 420) explains that Zimbabwe's polarisation occurred because of the elite instrumentalism, as a shallow cleavage was mobilized for political gain. The divisions presented earlier in this chapter are examples of circumstances under which political rivalry develops. These cleavages operate as simple vehicles to drive particular conflicting interests forward (McCoy et al., 2018, p. 22). For political actors to express these competing interests, group-based markers (ethnicity/religion/partisanship) become a necessary tool. The relevant element is how political actors capitalize on these cleavages through political mobilization, attempting to exploit political, economic, or cultural grievances through activating latent resentment (McCoy & Somer, 2019, p. 240).

Actors drive the polarization in fundamental ways by choosing a particular cleavage to emphasize in their rhetoric (LeBas, 2006). For example, religious and ethnic diversity is assumed to be a raw material for elites to revitalize during the electoral competition, while they are often not the source of division (LeBas & Munemo, 2019, p. 210; Warburton, 2019, p. 201). In Indonesia, Eva Warburton emphasizes elite agency as she describes how the elite intentionally mobilized religiously charged and acrimonious rhetoric to attack the opponent (Warburton, 2019, p. 202). Likewise, Naomi Hossain argues that the polarization is merely instrumental in Bangladesh, as the competition grew out of a contest for political power, thus of purely political origin (Hossain, 2019, pp. 177-178). Therefore, in several cases of polarization, scholars point to the political and institutional sources of the political competition and polarization, despite the social diversity present (Arugay & Slater, 2019, p. 123). This political and institutional bias is particularly evident in cases where political actors attempt to mobilize issues through political discourse where the discourse does not necessarily fit with the underlying cleavage (McCoy & Somer, 2019, p. 240).

Polarizing discourses and rhetoric reflect a general feature of polarizing politics, portrayed through symbols and language (McCoy & Somer, 2019, pp. 244-245). Usually, this electoral strategy involves constructing rival images, creating or exacerbating the ‘us’ vs ‘them’ divide (McCoy et al., 2018, p. 21). This aspect of polarization is related to the social psychology of polarization, where intergroup dynamics are activated, as parties exhibit solid in-group cohesion and out-group bias and prejudice (McCoy et al., 2018, p. 23). Partisanship is an integral part of this process. It is an essential component of social identity and relates to people’s experience of group membership, particularly in countries with dominant two-party systems (Hameleers, 2018, p. 487). Partisanship is also evident in the moralizing character of political discourse and the language of blame, blaming the evil ‘others’ while playing on existing issues and fears, assigning others with corrupt intentions (McCoy & Somer, 2019, p. 245). Thus, the incumbents use these tactics to stay in power while the opposition employs them to accede to power.

3.3.3 Institutional drivers

In addition to strategies and tactics by polarized actors, researchers have identified institutional arrangements as factors that may exacerbate or mitigate polarization. Due to the scope of this thesis, the most appropriate institutional arrangements will be discussed, with a focus on the African context. These include political system designs and the state of guardrail institutions (Carothers & O’Donohue, 2019a, p. 266). As may be recalled from earlier in this chapter,

polarization takes on different forms in countries where politics does not centre around programmatic parties. According to Carothers and O'Donohue (2019a, p. 266), political system designs have an essential role in how polarization unfolds, as they either pose as a strength or a vulnerability. This is particularly true for countries in the developing world, where institutions are in developing stages and where allegations of abuses of power and lack of accountability are frequent. Thus, in these cases, polarization can become worse through processes and mechanisms that are institutional rather than ideological or sociological (Arugay & Slater, 2019, p. 124). As Slater and Arugay (2018, p. 93) state:

Democratic polarization's deepest and most enduring source is not ideological or sociological but institutional. Even when leading political parties are virtually indistinguishable in ideological or sociological terms, polarization can arise as a predictable byproduct of democracy's definition and design.

Furthermore, within the institutional realm, electoral system designs such as the first-past-the-post system are highlighted as it tends to create two-party systems, which raises the stakes for political competition (Carothers & O'Donohue, 2019a, p. 267). This has been the experience in Bangladesh, as Naomi Hossaini points to the functioning and design of the country's political institutions as features that have exacerbated polarization (Hossain, 2019, p. 178). Moreover, she argues that "elite competition for political power in Bangladesh has been polarized and polarizing, in a high stakes game of winner-take-all, with the logic to win at all costs" (Hossain, 2019, p. 180). In addition, the first-past-the-post political system has fostered the winner-takes-all politics creating two catch-all parties. Van Gyampo (2015, p. 65) argues that the winner-take-all (WTA) approach leads to the partisan monopolization of state resources, facilities, and opportunities and subsequent exclusion of the opponent from governance. This system is prevalent in several political regimes, but it has varying effects.

In the African context, the system is cited as a challenge to national development and the practice of checks and balances within governance. In the electoral context, it becomes a polarizing practice, as it creates an imbalance of power which accentuates the perception of marginalization by the opposition (Van Gyampo, 2015, p. 66). Thus, this system may, in specific contexts, exacerbate polarization. In contrast, electoral systems with multiparty landscapes may, in some instances, temper this binary effect, allowing for multiple small parties to establish (Carothers & O'Donohue, 2019a, p. 267). However, multiparty systems are not the formula, as polarization occurs in multiparty settings as well.

Moreover, Carothers and O'Donohue (2019a, p. 267) point to the degree of centralization of political power as another feature that influences polarization. This is

particularly relevant in countries with religious, ethnic, or regional cleavages, as the concentration of power can worsen divisions through the political contest (Carothers & O'Donohue, 2019a, p. 268). In Kenya, the centralized state system and concentration of power to the executive president has intensified ethnic polarization through intense political competition over the state's resources (Khadiagala, 2019, p. 41). Additionally, Khadiagala (2019, p. 41) notes that within the neo-patrimonial system, where power is personalized, ethnicity has become a source for politicization and mobilization to increase the chances for political power.

This last segment relates to the influence of informal institutions such as clientelism and corruption on polarization. Here, Carothers and O'Donohue (Carothers & O'Donohue, 2019a, p. 268) argue that counterintuitively to democratic practice, clientelism and polarization can alleviate polarization at the elite and mass level. Mignozzetta and Spektor (2019, p. 230), for example, explain how patronage has a more significant role in mobilizing voters than party programs, arguing that it has weakened the importance of other cleavages in Brazil. Likewise, Warburton (2019, pp. 204-205) describes that the presence of patronage and endemic corruption in Indonesia has dampened the partisan divide as the elites conspire to gain access to state resources, transcending political division. These variations show that the influence these factors have depends on the national context. Although the two latter cases demonstrated harmless instances, the case of Kenya revealed that patronage could have a harmful effect under other circumstances and in interplay with other issues. In the long run, clientelism and corruption are systems that tend to create public dissatisfaction, which may foster new divisions for polarization to thrive (Carothers & O'Donohue, 2019a, p. 268).

Moreover, another dimension is the role of guardrail institutions within the democratic framework (Carothers & O'Donohue, 2019a, p. 269). These institutions are the judiciary and the electoral management body, limiting or intensifying polarization depending on their state. In the African context, weak democratic institutions give leeway for political actors to act without constraint (LeBas, 2018, p. 60). Thus, in the presence of weak legal institutions that lack partiality, the judiciary becomes compromised during polarization (Hossain, 2019, p. 269). Likewise, in settings where the independence of the electoral commission is under question or is already in a weak state, it often becomes an area of contestation during elections (Carothers & O'Donohue, 2019a, p. 269).

3.2.4 Consequences for democracy

The previous section presented the drivers of polarization at the level of agency and institution, explaining how they influence polarization. This last section on polarization discusses the potential implications polarization has on democracy. Research on polarization has found that it either has a positive or negative impact on democracy (Carothers & O'Donohue, 2019a; LeBas, 2018; McCoy et al., 2018). The degree and underlying nature of the polarization impact the outcome for democracy. This section will first discuss how polarization can be positive for democracy before discussing negative implications for political institutions and society, including both severe and non-severe cases of polarization.

Polarization is often associated with negative connotations. However, certain levels of polarization may benefit democracy and have a democratizing effect. Lebas (2018) argues that polarization can have a democratizing impact in the context of 'generative conflict.' Generative conflict ties conflict and democratization together, gradually diffusing and checking excessive power (LeBas, 2018, p. 60). This impact is particularly true when political parties attempt to establish constituencies, competing fiercely with one another, trying to stand out based on their distinct agenda (Carothers & O'Donohue, 2019b, p. 5). When this occurs, polarization simultaneously contributes to the practice of political representation and accountability (McCarty, 2019a, p. 19). The occurrence of this is particularly relevant for developing democracies. Lebas's (2018) theory-developing and comparative analysis of Ghana, Burkina Faso, Kenya, and Cote d'Ivoire illustrate situations when polarization can be positive and negative. The cases of Ghana and Burkina Faso exemplify the first outcome. The democratizing effect occurred when polarization generated incentives for political participation through mobilizing new constituencies, sustaining the commitment of activists while creating a new political order through institutional reform pushed by the elites (LeBas, 2018, p. 70). Likewise, Hossain notes that Bangladesh benefitted from 'generative conflict' in the process of party formation (Hossain, 2019, p. 179).

However, LeBas (2018) identifies two factors that influence the impact polarization might have. First, the cleavage's nature underlies the polarization, and second, the balance of power between groups on either side of the political divide. When there is a power balance between polarized blocs, it is more likely to motivate competing parties to create durable organizations. It encourages them to share power and build more accountable institutions (LeBas, 2018, p. 60). Thus, polarization can strengthen democracy through democratic deepening, democratization, facilitate party building, mobilization and stabilization, present more accessible choices for the electorate, and help consolidate political party systems (McCoy

& Somer, 2019, p. 235; Somer & McCoy, 2018, pp. 7-8). Depending on the underlying nature of the polarization and the character of preexisting cleavages.

The juncture of polarization going from a neutral or positive component to becoming an increasingly hazardous aspect is not a clear line. Polarization can damage several democratic institutions, such as the judiciary, legislature, executive, and political parties (Carothers & O'Donohue, 2019a, p. 271). While also expanding throughout society, affecting people's daily interaction. The latter is particularly relevant for countries experiencing pernicious polarization, as the political division has spilt over to the masses (Carothers & O'Donohue, 2019a, p. 273). Carothers and O'Donohue (2019) recognize that polarization has harmful consequences in countries with lesser but still considerable degrees of polarization. Both Hossain (2019, p. 189) and Feldman (2019, pp. 167-168) find that polarization leads to rising political violence as the politicization of crucial state and societal institutions compromises the credibility of those institutions. In that case, the aggrieved increasingly rely on extra-institutional strategies of political contestation such as parliamentary or election boycotts. Their case studies have in common that the polarization has not spread throughout society, which is a hallmark of pernicious polarization. However, they illustrate how polarization impacts crucial democratic institutions, even when it is of a moderate degree.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, research on pernicious polarization, political and societal polarization where the society splits into two opposing camps has detrimental effects on democracy. Scholars find that the consequences are due to the underlying cleavages the political actors activate and the balance of power in electoral mobilization (McCoy & Somer, 2019, pp. 264-265). For example, the study by LeBas (2018) found that the nature of the cleavages in Kenya and Cote d'Ivoire, which drew "on a historical legacy of formal group exclusion or differential citizenship rights," the outcome was "more likely to result in large-scale violence and democratic breakdown" (Lebas, 2018, p. 55). On a larger scale, the divided society mistrusts each other and is unwilling to compromise or communicate (Algan & Cahuc, 2013, p. 525). Thus, when political actors divide the community by exploiting existing grievances, it leads to democratic erosion and democratic collapse, as it weakens democratic norms, legitimacy, and institutions (McCoy et al., 2018, pp. 26-26).

3.4 Peace and violence research

This section discusses, first, the broadened understanding of peace and violence as presented by Johan Galtung. Secondly, it discusses the term structural violence and conceptualizes it for this study.

As the previous section elucidated, the implications of polarization are complex and not straightforward. Nonetheless, research on polarization has presented a worrying picture of the trajectory of polarization on democracy. Whether or not polarization is positive for democracy in the long run or has severe consequences for democracy, the inherent challenge appears to be the tension and violence it produces.

Therefore, this study views polarization through a peace and conflict studies perspective, a discipline where violence is a core concept, exploring methods for researching polarization within peace research. With this notion, it is necessary to mention that both political science and peace research are interdisciplinary fields while acknowledging that both come with certain concepts. Different conceptions of violence can enlighten other dimensions of polarization. Research on the relationship between polarization and conflict (within peace research) often focuses on direct overt violence, particularly in the form of a large-scale conflict, which can be measured quantitatively (J. M. Esteban & Ray, 1994; Hegre, 2008). For example, research conducted by Hegre (2008) and Esteban and Schneider (2008) uses a positivist approach in assessing the relationship between increased polarization and the likelihood of (violent) conflict. Concerning this, it is relevant to note that scholars apply different conceptions of both polarization and conflict.

Peace research is concerned with research into the conditions for realizing peace in the past, present, and future (Galtung, 1969, pp. 183-184). While also understanding dynamics and uses of power (Brunk, 2000, p. 21). Like most of the concepts discussed in this chapter, peace is an abstract and contested term, which means no one agrees on its definition. There is, however, a recognized distinction between positive and negative conceptions of peace within peace research that entails more than the colloquial understanding of peace as solely the negation of war and violence (Brunk, 2000, p. 16). Johan Galtung, a pioneer of peace research, defines peace as the absence of violence (Galtung, 1969). With this, he suggested three kinds of violence: personal/direct, structural, and cultural. These extended conceptions of violence represent negations of peace and acknowledge the multiple ways harm can be done, in addition to or in the absence of physical damage, such as economically, politically, psychologically, or socially (Brunk, 2000, p. 16). Negative and positive peace refers to two different kinds of violence. First, negative peace is the absence of personal or direct violence, where a perpetrator/s with an identifiable victim performs an intentional and identifiable harmful action (Brunk, 2000, p. 17). Although negative peace is preferable to violence, it does not equate to an entirely benign condition, as peace is more than a state of non-violence or ceasefire. As

Galtung points out, negative peace is like a point where there is neither violence nor peace (Galtung, 2012, p. 76).

In contrast, positive peace, defined as the absence of structural and cultural violence, entails structures for achieving durable peace (Galtung, 2012, p. 75). Positive peace also referred to as social justice, is a state of egalitarian distribution of power and resources (Galtung, 1969, p. 183). It is a condition in which structures that produce harm are transformed into peace-producing ones. The concept is criticized as an unattainable utopia (Brunk, 2000, p. 17), as it is often associated with concepts such as international justice and cooperation, integration of human society, and egalitarian distribution of power and resources (B. Lee, 2016, p. 137). However, as the next section will demonstrate, this expanded definition of peace enables the study of less perceivable forms of violence built into normalized structures.

3.5 Structural Violence

The previous section briefly discussed how the expanded definition of violence acknowledges the multiple ways harm can be done, in addition to or in the absence of physical. Johan Galtung (1969) introduced the theory of structural violence to expand the understanding and definition of violence in peace research. Accordingly, he stated that “violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations” (Galtung, 1969, p. 168). This conceptualization allows for an interpretation of violence that extends beyond the individual to include structural and cultural foundations of violence. Thus, it differs from definitions of violence, which are characterized by a focus solely on agents and intentions, expressed through personal or direct violence (Winter, 2012, p. 196). Thus, structural violence is a counterpart to direct and personal violence. As Galtung notes, if we solely focus on the perpetrator of violence, we fail to prevent suffering, injury, and pain inflicted by structures of violence, which are as relevant (Winter, 2012, p. 195).

Structural violence is defined as violence built into the structure, revealing it as unequal power and consequently unequal life chances (Galtung, 1969, p. 171). These structures can be political, economic, or cultural, and the violence can manifest itself as inequality of power, resources, and life opportunities (Winter, 2012, p. 195). In this regard, structural violence embodies a kind of “unintended harm done to human beings where the responsibility for the damaging action cannot be attributed to individual will” (Kemp & Fry, 2004, p. 13). This conception of violence, has among others, two implications that are of particular relevance. First, it focuses on ‘invisible’ forms of violence, for which the concept has enlightened previously neglected forms of violence. As Dilt et al. (2012) assert, limiting ourselves to a

narrow understanding of violence ignores other pervasive forms of violence embedded in structures, institutions, ideologies, and histories. Which recognizes how violence shapes and reshapes our experiences in ways which actor-oriented perspective cannot explain or justify (Dilts et al., 2012, p. 191). Second, structural violence is a broad concept. It has opened the category of violence to include colonialism, racism, hunger, discrimination, marginalization, and poverty (Winter, 2012, p. 195). As the previous argument implied, this has made it possible to postulate violence on different dimensions, mainly how other access to power and resources is a form of violence. Various structures, either political, economic, or social, lead to different disparities. For example, structural violence is often viewed in terms of health inequalities manifested through preventable diseases, such as aids and HIV, and through poverty, displayed in the uneven access to essential nutrition and consequently malnutrition and death (B. X. Lee, 2019, p. 123). Kholer and Alchok (1976) quantified social, economic, and political inequalities by looking at socioeconomic inequality and life expectancy, emphasizing how many deaths could be avoided if wealth was redistributed equally. Others have tied structural violence to political and economic ideologies such as neoliberalism. Biebricher and Johnson tied structural violence to neoliberalism, identifying the harm it causes in terms of global and local distribution of resources (Biebricher & Johnson, 2012). Thus, structural violence is viewed through different lenses. The main feature is how unequal power structures determine the distribution of resources, in several spheres of life. Thus, scholars contend that the concept is as relevant to contemporary theory and practice as it helps understand our present moment and collective past (Dilts et al., 2012, p. 192). Which, consequently, enables us to understand violence and subsequently how we address it.

However, the concept has received criticism for these qualities. Critics argue that it collapses a host of components into one category, essentially becoming too broad and vague, neglecting the historical differences of other forms of injustice (Winter, 2012, p. 195). According to Winter, one of the main problems is identifying and perceiving violence (Winter, 2012, p. 196). Structural violence unfolds without a discernible perpetrator and is, therefore 'invisible.' While direct violence, as previously mentioned, is associated with visible acts. This perception of violence is expected in the positivist paradigm, where one studies observable phenomena, a dominant approach to research on violence (B. X. Lee, 2019, p. 126). This is understandable, as personal violence is noticeable and quickly shows.

In contrast, structural violence, which is silent and static, is often conceived as stability (Galtung, 1969, pp. 173,175). Therefore, a narrow view of violence hinders research into contemporary forms of violence, which some argue is more destructive than overt forms of

violence and a potent stimulant of behavioural violence (B. Lee, 2016, p. 119). The point of the concept is not to dilute or eschew blame and responsibility from the perpetrator. Instead, it enhances our ability to identify how “peaceful” conditions of tranquillity and stability may mask more destructive and profound violence (Dilts et al., 2012, p. 192). Without this understanding, Galtung notes, highly unacceptable social orders would still be compatible with peace (B. X. Lee, 2019, p. 125). Therefore, this understanding of violence is necessary as the manifestations of violence change over time, providing a need for new conceptualization to understand, manage, and eventually find remedies.

3.5.1 Conceptualizing polarization as structural violence

Structural violence puts violence, power, and structures together. This study looks at how structural violence is embedded in a political system with the potential to generate violence. More precisely, this research looks at how polarization constitutes a form of structural violence within the context of Ghana’s democracy, identifying structural violence in how polarization manifests. Drawing back to Galtung’s expanded definition of violence, Galtung (1969, p. 168) states, “violence is that which increases the distance between the potential and the actual, and that which impedes the decrease of this distance,” which means that violence is what hinders a person’s potential realization. Consequently, based on the consequences that polarization inflicts, it is perceivable that polarization leads to observable violence or is a process that produces violence, either physical or verbal. This makes the relationship between direct personal violence acted out by perpetrators during polarization clear. However, this research views polarization and violence regarding the actors that execute it and how institutional arrangements reproduce it. Particularly, how the institutional provisions and political culture, which determines how the power to decide over the distribution of resources is divided, accentuates the perception of marginalization by the opposition.

Moreover, Galtung explained the interaction of structural violence in terms of top dogs and underdogs, where there is unequal exchange, and the top dogs get much more (Galtung, 1969, p. 198). Here, more is measured through what he calls need currency, such as survival needs, wellbeing needs, identity needs, and freedom needs (Galtung, 1969, p. 197). Thus, top dogs gain much more out of the interaction of the structure than others. Interpreting this in the context of polarization, it reflects the recurrent cycle of polarization in each election, where the ones in power benefit from the structure while the opposition has a power deficit. As Ramsbotham et al. (2011, p. 12) note, ‘injustice’ usually amounts to ‘perceived injustice.’ Thus, in this context, the perceived deficit and the ‘injustice’ which the opposition feels fuels the

antagonistic power struggles. Therefore, this research examines the Ghanaian context's polarisation as a regenerative process whereby structural factors reproduce this cycle

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented a conceptualization of polarization and structural violence. The definition adopted moved away from a conventional understanding of polarization as ideological distance. Instead, polarization is conceptualized as a relational and political process driven by the interaction of elites and institutional arrangements. The manifestation and consequences of polarization vary based on the particular context. In an African context, institutional weaknesses play a specific role in exacerbating polarization. Thus, this study takes a peace and violence approach to study the occurrence of polarization in Ghana. Conceptualizing structural violence as violence embedded in the political system with the potential to generate violence.

Chapter 4 Methodological Framework

This research is a case study of the extent to which the heightened tension during Ghana's general elections is constitutive of polarization due to structural violence embedded within the constitutional, legal, institutional, and organizing frameworks guiding the electoral process. The preceding two chapters described the general political context and the conceptual framework of the study, respectively. This chapter will explain the rationale and assumptions informing the methodological choices and adaptations made to the original data gathering plan due to national and international restrictions under the still raging Covid-19 pandemic. The chapter first describes and justifies the qualitative research approach that underpins adopting the case study method. Thereafter, it discusses the data collection method through internet-based research (a discussion on the use of documents and internet media platforms as a source of data) and the three steps process of data collecting used. This is followed by a description the data analysis. Lastly, the chapter presents reflections on ethical considerations and researcher's reflexivity.

4.1 Methodology

From their respective disciplinary lenses, social sciences researchers study various forms of polarization using either qualitative or quantitative methods. As indicated in the conceptual framework chapter, researchers in political science who study political polarization in different national contexts are no exception. Nevertheless, most political science research uses the quantitative method to apply statistical measures to large samples within large-scale studies to answer numerical questions to generalize the findings political science researchers investigate LeBas (2018) and McCarty (2019a). The central assumption of qualitative research is that objectivist and positivist principles see social phenomena as external to and beyond human influence. The quantitative approach posits that the search for objective truth in research procedures should be devoid of subjective views of both the researcher and the interviewee by focusing on quantification procedures and suitable scientific units of measurement in the process (Bryman, 2016, p. 29).

The qualitative approach is suitable for studying Ghana's case because it fits its general purpose of understanding the polarising tendencies and their effects through the actors' actions, interactions, and verbal expressions. The choice of methods is based on ontological and epistemological considerations, which have implications for knowledge production under qualitative and quantitative methodology.

Though I have a political science background and am researching political polarization, I find the quantitative method not suitable for achieving the objective of this research. Instead, the qualitative approach serves the purposes better. My aim is not to generalize the findings. Instead, I intend to provide an in-depth understanding of why political polarization rises to a crescendo during general elections and evaluate how the phenomenon is constituent to structural violence within Ghana's political culture. This understanding will emerge through exploratory analysis of political actors' verbal and non-verbal expressions and reactions at every stage of the electoral cycle. Also, the case study is within the multidisciplinary academic environment of Peace Studies, where peace and conflict issues in the Global-South are researched broadly through qualitative research approaches. Moreover, the qualitative research approach for this study embraces detail and acknowledges the biases that shape our understanding and description of events (Moses & Knutsen, 2007, p. 12). This consideration conforms to constructivist and interpretivist assumptions underpinning qualitative research and, consequently, the 'method chosen through which knowledge becomes apparent to us' (Moses & Knutsen, 2007).

Moreover, the qualitative approach allows for the study of political polarization as a socially constructed process created through the interaction and reaction of the participants within that process centred around specific issues of conflict, in this case, related to the approaches towards the acquisition of state power in Ghana during the 2020 elections. In addition, the constructivist approach enables the social researcher to appreciate the subjective meaning of social action through the study of the phenomena from the varying perspectives of the participants. Specifically, the Ghana case of political polarization enables me to explore and understand the meanings that specific individuals and groups ascribe to a social issue (Bryman, 2016, p. 26). Consequently, it opens for understanding social actions as something meaningful within a larger context, for both the agents performing these actions and the researcher studying it (Moses & Knutsen, 2007, p. 11).

In the Ghanaian context, the general topic of political polarization is under-researched. There is also no in-depth study of polarization as a reflection of structural violence embedded in the political culture of the Fourth Republic. Thus, this thesis is original and innovative as an exploratory attempt to develop some thoughts about the manifestation of polarization in Ghana and how it constitutes a form of structural violence in its democratic development process. This approach is in line with the conceptualization of exploratory research as a study of minor understood issues or phenomena through carefully examining and developing preliminary ideas

about them (Neuman, 2014, p. 38). Therefore, the above underpinning assumptions of this research inform the case study design and document analysis approach.

4.2 Case study design

Case study research design is conducive for studying the specific social phenomenon, either through the investigation of a single unit of the social phenomenon or through comparing several occurrences of the same phenomenon. For instance, research of political polarization can be done either as a single unit study of one country or compare multiple units of the phenomenon in several countries. The case approach benefits theoretical, analytical, or methodological understanding of a particular phenomenon or situation. Critics of the case study approach argue that the method lacks generalizability. However, this criticism is tangential, considering that the technique focuses in-depth on the particularity and complexity of the case studied (Bryman, 2016, p. 53, 66).

The single case study method involves a ‘sample of one’ and implies a detailed and intensive analysis of a single case at a specific point in time (Bryman, 2016, p. 60; Pierce, 2008, p. 51). This research adopts the single case study design to explore recurrent tension during general elections in Ghana under the Fourth Republic Constitution established in 1992. Carothers and O’Donohue (2019) note that various national structures (for example, variation in the political institutions, societal makeup and levels of economic development) affect how polarization occurs (Carothers & O’Donohue, 2019, p. 7). Indeed, the friction during elections is contingent on other aspects of the development. In other words, to appreciate the complexities and particularities of the case, it is helpful to understand the context in which the phenomenon unfolds.

Since 1992, the Electoral Commission (the country’s elections management body) has organized eight general (presidential and parliamentary) elections. Like other liberal democracies, Ghana’s electoral cycle in these elections consists of three phases: the pre-election, election, and post-election stages, as illustrated in Figure 3. Under the winner-take-all political system, winning power becomes the main objective of the competing political parties. Therefore, when election managers suffer perceived integrity deficits, leaders of opposition political parties likely equip themselves and their activists or footsoldiers to be extra vigilant and aggressive during the pre-election and election stages. At the same time, incumbent parties also do all they can to maintain the privileges of power. Therefore, the most crucial stages of the cycle from the political party actors perspective are pre-election and election stages when

the elections management body, the Electoral Commission, initiates the constitutional, institutional and procedural processes towards the elections and declaration of results.

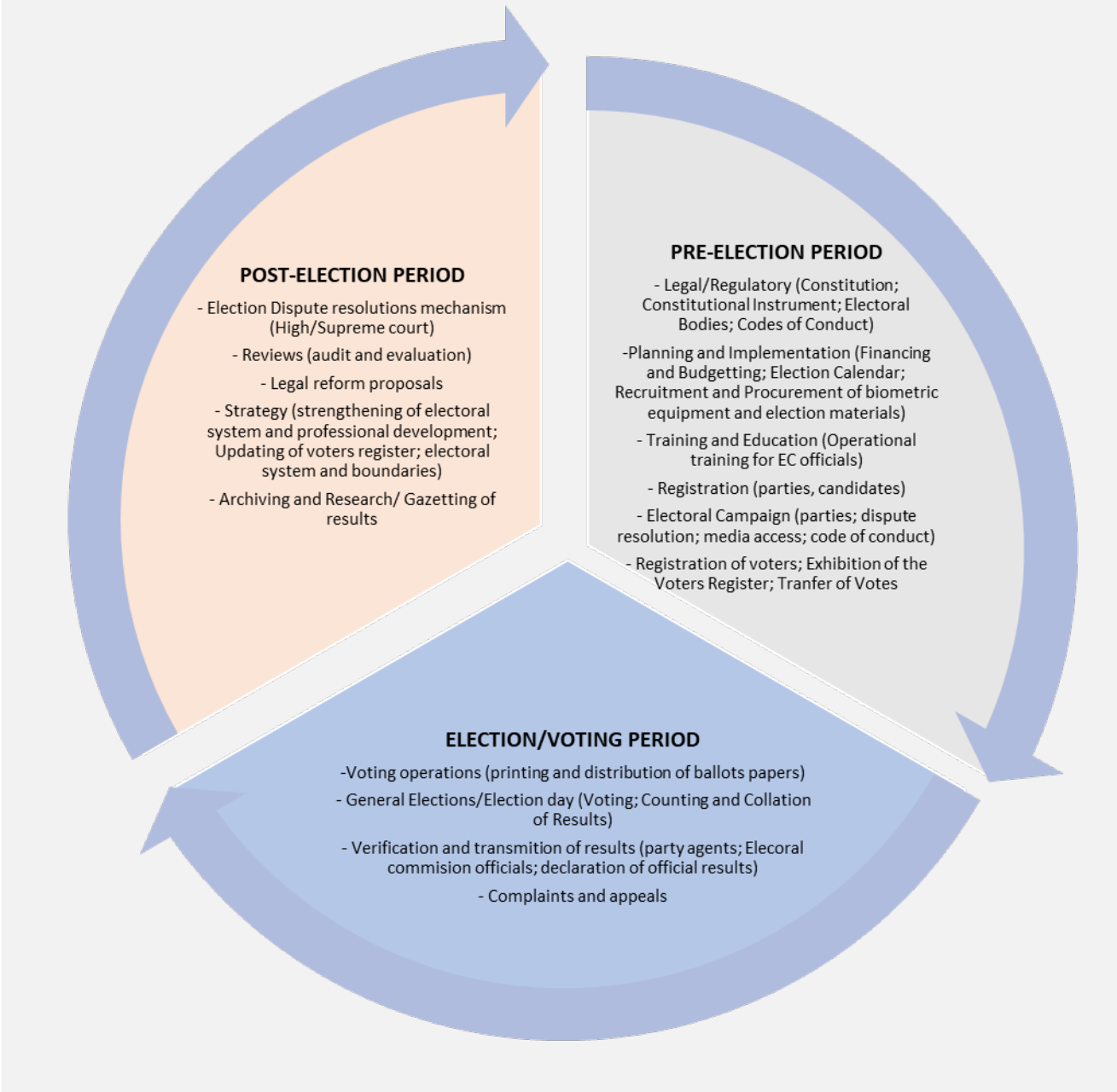


Figure 3: Electoral Cycle

Given that the extreme tension is perennial during all polls and results from distrust of the electoral systems, a focus on one of the elections will help gain deeper insight into the intertwined relationship between political polarization and the structural (institutional and social) context of the election period pressures at different stages of the electoral cycle. Therefore, I narrow the study to the specific case of Ghana’s 2020 presidential and parliamentary elections to investigate actors’ and stakeholders’ (re)actions and interactions.

Studying the electoral process in depth gives an understanding of the specific contexts in which the polarization occurs and how this potentially has consequences for the peace and democratic development of the country. Thus, the single case approach helps understand why polarization is recurrent, escalating in the period towards general elections and explain how it is attributable to embedded structural dichotomies within its political system from a peace and conflict studies perspective. Therefore, the phasing of the electoral cycle is also helpful from a peace-conflict perspective to outline periods of escalation of tension and open violence (pre-election and election); and periods of de-escalation of tension when hostility decreases or becomes latent (post-election phase). The diagram below illustrates the correlation between the tensions cycle and the electoral cycles.

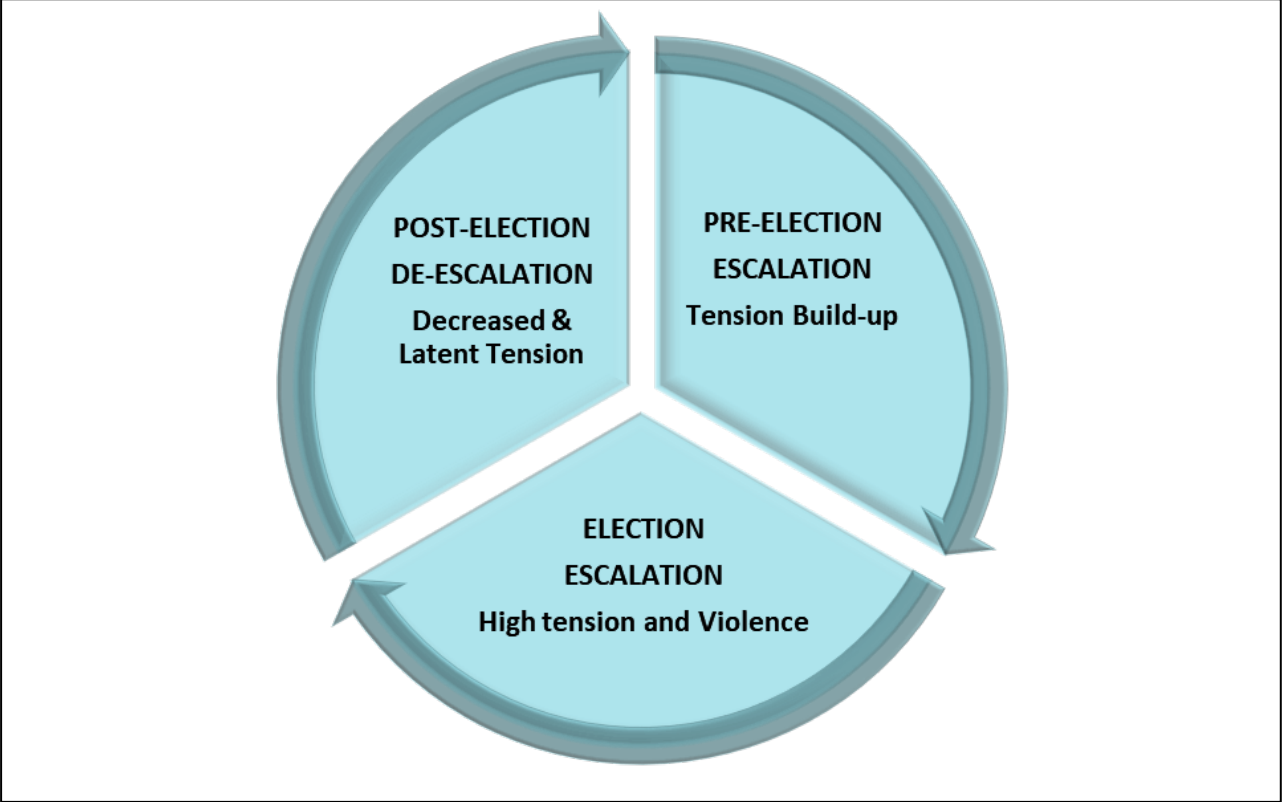


Figure 4: Tension cycle aligned (to the Electoral Cycle)

As such, I narrow down my case study further to the various degrees of antagonism and even violence that characterizes aspects of the preparations towards and implementation of election procedures. In the pre-election phase, I focus on the Electoral Commission’s setting up the institutional framework for the election. For the election phase, I emphasize activities relating to the actual voting, notably compilation of voters’ register, the procurement and setting up of the voting system, the conduct of the election itself and declaration of the results. In the post-

election phase, I focus on the post-election period is the mediatory mechanisms. This division will guide my data collection and organization, described in the next section.

4.2.1 Criteria for selection: Ghana

The main criteria for choosing the 2020 general elections in Ghana is my desire to conduct an in-depth the phenomenon of political polarization in a sub-Saharan context to unravel its drivers and consequences for peace. It derives from my scholarly interest in liberal democratic development processes in sub-Saharan Africa and other developing democracies. In this sense, the research is both exploratory and explanatory (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010, pp. 61-63) because it seeks to understand the under-researched topic of political polarization as a reflection of structural violence embedded in the political culture of Ghana. It tries to answer the what, how, and why of political polarization in a developing democracy. Ghana is a suitable case because it is acclaimed as a beacon of democracy. Yet, its democratic development is plagued by peace-threatening incidences relating to elections. So my curiosity is about the underlying structural issues that heighten political polarization during elections to the extent of threatening the general peace of the country. This scholarly interest fits Alicia Decker and Andrea Arrington's (2014) warning that liberal democracy is not a "one-size-fits-all", meaning that studies of liberal democratic processes need to be contextualized within the political culture of the countries studied. Above all, my choice of Ghana as a case for my study to analyze political polarization in peace and conflict studies is justified because of its novel interpretation of the phenomenon emanating from the structural violence embedded within the constitutional and administrative guidelines for contesting power.

4.3 Document analysis and Internet research

This section explains the nature, sources, and limitations of the Covid-19 pandemic on the data collection process. My original data collection plan was to carry out fieldwork in Ghana during the 2020 general elections. The fieldwork would give first-hand insight into the operational aspects of the election process under the management of the country's Electoral Commission and the (re)actions of the key political party actors and stakeholders at each stage. I aimed to gain insight from the fieldwork through in-depth interviews to explore the views, feelings, and perspectives of individuals and groups and through personal observation and evaluation of why and how aspects of the electoral process can be contentious. My potential interview objects included officials of the Electoral Commission, political party actors (officials and foot soldiers), other stakeholders (media personnel, Civil Society actors, local and international

elections observers, etc.), and voters in urban and rural settings. Thus, during the 2020 general elections, my presence in Ghana would have met the methodological necessity. Namely, the gathering of relevant data through interviews, personal experiences, and direct observation of how political actors articulated either support or discontent (verbal and non-verbal) towards the electoral system and election process. Concerning my research question, my presence during the 2020 elections would have made it possible to appreciate how a highly polarised setting can threaten the country's peace, both short term and long term.

The global lockdown and the attendant travel restrictions imposed nationally and internationally in 2020 under the still raging Covid-19 pandemic led to a creative adaption of my data collection plan from physical fieldwork to documentary research using the internet (Tight, 2019, pp. 59-60). Internet research (IR) research is an innovative online approach, offering various data collection options, including surveys, interviews, and social media (Sagepub 2020). The appropriate digital option for my research is to use an online interview approach. However, during the build-up to the elections and connectivity problems in Ghana, it was challenging to get through to the potential interview objects using regular email, voice, and other social media channels to conduct virtual interviews.

Due to these problems, I decided to adopt a document analysis approach using online documents, mainly newspaper articles disseminated through electronic media platforms. This approach locates the research within both internet and documentary research. Document research is a method that relies primarily on documents as sources for research instead of data produced by other means (Tight, 2019). From its narrow meaning, as published printed texts, the definition of the document has expanded since the 1990s to include various data like unpublished text, information, newspaper articles and reports of events, photographs, magazines, radio and television program scripts, and official records (Bowen, 2009).

Lately, the possibilities offered by the internet to access a growing number of online data (news and reports) has led to a widening of the meaning of documents from the physical written text to include 'oral and virtual' records (Tight, 2019, p. 2-3). This proliferation of virtual data has increased the use of online documents has made it possible for social science researchers to develop documents analytic methods to unravel social phenomena. The data that document analysis produces are often extracts, quotations or whole passages (Bowen, p. 28), which researchers often use in addition to other methods for triangulation. However, this does not exclude its utility as a stand-alone method, particularly true in studies within the interpretive paradigm (Bowen, 2009, p. 29). According to Bowen (2009), document analysis is particularly suitable for qualitative case study design, as the intensive studies produce detailed descriptions

of a single phenomenon (Bowen, 2009, p. 29). In sum, the examination and interpretation of documents allow for uncovering meaning, gaining understanding, and developing empirical knowledge *in the same sense* (Bowen, 2009, p. 27).

Much scholarly research that uses the media as a source of data focuses on how the media influences behaviour or society in general or on the media's representation or framing of issues/cases from a specific standpoint/affiliation. In this regard, it is essential to state that though I rely solely on news reportage and articles, my research is not about the media itself or its exclusive representation or opinions of events. Instead, this research used the statements and descriptions of the actors' actions in the media sources as a portal to gain insights and understand the political opinion and discourse that reveal political polarization. In other words, the focus was on the different views actors convey around specific topics and events, mainly their mode of expression and words. My emphasis on actors' perspectives and (re)actions during the elections rather than on media agenda setting is consistent with other studies showing that political actors can use the media to push their perspectives and reach their political goals (Dalmus, Hänggli, & Bernhard, 2017).

Critics of the documentary method raise important issues about possible limitations or flaws of the approach, relevant in any research context. The main criticism is that the documents provide insufficient detail, have low retrievability, and show biased selectivity (Bowen, 2009, p. 32). In other words, according to the criticism, documents produced for other purposes may have insufficient detail for academic research purposes. However, experience from the current research shows that its suitability and advantages outweigh those apparent disadvantages in some research scenarios. Admittedly, I spent considerable time selecting relevant and sufficient information to answer the research questions, but my collected data occurred naturally without my (researcher's) intervention. This non-intervention is advantageous to my research because the Covid-situation and the alternative possibilities offered by the internet allowed access to newspaper articles relating to the whole election process relevant to my research question. Indeed, this aspect is pointed out as an advantage of the use of documents in general, as they are unobtrusive and non-reactive, meaning that they were created without the researcher's intervention and therefore unaffected by the research process (Bryman, 2016, p. 552; Bowen, 2009, p. 27). Overall, documents are cost-effective and offer stable unaltered content and broad coverage (Bowen, 2009, p. 31), which benefitted this research.

4.3.1 GhanaWeb: the virtual repository of election news and reports

As indicated, I adapted my research to document analysis using digitalized documents due to my inability to conduct physical fieldwork. I collected new items of interest from various Ghanaian media sources retrieved from the *GhanaWeb*, Ghana's first vertical portal launched in 1999 in the Netherlands. There are several reasons why GhanaWeb is a formidable alternative to physical fieldwork when accessing material on the 2020 elections. First, the site managers describe the portal as a privately-owned "independent and objective" portal operating under the laws of the Netherlands and guaranteeing the free expression of Ghanaians that use the platform. Thus, it appears to be a neutral disseminator of news, headlines, and other media content from 108 FM stations, 48 newspapers, and TV sites. These are curated articles from other websites (credited with backlinks), syndicated material from other websites, User-generated opinion articles and contributions, and original news articles by GhanaWeb's journalists and correspondents. With no apparent political interest beyond curating news articles from different sources, the platform captures opposing opinions and perspectives of individual writers and organizations. Assertions of neutrality are made through elaborate disclaimers to posted content as follows:

GhanaWeb is not responsible for this report and its content. The portal is a content curation and syndication platform that ethically publishes selected news articles of interest to our readers from a wide range of credible online sources. ... The opinions expressed on this platform are not necessarily those of us. Due to the freedom of speech which prevails on GhanaWeb, we will frequently publish opinions which you (or ourselves) might find totally objectionable. If you cannot accept absolute freedom of speech, you should not visit this website. (GhanaWeb webpage Disclaimer)

The neutrality of *GhanaWeb* in presenting material from various media outlets is essential for my research because the specific political or ideological affiliation of the media outlets was not as crucial to my analysis as the statements themselves.

Second, the case study approach requires in-depth insight into the reasons for varying degrees of tension during various stages of the electoral cycle general elections and its potential impact on the country's peace. The availability and accessibility of the material presented as verbatim and paraphrased statements and descriptions of actions in the reportage on *GhanaWeb* give insights into the diverse perspectives of various competing political actors' on specific issues and aspects of the electoral process. Thus, besides capturing all opposing voices, *Ghanaweb* is useful as a source due to its rich, variable, naturally occurring, and accessible

content of news items and reportage relevant to the topic. This variety corresponds with Silverman's (2006, p. 225) and Bowen (2009, p. 31) assertion that richness, accessibility, and natural occurrence are advantages of using documents from a public domain and the internet in general. Third, GhanaWeb is recognized internationally for its broad reach and comprehensive coverage of the 2020 election (GhanaWeb, 2020). Indeed, the platform has a dedicated column containing valuable data from its election coverage on the 2020 elections, which allowed for the observation of conflicts, events, and debates in their natural occurrence throughout the election period.

In addition, following Bryman's (Bryman, 2016, p. 555) suggestion that sometimes "evidence may require considerable awareness of contextual factors", I used supplementary or secondary sources to clarify the data sourced from the news articles and provide a context in the data presentation and analysis. Importantly, my use of supplemental data does not imply an undertaking of systematic document analysis of these documents but rather to illuminate and contextualize. The secondary sources include reports on the 2020 election process by the European Union observer mission (EUOM) and the Centre for Democratic Development (CDD). The following section addresses the documentation and quality criteria in the data collection for my case study.

4.4 Collection of news articles (Sampling)

As a reminder, the case study covered the process towards Ghana's general presidential and parliamentary election in 2020, consisting of the pre-election, election, and post-election activities. This section describes the method of selecting, sorting, and assessing news articles. As is common in all qualitative data collection methods, selecting relevant documents requires documentation of the procedures used, including detailed information about the design and conduction of the study (Bowen, 2016, p. 28-29). In addition, the researcher must address the quality criteria of the selected document. The collection and selection process of relevant digitized newspaper articles for my research consisted of three phases: the preparatory, the actual collection, and data review (Grønmo, 2016, pp. 175-177), which overlap. The division of the data collection process into phases aligned with the three-phase electoral process, which helped me establish clear focus areas for organizing the empirical data. Selecting news articles was a continuous process, guided by purposive sampling and saturation principles. *GhanaWeb's* news referencing approach was helpful because each relevant news article is credited with a backlink to the source, allowing cross-checking for accuracy. In addition, each article links to related or similar reportage from the platform of other media and actors. This

linkage to related information snowballed on my data collection, making selecting and excluding additional or repeated texts easier. Though divided into two phases, the collection phases were not discrete processes, as the phases partly overlapped.

4.4.1 Preparatory phase

The preparatory phase of data gathering involves the establishment of the context and focus of the data collection process, which consists of outlining the timeframe, mapping the potentially contentious issues in the electoral process and how the relevant political actors reacted based on their power positions in incumbent or in opposition. The timeframe for the data is consistent with the Electoral Commission's election timetable from June to December 2020. Since the major political parties, NPP and the NDC, are polarized about gaining and maintaining political power using all possible polarizing strategies, the data reflects the elections-related utterances and actions for or against frameworks and processes established by the Electoral Commission.

The process started in June 2020 with the passing of the Public Election Regulations Act or Constitutional Instruments (CI 127, CI 126, and CI 124) by the Electoral Commission to regulate elections according to its constitutional mandate under Article 295 of the 1992 Constitution. These CIs govern all election processes, including delimitation of electoral boundaries, establishing constituencies and polling stations, compilation and exhibition of voters' roll, filing of nominations by candidates, voting, vote counting, and the declaration of presidential (nationally) parliamentary (locally) election results in December 2020. Other data covered on matters arising during the election dispute resolution in the Supreme Court from January 2021. The task of mapping out events was necessary because the data collection process allowed for a great deal of flexibility, which could obscure the objectives of the collection (Grønmo, 2016, p. 189). Hence, these processes, which are integral to the electoral process, partly guided the data collection since they were a constant source of conflict and contestation.

I present the actors broadly for orientation, based on the background information and the initial observation of the data to guide and prepare the data collection process. Apart from the EC and the two dominant parties, the data sampling will cover other Ghana's democratic development stakeholders. These include politicians and activists of smaller political parties, CSOs, the Courts, and other public bodies. Specifically, the research aimed to understand different perspectives of the various actors on the various events and issues at each stage of the electoral cycle. This aspect will be important when presenting and discussing the specific views of the actors in the next section based on relevance for the categories developed during the data collection. Therefore, there will be a more detailed presentation of specific actors and their

alignments later. In sum, I collected unsystematized but relevant data from the curated GhanaWeb vertical platform during the preparatory mapping stage. The collected newspaper articles (documents) covered all stages of the election cycle and was an essential step towards the thematic data systematization phase described below.

4.4.2 Main data collection phase: thematic systemization

This part consisted of a systematic review of the selected articles, whilst having an ongoing assessment of which reports would prove relevant and fruitful for the study (Grønmo, 2016, p. 177). In this regard, it was essential to perform source-critical and contextual in the process of selecting articles. These include availability, relevance, authenticity and credibility (Grønmo, 2016, p. 177). Before I began data collection, I considered the issue of data availability mentioned in the previous section. The media platform's use is beneficial because it is always a permanent open-source archive of information accessible. I based the selection of news articles on their relevance to the research questions using the method of purposive sampling, which unlike the predominant (quantitative) 'probability sampling', emphasizes the research goals as the core consideration when selecting data (Bryman, 2016, p. 418). This approach can be applied to documents in the same manner as it is used to people and involves the strategic sampling of the preferred units, based on relevance and criteria of inclusion and exclusion (Bryman, 2016, pp. 418, 427).

The objective was to gather data on the manifestation of polarization during various stages of the electoral cycle by mapping specific aspects, identifying the leading agents how they interrogate the arrangements established by the managers of the elections. This approach reflected in the issues that there was intense contention around. Simply put, what was the conflict and tension focused on, and what were the different actor's reactions and interactions surrounding these issues. Early on, it was clear that the disputes rose around the process that led to the winning elections and gaining power. Therefore, purposive sampling was suitable to systematize the data that specifically elucidated those issues. I selected some categories beforehand, adding new ones based on additional information from the reviewed articles.

The chosen articles were copied, downloaded, archived, and then uploaded onto NVivo 12 for further categorization and subsequent analysis. In some cases, the data collection and categorization went on concurrently to ensure that the content of the articles was of other relevance in other contexts. This concurrency laid the foundation for grouping connected issues and determining which texts were most typical for a specific category and what was not.

In qualitative research, “data saturation refers to the point in the research process when no new information is discovered in data analysis and this redundancy signals to researchers that data collection may cease. In other words, “a researcher can be reasonably assured that further data collection would yield similar results and serve to confirm emerging themes and conclusions” (Faulkner & Trotter, p. 2017). Since the thesis wanted to evaluate the perspectives of at least three different elections stakeholders on the outlined competed for issues and processes, the researcher based the inclusion and exclusion criteria on the importance of relevance of the actors’ statements on the contentious matters reported in the news article for explaining polarization. Given that GhanaWeb’s curating approach potentially yield similar data from multiple sources on the identified controversial categories of problems, I used the principle of data saturation to determine the cut-off point for article selection. I considered my data gathering aims for a specific theme fulfilled when additional material was unlikely to add new information or insights to enhance or change the perspective or findings on the topic. This elimination process was vital methodologically as it was evident that the political actors with the same political affiliation had coordinated opinions on issues.

The perspectives/opinion of the political actors from the two-dominant party blocs, NPP and NDC, was a criterion for each topic, as they were the main drivers of the polarization. Concerning this, I chose other agents within their party apparatus based on their relevance. This allowed for a more open exploration of the data. Perspectives of other actors varied based on the subject, as sometimes a statement from an exciting party, like an intellectual, would be included to illuminate a view or issue when it spoke to the research question. Thus, a criterion for selection was whether an actor’s statement or actions related to specific topics in the process or an issue raised about them.

Not all the elements of the electoral process were given equal attention, as others garnered more attention which also affected the collection. Correlatingly, other related issues that arose along the line were also included in the data presented as conflict issues related to the processes. And as such, although there were focus areas, the collection process was not rigid, and other relevant matters were included where necessary.

Initially, this was a challenging process, as it was difficult to know when to stop collecting or revise what one had instead of continually adding more. Saturation was appropriate because it gave clarity to the necessity for more data. Particularly in the case of newspaper articles, when data are abundant, this contributed to setting a limit to the collection.

Contextualization was relevant for assessing statements by politicians and other actors. During this process, other aspects were considered, such as contextual assessment, which means that the text is evaluated in context, taking note of other available articles, knowledge, and issues to determine the reliability of the content (Grønmo, 2016, p. 178). However, most of the actors included were political figures which made the process easier, as press releases and official statements were given within the context of an event and thus was shared multiple times. Considering the representativeness of reports and the meaning behind them assisted in interpreting and understanding the larger picture of the process, as the comments by politicians most often represented their party. Their allied interest groups often shared their view. Thus, the systematic and detailed review of the selected news articles helped assess their relevance, authenticity and credibility.

4.5 Data Analysis

My data collection co-occurred with the analysis and interpretation of the texts, using combined qualitative content analysis, thematic analysis, purposive sampling, and saturation procedures. The previous section already presented elements of the study but focused on describing the process of data collection. This research had elements from qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis. Though these techniques within the methods are not distinct, they will be described separately first for clarity. The process of qualitative content analysis includes organizing the information into categories related to the research's central questions through reviewing and selecting relevant content, a process explained in the previous section (Bowen, 2009, p. 32).

On the other hand, thematic analysis is described as a process of pattern recognition within the data, where developing themes become the categories for analysis through a thorough review (Bowen, 2009, p. 32). Thus, it involved identifying themes in the data through coding and categorizing the content (Bryman, 2016, p. 580). However, overall, both approaches include the search for underlying themes (Bryman, 2016, p. 580).

The data collection produced a lot of data. Therefore, as mentioned previously, all the newspaper articles were downloaded, organized, and analyzed in the software program NVivo 12. The analysis of the data was an iterative process that overlapped with data collection. The broad topics that were the focus of data collection were pre-defined, centred around the elements of the electoral process under contestation. Thus, I outlined the relevant issues in the initial stages, and the data was organized and categorized based on the issues they represented. Other problems emerged while reviewing the related and relevant content for the case, leading

to new categories to address them. The statements directly related to the pertinent topics of the news articles were divided into categories and coded in terms of the representative viewpoint of parties or groups. Thus, connected categories were merged and coded under sub-themes through this continuous analysis process. Therefore, this process provided the researcher with a theoretical understanding of the data (Bryman, 2016, p. 584). These data analysis techniques were suitable for this research because they facilitated identifying the different actors and perspectives across the data and included the emerging actors and issues. Additionally, the newspaper articles are referenced by Article number, this is because several articles are collected from the same day, month and year, thus, they become indistinguishable.

4.6 Reflections on reflexivity and ethics in internet documentary research

Increasingly, documentary research via internet sources is subject to similar reflexive and ethical dilemmas as other research types. This section will reflect on the researcher's role and the implications this role might have on the choices in the research process. The two elements in this reflection are reflexivity and ethical considerations.

4.6.1 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a complex concept defined differently by each discipline for its purposes (Probst & Berenson, 2014). Reflexivity refers to the researcher's awareness, understanding, and acknowledgement of how their values and preconceived ideas influence the whole research process (Bryman, 2016, p. 393). Hamid Pousti, et al. (2021, p. 356) suggests that internet documentary and social media researchers should reflect upon their impact on the research process as others do. Following their study of reflexivity in social media research as a three-tier notion, I see internet research as a reflexive space where theory, design, and practice merge and yet can operate independently. Focussing on the practice aspect, I interrogate my subjectivity regarding how my interests or biases may have affected the research process. As noted in the section on motivation in the introduction chapter, my interest in political polarization in Ghana, an acclaimed beacon of democracy, is purely academic curiosity. It is a desire to understand and broaden understandings of polarization in non-Western liberal democratic contexts. Yet, I acknowledge that this interest may be fueled imperceptively by my international background as a Norwegian-Ghanaian-Colombian heritage.

4.6.2 Ethical considerations in Internet research

In its guide Research Ethics, the National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH, 2019, p. 3) opined that "The same ethical considerations apply to

Internet research as to other areas, as defined in NESH's guidelines and elsewhere." This is necessary as the researcher needs to develop sound judgement to ensure good scientific practices. Consequently, this research adheres to NESH's guidelines to preserve the dignity and integrity of the actors whose views I relied on to elucidate my research aims and questions. In ordinary, physical fieldwork, issues relating to Participant privacy, confidentiality and anonymity would be the primary ethical concerns. How are these concerns applicable to internet document research like mine, where public figures comment and act against shared arrangements through public and published utterances? When it comes to the need to inform and seek the consent of research participants, I abide by NESH's guideline to distinguish between "accessible in the public sphere" and the "sensitivity of the information". It recommends that researchers must apply the concept of "reasonable expectation of publicity to determine whether the research violates the informant's "understanding or expectation that the information and communication are public (NESH, 2019, p. 5)."

The information that I use in my research is freely available in an assortment on the online media platform, *GhanaWeb*. The data is from political actors trying to make a public case about the fairness or otherwise of the electoral system to their political fortunes. In other words, they are courting public sympathy and support through their utterances and actions. Therefore, the information I use in my research has contextual integrity as it is freely available as political debate in open forums. Consequently, I do not see it violating privacy, confidentiality, sensitivity, and anonymity principles.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter addressed the research methodology framework, explaining the rationale and assumptions informing the methodological choices. It argued that the qualitative approach was suited to the single case study of both drivers of polarizing and its manifestations during elections in Ghana. One of the important methodological choices related to the adaption of the original data gathering plan. The original plan was to conduct fieldwork through interviews and observations of the major players in the 2020 elections. However, due to the still-raging Covid-19 pandemic, the data plan had to be adapted, using document analysis from GhanaWeb, the virtual repository of curated election news and reports. Another methodological choice related to using a qualitative case study approach to study the 2020 elections in Ghana to gain an in-depth understanding of political polarization in Ghana, which manifests as cycles of relative tension and sporadic violence over election procedures. The fourth section reflects on ethical considerations, the researcher's reflexivity, and the challenges and limitations of the digital data

collection technique. It also described the three steps process of data sampling, selection and analysis. Finally, the chapter addressed pertinent reflexivity and ethical concerns of internet research.

Chapter 5 Manifestations of polarization: data and analysis

As a reminder to the reader, the first objective is to elucidate the nature and structural context (institutional, legal, and socio-cultural) of political polarization in Ghana's Fourth Republic and explore its manifestations during the electoral cycle. The second is a theoretical ambition to reflect (from an interdisciplinary peace and conflict perspective) on how polarization around election issues and processes constitute structural violence embedded in the political culture, which requires a consideration of the institutional foundations in Ghana's electoral process. This chapter presents and discusses the manifestations of political polarization data collected from newspaper articles on *GhanaWeb* and additional sources to answer the research questions towards achieving the two research objectives. The case study is the electoral process towards the 2020 general (presidential and parliamentary) elections. The underlying assumption is that studying how polarization unfolds at each step in the electoral process gives an in-depth understanding of the specific structural contexts in which it occurs and allows for reflections on its impact on Ghana's democratic development. Overall, the analysis will help understand why polarization is recurrent, becoming intense in the period towards general elections, and explain how this is attributable to embedded structural dichotomies within its political system from a peace and conflict studies perspective.

Methodologically, the chapter aligns to three phases of the election and tension cycles described in Figure 3 and 4. It answers the following research questions: How did political polarization manifest during the three stages of the 2020 electoral process? What are the polarizing issues? Who are the main drivers of the polarization? To answer them, I categorize the data and analysis according to the three-phase electoral cycle, namely the pre-election, election, and post-election stages. It is analyzed thematically to investigate actors' and stakeholders' (re)actions and interactions to uncover the controversial electoral matters and procedures, nature, and degrees of the antagonism (including physical violence) during elections. Thus, the data presentation and discussion also focus on the drivers of polarization, defined as the agency of actors and institutional basis of political contestation, which entails presenting the relevant actor's perceptions of the contentious issues reflected through their perspectives. In all, the chapter has four sections. Section 5.1 defines the relevant actors and their interests or roles in the elections. Sections 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4 present and discuss polarizing developments during pre-election, election, and post elections phases.

5.1 Relevant political actors and stakeholders

For the 2020 election cycle, the EC approved 12 eligible candidates for the 2020 presidential election. Scholars find that political actors, such as leaders, movements, or parties, are often the main drivers of polarization (Carothers & O'Donohue, 2019a, p. 262). As the contextual chapter indicated, this process is mainly elite-driven in Ghana, as two political blocs dominate and alternate in the political and power space. LeBas and Millar's studies of Ghana confirm that the polarization and political power is a hegemony between the two dominant and polarized political parties, the New Patriotic Party and the opposition National Democratic Congress. However, NPP and NDC were the main parties. The presidential candidate for the NPP was Nana Dankwa Akuffo-Addo and John Mahama Dramani for NDC. Therefore, the data presented in this chapter will focus on the opinions, utterances, and actions of the leading spokespersons for the parties, as they invariably reflect the parties' positions on electoral issues.

The most critical player in the elections, whose actions and omissions potentially affect the integrity of elections outcomes and therefore are scrutinized by other actors, is the Electoral Commission of Ghana (EC), Ghana's independent Elections Management Body (EMB). The EC's enormous constitutionally mandated election role includes setting up the legal and administrative framework, procuring voting materials and results-transmission services, and declaring election results. In the 2020 elections, as in earlier ones, the opposition criticisms and utterances become more apparent as they have a power deficit against the incumbent's perceived advantage. In a winner-take-all and the first-past-the-post political system like Ghana's, the EC's role is vital and controversial at the same time because it oversees and leads all activities in the pre-election, election, and aspects of the post-election phases. The EC's position was even more precarious during the 2020 elections due to circumstances leading to the appointment of the Electoral Commissioner and deputies, using constitutional provisions. The incumbent President (Nana Addo Dankwa Akuffo-Addo, 2016-2024) had invoked his constitutional mandate to dismiss the existing EC Chairperson (appointed by the opposition NDC candidate when he was President in 2012-2016) and deputies for procurement misdemeanours. The NDC saw red flags in these Presidential actions. There is the perception among the Ghanaian politicians and the general public that every incumbent President who appoints an EC Chairperson has some control over what they do. Therefore, opposition parties particularly always suspect that the EC can manipulate electoral outcomes.

Other state actors include the police, the military, and the fire service placed at the disposal of the EC to provide security during the voting. Again, during voting in keenly contested atmospheres of election flashpoints, the presence of these coercive forces of state

under the command of the President (Commander in Chief) potentially leads to sporadic clashes with civilian party activists, leading to injury and even deaths. Another public player in the elections is the judiciary that adjudicates in election disputes. Again, the judiciary's role is not without controversy as the President appoints the Chief Justice and judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts. However, the neutrality of justices like that of the Electoral Commissioner through life tenure the constitutionally guaranteed.

Several local Civil Society Organizations (CSO) perspectives are essential insights as they keep a keen eye on the process as critics, observers, and watchdogs. Their perspectives reflect the tension and antagonism the process produces. The main CSO actors in the 2020 elections include the Coalition of Domestic Elections Observers (CODEO), advocates for peaceful and credible elections, and the Center for Democratic Development (CDD) that promotes democracy and good governance economic transparency. Others are anti-corruption and public accountability groups like the Inter-Party Resistance against the New Voters Register (IPRAN), the IMANI Centre for Policy and Education, and Alliance for Social Equity and Public Accountability (ASEPA). Their criticisms of perceived or actual infractions in the election process reflect a power balance. It reassures the opposition that others are also concerned about the integrity of the elections. Finally, the media (print, social, electronic) were important in articulating and disseminating news about the elections in general, particularly the perceptions of the actors and stakeholders. That is why the media coverage through *GhanaWeb* is an essential source of data for discussing issues that the political actors were polarized about in the 2020 elections at each phase of the electoral cycle, as presented in the following sections. Due to the repetitive nature of the issues by various spokespersons and footsoldiers of the parties and CSOs in the sources on *GhanaWeb*, I will apply saturation to select the most representative data to elucidate the problems in this chapter.

5.2 Pre-election phase: The institutional arrangements of the election

Elections represent the process whereby political leaders are elected to govern the country. In the early stages of the data collection, it became clear that the political elites compete for power in ways that channel rival demands for access to the state and its resources. Therefore, the arrangements in the pre-election phase are one of the most vital stages for the political parties. The 1992 Constitution of the Fourth Republic (amendments through 1996) is the ultimate guide to elections in Ghana, as it specifies the legal and institutional framework. Article 51 of the Constitution mandates the EC to oversee the entire electoral process by establishing regulations and administrative policies and mechanisms, as outlined in Figure 3. Other measures are

planning and implementation (including procurement of biometric voting system and printing of ballots), appointment, training and Education (operational training for EC officials), registration of eligible parties and candidates, and compilation of voter registration for the elections.

5.2.1 Setting the Rules and organizing framework for 2020 Election

The data shows that the Constitutional Instrument (CI) 127 to regulate the elections became contentious, as the opposition NDC party and its members of parliament opposed them vehemently. The bone of contention is related to documents needed for establishing the identity and eligibility of voters. The two main legal instruments regulating the registration of voters and the conduct of elections are the Public Elections (Registration of Voters) Regulations, 2016 (Constitutional Instrument (CI) 91 as amended in 2020 by CI 126) and the Public Elections Regulations 2020 (CI 127). These regulations set out all the processes and actions for elections in Ghana, from voter registration through voting on election day to the declaration and gazetting of election results. CI 127 (2020) replaced CI 94 (2016) in regulating the general conduct of elections.¹ The controversial aspects related to amendment, CI 126, which regulated the registration of voters and the compilation of a new voter register. Under the previous CI 91, potential voters the proof of identity documents were a valid Ghanaian passport, previous Voter IDs, National Health Insurance (NHIS) card, driver's license, or registered Ghanaians to serve as witnesses of citizenship. The amending CI 126 for the 2020 elections permitted only the National Identification Card (Ghana Card), Passport, and witness statement by registered Ghanaians as proof of eligibility (Article 202006).

Though parliament passed the amendment to CI 91 in CI 126 with a majority decision of 106 - 92 on June 9th, 2020 (Article 975289), the voting pattern indicated that the major parties in parliament were polarized along partisan lines. The NDC party and its parliamentary members, supported by smaller parties and several CSOs, argued that the amendment was unnecessary. However, the NPP majority asserted that it was time to amend it, as the NHIS card documents were insufficient proof of citizenship. They argued that NHIS and other former identity cards could be possessed by anybody living in Ghana and therefore were not enough proof of citizenship.

¹ A detailed list can be found in Public Elections Regulations 2020, C.I. 127.

The EC attempted to review some aspects to meet the demands of those opposed to the compilation of a new register. However, the opposition NDC presidential candidate, John Mahama Dramani, insisted that the exercise would be a “waste of national resources because the current register has no major defect or credibility issues hence required only cleaning as was done in the run-up to the 2016 general elections” (Article 991444). In addition, NDC threatened to file an “avalanche” of lawsuits against the EC’s perceived effort to de-enfranchise eligible voters (Article 976216). Several CSOs, particularly IMANI and IPRAN, agreed with the NDC position, arguing that the EC’s move was illogical, excessive, and unnecessary. For instance, the Inter-Party Resistance against the New Voters Register (IPRAN), which consists of minor opposition parties and CSO’s, held several NDC-led demonstrations during the year (Article 991444). They challenged voters:

Get your voter ID card, if it is the only identification document you can find and march in your numbers and in multitudes to the registration centers to demand the restoration of your right to citizenship and your inalienable right bestowed on you by virtue of your birth and by courtesy of the 1992 Constitution.” (Article 991396).

When the parliament approved CI 126, NDC made good on its statements and filed a lawsuit against the EC (Article 89864219). However, in June 2020, the Supreme Court ruled that the independent EC reserved the right to organize the elections as it sees fit according to the law and without interference from any other body. Unsatisfied, the NDC filed for review of the Supreme Court judgment over the rejection by the EC of the use of birth certificates and existing voter id cards in the new voter registration (Article 1016104).

The defiance of the NDC and others opposed to the EC’s procedures and the Supreme Court’s judgement meant that they were challenging the integrity of the two bodies to oversee credible elections. Sammy Gyamfi, the national communication officer of the NDC, accused the EC and the Supreme Court of undermining the quest for accountability of democratic institutions (Article 1016104). Concurrently, the think tank group IMANI articulated that the Supreme Court would lose its legitimacy over the ruling, arguing for the decision’s unconstitutionality (Article 978313; Article 978787). These statements echo the position of the NDC and other stakeholders, depicting the uncertainty behind the motives and measures taken by the EC in the initial stages. These views are evident throughout the process.

The accusations against the judiciary, in particular, are serious because, ideally, well-functioning and impartial legal institutions are essential for protecting polarized parties in democracies (Carothers and O’Donohue 2019, p. 268). The mechanism of the judiciary as an arbitrator of disputes, in a fair and non-violent manner, is vital to democracy. Therefore, when

the impartiality of the courts comes into question, it poses a risk to peace and democracy. Consequently, it deepens the divide between the two opposing sides. Nevertheless, it is significant that the NDC, in this case, choose the judicial route to oppose the legitimate decision by the EC.

Another polarized issue was introducing a new Biometric system (BVR), which the NDC opposed. Defending the changes, the Chairperson of the EC, Jean Mensah, argued that the BVR “is the surest way to deliver free, fair, credible and transparent elections” because audits of the previous system revealed the potential for election manipulation [Article 202006c]. She maintained that the old register was bloated and included names of foreign nationals and youths due to the previous identification methods, affirming that using it would taint the election’s credibility (Article 992842). This view was supported by the NPP, as the general secretary John Boadu commended the EC for exhibiting professional neutrality during the exercise (Article 202007). Also, the incumbent President Nana Akuffo-Addo appealed:

Every member and sympathizer of the NPP and indeed on all eligible Ghanaians no matter what party they belong to if any, to go out and register so they can exercise their civic responsibilities on December 7th, 2020, to elect the government of their choice in a free and fair, peaceful and transparent election. (Ghanaweb Article 991840).

NPP’s agreement with the EC reflects their reasoning and consistent position on the compilation of a new register and the conduct of the election throughout the electoral process. It depicts the NPP’s trust in the EC and the process they ensued towards credible polls.

Based on NPP’s apparent support for the EC’s actions, the NDC’s presidential candidate voiced his contempt, claiming that the NPP government is colluding with the EC to manipulate the electoral process, purposely and systematically excluding millions of eligible Ghanaians in the country. He noted:

This represents the handiwork of a desperate incumbent that on account of its very poor performance in government, sees its very political survival only through the prism of manipulation of the electoral process to exclude a section of the Ghanians who they suspect may not renew their mandate (Article 991444).

Overall, the consensus among the opposition NDC and some CSO through narratives of perceived manipulability of the electoral process by the EC indicate deep mistrust of the electoral management and the political system. The opposition’s narrative is that incumbents, which happened to be the NPP in 2020, can and is attempting to manipulate the electoral process through the EC and the judiciary. Interestingly, the NPP said the same thing about manipulability when the NDC was incumbent towards the 2016 elections. The mutual suspicions and distrust about the neutrality of the independent EMB potentially create a volatile

environment in Ghana's politics, which spreads to other sections of society, leading footsoldiers to take matters into their own hands with dire consequences for themselves and their families as happened isolatedly in 2020. Generally, too, the opposition's attacks on the integrity of the EMB and the judiciary appeared as a strategy for mobilizing sympathy for itself and discontent against the incumbent government.

Thus, during the pre-election stage, we see rising tension as illustrated in Figure 4 and anxiety over procedural issues relating to voter identification. The manifestations of the polarization played out through opposing voices on the opposition and the incumbent sides, respectively. It was characterized by opposition demonstrations, criticisms, and incendiary language by activists (against the EC, judiciary, and the incumbent government) and death threats against the EC Chairperson (Jean Mensah). Similarly, the incumbent NPP party dismissed opposition claims and expressed steadfast support for the EMB and the Court. The contrasting views held by the dominant parties on the procedures of the electoral commission present a clear divide reflected in the struggle for power between the NPP and NDC, NPP trying to stay in control and the NDC attempting to win power. These positions reflect how the election management system and other institutions are politicized through the route to power.

5.2.2 Ethnic mobilization: The issue of security forces in the Volta region

One controversial and highly volatile situation was dispatching security forces to the Volta, and other border regions before the voters' registration commenced in the pre-election phase. This raised tensions as the opposition claimed partiality by the security forces against the "Ewe" people in the Volta Region, the stronghold of the NDC. As may be recalled from the background chapter, both NPP and NDC have "ethnic strongholds," where NPP draws most support and votes from the Akan-speaking areas, particularly in the Ashanti Region. The NDC has its firm base in the Volta Region and the Ewe speaking areas (Fridy, 2006). The ruling government sent the security forces to several border regions, not only the Volta and Oti region (Article 1045132). Stating that it was due to the Covid-19 pandemic, they maintained that officers were deployed to ensure the border controls around the country, prohibiting foreign residents from entering (Article 1045132; Article 1045120). However, this deployment gained a lot of criticism from supporters of the NDC (Article 991342), most of them in line with the NDC opinions, accusing the NPP of voter suppression and an attempt to siege the region. Togbe Afede, the President of the National House of Chiefs, expressed his concerns, saying that the action was divisive: "never have we seen military invasion like this in peacetime" (Article 1006024).

As this occurred right before the voter registration exercise began, the NDC held that the President had declared war on the people of the Volta region and that the deployment of soldiers there was an intentional act to intimidate and deter potential voters. (Article 993184; Article 1005511; Article 992677). The criticism also implicated the security forces. Because the Volta region is one of the NDC strongholds, they held a strong position, stating that the “state security apparatus is filled with vigilante elements devoted to the NPP, purposely excluding and preventing ‘Ewes’ from participating in the exercise” (Article 1068958). A particular remark by the NDC about the security forces was that the security forces would be ‘paid back’ when they come to power (Article 1017700).

Two noticeable elements here are the politicization of the security forces and the mobilization of ethnicity. First, the apparent distrust of the security forces falls in line with the suspicion for the EC and the judiciary, as explained earlier. Second, although ethnicity is not a divisive matter in Ghana, as different ethnic groups are dispersed throughout the country, the actors attempt to use it as a mobilizing factor when the stakes are high. Ethnic and religious diversity has divisive aspects of polarization and conflict, particularly in an African context. When looking at polarization, it is often expected to discover deep-seated differences between the opposing sides. As McCoy et al. (2018) argues, in situations where the polity is not divided based on cleavages, the differences in society often constitute the divisions under which the political parties attempt to mobilize support. Despite the ethnic strongholds that both parties hold, there has not been large scale ethnic conflicts in the Ghanaian context. No part of the country is ethnically homogenous, as one can find people of different ethnic backgrounds living together in all the geographical areas. Instead, ethnicity is a potential instrument for political mobilization, which creates increased tension during tight electoral races under the winner-take-all system — underscoring the argument that the polarization is not rooted in a central ethnic separation between the electorate. Instead, it results from elite power struggles where cleavages are instruments that political actors can capitalize on.

5.2.3 Voter registration and exhibition

The ruling by the Supreme Court that the EC had a constitutional mandate to compile the voters’ roll, the voter registration began. As previously stated, the amendments by CI 126 entailed the exclusion of old voter ID and birth certificates as a form of voter identification. In addition, a new biometric voter system was introduced and distributed to voting centres, which opted for the registration and identification of voters through fingerprint and facial recognition. The compilation of the voter register entails three parts, the registration of voters, the exhibition of

the rolls, and the compilation of the official roll. The registration exercise took place from June 30th until August 6th (Article 1009042) and was marked by heightened tension, offensive language, and incidents of violence in several constituencies. The incident in the Volta region led to further stress right before the voter registration exercise began. As previously noted, the opposition NDC and some CSO's had already displayed their disapproval of these processes in a final attempt through legal routes which did not go through.

The actions by the NDC are driven by the widely held assumption of attempts of exclusion and rigging. The NDC accused the EC of manipulating figures in the voter registration exercise, claiming that they inflated registrant numbers in NPP strongholds such as the Ashanti region while reducing the number of registrants in the NDC's strongholds (Article 1004395). In particular, the opposition expressed contempt and accused the EC of intentionally delivering damaged equipment to NDC strongholds compared to the NPP strongholds as there was registered faulty biometric voter systems (BVR) in the Savannah Region (Article 1007812). These are some of several accusations which the NDC expressed. Due to these BVR failures, the presidential candidate Mahama stated that:

A lot of things are happening; closure of the radio stations and just recently, during this registration exercise, the elimination of people and the questioning of their citizenship and the use of the military to prevent people from registering. It all shows a government that is determined to do everything to hang on to power. It is dangerous and unacceptable. "These calculated acts of dehumanization, disentrancing Ghanaians, stripping them of their citizenship must end (Article 1026322).

On the other hand, the NPP, which supported the register compilation, viewed the voter registration exercise as a successful endeavour. The director of elections for the NPP stated that the registration exercise "is a process that has been run very well. It has been very transparent. The EC has been updating stakeholders all the time" (Article 1026997). Further, the NPP party maintained that "the decision to compile a new register has ensured that several ineligible people on the old voters' register have been removed. We now have a credible voter register" (Article 1032754). Drawing back to the 2012 election, when they were in opposition and raised concerns about the voter register, the NPP maintained that their position had been vindicated (Article 1032754), indicating that the execution of the new exercise proved them correct, leading to the most credible register in history (Article 1035280)

Several incidents of violence heightened the tension in society. As the CDD states, "in every tension-related situation, there is likely to be violence" (Article 1016989). Violent clashes

happened at registration centres because both parties instructed their supporter to be vigilant during this registration exercise. For instance, there were similar violent clashes at Banda in the Bono Region between the military activists of the NDC. Another violent incident was at Step to Christ Voters Registration Centre in the Awutu Senya East constituency in the Central Region. Reports stated that unidentifiable gun-wielding party activists attacked officials at the registration centre (Article 1012234). This incident gained much attention because the NPP parliamentary member Hawa Koomson fired her gunshot in self-defence against NDC operatives suspected of bussing potential voters from other constituencies to boost their votes in the NPP stronghold. However, the NDC claimed Hawa's action as "state-sponsored violence" (Article 1050775) "masterminded" by the NPP (Article 1027852).

"Bussing" relates to issues of eligibility of voters to register to vote in constituencies other than where they are resident. Tension rises when political parties in a bid to boost their chances of winning opponents constituencies, mobilize potential voters from their 'safe' constituencies to register and vote in another constituency. The NPP and NDC members and supporters accused each other frequently of bussing non-residents to constituencies to register to vote (Article 995671; Article 996148; Article 998101). Bussing is one of the significant causes of disputes. However, the EC stated that parties that suspected registration of non-residents had the option to complete the standard challenge forms but not prevent them from registering. (Article 1011592). However, the interaction between stakeholders in the process often leads to violence. In the Bono Region, a student was killed during clashes between the NPP and NDC supporters due to conflicts about registration and bussing (Article 1011592). Many intimidation, voter suppression, and violent incidents were registered by supporters affiliated with the NPP and NDC (Article 1035781). Additionally, the EC raised concerns regarding machomen at registration centres (Article 1012123). The electoral commission states that the actions violate the Vigilante and Related Offenses Act, 2019 Act 999. The vigilante act, which both parties have signed, has made vigilante groups and violent activities by political parties illegal. The actions by vigilante groups are central during the electoral process, as they execute most of the violence on behalf of the political parties (Owusu Kyei & Berckmoes, 2020).

Explaining the causes of tension during the registration of voters, the CDD (Article 1016989) reported that the compilation of a new voter register is contentious because the voter register is the primary document that determines whether one wins the election. Therefore, during this process, the political parties attempt to mobilize their strongholds, ensuring that many of their

supporters go out and register. They also use the exercise to assess the registration exercise, keep tally, and know their winning chances.

5.2.4 Exhibition of the voter register

The fourth tension-laden aspect of the pre-election cycle to conder was the provisional voter register exhibition between Friday, September 18th to Friday, September 27th, with an extension of two days from the original end date, the 25th. According to the EC, the purpose of the exhibition was to ensure that all voters had a chance to inspect the register “to authenticate their eligibility to vote by ensuring that their details correctly input on the voters’ register” (Article 1059712). Accordingly, the exhibition happened at 33,367 polling stations throughout the country. This exercise allowed all political parties to independently inspect and sensitize their supporters to verify their names in the register towards the compilation of the final voter roll.

As with the other stages of the pre-election phase, the NDC raised objections about errors in the provisional roll, which the also EC acknowledged and assured of rectifying them after the exhibition. (Article 1066918). The incumbent governing party, the NPP insisted in support of the EC: “The essence of an exhibition is to correct the anomalies and errors, and so why is Mahama organizing an address?” (Article 1068055).

Not budging, the NDC registered its displeasure as follows:

Even though anomalies during voter exhibition exercise are not new, the sheer volume and magnitude of the recorded anomalies in this ongoing voter exhibition exercise are unusual and unprecedented and give us genuine cause for concern about the credibility of the register and the integrity of the electoral process. (Article 1068730).

As usual, some CSO vocally criticized the entire registration exercise. Indeed, true to its opposition to the compilation of the new voter register, the President of IMANI Ghana described the EC as incompetent and wasteful. He noted, “All these for 150\$. Incompetence is an understatement. They still can’t stop lying to. I think the ruling party must now unalloyed support for the EC and ask them to sit up” (Article 1069396).

As the tension built up, the National Peace Council (NPC) of Ghana stated the tension in the 2020 polls:

We have gone through elections before and we’ve come out clean. In all those elections that we went through, there was tension. But come to look at the 2020 election, there seems to be more tension than any of the past elections. Why? Because from the two major parties, we are having people who have tasted the seat before and they know what it means to sit on that seat” (Article 1084954).

This excerpt alludes to the power that the executive gains when it comes to power. The Executive President in Ghana accumulates more power and influence by appointing authority, controlling the state's coercive and administrative structure, and regulatory oversight of the country's resources. In the context of Ghana's weak institutions, the position of the elected President can be domineering. This makes the periodic elections in Ghana very keen, polarized, and sometimes destabilizing for the country's peace.

5.3 The Election stage: Voting, Counting and Declaration of results

The general presidential and parliamentary election took place on December 7th 2020, at 38,622 polling stations to elect the President and 275 legislators. The voter registration exercise set the stage for the voting day, as several calls for a peaceful election were made. The voter registration exercise had fueled the uncertain environment, as parties clashed at several constituencies during the exercise. Thus, when election day came, both parties were ready to protect the ballot box to ensure a fair process. The votes determine whether one wins or not, and therefore, within this suspicious environment, the ballot box becomes the last avenue for political power.

5.3.1 Voting

The tension increased on election day, as people were particularly vigilant due to the already uncertain environment. The voting exercise had strengthened the view of the opposition of foul play. During the voting and counting process, the Coalition of domestic election observers (CODEO) issued a preliminary report, which registered 254 incidents (CODEO, 2020). Among them were 45 reports of intimidation and harassment, 26 incidents of violence, 24 unauthorized persons at the polling stations, seven violations of voting or counting procedures, four destructions or stealing of election materials, and five incidents of vote-buying or bribery (CODEO, 2020). These incidents reflect some of the actions which occurred.

The NDC's narrative of a 'rigged election' was already established, as they maintained early on those voters should protect the ballot box on election day. On election day, Mahama expressed to his voter:

I urge that we all maintain peace. We're not violent people, but we must make sure that nobody comes and disrupts the voting process in our polling stations on election day. The ballot box is in your care; everybody must work to protect the ballot box. Don't let anybody come and disrupt voting in your polling station and make your vote not to count." (Article 1036078).

The NPP encouraged their voters to do the same, as the incumbent Akuffo-Addo advised his supporters to remain watchful and protect the ballot box at all stages of the process (Article 1128695). These sentiments reflect both parties' distrust, as they fear that the other might attempt to manipulate the procedures. Therefore, they mobilize their supporters in the last stage of the election. This is particularly evident in the actions by the opposition, as the NDC created their own citizen's arrest task force to surveill the election and hand over any suspicious persons (Article 1118912). These actions and statements by the political leaders lead to apprehension, as segments of the public take the law into their own hands, believing that the other party can manipulate the election.

There was an incident at the Awutu Senya East constituency where polling assistants from the EC had tampered with the ballot papers (Article 1128431). The EC corroborated this, sending out a statement saying that the perpetrators were apprehended (Article 1128455). Situations like these show that EC agents can be corrupt. Therefore, reinforcing the perception of having to protect the ballot box. The NDC accused the NPP of ballot box snatching and vote buying (Article 1128452; Article 1128626). Ballot box snatching is the act of stealing a ballot box. In separate instances, the NDC accused EC officials at polling stations of directing voters to vote for the NPP (Article 1128557) (Article 1128428), substantiating the narrative of collaboration between the NPP and EC.

5.3.2 Counting

Collation is the process of tabulating the votes cast. The counting occurs immediately after the voting exercise has been completed when the polls are closed. The votes are counted manually. The collation of votes occurs in three stages, first at the constituencies, then the regional level, and lastly at the national level, before the EC declares the results (Article 1120505). During the initial counting stages, the NPP and NDC proclaimed that they were in the lead (Article 1129340; Article 1129607). The EC had intended to declare the results within 24 hours after the voting exercise ended. However, on the 8th, it decided to reschedule the announcement explaining that the extension was necessary to ensure that the results were accurate (Article 1129196).

This raised suspicion, as every discrepancy becomes scrutinized, within the already distrustful climate. The NDC criticized the EC for 'unprecedented delays' and warned them against attempts to 'steal the election for the governing party' (Article 1129259; Article 1129286). The presidential candidate Mahama stated that "we will resist any attempt to subvert the will of the people", accusing the NPP of attempting to use the military to overturn some of

the results in constituencies (Article 1129286). At the same time urging their supporters to go to the collation centres to overview the process. Mahama assured them that “we are leading both in parliamentary and presidential elections currently, but the New Patriotic Party can temper with the results if you don’t go to the collation centres to monitor the process because we know the NPP can do” (Article 1128740).

This view of collusion becomes even stronger when they go out and declare an early win, then when the results come, and they lose. It is easier to mobilize based on the perception of wrongdoing. Because of the deep distrust, every issue becomes a source of contention and conflict-prone. The view of manipulation due to the late announcement incited NDC supporters to protest the EC. Several protesters stormed the EC headquarters, claiming that the EC attempted to manipulate the results (Article 1129673; 1129619).

These positions and behavior created a climate of suspicion during the voting and counting that eventually manifested in violent cases. The police registered five deaths and 61 incidents of violence during the vote and the process of counting. At the Kasoa polling station, two people were killed on election day (Article 1128404). The incidents which resulted in death occurred in 5 constituencies. At the Odododiodoo constituency, two were killed and six people injured from shooting by civilians. At a collation centre in Ablekuma Central, four people were injured from a shooting incident by civilians. At a collation centre in the Techiman South constituency, two were killed and four wounded from shooting by security forces. In the Saveluga constituency, there was a shooting incident where people surrounded the police station, where one person was killed and three injured (Article 1129652). The mobilization of voters heightens the tension as everyone is apprehensive, and therefore takes action into their own hands to ensure victory for their party. Often, parliamentary candidates are part of these clashes. For example, in the Odododiodoo constituency, the parliamentary candidate for the NDC and fifteen people with him were apprehended concerning the deaths of two people (Article 1128992).

5.3.3 Declaration of results

The elections in Ghana are a tight race between the two dominant parties. The results of the election were declared December 9th, within 49 hours after the polls closed. When the EC announced the results, the process became even more charged, as they had made a mistake in their first declaration. The European Union Observation Mission (2020, p.41) election report found numerous errors in the declaration of the results, with differences in what was declared verbally and the published results. The EC initially stated that the valid votes cast were

13,433,573. The EC further announced that President Akufo-Addo of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) won 51.302% of valid votes. The presidential candidate of the opposition NDC, John Dramani Mahama, came second in the race, with 47.359% of the votes (Article 1129871). Thus, the difference between the two parties was 515,524 votes. However, as mentioned, the number of total valid votes declared on the 9th was adjusted shortly after to 13,119,460, as the EC had unintentionally used a higher number. According to the electoral administration, this difference did not affect the outcome (Article 1130120). The organization CODEO verified the results of the EC, stating that the election results reflect how people voted, based on their independent estimates (Article 1130288).

The correction of the announced results did not sit well with the NDC, which questioned the EC for changing the results several times. The general secretary of NDC Asiedu-Nketia stated that,

The truth of the matter is that none of the two represents the reality, and we want to send notice to them that presidential election results are declared at the polling stations. The primary document is the pink sheets and if they doubt our resolve, let them know that we have our pink sheets ready. We are aware of the efforts by the National Security to belatedly go round to try to manufacture pink sheets to suit the answers that have been given. They have announced the results, and by their own computations, you realize that the sum of the total of the figures they themselves have given is not consistent with the 100 per cent they have indicated (Article 1130528).

Following this, Mahama told the EC to preserve the election data and the pink sheets, as they intended to audit them independently (Article 1131401). This discrepancy fuels the NDC suspicion, as they uphold the view that the NPP is using the EC and security forces to steal the election. This is reflected in the distrust the NDC has in every instance of the process, deriving from the perceived discrepancies in the collation process to the declaration of the results. They do not trust the EC in managing the election since they do not trust the NPP in government. This creates room for doubt in every instance. Every mistake is viewed as a calculated intended action by the other side. Addressing the election results, the presidential candidate John Mahama Dramani stated that:

What we witnessed across the country from Monday, December 7th, 2020, exposed a deliberate plan to manipulate and predetermine the results of the election in favour of the incumbent candidate, Nana Akuffo-Addo, who, as so happens, controls all of the state's resources and oversees the state's institutions. Despite all of the ruling party's inducements, use of monetary enticements, and other such schemes on a scale never before seen in this country, the good people of this country understood

what was at stake, and it was clear, as the results of the votes that were legally cast that the National Democratic Congress won the Presidential and Parliamentary elections. No amount of trickery, sleight of hand, or obfuscation will erase that reality. (...) The electoral commission of Ghana has never brought its credibility to this historic low at such a crucial moment of the election results declaration. In fact, the litany of irregularities and blatant attempts at rigging for a candidate is obvious and most embarrassing...” (Article 1130684).

Following this statement, Mahama declared that the NPP would not accept the election results (Article 1130762). The CSO IMANI also expressed their unease over the irregularities that occurred. The President of IMANI, Franklin Cudjoe, commented that the EC “is not only incompetent but corrupt” (Article 1130798), adding that these actions only give credence to the concerns raised by the NDC.

The winner of the election, President Akuffo-Addo, praised the EC and its members for delivering the best election yet. Expressing the opposite view as the NDC. Addressing the nation, he said:

Fellow Ghanianas, I say a big ayekoo to the Chairperson, Deputy Chairpersons, Commissioners, Directors, Returning Officers, Electoral Officers, and the agents of our respective political parties for delivering one of the best elections, if not the best, ever witnessed in our history, which has won universal acclaim. The EC, even in the midst of the pandemic, has done a yeoman’s job, and we can only urge them on... (Article 1130321).

The expressions of ayekoo and yeoman’s job express their sentiments about the process. Ayekoo means well done or congratulations in Ghanaian. The latter means ‘very good, hard and valuable work to support a cause’. The NPP viewed it as a fair and due process. The EU Observation Mission (EUOM) issued a report on the Ghanaian election, which affirmed that the polling, counting, and tabulation of results were well-managed and transparent—deeming it overall a positively executed election (EUOM 2020, p. 41). However, noting irregularities during the counting and collation due to lack of organization makes the process less transparent (EUOM 2020, p. 46). An important observation from the EUOM report relates to the appointment of the members of the EC. The report noted that “The appointments mechanism, whereby the President selects all seven EC members for an indefinite tenure without consultation with the opposition, is not inclusive and does not build confidence” (EUOM 2020, p. 16), while also highlighting the issue of mismanagement of state resources.

The report points to one of the primary sources of conflict and mistrust. The appointment of members of the electoral body by the incumbent. As both perspectives of the NDC and NPP depicted contrasting perceptions of the conduct of the election. As

Mahama refused to concede, claiming foul play, his supporters took to the streets, driven by the command that “all who feel outraged by the EC’s conduct to manifest their displeasure in a manner that is peaceful” (Article 1139192). There were several demonstrations by supporters and branches of the NDC in different parts of the country, where there were incidents of destruction, burning of tyres and roadblocks (Article 1138673). The protesters marched the streets in Accra, Zabzugu, Techiman South, Tamale, Kumasi and Ketu South, shouting “No Mahama, No Peace” (Article 1143233; Article 1137443; Article 1140164).

5.4 Post-Election: Post-election mediatory system

Courts are the primary avenue for settling electoral disputes, as political actors can pursue their grievances through Court. It is a mechanism that helps to decrease further escalation. The post-election period sees a decrease in conflict and is a period of de-escalation. However, the initial stages are filled with complaints of electoral conduct. The post-election period proves to be a phase of learning and review, as the parties meet through several instances for deliberation. This section covers the Supreme Court case, potentially the most conflict-producing incident during this period tied to the election, lasting from filing the petition to the judgment on March 4th 2021.

On December 30th, John Mahama Dramani and the NDC filed a petition at the Supreme Court contesting the results of the presidential elections (Article 1143602). The petition was amended a few times due to errors before getting approved. The final petition included six reliefs against the Electoral Commission and the presidential candidate of the NPP, Nana Akuffo-Addo. The petition sought relief on three declarations and three orders. There was one relief concerning the NPP presidential candidate, which requested him to restrain from declaring himself the president-elect of Ghana (Article 1196515). The other reliefs were directed at the EC and Chairperson, Mrs Jean Adukwei Mensa. These included the first breach on Article (63) of the 1992 constitution on the declaration of the election results”; second, based on the data provided in the first declaration, no candidate can be declared president-elect. Third, the declaration of the election result on December 9th is unconstitutional with no effect. The others were of lesser significance (Article 1196515).

In response to questions of why NDC sent the petition, Mahama stated,

“I want a Ghana that our institutions of the state can be held to account where we can stand on principle and demand transparency without the risk of losing our lives. (...) Some people have asked me what I stand to gain by challenging the results of this election. Let me tell you. I want perhaps the very same thing that my opponent wanted when in 2012, he challenged the results of that election. I want the removal of doubts. I want all of us to know that our elections should be free, fair and safe and that we won't have to settle for a process that leaves us confused” (Article 1144784).

In 2012, the then-presidential candidate Akuffo-Addo for the NPP filed an election petition, challenging John Mahama victory and rejecting the election results based on similar allegations of fraud, as the NDC did in this election. However, expressing their view of the 2020 election petition, the NPP stated that it was “born out of unfounded imagination” (Article 1150634). Further, Akuffo-Addo implored the Supreme Court to reject the petition, asserting that it was “incompetent, frivolous, and vexatious, and discloses no reasonable cause of action in terms of article 64(1) of the Constitution” (Article 1150634). Concerning this, NPP's National Communications Director, Yaw Buaben Asamoah, said,

They lied to their supporters that they had won and started referring to John Dramani Mahama falsely as the President-Elect. Now they have backtracked, settling futilely for a run-off which they themselves know will not happen. They have attempted and continue to use lies, threats, violence, and intimidation to seek forlornly to overrule the manifest will of the people as freely expressed on December 7th, 2020. We are absolutely confident that the facts and figures as presented in Court, even by the NDC, will very easily, in a transparent and indisputable manner, reaffirm the expressed will of the voting public that President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo won the 2020 Presidential Election “one-touch” and convincingly so. (Article 1144526)

The hearing of the petition began on January 14th. As usual, the NDC distrust of the judiciary during the build-up towards the election continued, as they raised doubts about the independence of the Supreme Court. The President can nominate Supreme Court judges, and this is a common practice in several democracies. However, in line with the NDC's distrust towards other institutions, stakeholders hinted at bias in the judiciary. On the second day of the hearing, the NDC expressed concerns about the composition of judges for the petition hearing. The member of the party's legal team Dr Abdul Baasit Bamba, stated that the composition of the bench was “unfair and unbalanced”, conveying that it mainly consisted of members of the NPP government (Article 1155437). Similarly, ASEPA expressed their apprehension about the impartiality of specific judges, saying, “Because the learned judge seems to be a nominee of the ruling party, we believe that puts the Judge in a prejudicial position incapable of making an independent determination of any election-related proceedings” (Article 1143848). As a

principal witness for the NDC during the petition, others also expressed their concern that there is growing abuse of judiciary discretion (Article 1171366).

The Supreme Court presented the unanimous ruling the March 4th, 2021, read by justice Kwasi Anin Yeboah. The Court rejected the application for a rerun of the 2020 election and all other claims saying that the petitioner failed to provide sufficient evidence for the claims, with the concluding statement “your petition is dismissed without merit” (Article 1196515). Akuffo-Adoo reacted with pleasure, stating that “the Supreme Court affirmed my victory in the presidential election of December 7th 2020” (Article 115996).

The petitioner, Mahama, conveyed his opinion regarding the Supreme Court verdict in a speech with several accusations,

Much as I am aware that we are legally bound by the decision of the Supreme Court, I disagree with the process of trial and ruling of the Court. Ladies and gentlemen, our 1992 Constitution says very directly in Article 125 section 1 that: ‘Justice emanates from the people and shall be administered in the name of the Republic by the Judiciary, which shall be independent and subject only to this constitution’. I believe that the law should not be an instrument for partisan purpose. (...) The Supreme Court has given its verdict, but the national debate on the dismal state of our democracy and the increasing weakness of its institutions has only just begun. It is time we all come together to confront those who seek to destroy the very democratic system that brought them into office. It is our patriotic duty to do so. (Article 1196236).

Despite the verdict, the NDC still held on to the same view, alluding to the partiality of the Supreme Court. A central contention was that the EC chairperson did not testify in Court, which according to Mahama, would stain the justice system and the democratic development (Article 1196236).

Despite strong reactions of the NDC to the verdict by the Supreme Court, it is noticeable Ghanaians generally accept the Supreme Court’s constitutional role as an adjudicator in election disputes. Although the tension the two polarized dominant parties create during various stages of the electoral process, the judicial mechanism is usually relied on. This proves why Ghana’s democracy is a developing and learning process because although the polarization induces violence, it is controlled on a certain level. The 2012 election also showed that the losing parties reverted to democratic institutions to express their discontent and seek amends.

5.5 Conclusion

These sections presented some of the main areas of focus during the election. Going through the election chronologically depicted how these issues and the electoral procedures were at the core during the electoral process. Consequently, reflecting what the polarization is centred

around and reflecting what the main stakeholders say at each stage of the electoral cycle. The behavior of the dominant polarized NPP and NDC heightens the tension and violence during elections. The issues are about the procedures that lead to power, namely voter registration, which causes conflict and heightens the tension. Each party's number of registered voters determines how many votes they get, based on their supporters enrol. Therefore, when the NDC viewed their supporters as being excluded, it became critical to oppose it at every stage. Then there is election day, where the votes determine whether one wins. The ballot box becomes the last avenue for political power. As illustrated throughout, tension built up gradually in the pre-election stage, reached a crescendo during the election stage, and relatively decreased in the post-election stage of the electoral cycle. Generally, the polarization was around the election issues and manifested as heightening tension, verbal articulations (criticism and insults); peaceful demonstrations; and sporadic violence leading to unfortunate deaths and injuries. Generally, however, Ghana maintained its reputation as an emerging democracy, developing processes and structures that potentially can strengthen its democratic status.

Chapter 6 Discussion and Conclusion

This concluding chapter discusses the research findings in the overarching research objectives, emphasizing the second. I restate the goals as a reminder. The first objective was to elucidate the nature and structural context (institutional, legal, and socio-cultural) of political polarization in Ghana's Fourth Republic and explore its manifestations during the electoral cycle. The second was a theoretical ambition to reflect (from an interdisciplinary peace and conflict perspective) on how polarization around election issues and processes constitutes structural violence embedded in the political culture, which requires a consideration of the institutional foundations in Ghana's electoral process. This chapter focus is answering "How does the manifestation polarization in Ghana constitute a form of structural violence?".

Before that, however, I give a summary of the preceding chapters for context. Chapter 2 presented the historical background of polarized politics in Ghana, outlining the polarizing issues and parties involved. Chapter 3 was the conceptual framework, which was in two sections. The first section conceptualized polarization and discussed it in terms of the two drivers, namely the agency of the actors and the institutional arrangements, and discussed their role in polarization. The second section of the chapter approached polarization from a peace studies perspective, conceptualizing structural violence as violence embedded in the political culture with the potential to generate violence. Chapter 4 presents the methodology, describing the data collection from the *GhanaWeb*. I aligned the collection of newspaper articles with the three-phase electoral cycle, using the principle of saturation to exclude repetitive data. The data captured the actors' and stakeholders' (re)actions and interactions to uncover the controversial electoral matters and procedures, nature, and degrees of the antagonism (including physical violence) at each phase. Chapter 5 presented and discussed the data on how polarization manifested in the 2020 elections. This chapter (6) addresses the four key findings of the research. The first finding is that Ghana's Fourth Republic politics is polarized around the two major parties, namely NPP and NDC. Second, the utmost issue they are polarized over is winning power at all costs under the winner-takes-all first-past-the-post election system. Therefore, they use all possible means to mobilize towards that goal. The third finding is that the suspicion of bias against Ghana's Electoral Commission is about how the members are appointed or removed. The fourth finding concludes that Ghana's polarization results from the structural violence embedded in the constitutional provisions that empower incumbent Presidents to appoint or dismiss heads and deputies of key independent public institutions. I elaborate on these findings below.

6.1 Polarization manifested in the competition for power by political elites

Polarization is an ongoing process that might appear gradually while slowly intensifying, taking form over several years. It is a complex process where political actors and institutional arrangements shape its development. The manifestation of polarization depicts a picture of a more extensive historical process, whereby elections become a lens into the political climate as polarization often peaks during moments of the intense electoral contest. The thesis argued that polarization manifests during the competition for political power through elections since winning political power becomes the main objective of the competing political parties.

Every presidential election in Ghana has the potential for an alternation of power. The 2020 election was the eighth successive presidential and parliamentary election since Ghana's return to multiparty democracy in 1992. Power has alternated between the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the main opposition party National Democratic Congress (NDC), eight times between 1992 and 2016. The development of a duopoly has created a condition where the multiparty democracy in Ghana has become a de-facto two-party system, where the NDC and NPP dominate the political space each cycle. The 2020 election was not an exception. The background chapter indicated that the emergence of polarization could be traced to the pre-independence phase, where party formation centred around two ideological blocs which endured throughout independence, eventually comprising the basis for the contemporary NPP and NDC. The data showed that the two major political parties dominated the 2020 election. This agrees with existing literature (Lebas 2018; Bob-Milliar 2010), which stated that the polarization is mainly elite-driven.

Furthermore, the data showed a clear division in the perceptions of the conduct and execution of the election between the incumbent government NPP and the opposition NDC. The NPP, which is in power, generally agrees with the EC's measures, while the NDC disapproves of almost all the procedures related to the process. Within this process, third-party stakeholders expressed their opinion, either reflecting their affiliation or independent agency. Thus, the political elites actively contribute to polarization through their statements and actions, which consequently mobilize the electorate, reflected in the demonstrations and protests throughout the cycle.

6.2 The basis for political competition

Why are elections in Ghana characterized by tension, antagonism, and incidents of violence, centred around disagreements regarding election management? The data showed that winning power is the most significant aspect of the NPP and the NDC. This is due to the nature of the

political culture, which consists of the first-past-the-post and the winner-takes-all system. It is evident throughout the electoral cycle as the polarization intensified leading up to the election day, and each stage was characterized by disagreements regarding aspects of the electoral proceedings. The FPTP and the WTA system produce a tense political environment because both parties know what is at stake. As Van Gyampo (2015) described it, WTA essentially means a “state capture”. It creates a situation in which state resources, facilities, and opportunities are monopolized by partisan interests while excluding the opposition from political governance.

Consequently, the focus of the election becomes to win power at all costs. The National Peace Council (NPC) explained well, stating that the 2020 election is tenser than previous elections because both candidates have tasted the seat before. Therefore, they know what it means to sit on that seat (Article 1084954). The reason is that both Nana Akuffo-Addo and John Mahama Dramani have been Presidents of Ghana previously. Therefore, they know what it entails in terms of the power over the state’s resources.

Patronage is a significant factor in the relationship between the electorate and the elected. In the context of ‘money politics’ and patrimonialism, material resources determine a party’s capacity to capture and mobilize support. Thus, the client-patron relationship is upheld through regular flows of resources from leaders to followers. Through its distributive power in the zero-sum game politics, incumbents can use state resources to canvass for and sustain loyalty. On the other hand, opposition parties can only rely on precedence (from when once in power) and ‘promise’ to fulfil particular demands of their constituencies when they win elections and control. This is also reflected in the fact that the only significant presidential candidates in each election within Ghana’s multiparty democracy since independence have come from the NDC and NPP. Although, there were 12 presidential candidates in the 2020 election cycle. However, the candidates of the minor parties cannot mobilize support in any significant number. Therefore, they do not stand a chance of winning the elections.

Furthermore, the importance of resources is also reflected in vote-buying and the act of busing non-residents during the voter registration exercise. The data showed that these actions are practices that both parties do and simultaneously accuse the other of doing. These are strategies that they use to gain more voters and consequently more power. Thus, political power remains the central element characterizing political competition. Hence, the struggle for power and political competition reflects Slater and Aruguay (2018)’s phrase, “polarization without poles.”

6.2.1 Political mobilizing

Since the primary goal of the political actors is to achieve power, they use all available means to attain that goal. The data showed how each step of the electoral process became a source of distrust and conflict. While the NPP mainly supported the actions of the Electoral Commission, the opposition expressed their contempt for every decision the EC made. This created suspicion of all the electoral procedures which the EC initiated, which manifested in a tense political environment. However, this is also an activating factor. As the events surrounding the declaration of the 2020 election results revealed (Chapter 5), the NDC mobilized their voters based on the assumption that the EC was colluding with the NPP to alter the election results. This mobilization, which led to widespread protests and demonstrations (Article 1138673), was an election strategy losing candidates used to mobilize their grassroots on claims of foul play, which the NDC expressed. The sometimes unfounded criticism created room for doubt and an opportunity for mobilization. Likewise, on election day, both parties demonstrated their distrust of each other, as they urged their supporters to protect the ballot box at all stages of the process (Article 1128695; Article 1036078). These statements incentives their supports and as the distrust trickles down.

Moreover, as McCoy et al. (2018) note, polarization is reflected in the political leaders' channel in their quest for power, as some issues are mere vehicles to drive conflicting interests forward for political gain. This is particularly relevant when political actors play on perceived grievances through activating latent resentments. The dispatching of security forces in the NDC's stronghold, Volta Region, reflects this, as NDC impugned ethnic motives and claimed that the incumbent intentionally attempted to intimidate and disenfranchise Ewe's through the use of security forces. However, in reality, the security forces were sent out to all the border regions in the country. Thus, in the polarized political system based on the standardized winner-takes-all election and patronage politics, political parties exploit informal structures like actual or imagined identity cleavages and group loyalties on ethnic, class, religious and regional lines.

Although LeBas (2018) argued that political polarization is based on ideological differences, this study found that the polarization is centred mainly around the quest for power rather than reflecting any programmatic difference. This view is shared with Bob-Milliar (2010), which stated that the political elite's polarization in Ghana is preferred to maintain the polarized situation. Thus, as the contextual chapter indicated, the ideological division, which has its roots in the different ideological orientations of the pre-liberation parties, and characterized the politics during the independence struggle and the tumultuous periods after, does not have a decisive factor in electoral mobilization. Hence, this study argues that, rather

than being ideologically or ethnically polarized, politics in Ghana is centred around the quest for power. However, although this process is reflected in an elite agency, institutional mechanisms have a fundamental role in exacerbating the polarization.

6.3 The perennial pattern: Power imbalance and the Electoral Commission

The data showed that everything the Electoral Commission does became a source of suspicion and distrust. This suspicion against the EC relates to how the members of the EC are appointed or removed. The two dominant political blocs and their party affiliates disagreed about the integrity of the electoral process. In the WTA system, the political actors perceive the manipulability of the electoral process. Thus, in the context of intense partisanship, WTA becomes a polarizing practice. Because the Executive presidency system in Ghana has the potential for disproportionate distribution of power in state and society, which is reinforced through the First-Past-the-Post (FPTP) approach in parliamentary elections and the Two-Round System (TRS) election systems in presidential elections. This makes the periodic elections in Ghana very polarized and sometimes destabilizing for the country's peace as it creates suspicion about the election's fairness. NDC clearly expressed this in the data analysis chapter. Mahama articulated in his speech after the declaration of the election results that the election's credibility was compromised, claiming charges of rigging. The perception that the EC was biased in favor of the NPP due to apparent control and power Akuffo-Addo has over the institutions and resources of the state (Article 1130684). Therefore, the attacks on the EC should be seen as uncertainty about the EC's perceived capacity to manipulate the election in favor of the incumbent that appointed them.

Carothers and O'Donohue explained that political system designs might either mitigate or exacerbate polarization. This instance produces an environment of mistrust among the political actors in all the processes leading to power. However, this is not isolated to the 2020 election, as it is a recurrent pattern. The contesting parties in all the eight presidential and parliamentary elections under the Fourth Republic are primarily motivated by a fear of losing elections and thereby suffering the accompanying risk of its supporters being marginalized by the winning party (and President). Under the circumstances, the contesting political parties become polarized around election procedures, with opposition parties particularly becoming more distrustful of the actions and the processes put in place by the Electoral Commission (EC) during election cycles. This primarily relates to the way the members of the commission are elected. The opposition's distrust against the election managers becomes focused on the person who holds the position of EC Chair, especially if the Incumbent President appointed that person.

This distrust was reflected in the opposition NDC's constant attacks on the EC Chairperson Jean Mensah throughout the process as articulated by Asiedu Nketia, the General Secretary during concernig the Supreme Court judgment on the voter register. He said, "You are all aware of the bad name that Jean Mensa has earned for herself after she allowed herself to be used by the President, who appointed her to office. The reputation of the judges is also at stake. Therefore, they would act appropriately" (Article 991690). The opposition assumes that the incumbent will appoint a person who may be loyal to him/her and, therefore, willing to manipulate the electoral process for the benefit of the incumbent. Otherwise, if the EC Chair was appointed during the tenure of a former opposing party, the "suspicion" becomes mutual, with the opposition (that appointed the electoral commissioners during its incumbency) becoming less jittery. Thus, the perception is that the incumbent has an advantage. Therefore, when the procedures in the election are not clear, they expect that manipulation is happening.

Nana Akuffo-Addo and the NPP won the 2016 election under an electoral management body appointed by the previous administration. The fact that the opposition won shows how the EC, which the NDC elected, did or could not manipulate the process in favor of the NDC. Therefore, substantiating the claim that it is just perceptions. However, it is still a recurrent phenomenon that characterizes Ghana's elections. In 2018, President Akuffo-Addo terminated the previous chair of the EC, Charlotte Osei, and two commission members based on allegations of corruption (A.-G. Abdulai & Sackeyfio, 2021, p. 9). These were posts previously appointed by the John Mahama (NDC) administration. This decision was opposed and underpinned the opposition's distrust in the current election management system.

The independence of the electoral commission is imperative for the conduction of the election. It works against compulsions and efforts to impact the electoral rules, attempts to cheat during the electoral process, and attempts to challenge the legitimacy of the election (Carothers and O'Donohue, 2019, p. 269). Notably, however, Ghana is internationally acclaimed for building a relatively robust set of institutions surrounding its elections: including a relatively independent EC; active civil society, and mediascape that has facilitated a culture of debate and dialogue among the competing actors, as well as security agencies (mainly the police and the army) that work closely with the Electoral Commission protecting the electoral process (Siegle & Cook, 2020, pp. 10-11). Despite this, the election administration has become a politicized area. In the previous election cycles of 2012, the then opposition party NPP was adamant about the amendments that had to be made to secure a fair electoral process, questioning the credibility of the register (Article 9977530).

Moreover, this is not something new, but it is a trend that is becoming increasingly violent. As table 1 below demonstrates, election-related violence is a growing issue. The hostile and tension-yielding environment that polarization produces has become a recurrent event, generally isolated to the electoral cycles.

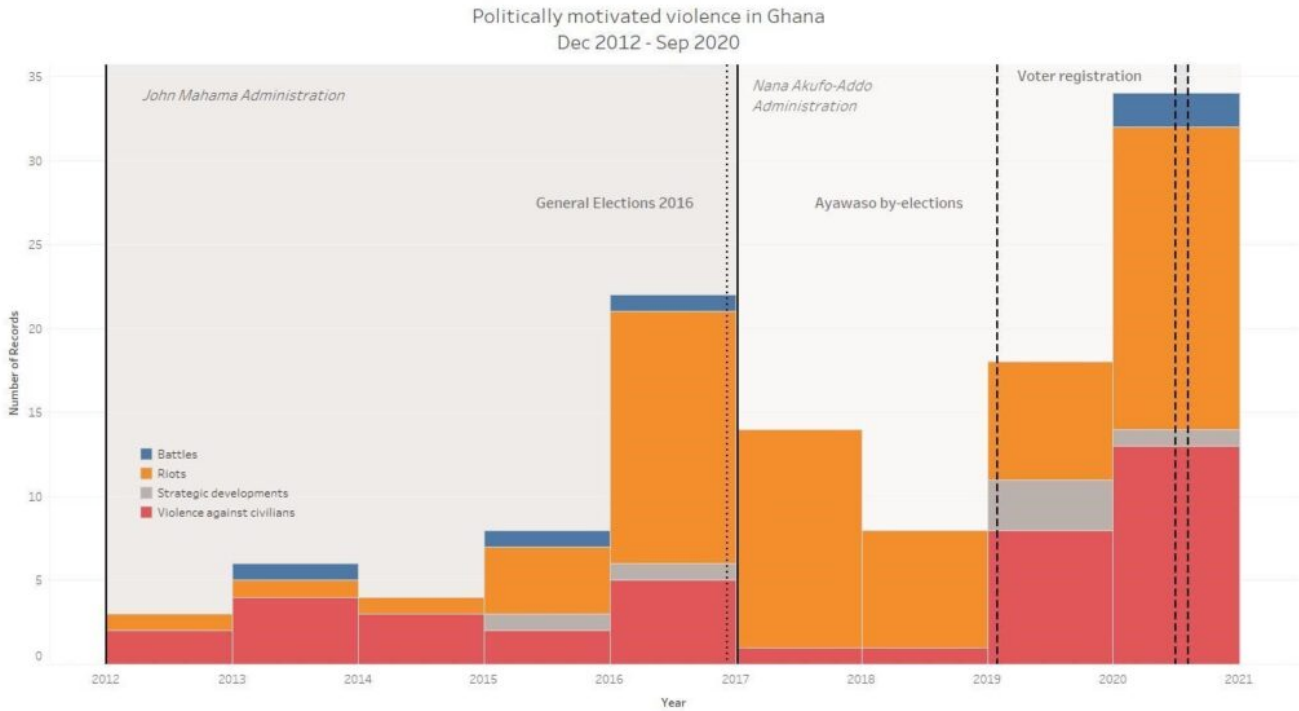


Figure 5: Politically Motivated Violence in Ghana (2012-2021) committed by political militias, party supporters, and unidentified gunmen against civilians. Source: <https://africanarguments.org/2020/11/warning-shots-the-steady-rise-of-political-violence-in-ghana/>

6.4 Political Polarization as Structural violence

Based on the findings of the manifestation of polarization, this study concludes that polarization is a result of the structural violence embedded in the constitutional provisions of appointment and removal of state officials. To remind readers, structural violence is defined as violence built into the structure, revealing itself as unequal power and consequently unequal life chances (Galtung, 1969, p. 171). Thus, structural violence puts violence, power, and structures together to understand how violence is produced. For this study, structural violence was conceptualized as violence embedded in the political culture with the potential to generate violence. The data showed that power underpins the political competition gained through institutional arrangements, which reproduce tension and violence.

In Ghana, the constitutional prescriptions about and institutional arrangements relating to political power are contested for won and exercised become a structural weakness. The Executive President accumulates more power and influence through its appointing capabilities,

control of the state's coercive and administrative structure, and regulatory oversight of the country's resources. The people that oversee the election, such as the electoral commission, the judiciary, which acts as mediators, the police, and the military, are controlled by the state. This accentuates the perception of marginalization by the opposition. Ramsbotham et al. (2011, p. 12) note that 'injustice' usually amounts to 'perceived injustice.' Consequently, the perceived deficit and the 'injustice' which the opposition feels fuels the polarization.

This is reflected throughout the electoral cycle in the perception of the opposition on the government's capacity to influence the state institutions. As the pre-election, election, and accusations of rigging and manipulation characterized post-election phases. The EU Observation Mission (EUOM p. 16) addressed the issue of how the EC members are selected by the President, stating that it does not build confidence and inclusivity. As presented in the background chapter, Sir Sam Jonah (Article 1242175) characterized the Ghanaian system as an "Executocracy" rather than a 'democracy,' due to the strength of the executive and subsequent weakening of the checks and balances. In his statement, he points to the 1992 Constitution as faulty. This reflects the source of the problem and why it becomes a recurrent pattern.

As Ninsin (2016c, p. 155) notes, while the election system is constitutionally rooted to select leaders, in evolving liberal democracies, it potentially provides a basis for the winners to misuse state power and the accompanying material resources in a partisan manner. As the Ghanaian example shows, when all the power is in the hands of the incumbent and the resources have the potential to be misused, within a political culture characterized by WTA and patronage, the competition for power becomes tense. The polarizing stakes become high when the political competition hinges on competition over who wins, holds and maintains political power because if you do not have resources to give to your voter base, then you lose voters, if you lose voters, then the election is lost and subsequently all the power that follows. In that case, the politics of issues and ideology or policy matters become less critical.

Therefore, when the opposition perceives the process as unjust due to the executive's power, the electoral process is rejected and subsequently contested. The result is the filings of election petitions to the Supreme Court. As the data showed, in the context of the 2020 election petition results, the presidential candidate for the NDC, Mahama, stated that the democratic institutions are not independent. Instead, they are instruments subject to partisan politics (Article 1196236). The same scenario characterized the 2012 election, as opposition candidate Akuffo-Addo petitioned the court on electoral irregularities and misconduct by the EC (Article 260739).

Interestingly, the NDC that benefitted from the polls run by the EC and adjudication of the Supreme Court in 2012 made similar claims of bias in the 2020 election petition. Thus, as the statements by the EUOM report and Sir Sam Jonah alluded to, the problem lies with the power imbalance that the constitution creates. It is seemingly a known problem; however, nothing seems to change.

Ghana is acclaimed for being a beacon of democracy in Africa, with reduced occurrences of electoral violence compared to other African nations. The nature of electoral violence is observable and is, therefore, often the focus of research on elections. I chose the Ghana case study because it captures the subtle form of invisible violence more than just direct violence. By looking beyond, the polarizing actions of the actors and the tension that they produce, one can look at how the polarization reflects a regenerative process where the structural forces are the main drivers. The constitutional provision regarding the institutional arrangements governing the electoral cycle and the election process, particularly considering its inclusiveness and transparency, underlie how political actors and stakeholders react and mobilize support during the election process and act after the elections. Instead, the electoral violence that occurs is a byproduct of structural violence, as structural violence is a potent stimulant of behavior violence (X. Lee, 2019). Structural violence points to why polarization is a recurrent phenomenon and why it intensifies. Interpreting Galtung's (1969, p. 198) depiction of the interaction of structural violence in terms of top dogs and underdogs in this context, it explains how the executive's power reproduce polarization. For these reasons, this study views polarization as a form of structural violence embedded in the political structures with a peace and studies perspective.

6.5 Recommendations

From the findings, I make three recommendations.

First, there should be a constitutional amendment to curtail incumbent presidents' enormous powers and control.

Second, the electoral system should be reformed, replacing the winner-take-all system with ensuring broader consensus and power distribution.

Third, the EC ought to be more transparent in its operations to forestall suspiciousness of bias.

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Appendix A

Newspaper Articles:

Article 1016104

Ghanaweb. (2020, 25 July) Voter register case: NDC goes back to Supreme Court for review. Retrieved from <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Voter-register-case-NDC-goes-back-to-Supreme-Court-for-review-1016104>

Article 975289

Ghanaweb. (2020, 09. June). Parliament votes 106-96 to approve controversial C.I 126 Retrieved from <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Parliament-votes-106-96-to-approve-controversial-C-I-126-975289>

Article 89864219

Ghanaweb. (2020, 19 March). NDC sues EC over new voters' register Retrieved from <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/NDC-sues-EC-over-new-voters-register-898642>

Article 992842

Ghana Web. (2020, 29 June) Akufo-Addo to speak on controversial voters registration today. Retrieved from <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Akufo-Addo-to-speak-on-controversial-voters-registration-today-992842>

Article 1009042

Ghana Web. (2020, 16 July). All biometric voter registration kits are brand new – EC. Retrieved from <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/All-biometric-voter-registration-kits-are-brand-new-EC-1009042>

Article 991444

Ghana Web. (2020, 27 June) Akufo-Addo govt manipulating 2020 electoral process – Mahama. Retrieved from <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Akufo-Addo-govt-manipulating-2020-electoral-process-Mahama-991444>

Article 991840

GhanaWeb. (2020, 27 June). Voters register: Come out and register irrespective of your party - Akufo-Addo to Ghanaians. Retrieved from <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Voters-register-Come-out-and-register-irrespective-of-your-party-Akufo-Addo-to-Ghanaians-991840>

Article 991396

GhanaWeb. (2020, 27 June) Go and register your name with old voters ID cards – Bernard Mornah to Ghanaians. Retrieved from <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/politics/Go-and-register-your-name-with-old-voters-ID-cards-Bernard-Mornah-to-Ghanaians-991396>

Article 991444

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Article 1004395

Ghanaweb (2020, 10 July). EC ballooning figures from some regions, reducing those from stronghold – NDC. Retrieved from

<https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/EC-ballooning-figures-from-some-regions-reducing-those-from-stronghold-NDC-1004395>

Article 1026322

Ghanaweb. (2020, 5 August). Akufo-Addo trampling our democracy, doing everything to hang on to power' – Mahama. Retrieved from

<https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Akufo-Addo-trampling-our-democracy-doing-everything-to-hang-on-to-power-Mahama-1026322>

Article 1011592

Ghanaweb. (2020, 20 July). You've a right to stop bused people from registering – EC to Ghanaians. Retrieved from

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Article 1035781

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Article 1012123

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Article 995671

Ghanaweb. (2020, 1 July). Lydia Alhassan busing aliens to Ayawaso West Wuogon to register – NDC alleges. Retrieved from <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Lydia-Alhassan-busing-aliens-to-Ayawaso-West-Wuogon-to-register-NDC-alleges-995671>

Article 996148

Ghanaweb. (2020, 2 July). Abu Jinapor busing people to register at Damongo – Mutawakilu claims. Retrieved from <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Abu-Jinapor-busing-people-to-register-at-Damongo-Mutawakilu-claims-996148>

Article 998101

Ghanaweb. (2020, 3 July). Voter registration: Teacher bused students to Asawasi, one arrested. Retrieved from <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Voter-registration-Teacher-bused-students-to-Asawasi-one-arrested-998101>

Article 1006024

Ghanaweb. (2020, 13 July). Heavy military presence in Volta divisive – Togbe Afede. Retrieved from <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Heavy-military-presence-in-Volta-divisive-Togbe-Afede-1006024>

Article 1066918

Ghanaweb. (2020, 23 September). Flaws in new voters register normal – EC justifies irregularities. Retrieved from <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Flaws-in-new-voters-register-normal-EC-justifies-irregularities-1066918>

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Article 1068700

Ghanaweb. (2020, 25 September). Mahama orders all NDC executives to stop campaigning. Retrieved from <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/2020-polls-Mahama-orders-all-NDC-executives-to-stop-campaigning-1068700>

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Article 976216

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<https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/President-says-military-deployment-in-Volta-Region-not-an-invasion-1045132>

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