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Ghana's 2020 General Elections: An Assessment of the Journey and Processes

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Abstract

The December 7, 2020 General Election was the 8th milestone in Ghana's electoral politics. It was keenly competitive for several reasons, including the fact that the two key contenders had a sense of unfinished agenda and wanted to capture or hold on to power to complete what had been initiated. The flag bearer of the main opposition party was voted out after one term in power, in a manner that challenged the creeping belief that all regimes in Ghana, since 1992, serve two terms in office. Whereas the ruling party did all it could to maintain the two-term tradition, the main opposition party also did its best to drum home the message that, the two-term tradition is not yet institutionalized. It was also widely believed that a defeat of any of the two main contenders, may mark the end of their respective political careers, as the two main political parties would file completely new candidates in future elections. This paper seeks to examine the journey and processes towards the 2020 General Elections within the context of the global pandemic, COVID-19. The paper highlights and fleshes out all the major issues before and during the elections and proffers possible explanations on the outcome of the elections.

Keywords

Ghana – elections – democracy – New Patriotic Party (NPP) – National Democratic Congress (NDC)

1 Introduction

The 2020 General Elections were keenly contested by the incumbent government of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) led by President Nana Akufo-Addo and the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) led by the former President John Dramani Mahama. This was Ghana's 8th General Election since the return to multiparty democracy in 1992. It is important to mention that there are several studies on Ghana's elections and democratic governance (Aye, 1997, 2002, 2017; Brierley and Ofori, 2014; Cheeseman et al., 2017; Frempong, 2008, 2017; Gyimah-Boadi, 1991, 1999, 2001, 2009). But these do not capture the uniqueness of the 2020 General Elections. Several factors account for the uniqueness of the elections. First, it was a competition between an incumbent president, Nana Akufo Addo, and a former president, John Mahama, who had lost the 2016 elections after serving one term. Second, both the incumbent president and the former president had all served one term as presidents and so, it was a big contest for a second term for both presidential candidates. Third, president Akufo Addo had appointed a new chairperson of the Electoral Commission, following an allegation, investigation and culpability of breaching of procurement laws by the former chairperson of the Commission. This heightened perception and fear that the elections could be rigged in favour of the incumbent president. Fourth, for the first time, elections in Ghana had to be held in the midst of the COVID-19 global pandemic that had led to several infections, deaths and lockdowns.

All these added different dimensions to Ghana's 2020 General Election which, which made it unique and unstudied. This paper therefore, seeks to examine the various processes towards the elections within the context of the global pandemic, COVID-19. The paper highlights and fleshes out all the major issues before, during and after the elections and proffer possible explanations on the outcome of the elections. The structure of the paper is as follows; it reviews the theoretical explanations for voter behaviour; discusses pre-elections, election day and post-election issues; proffer explanations about the results; and makes some concluding remarks.

2 Explaining Voter Behaviour in Ghana: Is the Rational Choice Approach Sufficient?

Using a comprehensive approach to explain voter behaviour, Heywood (2002: 242–245) outlines the following approaches: first is party identification, where people vote for their preferred party for continuity and stability; second is a

sociological approach which shows people vote based on their social affinity such as gender, race, economic class etc.; third is rational choice approach (RCA), which submits that all electorate are rational actors, and vote based on policies and issues; fourth is ideology, which posits that, voters are oriented by their political ideology which influences their voting patterns. The discussion on the Ghanaian voter behaviour varies and is a mixed bag of opinions. For example, whilst scholars such as Debrah (2016) suggests that ethnicity is the major voting consideration by the typical Ghanaian voter, other scholarly works, including the works of Aye (1997, 2002), Fobih (2008), Daddieh (2009), Jockers et al. (2010), Brierley and Ofosu (2014) and Gyampo et al. (2017), all point to party identification as the dominant variable that influences voter behaviour in Ghana. Despite these diverse views of voter behaviour, we posit that RCA is sufficient in explaining the voter behaviour of Ghanaians during the 2020 elections.

RCA is said to have arguable emanated from the American Political Science Behavioural Revolution, which occurred in the 1950s and 1960s in the United States of America. This behavioural revolution sought to examine the individual's behaviour using empirical or scientific methods. One of its founding fathers, Downs (1957), used the approach to study party elections and concluded that individual actors are rational and therefore seek the best 'utility' in their actions (*ibid*). RCA deals with the "micro-foundations" of individual actions (Levi, 1997: 23, 1997; Tsebelis, 1990). Its main focus is the 'individual' since it is said to be sociologically minimalist (micro). In this regard, when people are faced with many courses of action, they usually do what they believe is in their overall interest and will yield the best outcomes. These activities in the view of Elster (1985: 61) are based on sets of "cognition" and "desires". In the view of Levi (1997: 23) RCA is fundamentally the "micro-foundations" that leads to "macro" processes of event. It is how choices made by individuals are evaluated, weighing the pros and cons of these actions. Additionally, Downs (1957) suggests that a rational actor in a democracy seeks the ultimate 'utility' when voting. He further posits that 'citizens act rationally in politics' when each electorate cast their votes to the party which he/she is certain will deliver more benefit or utility compared with the other political party.

In terms of strengths, the RCA has the advantage of universal applicability (Tsebelis, 1990: 41). It is also quite straightforward to understand and apply as a theoretical framework of analysis. It is based on deductive logic or reasoning and is predictable (Tsebelis, 1990: 42). The theory also is based on three fundamental assumptions that have been used in the real world to explain how individuals behave in situations. First of all, it suggests that humans are self-interested, profit maximisers and goal-oriented. Secondly, individuals are

rational and use sufficient information at their disposal to make decisions. Finally, the individual uses logical calculation by doing a cost-benefit analysis to make a rational choice.

The RCA however has some limitations, like all other theories. Notable is the argument that it tends to oversimplify the issues of reality. The notion of utility maximization is unrealistic in all situations as the theory suggests. Also, the approach, it's been argued, ignores all other variables that shapes human behaviour (Hodgson 2012: 1). But, after the third wave of democracy in Africa (Huntington, 1991), several scholars have used RCA to explain voter behaviour on the continent of Africa. The central debate has been which approach best explains voter behaviour at the polls in Africa, since the third wave of democratization. Some scholars have argued that voters are rational and seek their benefits through the calculations of expected outcomes before they cast their ballot for a political party or candidate (Fair, 1996; Fiorina, 1981). Other studies show that voters do so because they understand voting as a civic duty (Brennan and Hamlin, 2000; Kan and Yang, 2001). However, Debrah (2016) posits that these two models are not sufficient in explaining voter behaviour and that, voting is shaped by ethnicity. Nonetheless, judging by the very close outcome of the 2020 General Elections, including a hung parliament for the first time in the history of Ghana, since independence, this study deploys the RCA as the appropriate theoretical taxonomy for explaining how voters behaved the way they did in Ghana's elections of 2020.

3 Demystifying Pre-Elections, Election Day and Post Elections Issues Amidst COVID-19

3.1 *Pre-Elections*

The electoral processes before the 2020 General Elections, were fraught with several issues, challenges and disagreements. A few notable ones are highlighted. The first issue of contention, was the dismissal of the chairperson of the Electoral Commission Charlotte Osei, and her two deputies Amadu Sulley and Georgina Opoku Amankwah, by President Akufo Addo, on the recommendation of a Committee chaired by the Chief Justice, that found them guilty and culpable of some procurement breaches. The Committee's Report inter alia, read:

... In this report we have demonstrated through evidence before the Committee that the Chairperson, Mrs Charlotte Osei breached the Public Procurement Act in all the procurement activities for which she was

accused. She blatantly breached the Public Procurement Act without any justification, a conduct which amounted to misbehaviour. The Honourable Chief Justice in her *prima facie* determination defined misbehaviour as conduct based and is generally understood to connote conduct which falls below the accepted norms or stipulated standards of morality, propriety and or legality....

GRAPHIC ONLINE, 2018

The President appointed Jean Mensa as new chairperson for the Commission, as well as Samuel Tettey and Bossman Asare as her deputies. These appointment was met with huge criticisms from the opposition, civil society and the general public. The Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) expressed concern about the implication of the dismissal on the governance make-up of the Commission and the 2020 elections (ModernGhana.com, 2018a). IMANI Africa described the process of removal of the heads of the Commission as akin to what goes on in a “military tribunal” (GhanaWeb, 2018b). Other scholars and Political Scientists described the removal as whimsical, capricious and bad for the independence of the Commission. Political Scientist at the University of Ghana, Professor Ransford Gyampo, described the move as “legally wise and politically unwise” explaining that it could have political implications (GhanaWeb, 2018a). The largest opposition party in Ghana, the NDC, suggested that the removal of Charlotte Osei was an attempt to rig the 2020 General Elections by president Akufo Addo (ModernGhana.com, 2018b).

Upon assumption of office, the new chairperson of the Electoral Commission called for the compilation of a new voters register that would have biometric features. The commission was of the view that, the old register was dated, not credible, and any attempt to review or revise it may be more costly. Strangely, but typical of ruling political parties in Ghana, the governing NPP that won the 2016 elections with the old register supported the position of the Electoral Commission. But the NDC and other political parties as well as identifiable civil society bodies like CDD-Ghana, IMANI-Africa, the Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG), the Youth Bridge Foundation (YBF), etc. This created much suspicion and tension in the lead up to the 2020 elections, before the outbreak of COVID-19, which served to douse the tension (Aikins, 2020).

The opposition NDC sued the EC in court, arguing that the EC lacks the power to compile a new register less than six months into an election. They argued further that, the commission could “compile a register of voters only once, and thereafter revise it periodically, as may be determined by law” (Citinewsroom, 2020c). The NDC also demanded that the EC rescind its decision to amend

Regulations 1 sub-regulations 3 of the Registrations of Voters Regulations, 2016 (C.I. 91) to Registrations of Voters (Amendment) Regulations 2020, which barred all existing voter identification cards as proof of identification. In the view of NDC, it was “unconstitutional, null and void and of no effect whatsoever” (*ibid*). Additionally, the EC was sued by a private citizen named Mark Takyi-Banson at the Supreme Court of Ghana on same issue. The Plaintiff sought a proper interpretation of Article 45(a) of the 1992 Constitutions of the Republic of Ghana, a declarations that the EC’s decision to compile a new voters register was not consistent with article 45(a) of the 1992 Constitution, and finally challenged the Commission’s ruling out the use of birth certificate and old voters identity cards as identifications for compilations of the proposed new register (GhanaWeb, 2020b). The Supreme Court however, dismissed both cases, suggesting that existing voters’ ID cards and birth certificates do not prove citizenship, and should therefore be excluded as identifications in the proposed new voter registration exercise (GhanaWeb, 2020c).

Whilst grappling with many of the pre-election issues that had polarized the country and heightened the political temperature, the COVID-19 global pandemic which shook the foundations of the world, because of several deaths, compelled many countries including Ghana to go on lockdown with many restrictions that naturally doused electioneering campaign activities. Indeed, Ghana recorded its first COVID-19 case on March 12, 2020, and the government responded with a three week partial lockdown that placed all campaign activities on hold and at the same time, inflicted some hardships on the citizenry, many of whom survived on the streets because of the highly informal nature of the Ghanaian economy. To contain some of the hardships of the partial lockdown, the government resorted to interventions such as the distribution of food to some homeless people in slums, and absorbed utility bills such as water and electricity for some time. The opposition NDC however criticized these gestures as part of measures to buy votes. When restrictions imposed by the lockdown was relaxed, the opposition once again described the move as part of government’s machinations, to rig the elections (Ijon and Bingab, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic brought several uncertainties for the 2020 general elections. Many writers even went ahead to predict the impact it was going to have on the voters’ registrations exercise (Aikins, 2020), and perhaps a low voter turnout because of the risk of contracting the virus (Ijon and Bingab, 2020). On the contrary, many Ghanaians (about 70 percent of the voter population) participated in the voter registration process, in the wake of the pandemic. As rational voters, they had thought about the need to optimize and maximize the benefits accrue to them from voting in the upcoming elections as argued

by Downs (1957). They therefore took the risk and went ahead to participate in the voter registration exercise, which tend out to be fairly successful in all the 50 registrations centres (Adams, 2020). Nonetheless, there were some reported cases of violence, crowding and queuing which violated the protocols in the fight against COVID-19 (Raji, 2020).

3.2 *Election Day and Post-Elections Issues*

On December 7, 2020, thousands of Ghanaians went to their various polling stations to cast their ballot in a generally peaceful fashion and observing all the COVID-19 protocol at these polling stations. Voter turnout was 79 percent (compared to 69.25 percent in 2016), in spite of the COVID-19. This supports the position of this paper that the Ghanaian voter behaviour in the 2020 election, was shaped more rationally. It was reported that these voters formed orderly queues with high voter turnout before the commencement of the polls at 7 AM. Many of these voters waited in the line with a meter apart, to get their temperature checked before casting their votes for both the presidential and parliamentary candidate (The Commonwealth, 2020).

Despite the generally calm and peaceful elections, there were some reported instances of electoral malpractices and violence that dented the election process. For instance, at the Awutu Senya Constituency, an official of the Electoral Commission was caught on camera tampering some of the ballot papers and was arrested by the police (GhanaWeb, 2020e). Also, two people were reported to have been shot at the Church of Christ polling station at Kasoa in the Awutu Senya East constituency of the Central Region (GhanaWeb, 2020f). Again, one man was shot dead for snatching the ballot box at Awutu Senya West (GhanaWeb, 2020a). The Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) reported 235 cases of varied incidents from all the 4,000 polling stations it had sent observers. The top five of these cases were “intimidation/harassment; violation of COVID-19 health and safety protocols; acts of violence of various kinds; unauthorised persons at polling stations; and malfunctioning of biometric devices”, (GhanaWeb, 2020i).

Before, the declaration of the results the NDC had on three occasions claimed to have won the 2020 presidential elections and cautioned that any attempt by the EC to change the results would have ‘serious consequences’ (GhanaWeb, 2020j). On December 8, 2020 in a third press conference, flag-bearer of the NDC, John Mahama stated that the NDC “would resist any attempt to subvert the will of the people” (*ibid*). He further accused the president of trying to use the military to overturn election results at the constituencies that were won by the NDC. He added that the NDC has collated its results and are thankful to Ghanaians for the confidence they have in the party, admonishing the NDC

supporters to remain calm (*ibid*). The NPP also responded in a press conference where their General Secretary John Boadu said the NPP had won the elections in many areas considered to be the stronghold of the NDC, including a seat in the Volta Region (Graphic Online, 2020). He also mentioned that the NPP's Presidential Candidate was leading with 6,085,708 representing 52.72% (*ibid*). He added that they were confident that Nana Akufo-Addo had obtained a clear undisputable margin ahead of the NDC's presidential candidate and debunked the statement by the NDC that, they had won the elections (*ibid*).

4 Post-Election

On December 9, 2020, the EC declared the flag-bearer of the NPP Nana Akuffo-Addo as president-elect. He polled 6,730,413, representing 51.595% while John Dramani Mahama garnered 6, 214, 889 representing 47.366% (GhanaWeb, 2020k). The EC chairperson further stated that:

Currently the election results we have declared exclude that of the Techiman South Constituency, with a voter population of 128,018. The said election results are not ready because they are being contested. As such collation is not complete. The difference between the total number of votes between the first and second candidates is 515,524. As a result, even if we added the 128,018 to the results of the second candidate, it would not change the outcome of the Presidential Election. Hence our declaration of the 2020 results without that of Techiman South ... If we were to add the results from Techiman South Constituency, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo would obtain 50.8% of the votes and John Dramani Mahama, would obtain 47.873% of the votes.

GHANAWEB, 2020K

After the declarations of the presidential results, there were so many controversies over who won the elections. There was an accusation that the EC was in favour of the NPP's candidate because he appointed her as EC after the former EC Chairperson Mrs Charlottes Osei was sacked. What heightened some of these suspicions was the EC press release to correct a mistake made by the chairperson stating that on December 9, 2020 when the presidential results were declared the Chairperson "inadvertently used 13,433,573 as the total valid votes cast. The total valid votes cast is 13,119,460". The statement further explained that the change does not alter the percentages obtained by

each candidate and the declaration made by the EC chairperson (Pulse Ghana, 2020a). Tables 1 and 2 illustrate these figures and the percentages obtained by the various candidates.

TABLE 1 The 2020 presidential elections result summaries

Order on ballot	Parties	Name of candidates	Votes obtained	Votes in %
1	NPP	Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo	6,730,587	51.302%
2	NDC	John Dramani Mahama	6,213,182	47.359%
3	GUM	Christian Kwabena Andrews	105,548	0.805%
4	CPP	Ivor Kobina Greenstreet	12,200	0.093%
5	GFP	Akua Donkor	5,574	0.042%
6	GCPP	Henry Herbert Lartey	3,564	0.027%
7	APC	Hassan Ayariga	7,138	0.054%
8	LPG	Percival Kofi Akpaloo	7,683	0.059%
9	PNC	David Asibi Ayindenaba Apasera	10,882	0.083%
10	PPP	Brigette Akosua Dzobenuku	6,849	0.052%
11	NDP	Nana Konadu Agyeman-Rawlings	6,549	0.050%
12	IND	Alfred Kwame Asiedu Walker	9,704	0.074%
Total valid votes			13,119,460	
Total rejected ballots			313,397	2.333%
Total votes cast			13,432,857	
Registered voters			17,027,641	
Voter turnout			79.0%	

SOURCE: THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF GHANA

TABLE 2 The 2016 presidential elections result summaries

Candidate	Running mate	Party	Votes obtained	%
Nana Akufo-Addo	Mahamudu Bawumia	New Patriotic Party	5,755,758	53.72
John Dramani Mahama	Kwesi Amissah-Arthur	National Democratic Congress	4,771,188	44.53
Paa Kwesi Nduom	Brigitte Dzogbenuku	Progressive People's Party	106,092	0.99
Ivor Greenstreet	Gabby Nsiah Nketiah	Convention People's Party	25,552	0.24
Edward Mahama	Emmanuel Anyidoho	People's National Convention	22,214	0.21
Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings	Kojo Mensah Sosu	National Democratic Party	16,935	0.16
Jacob Osei Yeboah	Daniel Wilson Torto	Independent	15,911	0.15
Total			10,713,650	100.00
Valid votes			10,713,650	98.46
Invalid/blank votes			167,349	1.54
Total votes			10,880,999	100.00
Registered voters/turnout			15,712,499	69.25

SOURCE: THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF GHANA

Subsequently, the flag-bearer of the NDC former president John Dramani Mahama filed an election petition at the Supreme Court of Ghana. In his petition, he prayed the court that there was no winner in the 2020 General Elections, and that none of the presidential candidates obtained 50% plus one vote (Mahama, 2020). He, therefore, prayed the court to grant him the following:

- a. A declaration that Mrs Jean Adukwei Mensa, Chairperson of the 1st Respondent and the Returning Officer for the Presidential Elections held on December 7, 2020 was in breach of Article 63 (3) of the 1992 Constitutions, which states that only a candidate who garners 50 percent plus one of the total votes cast in a Presidential Election, can be declared a winner.

- b. A declaration that the purported declaration made on December 9, 2020 of the result of the Presidential Elections by Mrs Jean Adukwei Mensa, Chairperson of 1st Respondent and the Returning Officer for the Presidential Elections held on December 7, 2020 is unconstitutional, null and void and of no effect whatsoever.
- c. An order annulling the Declaration of President-Elect Instrument, 2020 (C.I. 135) dated December 9, 2020 issued under that hand of Mrs Jean Adukwei Mensa, Chairperson of 1st Respondent and the Returning Officer for the Presidential Elections held on 7th December 2020 and gazetted on December 10, 2020.
- d. An order of injunction restraining the 2nd Respondent from holding himself out as President-elect.
- e. An order of mandatory injunction directing the 1st Respondent to proceed to conduct a second election with the Petitioner and 2nd Respondent as the candidates, as required under Articles 62 940 and (5) of the 1992 Constitution (Mahama, 2020: 2-3).

The Supreme Court, made up of seven Justices after two months sitting on the case, unanimously dismissed the petitioner's case. In their 58 pages ruling, the Chief Justice, Justice Anim Yeboah stated that the case was without merit and therefore dismissed.

5 Accounting for the NPP's Victory with a Taste of Defeat

As pointed out in the earlier sections of this paper, we hypothesize that the rational choice approach (RCA) is appropriate in explaining the voter behaviour of Ghanaians in the 2020 General Elections. In this section, we show why Ghanaians voted the way they did. At the end of the elections, it became evident that the NPP won the Presidential Elections but could not win a majority of seat in Parliament, as has always been the case in all elections held in Ghana, since 1992. The elections produced a Hung Parliament of 137-137 and one independent Candidate. For the first time in the history of Ghana's Fourth Republic, a ruling party could not secure a majority of seats in parliament. This marked a victory with a taste of defeat for the NPP, that even though they won the presidency, there was a reduction in its number of seats from 169 in 2016, to 137 in 2020. It was also a defeat with a taste of victory for the NDC that lost the presidency, but increased its seats in parliament from 106 in 2016, to 137 in 2020. Some of the factors that accounted for the outcome of the elections are as follows:

1. The first reason was the imposition of Parliamentary Candidates on Constituencies leading to skirt and blouse voting (“split-ticket voting”).¹ The incumbent NPP during their 2020 election primaries, did not allow for other candidates in their party to contest in some constituencies. This decision was taken by their National Executive Committee (NEC) and the National Council meeting which were held jointly on June 3, 2020 at Alisa Hotel, Accra. Some of those present at this meeting were President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, Vice-President Dr Mahamudu Bawumia, the NPP Chairman Mr Freddie Blay, the General Secretary of the party, Mr John Boadu, among other executives, from both the national and regional levels (Hawkson, 2020). As many as 67 parliamentary aspirants were made to contest the internal primaries of the party unopposed. This did not go down well with party supporters and delegates and resulted in several fighting, altercations and aggrieved persons contesting as Independent Candidates (Ibrahim, 2020). In the Fomena Constituency for instance, the attempt to impose a candidate was resisted when the incumbent decided to contest the elections as an Independent Candidate and won. These tendencies reduced the attractiveness of the party to many of its supporters and other Ghanaian voting public.
2. The second factor was the over-concentration on the government’s Free Senior High School (SHS) policy to the neglect of other key social interventions. The Free SHS policy had been the signature policy proposal of Nana Akufo Addo, since his bid to become President of Ghana in 2008. It aims at ensuring that school children benefit from secondary school education freely, as a way of helping to build the manpower resource base of Ghana. Upon assumption of office in 2017, the President showed a clear determination to give the policy the utmost priority it deserves. The programme was implemented and in spite of its challenges, many saw it as a commitment to fulfilling a manifesto pledge. However, all other important social interventions that must be tackled to improve the lots of Ghanaians were virtually neglected. In their campaign, the NPP brazenly declared that the Free SHS was going to win more votes for them. Indeed, the Educational Minister Dr Matthew Opoku Prempeh mentioned that the implementation of the Free SHS programme, was going to win the elections for the NPP (GhanaWeb, 2020d). The point worth noting is the

1 Skirt and Blouse Voting “split-ticket voting”. This is when a voter in election votes for candidates from different political parties when multiple offices are being decided by a single election, as opposed to straight-ticket voting, where a voter chooses candidates from the same political party for every office up for election.

over-emphasis on the Free SHS and the near neglect of other crucial interventions such as one village one dam that the NPP government promised Ghanaians were faced with challenges. Apart from the Free SHS policy, all other campaign promises of the NPP were handled without much priority. So, though there was a sense of commitment towards implementing a campaign promise in the name of the Free SHS on the part of the citizenry and the government, at the same time, the people could not boldly report or tangibly feel developmental programmes in their lives. This fed into the impression that the government was a disappointment (Adogla-Bessa, 2019).

3. The third reason was the seeming tolerance for corruption by the regime and the weakening of anti-corruption institutions like the Auditor-General and Office of the Special Prosecution. The Auditor-General and Special Prosecutor had guts to “touch” key government appointees like Osafo Maafo, Senior Minister and Ken Ofori Atta, Finance Minister in some controversial deals, and paid for these by being kicked out of office and being compelled to resign respectively (Agbobli, 2020). The Special Prosecutor investigated the Finance Minister in the Agyapa Deal, in which agreements had been signed to propose the sale of 76 percent of the country’s future receipts from gold royalties to a special corporate vehicle in the British overseas territory of Jersey, a known tax haven and secrecy jurisdiction. Under the deal, Ghana would own 51 percent of the Jersey-based company, Agyapa Royalties and the remaining shares would be listed on the London Stock Exchange. In return for handing over such a large share of the future revenues, the government argued that it could raise US\$ 500 million in capital to ease its growing debt crisis by listing the 49 percent of shares. The Special Prosecutor raised several issues of conflict of interests and acts of corruption with the Deal. This is led to the exchange of letters of accusations and counter-accusations between the Office of the President and the Special Prosecutor, with the latter alleging that “the President of Ghana only looked like the innocent flower of the fight against corruption, but was indeed the mother serpent of corruption under the innocent-looking flower of anti-corruption” (ibid). Another issue was the case of alleged procurement breaches by the Senior Minister Mr Yaw Osafo Maafo and four others in which the Auditor General surcharged them and disallowed the payment of US\$ 1 million to an organization by name, Kroll and Associate in a contract that had been signed with them. The opposition NDC called on the president to order the arrest and prosecution of Mr Maafo and the rest who were involved (Graphic Online, 2019a). Mr Maafo appealed to the

Accra High Court and the court granted his appeal and rather charged the Auditor General with Contempt for failing to respond to the suit that was filed by the Senior Minister (ModernGhana.com, 2020a). In the final analysis, the Auditor-General was asked to proceed on leave prior to his retirement in a manner that led to massive condemnation from civil society and other identifiable groups in Ghana. The Special Prosecutor also resigned his post. These cases involving the Minister of Finance and the Senior Minister all contributed to making the government up popular.

4. The fourth, was the near culture of silence that made people who held divergent and critical opinions about the government, including the media, fear for their lives and the attacks on civil society organizations (CSOs) and tagging them as partisan for voicing their dissatisfaction with some government decisions. There were several reports of attacks on journalists who reported on sensitive issues. Some of these reports were cited in the *Freedom House Report's 2019* on Ghana. For instance, in February 2018, Christopher Kevin Asima, a radio presenter for *A1 Radio*, was purportedly attacked by three police officers while reporting on a fire in Bolgatanga, the capital of the Upper East Region. In March 2020, Latif Iddrisu, a reporter for *JoyNews* and *JoyFM*, was beaten by police officers for daring to question the arrest a senior NDC official who had forecasted an insurrection against the president. Also, in the 2020 *Freedom House Report* on Ghana, the National Security arrest, detention and torture of some two journalists from the *ModernGhana.com* for publishing an article against the minister. Ahmed Hussein-Suale, an investigative journalist whose reportage had uncovered high-level corruption in Ghana, was murdered in January 2019, after an NPP Member of Parliament, Kennedy Agyapong had called on the public to unleash violence against him. All civil society leaders who criticized the government, were tagged as partisan and suffered some threats and attacks for voicing their dissatisfaction with some government decisions. These tendencies created a seeming culture of silence that kept virtually all segments of the citizenry quiet, out of fear and a resolve to kick the regime out of power.
5. The fifth is the closedown of anti-government media houses such as *Radio XYZ* and *Radio Gold*. The National Communications Authority (NCA) explained that, it shut down Radio Gold and Radio XYZ because they failed to comply with the ruling of the Electronic Communications Tribunal (ECT) to regularized or renew their operation licenses (BBC News, 2019; Graphic Online, 2019c). The shutdown of Radio ZYX took place at a time when the station was broadcasting a live press conference being hosted by the NDC to address frequent police invitations of the

party's national chairman (Graphic Online, 2019b). The timing of these actions were criticized by many Ghanaians, who also wondered why pro-government media houses that had allegedly broken the ECT ruling, were not shut down.

6. The sixth reason for the outcome of the 2020 elections, was the arrogance and totalitarian tendencies exhibited by the government. Within one year of their administration, the level of arrogance exhibited by many appointees was noticeable and palpable. Some NPP members and the leaders expressed this concern themselves and noted that it accounted for the party's poor show in the 2020 elections. For instance, speaking on *Oman FM* in Accra, the Assin Central Member of Parliament Hon. Kennedy Agyapong mentioned that most of the Ministers were rude to Ghanaians. He lamented that "I constantly raised issues about the attitude of these arrogant ministers, but they said I was destroying the party" ... "Clearly, their arrogant posture nearly created problems for the NPP in the elections". He added that the majority of the supporters of the NPP were neglected and disrespected by the appointees. Nonetheless, he said, these supporters stood by the party during the polls. "The same party supporters who were neglected stood by us. It teaches us one lesson that we should not take them for granted", he said. Arrogance and the tendency to control or silence voices of dissent, dented the performance of the NPP. The quest to control the semi-autonomy of public universities and to undermine academic freedom did not only make the regime arrogant, but also totalitarian. This was resisted by many Ghanaians and accounted for the kind of votes the party garnered in the elections (Annang, 2020).
7. The seventh was the defence of nepotism and "family and friends government" after they had criticized the previous regime for doing same. In November 2019, the opposition NDC accused the Akufo-Addo government of being the most nepotistic government. The National Communications Director of the NDC, Sammy Gyamfi at a press conference mentioned 51 names of people close to the president who were appointed to various positions of power by the president (GhanaWeb, 2019b). These allegations were defended by many government officials, including the vice president Dr Mahamudu Bawumia who defended the appointees as competent. In an interview on an Accra-based Asempa FM, the vice president explained that:

"I think that if you look at what we are doing, I wouldn't honestly classify it as a family and friends government. We are delivering for the people of Ghana and using the most competent individuals we can

find to deliver for the people. So I think that the ultimate issue that we are going to look at is what we have been able to do with the people that have" ... "We have a very large diversity and I am very confident and comfortable with our team but everyone can have their own views about what family and friends are but we are just dealing with competent people",

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He added that what was important was not the critics but the judgment of the Ghanaian citizen. But these explanations did not go well with many Ghanaians, who accused the NPP of repeating the very practice of nepotism they criticized the previous government about. Generally, many Ghanaians do not see any difference between the NDC and NPP because of the tendency they both exhibit in criticizing and ill in opposition, and repeating what was criticized when they are in government. This had a telling impact on the voting pattern and produced the kind of results that made both parties taste victories and defeats.

8. The eighth explanatory variable, is the high public expectations of the government. The NPP promised to better the lives of the Ghanaian. But four years in government, not much could be reported. Rather than daring to tout tangible achievements, the regime compared itself with the previous administration in terms of achievements. The NPP made several promises to the Ghanaian voter making them have high expectations of them. Sadly, when the NPP came into office and were struggling to meet these promises they started comparing their achievement to the NDC in a manner that angered many voters who argued that, to compare the achievements of a new regime to those of an old one that had been voted out of power for non-performance, is to extol mediocrity. There were instances where government officials claimed they had fulfilled 90% of all campaign promises (Pulse Ghana, 2020b). On the contrary, IMANI a Policy Think Tank in its assessment of the government's claim, noted in 2019 that, the government had fulfilled 48.7% of their promises (Citinewsroom, 2019a).
9. The ninth reason was the annoying last-minute road construction and tarring. A year before the 2020 elections, and in some cases a few months before the elections, Ghanaians observed several abandoned road projects being resurrected and worked on. An example was the construction of the Bolga-Baku Road, the Ledzokuku-Krowor Municipal Assembly Hospital road in the Greater Accra regions (Construction Review Online, 2019a, b; Kemboi, 2019). The construction of several roads in the last minute lead up to the elections was seen as an act of vote-buying. This

TABLE 3 Presidential election results for the NDC and NPP since 1992

Political Party	Percentage of votes obtained									
	1992	1996	2000		2004	2008		2012	2016	2020
			Round	Round		Round	Round			
			1	2		1	2			
NDC	58.3%	57.4%	44.5%	43.9%	44.9%	47.9%	50.2%	50.7%	44.53%	47.36%
NPP	30.4%	39.6%	48.2%	56.9%	52.5%	49.13%	49.8%	47.7%	53.72%	51.30%
Variations	27.9%	17.8%	3.7%	13.0%	7.6%	1.23%	0.4%	3.0%	9.19%	3.94%

SOURCE: AUTHORS' COMPUTATION FROM THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF GHANA^a

a Table 2 shows the presidential results of the two major political parties NPP and NDC in Ghana's Fourth Republic. It also points out the variation in percentages of the defeat between the two parties from 1992 to 2020.

angered many people who also wondered why the projects were never undertaken prior to the election year (Kemboi, 2019).

All these factors contributed to the victory with the taste of defeat by the NPP government. Table 3 show the margin of defeat closing up from 9.19% to 3.94%, this shows that the NDC improved on its performance from the 2016 defeat.

This should be a warning to the NPP that 2024 elections would not be one that they will have on a silver platter. The outcome of the elections also show that voters made a rational choice in deciding who must lead them at the national level and within their constituencies. The factors accounting for the outcome of the elections clearly show that, voters voted in line with personal calculations and analysis of the key issues that confronted them in the lead up to the elections. The sociological, party identification, and dominant ideology models that tend to shape voter behaviour in Ghana may have played only a limited role in the 2020 elections. Clearly, the preponderant explanation of the outcome of the 2020 elections points to the fact that voters are now discerning, open-minded and wise. Their choice in the 2020 elections and subsequent choices are likely to be shaped by rational factors.

6 Conclusion

The outcome of the 2020 General Elections in Ghana thrilled many. Ghanaians have been hailed for demonstrating rationality in expressing and exercising

their choice in an election. As already indicated, although the incumbent president won the presidential elections, his party the NPP barely got a majority in parliament. Ghana's parliament, for the first time in the history of the Fourth Republic, since 1992, was divided by a 137 and 137 split of seats between NPP and NDC, with an independent candidate, who was a former NPP member of parliament. This was a historical first for Ghana and was seen as a resounding call by Ghanaians on parliament to deepen its role as countervailing authority to the powers of the executive arm of government. However, the reported cases of violence at some polling stations, dented the almost successful elections. Given these challenges, Professor Emmanuel Gyimah-Boadi, a renowned Ghanaian Political Scientist described the electoral processes as "highly flawed". In an interview with Bernard Avle on Citi TV, an Accra-based television station, on March 10, 2021, he opined that even though Ghana's electoral process might have seen some major improvement, and Ghana can be proud of having another successful election with limited challenges nonetheless, the electoral violence and general democratic backsliding, leaves much to be desired. This makes the conduct of the next major elections in 2024, which promises to be a keenly contested one, quite troubling (Nyabor, 2021). Celebrating Ghana's drive towards democratic maturity and the drive to push towards issues-based voting, cannot be fully meaningful, without conscious efforts to rid elections off all violence that have characterized virtually every election since 1992.

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