



Politikon

South African Journal of Political Studies

 Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cpsa20>

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To cite this article: Emmanuel Debrah & Isaac Owusu-Mensah (2023): How Electoral Integrity Matters in an Era of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic: Experience from Ghana's Eighth General Election, Politikon, DOI: [10.1080/02589346.2023.2215027](https://doi.org/10.1080/02589346.2023.2215027)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02589346.2023.2215027>



Published online: 26 May 2023.



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How Electoral Integrity Matters in an Era of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic: Experience from Ghana's Eighth General Election

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ABSTRACT

This article examined whether, in the pandemic, the conduct of Ghana's 2020 general elections conformed to acceptable international standards or not? Analysing data drawn from 120 respondents based on face-to-face and telephone interviews, the study established that the measures for pre-election and polling day activities guaranteed the integrity of the elections. The electoral laws and system, the mechanics for voter registration, polling, and balloting were fair, transparent, and inclusive. The fair application of the electoral laws, openness, and stakeholders' active participation in the electoral process obviated fraud. Both domestic and international observers validated the election result declared by the EC because the processes satisfied the standards for free and fair elections even though Ghanaian diasporas were disenfranchised, and a few administrative and technical challenges occurred. Hence, electoral reform targeting efficient management, enlargement of the franchise to capture diasporas' votes, and an electoral system that supports proportional representation albeit a possibility of proliferation of parties, would improve electoral integrity for deepening democratic development.

Introduction

Ghana is one Sub-Saharan African country that has received much commendation for promoting democratic governance since it returned to constitutional rule in 1992. Apart from sustaining the functioning of democratic institutions such as parliament, executive, and independent judiciary, it has institutionalised multiparty politics (Gyimah-Boadi 2001; Ayee 2017; Debrah 2016). In contrast to the previous culture of regime changes through coup d'états, elections have become the only game in town (Linz and Stepan 1996). The regularly organised elections have been competitive to the extent that they have produced power alternations between the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) – two strong political parties, at different junctures. But the 1992 transition election was never smooth and ended in the opposition parties' boycott of the December parliamentary poll after they contended that the earlier presidential election in November was a stolen verdict (NPP 1992). The opposition parties alleged that the Interim National Electoral Commission (INEC) that was hurriedly created by the military regime was biased in favour of the incumbent, Jerry Rawlings, the presidential candidate of the NDC and leader of the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) who also supervised the transition. In the Stolen Verdict, the opposition

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catalogued a number of electoral frauds, and threatened non-cooperation with the government unless electoral reforms were implemented (Commonwealth Secretariat 1992; NPP 1992; Debrah 2004). The attack on the integrity of the 1992 election was not an isolated case in Africa. Mozaffar and Schedler (2002) have reported how election management during transitions in many African countries was characterised by administrative inefficiency, lack of political neutrality, and accountability, thereby creating uncertainties about the future of African democratisation. However, the problems with the integrity of Ghana's transition election offered the democratic stakeholders the opportunity to overhaul the electoral process in order to ignite voter confidence in its management (Gyimah-Boadi 1999; Debrah 2011; Pastor 1999). With support from the International Federation for Electoral System (IFES), Ghana's Electoral Commission (EC) worked closely with the political parties to promote professionalism in the management of the subsequent elections – which both the international and domestic election observers have rated as relatively free and fair (Commonwealth Secretariat 2000, 2012; Gyimah-Boadi 2001; Ayee 1997; CODEO 2012, 2016; Debrah 2016). Yet, in early 2020 when the EC inaugurated the calendar for the 8th general election, it was greeted with negative reactions. The scepticism about the EC's decision to implement an electoral timetable was largely informed by the outbreak of the Coronavirus (COVID-19)¹, which by the time the World Health Organization (WHO) declared it a pandemic in February 2020, had begun to show signs of its capacity to devastate nations – the increased infections and deaths were alarming – by the end of May 2020, the infection in Ghana had reached 7,768 (John Hopkins 2020). Yet, global actions in the form of lockdowns aimed to curb its spread led to economic knock-downs of which developing countries, particularly Africa was the hardest hit by its devastating effect (World Bank 2020). It was not only on the economic front that COVID-19 wobbled the world. Democracy too, trembled under its 'sovereignty'. Countries that had scheduled elections during the period such as Ghana, faced a dilemma of either postponing or bravely implementing the election plan.

The dissenting views to the EC's decision to hold the presidential and parliamentary elections largely coalesced around how to maintain the integrity of the election in the pandemic situation. Indeed, the literature on emergency politics has already noted that pandemics could encourage the exercise of emergency powers by the executive in a manner that can weaken democratic institutions. For instance, according to Maatsch (2020) and Afsahi, et al. (2020), pandemics often present potential risks for institutions of accountability to exercise their oversight powers; embolden the executive to place restrictions on citizens' freedoms – silence its critics, and make irrational decisions that could affect voters (Posner and Vermeule 2006; Gargarella 2020). On the other hand, it has been contended that during periods of increased threats such as pandemics, well-motivated institutions such as election management bodies will not renege on their responsibility to provide adequate safeguards against possible democratic institutional failure (Posner and Vermeule 2006). Hence, in the wake of popular apprehensions, the EC assured the stakeholders of developed measures to sustain the rule of law, transparency, inclusivity, and fairness of the electoral process. The EC's position suggests that it is possible to conduct free and fair elections in a pandemic situation (Honig 2009).

Therefore, agreeing with Norris, Frank, and Martínez i Coma (2014) and Mauk (2020) that electoral integrity lies at the core of democratic procedures, the paper examines how the conduct of the elections in terms of the implementation of the electoral laws

and system, voter registration, polling, and balloting reflected international norms of fairness, transparency, and inclusivity. Paying attention to these variables is important because according to Elklit and Reynolds (2002), a free and fair election has a direct impact on political legitimacy and democratic consolidation in new democracies. Why is this study significant when the literature on democratisation in Ghana is already chocked with election studies (Ayee 1997; Ayee 2011; Boafo-Arthur 2008; Gyimah-Boadi 1997; Debrah 2004). Although much ink has been poured into the management of elections in Ghana by the EC (Debrah 2011; Gyimah-Boadi 1999; Ayee 1998); the role of the electoral process in fostering free and fair elections (Debrah 2003); the impact of political parties and manifestoes on the elections (Ayee 2002); issue-based voting (Debrah 2016; Arthur 2009), analysis of elections' outcome (Ayee 2017); the role of election observers and the impact of money on the elections (Ayee 1998; Ayee 2011; Debrah 2019), gauging election integrity has been a forgotten variable in the burgeoning literature on democratisation in Ghana. Yet determining the credibility of elections goes beyond what happens on ballot day to include the totality of the electoral process (Goodwin-Gill 2006). Therefore, this study endeavours to fill the void by arguing that election integrity – conducting elections that met international standards is of paramount importance for nascent democracies, which cannot be compromised under any circumstance – whether during pandemics or not. This would illuminate our understanding of the quality of electoral democracy that has emerged in Ghana and how it represents an important step towards consolidating its democracy².

The study is structured as follows: first, the introduction, which encapsulates the review of the salient literature is followed by the second, conceptualisation of democratic-election nexus in order to provide a context for comprehending the relevant issues. Third, it delineates salient aspects of the electoral process³ and examines whether their implementation met acceptable international standards of fairness, transparency, and inclusiveness or not? The fourth section is devoted to the conclusion and lessons that have been learned from the study.

Conceptual imperative: democracy-election nexus

Until fairly recently, Western scholars who devoted attention to the prerequisites of democracy settled on the Protestant religion, middle class, economic development, and culture as the impeccable intervening causative factors (McKinnon 2010; Pastor 1999; Lipset 1994). These democratic theorists contended that the prevalence of democracy in Western industrialised societies such as the United Kingdom, United States, and France was the result of the presence of mediating factors. However, when later empirical evidence proved that societies that had experienced modernisation – economic development did not become democratic – and others that did receded to authoritarian rule, Lipset (1994, 7–17) was encouraged to conclude that 'the various factors (old conditions) shape the probabilities, but they do not determine the outcomes'. Following the demise of the Cold War in 1989 (with the collapse of the Berlin Wall), the focus of the debate about the environmental factors that precipitate the emergence of democracy has shifted to the possibility that improvement in the level of development would lead to the transition phase albeit not enough to

guarantee a full entry to democracy (Huntington 1991; Bratton and Van de Walle 1987; Diamond 1997).

Yet, recent studies have revealed that the most distinguishing factor aiding the transition zone towards democracy is election (Lijphart 1997; Huntington 1991; Bratton and Van de Walle 1987; Diamond 1997; Gyimah-Boadi 1997). Thus, the democracy-election argument has been reinforced by the fact that since the 'Third Wave' of democratisation dismantled the authoritarian infrastructures in much of the developing world, the election has been the instrument for navigating the transitions to inaugurate new eras of constitutional regimes (Pastor 1996; Elklit and Reynolds 2002). In these societies, democracy has been understood as 'a system of government by which people choose their leaders in a free election' (Pastor 1999, 5). In contrast to military regimes that capture power through coup d'états – violence, elections are the institutionalised means by which large numbers of people (electorate) participate peacefully in the choice and disposal of their governments. This definition has been affirmed by the United Nations (1996, 352) when it noted that representative democracy is 'where citizens participate in the conduct of public affairs through freely chosen representatives'. Due to its legitimising effect, some authoritarian regimes have even conducted elections to tie the government to the people – albeit the elections being a facade. Besides, it has been contended that no matter the plethora of needs citizens might have, they value their participation in the political system via regular elections because of their belief that voting reinforces their self-esteem and self-respect (Lijphart 1997; Diamond 1997). Furthermore, it has been acknowledged that only through elections do representatives gain legitimacy and become accountable for the exercise of power. Indeed, many scholars believe that it is unthinkable to imagine there being democracy without an election (Huntington 1991; Diamond 1997; Elklit and Reynolds 2002; Gyimah-Boadi 2007). For Diamond (1997), the election is the lifeblood of democracy. Hence, it is becoming increasingly evident that in much of the developing societies, elections have become a ritual affair, and represent the singular manifestation of democracy – and largely the means for consolidating it – two turnovers (Huntington 1991).

While election has led to the flourishing of democracy, at least, in many of the developing world, there is still a strong challenge to it as the salient indicator that facilitates democratic consolidation. Consequently, Linz and Stepan (1996) have labelled it as 'electoralist fallacy' and other scholars to have dismissed 'electoralism' as an ethno-centric diversion from genuine democracy – because the election is not the only source of democratic legitimacy (Kaplan 1997; Schmitter and Karl 1991). The objectors to the procedural-democracy paradigm have explained that democracy should not be just about holding periodic elections but also promoting electoral governance. Yet, while Mozaffar and Schedler (2002) have emphasised the critical role electoral governance plays in securing the credibility and continued legitimacy of democratic elections, Pastor (1999) and Elklit and Reynolds (2002) have insisted that electoral governance alone would not guarantee free and fair elections (promote the integrity of elections) because of the prevalence of complex array of socio-politico-economic forces that tend to affect the electoral process. For instance, according to (Norris, Frank, and Martínez i Coma 2014), countless reports have revealed astonishing problems relating to electoral fraud including ballot stuffing, gerrymandering, and voter intimidation (Birch 2011; Norris, Frank, and Martínez i Coma 2013); irregularities in vote counting (Breunig and Goerres 2011) and popular

perception about the bias of election management bodies (Pastor 1999; Mozaffar and Schedler 2002) as well as voter suppression laws that target minority voters in many nascent democracies (Hajnal, Lajevardi, and Nielson 2017; Wang 2012; Mauk 2020). Yet, the prevalence of these weaknesses is largely the inability of the elections to meet the threshold of electoral integrity – the management of elections to reflect globally acceptable laws and conventions (Hyde 2011; Kelley 2012; Norris, Frank, and Martínez i Coma 2014), democratic norms (Birch 2011; Pastor 1999; Elklit and Reynolds 2002) and national laws (Minnite 2010). Therefore, achieving credible elections requires that the management of the electoral process should follow strict democratic principles such as transparency, fairness, and inclusivity (Goodwin-Gill 2006; Pastor 1999; Elklit and Reynolds 2002; Norris, Frank, and Martínez i Coma 2014).

The methodology

This paper is based on primary data collected from January 9, 2021 – February 22, 2021, with follow-ups from March 22–31, 2021 to examine whether or not the conduct of Ghana’s 2020 election conformed to international standards for credible elections despite the outbreak of COVID-19. The study employed the qualitative method because it allows for analysing the interactions among key variables and explaining the ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions to obtain valuable insights into the quality of the conduct of the election and its outcome. In particular, the in-depth interview approach created room for flexibility/follow-ups and probing for clarifications of ambiguous responses (Lavrakas 2008). For instance, the researcher made follow-up contacts with some key respondents to clarify opinions on issues at various phases of the data collection, processing, and analysis.

In all, 120 respondents were chosen for the in-depth interviews, comprised of 20 officials, and 100 registered voters drawn from 10 selected constituencies in 3 of Ghana’s 16 regions, namely Ashanti, Volta, and Greater Accra. These regions reflect the geopolitics of the country: the Ashanti and Volta regions are the NPP and NDC’s electoral strongholds respectively while Greater Accra region swings between the two (See Table 1). Moreover, while Ashanti and Volta regions are predominantly Akans and Ewes that have consistently voted for the two parties respectively, the

Table 1. Electoral patterns between the NDC and NPP in the three regions.

Issues	Region				
	Ashanti		Greater Accra	Volta	
Voter register					
2016	2,872,619		3,063,990		
2020	1,282,306				
	3,013,856		3,509,805		
	1,282,814				
Presidential election	NPP	NDC	NPP	NDC	NPP
Results	NDC				
2016	1,640,694	503,497	1,062,157	946,048	135,077
	629,398				
2020	1,795,824	653,149	1,253,179	326,489	100,481
	606,508				

Source EC February 2021.

Greater Accra region where the capital of the country is located, is a mixture of all ethnic groups in the country.

The constituencies were selected in proportion to the electoral population in the 3 regions based on the EC's published voters' register used in the 2020 elections (See [Table 1](#)). Consequently, the distribution of the 10 constituencies was as follows: Greater Accra 4, Ashanti 4, and Volta 2. Given the homogeneous electoral characteristics at the regional level, the choice of constituencies was done randomly. The method, which involved blindfolding a research assistant to pick a constituency from the gazetted lists of constituencies in the respective regions available at the headquarters of the EC produced Shai-Osudoku, Tema East, Ga West and Ayawaso Wuogon (Greater Accra), Asante Akim South, Oforikrom, Bantama and Kwabre West (Ashanti), and Ho Central and Anlo South (Volta) regions. The same procedure was followed to pick two polling stations from each constituency. In each of these two polling stations, 5 voters were picked from the voter's register using systematic sampling techniques, which involved selecting every other fifth name on the register as the respondent. Relying on the District Assembly member for the locality/electoral area, these respondents were identified, contacted, and interviewed.

On the other hand, the 20 officials, namely EC 6, CODEO 3, Lecturers 3, and Party Agents 8 were selected purposively because of their in-depth knowledge of the conduct of the election (they participated in every stage of the electoral process). While the EC officers were at the centre of the election management, CODEO Officers and party agents were trained in the election mechanics and monitored the implementation of the election process, the lecturers from the Department of Political Science, University of Ghana, teach courses in Electoral Politics and Democracy in Ghana and have conducted election surveys. On the other hand, the 100 were ordinary registered voters who went through the registration and voting processes (participated and observed the process) and therefore were well-informed about the electoral procedures and activities involved.

While the primary information for this study came from direct interactions, face-to-face, and telephone interviews (aided by semi-structured questions) with the respondents, the secondary data involved the review of the theoretical and empirical literature on democracy, democratisation, and elections. The semi-structured questions, which directed the interviews covered critical issues about how the conduct of the elections met acceptable international standards of fair, transparent, and inclusive election management. The overall data obtained through the in-depth interviews and field notes (personal observations/direct contacts) were transcribed and, organised the ideas flowing from them into salient analytical themes. In order to illuminate our understanding of the nature of whether the conduct of the elections met international standards for free and fair elections or not, a synthesis of the primary and secondary data was done. Also, the data collection and analysis have carefully complied with the required research ethical standards by guaranteeing the anonymity of all interviewees.

Ghanaian electoral laws and system

International norms on elections require states to adopt internal laws, procedures, and systems that are favourable to the attainment of free and fair elections (Goodwin-Gill

2006). The saliency of legislation as a constituent part of free and fair elections has been annotated in many scholarly works. In their study about how to promote election integrity, Elklit and Reynolds (2002) have maintained that the effective conduct of democratic elections requires a legal framework that sets the ground rules to give direction to the activities of all stakeholders. While the United Nations (1991, 11) acknowledges the prevalence of multiplicity of electoral laws, ‘sovereign nations are encouraged to create laws that are in accord with the will of their people’ as well as ‘meeting acceptable international standards’ (Goodwin-Gill 2006). According to Elklit and Reynolds (2002), codified laws (constitutions, statutes, and regulations) that promote fairness and are easily available to all stakeholders ought to be the first activity to be promulgated prior to the implementation of the electoral process. The legitimacy of the conduct of the Ghanaian elections was derived from important legislations, namely the 1992 Constitution (the parent legislation), statutes (Representation of the People Act 1992, Presidential Elections Act 1992, Electoral Commission Act 1993, Political Parties Act 2000), and others such as Public Election Regulations (Constitutional Instrument – C.I 15) 1996, Public Elections Regulations – C.I 75, 2012, Political Parties Code of Conduct 2012, and Public Elections (Registration of Voters Regulations – C.I 91), 2016. These legislations that governed the conduct of the elections are consistent with the standards set by the Inter-parliamentary Union (IPU) because they ensured that:

Every citizen of Ghana of eighteen years of age or above and of sound mind (had) the right to vote and (was) entitled to be registered as a voter for the purposes of (the) elections (Republic of Ghana 1992, 51).

Even though the pandemic ranged on, the EC leaned on the pieces of legislations (which mandate it to hold elections every 4 years) to implement the electoral procedures to give voters the opportunity to choose the President and 275 legislators (Members of Parliament – MPs). The foundation upon which the EC guaranteed fairness of the elections lay with Article 42 of the 1992 Constitution, which stipulates that the supreme principle for the conduct of elections is ‘one man one vote’ (Republic of Ghana 1992, 50). Therefore, when stakeholders were asked to indicate whether the elections conformed to best international practice, they were unanimous in their remark that, ‘the laws guaranteed the fundamental human rights of all adult citizens to participate in the choice of their political leaders – without discrimination’ even though Ghanaian Diasporas did not participate (Interview, Party Agents, EC Director, Accra, February 2021).

Similarly, the Ghanaian electoral system – the seat allocation arrangements – the method whereby the votes of citizens determine the choice of the executives and legislators (Lijphart 1994; Nohlen 1996) syncs with best international practice. For instance, the electoral system, which is based on the majoritarian principle stresses the importance of a reasonable link between the electors and the elected even though it is not based on the proportional representation system. Nevertheless, in consonance with agreed international standards, the electoral system facilitates the full expression of the will of the people (Interview, Lecturers in Political Science, Accra, February 2021). This is because ‘the threshold requirements in the electoral laws and system did not deny representation to smaller parties . . . and also, participation in the elections was not conditioned upon securing a prescribed percentage of votes in previous elections’ (Interview, Party Agents, EC Officer & Lecturer in Political Science, Accra, February 2021). Indeed, the

application of universal suffrage did not disenfranchise any minority ethnic group in the country. The salient ingredients in the laws are supportive of the principle of 'equality of voting power' to the extent that none of the votes cast in the elections carried more weight than others. Despite this, it must be emphasised that the existing Ghanaian electoral system and its implementation had a direct effect on the political rights of the citizens. Thus, while the electoral system (the majoritarian system) has evolved a two-party model within the prevailing multi-party framework with remarkable stability over equity in representation, the smaller parties and independent candidates were severely disadvantaged even though it projected fairness and transparency of the process (See [Table 2](#)).

Registering the voters

The centrality of the electoral roll to the organisation of free and fair elections is widely acknowledged (Goodwin-Gill 2006; Pastor 1999; Elklit and Reynolds 2002). Citizens who qualify to vote, need to register. Voter registration, the process of cataloguing names of all citizens who are eligible to vote is an important step to guarantee the integrity of the vote (Commonwealth Secretariat 1992; Elklit and Reynolds 2002; Debrah 2011). It is a legitimate act that gives practical meaning to the right to vote. In other words, without registering, a voter cannot vote in an election. To this end, states ensure that citizens who are eligible to vote are given the opportunity to register (Interview, EC Deputy Chairperson, Accra, January 2021). Scholars have identified, at least, two typologies of voter registration, namely self-initiated and the state-initiated system. While the former is where voters take the initiative to register to vote (voluntary), the latter refers to the system where eligible voters are registered by states or their accredited agencies at the national or local government level (Goodwin-Gill 2006). In some jurisdictions with reliable demographic data and modern technologies such as Denmark, a continuous and update of the register by the automatic inclusion of new entrants is a recurring feature of their voter registration system. Yet, in other countries, particularly those where election stakeholders are distrustful of each other even though not always the case, citizens are prompted to register through the actions of those with constitutional power to register voters. Whereas in the United Kingdom and Canada that carry out yearly voter registration, forms may be issued to eligible voters by enumerators – who may visit homes to carry out the exercise, in many nascent democracies such as Ghana, the official registration period may be announced during which citizens submit themselves to registration officers for their names to be captured on the roll (Goodwin-Gill 2006; Aye 1998; Debrah 2018).

Ghanaian electoral laws promote the state-centred registration system. The institution with constitutional mandate to register voters is the EC. Yet, the EC faced an uphill challenge of having to undertake a comprehensive voter registration at a time when COVID-

Table 2. Performance of smaller parties in the election.

Party	GUM	CPP	ACP	LPG	PNC	GCPP	PPP
Votes obtained presidential poll	105,548	12,200	7,138	7,683	10,882	3,564	6,849
Seats obtained in parliamentary poll	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: EC, February 2021.

19 infection cases were surging and the opposition NDC had proclaimed its postponement. The decision by the EC to compile fresh voters' roll rather than updating the old, heightened popular fears that voter mobility from the cities – endemic areas to the districts would lead to the spread of the pandemic (Interview, EC Official, Accra, January 2021). Notwithstanding the objection from some of the stakeholders because of the pandemic, the EC indicated its determination to undertake the exercise. Towards this, it rolled out a comprehensive programme to compile a fresh voters' register from June 30, 2020 to August 6, 2020. Although infections rose from 453 to 761 during the early registration period, by the end of the exercise, they had plummeted below 200 (John Hopkins 2020). What pragmatic measures did the EC institute that yielded this outcome and promoted the credibility of the election process generally?

First, the EC created conditions that 'enhanced the health safety of voters in the wake of the pandemic' (Interview, EC Officials, Accra, January 2021). A two-day nationwide pilot to assess the efficacy of the registration mechanics in the pandemic environment was undertaken – this allowed the EC to design a relatively risk-free registration process. An innovative approach for the registration was the 'introduction of electronically generated queue system that involved the issuance of chits to voters to restrict the number of registrants per day – a crowd control measure geared towards avoiding the spread of COVID-19 infection' (Interview, EC Director, Accra, January 2021). In addition, only 700 voters could register at a single registration centre and banned political parties from mobilising their supporters to register through the mass rally approach. Instead, they were restricted to the door-to-door and social media mode of voter education.

Second, it operated within acceptable international standards: the legal requirement to register was based on citizenship and universal suffrage, namely a 'citizen of Ghana of eighteen years of age or above, and of sound mind ...' (Republic of Ghana 1992, 34). From the non-discriminatory viewpoint, the statutory stipulation for the registration did not limit qualification to religion, gender, region, social status, or denied the right of minorities and marginalised groups such as women to participate in the elections. Also, unlike in some countries that maintain residency requirements as a basic condition for registering to vote (Goodwin-Gill 2006), the Ghanaian voter registration regulations only restrained citizens suffering from a mental disability. The justification for disenfranchising the mentally unsound has been defended on the grounds that 'those people cannot make rational voting decisions' (Interview, Lecturers in Political Science, Accra, February 2021). Besides, the disqualification criterion is proportional and not a strategy to disenfranchise a targeted segment of the population even though elsewhere, the Canadian Courts have established that a category of the mentally handicapped is constitutionally entitled to vote (Goodwin-Gill 2006). Also, the principle of inclusivity requires the extension of the franchise to overseas residents, however, the registration system disenfranchised the many Ghanaian diasporas albeit the Representation of the Peoples Amendment Act 2006 (Act 699) mandating their inclusion. Therefore, the justification for the non-inclusion of the diasporas in the election on grounds of logistical and structural difficulties undermined the principle of suffrage for all Ghanaians regardless of whether they are at home or abroad (Interview, CODEO Official & Lecturer in Political Science, Accra, February 2021).

Acceptable international practice requires that a voter registration system should provide in advance the eligibility criteria (Goodwin-Gill 2006). Hence, in the voter education that preceded the exercise, the EC outlined the basic requirements for registration.

Also, the detailed eligibility criteria were made part of the content of the published Election Manual used for the training of its temporarily recruited staff. The Registration Instrument made Ghanaian passport or national identification card (NIC) the basic criterion for proof of citizenship. This was in sharp contrast to the previous requirement of a national insurance card, birth certificate, or an old voter identification card. However, in lieu of a passport or NIC, two registered persons could guarantee the citizenship status of an applicant (Interview, EC Director (Accra) & Voters (Study Area), January 2021).

An important step towards inclusivity and transparency was the involvement of political parties and other stakeholders in the monitoring and auditing of the registration process. Each political party presented an agent to witness the packaging and distribution of the registration materials from the EC headquarters to the registration centres. At the end of each registration day, the agents authenticated the exercise by signing a form (Interview, EC Director & Party Agents, Accra, February 2021). Prompt publication of provisional voter register and effective procedure to correct errors are fundamental to the attainment of free and fair elections (Goodwin-Gill 2006). The exhibition of the voters' register was part of the strategy to ensure the accuracy of the voters' roll. The period was used to restore names that had been inadvertently omitted and expunge the wrongly included such as underaged as well as duplications (Interview, EC Director, Party Agents (Accra) & Voter (Study Area), 2021). The final published list of nearly 17 million voters was accepted by all stakeholders as 'accurate, reliable and dependable' (Interview, Official of the EC & Executives of Political Parties, Accra, March 2021).

Disputes are inevitable in elections, however, what matters is the availability of trusted mechanisms of conflict resolution (Goodwin-Gill 2006; Norris 2014). Two issues generated conflict among the stakeholders during the administration of the registration exercise, namely, 'the reduction of proof of citizenship to passport/NIC, and the allegation that some EC officers had issued photo identity cards to some voters without the involvement of party agents' (Interview, NDC MPs, Accra, February 2021). Unlike in other jurisdictions where conflicts emanating from aspects of the electoral process have led to civil wars, the disagreement over the legal criterion was resolved through both the consensus approach – the Inter-Party Advisory Committee (IPAC) platform, and the courts. Since electoral reforms in 1996, the electoral process has institutionalised dialogue and consultation (through the IPAC) as the acceptable framework for resolving inter-party and EC conflicts. Although IPAC's intervention diffused tension over the issue, other groups sought the opinion of the Supreme Court for a final determination. In the end, the Supreme Court established that 'the eligibility criterion would prevent electoral fraud thereby enhancing the acceptability of the final register as authoritative and dependable for use by the parties' door-to-door campaigns, the discharge of their agents' duties and use by the EC on polling day' (Interview, EC Director & Party Agents, Accra, February 2021; Also see Commonwealth Observer Group 1992). Similarly, notwithstanding the occurrence of sporadic violence in some constituencies, respondents extolled the integrity of the registration process noting in particular 'the relatively peaceful and orderly manner and public health safety environment within which the exercise was carried out' (Interview, EC Director, Party Agents & Lecturer in Political Science, Accra, February 2021) – a fact attested to by CODEO (2020, 3) when it wrote, 'the registration process was generally orderly, peaceful and devoid of malpractices and fraud'. Thus, the voter registration exercise and the publication of the

verifiable list of the electors contributed to voters' confidence-building and in turn, fairness of the elections. Thus, the overall voter registration process and its outcome satisfied the standard set by the IPU (1993, 12–13):

The voters' roll is inclusive rather than exclusive (when) ... it has not been corrupted by the systematic exclusion of particular voters (and therefore), affords the electorate at large, a reasonable opportunity to vote (because it is) not a barrier to a free and fair election.

The polling process

Among the critical components of the electoral process that must be effectively managed for a free and fair election to occur, polling, the organisation, and management of voting, stands out (Goodwin-Gill 2006; Elklit and Reynolds 2002; Debrah 2011). This is because what happens on election day has a direct effect on the outcome of elections. Among other pre-polling activities necessary for confidence building, the presence of election officials well-versed (competent) in the procedures has been acknowledged (Goodwin-Gill 2006). This requires the recruitment and training of polling station personnel who would uphold neutrality to administer the process (Elklit and Reynolds 2002). Against the backdrop of fraud committed by election staff in previous elections (NPP 1992), the election stakeholders admonished the strategic recruitment of temporary polling officials for the election. Consequently, the lists of those recruited were subjected to public scrutiny: political parties were permitted to raise their objection to the enlistment of those they suspected not to be neutral. To enhance public confidence in the personnel, the EC District Officers posted the lists on the notice boards in their respective office in the 275 districts. Although temporary election staff may be drawn from state institutions and therefore are competent in their own administrative fields, schooling them on the election mechanics has been necessary because in nascent democracies such as Ghana:

(Often) technical problems converge into political ones, threatening the entire process. (While) technical problems are inevitable, in a polarised environment, one group is likely to see 'irregularities' as politically inspired by the other side (Pastor 1999, 10).

Contrary to claims by some Western scholars that '... poor countries have low levels of education, and thus the pool from which the country selects its (election) administrators is very shallow. (And that), the capacity of such an administration to conduct complex bureaucratic tasks like elections is low' (Pastor 1999, 10), those recruited and trained were highly educated and technically competent to manage the polls. Drawn largely from the Ghana Education Service and other institutions, those who performed the electoral tasks, namely teachers, civil servants, and university students were high-calibre educated people. Besides, they underwent comprehensive training on the rule application and interpretation regarding polling and balloting processes (Interview, EC Director & Party Agents, Accra, February 2021). The decentralisation of the recruitment and training of the election staff to the district level enhanced their familiarity with the local terrain and easy deployment to the polling stations (Interview, EC Director, Accra, February 2021). Each polling station was assigned five personnel with specific tasks to perform on polling day. The five comprised, a presiding officer as head, and four assistants with divided responsibilities such as checking of voters' names on the register, verification of their fingers on the biometric machine, issuance of ballot papers, and application of

indelible ink on their fingers (Interview, EC Officer (Accra) & Voters (Study Areas), January 2021).

A salient issue associated with polling in most developing democracies is the question of the location of polling stations and their accessibility to voters (Elklit and Reynolds 2002; Goodwin-Gill 2006). The argument has been made that the right to vote is also about the voters' ability to access the polling booths on election day to cast their ballots. The access principle would also mean voters' ability to locate the polling stations where they would vote. Ideally, the polling stations should be identifiable to ordinary voters. In other words, voters must be familiar with the places where the polling stations have been cited and as much as possible be close to where they reside. This point has been emphasised by the Commonwealth Observer Group (1992, 14) when it wrote, 'accessibility, in the sense that polling booths should be so sited that voters do not have to travel far ... more than 5 kilometres to vote'. A key strategy adopted to fulfil this requirement was the policy to translate registration stations into polling stations so that voters cast their ballots in the same place where they registered to vote (Interview, EC Deputy-Chair, Accra, February 2021). Also, the polling stations were cited in popular state facilities in the communities, which made accessibility (location of polling stations) easy for the voters. Most respondents confirmed this, 'it was not difficult to identify and access the polling station when I went to cast my vote' (Interview, Voters, Study Area, January 2021). Furthermore, 'the polling station accessibility policy extended to include the ability of the physically challenged persons to enter the stations to cast their ballots with considerable ease' (Interview, EC Director, Accra, February 2021).

Transparency of the polling process was one of the key highlights of the elections. One measure put in place to guarantee this was the acceptance of party representatives to monitor the process. The EC certified a representative of each of all parties and independent candidates that took part in the elections to verify the detailed procedures in the polling stations. These agents underwent intra-party training in the polling and counting procedures. Their task was to ensure the security of the ballot box by checking that voting was secret, the officers applied indelible ink to deter double voting, the ballot boxes and their contents were emptied before voting began. They also monitored the counting of the ballots, declaration of results, and during transportation of ballot boxes to the collation centres in order to ensure that there was no tampering with the ballots – this activity was important against the opposition parties' claim that 'substitution of ballots often occurs during transportation of ballot boxes' (Interview EC Officer & Party Agents, Accra, February 2021).

Equal suffrage is an established principle that guarantees credible elections. It means that no vote should have greater value than any other vote. This requires creating measures to promote proper layout of polling stations and management of voting streams as well as those that guard against multiple voting, such as those that scrupulously scrutinise voters' cards and marking voters with indelible ink to distinguish those who have cast their ballots from those who have not (Goodwin-Gill 2006; Elklit and Reynolds 2002; Pastor 1999). Towards this goal, voters were directed to follow the delineated step-by-step voting procedures by first joining the orderly queue controlled by an EC-accredited COVID-19 Ambassador and state security officer (police, custom, fire-service, or immigration) on arrival at the polling station. Second, the voter submitted the photo ID card to a polling assistant who crosschecked the name on the voters' register, and another authenticated the voters' identity on the biometric verification device. Third,

the voter was issued with both the Presidential and Parliamentary Ballot papers after an indelible ink had been applied on one of the fingers – a mark to indicate that the voter has already cast the ballot – a technique against double voting (Interview, EC & CODEO Officers (Accra), Voters (Study Area), January 2021).

The secrecy of the ballot is as crucial as the right to vote. Hence in many jurisdictions, it is protected by law and other electoral rules. Therefore, a system or practice of not using voting booths has become anachronistic to democratic elections. According to Goodwin-Gill (2006), one measure that supports the secret ballot principle is adequate screens. In the fourth voting step, voters were directed to mark their Presidential and Parliamentary candidates on the ballot papers on separate tables on which have been erected Card-board Voting Screens to prevent outsiders from viewing the voters' choice of candidate (Interview, EC & CODEO Officers (Accra), Voters (Study Area), January 2021). In the final step, the voter placed the marked and folded ballot papers (presidential and parliamentary) into transparent ballot boxes placed in open spaces respectively, after which the voter exited the Polling Station and could return to observe counting after the close of polls at 5 pm (Interview, EC & CODEO Officers (Accra), Voters (Study Area), January 2021). Whereas in previous elections, some elderly illiterate and visually impaired voters were denied secret voting (because they received help from the presiding officers) – a measure that raised suspicion of fraud, care was taken to discourage the marking of ballots of illiterate voters in the presence of party agents. Also, the designing of braille ballot papers for use by visually impaired persons guaranteed their independent voting choices.

Mindful of the need to contain the spread of the pandemic, the EC enforced the WHO-prescribed methods at the polling centres. Each polling centre had handwashing facilities, temperature guns, and alcohol-based sanitisers, and wearing of facemasks and social distancing were made mandatory. The designated EC COVID-19 Ambassador and the election security officers received EC instruction to enforce the protocols at all polling stations even though lapses occurred at several places with the risk of precipitating high infections, by December 7, 2020, total infection was as low as 705 cases⁴.

Furthermore, since elections' integrity is measured by the manner of the counting process, the kind of arrangements that are established for the counting of votes such as a transparent tally process can inspire the electorates' confidence in the election and its outcome (Elklit and Reynolds 2002; Goodwin-Gill 2006). In addition to observing the official tallying scheme, the political parties were encouraged to carry their independent vote tallies. In compliance with this measure, the party agents marked the voters on their own register (copies given to them by the EC), which they used to crosscheck the turnout in the elections. Counting of ballots for both presidential and parliamentary elections commenced immediately after polls closed. The Presiding Officer sorted both the presidential and parliamentary ballots from the respective ballot box according to the order of candidates on the ballots. Witnessed by party agents and external or local observers, the votes were counted publicly, tallied, and the votes obtained by each candidate were recorded (Interview, EC & CODEO Officers (Accra), Voters (Study Area), January 2021). Party agents and observers also conducted their independent vote tallies, which they used in their calculations to confirm or disprove the EC's declared results. Haven monitored the polling and voting operations, the party agents were required to sign the Result Declaration Form to indicate acceptance of the proceedings and could also add

their comments. When all stakeholders – party agents, observers, and the general citizens who have witnessed the counting of ballots) feel satisfied that the process has been honestly executed, there would be overwhelming endorsement to indicate that the polls reflected the free expression of the will of the voters' (Interview, Lecturers in Political Science, Accra, February 2021). Comments on the polling and voting processes by respondents indicate general acceptance of the quality of the election outcome:

The polling station arrangements were correctly done, voters did not impersonate and were not denied the right to vote, candidates and parties did not engage in campaigning and intimidation around the polling stations or in the queues, and disputes over invalid or damaged ballots were peacefully resolved (Interview, EC Officer, Party Agents (Accra), Voters (Study Area), January 2021).

Election observation is critical to a free and fair election. It does not only enhance voter confidence in the conduct of elections but more importantly, ensures the integrity of their outcome. Aside from the role of partisan actors – representatives of political parties, participation by non-partisan groups such as international or local observers has become an integral feature in the election integrity enterprise (Goodwin-Gill 2006; Pastor 1999; Elklit and Reynolds 2002). International election observation entered the lexicon of African politics in the early 1990s during the transition elections. The epoch was marked by regular visitations to developing democracies by international observation groups such as the Carter Centre, European Union, and Commonwealth Observer Group whose pronouncements validated the credibility or otherwise of their elections. But soon, they attracted stern criticisms with some discrediting them as appendages of Western governments with hidden motives to legitimise the elections of their protegeses. Others ridiculed their activities as 'superficiality and lacking professionalism in the application of democratic standards' (Geisler 1993, 621), and 'poll-watchers who come to witness polling and develop shallow paper-works on the outcome of elections' (Interview, Lecturer in Political Science, Accra, February 2021). Goodwin-Gill (2006, 156) has captured what has been termed, 'the vagaries of election observation' (Geisler 1993) more succinctly, 'foreign observers run the risk of controversy, either because they are perceived as interfering, or because they do their job too well, or not at all'. Despite the assault on their activities, they have played critical role in the consolidation of democracy in Africa and elsewhere. In particular, they have been responsible for assisting or underwriting the difficult transitions from authoritarian regimes to democracy in many African countries. For instance, according to Garber (1992, 112):

When questions arise regarding the quality of the system (elections), governments and non-governmental organizations should be prepared to sponsor international observer delegations that can then determine whether a commitment to free and fair elections exists and, where appropriate, encourage ways to improve the electoral process.

Since 1992, Ghana has derived much support for its elections from international observers: their frequent observations of the elections have added significant impetus to the electoral process. Some respondents noted how 'the observation reports have served as vehicles for advancing the course of democratic elections – they formed the starting point for the post-1992 electoral reforms' (Interview, EC Director & Lecturer in Political Science, Accra, February 2021). Undoubtedly, the observation activities of the European Union, African Union, and Commonwealth Observer Group in the 2020 elections lend

credence to the elections' outcome (Interview, Lecturer in Political Science, Accra, February 2021).

Similarly, the presence of domestic observers adds to the credibility of elections. Goodwin-Gill (2006, 156) believes that 'domestic monitors are key to the fairness of any election'. If election stakeholders are sceptical about the genuineness of international observers, they may have faith in home-grown monitors. As Garber (1992, 142) noted, 'effective local monitors recognised as impartial officials, (may) appear more likely to satisfy national aspirations for a free and fair'. Thus, complimentary to the work of international observers, a coalition of local observation groups participating in election monitoring has been a prominent feature of recent elections in Ghana and Africa generally. As they did in the previous elections, the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) set its monitoring machinery in several polling stations across the 16 regions. Like the international observers, they drew strength from their non-partisan complexion and perceived neutrality (Interview, CODEO Officers & Lecturer in Political Science, Accra, February 2021). The well-trained volunteers deployed to polling stations in the cities and rural areas checked against possible errors, misconducts, and frauds by the party activists. According to respondents, 'their presence at the polling stations limited opportunities for wrong-doing' (Interview, Voters, Study Area, January 2021). Their 'independent cross-checking of voter attendance, inspection of ballot boxes and election materials on polling day, and enforcement of the rules contributed in no small measure to the confidence-building of the voters and the outcome of the elections' (Interview, EC & CODEO Officers (Accra), Voters (Study Areas), Study Area, January 2021). For instance, CODEO's Vote Parallel Tabulation (VPT), which affirmed the result of the presidential election declared by the EC flavoured the integrity of the election's outcome. Goodwin-Gill (2006, 157) has argued in support of this more forcefully:

The monitoring of vote counts as part of an overall election-observation effort can boost the confidence of voters suspicious of possible fraud, permit results to be projected more quickly than the official results and allow for the identification of actual winners and the consequent exposure of attempted manipulations.

It has been argued that 'the acceptance of any election outcome is largely a function of the quality of its conduct (Pastor 1999; Elklit and Reynolds 2002; Schedler and Mosaffar 2002). Similarly, it determines the extent to which voters would participate in choosing their leaders – a reflection of the quality conduct of elections – suggesting that it has conformed to international standards. Hence, the 'high voter turnout in the election (78.89%) despite the feared pandemic, compared with 68.25% in 2016 is a testament of popular confidence in the election's conduct' (Interviews, CODEO Officers & Lecturer in Political Science, Accra, February 2021). The more than two-thirds turnout confirms the extraordinary managerial competence of the EC in navigating the complex COVID-19 infection situation to ensure the active participation of voters, parties, and their candidates in the election. This reality has been noted by the respondents when assessing the performance of the measures the EC put in place to promote the integrity of the election, they noted, 'except for minor administrative challenges such as the late opening of polls and temporal shortages of voting materials, the conduct of the election conformed to best international practice – it was orderly, peaceful and even in the pandemic, it guaranteed the health safety of the voters' (Interview, CODEO Officers (Accra),

Voters (Study Area), January 2021). The Commonwealth Observer Group affirmed the popular opinion:

The voting process was conducted in a largely peaceful and orderly manner. The Commonwealth Observer Group commends the People of Ghana, the institutions involved, the polling staff and all other electoral stakeholders for the commitment to conducting a successful election and for the tolerance exhibited by all stakeholders on Election Day. On Election Day, the majority of polling stations opened on time, and they were equipped with requisite polling staff and materials. The procedures for the opening of the polls were generally followed. We were impressed by the professionalism, confidence, and enthusiasm of polling officials. Issues that were observed, such as delays or missing materials, were usually resolved efficiently. We are honoured to have been given this opportunity to observe and support Ghana's democracy (Commonwealth Secretariat 2020, 2).

Why promoting the election integrity necessary?

Thus far, the findings have revealed that electoral integrity is indispensable for the attainment of democratic consolidation. By managing the electoral process in accordance with the acceptable international standards, the EC enhanced the incorruptibility, completeness, inclusiveness, and accountability of the election – fundamental tenets for the drive towards democratic consolidation in Ghana (Elklit and Reynolds 2002; Goodwin-Gill 2006; Norris, Frank, and Martínez i Coma 2014)

Also, by managing the electoral process in the order of electoral integrity, the EC prevented the election from falling into violence and conflict. This is because the transparent and inclusive, process enhanced the early detection of errors thereby, reducing the possibility that malpractices and frauds could occur. Indeed, upholding the highest international standards in the conduct of the elections helped to diffuse inter-party tensions and the likelihood that the campaign processes would produce conflicts or violence – the absence of which has engendered ethnic and civil wars as exemplified by the 2010 Cote d' Ivoire, 2007 Kenya, and 2005 Togo elections. Indeed, it was the failure of these elections to pass the integrity test which ended in the street and bush wars.

Also, the debilitating consequences for the EC to fail the integrity test in the 'pandemic election' would have been the heaviest damage to the legitimacy of the regime (Fortin-Rittberger, Harfst, and Dingler 2017; McAllister and White 2014). Given that many regime destabilisations in nascent democracies have been caused by elections that end in contention and partisan deadlocks on grounds of lack of transparency and inclusivity, among others, the legitimacy of the 'winners' to govern would have been problematic (Atkeson and Saunders 2007; Claassen et al. 2013; Elklit and Reynolds 2002; Pastor 1999; Snyder 2013; Norris, Frank, and Martínez i Coma 2014). Moreover, had the pandemic caused or 'instigated' lower voter turnout, it would have been interpreted as an expression of lack of popular confidence in the electoral process and those elected by it.

Arguably, the successful conduct of the elections even under grave threat from the pandemic has revealed the robustness of Ghana's electoral process and the EC, in particular. By navigating the electoral process against the backdrop of rising infections and deaths from the pandemic without compromising acceptable international standards, the EC has established itself as a resilient election authority in Africa. This suggests that long-term electoral, regime and democratic stability in nascent democracies including Africa largely depend on electoral integrity (Daniller and Mutz 2019; IFES 2022).

Conclusion and lessons

Fundamental to democracy is that elections should be held periodically, and that, the accountability of representatives for the legislative and executive offices should take place within acceptable international rules and principles so that the result represents the will of the electorates (UN Human Rights Committee 1996; Goodwin-Gill 2006). Thus, despite the feared COVID-19, the holding of the 2020 election was a move of major importance to guarantee the rights of Ghanaian citizens to choose their representatives as prescribed by the 1992 Constitution. At the same time, a key element in the exercise of democracy is that elections should as much as possible be free, fair, and transparent in order to enable the people's will to be expressed. This then implies that democratic elections transcend the realm of voting because the formal act of casting a ballot is preceded by electoral competition in which rules defining, among other things, the electoral formula, right to vote, eligibility criteria, polling, and participation generally, coordinate the strategic choice by the voters (Lijphart 1994; Cox 1997). Hence, this paper has argued that electoral integrity is critical for elections to qualify as democratic or credible. This means that there can be no situational change that must compromise the goal of attaining election integrity because the conduct of elections that is judged unfair, exclusive, and not transparent by stakeholders can provoke violence and instability to truncate the process of democratic consolidation.

The findings, therefore, presuppose that consolidating democracy requires institutionalising electoral process and mechanics that guarantee fair and transparent elections. But critical among the ingredients necessary for a credible election to occur, competent/knowledgeable election staff to implement the electoral rules at every stage is of utmost importance. The capacity of the electoral process to promote the recruitment of a critical mass of bureaucratic personnel acting neutrally to apply the electoral rules for efficient administration, which builds stakeholders' confidence is central to electoral integrity (Elklit and Reynolds 2002). In developing democracies and poor countries that are financially challenged and therefore depend more on temporary staff and a motley recruited full-time officers, the recruitment of civil servants and other educated men and women adequately trained in the detailed mechanics, laws, and regulations to perform several electoral tasks would enhance the attainment of free and fair elections (Pastor 1999; Mozaffar and Schedler 2002).

The electoral governance approach requires the establishment of a broad institutional framework in which voting and electoral competition would take place. This principle maintains that an election management system that promotes a high level of inclusion is a sine qua non for an election that will be considered free and fair (Goodwin-Gill 2006). Given the experiences in neo-democracies that, the price of exclusion is violence, the choice of a system that promotes political and electoral inclusion holds immense prospect for credible election and by extension, sustainable political stability. An environment that stimulates competition of diverse political interests and effective participation of all stakeholders through transparent processes enhances a unified avenue for resolving differences among competing interests in the electoral process, thereby removing the incentive for violence (UN 2001).

Key to democratic election success is that electoral processes must encompass acceptable institutions and procedures that guarantee effective representation, accountability, and protection of individuals or groups against arbitrary behaviour, injustice, or

oppression by central actors. In this regard, free and transparent election must be embedded in an electoral process built on the rule of law and respect for human rights (Goodwin-Gill 2006). Indeed, an essential ingredient in the principle of a democratic election is the obligation for states to submit to electoral processes that always foster election management integrity. At the practical level, independent and neutral election management body overseeing the electoral process promotes voter confidence and contributes to the overwhelming acceptance of election outcomes. Its efficiency may rest on decentralisation of election and administrative responsibilities to its 'field administration' (Smith 1985) as a measure of reducing administrative and technical errors to enhance the quality of election management and its outcome.

The choice of the electoral system and its implementation has a direct impact on citizens' political rights. Whereas the majority system is relatively straightforward and promotes stability of the polity, within a multi-party establishment it harms equity in representation by sidestepping the chances of small parties and independent candidates and also ensuring that large parliamentary majorities are won on minor electoral victories (Goodwin-Gill 2006). Therefore, the proportional representation option, which allows for the allocation of seats to political parties in proportion to their electoral strength but based on a framing that ensures that no single party obtains a majority (a transparent and fair arrangement that fosters rural-urban balance, and also caters for minority or sectional representation), may be suitable for the Ghanaian multiparty system albeit a possibility of proliferation of parties.

These measures may provide the core framework for future electoral reforms. Although Schaffer (2008) has cautioned that election reforms are often complex and difficult to implement because some stakeholders tend to believe that the process can also harm their interests. But given that opposition is assumed in any reform effort (Caiden 1982), the fear of unintended outcomes should not constrain genuine reforms because electoral reform can potentially stimulate electoral integrity in developing democracies, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa where there have been progressive improvements in their election management portfolio and there is a prospect for the added value of power alternation for democratic consolidation (Huntington 1991). Also, experience of electoral reforms in Ghana and elsewhere suggest that the choice of a particular reform instrument could stimulate a transformation of the status quo (fraudulent practices and technical errors) that have been responsible for most post-election violence to the adoption of the consensual method on rulemaking, rule-application, and rule-adjudication to enhance electoral integrity in the evolving democracies (Mozaffar and Schedler 2002).

Notes

1. The World Health Organization (WHO) (2020) has defined Coronaviruses as RNA viruses (SARS) that cause respiratory, hepatic, and neurological diseases in domestic, wild animals and were first discovered in humans in late 2019 in Wuhan, China and spread rapidly throughout the globe.
2. Beyond elections as the only game in town, Gunther and Diamond (1995) extend the definition to include when there has been an adoption of democratic institutions, processes, and values by the political class and the masses.
3. Elklit and Reynolds (2002) define it as a process comprises a number of basic steps (numerous elements), which are at the same time constitutive and largely chronological.
4. See Ghana: cumulative coronavirus cases 2020–2022 | Statista.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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