

**POLITICAL VIGILANTISM IN WEST AFRICA'S
CONTEMPORARY DEMOCRATIC DISPENSATION
AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR HUMAN SECURITY:
THE CASE OF GHANA**



**BY
SHARON ALO
(10345093)**



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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of original research conducted by me and supervised by Dr. Ken Ahorsu. All sources referred to in the study have duly been acknowledged and that no part of it has been submitted anywhere else for any other purpose.

.....
SHARON ALO
(STUDENT)

.....
DR. KEN AHORSU
(SUPERVISOR)

DATE:

DATE:.....

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated first of all to God Almighty for His unfailing mercies towards me.

Also, I dedicate it to Peter Berk for his wonderful support.

To my sister and her husband, Mr. and Mrs Anodam for their unwavering support.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACDR	-	Association of Committees for the Defence of the Revolution
AQIM	-	Al-Quaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
CDD	-	Center for Democratic Development
CFR	-	Council on Foreign Relations
CODEO	-	Coalition of Domestic Election Observers
CID	-	Criminal Investigation Department
CJTF	-	Civilian Joint Task Force
CDR	-	Committee for the Defense of the Revolution
CPP	-	Convention People's Party
EC	-	Electoral Commission of Ghana
ECOWAS	-	Economic Community of West African States
FDI	-	Foreign Direct Investments
HIV	-	Human Immune Virus
HRW	-	Human Rights Watch
IPAC	-	Inter-Party Advisory Committee
KAIPTC	-	Kofi Annan International Peace Keeping Training Center
MOSOP	-	Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People
MEND	-	Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta
NCCE	-	National Commission for Civic Education

NDC	-	National Democratic Congress
NDV	-	Niger Delta Vigilantes
NDLF	-	Niger Delta Liberation Front
NDPVF	-	Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force
NLCD	-	National Liberation Commission Decree
NPP	-	New Patriotic Party
NPC	-	National Peace Council
NLM	-	National Liberation Movement
OAU	-	Organization of African Unity
PNC	-	People's National Convention
PNDC	-	Provisional National Defense Council
PDC	-	Peoples Defense Committees
PDG	-	Democratic Party of Guinea
RCC	-	Regional Coordinating Council
SALWs	-	Small Arms and Light Weapons
SLPP	-	Sierra Leone's People Party
IGP	-	Inspector General of Police
UN	-	United Nations
UGCC	-	United Gold Coast Convention
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Programme
UNCRC	-	United Nations Convention on Human Rights
USSR	-	United Soviet Socialist Republics
WDCs	-	Workers Defense Committees

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ABSTRACT

Even though democracy is progressively finding grounds in West Africa, analysts are increasingly becoming worried about the emerging trend of violent political vigilantism, especially among the youth. Across the sub-region, virtually no country is being spared the scourge of the violence. For countries that have experienced civil strife in the past this does not come as a surprise. However, when relatively stable democracies like Ghana begin to feature among the list of countries reeling under the plague of vigilantism, then it means the subject requires serious treatment. It is for this reason that this study seeks to explore the dynamics of political vigilantism in West Africa's contemporary democratic dispensation and its implications for human security. Ghana is used as a case study in an effort to delve deeper into the occurrence. Among several others, the findings of the study show that the political culture of "winner-takes-all" in Ghana is a major contributory factor to the phenomenon of political vigilantism. The study also established that if the current tide of vigilantism is not checkmated, it could lead to a destabilization of the country's democracy. To this extent, the study recommends that political parties must disband all their para-militia youth wings and develop codes of conduct to guide their activities. The study also recommends that security agencies and the judiciary must be impartial, apolitical and fearless in when dealing with cases of vigilantism.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Background to the Research Problem

West Africa's development problems have largely been attributed to its governance crises. After independence, almost all African countries inherited multilateral institutional models of government.¹ However, African countries within a brief time changed from democratic governance to military dictatorship or one-party dictatorship. Several reasons were cited for the transition to autocratic rules. Some argue that multi-party democracy was alien to the African setting and its people; and, that multi-party democracy leads to polarization of society along parochial party lines.² Others argue that liberal democracy drags on the development of countries since politicians are divided and hardly unite and even if they do, hardly do they agree on issues.³

For over two decades, since independence, governance in many West African states was characterized by authoritarian rule, human right violations, insurgencies and civil wars, weak and steeply declining economies, and falling standards of living. Since the 1990s, however, constitutional multi-party democracy has been an adopted form of governance in contemporary West Africa, largely due to the influence of domestic pro-democracy groups clamour for democratic change, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), international institutions, and civil society organisations among others. Many democracy-related institutions such as free mass media, free electoral systems, and human rights institutions have flourished. Citizens are now free to participate in elections and choose their own leaders. It has even become commonplace for opposition parties to win elections and the citizenry to witness a transition of

government as has happened in Ghana, Senegal, Nigeria, Benin and Ivory Coast. ECOWAS has since passed the 1999 Mechanism for Conflict Prevention and the 2001 Extension Protocol for Democracy and Good Governance that has outlawed autocratic rule and unconstitutional change of government in the West African sub-region.⁴

On the other hand, however, the practice of multi-party democracy in many West African states has not been free and fair. Elections processes have been characterised by common violence, ethnocentrism, abuse of incumbency and impunity, rigging, nepotism and the use of political vigilante groups in the abuse of rights of the opponents and for parochial gains. One of the most worrying dysfunctional trends has been political violence and the use of vigilante group before, during and after elections. Political vigilantism otherwise known as vigilante politics is an organized effort outside legitimate channels to suppress or eradicate any threats to the status quo. It means deliberately taking the law into one's own hands. It is the machinery used to intimidate interparty and intraparty opponents and their illegal activities span over pre-election, election and post-election periods.⁵

Election violence often carried out by political vigilante groups are marked by political killings, looting, destruction of properties and infrastructure, assault and death threats, bombings, forceful dispersal of political gatherings, fighting among political opponents or political parties, violent street protests, and hooliganism. Other forms are arbitrary arrests and detentions, abductions, economic repressions or sabotage, rigging, intimidation of voters, and prevention of voters from voting, and sexual assaults. Recent elections in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, the Gambia, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Guinea, Mali, and Burkina Faso have witnessed varying degrees of election

violence perpetrated by vigilante groups, however, constituted and defined. Political vigilantes and their electoral malpractices are essentially an affront to the tenets of democracy, abuse of human rights and the self-actualization of West African people. The malpractice essentially has adverse implications for human security. This dissertation centres on the rise of political vigilantism in West Africa's contemporary democratic dispensation and its implication for human security with the rise of political vigilantism in Ghana as a case study.

Ghana has often been touted as an example of democratic success in West Africa. However, it has its fair share of political vigilante violence. The two main political parties in Ghana, National Democratic Congress (NDC), and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), while publicly denouncing political vigilantism and violence often clandestinely recruit and organize political vigilante groups such as the Azorka Boys, Delta Forces which act with impunity and with complete disregard for the main security agencies. For instance, since 2016, several activities and emergence of party vigilante group especially the NPP's Delta Forces have become a source of grave concern to Ghanaians.⁶ The study seeks to discern what the factors responsible for the rise of political vigilante groups and the threats they pose to the human security of the people are?

1.1 Problem Statement

Political vigilantism otherwise known as vigilante politics is an organized effort outside legitimate channels to suppress or eradicate any threats to the status quo. Simply defined, it means deliberately taking the law into one's own hands in achieving personal whims and caprices as against generally accepted status quo especially with regards to human security. It is the machinery used to intimidate interparty and intraparty opponents and their illegal activities

span over pre-election, election and post-election periods and its consequential effects on the general security architecture of the society.

The phenomenon of political party vigilante groups and their activities have been an aberration in Ghana's politics, especially in the Fourth Republic. Over the years, the level of violence that has characterized the activities of party vigilante groups during each phase of the electoral cycle has increased, especially since the 2000s. 2016 Presidential and General Elections of Members of Parliament were without exception. The immediate post-election phase also witnessed some incidents around the political transition, nearly marring the almost smooth process. Unfortunately, the manifestations of political party vigilante groups have continued from the transition and into the governing period.

The tenets of democracy are such that “government of the people, by the people, for the people” as said by Abraham Lincoln.⁷ What this means is that everybody is free to contest elections and to vote for their preferred candidate and in the same vein, people are free to form associations of a political party or pressure groups to influence elections and democracy in their countries. The main tenets of democracy are a level playing field, openness, accountability, free and fair elections, and people should concede elections when they lose.⁸

However, the activities of vigilantism appear to be a form of design to impose candidates and elections results on the people and this is against what democracy stands for and what it's fighting for. Africans have moved from dictatorship, violence and human right abuse, vigilantism reintroduces the abuse of human rights and threatens to derail the whole process of

democratic consolidation in Africa. The activities of political vigilantism unquestionably threaten the security of the State.

The dissertation would, therefore, like to examine why West Africa and Ghana for that matter have accepted democracy as the preferred means of governance and on the other hand, there is the emergence protraction of vigilantism across the West African sub-region. The work also seeks to find out the fault lines that are causing the rise of vigilantism, the motives and the motivation and modes of mobilization of vigilantism in West Africa and the dangers they pose to governance and human security as a whole.

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To look at the state of vigilantism in West Africa.
2. To look at the motivations and the modes of mobilization of vigilantism in Ghana.
3. To investigate the means of addressing vigilantism in politics in Ghana as well as the challenges of vigilantism in Ghana.
4. To suggest solutions to the rise of vigilantism in Ghana.

1.3 Research questions

1. What is the state of vigilantism and its implication on human security in West Africa?
2. What are the motivations and modes of mobilization of vigilantism in Ghana?
3. What means can be used to address vigilantism in politics in Ghana?
4. What solutions can be suggested to stem the rise of vigilantism in Ghana?

1.4 Significance of the Study

West Africans have rejected all forms of dictatorship whether military or one-party dictatorship. This is because dictatorships or the lack of democratic governance has been one of the sources of violence in the Sub-Region. It is therefore unfortunate that after embracing democracy and the progress that democracy has made, vigilantism seems to be reintroducing resulting in human rights abuse, democratic abuse through the back door. Therefore, the findings of this research will be a tool to inform politicians and West Africa's development partners to correct the ills that the rise of vigilantism is reintroducing into West Africa's democratic fabric. This research will also inform policymakers and major political stakeholders about the need to tackle political vigilantism. The research will be a foundation to future research on vigilantism.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Research

The research will focus on democratic governance in West Africa, the motivation, motive, and mode of mobilization of vigilantism with specific reference to Ghana from the period of 1992 to date. Meanwhile, due to the limited span of the study and the difficulty in accessing information on the subject matter as well as the controversies surrounding the proposal for the disbandment of various political vigilante groups at the time of conducting this research, just a few political parties and some stakeholders were ready to speak to the issue. Nonetheless, this did not affect the quality of the work due to the existence of secondary literature on the subject and the inputs of other eminent experts in the field.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

The study adopted the liberal democratic theory as its theoretical framework. *Liberal democracy* is a liberal political ideology and a form of government in which representative democracy operates under the principles of classical liberalism. Also called *Western democracy*, it is characterised by-elections between multiple distinct political parties, a separation of powers into different branches of government, the rule of law in everyday life as part of an open society, a market economy with private property and the equal protection of human rights, civil rights, civil liberties and political freedoms for all people. To define the system in practice, liberal democracies often draw upon a constitution, either formally written or uncodified, to delineate the powers of government and enshrine the social contract. After a period of sustained expansion throughout the 20th Century, liberal democracy became the predominant political system in the world.⁹

Liberal democracy traces its origins—and its name—to the European 18th-century, also known as the Age of Enlightenment. At the time, the vast majority of European states were monarchies, with political power held either by the monarch or the aristocracy. The possibility of democracy had not been a seriously considered political theory since classical antiquity and the widely held belief was that democracies would be inherently unstable and chaotic in their policies due to the changing whims of the people. It was further believed that democracy was contrary to human nature, as human beings were seen to be inherently evil, violent and in need of a strong leader to restrain their destructive impulses. Many European monarchs held that their power had been ordained by God and that questioning their right to rule was tantamount to blasphemy.¹⁰

These conventional views were challenged at first by a relatively small group of Enlightenment intellectuals, who believed that human affairs should be guided by reason and principles of liberty and equality. They argued that all people are created equal and therefore political authority cannot be justified on the basis of "noble blood", a supposed privileged connection to God or any other characteristic that is alleged to make one person superior to others. They further argued that governments exist to serve the people—not vice versa—and that laws should apply to those who govern as well as to the governed (a concept known as rule of law).¹¹ One of the key aspects of democratic culture is the concept of a "loyal opposition", where political competitors may disagree, but they must tolerate one another and acknowledge the legitimate and important roles that each play. This is an especially difficult cultural shift to achieve in nations where transitions of power have historically taken place through violence. The term means in essence that all sides in a democracy share a common commitment to its basic values. The ground rules of the society must encourage tolerance and civility in public debate. In such a society, the losers accept the judgment of the voters when the election is over and allow for the peaceful transfer of power. The losers are safe in the knowledge that they will neither lose their lives nor their liberty and will continue to participate in public life. They are loyal not to the specific policies of the government, but to the fundamental legitimacy of the state and to the democratic process itself.

Although liberal democracy was originally put forward by Enlightenment liberals, the relationship between democracy and liberalism has been controversial since the beginning and was problematized in the 20th century.¹² In his book *Freedom and Equality in a Liberal Democratic State*, Jasper Doomen posited that freedom and equality are necessary for liberal

democracy.¹³ Basically, liberal democracy as an electoral democracy can also be seen as protecting civil liberties. Therefore, the theory is of significance to the study because it is seen as a wider shift in the political culture and the gradual formation of the institutions of democratic government are needed. When the tenets of democratic principles are upheld, citizens including political parties feel secured and invariably have confidence in state institutions to provide them with protection especially during the electoral period and therefore do not take the laws into their own hands by providing personal security to party officials hence guaranteeing their human security as well as in the defence of the security architecture of the state.

1.7 Literature Review

1.7.1 The Concept of Vigilantism

Vigilantism like many other concepts mean different things to different people, however, before we look at what some scholars have to say on this concept it is important to note that the term vigilantism is from the Latin word 'vigil' which means 'awake' or 'observant' and vigilante, which is of Spanish origin and means, 'watchman' or 'guard'. To be vigilant is simply to be watchful and awake.¹⁴

Eduardo Moncada¹⁵ defines vigilantism to include the collective use or threat of extra-legal violence in response to an alleged criminal act. This definition is premised on the use of violence or the threat of it. It presupposes an element of spontaneous action in response to an incident in which the vigilantes believe justice has not been served. Thomas Giddens¹⁶ conceptualizes vigilantism as a form of extreme restorative justice occasioned by the impulsive action of the vigilantes to exact revenge. This is fueled by the perception that there are inefficiencies or biases in the judicial system that causes perpetrators of crime to go unpunished.

Schmid and Jongman¹⁷ equate vigilantism to a form of nonpolitical terrorism. This comparison may seem far-fetched if terrorism and vigilantism are considered as two different extremities. However, a common thread that runs through the two is the resort to violence. Both terrorism and vigilantism, more often than not, lead to loss of life and destruction of property. It can also be argued that if vigilantism is not nipped in the bud, it can escalate into full blown terrorism.

Robinson and Robinson¹⁸ express concerns that vigilantism has the potential of eroding community confidence in law enforcement. They argue that when criminal justice officials distort and subvert the legal penal system, it leads to a lack of trust which eventually becomes pervasive and pernicious. Under such circumstances, citizens refuse to report a crime or help investigators and jurors refuse to indict or convict. Ultimately, this undermines the moral authority of law enforcement and creates widening rifts in the community.

Sana Jaffrey¹⁹ questions why states that are seemingly effective in controlling violence from terror groups and ethnic insurgents tend to exhibit ambivalence towards vigilantism. In the opinion of Jaffrey, vigilantism breeds when the perpetrators are assured of impunity. He argues that vigilantism is generated as the result of state's dependence on coercive functions of civil society; particularly the latitude in allowing for extra-legal violence against local threats.

Buur suggests, vigilantism as a phenomenon in fact generally aims for 'more state, not less state', seeking to prop up a weak state by taking on some of its functions.²⁰ Indeed, Rosenbaum and Sederberg suggest that a vigilante action is a form of 'establishment violence' designed to defend a particular socio-political order against threats of social change.²¹

In the view of Rosenbaum and Sederberg, vigilantism consists of acts of threats or coercion in violation of the formal boundaries of established socio-political order, which, however, are intended by the violators to defend that order from some form of subversion.²² However, from a broader perspective, Ransford Gyampo cites that political vigilante groups are part of the broader concept of party Apparatchiks who are agents of a government. They comprise of party foot-soldiers who work immensely to ensure the election of their respective parties into power and can be relied upon to defend the party without compromising their loyalty to the party.²³

Vigilantism can, therefore, be described as a social group controlled violence or activism which serves the interest of both the incumbent government and the opposition since both have their respective vigilante groups.²⁴

In the case of Ghana, for example, it is no hidden fact that the two major political parties, thus; the NPP and the NDC have vigilante groups almost in every region. This normally comprises of the youth who are described as the foot soldiers of the parties, due to the high rate of unemployment, most of these youth have no jobs hence they end up taking part in these activities with the hope of getting rewarded when their parties come into power.²⁵

Also, Daddeh and Bob-Millar suggest that the activities of political vigilante groups are based on the notion of reciprocity and the provision of personalised goods. It is their belief that public office holders control massive resources.²⁶ Consequently, they expect the political elite to share the state resources with them once they are in government, therefore, they do anything possible to win and retain power for their political elite. There is, therefore, a linkage between political vigilantism and clientelism.²⁷ These groups' actions could be fair or foul. It must, however, be

noted that there may also be vigilante groups organized around ethnicity as some examples in Kenya, Nigeria and Philippines show.

Francis Amanu proffers a similar ideology for civil militias. Civil militias differ from vigilante groups in that they are typically established in times of intra or inter-state conflict, while vigilante groups tend to focus upon civil matters such as crime, but Francis suggests that they are motivated by a similar ‘normative underpinning and ethos,’ a desire to defend citizens and the status quo.²⁸

1.7.2 Historical Perspective of Political Vigilantism in Ghana

Historically in Ghana, night guards and vigilante groups have often emerged in response to theft and armed robbery. Since the return to democracy in the 1990s, however, vigilante groups have proliferated. They have organised at many levels (from lineage to ethnic group), in many locations (from the village ward to city street), and for many reasons (from crime-fighting to political lobbying). Meanwhile, as stated earlier, political party vigilantism in Ghana could be traced to pre-independence Ghana during the regime of Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. However, for the purposes of this research, political party vigilantism will be discussed within the context of the Fourth Republic to date.

Ghana's fourth attempt at constitutional democratic governance which started in 1992 has been plagued with negative acts of political vigilantism. Political vigilante groups play a key role in securing electoral victory for their parties. But they are also key agents in pushing their parties to the opposition. Vigilante groups, particularly those belonging to the party that won elections

have over the years, taken the laws of the country into their own hands, forcibly ejected officials of previous administration from their apartments and physically assaulted them, as well as engaged in seizures of public property and assets in the custody of public officials in an uncoordinated manner. These acts have fuelled polarization in Ghana's body politic and undermined the nation's drive towards democratic maturity.²⁹ Admittedly, political vigilantism has existed since the political history of Ghana. In contemporary times, however, their activities are rather too harsh and alarming for the security and safety of our democracy.

Paalo recalls that political vigilantism in Ghana has its historical antecedence from youth activism in politics, during the British colonial era when the Convention People's Party youth wing, known as Nkrumah's 'Veranda Boys' set the pace for party youth activism in Ghana. Kwame Nkrumah steered his 'Veranda Boy' (who were mostly youth) to successful political sovereignty from the British. The activities of these groups did not end when Ghana gained her independence and have continued to date. Several political parties since independence have engaged the services of youth groups. Gyampo further recalls that for instance, during the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) era, some vigilante groups such as the "Mobisquad", Committee for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR), Workers Defense Committees (WDCs), Peoples Defense Committees (PDCs) and others were trained and armed to defend the revolution. Many wings such as the women's and Youth Wings of Political Parties, particularly the two largest (NPP and NDC), were formed which were made up of die-hard or core foot soldiers.³⁰

Currently, in Ghana, there are over twenty-four (24) registered political parties, some of which includes Convention People's Party (CPP), People's National Convention (PNC), National Democratic Congress (NDC) and New Patriotic Party (NPP) among others. However, in the case of vigilante groups, it is the two major political parties, thus; the NPP and the NDC that have encouraged the activities of political vigilante groups. In the same light, Paalo concludes that both NDC and NPP have gained national and international notoriety for their continuous association with youth arms such as 'Azorka' (for NDC) and 'Invincible Forces' (for NPP).³¹

Bob-Millar recounts that it is imperative to note that the activities of political vigilante groups have manifested in all the seven elections and three transitions that Ghana's fourth republican democratic dispensation has undergone. Both NPP and NDC have their vigilante groups in almost all the regions of Ghana, sometimes, with different names.³² This is shown on the table below;

REGION	NPP	NDC
Greater Accra	Foot Soldiers (No name)	Foot Soldiers (No identified name)
Ashanti	Delta Force	The Hawks
Volta	Foot Soldiers (No Name)	Foot Soldiers (No identified name)
Eastern	Invincible Forces	Eastern Bambas
Western	Western Crocodiles	Foot Soldiers (No identified name)
Brong Ahafo	Foot Soldiers	Foot Soldiers

	(No identified name)	(No identified name)
Northern	Foot Soldiers (No identified name)	Foot Soldiers (No identified name)
Upper West	Foot Soldiers (No identified name)	Foot Soldiers (No identified name)
Upper East	Bolga-Bulldogs	Azorka Boys

Source: Author's compilation

Table 1

1.7.3 Vigilantism and its implications for Human Security

Basically, political parties do not have maximum confidence in the state security agencies, especially opposition parties have little trust and confidence in the police, particularly during election periods. Entrusting the safety and security of their presidential candidates, running mates and campaign contingents to a police service over which they have no control is, in their view, too much of a risk. This act of mistrust is a source of threats to human security.

Human security is an emerging paradigm for understanding global vulnerabilities whose proponents challenge the traditional notion of national security by arguing that the proper referent for security should be at the human rather than national level. Human security reveals a people-centred and multi-disciplinary understanding of security involves a number of research fields, including development studies, international relations, strategic studies, and human rights.³³ The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 1994 Human Development Report is considered a milestone publication in the field of human security, with its argument

that insuring "freedom from want" and "freedom from fear" for all persons is the best path to tackle the problem of global insecurity.³⁴

The emergence of the human security discourse was the product of a convergence of factors at the end of the Cold War. These challenged the dominance of the neorealist paradigm's focus on states, "mutually assured destruction" and military security and briefly enabled a broader concept of security to emerge. The increasingly rapid pace of globalisation; the failure of liberal state-building through the instruments of the Washington Consensus; the reduced threat of nuclear war between the superpowers, the exponential rise in the spread and consolidation of democratisation and international human rights norms opened a space in which both 'development' and concepts of 'security' could be reconsidered.

At the same time, the increasing number of internal violent conflicts in Africa, Asia and Europe (Balkans) resulted in concepts of national and international security failing to reflect the challenges of the post-Cold War security environment whilst the failure of neoliberal development models to generate growth, particularly in Africa, or to deal with the consequences of complex new threats (such as HIV and climate change) reinforced the sense that international institutions and states were not organised to address such problems in an integrated way.

The principal possible indicators of movement toward an individualized conception of security lie in the first place in the evolution of international society's consideration of the rights of individuals in the face of potential threats from states. The most obvious foci of analysis here are the UN Charter, the UN Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and its associated covenants (1966),

and conventions related to particular crimes (e.g., genocide) and the rights of particular groups (e.g., women, racial groups, and refugees).³⁵

Fundamentally, the vigilante activities are threats to security and it constitutes human rights abuse. Nyabor J. corroborated this assertion by citing that another major affront to Ghana's drive towards democratic maturity is human rights abuse and physical assaults sometimes perpetrated by vigilante groups against officials of parties that lose elections. Both NPP and NDC vigilante groups and foot soldiers are culpable. For example; on 24 March 2017, the Delta Force of the NPP stormed the premises of the Ashanti Regional Coordinating Council and demanded the removal of the Regional Security Coordinator, George Adjei. In the process, they inflicted multiple injuries on the victim and but for the timely intervention of the police, serious casualties would have been recorded.³⁶

As a result of this, some 13 thirteen members of the Delta Force were arrested for trial in court. However, they were forcibly freed by other members of the vigilante group during their trial at the Kumasi Circuit Court on 20th April 2017.³⁷ Also, After the 2016 general elections the NDC National Organizer, Kofi Adams alleged that two of their loyalists were murdered in Sefwi Wiawso and Dunkwa as a result of the rampage and forcible takeover of state property by the NPP foot soldiers and party loyalists.³⁸

Similarly, after the 2012 elections, CODEO observed there were reports of harassment, intimidations, and violation of voting procedures in the Ashanti, Greater Accra, and Northern Regions. Similarly, in the midnight of 6th December 2016, there were clashes between NPP and

NDC supporters, thus; party vigilante groups at Chereponi in the Northern Region which led to the death of one person and fourteen injured. Truth be told, vigilantism is an enormous albatross on the neck of several sub-Saharan African leaders in dealing with its implications on human security.

1.8 Methodology

The work employed a qualitative research approach to guide data collection and analysis. This research design assisted the research to collect in-depth information from participants interviewed. The researcher collected data from both primary and secondary sources of data. With an interview guide, the researcher collected data from seven respondents who were knowledgeable about the topic under study. The respondents included; the general secretaries and electoral directors of both the NPP and NDC political parties, a senior lecturer at the Political Science department, and two researchers (whose research focus is on vigilantism and landlords) at the Kofi Annan International Peace Keeping Training Center. Secondary data were collected from the following sources: Libraries of The Legon Centre for International Affairs and Diplomacy (LECIAD), University of Ghana, Institute of African Studies of the University of Ghana, Library of the Ghana Armed Forces Command and Staff College (GAFSC), the Library of the Kofi Annan International Peace Keeping Training Center (KAIPTC) and the Balme Library of the University of Ghana. In addition, journal articles, books, and relevant online sources were also reviewed and incorporated into this research. Content analysis was used to analyze information obtained in order to provide a more holistic and in-depth analysis.

1.9 Arrangements of Chapters

The work is divided into four main parts. Chapter one introduces the work by giving a Background to the Research Problem, followed by the problem statement, objectives of the research, rationale of the research, scope and limitation, theoretical framework and literature review. It also includes methodology and sources of data and arrangement of chapters. Chapter two provides an overview of some contemporary causes of political vigilantism and its impacts on human security. Chapter three discusses, comprehensively, the major challenges to contemporary democracy in Ghana and chapter four constitutes a summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Endnotes

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CHAPTER TWO

AN OVERVIEW OF VIGILANTISM IN WEST AFRICA'S DEMOCRATIC DISPENSATION

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of vigilantism in West Africa. It traces vigilantism from the pre-independence era to the present democratic dispensation. In the years after independence, most of the countries derailed into one-party regimes. This led to the phenomenon of coup d'états that virtually destabilized the sub-region's security. The military years recorded some forms of state-sponsored vigilantism that were intended to repress the rights and freedoms of the people. The sub-region also experienced some civil wars that worsened the security situation. But, eventually, there were reforms that led to a re-democratization process that reduced the insecurities. Many had thought that the return to democracy was going to completely eradicate violence. However, regrettably, this new democratic dispensation continues to witness violence in the form of vigilantism.

2.1 Historical Overview

The pre-independence era in West Africa witnessed some forms of vigilantism. Some may not agree that the Aba Women's Riot¹ in eastern Nigeria in 1929 fits the description of vigilante activism. But, to the extent that the women who participated in the riots took the law into their own hands and defied the colonial authorities nothing could be far from the truth in referring to it as a vigilante act. The consequences of that rebellion were far-reaching thence in informing British policies and subsequently laid the grounds for the independence struggle.

In Ghana, the historical account of Kwame Nkrumah in his autobiography shows that the 1948 riots were equally significant in triggering the march towards independence.² The riot was staged by ex-servicemen who were protesting against their living conditions. Somehow, the protest turned violent leading to casualties. It was after the riots that the famous Big Six (leading members of the United Gold Coast Convention) in Ghana's history were arrested. Nkrumah stood out of the lot when he broke away from the UGCC and established the Convention's People Party (CPP), which he used as a vehicle to garner for independence. The modus operandi of the CPP included boycotts, strikes and protest marches which sometimes turned violent.³

The first country to gain independence among the colonial territories of the French was Guinea. Led by Ahmed Sekou Toure, a trade unionist, Guinea also experienced some forms of rebellion on its road to self-government. When he became the leader of the Democratic Party of Guinea (PDG) he led workers in Guinea to stage a 71-day strike against new labour laws proposed by the French. That strike was the longest across French West Africa and it signaled the beginnings of Guinea's defiance to French rule.⁴

In Sierra Leone, there was a similar rivalry between Sierra Leone's People Party (SLPP) led by Milton Margai and the All People's Congress (APC) led by Siaka Stevens. The latter was opposed to elections before independence and rather preferred independence before elections. Their disagreements led to violent clashes among their supporters⁵. In Nigeria, there were similar rifts between pro-independence activists like Obafemi Awolowo and Ladoke Akintola as pointed out by Emmanuel⁶ just as there were divisions in Benin among the supporters of Souron-Migan Apithy, Hubert Maga and Justin Ahomadegbe.⁷

2.2 Post-colonial Political History of West Africa

Ghana was the first country to gain independence in West Africa in 1957 led by Kwame Nkrumah. Guinea followed in the footsteps of Ghana in 1958 under the leadership of Ahmed Sekou Toure.⁸ By 1960, following the outcome of the Loi-Cadre, all the Francophone countries were granted independence by France.⁹ It took another decade and a half before Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde won their independence from Portugal in 1974 and 1975, respectively, to complete the process of decolonization in the sub-region.¹⁰ It is important to mention that the case of Liberia was somewhat different. Liberia was the only country in the sub-region that was not colonized during the scramble for territories by France, Great Britain, and Portugal. It was established by slaves who were returned from the United States of America in the 1820s. They were known as Americo-Liberians and they declared the country independent in 1847.¹¹

All countries in West Africa started off as multiparty democracies but, within a short period, they derailed into authoritarian one-party regimes. This created a lot of rancor between incumbent parties and opposition parties. The economic situation started deteriorating and many people started becoming disillusioned about the bliss of independence. Some of the countries also became divided along ethnic lines and soon democracy came under threat. Togo was the first casualty as Sylvanus Olympio was assassinated in a coup in January 1963.¹² This was followed by another coup in Benin the same year, orchestrated by Christopher Soglo. On January 15, 1966, there was another coup in Nigeria that overthrew the government of Nnamdi Azikiwe and Tafawa Balewa. The following month, on February 24, 1966, Nkrumah was also overthrown.

After Nkrumah, Modibo Keita was also deposed in a coup d'état in Mali on November 19, 1968.¹³

The spate of coups and counter-coups continued throughout the 1970s up to the mid-1990s. By 1995, the only countries that had not experienced military putsches were Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, and Senegal. Clearly, it can be seen that the trajectory of coups that the security situation in the region was very volatile. Particularly, in the late 1980s to early 1990s, Liberia and Sierra Leone experienced civil wars that almost destabilized the entire sub-region but for the intervention of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The sub-regional body constituted the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) that intervened in the conflict militarily, while the leaders dialogued with the warlords for a political solution.¹⁴ Later, there were conflicts in countries such as Cote d'Ivoire (2010), Guinea-Bissau (2012) and Mali (2012) that required the intervention of ECOMOG troops.¹⁵ Quite significantly, to the admiration of the international community, ECOWAS was able to bring all the conflicts under control.

2.3 The Democratic Dispensation in West Africa

It is instructive to note that the early 1990s also witnessed the re-democratization process in West Africa. This was perfectly in line with the theory of Samuel Huntington about the “third wave of democracy” in the world.¹⁶ It began with Benin in 1991 when Mathieu Kerekou lost the presidential election to Nicephore Soglo and he agreed to hand over power. The next was Mali when the Amadou Toumani Touré supervised elections that were won by Alpha Oumar Konare in 1992.¹⁷ In the same year, Jerry John Rawlings organised presidential elections in December and won, marking the country's return to constitutional rule. The process continued next door in

Togo where Eyadema won the 1993 presidential elections. Eventually, the decade ended with presidential elections in Nigeria that saw Olusegun Obasanjo elected as president.¹⁸

Thus, starting from the 2000s the West Africa sub-region stabilized, politically. Apart from Guinea-Bissau (2003 and 2009); Togo (2005) and Guinea (2008) that experienced coup d'états, virtually all the countries remained stable.¹⁹ Some of the countries including Benin, Mali, and Ghana all witnessed successful transfer from an incumbent government to an opposition party.²⁰

2.4 Vigilantism and Democracy

Democracy as a system of government is participatory. As Abraham Lincoln defined it, it is a “government of the people by the people for the people.”²¹ In other words, democracy is participatory. It gives all citizens the opportunity to make their voices count either directly by themselves or through their elected representatives. Democracy is also based on institutions whose roles are defined by constitutions. It is therefore expected to be less conflictual. And, it is on this basis that concerns are being raised about the growing phenomenon in West Africa in spite of the democratic dispensation.

Lars Buur describes vigilante groups as twilight institutions.²² He argues that they flourish when state institutions are weak and there is a formal breakdown of law and order. Citizens feel the urge to take the law into their own hands where they feel that state institutions either intentionally or logistically do not have the interest or wherewithal to offer them protection. Sometimes, it is also a form of protests when citizens are dissatisfied by the actions of the state. Where vigilantes are sponsored by the state, it can be in the form of paramilitary groups or

militia. The state may either turn a blind eye to their activities or the state may actively support them.

Throughout history, commentators have often been divided about whether vigilantism is acceptable or not. Due to the violence usually associated with vigilante activity, they are generally regarded as villains. However, there are times when vigilantes can enjoy popular support, as noted by Daniel Smith.²³ Thus, whether vigilantes are seen as villains or heroes depends on the circumstances under which they operate and who their actions are targeted at. Haas et al have suggested that where vigilante violence is low and their actions are targeted at criminal elements, they are likely to enjoy more support. Citizens are, therefore, quite sensitive to situational variation when judging a crime.²⁴ Laars Buur is quite explicit that vigilantism is a reflection of the failure of the judicial system. Sometimes it is the powerful in society who contract the services of vigilantes for their parochial interests.²⁵

2.5 Vigilantism in Contemporary West Africa

Against the background of the civil wars that broke out in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the early 1990s and later in Cote d'Ivoire in early 2000, the preponderance of vigilantism in the West African sub-region comes as no surprise. Virtually every country has experienced one form of vigilante violence or the other. Even countries such as Senegal, that have never experienced any military insurrection in the form of a coup d'etat, the insurgencies in the Casamance region of the country pose serious security threats for local residents.²⁶

For a country like Ghana which has enjoyed relative peace and stability since the beginning of its Fourth Republic some 26 years ago, and being touted as one of the leading lights of democracy

in Africa, one would have thought that the scourge of vigilantism would be non-existent. But, as it turns out, it is one of the countries which have a high incidence of political vigilantism. This goes to show how rampant vigilantism is in the sub-region.

In Nigeria, the scourge of vigilantism is highly pronounced. The conflict in the oil-rich Niger Delta region has probably produced more virulent vigilante violence than any other in West Africa as argued by Stephanie Hanson 2007²⁷ and Elias Courson.²⁸ In an article published in the Guardian, Leighann Spencer identified some of the main vigilante groups to include: Bakassi Boys, Oodua People's Congress, Hisbah, Egbesu Boys and Okrika Bush Boys.²⁹ Stephanie Hanson, on the other hand, describes the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta as the umbrella organization of all vigilantes in the Niger Delta.³⁰ The activities of the groups have led to the destruction of petroleum and gas pipelines worth several millions of dollars. It has also resulted in several kidnappings and the payment of ransoms as recounted by Elias Courson.³¹

In northeast Nigeria, the activities of *Boko Haram* have also rendered that part of the country highly prone to vigilante violence. For example, in response to Boko Haram vigilante groups such as the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) have also emerged. The CJTF includes groups of hunters who have organized themselves into vigilantes to offer protection to their communities. The insurgencies of Boko Haram have spread to Nigeria's northern neighbour, Niger, where some vigilante groups have also surfaced to offer protection to local residents³². Analysts are concerned that this has the tendency of brewing more vigilantes in Diffa (the south-eastern region of the country). In Mali, jihadist vigilantes, believed to be affiliated to the Al Qaeda, continue to wreak havoc on local residents in the country's central region³³. This streak of

violence continues along the Sahel region through to Burkina Faso where activities of vigilantes known as *Kolglweogo* are flourishing.³⁴

2.6 Causes of Vigilantism in West Africa

2.6.1 Political Contestations

A major feature of democracy is the process of electioneering. Political parties and individuals gain power through elections. As a result, the process is always characterized by intense contestations that sometimes lead to violence. In West Africa, election-related violence is commonplace. According to Sampson Kwarkye in 2011, about 800 were killed in post-election violence across northern cities in Nigeria. In 2015, about 100 deaths were also recorded in Nigeria as a result of electoral violence.³⁵ In Benin, in May 2019, the elections also turned violent as opposition parties protested against new electoral laws that made it difficult for them to contest in the elections.³⁶ Togo has also been experiencing political unrest since 2017 over term-limit disputes. Tens of people have died since the conflict erupted.³⁷

2.6.2 Militarism

Military rule in West Africa introduced its own forms of vigilantism. This is a period that witnessed innumerable state-sponsored hit squads in the form of paramilitary or militia groups as narrated by Beek and Gopfert in their book titled 'State Violence Specialists in West Africa'.³⁸ This is what probably accounts for the innumerable extra-judicial killings that took place in the sub-region the military years. Almost every head of state had an elite squad. Under Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings, for example, the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) was known to

have different paramilitary groups. The one that was overtly known was the 64 Infantry Regiment (also called ‘Commandos’) which was amorphously maintained alongside the regular army. But besides that, the era witnessed the rise of several vigilante groups in the communities. These included the Association of Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (*ACDR*).³⁹

2.6.3 Resource Exploitation

The situation in the Niger Delta region is the clearest example that can be given about how exploitation of resources can breed vigilantism. The people of this area feel their resources are being exploited without the commensurate compensation for them. In other parts of West Africa, these kinds of vigilantism are usually spontaneous and short-lived. From time to time, local groups organize protests when they feel their communities are not getting their fair share of national development. But, in the Niger Delta region, the vigilante campaign has been sustained for such a long time that it has now become a permanent feature.

In Sierra Leone, the Civil War was fueled by the diamonds in the southeastern and eastern parts of the country, particularly in Kono, Kenema, Pujehon districts. And, it is important to mention that a few years ago, some chiefs in the Western Region of Ghana started some form of agitation over their share of the resources from oil production in their region. To the credit of the Ghanaian government, this was quickly resolved and the agitations mellowed.

2.6.4 Unemployment

An idle mind is the Devil’s workshop, so the adage goes. Indeed, this cannot be any truer when it comes to vigilantism. The acts are usually carried out by young people who do not have secured sources of income. Without sufficient education or employable skills or employment

opportunities, they become vulnerable to all manner of vices. Whilst some of them are recruited, others organize and offer themselves to persons who are ready to become their paymasters. When it comes to the protection of lands, some of the vigilantes organize themselves as ‘land guards’ and they freely advertise their services to the highest bidder. The issue of land guards is a major problem in Ghana where multiple sales of lands to different buyers is quite common. As a result, anyone who buys land feels the need to go in for some protection from local guards. Due to their vulnerability, political actors with money are able to lure them.

2.6.5 Ethnocentrism

Northern Ghana has experienced a lot of sporadic vigilante violence which have sometimes escalated into full-scale conflicts. The Nanumba and Kokomba war of 1995 was as a result of ethnic clashes that grew out of proportion. Till date, this part of the country continues to experience some forms of violence, every now and then, especially during traditional festive celebrations. The raging conflicts in the northern part of Mali and Burkina Faso also have undercurrents of ethnocentrism. In the case of Mali, the Tuareg rebels are fighting for autonomy while in the case of Burkina Faso.

Nigeria is another country in the sub-region which has a serious problem with ethnicity. Due to the amalgamation of the three large groups: Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba, as well as several others, the country has become a hotbed for ethnic clashes. In Cote d’Ivoire, the 2002 conflict took an ethnic dimension when rebel forces from the northern part of the country started attacking people from the south. For the first time, the country which had experienced stability since independence joined its Mano River neighbours as a conflict zone.

2.7 Impact of Vigilantism on Human Security

According to the United Nations Commission on Human Security, “human security means protecting fundamental freedoms – freedoms that are the essence of life. It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people’s strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood, and dignity.”⁴⁰

As a matter of fact, human security is a modern concept that seeks to make security more people-centred rather than state-centred. In times past, security-focused on how to deal with threats to the state and so more efforts were put into militarization and the procurement of armament. But, over the last few decades, there have been catastrophes that have impacted directly on human lives, necessitating a rethink about the safety of humans. Some of these catastrophes include poverty, ethnic violence, human trafficking, climate change, disease pandemics, environmental disasters, terrorism, and economic meltdowns. As a result, the emphasis is now being put on how human lives can be protected from such threats.

Quite recently, the violence of Boko Haram has destabilized socioeconomic life in northeastern Nigeria affecting residents in states such as Borno Bauchi, Kaduna, Kano, and Yobe. According to the United Nations, the atrocities of Boko Haram have led to the displacement of about 250,000 people in the affected states. In January 2019, for example, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that 30,000 people moved to the Cameroonian border over just

one weekend as a result of the conflict. So far, the Human Rights Watch (HRW) reports that about 27,000 persons have been killed through the violence.⁴¹

The atrocities of Boko Haram have been acute. The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) says:

Boko Haram has been linked to the deaths of more than thirty-seven thousand people since 2011, according to CFR's Nigeria Security Tracker, which monitors political violence in the country. About half of those killed were suspected Boko Haram militants, while roughly 45 percent were civilians and 5 percent were security forces.⁴²

In the Niger Delta region, vigilantism has also had a toll on human security. The CFR reports that since 2011 about 4,000 people have been killed in and several tens of thousands have been displaced. Additionally, about 10,000 have also been killed across the country through sectarian violence mostly between Muslims and Christians.⁴³ Some of the overall effects of these conflicts can be seen in the way Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) to Nigeria has whittled down from about \$9 billion in 2011 to \$3.5 billion as at 2017.

Vigilantism is also having a heavy toll in other areas such as Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. After the 2012 coup which polarized the country, jihadist groups linked to Al-Quaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Islamic State have continued to wreck violence in the northern parts of the country. This has impacted negatively on the human security situation in the country, especially vulnerable groups, including children. According to a 2019 report by Human Rights Watch:

Over 25 children in central and northern Mali were killed and others injured by explosive devices, in the crossfire, and during intercommunal clashes. Numerous children who fled their villages during attacks by ethnic militias, including Boumbo and Gueourou, remain missing. Thousands of children suffered from malnutrition as a result of conflict and intercommunal violence. In February, Mali adopted the Safe Schools Declaration, a

political commitment to reduce attacks on education. However, over 735 schools remained closed and 225,000 children were denied the right to education because of insecurity and displacement. Numerous teachers were threatened, and schools vandalized, destroyed, or occupied by armed groups.⁴⁴

The violence in Mali has spread to the country's neighbours, Niger, and Burkina Faso. Niger, as already discussed, is embroiled in the Boko Haram conflict. For Burkina Faso, the ouster of former President Blaise Compaore in 2014 opened up the country to militancy. Al-Qaeda militants started operating in the north before they spread their tentacles to the eastern and southwestern parts of the country. There have been several inter-communal clashes that have taken hundreds of lives. And what is worrying is that recent media reports suggest that the violence is spreading down south to northern Ghana where there is a red alert about possible terrorist attacks.⁴⁵

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter dilated on the history of vigilantism globally and regionally (within West Africa). It was established that acts of vigilantism date centuries back into the era of the ancient Greeks. It was also established that in modern times, regions of the world such as North America and Europe have had their fair share of vigilantism in history. On the continent of Africa, evidence was provided to show that vigilantism is a common phenomenon. Then finally, the current situation in West Africa was discussed.

It is obvious from this chapter that vigilantism is indeed a huge threat to human security. The heavy death toll in Nigeria, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali, arising out of vigilante violence, is a clear demonstration of the fact that, if it is not handled well, the vigilantism could threaten the

existence of all West Africans in the very near future. This calls for concerted action on the part of West African leaders to deal with the situation. Just as leaders of ECOWAS came up with ECOMOG to deal with the Liberian, Sierra Leonean, and Ivorian civil wars, there is the need for an ECOWAS anti-terrorism military taskforce of a sort to deal with vigilante violence. That is the only way the peace and security of human lives can be guaranteed in West Africa.

Endnotes

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- ¹⁹ In both Togo and Guinea, the deaths of the incumbent heads of state, Gnassingbe Eyadema and Lansana Conte brought about the coups.
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CHAPTER THREE

POLITICAL VIGILANTISM IN GHANA

3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses political vigilantism in Ghana in addition to other forms of vigilantism. The discussion features the views and opinions of seven respondents who were purposively selected for this study. They all gave caveats that the views they were expressing were based on their personal experiences and not necessarily of the institutions they work for or represent. The section on other forms of vigilantes is heavily dependent on newspaper accounts since most of the events have not yet found their way into the literature. In order to put the discussion in context, the next section looks at the history of the Fourth Republic.

3.1 Ghana's Fourth Republic

Ghana's Fourth Republic began on January 7, 1993, with Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings (Rtd) as the first president. This was the time which the African continent was experiencing what Huntington has described as the 'Third Wave of Democracy'.¹ In West Africa, Ghana was the second country to return to constitutional rule after Benin successfully achieved that in 1991.² The country received international accolades for the restoration of democratic governance. Given the military background of Rawlings and his eleven-year rule of the country under the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) some observers had been skeptical that he was really going to exchange his military uniform for a political suit. But, be that as it may, he actually surprised his critics and put the country back on the path of civilian rule.

Grounded in the tenets and spirit of the 1992 Constitution, the Fourth Republic of Ghana has so far proved to be the most enduring. The Constitution recognizes the principle of ‘separation of powers’ and consequently grants the Legislature and Judiciary some degree of autonomy from the Executive. But, due to the hybrid nature of the Parliament where the Constitution requires a majority of ministers to come from Parliament some have argued that the true legislative independence is yet to be achieved. Also, because the Chief Justice is appointed by the President, there are some contentions about the true independence of the judiciary. Indeed, equally contentious is the fact that the President retains the powers to appoint the Inspector General of Police (IGP).

There are those who argue that the seemingly pro-Executive provisions in the 1992 Constitution were solely intended to satisfy the whims and caprices of Rawlings who needed to be assured that a return to democracy was not going to diminish his authoritarian powers (if he won the presidential elections). And, to make assurance double sure, the so-called ‘indemnity clauses’ were put in the Constitution to ‘protect’ him in the event that he lost the elections. These provisions have sometimes come under criticism as they raise questions about the probity and accountability mantra of Rawlings during the era of his ‘revolution.’³

However, it may not be far from the truth to suggest that the decision of Rawlings to accept the outcome of the 2000 general elections in which the National Democratic Congress (NDC) lost was due to the fact that he had confidence in the indemnity clauses of the 1992 Constitution to protect him. And, it is instructive to note that since he stepped down he has not been subjected to any legal challenges about alleged atrocities committed during the era of the PNDC. Thus,

Ghana has remained peaceful and stable and its democratic practice has attracted international attention.

In 2009 and 2017 Ghana's name soared high in the international media when the country further consolidated its democracy with two more electoral turnovers. In 2009, John Agyekum Kufuor of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) who took over from Rawlings also completed his constitutionally-mandated two terms and handed over power to John Evans Atta-Mills; and in 2017 John Dramani Mahama who took over from Atta-Mills also handed over to Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo who won the 2016 presidential elections. By these feats, Ghana has thus surpassed the two-turnover-test of Huntington in the consolidation of democracy.⁴ The country is presently recognized as a beacon of democracy on the continent of Africa, second to none.

In recent times, however, there have been concerns about emerging threats to Ghana's democracy. Several commentaries have been run on the need for the country to pay attention to these threats lest they derail the country's rollercoaster ride on the tracks of democracy. One of these threats is the phenomenon of vigilantism. This chapter, therefore, is dedicated to dissecting vigilantism as one of the adverse occurrences in Ghana's Fourth Republic.

3.2 Political Vigilantism in the Fourth Republic

From the discussions in the previous chapter about the antecedents of vigilantism in Ghana, it is obvious that the phenomenon is a spillover from the previous years, starting from the pre and post-independence eras. There are those who believe that the Rawlings years may have recorded some of the worst forms of vigilantism perpetrated by people who were affiliated to the PNDC military regime. Granted that that may have been the case, it can be argued that those were heady

days when the country did not have a legislature to make laws; and the judiciary, even though it existed, was virtually emasculated where judiciary decisions were overturned by executive power at times. Thus, vigilantism in the PNDC era cannot be compared with vigilantism in the Fourth Republic where all the arms of government are in full swing. This is what has raised concerns about why the phenomenon, rather than subsiding, is on the increase.

Questions have been asked about the nature of vigilantism in the Fourth Republic and whether they are all political. Indeed, whereas political vigilantism has captured the attention of the public, there are other forms of vigilantism that are also worth talking about. And that is the essence of the next section which discusses five different vigilante scenarios. Perhaps, only the first strand of vigilantism falls under political vigilantism but all the others are equally important because they are all mostly directed at the state. Here, a broad definition is applied to vigilantism to refer to situations where groups of individuals take the laws into their own hands probably because they do not trust the police or the judiciary to guarantee them fairness and justice.

3.2.1 Electoral Violence

The first election of the Fourth Republic was held in November 1992. It was the presidential election which featured Rawlings against Albert Adu Boahen (NPP), Hilla Limann (People's National Convention), Kwabena Darko (National Independence Party) and Emmanuel Erskine (People's Heritage Party). The election was won by Rawlings but the main contenders, Adu Boahen and the NPP, protested against the outcome of the election and dubbed it as a 'stolen verdict'. They alleged that the election was marred by the violence unleashed by 'machomen' who snatched ballot boxes in the opposition strongholds. For this reason, the NPP boycotted the

parliamentary elections which were held in December of that year.⁵ Arguably, that episode marked the beginning of election-related violence in the Fourth Republic.

Post-1992 virtually every election in Ghana has been associated with tension and skirmishes occasioned by machomen acting on behalf of the two main parties, the NPP and NDC. However, the intensity of violence that accompanies general elections has not been as acute as the ones that come with by-elections. Five by-elections so far stand out as the most violent and these are Akwatia (2009), Chereponi (2009), Atiwa (2010), Talensi (2015) and recently Ayawaso West Wuogon (2019).

In an editorial published in the aftermath of the Akwatia by-election, Modern Ghana, the online news portal noted:

The violence that characterised the run-up to the Akwatia election re-run leaves a bad taste in the mouth of every peace-loving citizen. The lackadaisical behaviour of the security personnel did not help the situation. Any politician who contributed to the mayhem which saw two vehicles burnt to ashes by unknown assailants must bow their heads in shame. The Electoral Commission deserves tons of commendation for sticking to its guns to hold the election.⁶

Similarly, in a report that commented on the Talensi by-election, Penplusbytes, a pro-democracy media organization noted:

Like the Chereponi and the Atiwa by-elections in 2009 and 2010, the Talensi by-election was also marred by violence and intimidation from the NDC and NPP camps. What was even more terrifying was the interception by the Police of an AK-47 rifle, pistol, a dagger, an axe, and other dangerous weapons in Tongo, the capital of Talensi through a random search of vehicles entering the town. In a process that was very acrimonious and confrontational between NDC Azoka boys and the NPP Bamba boys in the Talensi, one could imagine the dangerous consequences if the police had not ceased these weapons.⁷

Perhaps, the mother of all election-related vigilante violence came in the December 2018 Ayawaso West Wuogon by-election when alleged NPP vigilantes enlisted into the National Security attacked supporters of the NDC. The ensuing mayhem shocked the entire country and

this caused the government to institute a commission of enquiry into the disturbances.⁸ Although the report of the commission is yet to be made public, both the NPP and NDC have already begun a process of disbanding their vigilante groups under the aegis of the National Peace Council (NPC).

Discussing the phenomenon of political vigilantism, Dr. Yao Boni Gebe⁹ of the Legon Centre for International Affairs and Diplomacy (LECIAD) traced the occurrence to the international arena.

He recounted that:

Political vigilantism is not a new phenomenon. It has been there for some time and it is not just a national problem, unique to Ghana. It is international. In fact, if you look at the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) they used to call them apparatchiks. These are groups of individuals or people who are closely associated with the party and therefore are willing and ready to do anything for the success of the party.

A second respondent for this study, Dr. Fiifi Adu Afful¹⁰ of the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) noted that “across Africa, the issue of vigilantism is a major problem, extending from the oil fields in Nigeria, across all parts of the continent.” In the case of Ghana, Dr. Fiifi Afful contended that “there is a history to it from the Nkrumah’s CPP, i.e. Young Pioneers to date.”

A third respondent, Johnson Asiedu-Nketiah,¹¹ General Secretary of the NDC, commenting on the state of Ghana’s democracy expressed concerns that “the culture of accountability is a challenge, especially where only past government officials are held accountable while the incumbent appointees are left off the hook.” He, however, hailed the role of the Inter-Party

Advisory Committee (IPAC) because according to him, it brings all the parties together on a single platform to deliberate on issues relating particularly to elections.

In the view of Asiedu-Nketiah, General Secretary of the NDC, Ghana's Fourth Republic has recorded some impressive achievements, starting with the fact that it is the only Republic in which there has been a smooth transfer of political power from one party to the other, at least on three occasions. The sentiments of Asiedu-Nketiah were shared by Evans Nimako,¹² Director of Research and Elections of the NPP who also stated that "27 years of uninterrupted democracy is the first of its kind in our political history. So I will say that, yes we, have done well as a country. But, we are still growing and there are best practices that we need to learn from."

Asiedu-Nketiah, however, accused the Electoral Commission (EC) of "backsliding" in its role as the "midwife" of elections in Ghana. He cited the events that took place at the Ayawaso West Wuogon and called on the EC to sit up. Not surprisingly, Mr. Asiedu-Nketiah claimed that the NPP is to be blamed for the increased vigilantism in the country because they allegedly brought "mercenaries from South Africa prior to the 2016 elections" and after the elections, the party's supporters started "chasing out people from offices as well as seizing of public properties and invasion of the national court of law." He added further:

Again, the bye-election at Ayawaso also saw another level of political violence where masked security personnel unleashed violence on citizens. The turnout in that election was about 19%. The election was flawed, nevertheless, a candidate was declared as the winner. This gave birth to the Emile Short committee whose findings are still unknown to the public. Later on, the government decides to pass a law to curb political vigilantism while the perpetrators of the bye-election are left unpunished.

As it was to be expected, the claims of Asiedu-Nketiah were refuted by Nimako who held that:

For us, as NPP, we do not trigger this kind of agitation. We do not organize boys to fight the opposing party. What we do is to have our people to support us. Sometimes you move into a constituency and you need to erect canopies, arrange the place and organize. We do not support people to fight our opponents. On the incident that happened at Ayawaso, I will say the NPP, as a party, did not organize any boys to cause any violence at the voting centre. And if you listened to the President's State of the Nation address, he called for an end to vigilantism in the country. And he set up the Emile Short Commission to achieve that.

Mr. PNK Aborampah Mensah¹³ of the Centre for Democratic Development (CDD) enumerated some causes of vigilantism in Ghana. He, interestingly, revealed that contrary to the popular view that unemployment is a cause of vigilantism in Ghana, there is more to it. Making reference to a study that he participated in, he explained:

Before we started our research we thought people usually get involved in vigilantism because they don't have jobs to do. However, in Kumasi for instance, out of the 15 people we interviewed, 14 were gainfully employed. Some of them were welders, taxi drivers, and mechanics at Suame Magazine. So, the argument about unemployment is no longer sustainable. The issue is that the vigilantes prefer jobs in a recognized institution. That is why most of them are forcing themselves into national security, police service, military, and other security agencies.

Aborampah Mensah¹⁴ also identified "mistrust in the security agencies" as the second cause of vigilantism in Ghana. He noted that "when the parties are in opposition they do not trust the security agencies to give them adequate security. That is why they prefer to train their boys to give them protection." When the question of trust was put to Supt. Ayisi Mensah,¹⁵ Director of the Police Transformation Program at the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Headquarters in Accra, this was his response:

The issue of trust among political parties and the police is a perceived notion; until some concrete research is done to establish that. The two main political parties have been in power before and so if they say they do not have trust in the police you can infer that when they are in government they probably manipulate the police system. And so when power changes hands, they begin to think their opponents may also be manipulating the police.

Supt. Ayisi Mensah¹⁶ explained that the police has several logistical challenges that constraints their work. He said:

The state security agencies are not enough to provide adequate security for everybody and so with that situation, political parties would want to see how they can complement the gap in the state security apparatus providing them with adequate security. And so they would want to engage their own party sympathizers to see how they can help to police their activities. Right now, for example, we have a deficit of police officers in reference to the UN ratio of 1:500; that is, one police officer is to 500 civilians. Currently, we are not anywhere close to this figure. So, clearly, this should tell us there is a shortage.

He quickly explained further that there is a need for the right distinctions to be made about vigilantism:

We have to look at the distinctions between vigilantism in a positive connotation and vigilantism in a negative connotation. What I just told you about is the ideal situation of the vigilantism, meant to augment the security agencies. That is a good thing. But, the excesses in how they perform these functions are the concerns we all have.

Dr. Fiifi Afful¹⁷ raised concerns about the fact that the appointment of the IGP compromises the independence of the police and makes the institution appear as it were an appendage of political parties. He expressed the view that the police institution must be treated as a professional institution devoid of political interference.

Quite interestingly, both Asiedu-Nketiah and Nimako had a converging viewpoint that the appointment of the IGP by the president should not be an excuse for the IGP not to be effective.

In the words of Asiedu-Nketiah:

The challenge is not the appointment because the president appoints other officeholders such as the judges among others. The issue is that the functions of the IGP must be well stipulated and devoid of manipulation. The focus should be on state security rather than regime security. There may be few things that can be done to improve their appointment such as their appointment should be subjected to parliamentary approval. This may improve things. There should be an institutional building capacity to check political manipulation of the security system.

Nimako¹⁸ also stated:

The fact that the IGP is appointed by the President does not mean that the law stops him or her from acting where he/she will have to act. So, it is neither here nor there. Ministers are also appointed by the president and they get to work. So it is not an issue of because you were appointed by the president so you become inefficient. It is a whole systemic failure we have experienced over the years because the IGP is just the head of the police service. Let us look at the people down the ladder: how do we train them? What is the length of training at the training school? What kind of refresher training systems are in place for them? What kind of logistics and tools do they have to work with? These are some of the things that we have to look at.

It is important to mention that the positions of Asiedu-Nketiah and Nimako were shared by Serwah Allotey-Pappoe¹⁹ who is a Research Officer at the KAIPTC. She said:

I believe that the IGP was not appointed from the lower ranks to where he is. He has worked as a professional and by qualification, he merits the position. Therefore, I believe people can still act professionally and independently despite who appoints them.

Commenting on the dangers of vigilantism to Ghana's democracy, Asiedu-Nketiah cautioned:

Terrorism thrives on fertile ground and hence without dealing with vigilantism, it will lead to terrorism. For instance, in the case of Libya, weapons were not retrieved from the militia after the political turmoil and this has torn the former peaceful country of Libya apart. Huge unemployed youth can be a recipe for disaster. They can engage in terrorism as well. If government-trained militia who are trained to handle weapons, used to win elections, have no jobs to do after the elections, it could be a recipe for disaster.

Once again, the pronouncements of Asiedu-Nketiah²⁰ were in tandem with that of Nimako²¹ who agreed that:

Those who engage in vigilantism are mostly people who do not have any formal education. These are guys who have taken advantage of the system; they build their bodies and if you are not able to satisfy them, in the medium and long term, they turn into something else.

Supt. Ayisi Mensah²² also agreed with the political actors and stated that the activities of vigilantes increase the insecurity of the state and even for the political parties themselves who allow the vigilantes to police them because "in the first place they are not trained; they are not

guided by any standard operating procedures. As such, they are not regulated.” He added that “these are guys who are mostly unemployed or underemployed and can be manipulated by their masters. If their activities are not well handled, it can escalate into something else.”

They all reiterated the role of the National Peace Council (NPC) in resolving the matter. Nimako particularly articulated that, “I think it has gotten to the level that the National Peace Council has been tasked to engage stakeholders to fashion out proper arrangements of resolving this phenomenon.”

But, Aborampah Mensah²³ elicited some concerns about how resourced the NPC is. He opined:

The National Peace Council, even though it is a good initiative, has not been given the needed support. They do not even have an office. They are perching. So, the first question we should be asking ourselves is whether the peace council is adequately resourced to implement its activities. The NPC has not been able to live up to expectation because it lacks the necessary resources to do its work. But, to their credit, they have been able to produce a national peace map in spite of all their constraints.

Speaking on the way forward, Supt Ayisi Mensah²⁴ remarked:

We need an educated populace. People need to know what their rights and responsibilities are so that they can take state institutions on. The NCCE comes in here. Our society must be capacitated enough to hold institutions accountable. It should not be as if we public servants are doing them a favour. Well, let us see how the Right to Information law will work out so that we can demystify this whole thing of public service as if it is for some privileged class. We should be seen to be serving the interest of the masses.

3.3 Other Forms of Vigilantism

3.3.1. Land Guards

The second strand of vigilante in Ghana comes in the form of ‘land guards’. These are armed persons who are hired by landowners to protect their lands on their behalf. The need for land guards arises out of the situation where sometimes there are multiple sales of lands. Thus, a

parcel of undeveloped land may end up having as many as five ‘owners’. Due to this situation, persons who purchase lands hire the services of land guards to protect the lands. There are times also when rivalries between royal homes lead to chieftaincy disputes and the actors resort to the deployment of land guards. The land guards terrorize citizens in the areas where they operate and sometimes also, there are clashes between rival factions.

The most infamous land guard violence occurred in November 1998 when Police Constables Owusu Sekyere (alias Kwaku Ninja) and his colleague Jerry Wornu (alias Taller) were murdered in Ablekuma in the Greater Accra Region. The two were killed when they went there to ward off three land guards identified as ‘Terminator’, ‘Black Rasta’ and ‘Wisdom’ who were said to be encroaching on a piece of land that belonged to Constable Sekyere. According to the Police, on their arrival, they were “met with fierce resistance from the suspects who were wielding AK 47 and pump-action guns and in the process fired at Wornu who fell unconscious with blood oozing and died shortly.”²⁵ When Constable Sekyere attempted to escape, the land guards pursued him and killed him as well. The two were subsequently buried under an uncompleted building and their bodies covered with concrete. It took the Police a number of days before they were able to retrieve the bodies.

Ever since the Police has been waging a war against land guards but the phenomenon is yet to go away. In their paper titled, ‘Killing to Protect’ Linda Darkwa and Philip Attuquayefio²⁶ concluded that ‘landguardism’ thrives in Ghana because of the weak law enforcement capabilities of the state. They also identified rampant corruption in the land management institutions as another factor that engenders conflicts inland markets and encourages people to

resort to individual security mechanisms. They argued that if the state failed to checkmate the activities of illicit security operatives, the state's authority and monopoly over the use of force will be jeopardized.

3.3.2 Inter-Ethnic Conflicts

The third strand of vigilantism comes in the form of communal mobilization of the youth to engage in inter-ethnic conflicts. In parts of the country where conflicts have been raging for decades, the youth usually mobilize themselves into armed groups and they take the law into their own hands. Here, it can be said that the northern part of the country is the worst plagued. The Konkomba-Nanumba conflict of 1994 can be easily recalled as the most insidious in the recent history of the country. The conflict claimed between 1,000 and 2,000 lives with between 150,000 and 230,000 persons displaced and over 500 villages destroyed.²⁷

This is how Global Security.Org describes the war:

The Konkomba-Nanumba war was sparked on 31 January 1994 in the market of the small town of Nakpayili, near the Togolese border in up-country Ghana, over the price of a guinea fowl. Initially, the clash occurred between two men: a Konkomba and a Nanumba. The two men were engaged in a common, intense Ghanaian pastime - bargaining. One outbid the other for a black guinea-fowl. Tempers flared into a brawl. Next day, the man outbid killed his rival, the Nanumba man, sparking a less common Ghanaian activity: tribal war. The clashes resulted from longstanding grievances over land ownership and the prerogatives of chiefs. A military task force restored order, but a state of emergency in the region remained in force until mid-August 1994.²⁸

Beyond the 'Konkomba – Nanumba War' there have been other conflicts in northern Ghana as noted by Mahama and Longi in their article "Conflicts in Northern Ghana: Search for Solutions, Stakeholders and Way Forward".²⁹ Underpinning most of the conflicts are chieftaincy disputes and land ownership issues, some of which date back to the pre-independence years. According to Sulemana:

An analysis of inter-ethnic conflicts in the Northern Region reveals a pattern of the struggle for paramountcy and autonomy. One of the main causes of conflict between Konkomba and other ethnic groups such as the Dagomba, Nanumba, and Gonja is the struggle for paramountcy and autonomy. Land Ownership and control of land are other major sources of ethnic conflicts in the Northern Region. The land has remained a thorny social, economic and political issue which has generated a lot of ethnic conflicts between Konkombas and Bimobas, Konkombas and Dagombas, Konkombas and Nanumbas, Konkombas and Gonjas, Gonjas and Nawuris and recently Konkombas and Nawuris.³⁰

The issue of inter-ethnic conflict in Ghana has attracted a lot of treatment in the literature because of its perennial and protracted nature. Ahorsu and Ame³¹ have argued that perhaps the approach to conflict resolution in Ghana must be relooked at. They advocate in their article ‘Mediation with a Traditional Flavor’ that the use of culturally tuned indigenous values, norms, and ethnographic practices as foundations for conflict resolution must be encouraged. They argue that when traditional African concepts of conflict resolution are blended with Western mediation processes they engender greater efficiency by facilitating the easy commitment of the part of factions to negotiate.

3.3.3 Clashes with Law Enforcement Agencies

Another strand of vigilantism that has raised concerns in recent years is the phenomenon of citizen attacks on law enforcement agencies, particularly police officers and police stations. This trend has become so pervasive that virtually every region has experienced this kind of vigilante violence. It normally starts when the police make an arrest in a community and the people disagree with it. The youth then mobilize themselves and launch attacks on the police stations. In some cases, the police are overpowered and subjected to beatings or the police stations are burnt down.

In May 2017 this kind of vigilante violence escalated a notch higher when a military officer, Major Maxwell Adam Mahama, with the 5th Infantry Battalion of the Ghana Armed Forces was lynched at Denkyira-Obuasi in the Central Region. The officer was attacked when he was seen with a gun on an early morning jogging exercise. According to the Ministry of Defence, the officer was posted to the area as the Commander of military personnel that was guarding a local mining company. Some accounts say he was mistaken for an armed robber because of the gun on him and the fact that armed robbers had been terrorizing the residents of the area. However, there are other accounts which suggest that the youth mobilized and attacked him, in a premeditated manner, because the presence of the military was hampering their Galamsey (illegal mining activities).

3.3.4 Concerned Citizens

The final strand that this study looks at is the phenomenon of ‘Concerned Citizens’. These kinds tend to emerge from local communities or workers’ unions or student groups. One of the disturbing features of the Fourth Republic has been that whenever some local residents have felt that they have been denied social amenities for long, they organize themselves into concerned citizens groups and they stage demonstrations to demand their share of the national cake. Sometimes, the demonstrations turn violent and properties get destroyed leading to roadblocks through the burning of tires or clashes with security agencies. One of such incidents occurred in Tarkwa in the Western Region in September 2016 where residents prevented a Minister of State from entering the town.³² The similar incidence occurred on the Adenta-Madina highway when moving cars knocked down residents. Residents took the laws into their own hands and engaged in all forms of vandalism and hooliganism.³³

Workers unions also, from time to time, experience challenges when factions break away to demand better conditions of service without regard to their leadership. Or when organizations refuse workers the opportunity to unionize, they constitute themselves into ‘concerned groups’ and cause anarchy. The recent workers' agitation at the Ghana Bauxite Company Limited at Awaso in the Western North Region is a case in point. The workers who had been demanding for better conditions of service took the laws into their own hands and destroyed properties worth millions of dollars. They burnt down houses and vehicles belonging to the company. Needless to say, about three months before the incidence, the workers staged a peaceful demonstration that did not get them the response they wanted and so they decided to resort to violence.

On the part of students, the pattern usually follows that of aggrieved workers. That is to say, whenever students feel aggrieved by a government or institutional policy, and negotiations break down, they resort to demonstrations that also sometimes turn violent. Here, reference can be made to the incident involving students of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) who violently protested the decision by the university authorities to convert all-male traditional hall of residence into a mixed hall.³⁴ The university authorities stated after the students' rampage that properties that were destroyed amounted to GHS 1.7 million.³⁵

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has looked at vigilantism in Ghana in depth. It started by recounting the history of Ghana's Fourth Republic and the various elections that have been held and the associated violence, particularly the by-elections. It then discussed political vigilantism in Ghana by

sampling the views of some experts on the subject matter. It also looked at other forms of vigilantism in the country which equally needs addressing because of the dangers they portend for the country's democracy. All the respondents agreed that the issue of political vigilantism must be addressed with immediate effect to preserve the peace and stability of the country, as well as its democracy.

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CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

4.0 Introduction

This dissertation set out to investigate political vigilantism in West Africa's contemporary democratic dispensation. It revealed that most West African countries have experienced several acts of vigilantism at different levels and forms. The study further revealed that there is misrepresentation of the word vigilantism as its original meaning connotes a positive term to mean to be watchful or to be awakened and usually to complement the state security in a failed state situation.

Secondly, the study sought to investigate the real causes of political vigilantism to ascertain the motivation and mode of mobilization of political vigilantism, the dangers, and implications for human security. Ghana's democratic dispensation was the focus of study, further study was conducted to ascertain political parties contribution to the increase of this phenomenon, the impact of political influence on major institutions of the country, the danger and expectation of the impact of vigilantism and to investigate the police service and what this means for Ghana as a democratic country. The study adopted a qualitative research methodology as the main research approach in under-studying the research problem. Primary sources such as interviews and secondary sources of data were used in the study.

In order to answer the problem under study, the research focused on the specific objectives of the study which were:

1. To look at the state of vigilantism in West Africa.

2. To look at the motive, motivation and the mode of mobilization of vigilantism in Ghana.
3. To investigate the means of addressing vigilantism in politics in Ghana as well as the challenges of vigilantism in Ghana.
4. To suggest solutions to the rise of vigilantism in Ghana.

This chapter likewise outlines the findings of the study and offers a conclusion. The last section of this chapter proposes meaningful recommendations in view of the findings and conclusions.

4.1 Summary of Findings

The research sought to investigate the contribution of political parties to the increasing phenomenon of political vigilantism in Ghana's politics. The study revealed that political parties in opposition do not have trust in the state security agencies because of the high political control over security institutions and the framework of most national institutions by the incumbent government.

Winner-takes-all syndrome is not the best practice. In most West African countries, the executive president wields enormous political power in appointing almost all persons in government. This creates a lot of mistrust and hence the need to engage party vigilantes to provide personal security to its members including party officials. Furthermore, the study concludes that there exists different forms of vigilantism in Ghana especially in the areas of land guards, chieftaincy, mining areas and then in politics.

The research surprisingly revealed that youth unemployment was not a major cause of political vigilantism but rather the desire to work in certain recognized institutions was the factor. Also, the investigation concluded that there were two forms of mobilizing political vigilantes; one form is those individuals who come together to train and sell their services and the other form is those individuals who willingly desire to contribute to the success of an individual or a political party through such means. Notably, the findings revealed that political parties do not own these groups as a whole but individuals within the party own them and they intend to act on the interest of the parties these individuals belong to.

4.2 Conclusion

The phenomena of political vigilantism in Ghana from the findings have proved that it is real, increasingly and threatening and the danger is that if care is not taken it will threaten the consolidation of the democracy that Ghana has practiced over the years as well as wipe off the gains of our democratic credentials. Also, it undermines our democracy, undermines our expression of choice and our peace as a country. It is also a challenge to the consolidation of democracy; it threatens the Ghana security agencies and other government institutions and if care is not taken Ghana will have a lot of electoral malpractices, violence and even undermine state stability.

4.3 Recommendations

Upon in-depth analysis, the research seeks to give the following recommendations and they include:

- First, despite the passing of the vigilantism and related offences bill 2019 by the Parliament of Ghana. The bi-partisan engagement of the two main political parties is still very significant because if there is a resistance by a party it can still escalate into mayhem and compliance to the law may not be achieved since the aim of the bill is expected to among other things curtail political thuggery and rid the country's body politic of rancor.
- Also, important to note, the Police Service Council should be reviewed, as well as the appointment of the IGP to limit political interference and make it an independent body. There should be a security of tenure for the IGP and the transformation program of the police should be well resourced to enhance the professional development of the police service to include mentoring, tailored training programs refreshers courses and exchange programs to develop the police profession and their capacity. There should be adequate police personnel to meet up the UN ratio for police to civilian standard ratio.
- Political parties should desist from recruiting unqualified persons into the security service as it is a very delicate sector of governance and political parties especially opposition parties should be provided with adequate security especially during election periods to prevent them from getting their own security. Political parties should also develop a kind of code of conduct to check and regulate the activities of their youth.

- The NCCE should do more work on sensitizing the public in their civic rights and responsibilities. The government should promote education, in general, to have a higher number of populates being literate. This will help check the menace of vigilantism as these groups are mostly made of illiterate youth who do not really understand the dangers of vigilantism and what this means to us as a country. The Peace Council should be well resourced to enhance their work in promoting peace and the Judiciary and state institutions should be apolitical and the rule of law should work no matter who falls prey to them.
- Further, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons represents a risk to the electoral process. Political party vigilantes are trained in the use of these arms during the electoral period. However, after elections, the weapons are not retrieved from them by the political parties. This poses a threat to society at large. In the event of disputed elections, the availability of SALWs could lead to violent clashes and exacerbates existing tensions between political parties through the various vigilante groups. The retrieval of SALWs, therefore, should be of priority for the security agencies. This can be done through civic engagements and sensitization programmes in targeted communities prone to electoral violence by the security agencies, particularly the Police Service.
- Finally, calls for concerted action on the part of West African leaders to deal with the situation. Just as leaders of ECOWAS came up with ECOMOG to deal with the Liberian, Sierra Leonean, and Ivorian civil wars, there is the need for an ECOWAS

anti-terrorism military taskforce of a sort to deal with vigilante violence. That is the only way the peace and security of human lives can be guaranteed in West Africa.

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APPENDIX

The general information provided by interviewees

1. A programme director and team lead for local and urban security sector governance, security sector governance at the Centre for Democratic Development (CDD), PNK Aborampah Mensah, He was also part of a committee to research on vigilantism and also a technical adviser of the mediation committee on disbanding Vigilantism. He was interviewed. He provided in-depth first-hand information on vigilantism, the causes and dangers to our democracy, appointment process of the IGP, winner take all syndromes among others.
2. An interview was conducted with Johnson Aseidu Nketia, Johnson Aseidu popularly known as General Mosquito in Ghana is the General Secretary of the main opposition party, the National Democratic Congress, He gave in-depth information on the political party system in Ghana and why they engage vigilantes especially during election periods.
3. The Director for Elections and Research for the ruling New Patriotic Party was also interviewed, Mr. Evans Nimako also gave information on why political parties engage vigilantes and the processes the ruling party is taking to bring it to a halt.
4. Prof. Ransford Gyampo, a lecturer at the Political Science Department and Director of the Centre for European Studies at the University of Ghana, Legon, he gave in-depth information on weak institutions and the institutionalist school of thought and the impact of vigilantism to our body politic as a country.
5. A Senior Lecturer at the Kofi Annan International Peace Training Centre (KAIPTC), an interview conducted with Dr. Fiiifi Edu-Afful. He provided information on the general overview of vigilantism in West Africa especially in Nigeria with regards to the oil fields and what it means for the peace of our country.
6. An interview was also conducted with Dr. Yao Boni Gebe, a Senior Research Fellow at the Legon Centre for International Affairs and Diplomacy and a lecturer of US Foreign Policy and a Security Analyst highlighted on the history of vigilantism and the international nature of vigilantism even from the USSR era and the democracy of Ghana comparability to other advanced democracies , he also emphasized on the political structure of Ghana.
7. An interview conducted with Mrs. Serwah Allotey-Pappoe, is a Senior Research Fellow at the Kofi Annan International Peace Training Centre, she provided information on vigilantism in Sierra Leone for instance and the civil war era of West Africa, she also highlighted the need for promotion of education to solve the problem of vigilantism.