

Addressing the Problem of Political Vigilantism in Ghana through the Conceptual Lens of Wicked Problems

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Abstract

Ghana entered into the Fourth Republic in 1993 after experiencing political instability over two decades. A defining feature that has characterized the Fourth Republic of Ghana and marred Ghana's democratic credentials is the emergence of political vigilantism. Political vigilantism has basically been perpetuated by the two leading political parties in Ghana: the New Patriotic Party and the National Democratic Party. The major political actors in the political system of Ghana continue to express the debilitating effects of political vigilantism on Ghana's democratic advancement, nevertheless, it continues to persist in monumental proportion in our political dispensation. Using a qualitative research approach, the paper examines the factors responsible for the pervasiveness of political vigilantism under the Fourth Republic of Ghana and proffer some plausible solutions to address this political canker.

Keywords

Ghana, Africa, political, vigilantism, wicked problem, democratic

Introduction

Political vigilantism has long attracted the attention of various scholars in Africa (Baker, 2002; Meagher, 2007; Pratten, 2008; Smith, 2004). In the context of Africa, the significance of the discussion on the interconnectedness between vigilantism and state failure cannot be overlooked. The description of state failure as postulated by Silva (2013) arises due to the general expectations towards the state. It is often argued that the frustration about this 'failure' and 'ineffectiveness' of the state gives rise to the emergence of vigilantes (Candy, 2012). It is evidently clear that policing in sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, which is important in controlling violent crime throughout its history, has been marked by widespread public recourse to vigilante violence and unbridled use of force which undermine the rule of law (Anderson, 2002; Hills, 2000).

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The activities of vigilante groups have been recorded in the political history of countries across the world. Mostly, vigilantism is borne out of dissatisfaction with institutions that maintain law and order in the public space. According to Johnston (1996), vigilantism entails the formation of groups by private citizens, which use force and violence to put across their frustrations with the state of affairs in a country. However, Rosenbaum and Sederberg (1974) disagree with Johnston (1996) on the assumption that, only private actors can advance vigilantism. They insist that state actors are sometimes perpetrators of vigilante activity.

In effect, Rosenbaum and Sederberg (1974) point out that the illegitimate use of force by state-supported groups and institutions can be referred to as vigilantism. However, there is scholarly convergence on the fact that vigilantism is characterized by the pursuance of activism outside the confines of the law, which is mostly associated with violence (Nivette, 2016; Phillips, 2016; Silke and Taylor, 2000). For instance, the Ku Klux Klan (a vigilante group operating in the United States) pursued violent attacks against African Americans in the 1880s. Other well-known vigilante groups include Esquadão da Morte (Death Squad) in Brazil, Protestant B Specials in Northern Ireland, Muslim Brothers in Egypt, White Hand of Guatemala, the Jewish Defense League and the Nazi Brown Shirts amongst others (Johnston, 1996). The waves of military coups d'état that blew across the Africa continent in the late 1990s was associated with various forms of vigilante activity. This is essentially true because coup makers disregarded the constitutionally laid down principles and toppled republican governments (Nina, 2000).

After floundering in political instability for over two decades, Ghana eventually embraced democratic governance in 1993. Unfortunately, the Fourth Republic of Ghana has witnessed the burgeoning of what is called political vigilantism. Due to the escalation of political vigilantism, the chairman of the National Peace Council, Rev. Professor Emmanuel Asante, alluded to the fact that 'he does not feel safe with the current rise of pro-government party vigilantism in the country' (*Daily Graphic*, 31 October 2017). Expressing his frustrations with the ever-increasing trend of political vigilantism, the Minister for National Security, Albert Kan-Dapaah, described the activities of political vigilante groups as: 'Criminal and affirmed the resolve of the security agencies to confront the groups and stop their activities' (*Daily Graphic*, 7 April 2017).

Notwithstanding the emergence of political vigilantism which has characterized Ghana's constitutional experience, some credit could be given to Ghana's democratic dispensation. This success could be seen in terms of considerable evidence of political liberalization which allows Ghanaians to enjoy a much wider range of rights and liberties, as well as the burgeoning of a robust civil society and a free and independent media that increasingly hold government accountable on behalf of citizens (Gyimah-Boadi, 2009). With these achievements, Ghana's democratic dispensation has been touted as one of the political success stories in Africa (Ninsin 1998). Despite these successes, it is argued that 'the democratic development of Ghana is still very much work in progress' (Mensah, 2007: 6), as it is perceived that a number of democratic deficits still persist at all levels of governance – national, regional and local (Abdulai, 2009). Political vigilantism has been observed as one of such monumental deficits undermining Ghana's democratic credentials. The literature points out that the circumstances in which these vigilantes operate are often very insecure and dangerous (Candy, 2012).

In Ghana, the two main political parties, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC), are the main culprits of these dastardly acts perpetrated by these political vigilantes or foot soldiers (*Daily Graphic*, 14 March 2019). Such political groups are used as a campaign machine during political campaigns. They perform functions such as providing security for presidential and parliamentary candidates. The security function in most cases is offered to political parties in the opposition because such parties perceive the police and the other security

apparatus to favour the party in government. The vigilantes also play the role of event organizers such as arranging of chairs for political activities (Bob-Milliar, 2014). Consequently, once a group's favoured political party wins political power, the assumption is that it is their turn to enjoy the benefits and booty that go with winning political power (Kopecký, 2011). Foot soldiers and other political activists are motivated to join political vigilantes with the motivation to get a job when their political party wins political power (*Daily Graphic*, 12 December 2017). Addressing the problem of political vigilantes therefore becomes a critical need to be met as such groups have the potential and capacity to degenerate into militant groups such as Boko Haram, whose activities could have serious repercussions for the security of the country.

Political vigilantes resort to barbaric acts which are inconsistent with democratic tenets. These despicable acts include seizing income generation entities belonging to government such as toll booths being manned by perceived political opponents; attacking offices of political appointees whom they consider do not deserve to hold such positions; preventing duly appointed chief executive officers from performing their lawful duties; and attacking police stations and using unbridled force to lock government facilities. It is against this background that a prominent member of the ruling NPP, Dr Nyaho-Tamakloe, claimed that 'there is a state of impunity. These mobs are bold because they are affiliated with powerful camps and know they cannot be sanctioned. They also know that the government has failed to punish similar conducts in the past' (*Daily Graphic*, 26 October 2017, 17).

Activities by political vigilante groups generally reflect behaviours of anomic groups, usually spontaneous groups that are formed suddenly when many individuals respond to frustration, disappointment or other strong emotions (Almond et al., 2001). In the context of political vigilantism in Ghana, supporters of the ruling government behave the way they do as their expectations of getting jobs, contracts and political appointments are unmet. For instance, on 1 August 2017, the Tema-based Invincible Forces, a pro-NPP vigilante group, threatened to visit chaos on the Tema Metropolis if the NPP government failed to provide them with jobs. The spokesperson of the group is reported to have said: 'You promised that there are certain jobs on the way coming. We exchanged numbers with those who are supposed to employ us. I have called them for almost two months now, but nobody is ready to answer my calls' (CifiFM Online, 1 August 2017). The vigilante groups believe that their criminal conduct can go unpunished as they have the backing of the political authority of the day. Due to the frustrations and disappointments of unmet expectations, the vigilante groups resort to political vigilantism to register their frustrations, disappointments and displeasure with the government. This article examines a myriad of factors driving the current Ghanaian political vigilantism and what can be done to address this political conundrum.

Contributing to the mob justice and citizen-led violence debates in Ghana, Tankebe (2009) argues that the incidence of vigilantism and broader issues of rule of law put to question the effectiveness of the state and its legal institutions. To explain in a different way, vigilantism thrives when the legal institutions of a country are perceived to be moribund, paving the way for unorthodox mechanisms to resolve conflicts in a society. However, recent studies have failed to explore the drivers of the contemporary Ghanaian political vigilantism, making the current study particularly important.

This article draws on the concept of wicked problems, which indicates that emerging policy problems do not correspond neatly to the conventional models of policy analysis (McCandless, 2013). The complex and multi-dimensional nature of wicked problems makes them difficult to resolve. This concept is relevant to the current article because it sheds light on the multifaceted factors that make it difficult to address a particular social problem, such as the Ghanaian political vigilantism. Based on this concept, the article addresses the following questions:

1. What accounts for the alarming rate of political vigilantism in the political space under the Fourth Republican Constitution of Ghana?
2. What strategies can effectively be used to address the problem of political vigilantism in Ghana?

Methodology

The study adopted the content analysis of secondary data and relevant materials gathered from online sources, local newspaper publications, election observer missions' reports and journal articles. These data sources were subjected to a critical examination of the contents and triangulated with evidence from the literature (Carter et al., 2014). This article enriches our substantive understanding of the contemporary Ghanaian political vigilantism and the necessary measures that need to be taken to tackle the problem.

Conceptual framework: wicked problems

This study is theorized through the conceptual lens of wicked problems. Wicked problems are construed to mean problems that are obscure; murky in terms of objective definitions, boundaries and definitive solutions; and, perhaps most importantly, there is little to no opportunity for experimentation as any implementation of proposed solutions will have significant impacts on society, the economy and the environment (Rittel and Webber, 1973).

For policymakers, wicked problems constitute a critical challenge, as they are averse to traditional, single-issue policy responses (Parsons, 2002). For the purposes of this study, wicked problems could be understood in terms of policy problems that seem to defy traditional strategies for developing public policy interventions to address such problems. This can be due to issues in defining the problem (Durant and Legge, 2006), constantly changing problem constraints (Roberts, 2000), or stakeholder disagreements (Kreuter et al., 2004).

The concept of wicked problems was developed in the planning literature (Rittel and Webber, 1973) to describe emerging policy problems that did not correspond neatly to the conventional models of policy analysis used at the time. The recognition of the existence of wicked problems was to some extent a precursor to the development of complexity theories in the social sciences (Klijn and Snellen, 2009; Room, 2011). Complexity theories focus on systems and the interactions within them. Such systems may be natural (climate) or primarily human (poverty). Like wicked problems, complexity theories postulate that the relationships among variables are not linear and that small shifts (especially in the initial conditions) may produce large differences in the outcomes of the systemic dynamics.

There are some visible features such as the multiplicity of policy sectors and levels of government involved in addressing wicked problems. Most of the recent discussion on wicked problems draws primarily or exclusively on this perspective. At the same time, wicked problems are frequently seen to elude the autonomous capabilities of public authorities and are linked to calls for more public participation as well as the need to address issues through some form of collaborative decision-making arrangement that devolves policy authority and accountability to non-governmental actors. Each of these responses poses its own unique challenge (Daviter et al., 2016).

Properties of wicked problems can be consolidated into three interconnected categories: first, wicked problems are complex, in that they have shifting boundaries and moving parts as well as far-reaching and cascading negative externalities. Second, the information available to help resolve wicked problems is finite: uncertainty about the effects of a problem on society, who the relevant stakeholders are, and what consequences will follow any particular strategy is a major contributing

factor to the wickedness of the problem. Third, wicked problems arise when there is a high level of disagreement among stakeholders, to the extent that consensus or even compromise is unlikely. Anyone of these categories alone is not enough to diagnose a wicked problem; it must have elements of all three (Farrell and Hooker, 2013; Head, 2008).

The wickedness of wicked problems may be largely due to a function of the political dynamics and value systems of the local or national context in which they exist (Coyne 2005; Nelson 1974; Wexler 2009). Wicked problems pose a bigger challenge in developing countries. These countries are characterized as ‘soft’, ‘fragile’ or ‘quasi’ states as they have weak government, politically interfered judiciary, lack of transparency and accountability, and low adaptive capacity (FitzGibbon and Mensah, 2012). State fragility epitomizes the essence of a wicked problem (Brinkerhoff, 2014).

McCandless (2013) and Brinkerhoff (2014) address wicked problems in terms of a ‘revolutionary’ exercise. Wicked problems in such fragile states are undeniably messy, fractured and mired in politics at many levels, given the social complexities and the need to establish rules of the game. Recognition of the complexity of tackling the problem of political vigilantism constitutes the starting point of any assessment of progress.

The ‘small boys’ and ‘big men’ syndrome has a clear significance in the discussion of wicked problem in relation to political vigilantism. The political elite who in this context constitute ‘big men’ derive some benefits from the office they hold at the expense of their ‘small boys’. The political vigilantes or the foot soldiers are of the conviction that having worked so hard to win political power they feel that they are being cheated and treated as ‘small boys’ who are unable to transform themselves into ‘big men’. They thus indulge in lawlessness and hooliganism to register their protest. The ‘big men’ by this analysis are helped by the ‘small boys’ to capture political power and occupy key and juicy political positions (Rathbone, 1973) and forget to provide jobs and other opportunities for the ‘small boys’ as promised during the campaign period to win elections. Achebe (2008: 21) captures it well in *Things Fall Apart*:

‘The oldest man present said sternly that those whose palm-kernels were cracked for them by a benevolent spirit should not forget to be humble . . . But it was really not true that Okonkwo’s palm-kernels had been cracked for him by a benevolent spirit. He had cracked them himself.’

The ‘small boys’ hold the view that the palm kernels of the ‘big men’ have been cracked for them by the benevolent spirit of the ‘small boys’. And this has implications that are wider and deeper in attempting to make sense of political vigilantism in Ghanaian politics. Price (1974) argued that it was almost to be expected that those who ruled would behave with the arrogance of traditional ‘big men’. Nugent (1995: 21), in supporting the ‘big men’ and ‘small boy’ syndrome, asserts that ‘it was even accepted that political bosses would derive some advantages from their position. What was resented was their apparent selfishness—that is their failure to distribute the rewards of the political kingdom more widely.’

Looking at wicked problems from the perspective of the ‘big men’ and ‘small boys’ analysis, complications arise as to how despicable activities of political vigilantes can be punished, given the fact that they are in most cases considered as kingmakers. As such, wicked problems are frequently seen to elude the autonomous capabilities of public authorities and are linked to calls for more public participation as well as the need to address issues through some form of networked or collaborative decision-making arrangement that devolves policy authority and accountability to non-governmental actors. Each of these responses poses its own unique challenge (Daviter et al., 2016).

Wicked problems are often characterized in terms of some unique features that set them apart from other kinds of problems (Devaney and Spratt, 2009). Political vigilantism in Ghana as a

wicked problem arises from the fact that it is extremely difficult to address. The political vigilantes are viewed as kingmakers who have worked assiduously to bring their parties to power. In that regard, they take the laws into their own hands knowing very well that those in political authority cannot crack the whip on them. Failing to sanction them therefore embolden them to perpetuate their despicable activities as political vigilantes.

Political vigilantism in Ghanaian politics: background

The genesis of vigilantism in Ghana can be traced from pre-colonial days. Most of the vigilante activities in the pre-colonial era were regime protectionist in nature. Whereas the British Colonial Administration used violence to protect colonial rule, the young people of Ghana also retaliated by organizing violence to frustrate the colonial system, which indirectly had the potential of transitioning the colony into political independence and republic rule (Asamoah, 2014). One such incidence of protectionist vigilantism was the killing of some veterans by the colonial administration, which led to the February 1948 riots that gained popular support and led to the boycott of foreign goods, which incurred the wrath of the colonial administration.

The attainment of independence did not end the activities of vigilantes by the youth groups of political parties. Shortly after independence, Nkrumah faced strong opposition from political parties like the National Liberation Movement (NLM) and some other ethnic-based political parties which engaged in acts classified as vigilantism. The Action Troopers was a vigilante group, set up by the main opposition political party, the NLM. This group was involved in creating fear and panic and brutalizing members of the Convention People's Party (CPP) in the Ashanti Region, using dynamites, guns and other deadly weapons to suppress and eliminate opposing political factions. There were other vigilante groups such as 'Tokyo Joes' to protect the interest of Ga Adangbe, and Ga Ekomefeemo Kpee to protect the interest of the CPP and make Nkrumah's government popular among Ghanaians in Accra.

The prevalence of such vigilante groups serving as opposition to the CPP led to the promulgation of the Avoidance of Discrimination Act, which barred the existence of any political grouping that was based on ethnic or religious affiliation. Also, there was the enactment of the Prevention Detention Act (PDA) in July 1958 which authorized the government to detain anyone in prison for not more than five years without trial.

The lack of constitutional means for opposing the rule of Nkrumah led to a series of unconstitutional and vigilante-styled attacks on the first President of Ghana, like the Kulungugu bomb attack in 1963 in which Nkrumah sustained some injuries and several people died. Nkrumah's government was overthrown in 1966 in a military coup championed by Colonel E.K. Kotoka, Major A.A. Afrifa and Mr. J.W.K. Harley. After the overthrow of Nkrumah, there were coups and counter-coups, which were more violent and bloodier than those of the 1966 coups. The 1979 coup d'état for instance, resulted in the bloody execution of some former Generals of the Ghana Army by a firing squad authorized by the leader of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), Jerry John Rawlings. In the Provisional National Defence Councils' Government, which was also led by Rawlings, there were the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, the Militia and the Civil Defence Organizations which all played the role of vigilantism.

Political vigilantism under the Fourth Republic of Ghana: the battleground of the New Patriotic Party and the National Democratic Congress

Under the Fourth Republic of Ghana, both the NPP and the NDC have made significant use of political vigilantes. They have been used in terms of political campaigning, providing security for

Table 1. Vigilante Groups linked to the NPP.

<i>Groups</i>	<i>Location</i>
Nana Addo Fun Club	Tamale
Invincible Force	Accra
Bamba Boys	Wenchi
Bolga Bulldogs	Navrongo, Sandema, Bawku, Bolga, Techiman
Kandahar Boys	Tamale
Delta Force	Kumasi
Action Troopers	Kumasi
Bugri Naabu Fun Club	Tamale

Source: Compiled by the author.

Table 2. Vigilante Groups linked to the NDC.

	Tamale
Pentagon	
Tohazie	Tamale
Bukurisung	Tamale
Aluta Boys	Tamale
66 Bench	Tamale, Yendi
Azorika Boys	Tamale
Gbewaa Youth	Tamale
Al Jazeera	Tamale
Al Qaeda	Tamale
NATO Forces	Tamale
Rasta Boys	Agbogloshie
Se Se Group	Nima
Aluta Boys	Tamale
Nima Boys	Accra
Salifu II	Asunafo North Constituency (Mim and its environs)
Zongo Caucus	Ashanti, Western and Volta Regions
Untouchable Forces	Accra
The Hawks	Ellembelle Constituency

Source: Compiled by the author.

political candidates both for parliamentary and presidential elections, as well as the organization of political party events. Some unique names have been given to the respective vigilante groups to express how fearful they are. Tables 1 and 2 show the vigilante groups linked to both the NPP and NDC parties.

Figure 1 displays information on the series of political violence recorded after the NPP won power in 2016. When the NPP won political power in 2016, some toll booths being manned by perceived members of the opposition NDC were seized. Similar incidents of seizure of public facilities were reported at various places in Ghana. The members of the Delta Force, a political vigilante group affiliated with the NPP government, attacked the Ashanti Regional Security Coordinator in Kumasi and brutally assaulted him and some of his staff members (*Graphic Online*, 24 March 2017). The same group also attacked a Kumasi Circuit Court and freed about 13 members of their vigilante group who were facing court charges for causing disturbances at the

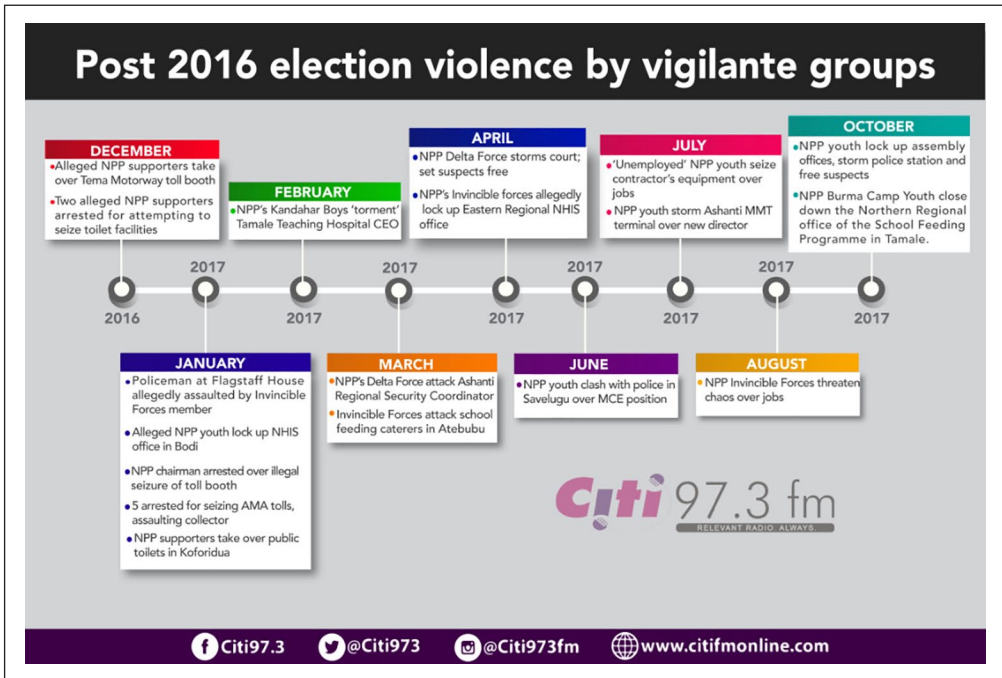


Figure 1. Post-2016 Elections Violence by Vigilantes.
 Source: Citi FM online. Available at: <http://citifmonline.com/2017/10/26/18-incidents-of-vigilante-violence-recorded-since-npps-victory/>

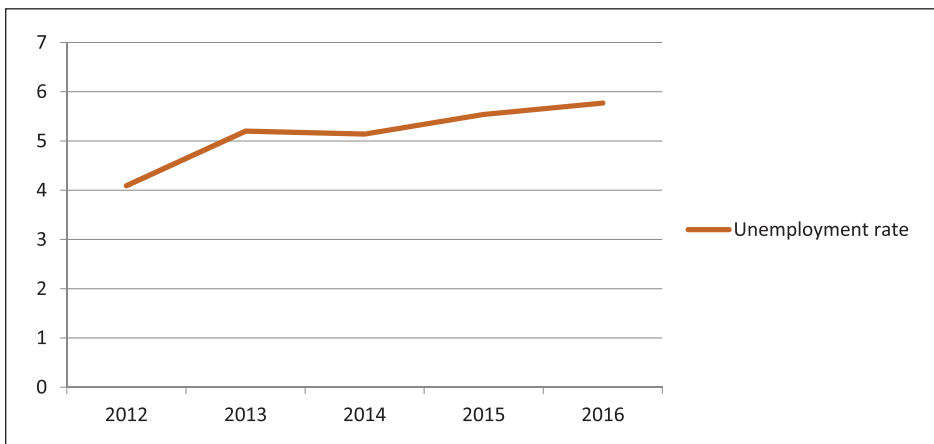


Figure 2. Rate of unemployment in Ghana.
 Source: International Labour Organization (2017).

Regional Coordinating Council. The group nearly assaulted the Judge at the court (*Daily Graphic*, 7 April 2017).

A report by the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD) expressed a disappointment with the fine imposed on the 13 members for the violence caused. The court fined each of the

accused persons of Delta Force GHC1800 (equivalent to US\$400.00). The punishment meted out to these perpetrators of the heinous crime was considered by political actors as a setback in an attempt to promote decency in politics. The CDD stated

While CDD-Ghana acknowledges that the process leading to the verdict followed the rule of law, it is saddened by the leniency of the judgement. Considering that activities of political party vigilante groups are still rife, this verdict presents a setback in efforts to promote decency in politics. (*Daily Graphic*, 26 October 2017, 17).

Contributing to the discourse on the sentence imposed, OccupyGhana, a socio-political pressure group, called on the Attorney-General to appeal against the sentences imposed on some members of the Delta Force to review the sentences: ‘OccupyGhana has noted with grave concern the ridiculously insignificant fines imposed on the NPP activists who either escaped from lawful custody or engaged in criminal acts under the banner of the Delta Force’ (*Daily Graphic*, 27 October 2017, 17).

Expressing umbrage with political vigilantism, the 2017 Annual Plenary Assembly of the Ghana Catholic Bishops Conference (GCBC) urged the government and the state security agencies to act decisively against the activities of vigilante groups, land guards and nomadic herdsmen. The bishops emphasized that the increasing acts of violence being perpetrated by those groups against innocent citizens with impunity posed a great threat to the peace, security and safety of the country, a situation which in their view must be dealt with immediately. The Conference further condemned the attack on the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly (KMA) Circuit Court, describing the act as lawlessness that only discredited the country’s hard-won democratic credentials (*Daily Graphic*, 20 November 2017).

Adding a voice to the catastrophic nature of political vigilantism, the President of the Ghana Bar Association (GBA), Benson Nutsukpui, expressing disapprobation with political vigilantes’ activities, along various sentiments by political actors, urged all Ghanaians to stem vigilantism and mob justice, since they threaten the very essence of the rule of law and democracy (*Daily Graphic*, 1 July 2017).

It was also reported that the ruling NPP group called the Kandaha Boys, vandalized the office of the Sangnariqu District Chief Executive (DCE). They smashed the doors and windows and destroyed chairs and tables in the office. The irate young people alleged that the District Chief Executive awarded school feeding contracts to her close associates while neglecting party women organizers (*Ghanaian Times*, 15 September 2017, 7).

Factors driving Ghanaian political vigilantism

The factors that drive the contemporary Ghanaian political vigilantism are political, economic and social.

Political condition

The political condition in a country is always critical to the maintenance of law and order. One of the most identified causes of vigilante activity is the ‘authoritative allocation of values’. It is projected that if groups feel cheated by the government in the distribution of state resources, there is the potential for people to organize themselves into groups to counter the government through vigilante-style attacks. It is therefore correct to assert that there are political conditions favouring the activity of vigilante groups in the Ghanaian public space.

In fact, Bob-Milliar (2014) sees political vigilantism in terms of a brand of party activism that violates the norms of liberal democracy. Other scholars also hold the view that the post-election activities of foot soldiers point to the fact that their operational logic is fundamentally about sacrificing for patronage spoils after elections (Daddieh, 2009; Gyimah-Boadi, 2009, 2007; Whitfield, 2009). Political vigilantism in this context, therefore, means a politically affiliated vigilante group, or perceived supporters of political parties, contextually known as foot soldiers who act with impunity and perpetuate a crime due to their inability to enjoy the fruits of political patronage. Such political supporters normally assume that since they are supporters of political parties and have fought to bring a party to government, their illegal conduct can go unpunished.

Moreover, the winner-takes-all politics is accepted as one of the factors contributing to the overly partisan public space in Ghana. Gyampoh (2013: 2) offers a useful explanation of winner-takes-all politics in Ghana as ‘an extremely divisive and partisan sub-culture that excludes all other Ghanaians who are not part of the ruling party from national governance and decision making in a manner that polarizes the nation and dissipates the much-needed talents and brains for national development’. This situation results in the violent attacks on sympathizers on the losing party after all general elections since 1992.

The occurrences in the Ghanaian political scene prove that opposition parties do not trust security agencies due to their allegiance to sitting governments. For instance, the NDC boycotted the most recent by-election at Ayawaso-West Wuogon Constituency in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana due to widely reported violent attacks on NDC supporters by state security agents during the event (BBC News/Pidgin, 31 January 2019). These incidents later became the reasons for the formation of a commission of enquiry later known as the Emile Short Commission, chaired by a former director of the Commission of Human Rights and Administrative Justice. Mistrust of the security agencies like the Ghana Police Service has been the reason for the setting up of crime control vigilante groups by political parties especially for the purpose of elections. This mistrust stems generally from the total control of the state apparatus by the ruling government, and more specifically the appointment of the leaders of the main security agencies by the President. The Police Service is tasked with maintaining law and order and is led by an Inspector-General of Police. The Inspector-General of Police is appointed by the President in consultation with the Council of State, which is an advisory body. Article 202 (1) states: ‘The Inspector-General of Police shall be appointed by the President acting in consultation with the Council of State.’

The appointment of the Inspector-General of Police by the President creates antagonistic relationship between the Police Service and the opposition party since the latter perceives the Police Service to be ‘in bed’ with the ruling government. They therefore establish their own private police by creating militia in their political parties to maintain law and order during political campaign activities, and monitoring election results. This assumption is supported by Abrahams, who adds that:

vigilantism presumes the existence of the state, and of formal legal and other procedures involving the use of force over which the state normally claims a monopoly . . . Vigilantism typically emerges in ‘frontier’ zones where the state is viewed as ineffective or corrupt, and it often constitutes a criticism of the failure of state machinery to meet the felt needs of those who resort to it. It is a form of self-help, with varying degrees of violence, which is activated instead of such machinery, against criminals and others whom the actors perceive as undesirables, deviants and public enemies. (1998: 9)

Following from the above, the parts of this equation are: the state, criminals and good citizens. If everything is in order, citizens entrust their protection against crime to the state and the equation has the following form: good citizens→state→criminals. If, on the contrary, trust in the state is lacking, the equation loses one part: good citizens→criminals (Abrahams, 1998). Vigilantism

arises as an initiative aimed at restoring the levels of personal and social security desired by vigilantes. The vigilante is thus an 'upholder of the established rules' (Dumsday, 2009).

Also, the enormous powers bestowed on the President to appoint district chief executives and other directors in key institutions creates a favourable condition for grievances and vigilante activities in Ghana. Article 195 (1) of Ghana's 1992 constitution states:

Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, the power to appoint persons to hold or to act in an office in the public services shall vest in the President, acting in accordance with the advice of the governing council of the service concerned given in consultation with the Public Services Commission.

Experience in Ghana shows that the imposition of chief executives to districts and state agencies on the people and public servants creates avenues for resentment especially when members of the party in government are unsatisfied with their appointments.

Social condition

The social setting can influence the perpetuation of vigilante activity in the political scene. An aspect of the Ghanaian society that supports the creation and the illegal activities of vigilante groups is the support of mob justice by a larger proportion of the Ghanaian population (Tankebe, 2009). Reports of mob action on suspects are rampant and consistently reported on various news platforms. A recent and notable in the Ghanaian media space was the lynching and eventual killing of a military person, at Denkyira Obuasi, who was wrongly suspected to be an armed robber (CitiFMOnline, 29 May 2018). This shows the people's belief in instant justice and their support for violence in the political set-up. The use of violence and brute force in influencing government decisions perpetuated by the vigilante groups has the support of some prominent politicians, thereby making it difficult for them to condemn and punish any wrongdoing perpetrated by the vigilantes.

Political vigilantes' activities in Ghana's democratic dispensation are usually associated with violent crime. Some scholars are of the view that violent crime and its concomitant feelings of insecurity have become twin challenges for the Ghana police since the return to democratic rule (Appiahene-Gyamfi 2002; Tankebe 2008). As Tankebe (2010) observed, however, the coincidence of democratization and violence is not a peculiar Ghanaian problem; it is a feature of many countries in democratic transitions (Karstedt 2003). Nevertheless, violence and insecurity are important issues, because they are indicative of the fragility or precariousness of democratic experiment. As Bayley (2006) puts it, 'democratic government cannot be created in the face of widespread lawlessness and violent disorder'. Unfortunately, widespread lawlessness perpetrated by foot soldiers and political supporters in the name of political vigilantism has taken root in the Fourth Republic of Ghana.

Economic conundrum

It has been suggested that the economic situation in Ghana supports political violence and the formation of party militia who make the Ghanaian political space quite insecure. The high rate of unemployment in the country serves as a catalyst for the easy mobilization of young people in the formation of political party militia. Scholars agree that the lack of genuine employment opportunities especially for young people makes them vulnerable to recruitment by illegal groups like terrorist organizations and other outlawed militia, like the vigilante groups (Nivette, 2016; Phillips, 2016). A report by the World Bank in 2016 titled 'Landscape of Jobs in Ghana' revealed that about 48% of young people between the ages of 14 and 24 do not have jobs.

Apart from the youth employment gap in Ghana, Figure 2 demonstrates that the general rate of unemployment has increased over the past five years. The increasing rate of unemployment in Ghana potentially could spell doom for the political scene in Ghana if the situation is not rectified.

Due to the limited employment opportunities in the country, supporters of the winning political parties sack the existing workforce and take over operations public institutions. In December 2017, there was the occurrence of such takeovers at the Tema Motorway Toll Booth, where supporters of the ruling NPP sacked the existing workers and started collecting tolls at the booth (*Daily Graphic*, 12 December 2017). Again, some members of the Invisible Forces made strong threats to the ruling government for their failure to offer them jobs, this occurred during the maiden edition of the Ministry of Information and Ministry of Local Government town hall meeting held in Tema (*Daily Graphic*, 1 August 2017).

The significance of the discussion on the interconnectedness between vigilantism and state failure cannot be overlooked. The description of state failure as postulated by Silva (2013) arises due to the general expectations towards the state. It is often argued that the frustration about this 'failure' and 'ineffectiveness' of the state gives rise to the emergence of vigilantes (Candy, 2012). In this light, the failure of the successive governments in the fourth republic of Ghana in creating a conducive economic environment for business and job creation has been a boost for political vigilantism.

Conclusions and recommendations

This article used the concept of wicked problems to explore the factors driving Ghanaian political vigilantism and the implications they have for addressing the problem. Political vigilantism is hereby referred to as a wicked problem due to the complex web of actors and factors that facilitate the phenomenon, making it cumbersome to address. The widespread nature of political violence in the blueprint of post-colonial politics in Ghana has been associated with the creation of militia groups by political parties to advance diverse causes, most often these groups operate as crime prevention vigilante groups but later advance to either regime control or social group control vigilante groups. State actors in Ghana have also been found to be undermining the principles of rule of law to stay in power through violence and against political tactics characterized as vigilantism by the classic work on the classification of terrorism by Rosenbaum and Sederberg (1974).

The prevailing conditions in the political, social and economic atmosphere of Ghana has been established to support the activities of political vigilante groups. Also, the increasing rate of unemployment especially among young people is argued to promote vigilante activities by political parties.

There have recently been attempts by the Government of Ghana to investigate and to deal with the menace of political vigilantism in the body politic. President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo called for the abolishment of vigilante groups by the two main political parties during the State of Nations Address on 21 February 2019. The President also promised to favourably consider and implement recommendations of the Emile Short Commission, which investigated the violence which took place at Ayawaso-West Wuogon by-elections (*Daily Graphic*, 14 March 2019). Moreover, a milestone in the fight against political vigilantism was attained when the leaders of the NDC and NPP met to discuss the roadmap to the disbandment of their vigilante groups (*Daily Graphic*, 10 April 2019). In spite of commendable progress of work by state actors with regard to political vigilantism, there is still more to be done to averse politically motivated vigilante activity in Ghana.

The study recommends that political appointees to various positions must learn to lead a modest life to convince the citizens to accept that they are in office to serve but not to amass wealth. The

study also recommends that critical public servants like the Inspector-General of Police must not be appointed by the President. Again, district chief executives must be elected for them to really represent their constituents. There is also the need for governments to work towards creating employment avenues for Ghanaian young people, in order to effectively use their strength, skills, knowledge and talents for nation-building. The government and the relevant stakeholders must work assiduously to create job opportunities for young people. The perception that one's party must be in power before one can get a job in the public sector must be jettisoned through proper education by the National Commission for Civic Education.

There is the need for opinion leaders like chiefs and religious leaders to condemn the activities of political vigilante groups and reorient their followers about the menace of political vigilantism. It is further recommended that the police must clearly deal with anyone who breaks the peace in the name of political vigilantism.

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