

The causes of electoral violence politics essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In every democratic system of governance, election is the only legitimate determinant entrance to political office or leadership, and it is an important element for facilitating good governance practices and consolidation of democracy. Elections provide avenue for the electorate to express their will and sovereignty and give legitimacy to their political leaders. Election periods give an opportunity for the electorate to assess not only the performance of the party in power but indicate their expectations of the future government. Hence, the power to rule or to lead emanates from the citizens or the electorate. To elect and to be elected into any political office is both a political and human right. The Article 21 of 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides that, “ the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government as expressed in periodic and genuine elections.” The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) provides that “ Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections.”(Heyns, Killander; 2007). The article 42 of the 1992 constitution of Ghana states that “ every citizen of Ghana of 18 years of age or above and of sound mind has the right to vote and is entitled to be registered as voter for the purposes of public elections and referenda”. Therefore voting in an election is both a political and civic right for every citizen in a country of origin to exercise when it is due. Elections all over the world are contested by political parties and candidates who demonstrate their capabilities and articulate policies and programmes that they believe reflect the aspirations of the people.

However, the outcomes of these elections in some countries are not desirable and call for greater concerns for all. For example, the outcomes of

election in Asian countries such as “ India, Pakistan, Philippines, and Malaysia are characterised with violence leading to loss of human life, property, injuries and chaos. In the Philippines, 75 people were killed prior to the May 2007 elections, while 80 others were wounded in election violence.”(Samuel Mondays Atuobi; 2008) In Africa, countries like “ Zimbabwe, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Chad, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Zambia have all been characterised by election violence. This incidence of election violence in Africa is so high that even an election considered being free, fair and transparent the outcome may not have been free of violence. Elections in Africa are periods in which the stability and security of African states hangs in the balance, due to the threat of election violence” Ibid. For example, “ Nigeria, in 2003 federal election, at least 100 people were killed and many more were injured, 600 people were reported killed in the December 2007 presidential election violence in Kenya, following disputes over the results”. (Cyllah; 2010: 5)

Indeed, in Ghana like other African countries, the 1992 constitution has made provisions towards the attainment of democracy. The Constitution has spelt out clearly designed structures of an integrated democratic state and the qualifications of citizens to take part in any election. Articles 43-46 of the 1992 constitution spells out the establishment, composition, qualification, terms of office, conditions of service, functions and the independence of the electoral commission who sees to the day to day management of the Electoral Administration.

Since 1992 to 2008, Ghana had undergone through five major successive elections which have been applauded by democratic nations, institutions and

<https://assignbuster.com/the-causes-of-electoral-violence-politics-essay/>

personalities. These elections have been described as free and fair elections and made Ghana to become a member of committee of nations in the international systems. All these elections were contested by the major political parties and candidates in Ghana.

Table 1 shows the number of political parties contesting the elections since 1992 to 2008 with the votes obtained.

S/N

Name of Party

1992

1996

2000

2004

2008

1

NDC

2, 327, 500

4, 099, 460

2, 895, 575

3, 280, 056

4, 501, 466

2

NPP

1, 213, 078

2, 834, 881

3, 131, 739

4, 002, 680

4, 478, 411

3

CPP

NA

NA

115, 641

88, 022

113, 494

4

PNC

266, 728

211, 136

189, 659

119, 656

73, 494

5

GCPP

NA

NA

67, 504

NA

NA

6

NCP

113, 615

NA

NA

NA

NA

7

NRP

NA

NA

78, 629

NA

NA

8

UGM

NA

NA

22, 123

NA

NA

9

PHP

68, 059

NA

NA

NA

NA

NA — Not Applicable

Source: Electoral Commission of Ghana Reports. (1992-2008)&Oquaye, (2004: 530)

From the table above, the NDC led by former president Jerry John Rawlings won both 1992 and 1996 elections. However, the NDC led by John Evans Atta Mills was defeated in 2000 election and power was successfully handed over to the NPP led by John Agyekum Kuffuor on 7th January, 2001. Equally, the NPP led by John Agyekum Kuffuor won 2004 election. Interestingly, in 2008 election, the NPP led by Nana Akuffo Addo was also defeated and power was successfully handed over to the NDC led by John Evans Atta Mills on 7th January, 2009.

From the table above, the two dominant parties won the elections and ruled for two consecutive terms each since 1992 when Ghana returned to democratic system of government.

A review of these elections in Ghana since 1992 highlights the importance of democracy in legitimising the exercise of political power held and transferred of such power from a defeated government to another elected government.

All the five elections mentioned above were described by observers both internationally and locally as credible, free and fair. (1992-2008 Election

<https://assignbuster.com/the-causes-of-electoral-violence-politics-essay/>

Reports). The elections illustrate positive features of a democratic country which, although slowly, is steadily maturing into a consolidating of democracy.

1. 2 Problem Statement

Ghana has conducted five democratic elections which were generally applauded by international and local observers as free, fair and transparent. However, none of these elections have been conducted or passed without violence. Eventhough Ghana is considered as one country in Africa that has been performing well in the conduct of elections and transfer of power, a closer look at or monitoring of these elections indicates that there is a cause to worry. The process toward attainment of free, fair, credible and transparent elections as a system of consolidating democracy and good governance in Ghana is characterised by violence in all the succeeding elections since 1992. These worries are mainly centred on series of elections violent that claimed lives, burning down of properties which include houses/offices and ballot boxes that have been recorded in all these elections. For example, there were incidences of violence and mob actions reported in “ Pru District in the Brong Ahafo Region, Tamale Central, Tamale North, Saboba, Zabzugu/Tatale constituencies in the Northern region”. (Election Report, 2004). Similar cases of violence were recorded in some areas of the Upper West Region. At Busa, a community in the Wa Municipality for example, violent erupted leading to burning of a motor bike and injury to people. (Elections report, 2004). Also in the 2008 elections, “ the district electoral officer for Kratchi West in the Volta Region was held in a gun point by a group of men known to be party foot soldiers to hand over the

elections results and the materials to them”.(Dr Kwadwo Afari Gyan, Intermediate Workshop for Election Administrators, 2010, Ho). In fact the phenomenon of election violence is taking root and is becoming a serious challenge in our electoral process. Politicians use it as a method of campaign causing fears and intimidation among their opponents’ strongholds. In fact, the 2004 Presidential results were declared without five constituencies’ results when the Chairman of Electoral Commission Dr. Kwadwo Afari-Gyan noted:

“ As a result of acts of vandalism which occurred in certain constituencies after the 7th December, 2004 balloting, the results in those constituencies were slow in arriving at the head office for collation” (Elections Report, 2004: 50).

Again, the 2008 parliamentary election result in Akwatia constituency in the eastern region was not declared because of the act of violence which led to the injuries of people, destruction of election materials as well as the election result.

Without getting full grips on the causes of this violence, it would be very difficult if not impossible for any person, group and organisation/institution to come out with appropriate solutions/recommendations to the negative tendencies that seem to have negative effects on the smooth conduct of elections and the democratic peace we enjoy in Ghana.

The rhetorical questions that come into mind are;

“ What is the essence of democracy and multiparty politics if it still results in violence that leads to the destruction of life, livelihood and property? What argument can we advance in favour of democratic consolidation in Africa/ Ghana when elections end in chaos, as we witnessed in some part of Africa/ the country?” (Samuel Mondays Atuobi; 2008: 6). The essence of democracy is to give the people or the electorate the opportunity to choose leaders who are capable of managing the affairs the country. The concept of multiparty politics is to enable the electorate to make informed choice out of the parties and ideas from the various candidates contesting the election. The essence of democracy and multiparty politics are the bases development and improve standard of living in the more economically advanced countries word over. Why then the practice in the third world countries are characterised by violence?

In light of the above, this study intends to investigate the causes of electoral violence in Wa Municipality in the Upper West Region of Ghana.

Thus the research will seek to find answers to the following questions:

1. 3. 1 Main Research Question

What are the factors that cause electoral violence in Wa Municipality?

1. 3. 2 Sub-Research Questions

What political factors perpetuate electoral violence in the Wa Municipality?

What role do the media play in electoral violence?

What factors that influence the youth in electoral violence?

What measures do Election Management Body (EMB) and stakeholders put in place to find solution to electoral violence?

1. 4. 1 Main Research Objective

To examine the factors that cause electoral violence in Wa Municipality.

1. 4. 2 Sub-research objectives

To determine the political factors that perpetuates electoral violence.

To examine the role the media play in electoral violence.

To investigate the factors that influence the youth in electoral violence.

To determine measures the EMB and the stakeholders put in place to find solution to electoral violence.

1. 5. 1 Explanation of terms

Political factors as in the research question and objective refer to any activity undertake by any political party in an election which lead to violence.

Examples are the mode of campaigning in an election, the use of state resources (abuse of incumbency) especially by the party in power as against the electoral laws.

The media as in the research question and the objective refer to the radio, the print media, television and internet.

Election management body as use above refers to the electoral commission and all the employees either permanent or temporarily involve in electoral activities especially during elections.

The stakeholders refer to the major players in the electoral process. That is those institutions or organisations that have key interest in the electoral process. For example, the electoral commission, the government, the political parties and the media.

1. 5. 2 Definition of terms

In this study, elections mean combination of acts and procedures aiming at choosing, selecting or casting of a ballot for a candidate among various candidates as members of parliament and as the head of state (President) or any public and private institutions.

Violence means any act or any inducement directly or indirectly aiming at harming or influencing a voter physically, emotionally or psychologically in such a way that affect their genuine or legitimate choice in an election.

Therefore, election violence as the main terms in this research could be defined as: “ Any random or organised act that seeks to determine, delay, or otherwise influence an electoral process, threat, verbal intimidation, hate speech, disinformation, physical assault, forced ‘ protection’, blackmail, destruction of property or assassination” (Fischer; 2002 P 8)

1. 6. 1 Justification of the Study

The role of elections in promoting good governance and democratic consolidation cannot be over emphasised. Over the years, the electoral environments have improved and we have all accepted that periodic and transparent elections are critical tools for consolidation of democracy and good governance. It represents a critical test for social cohesion and if badly managed could easily tear society apart.

The justification for this study can be attributed to many factors. Apart from the fact that it would enable me to meet my academic requirement, it is my contribution towards the entrenchment of democracy in Ghana. This is done through finding suggestions to the causes and effects of elections violence in the Wa municipality and beyond. Additionally, it would serve as an important document upon which future reference could be made. In this regard policy makers and stakeholders in good governance are in a position to come out of recommendation that could help in finding solution to violence that is associated with elections in Ghana. It also contributes to a legitimate choice made by the electorates without any influence, compulsion or hindrance.

CHAPTER 2

2. 1 Literature Review

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

DEMOCRACY, ELECTIONS AND VIOLENCE:

2. 2 Introduction

All over the world democracy as a form of government plays a significant role in human development and progress. It also contributes toward citizens' participation in the exercise of political power in every state. In this regard, the relationship between democracy and citizens' participation is demonstrated by using election as a tool which ensures participation. However, in the process of using election as a mechanism citizens participation turned into violence.

This proposal is set to give a brief introduction to the concept, theory, origin and type of democracy. It would also be focused on the definitions within available literature.

Secondly, a brief concept of elections, discussion on the theory of elections and also, an insight to the standards and requirements of electoral systems, as well as the understanding of the environment in which elections must be conducted for purposes of election sustainability and consolidation of democracy.

Lastly, there would also be brief discussion on the concept of violence, what constitute violence, and election violence in particular and its effects on citizens participation in the democratic dispensation.

2. 2. 1 Concept and theory of democracy

Although the term democracy is a cherished system of governance, it is complex and difficult to understand. The various writers on the subject of democracy are influenced by their system of practices and their orientations. The practice of democracy in the more economically developed countries like the United State of America, Britain, France and Germany are different from the practice in the third world countries in Africa and Asia.

The word “ democracy derives from the Greek word ‘ demokratia’, which is combination of the words ‘ demos’, a Greek word meaning ‘ the people’, and ‘ kratia’, designating power strength or rule”. Hence, from the Greek perspective ‘ democracy’ was understood as an idea resembling rule by the people or the actual and direct participation of the citizens in public affairs. This was manifested through the assembly of the Athenian community.

<https://assignbuster.com/the-causes-of-electoral-violence-politics-essay/>

(Oquaye, 2004: 59) In the view of O'Neill in support of the Greek, "democracy is a system where political power resides with the people". Thus, the people have the right to choose leaders to rule them at any electioneering period. In my view, democracy means the power of the people.

There are multiple ways of defining 'democracy' depending on the ideals envisaged when defining democracy, it may have different meanings. Democracy means "the government of the people, by the people, and for the people" (Abraham Lincoln in his famous Gettysburg Address as cited in Oquaye (2004 : 60). The expression "government of the people means the power to rule is originated from the people, by the people means the rulers represent the governed that is the citizens. The governments' legitimacy and power emanate from the people, the government is responsible to the people, government is guided by the people and the definition also connotes direct democracy. (Oquaye, 2004: 60). So from Abraham Lincoln's definition, democracy means ruling in the interest and with the power of the citizen.

The question is, what about those who come to rule a country through coup d'etat or the use of the barrel of gun? They are also government who come to power and rule but not through democratic processes as happened in Ghana between the 1970s and the 1980 in Ghana. Are they as per the definition a government by the people? And for the people means those in authority rule on behalf of the people. Do government actually rule on behalf of the people? Most rulers get to power to pursue their own personal and selfish interest as it is the case in most underdeveloped countries and not

that of the ordinary citizens. That is why during elections, the politicians manipulate the system to win power for the attainment of their own interest.

“ Democracy is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote” (Schumpeter; 1943: 269). In a democratic system, there are institutional structures like the electoral administration, executive, the legislature, the judiciary and the press. These are some of these institutions that make the concept of democracy to function effectively.

“ A political system is defined as democratic to the extent that its most powerful collective decision-makers are selected through periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote”(Huntington1984: 195). The competition for votes should be done in a civilised way with the exchange of ideas, policies and programmes as to how one is capable of ruling a country. Democracy is said to have a positive attributes and it presupposes the idea that, what is democratic is good and the opposite is the reverse. Democracy stands for stability, freedom of expression and choice. Democracy could be seen in the light of socialist and liberal perspectives. In the Communist view in countries such as the former Soviet Union, which saw themselves as democratic state, democracy meant collective equality rather than individual freedom. In Europe and United States, democracy has been associated with multiparty regimes, civil liberties and individual freedoms.

2. 2. 2 The Concept and Theory of elections

Historically election has religious background as the origin. It could be traced from old and ancient Greek and Roman States, where “ elections were used in ancient Athens, in Rome, and in the selection of popes and Holy Roman emperors, as the same went with the selection/election of Caliphate in the ancient Islamic history after the death of the prophet of Islam Muhammad. The origins of elections in the contemporary world lie in the gradual emergence of representative government in Europe and North America beginning in the 17th century”. (Nasiru Adamu, 2009: 17)

Democracy is a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions and inactions in the public realm by citizens who elect them for their representation periodically.

In democratic systems, elections are a primary tool to legitimise the authority of the rulers. According to Diamond, L and Plattner, MF (1996), “ elections are the basis for the existence of democracy. Additionally, elections are means to consolidation of democracy and good governance in every country that aspire to it and not an end in itself. They are basic human and political rights to express the will of the people.”

It is “ a formal expression of preferences by the governed, which are then aggregated and transformed into a collective decision about who will govern, who should stay in office, who should be thrown out, who should replace those who have been thrown out” .(Hague R & Harrop . M 2004) It is the procedure by which members of communities and or organisations choose or select representatives to hold public offices, and also as a concrete

instrument of political control at the hand of the electorate. " Elections are process through which citizens choose who will represent them in government or what will be done about a particular issue". (Nasiru Adamu; 2009, P 20)

Attempts to define elections have equally been extended to the level of several domestic legislations. Elections are combination of acts and procedures aiming at choosing or selecting among various candidates, members of parliament and the head of the state by the electorate. Elections are so significant that regional institutions have adopted standards and principles applicable to them. In Africa, the African Union Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa (2002) and the African Charter on Democracy Elections and Good Governance (2007) are key instruments of the regional legal framework which make reference to such standards and principles.

However, there are several conflicting and contradicting positions with regard to the specific objectives and importance of elections by writers. For instance, (Goodwin-Gill 2006) began by saying that " an election is not a poll aimed at giving the most accurate representation of all the various opinions or interests at play in society. However, he added that an electoral system is intended to give citizens the power to decide who shall rule and according to what policy", in this respect, he is self contradictory. If he admitted that electoral systems seek to give citizens the power to decide who should rule and in accordance to what policies and program, then he should have acknowledged that such systems must have election standards which make the people more represented so that they may participate in the policy

decision making processes through their elected representatives. If this is true, it is equally correct to say that those who are not represented will not be able to participate in the policy decision making process.

Hence, in electoral systems where elections are the effective ways of citizens' participation in political decision making, elections should aim at achieving the most accurate representation of all opinions and interests in the society. There should be effective ways through which the citizens choose their representatives both in parliamentary and the presidential elections. Therefore the system of choosing leaders either parliamentarians or presidential should be free and fair whereby the electorates are at liberty to make their own choice at any given election of their country.

2. 2. 3 The Concept and Theory of Violence

The definitions of violence are subjective and emotive and depending on the typology and the angle the writer looks at it. It could be domestic violence, criminal violence, routine interpersonal violence, cultural violence, structural violence etc.

The word “‘ violence’ is derived from the Latin violentia, meaning ‘vehemence’, a passionate and uncontrolled force”. (Vittorio Bufacchi; 2005)

“ Violence is interpersonal acts of force usually involving the infliction of physical injury”, (Coady; 1986). From the above definition it suggests that the concept of violence cannot be understood independently from the concept of force. In the words of John Dewey, “ violence is force gone wrong, or force that is destructive and harmful”

Violence is defined as “ the cause of the difference between the potential and actual, between what could have been and what is” (Johan Galtung; 1965, P 169). Here violence is seen as the difference between what is considered as actual and the potential or the ideal and the realities. Thus in a country where citizens are not able to have access to their basic needs like food, shelter, clothes in the mist abundance then there is violence. It means that when the actual and the reality are avoidable then there is a manifestation of violence in a society. “ Violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realization” (Johan Galtung; 1965, P 168) Again the emphasise is on the deprivation and the incapacitation of people to attain their fullest potential. There are two types of violence; physical violence and the psychological violence. Physical violent exists when parties or standby and development projects are affected directly or indirectly by killing, maiming by guns, bombs among others constitute casualties used in assessing the magnitudes of the violent. Under this type of “ violence, human beings are hurt somatically to the point of killing. Psychological violent occurs when parties or standby or development projects are not affected in any form directly.” (Johan Galtung; 1965, P 168/9)

“ Violence is not simply the exercise of physical force to get something done. For one thing, it is the exercise of force, or more generally power, in such a way as to harm others in pursuit of one’s own ends. It causes injury or death, including potentially to the performer of the violence himself or herself”.

(Andrew Strathern & Pamela J. Stewart; 2002: P 3)

“ It is harm done to others which provokes arguments about its legitimacy. Human societies depend both on controls over behaviour and the expression of positive values between people. Controls over behaviour may involve the use of force or coercive techniques, such as physical punishment or restraint by incarceration. Violent behaviour in particular may be controlled by these means, in which case what distinguishes the control from the violent behaviour itself”. (Riches; 1986, P 11)

David Riches introduced the triangle of violence consisting of performer, victim, and witness. Each of these three categories of persons involved is likely to have their own view of the legitimacy issue. “ A performer may see his or her action as legitimate, or at least justified; the victim is less likely to do so; and the witnesses will evaluate the actions variably according to their relationships with either the performer or the victim (or both) and their own social standards, moral code, or personal interests”. Ibid. The performer or the perpetrator would see his or her action as a legitimate and must be carried out, the victim also think that he or she is legitimate. However, the third person in the Riches triangle could equally interpret the actions between the performance the victim in his or her line judgement. Hence, violence is a subjective and complex theory.

CHAPTER 3

3. 1 Research Methodology

Research design is a plan or blueprint of how you intend conducting the research. (Mouton, 2001: 55). According to S. Sarantakos, (2005: 212), “ it is the logical sequence in which the study is to be carried out, as well as the elements of the study, it methods of data collection and analysis and all

<https://assignbuster.com/the-causes-of-electoral-violence-politics-essay/>

administrative procedures that need to be considered for the study to be carried out without problems or delayed”. Below are the various methods in which I intend to carry out my research work.

The methodology will involve the following:

The design process,

Sampling procedures,

Methods of data collection,

Data presentation

Data Analysis from focal group discussion

Data Analysis from Interviews

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Organization of the work.

3. 1. 1 General Approach

The research will be broadly designed based on a case study approach.

Research design is a plan or blueprint of how you intend conducting the research. (Mouton, 2001: 55

According to Yin (1993) “‘ case studies are appropriate for investigating problems especially because they allow the researcher to define topics broadly (and not narrowly), to cover contextual conditions (and not just the phenomenon of study), and rely on multiple and not single sources of evidence. The process will involve exploratory field visits, identification and

classification of different characteristics into similar units in the field from which cases will later be selected as well as designing and pre-testing of the field tools.

3. 1. 2 Sampling Procedures The purposive sampling will be the main technique. Purposive sampling enables researchers to “ choose subjects who, in their opinion, are relevant to the project”. S. Sarantakos. (2005: 164) Maxwell (1997: 87) defines this type of sampling as one in which “ particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well from other choices.” According to P. A. Twumasi, “ purposive sampling is used in impressionistic studies, in pilot and pre-testing procedures and when one wishes to gain a quick insight into a social phenomenon.” The targeted sampling population will include election officials from the EC, Candidates of elections since the inception of Ghana’s Forth Republican Constitution, elected representatives (both past and sitting), Traditional and opinion leaders, youth groups in the various political parties and others. The sample size is 120 people which are made up of 20 people for FGD and the remaining 100 people for in-depth interview with open-ended questions.

3. 1. 3 Methods of Data Collection

In research work, it is important to use the various sources, tools and techniques for data collection. According to Twumasi, (2005: 29) “ the data collect will help the researcher to evaluate his data source and to detect inconsistent answers”. “ There is no protocol to be followed in the use of any procedures; the procedure should be adapted to its circumstances and guided by judgement of its propriety and fruitfulness.” (Blumer; 1970: 29a, <https://assignbuster.com/the-causes-of-electoral-violence-politics-essay/>

as cited in Twumasi). In the light of this, primary and secondary sources will be combined for data collection.

“ Primary data collection process will make use of focus group discussions and in-depth interview with key participants using semi-structured or open-ended questions which allow respondents the opportunity to give any answers by freely expressing themselves”. (Karma, 1999; Twumasi, 2001)

“ In-depth interviewing is a qualitative research t