

# Party Youth Activists and Low-Intensity Electoral Violence in Ghana: A Qualitative Study of Party Foot Soldiers' Activism

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**Abstract:** Within the literature, there is growing concern about how competitive politics are contributing to electoral violence in Africa. The focus of scholars has been on large-scale organized political violence, referred to here as high-intensity electoral violence. This article fills a gap in the literature and introduces a “new” concept I call low-intensity electoral violence by youth activists affiliated with political parties. The article is based on youth activists affiliated to political parties in Ghana. Ghanaian parties mobilize these rank and file party members, who are commonly known as party foot soldiers. I argue that politics in Ghana functions within a clientelism environment where the party in government uses state authority to dispense patronage. Political parties recruit and use foot soldiers to commit electoral fraud in order to win elections or to maintain their control over state resources. On the basis of an original dataset built using event catalogs and in-depth interviews, the key argument of this article is that the normative logic of the winner-take-all electoral politics is that the winner of a presidential election monopolizes all state power. It further argues that this logic contributes to what I call low-intensity electoral violence. The aggressive behavior of the party foot soldiers is also linked to structural and partisan factors such as youth unemployment, unfulfilled electoral promises, and the survival strategies of elite groups within parties. The article concludes that as party foot soldiers begin to play an important role in the capture of power by political elites, they view a change of regime as the right time to claim political opportunities. On the whole, however, acts of aggression committed by youth party foot soldiers are of the low intensity kind.

## Introduction

Youth in Sub-Saharan Africa are said to constitute an important constituency for electoral mobilization. But in spite of making up 70 percent of the region's population, they are less engaged in partisan politics for a variety of reasons.<sup>1</sup> To be sure, elections are increasingly characterized by bitter struggles over access to state resources. And given the high stakes involved in capturing state power, politicians have come to value the organizational abilities of youth groups.<sup>2</sup> Democracy in Ghana is arguably a model of African democracy and serves as a yardstick for other democracies on the continent. And, yet, competitive politics in Africa's “model democracy” still generate electoral violence. This article proposes the “new” concept of low-intensity electoral violence to describe, measure, and show how interactions between Ghana's main political parties and party activists generate electoral violence. Electoral violence results from keen competition when incumbents and challengers manipulate the processes to gain advantage over their opponents. Most observer

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assessments of the conduct of elections in Africa since the “third wave” of democratization in the 1990s usually contain incidences of violence.

In the democratization and elections literature, various authors analyzing flawed elections or conflicts resulting from disputed elections in sub-Saharan Africa have used the concept “electoral violence” to describe these political infractions, disturbances, or riotous behavior of party supporters.<sup>3</sup> The majority of existing studies on electoral violence have tended to focus on large-scale violence. These kinds of violence, which are sometimes systematically organized by elite groups and their sympathizers, may be described as high-intensity electoral violence.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, Straus has noted that electoral violence is on the increase in African democracies.<sup>5</sup> This reflects the fact that competitive politics had never been keener. Disputed presidential polls in Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Kenya, and Côte d’Ivoire, for example, were accompanied by reportedly widespread mass killings, destruction of property, and the displacement of several communities.<sup>6</sup>

To be sure, not all electoral violence in Africa can be categorized as high-intensity violence. The degree of intensity and the scale of atrocities vary widely between states. Researchers have barely begun to conceptualize the intensity or magnitude of election related violence. This article begins to fill this gap in our understanding of what I call low-intensity electoral violence. I define low-intensity electoral violence as election-related disturbances or infractions occurring during the pre-vote and post-vote periods in which there are no more than ten election-related deaths; violence is localized; and, there is no large-scale displacement of human beings and dispossession of assets. Nonetheless, low-intensity violence is one characterized by the manipulation of formal procedures, violent assault/harassment, breach of the peace, disorderly behavior, protests, disorderly conduct, violent intimidation, vandalization or destruction of the properties of parties and supporters, stealing or stuffing of ballot boxes and other kinds of electoral fraud. The instigators or perpetrators of low-intensity electoral violence are political parties, politicians, and party youth groups.

Two main parties, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), dominate competitive politics in Ghana. The competitive behavior is relatively free of the kinds of high-intensity violence that has characterized multi-party elections in some parts of Africa.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, the country has recorded localized ethno-political violence in which activists of the main parties clashed.<sup>8</sup> In Ghana’s party system, foot soldiers—that is, rank and file party members—play a very important role in the partisan process.<sup>9</sup> Political office seekers have increasingly come to rely on the mobilization abilities of these young men and women. The role of party foot soldiers in the democratic process is, therefore, very controversial and has been questioned. A recent Afrobarometer survey reported that a majority (81 percent) of Ghanaians agreed that some of the activities of party foot soldiers had the potential to derail the country’s democratic development.<sup>10</sup> The foot soldiers’ brand of party activism violates the norms of liberal democracy. The operational logic of foot soldiers activism manifested itself in the open presidential elections of 2000 and 2008 and the resultant power alternation between the two dominant parties.<sup>11</sup> Foot soldiers of the NPP used the Akan saying “*y atu aban*” (“we have overthrown the government”) to describe the NDC’s defeat. In its practical manifestations, foot soldiers claiming NPP affiliation seized party patronage objects, including public toilets and lorry parks in Accra and other urban centers.<sup>12</sup> Violence characterized the changing of the party guards. The defeated NDC party foot soldiers, who controlled some public goods, refused to relinquish

their management to the victorious NPP party foot soldiers. The process repeated itself in early 2009 when the NDC recaptured the presidency.

On the basis of an original dataset built using event catalogs, in-depth interviews, and other sources (study design and method outlined below), the central claim of this article is that the normative logic of party politics understood as winner-take-all contributes to low-intensity electoral violence. The political system of the winner monopolizing all state power comforts and discomforts all political activists. Also foot soldiers' aggression is linked to structural and partisan factors such as youth unemployment, unfulfilled electoral promises, and survival strategies of elite groups. The article concludes that youth party foot soldiers place a high premium on capturing state power for the political elites. As a result, the foot soldiers view the change of government as the right time to claim political opportunities. Nevertheless, there is a significant decline in election related violence committed by youth party foot soldiers, a positive sign that democracy is deepening in Ghana.

In order to put the contending perspectives on political violence into their proper context, it is first necessary to outline the different conceptualization of political violence in the literature, before moving on to an analytical outline of the concept of low-intensity electoral violence. This is then followed by an explanation of the term "party foot soldiers." The section focuses on the multifaceted nature of the term in Ghanaian politics. The discussion is centered on the roles foot soldiers play in the partisan process and the potential triggers of low-intensity political violence analyzed. Finally, I will present and discuss the empirical findings and the overall implications of low-intensity electoral violence for the consolidation of democracy in Ghana.

## Method and Data

This article examines contentious or aggressive politics using both direct and indirect approaches. The indirect approach used to gather data for the creation of my original dataset was the event catalog model. The event catalogs method has figured prominently in empirical studies of collective violence and political struggle.<sup>13</sup> As a method, event catalogs allow for the compilation of acts of political aggression over a longer time period. For instance, in studies of collective violence, event categorizations give an indication of the intensity, magnitude, duration, as well as the form of violence.

For this event catalog model, I gathered data on incidences of infractions that constituted election related violence between 1992 and 2012. It must be acknowledged that it is difficult to determine whether a particular violent incident is directly related to an election or not.<sup>14</sup> There are no fixed criteria in the existing literature on which incidences constitute electoral violence or worse still what constitutes low-intensity electoral violence. To overcome this lacuna, I established a number of criteria to determine what constitutes a particular level of electoral violence. First, I examined whether the perpetrators of violence shared a political motive and an illegitimate strategy to win elections. Second, I categorized the time or occurrence of the incident as pre-, day-of-vote, and post-vote phases. Third, I delineated the magnitude or degree of intensity of the disturbances or infractions based on the level of casualties recorded and their geographical spread. Finally, I determined the level of criminality by the number of injured people, number of dead, and the damage to land and properties.

In preparing the event catalogs for this study, I consulted three broad sources including local newspapers, publications from democracy promotion think tanks, and reports of

election observer missions. From these different sources, I prepared event catalogs covering the period from 1992 to 2012. The events or incidences were differentiated into five sub-categories: a) ballot box theft or electoral fraud (e.g., underage voting, impersonation, double voting, etc.); b) physical assault or violent intimidation; c) seizure of public properties; d) protests or public disorders; and e) vandalization or destruction of party property. In order to avoid repetition or duplication of events reported in the various sources, the reports were crosschecked by date, location, and content. Nevertheless, the accuracy of some events reported in some politically aligned newspapers (e.g., *Daily Guide*, *Daily Searchlight*, and *Ghana Palaver*) could not be ascertained. The total number of events or incidences contained in the catalogs was 5,707 (see Table 1 below).

The direct methodological approach employed in-depth interviews and personal ethnographic observations. I undertook semi-structured in-depth interviews and participant observation with party members to contextualize the data from event catalogs. Fifty party activists were interviewed. The respondents were purposefully selected and consisted of thirty self-identified foot soldiers, ten Members of Parliament, and ten party executives of the main parties. The sampling frames were divided into list and non-list. To qualify to be included in the list sample, one needed to be a registered member of one of the main parties. Consequently, card-bearing party members, including Members of Parliament and party executives, made up the list frames. The non-list frame consisted of the party foot soldiers without registration but who claimed affiliation to one of the main parties. Foot soldiers were sampled from party regional offices. Consequently, foot soldiers interviewed were randomly selected from constituencies across the country.

Finally, I used political ethnography to observe political activities involving party activists. Political ethnography allows for a “close-up and real-time observation of actors involved” in contentious political activities.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, ethnographic methods “can reveal a great deal about interactional dynamics, particularly at the meso or organizational level.”<sup>16</sup> The direct observations of foot soldiers’ activism as a participant observer at party rallies, congresses, conference, and protests since 2007 have yielded valuable insights.

### **Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives**

The first task of this article is to provide an overview of the contending perspectives on political violence that dominate mainstream political science literature. Nevertheless, the focus here is on election-related violence in matured and emerging liberal democracies.

In a theoretical overview that examined the relationship between democracy and violence, Schwarzmantel defined political violence “as the use or threatened use of physical coercion to achieve political ends.”<sup>17</sup> He explained further that “political violence is the use of physical coercion to achieve a change in the nature of the political order, or to defend that order in its existing form.” The author also distinguished “political” from “criminal” violence. While identifiable groups carry out political violence, either as part of the state apparatus or as members of a non-state organization, criminal violence is carried out for personal gain and is also done by persons or gangs whose identities are not known. Schwarzmantel’s categorization allows for a similar distinction in my analysis of electoral violence. Höglund, a conflict studies scholar, makes a strong case for a conceptualization of electoral violence, which is distinguishable from other types of social and political conflicts.<sup>18</sup> However, within the context of political pluralism, Andreas Mehler was categorical about the utility of violence on political platforms. Mehler argues that electoral violence is “a

dominant mode of the political struggle.”<sup>19</sup> He went further to explained thus: “We may distinguish different dimensions of violence that should not lightly be mixed up. A mass protest demanding political freedoms may escalate into street violence. This is not the same as when a political party decides to go underground and to directly participate in a civil war. All violence is not equal.”<sup>20</sup>

This study’s empirical evidence, analyzed below, is consistent with Mehler’s position that “all violence is not equal” and that electoral violence is different from other forms of political violence. Indeed, two key contributions on electoral violence in Africa advanced similar arguments. Alluding to European antecedence, Laakso concludes that democratic transitions and electoral violence are always correlated.<sup>21</sup> However, in the case of Africa, Laakso argues that the preponderance of electoral violence on the continent is evidence of flawed post-1990 transitions. In a recent publication, several scholars examined the origins, the triggers, and the consequence of electoral violence in Africa.<sup>22</sup> The findings from the study of Straus and Taylor, based on a comprehensive dataset called the African Electoral Violence Database (AEVD), challenged the prevailing perspectives on the causes of electoral violence.<sup>23</sup> First, electoral violence in Africa occurred in only 10 percent of the elections conducted in Africa between 1990 and 2008.<sup>24</sup> Second, government parties perpetrated the majority of electoral violence during the pre-vote campaign period. The authors argued that electoral violence is primarily the result of incumbents manipulating the electoral procedure to maintain power.<sup>25</sup>

The phenomenon social movements scholars call “contentious politics” could offer some insights into the behaviors of party foot soldiers in Ghana. In this context, Tarrow argues that “we cannot understand episodes of contention without examining how contentious and institutional politics—including electoral politics—intersect.”<sup>26</sup> In their book, *Contentious Politics*, Tilly and Tarrow provided an elaborate definition of the concept, and it is worth quoting them at length because it forms the basis of the argument in this paper: “Contentious politics involves interactions in which actors make claims bearing on someone else’s interests, leading to coordinated efforts on behalf of shared interests or programs, in which governments are involved as targets, initiators of claims, or third parties.”<sup>27</sup>

Collective action is characterized as contentious politics when it causes activists to come together and confront ruling elites or their opponents “around their claims or the claims of those they claim to represent.”<sup>28</sup> Tarrow points out that the mechanisms that help to explain the occurrence of contentious politics within a polity are linked to “changes in political opportunities” and “perceive threats.”<sup>29</sup> These mechanisms induce citizens to respond to a range of incentives, which could be “material, ideological, partisan and group-based, long-standing and episodic.”<sup>30</sup> Political opportunities and constraints are the ingredients needed to induce contentious politics. In the context of developing world politics, some of the variables in the theoretical literature that are given as the cause of contentious politics appear abstract. The empirical literature addresses this problem.

The empirical literature expatiates on the agents of electoral violence. Electoral violence is triggered by the interaction of three principal agents: political parties, elites groups, and youth groups (or party youth wings).<sup>31</sup> It is generally assumed, with little empirical evidence, that politicians and political parties instigate most electoral violence. In ideological and conceptual terms, there are difficulties in associating political parties with electoral violence.<sup>32</sup> There is a thin line between what is institutionalized and non-institutionalized politics in many African democracies. Many political parties are weak and lack an

organizational structure. Some observers see African political parties as the vehicles for elite groups to capture state power.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, political parties have varied motives for employing violence to achieve a political objective.<sup>34</sup>

Nevertheless, the instrumentalization of violence is not exclusive to incumbents. Competitive elections in every democracy have two outcomes. Przeworski puts it succinctly when he notes that democracy is a system that produces winners and losers.<sup>35</sup> In African democratic practice the winners, most often incumbents, tend to be satisfied with poll results. The losers, mostly opposition parties, would always dispute the validity of the polls. Yet, in all democracies a popular mandate grants political opportunities to the winners. The exclusive use of state resources by a ruling coalition to entrench itself in power is the source of contention in many African democracies. According to Mehler, because so much is at stake political elites have incentives to influence the electoral process through intimidation and violence.<sup>36</sup>

Besides political parties and elite groups, the other important agent of electoral violence is youth groups aligned with political parties. The behavior of youth activists or supporters of political parties in Africa straddles conventional and unconventional political participation.<sup>37</sup> Writing about Africa's youth, Jon Abbink noted that "African youths are over-represented in armed rebel or insurgent movements of various kinds as well as in criminal activities, to which they are so easily recruited."<sup>38</sup> This observation also holds true for youth recruitment for partisan politics. All political parties in Africa pay attention to youth mobilization simply because they are the group needed to bring about change.<sup>39</sup> The political elites see the youth as an important constituency for electoral mobilization because of "their sheer numbers, their availability, and their eagerness to take up anything that may relieve them of conditions of poverty."<sup>40</sup>

More importantly, conflict studies experts have noted that many countries in Africa are experiencing a "youth bulge."<sup>41</sup> Consequently, the democratic stability of the continent is said to be threatened because stagnant economic development has a negative effect on the youth bulge. Weber argues that a country with a high proportion of young men risks democratic collapse because "male adolescents have a higher propensity to intergroup hate and political violence."<sup>42</sup> The supporting evidence for Weber's claim is that young men formed the principal recruiting pool for the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) of Sierra Leone and the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), among other rebel movements.<sup>43</sup> Africa's youth are also found in various criminal networks or ethno-religious movements.<sup>44</sup> Youth vigilantism becomes intertwined with partisan politics when the vigilantes represent the interests of their political "godfathers."<sup>45</sup> The Mungiki youth movement in Kenya is one such example.<sup>46</sup>

From the discussions in the theoretical and empirical sections, it is evident that the conceptualization of electoral violence is problematic. The common characteristics of election-related violence in Africa are violent displacement, dispossession, or death. This type of violence is also known for its traumatic experience. Arguably, mass killings, displacement, and dispossession constitute high-intensity violence. The arguments advanced in this article are consistent with the theoretical and empirical observations of Laakso, Mehler, and Höglund, which emphasized that the degree of intensity and the scale of the election-related violence are never the same in any two countries or even within districts in the same country. Yet, there is an overgeneralization about violence in the conduct of elections in Africa since the "third wave" of democratization in the 1990s. This study's contribution to the literature on electoral violence begins with the unpacking of the

old loaded concept. In order to minimize miscategorization and mislabelling, a determination of the nature of violence based on the degree of intensity or magnitude, criminality, timing, and motive are all relevant for an informed analysis. The time of occurrence must be established. This requires a clear delineation of the pre-vote, day-of-vote, and post-vote phases. The degree of intensity of the election-related disturbances or infractions, as measured by the degree of injuries, geographical spread, and costs, is equally vital. More importantly, the level of criminality—based on the number of injured people, number of dead, and damage to landed properties—must be measured. Finally, the motive of the actors/perpetrators must be determined. A political cause must be the basis for the inclusion of a motive into the analysis of low-intensity electoral violence.

If, in an emerging liberal democratic state, the overall incidences of election-related violence do not affect the proper functioning of the state machinery and the overall incidences (as cumulated number of events) are on the decline, such a phenomenon is defined as low-intensity electoral violence. Election-related infractions or disturbances that record a death toll not exceeding ten and where no large-scale displacement and dispossession is involved would constitute an example of low-intensity electoral violence. The same holds for an election which has witnessed one or more of the following incidences: manipulation of formal procedures, physical assault, breach of the peace, disorderly behavior, disorderly conduct, violent harassment/intimidation, destruction of the properties of parties and supporters, ballot box theft, and other kinds of electoral fraud. A juxtaposition of the theoretical perspectives and the empirical literature, with the study's empirical evidence to be analyzed in the next section reveals the following. First, violence is the use of physical force to achieve a set of political goals and political violence must always be differentiated from criminal violence. Second, the flawed character of many post-1990 transitions is the root cause of many incidences of Africa's electoral violence. Third, political and not electoral violence is on the decline in Africa. Finally, and most interesting, contentious politics arise when political actors make counterclaims on political opportunities. The empirical evidence of what has been conceptualized here is presented in the next section.

### **Youth Foot Soldiers in Ghanaian Politics: Unconventional and Contentious Action**

Political party activism in Ghana's Fourth Republic has been largely defined by the behavior of party foot soldiers. As a result, the term "party foot soldier(s)" is of recent origins. It gained political significance when a group of middle class supporters of Andrews Kwame Pianim, an NPP presidential aspirant in the party's 1996 presidential primary, described themselves as the candidate's foot soldiers.<sup>47</sup> Despite its inauspicious origins, the term has gained popularity on the platforms of all parties and has been used by politicians to identify with the aspirations of party members.<sup>48</sup>

Nevertheless, in Ghanaian politics, where social status is a significant identity marker in party membership, foot soldiers are at the bottom in party hierarchy.<sup>49</sup> According to the Marxian conceptualization, they are the lumpenproletariat. Party foot soldiers may be described as itinerant activists because their activism is very mobile and crosses party platforms: their engagement with the main parties is largely informal and highly personalized. In partisan operations, foot soldier activism consists of volunteering energy and mobilization abilities to support individual politicians attain party or public office. Foot soldier political activism is very contentious as it is driven by passion and aggression. Their

brand of political activism has features of lawlessness, and the line between conventional participation and contentious politics becomes blurred.

Based on my interactions and observations, the majority of party foot soldiers tend to have below-average levels of education or none at all. They were mostly without secure employment and survived by doing casual jobs, known in the local parlance as “by-day” jobs.<sup>50</sup> Consequently, as Honwana and Abbink have observed, without any meaningful employment, Africa’s youthful population and, by extension Ghanaian youth, are always available to be recruited by the political elites as foot soldiers to work for their political interest.<sup>51</sup> The popular image of party foot soldiers is of heavily built men or what is locally called “macho men.” They are more likely to be male than female and within the age cohort fifteen to thirty-five. As a non-elite group, many tend to live in poor neighbourhoods or in urban slums.<sup>52</sup> The political activities that engaged the attention of foot soldiers may include taking part in pro- and anti-government protests, attending meetings, canvassing for votes, and exercising public authority in diverse ways (e.g., providing security for their communities). The ambitious ones tend to formalize their membership with a political party. Those with exceptional mobilization abilities and leadership qualities are able to transcend the membership categories defined by social status, including education or monetary considerations, and move up the party ladder, either as youth organizer, constituency organizer, or local chairman. Chief Sofo Azorka, for example, one-time leader of the “Azorka Boys” (a ragtag youth group), used his leadership skills to secure the NDC Northern region chairmanship slot when the position became vacant in 2010.

### **Political Parties: Participation and Membership**

Members of political parties are at the heart of the partisanship process in most liberal democracies.<sup>53</sup> They play an important role in the decision-making process including nominating and selecting members to fill critical national and party leadership positions.<sup>54</sup> However, the size of formal membership of Ghanaian parties is not known. Formal party membership varies widely between the NDC and the NPP.

To be sure, all political organizations need a few dedicated members to keep their base vibrant or engaged with the political happenings within the polity. In the formal western conceptualization, party activists are said to be the lifeblood of political parties. They are needed to keep their party functional from the national to sub-national level. This group of active members canvass for votes, explain controversial policy positions to the undecided electorate, attend party conventions and congresses, and do routine fundraising in their local communities.<sup>55</sup> The rules regulating recruitment to political parties are set out in the party constitutions. Nevertheless, the process for recruiting foot soldiers operates outside the formal rules. From my interviews and observations it would seem that party foot soldiers are recruited directly by an executive member of a political party or a party’s candidates to assist them attain party or public office. The foot soldiers are recruited from the ranks of the youth within a particular community (known as “area boys”).<sup>56</sup> Recruitment is largely informal and therefore brings a different meaning to bear on the concept of voluntarism, which is at the heart of party activism in the advanced democracies.

The political activism engaged in by foot soldiers is not seen as a voluntary activity in the formal or theoretical sense, but one that is mediated by an institutionalized Ghanaian traditional custom of reciprocity (or gift giving).<sup>57</sup> Lemarchand calls this phenomenon of gift exchange in traditional societies as “tribute.”<sup>58</sup> And van de Walle classifies tribute as a

distinct form of political clientelism.<sup>59</sup> In operational terms, this custom requires that small gifts or assistance are given to the less successful person by the “Big Men” or women who were rendered a service. The post-1990 democratization process has embraced this custom on the party platforms to the chagrin of the promoters of political accountability. With regard to political party activism in Ghana, the party candidate or politician is seen as a successful person who must, by custom, reward foot soldiers for their services. According to the patronage politics perspective, foot soldiers are the clients and the politician is the patron who must provide for their needs in order to maintain their loyalty.<sup>60</sup> This thesis is problematic because it portrays the foot soldiers as powerless and therefore passive beneficiaries of the spoils of political power. Nevertheless, from the interviews and observations, foot soldiers expect that political power, once achieved, must be convertible into tangible goods. For example, when a group of NPP party foot soldiers felt neglected, they organized a press conference to register their displeasure with the Kufuor administration. A quote from the press conference is important because it captured the political and socio-cultural motives for party foot soldiers’ activism:

After the party has stayed in power for almost seven years, the foot soldiers have been forgotten and none of the foot soldiers have seen a change in their lifestyles and right now there are troubles in our marriage homes where some of us cannot pay our children’s school fees and even most of us are thrown out of our homes because we cannot face our responsibilities. We want the NPP government to come out and address these issues; other than that, we will not involve ourselves in any critical party activities within the constituency.<sup>61</sup>

Evidently, party foot soldiers’ activism is based on the notion of reciprocity and the provision of personalized goods. The foot soldiers perceived public office holders as wealthy and in control of patronage resources.<sup>62</sup> As a result, they expect the ruling elites to share state resources with them. As one foot soldier put it in an interview: “government property is for all citizens and since the men we help to attain public office are the ones in charge of the state resources we expect them to share the resources with us.”<sup>63</sup> Thus, the motivation for activism in the foot soldier category is mainly targeted at receiving selective private goods.<sup>64</sup>

Incumbent party functionaries and aspiring politicians dispense patronage goods to secure the services of foot soldiers. Knowing that they are most sought after during competitive elections, foot soldiers strategize and extract the most political opportunities they can possibly get. The rewards foot soldiers expect from politicians are both tangible and intangible resources including monetary gifts (or “chop money”) as well as the time and authority of the politicians. An introductory letter, for example, from the office of the “Honourable” Member of Parliament or Minister of State would enable foot soldiers to enjoy selective goods such as job opportunities in the security services (e.g., army, police, prisons, and fire service).<sup>65</sup> Similarly, the inclusion of the name of the foot soldier on the “Protocol List” from the office of the Chief of Staff or national party chairman would ensure that one’s level of education is overlooked and “jobs for the boys” caters for such foot soldiers.<sup>66</sup> Additionally, some foot soldiers are rewarded with employment in the District Assemblies (as revenue/tollbooth/market toll collectors, cleaners etc.), and others are given seed money to start a retail business.<sup>67</sup>

The labor intensive nature of political campaigns makes the services of foot soldiers indispensable in Ghana's electoral politics. That said, it is worth asking to what extent and how foot soldiers actually participate in politics. In the conventional (non-violent) type of participation, foot soldiers play two very crucial roles. Political campaigning in Ghana is heavily dependent on the old forms of campaigning, which are all labor intensive. Externally, party foot soldiers are needed to market the party and its candidates to the voting public. Thus, the foot soldiers become the middle political fixers, receiving information from the party hierarchy and disseminating such vital messages to the electorate at the sub-national level.<sup>68</sup> As a developing country, some rural areas are difficult to reach because of poor communication networks. In this context, the foot soldiers are needed in the mobilization efforts of the party and its candidates: foot soldiers tend to use bicycles and motor bikes to make contact with rural communities to canvass for votes for the particular party and candidate they work for.<sup>69</sup> I also observed foot soldiers in urban centers engaging in house-to-house or door-to-door campaigning.<sup>70</sup>

More importantly, foot soldiers are involved in internal party activities. Their involvement in the mobilization of party delegates is especially crucial during the selection of candidates for executive positions, for parliament, and the presidency. At the same time, it is important to point out that foot soldiers only enjoy limited voting rights within the parties, as the constitutions of the main political parties directly disenfranchise them.<sup>71</sup>

In intra-party contests, the foot soldiers' role is marginal. Their function in internal party elections is largely symbolic. This is because internal party contests are limited to elite members; that is, party members in "good standing" in terms of payment of membership dues and financial support to the party. What this means in practice is that only a few members can run for executive positions at the national and constituency levels. Furthermore, the composition of the party's electoral college indirectly disenfranchises foot soldiers as many do not vote at party congresses.<sup>72</sup> On this score, the differences between the major parties must be highlighted. The center-right leaning NPP in 2009, expanded its electoral college from some 3,700 delegates to over 140,000 delegates. The expansion has made it possible for some foot soldiers to participate in its internal elections. The center-left NDC's electoral college is restricted to some 3, 600 party delegates.<sup>73</sup> The upshot is that many foot soldiers only participate indirectly in party primaries, congresses, and conventions.

Nevertheless, for different reasons, all parties encourage the presence of foot soldiers at political events. First, the large numbers of foot soldiers at a party rally or program appears to give an indication of the popularity of the particular candidate or party. Closely related is the entertainment component of political rallies. From my observations, party rallies are at least partly social events for merry-making. And in rural constituencies, rally attendees are served food and drink.<sup>74</sup> In internal party contests, candidates recruit foot soldiers to mobilize votes for them. But the action of the foot soldiers on the day of voting greatly determines whether a candidate succeeds or fails. The various foot soldier factions usher their candidates into the congress grounds with acrobatic displays, drumming, and dancing. Second, some candidates purposely bus foot soldiers to campaign grounds to harass, intimidate, and destroy campaign symbols and paraphernalia of rival candidates.<sup>75</sup>

Aside from organizing, mobilizing, canvassing for votes, and, in a few cases, voting for political elites seeking election to top leadership positions, some foot soldiers also exercise public authority in the decentralized governance system. Through party patronage, the few foot soldiers that get tapped as the President's nominees in the Metropolitan, Municipal and

District Assemblies (MMDAs), while representing their party, also provide leadership for their communities.<sup>76</sup> At one District Assembly, for example, some foot soldiers contributed ideas or proposed practical solutions to sanitation, security problems, and other daily problems of the inhabitants.<sup>77</sup> Additionally, foot soldiers serve their local communities in socio-cultural terms. They attend festivals, weddings, naming ceremonies, and the funerals of members of their local communities. Without doubt, party activism at the foot soldier category is laborious. The majority of party foot soldiers act and behave like activists elsewhere in the advanced democracies.

### **Contentious Political Participation: Low-Intensity Electoral Violence by Party Foot Soldiers**

Since 1992, Ghana has held six multi-party elections, making the Fourth Republic the longest surviving civilian regime. Political parties have mostly been the vehicles used by the successful elites to attain public office. As Lindberg has explained, party supporters including foot soldiers perceive the ruling elites to have control over state resources. Consequently, the expectation of the foot soldiers is that the politician who is in-charge of state resources must share with “their people.”<sup>78</sup> Hence, in situations where the political elites or government functionaries are unable or are perceived to be unwilling to share political opportunities (the spoils of office) or fulfil the promises made to the foot soldiers, conventional politics veers off into the realm of unconventionality. That is, the actions and the behavior of foot soldiers become contentious, aggressive, confrontational, and violent.

The violence employed by foot soldiers to achieve their goals is spontaneous, localized, and therefore of low-intensity. On this score, a key contribution of the article that needs re-emphasizing is that the intensity of any election related violence must be delineated. Electoral violence generated by party foot soldiers in Ghana must be contrasted with the theoretical and empirical evidence analyzed in the above sections. Indeed, the high-intensity electoral violence of the kinds witnessed in Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Kenya, and, Cote d’Ivoire are not comparable to those that occurred in Ghana or elsewhere in Africa. Broadly speaking, contentious political participation is manifested in two areas. First, aggression is demonstrated in the conduct of internal party politics during the recruitment and appointment stages. A perception that ruling party elites or appointees are not spreading the spoils of power adequately results in aggression. In my interviews with party executives and MPs, it emerged that there is an unwritten rule among the main parties that mandates political appointees or government functionaries to “take care of our people first before the others.”<sup>79</sup> A former Minister of State captures it succinctly, when he said “we must make sure that our boys have chopped first before extending the invitation to others.”<sup>80</sup> This is the unwritten contract that sustains foot soldier activism. To address the foot soldier agitation that characterized the early years of the Mills administration in 2009, the Eastern Regional Minister, Samuel Ofose Ampofo, reminded newly appointed Chief Executive Officers of the various Municipal and District Assemblies that “when you are eating don’t forget the foot soldiers.”<sup>81</sup> Externally, contentious politics is visited on state institutions, public servants, and political opponents.

## Manifestations of Low-intensity Electoral Violence in Ghana

Table 1 is an event catalog of the various forms of contentious political participation undertaken by foot soldiers in the period between 1992 and 2012. The next section gives an overview of the five categories of event catalog of election related incidences.

### *Ballot Box Theft and Other Electoral Fraud*

Reports of ballot box stealing and stuffing were prevalent in national elections conducted in 1992, 1996, 2000, and 2004. While ballot box stuffing is the process of putting pre-cast ballots into the boxes prior to the scheduled voting, stealing of ballot boxes is where ballots cast in an election are taken away by supporters of one of the competitors in an election. Party foot soldiers at the grassroots were involved in the stuffing and stealing of ballot boxes. In the

**TABLE 1. ELECTION RELATED INFRACTIONS IN GHANA, 1992-2012**

Categories of Event Catalog of Election Related Incidences					
Ballot box theft	Molestations/Violent intimidation	Seizure/public properties occupancy	Protests/Public Disorders	Party property vandalism	Totals
89	468	5	3	8	573
-	112	8	17	3	140
-	8	-	5	-	13
-	398	-	54	5	457
16	15	13	3	3	50
-	18	-	2	-	20
-	115	-	115	-	230
-	416	-	28	7	451
26	252	3	16	19	316
-	19	432	101	5	557
-	11	156	203	3	373
-	126	9	27	-	162
10	17	-	5	5	37
-	13	8	19	13	53
-	27	5	27	-	59
-	37	-	5	-	42
1	237	-	164	12	414
-	387	765	28	3	1183
-	19	321	16	2	358
-	15	87	13	-	115
-	97	-	7	-	104
142	2807	1812	858	88	5707

Source: Compiled by author, 2012

event catalog in Table 1, a total of one hundred and forty-two (or 2.5 percent) incidents were recorded and an overwhelming majority of the cases were in the strongholds of the two leading political parties.<sup>84</sup> Additionally, the compilation of new voter registers was marred by allegations of fraud, violence, and irregularities. For example, foot soldiers of the two main parties prevented prospective voters they alleged were “foreigners” from registering in Kumasi and Accra during the compilation of new biometric electoral registers in 2012.<sup>82</sup>

*Molestation, Physical Assault, or Violent Intimidation*

Molestation, physical assault, and violent intimidation have characterized most national elections and some internal party contests. From Table 1, these incidences total 2,807 (49.2 percent) represented nearly half of all incidences of low-intensity electoral violence analyzed in this article and appeared widespread. Consistent with the studies by Laakso, Mehler, and Straus and Taylor, the evidence shows that during the pre-vote period, party foot soldiers engaged in molestations and violent intimidation of the electorate and rival supporters/activists. In August 2008, an NDC foot soldier allegedly fired gunshots and scuttled an NPP campaign rally at the Jubilee Park in Tamale.<sup>83</sup> In the December 2012 election, for example, the main domestic observer group, the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) received reports from its field agents of intimidation, harassment, and violation of the voting procedures in the Ashanti, Greater Accra, and Northern regions.<sup>84</sup> This observation contradicts postulations by Laakso and Straus and Taylor that on the actual day of polling, parties do not engage in election related violence. Similarly, inter-party violent intimidation was common during voter registration, national elections, and bye-elections.<sup>85</sup> In the north of Ghana, foot soldiers of the NDC and NPP vandalized registration centers. The violence was aimed at disenfranchising the supporters of rival candidates so as to reduce the vote margins.

*Seizure or Occupancy of Public Property*

Seizure and unlawful occupancy of state properties were widespread among the foot soldiers of the main parties. Recorded events of such seizures or occupancy from Table 1 indicate 1,812 cases (31.8 percent). This behavior of the victorious party foot soldiers resonates with Tarrow's argument that contentious politics results from "changes in political opportunities." Patronage objects such as bus terminals are political opportunities enjoyed by the incumbent parties' activists. Consequently, public property, including office buildings, cars, toll bridges, toilets, and lorry parks (or bus terminals), were the target of party foot soldiers. In early 2009, the foot soldiers of the NDC occupied several government buildings, evicted the occupants, and took over their jobs. The revenue collection jobs at many public toilets were forcibly taken over by the foot soldiers of the NPP in 2001 and the NDC in 2009 respectively.

*Protests or Taking Part in Public Disorders*

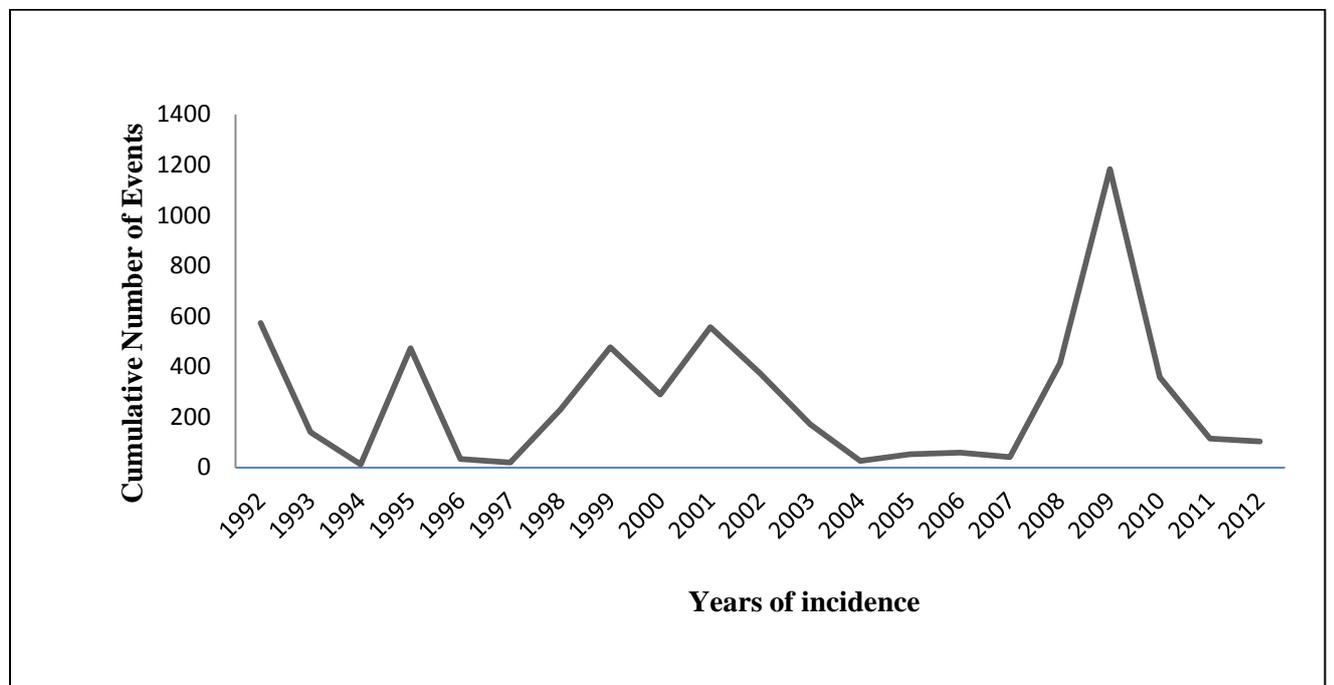
In Table 1, violent demonstrations against political appointees were the third highest incidence of low-intensity violence, registering a total of 858 (or 15 percent). Social movement theorists such as Tilly and Tarrow see public protest as contentious politics. Arguably, the behavior of foot soldiers is contentious because their motive for engaging in public protests was to confront the ruling elites. To be sure, foot soldiers demonstrated against Ministers of State, Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives (MMDCEs). A case in point was in March 2010, when a group of NDC foot soldiers in the Agona West constituency demonstrated against the MCE, Jacob Felix Obeng-Forson, whom they alleged was "misguided and incompetent."<sup>86</sup> Also found within this category were several anti-government demonstrations, the popular ones being the "Kume Preko" (Akan Twi meaning "kill me instantly") and "Wahala" (a Hausa word meaning "sufferings") protests which were staged in the nation's capital and other major towns. On May 11, 1995, an opposition pressure group, the Alliance For Change (AFC), organized the Kume Preko demonstration protesting against the then Rawlings administration decision to introduce the

Value Added Tax (VAT) policy.<sup>87</sup> In 2005, the Committee for Joint Action (CJA), another pressure group aligned with the opposition NDC organized the Wahala demonstrations against fuel price increases, “bad governance,” “economic hardships,” and the “insensitivity of the NPP government.”<sup>88</sup> The above illustrations are consistent with Tarrow’s argument that the mechanisms that induce party activists to engage in contentious politics could be “partisan and group-based.”

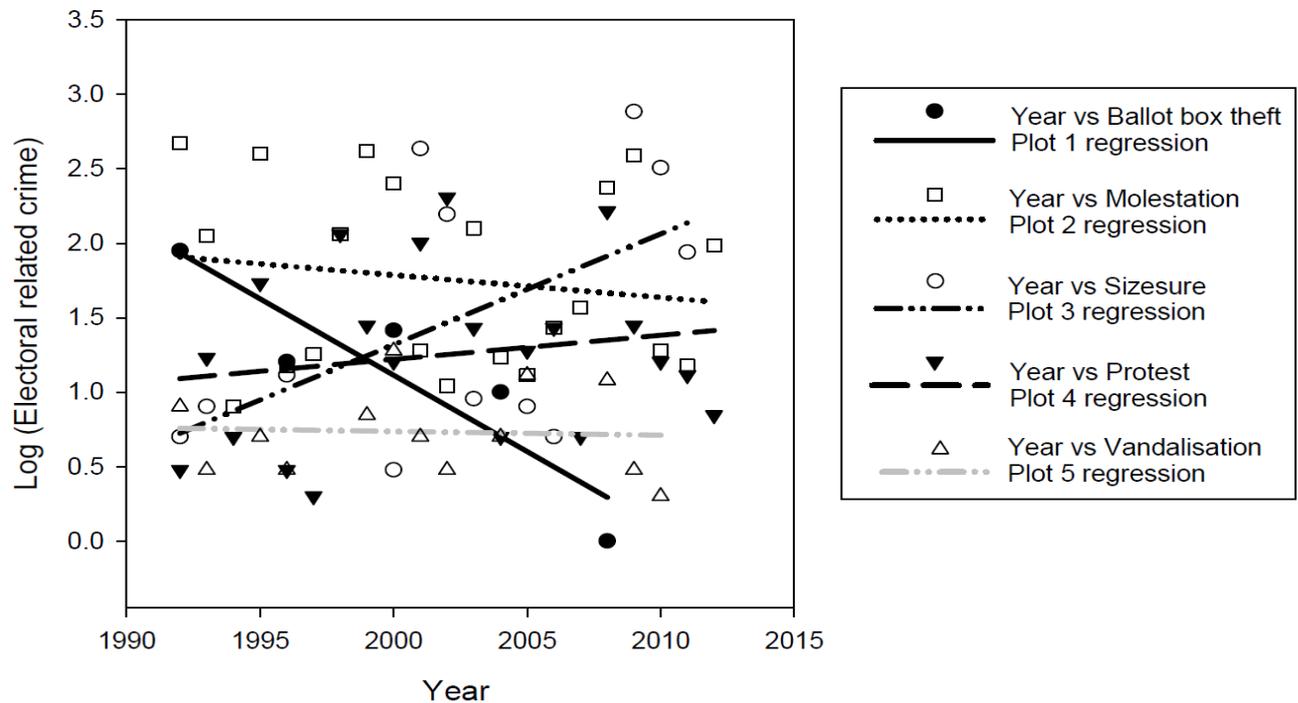
#### *Vandalization or Destruction of Party Property*

The contentious politics engaged in by foot soldiers also affected party structures, campaign cars, and other party branded properties or paraphernalia. From Table 1, a total of eighty-eight (or 1.5 percent) incidences were recorded covering the two decades of the Fourth five (1.5 percent) incidences were recorded covering the two decades of the Fourth Republic.

**FIGURE 1. TRENDS & PATTERNS OF ELECTION RELATED INFRACTIONS IN GHANA, 1992-2012**



**FIGURE 2. CASE BY CASE ANALYSIS OF ELECTION RELATED INFRACTIONS IN GHANA, 1992-2012**



Even though party offices are privately owned, they were not spared. In May 2011, for example, NDC foot soldiers attacked the offices of the mayor of Tamale and destroyed office equipment including computers, furniture, stationery, and exhibition stands. This youth aggression was said to be in protest at a “decongestion exercise” undertaken by the assembly.<sup>89</sup> The occasional decongestion exercises carried out by city authorities affect the interests of party foot soldiers. Tilly and Tarrow aptly captured this scenario when they argued that conventional politics degenerates into contentious politics when political “actors make claims bearing on someone else’s interests.” Again, in 2011, foot soldiers claiming affiliation to the NDC in Tamale burnt down a party office to register their displeasure over a court ruling that saw certain persons accused of the murder of an important local chief acquitted.<sup>90</sup>

### Trends and Patterns of Low-intensity Electoral Violence

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the cumulated number of incidences contained in Table 1. While Figure 1 shows the overall trends and patterns of low-intensity electoral violence, Figure 2 displays the intensity of the five categories of incidences. From Figure 2, there is no net increase because the five different categories of violence show contrasting patterns. However, Figure 1 shows the occurrence and the intensity of violence to coincide with crucial national elections. Besides, the transition election of 1992, elections held in 1996, 2000, and 2008 recorded incidences of violence. These elections were not only characterized by violent intimidation, but were also noted for voter impersonation, manipulation, and the use of defective voters registers. Cumulatively, violence increased during the open seat presidential elections of 2000 and 2008. Yet, on a case-by-case basis, there is a significant decline in ballot box theft (see Figure 2 black dots). The act of stealing or stuffing of ballot

boxes has declined considerably as Ghana deepens its democratic process.<sup>91</sup> This finding is consistent with studies that have assessed Africa's democratization wave. Lynch and Crawford, for example, see an improvement in the conduct and the management of electoral politics in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>92</sup> In the case of Ghana, Figure 1 illustrates, from a high incidence of eighty-nine reported ballot thefts in 1992; only one ballot box was reported stolen in the December 2008 election. The election of December 2012 reported no incidents of ballot box theft.<sup>93</sup>

Molestation or violent intimidation is a common feature of all Ghanaian elections. To be sure, molestations and violent intimidation are common in open seat elections. Localized violent intimidation characterized the general elections of 2008 and 2012. These elections were a two horse race between the NDC and the NPP. Additionally, foot soldiers claiming affiliation to the NDC and the NPP have clashed at party rallies and in crucial bye-elections. Bye-elections held in Navrongo Central constituency (4 July 1995), Ablekuma Central constituency (26 March 1999), Wulensi constituency (4 March 2003), Asawase constituency (21 April 2005) and Odododiodoo constituency (30 August 2005) recorded high levels of violence. Similarly, two bye-elections organized in the Chereponi and the Atiwa constituencies in September 2009 and August 2010, respectively, were problematic. Two observers of elections in Ghana concluded that the polls failed the democratic test because both recorded "unprecedented levels of violence and voter intimidation."<sup>94</sup>

In and between national elections, molestation and violent intimidation have been observed in the parties' internal conduct. As Figure 1 shows, there was a consistent pattern of physical assault or violent intimidation in open seat presidential and parliamentary primary elections and party executive leadership contests. To be sure, at the beginning of the Fourth Republican dispensation, only the NPP selected its candidates using the primary method.<sup>95</sup>

The institutionalization of presidential and parliamentary elections primaries in the two leading parties made competition keener. An NDC presidential primary in December 2002 witnessed a close race between former Vice-President Professor John Evans Atta Mills and former Finance Minister Dr. Kwesi Botchwey.<sup>96</sup> On this first attempt at democratizing the party's presidential primary, violence was used to disenfranchise Botchwey's supporters.<sup>97</sup> Similarly, the NDC national chairmanship contest was a two-faction race led by Dr. Obed Asamoah and Dr. Kwabena Adjei.<sup>98</sup> The party's December 2005 Koforidua congress saw the "Azorka Boys" using crude weapons such as cudgels and horsewhips on their opponents. Other forms of intimidation carried out by the group included the defacing of campaign posters of the opposing faction.

Meanwhile, the NPP, which portrays itself as the more democratic of the two leading parties, witnessed violent clashes in the conduct of its parliamentary primary election in 2008.<sup>99</sup> Nevertheless, cumulatively (as Figure 2 shows) there is a decline in molestation and other violent intimidation (see white squares). The incidences of vandalization have also not changed significantly (see white triangles). There was, however, a significant increase in the seizure of public properties and also a marginal increase in protests (see white circles and inverted black triangles). On the whole and consistent with studies elsewhere, there is a decline in election related violence in Ghana.<sup>100</sup>

### The Use of Low-Intensity Electoral Violence to Achieve Public and Private Goals

Party foot soldiers use low-intensity electoral violence to enable elites to attain party or public office. In return the foot soldiers expect the political elites to provide political opportunities such as jobs and contracts as personal reward for their contributions.<sup>101</sup> In this context, foot soldiers use low-intensity electoral violence to respond to changes in material incentives. Political parties have responded to the demands of their foot soldiers by creating phantom jobs or “jobs for the boys.” In justifying widespread agitations by NDC foot soldiers in early 2009, a former presidential spokesperson claimed that:

Other political groups were totally excluded from benefiting from the national cake. If you look at organisations and institutions that emerged under the NPP, the National Youth Employment Programme, National Health Insurance, School Feeding Programme, award of contracts and jobs, recruitment into state institutions, we were running a system in which you needed to be a member of a certain political tradition [NPP] before you could benefit from any of these opportunities.<sup>102</sup>

The foot soldiers’ demands for personal rewards can be understood within the larger context of patronage politics.<sup>103</sup> Broadly speaking, patronage politics thrives on the resources of the state. In Ghana, state-owned enterprises (SOEs) were used in the pre-adjustment era to reward party or regime supporters. But the privatization of hundreds of SOEs starting in 1987 has deprived the incumbent parties’ access to patronage resources.<sup>104</sup>

Meanwhile, the manufacturing sector fell from 10.2 percent in 2006 to 6.7 percent in 2010.<sup>105</sup> Apart from obsolete machinery, unbridled liberalization has been cited as a cause for the decline. Manufacturing is not generating enough employment opportunities. In 2011, for example, a mere 40,000 Ghanaians were employed in manufacturing.<sup>106</sup> *The State of the Ghanaian Economy in 2010* states that “unemployment, especially youth unemployment, is a major problem in Ghana.”<sup>107</sup> As Abbink notes, the large and growing population of unemployed youth has become a source for recruitment as foot soldiers by the political elites.<sup>108</sup> Well-paying jobs for the non-literate and semi-skilled persons are scarce. All political actors, however, capitalize on the politicization of unemployment in Ghana. Consequently, there is a perception among foot soldiers that their deprivation is politicized:

All the Big Men are the same in Ghana. The NDC party ruled the country for eight years but failed to address the numerous problems facing the youth. In the 2000 elections, the NPP said we should vote for them and they will treat us better. After eight years in power what did they do differently? The political system does not allow for consensus building among the two main parties. . . . Thus, all political parties want to claim the credit for themselves and in the end the youth suffer.<sup>109</sup>

The foot soldiers believe that the political system makes it difficult for the country’s ruling elites to agree on a common national development program.<sup>110</sup> Consistent with this belief, Whitfield argues that the ruling coalitions in Ghana tend to avoid investing in the more productive sectors of the economy.<sup>111</sup> Development projects or investment with longer gestation period are avoided. For instance, agriculture and manufacturing that have the potential to absorb many unemployed youths are under-invested. Mindful of electoral considerations, ruling parties tend to move resources around to satisfy the short-term

interests of constituents. The foot soldiers never know if the party that won the election would continue with the policies of its predecessor. As a result, party foot soldiers expect to be compensated handsomely for their efforts. As Lindberg explained, the behavior of the political elites supports the belief that politics is a ticket to primitive accumulation.<sup>112</sup> Foot soldiers believe that politicians are wealthier and many would employ low-intensity electoral violence to get into pole position to receive political opportunities.

## Conclusion

Increasingly, the conduct of multi-party elections in sub-Saharan Africa has come to be characterized by violence. The stakes involved in capturing state power are high and have therefore made competitive politics keener. Political parties and elite groups have bitterly disputed unfavorable poll results. While incumbent parties rarely lose an election in Africa, challengers are quick to declare victory. And when they lose, challengers allege manipulation of the voting process. In countries where electoral disputes could not be resolved through democratic means, violence determined which party or elites governed the state. The many incidences of election related violence since re-democratization in the early 1990s has compelled some scholars to claim that electoral violence is on the rise in Africa's new democracies.

To be sure, many countries in sub-Saharan Africa experienced instability for considerable periods. These political upheavals, as exemplified by the cases in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Rwanda, were accompanied by widespread displacement of human population and mass killings. Mass political violence was common in the period before political liberalization. Pluralistic politics embraced by African states in the 1990s appears to have a moderating impact on mass political violence. According to Straus, large-scale political violence has declined considerably. Rather, contentious politics has come to characterize political participation.<sup>113</sup> Increasingly, poll results are disputed. Consequently, widespread violence accompanied elections in Kenya and Cote d'Ivoire. In most of these cases of electoral violence, party activists or youth groups aligned with the main political parties played prominent roles to safeguard the interests of their patrons. Broadly speaking, electoral violence becomes an activity motivated principally to achieve a change in the prevailing political order. Violence is employed by incumbents and challengers to manipulate formal rules to legitimize state power. And no matter the scale or intensity of electoral violence, its eruption in relation to party campaigning taints the results of an election. Consequently, the degree of intensity of electoral violence is important in categorizing violence in all democratic societies.

The mainstream literature sees many election-related infractions in Africa as the dominant mode of political participation. Furthermore, this literature portrays electoral violence as widespread, and of course, of high intensity. This is problematic because electoral violence is never equal in any two countries. While several thousands of Ivoirians lost their lives in the country's 2010 disputed elections, the same could not be said of Nigeria's 2009 disputed presidential election. The conceptualization of electoral violence in the existing literature is uncritical. Election-related violence as reported by some scholars has tended to have over-generalized findings. This makes the concept of electoral violence problematic in academic analysis. Above all, most existing studies rarely factor the level of intensity into their analysis. As a result, our knowledge of the meso-level dynamics that sustain electoral violence in some of Africa's more stable democracies is lacking.

Low-intensity electoral violence is the concept I propose in this article to explain certain infractions or anomalies arising out of electoral contests in emerging democracies such as Ghana. Low-intensity violence is the opposite of high intensity violence. As a political phenomenon, low-intensity electoral violence is characterized by its smallness; such electoral infractions do not directly affect the overall stability of the state. Low-intensity electoral violence occurs during transition elections, open seat presidential or parliamentary elections, by-elections, and party primaries.

The agents that contribute to low-intensity electoral violence are political parties and elite groups. However, political parties by themselves do not instigate violence. The combination of a party platform, dissatisfied elites, and unemployed youth activists are the agents that cause electoral violence. In Ghana, the political parties mobilize youth activists known as foot soldiers to pursue their political agendas. Theoretically, the political activism engaged in by foot soldiers is not a voluntary activity. Foot soldiers activism is understood to be reciprocal. Engaging in contentious politics through the instrumentalization of violence among political parties in Ghana is linked to the understanding that activism by foot soldiers must be rewarded. Contentious politics is invoked when foot soldiers make claims on public properties that directly affect the interests of their opponents.

The political system in operation is one where the party that wins the presidency monopolizes all state power. The winner-take-all system makes no room for opposition parties (except in parliament) to participate in government. The winner-take-all logic contributes to electoral violence. Other contributory factors of electoral violence are structural and partisan in nature. Political parties easily recruit foot soldiers for partisan purposes because of their "availability and their willingness" to engage in any activity that would liberate them of conditions of unemployment. The foot soldiers of incumbent parties use contentious politics to protect their positions, access to power, interests and sources of livelihoods.

On the whole, however, electoral contests in Ghana are generally peaceful and the data presented here shows that cumulatively, election-related violence is on the decline. On the larger question of democratic deepening, this portends well for the consolidation of liberal democracy in Ghana.

## Notes

- 1 Honwana 2012; Resnick and Casale 2011.
- 2 Abbink 2005; Rossler 2005; Richards 1996.
- 3 See among others, Bekoe 2012; Bratton 2008; Laakso 2007; Mehler 2007.
- 4 Laakso 2007; Dercon and Gutiérrez-Romero 2012.
- 5 Straus 2012.
- 6 LeBas 2006; Dercon and Gutierrez-Romero 2012; Banegas 2011; Straus 2011.
- 7 Anderson 2002; Bratton 2008.
- 8 Wienia 2011; Awedoba 2009; Lentz 2006; Lund 2003.
- 9 Bob-Milliar 2013, 2012a; Gyampo 2012; Asante 2006; Ninsin 2006.
- 10 See CDD-Ghana 2012.
- 11 For a comprehensive discussion of the election, see Daddieh 2009; Whitfield 2009; Gyimah-Boadi 2009.
- 12 Ayee and Crook 2003.

- 13 Auyero 2007; Tilly 2006, 2002; Olzak 1989.
- 14 Straus and Taylor 2012, p. 19.
- 15 Baiocchi and Connor 2008.
- 16 Staggenborg 2008, p. 342.
- 17 Schwarzmantel 2010, p. 218.
- 18 Höglund 2009, p.415.
- 19 Mehler 2007, p.194.
- 20 Ibid., p. 197.
- 21 Laakso 2007, p. 227.
- 22 Bekoe 2012.
- 23 Straus and Taylor 2012.
- 24 Ibid, p. 37.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Tarrow 2007, p. 5.
- 27 Tilly and Tarrow 2007, p. 4.
- 28 Tarrow 2011, p. 6.
- 29 Ibid., p.16.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Mehler 2007, pp. 199-211.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Gyimah-Boadi 2007.
- 34 Mehler 2007.
- 35 Przeworski 1991.
- 36 Mehler 2007.
- 37 Rasmussen 2010; Bratton and Kimenyi 2008; Elischer, 2008; Daddieh, 2001; Toungara, 2001; Akindès, 2004.
- 38 Abbink 2005, p. 1.
- 39 Mehler 2007; Abbink 2005.
- 40 Abbink 2005, p. 3.
- 41 A large proportion of young adults in relation to the total population of a country constitute the youth bulge. For the concept in conflict studies, see Urdal and Hoelscher 2009.
- 42 Weber 2013, p. 348.
- 43 Roessler 2005; Richards 1996.
- 44 Abbink 2005, p. 3; Buur 2008, 2006.
- 45 See Olarinmoye 2008; Albert 2005.
- 46 Rasmussen 2010; Kagwanja 2005.
- 47 Bob-Milliar 2012a; Bob-Milliar and Bob-Milliar 2010.
- 48 Bob-Milliar 2012a, p.676.
- 49 For political parties membership categories, see Bob-Milliar 2012a, pp.674-76.
- 50 See Van Hear 1984
- 51 Honwana 2012; Abbink 2005.
- 52 In Accra, the national capital, foot-soldiers of NDC and NPP live side by side at Old Fadam, the largest slum in Ghana.
- 53 Whitley 2011.

- 54 Bob-Milliar and Bob-Milliar 2010.
- 55 Karlsten 2010; Scarrow 2009; Dalton 2013; Farrell and Webb 2000.
- 56 Personal interview, Accra, Ghana, 10 January 2011.
- 57 For a theoretical discussion on incentives for activism see Strøm and Müller 1999, pp.15-16.
- 58 Lemarchand 1988, pp.153-55.
- 59 Van de Walle 2007, p. 51.
- 60 See Utas 2012.
- 61 Cited in Bob-Milliar 2012a, pp. 677-78.
- 62 See Daddieh and Bob-Milliar 2012.
- 63 Personal interview, Tamale, Ghana, 26 January 2011.
- 64 Bob-Milliar 2012a.
- 65 See The Daily Searchlight, 24 August 2012.
- 66 Personal interview, Wa, Ghana, 28 January 2011; see also Kopecký and Spirova 2011.
- 67 Personal interview, Tamale, Ghana, 26 January 2011.
- 68 See Ninsin 2006; Asante 2006.
- 69 Personal interview, Wa, Ghana, 30 January 2011.
- 70 Author's observation in Accra, Ghana, 30 November 2012.
- 71 See the constitutions of the NPP (2009) and NDC (2002).
- 72 The electoral college is the body that is mandated by the party's constitution to vote at the party congress.
- 73 The NDC is currently compiling a new member's register and it's likely it will also expand its electoral college.
- 74 Personal observation in Lawra-Nandom constituency, November 2007.
- 75 Personal observation in Legon, Accra, December 2007.
- 76 Bob-Milliar 2012a.
- 77 Personal observation at the Wa Municipal Assembly deliberations on sanitation.
- 78 Lindberg 2003, p. 130.
- 79 Personal interview, Accra, Ghana, 21 June 2011.
- 80 Ibid.
- 81 Ghanaian Observer 29 May 2009, p. 7.
- 82 Ursula Owusu, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) parliamentary candidate for Ablekuma South in the 2012 election was physically assaulted during the biometric registration exercise in the Odododiodoo constituency, Accra.
- 83 Frimpong 2008.
- 84 See CODEO Report 2012, p. 5. CODEO was formed in 2000 and is a network of civil society groups operating in Ghana (see <http://codeoghana.org>).
- 85 For details on the politics of bye-elections see Frempong 2008.
- 86 See Ghana News Agency (GNA), "Agona West NDC youth demonstrate against MCE," 12 March 2010.
- 87 See among others, Frempong 2007; Osei 2000.
- 88 See Modern Ghana News 25 May 2005.
- 89 For more details on the politics of decongestion in urban areas in Ghana, see Bob-Milliar and Obeng-Odoom 2011.
- 90 For details of the politics on this issue see Bob-Milliar 2012b, pp. 592-3.

- 91 See CODEO Report 2012.
- 92 Lynch and Crawford 2011
- 93 See CODEO Report 2012.
- 94 Gyimah-Boadi and Prempeh 2012, p.106.
- 95 Daddieh and Bob-Milliar 2012.
- 96 Bob-Milliar 2012b, p. 549.
- 97 Bob-Milliar 2012b.
- 98 Ibid., p. 550.
- 99 Daddieh and Bob-Milliar 2012.
- 100 See Straus 2012; Straus and Taylor 2012.
- 101 Bob-Milliar 2012a.
- 102 Mahama Ayariga, Joy FM News, Accra, (6pm broadcast), 9 November 2009.
- 103 See Lindberg 2003; Kopecký 2011.
- 104 See Appiah-Kubi 2001.
- 105 ISSER 2011, p. 204.
- 106 ISSER 2012, p. 154.
- 107 Ibid.
- 108 See Abbink 2005.
- 109 Personal interview, Accra, Ghana, 27 June 2011.
- 110 Ghana currently has no national development policy binding on all governments. The practice in place is that governments' rule based on campaign promises.
- 111 Whitfield 2011.
- 112 Lindberg 2003.
- 113 Straus 2012.

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